CONTENTS

1. Introduction to Eschatology .......................................................... 5
   Our study
   Key terms

2. The Return of Christ ........................................................................ 8
   A visible appearance
   A glorious manner
   A cataclysmic event

3. The Resurrection of the Dead ......................................................... 10
   Resurrection day
   A singular event
   The resurrection body
   Our Christian hope

4. The Gathering of the Living .......................................................... 13
   The gathering of the saints
   The final harvest
   Taken and left behind

5. Judgment Day ................................................................................. 15
   A universal judgment
   A singular event
   An accounting for deeds

6. Rewards and Punishment ............................................................... 17
   A vindication of God
   A display of mercy
   Degrees of punishment
   The rewards of heaven

7. Amillennialism ................................................................................ 20
   Basic idea
   The binding of Satan
   Millennium blessings
   The second coming

8. Postmillennialism ............................................................................ 24
   Basic idea
   The millennium
   The second coming
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Dispensational Premillennialism</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Basic idea</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Historic premillennialism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Modern premillennialism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The second coming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Jewish millennium</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Preterism</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The first coming of Christ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hyper-preterism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Interpreting Bible Prophecy</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Figures and symbols</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Old Testament imagery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New Testament fulfillment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bible prophets and signs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jesus and figures of speech</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bible prophecies and biblical history</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>The Mystery of Christ’s Return</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A singular event</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Always imminent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deliberately delayed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Known only to God</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impossible to guess</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Signs of the end</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The six classic signs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Precursors of the end</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>The Abomination of Desolation</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The end</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daniel’s sign</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The fall of Jerusalem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>The Seventy Sevens</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daniel’s “seventy sevens”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Messiah cut off</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The abomination of desolation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Great tribulation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
16. The Rise of Evil .......................................................... 53
  Prophecies of an oppressive power
  Daniel’s “fourth kingdom”
  Daniel’s “little horn”
  Daniel’s “ten kings”
  The beasts of Revelation
  Time, times, and half a time
  Antichrist
  The man of lawlessness

17. The Final Conflict ....................................................... 64
  Armageddon
  A battle against God

18. Israel and Prophecy .................................................... 66
  A messianic role
  Divine rejection
  New Testament prophecies

19. Restoration Prophecies ............................................... 69
  The restoration of Israel
  A post-exilic fulfillment
  The new temple

20. The Consummation .................................................... 73
  Eschatology and history
  The Kingdom of God
  The restoration of creation
No. 1

INTRODUCTION TO ESCHATOLOGY

Our Study

1. Key doctrines of the second coming
   a. The return of Christ
   b. The resurrection of the dead
   c. The gathering of the living
   d. The final judgment
   e. Heaven and hell

2. Key Bible prophecy texts
   a. The Old Testament prophets
   b. The Old Testament apocalyptic books: Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah
   c. The Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21)
   d. The book of Revelation

3. Speculation and controversy regarding the end times
   a. Millennial views
      1) Premillennialism
      2) Postmillennialism
      3) Amillennialism
   b. Signs of the end
   c. Great tribulation
      1) Seven years of great tribulation
      2) The plagues of Revelation (Seals, Trumpets, Bowls)
   d. The rise of a great evil power
      1) The Antichrist
      2) The Man of Lawlessness
      3) The Beast of the Sea and the Beast of the Earth
      4) The Woman Babylon
   e. The battle of Armageddon
   f. Prophecies of Israel’s restoration
      1) Return to the land
      2) Restoration of Jerusalem, the nation, the temple
**Key Terms**

1. **Eschatology**
   a. The study of the end times and the second coming of Christ
   b. Greek *eschaton*: last things

2. **Adventist**
   a. One who believes that the second coming is imminent, within his own lifetime
   b. Often identifies “signs of the end” linking current events with Scripture prophecies
   c. Often assumes the arrival of his church (or his own ministry) is a sign of the end

3. **Futurist**
   a. One who typically interprets Bible prophecy texts as relating to the second coming and the end times
   b. May grant a first coming fulfillment for Old Testament prophecies, but argues for a double fulfillment

4. **Preterist**
   a. One who typically interprets Bible prophecy texts as referring exclusively to the first coming of Christ
   b. The focus is upon the 1st century church and the end of Old Testament Judaism
   c. Extreme preterism says there will be no future second coming event

5. **Premillennialism**
   a. The belief that the millennium of Revelation 20 will immediately follow the second coming of Christ

   ![Diagram](image.png)

   Old Testament age       Church age       Millennium       Eternal age

   1st coming          2nd coming

   b. Christ will reign on earth with his saints (Jewish or Christian or both)
   c. Two key versions
      1) Historic Premillennialism
      2) Dispensational Premillennialism
6. **Dispensationalism**
   a. A modern version of premillennialism that emphasizes some key themes not typically found in all the other millennial views
      1) The division of history into seven dispensations
      2) The secret rapture of the church
      3) The central role of Israel in end times prophecy
      4) A seven-year Great Tribulation with Antichrist and world conflicts
      5) A Jewish temple and restored sacrificial system
      6) A Jewish millennium with Christ’s reigning on earth
      7) A strict literal interpretation rule
   b. Not the same thing as Historic Premillennialism
   c. Progressive Dispensationalism: a recent effort to move away from the excesses of classic dispensationalism

7. **Postmillennialism**
   a. The belief that the millennium of Revelation 20 will begin sometime prior to the second coming of Christ

   ![Diagram of Postmillennialism]
   
   - 1st coming
   - 2nd coming
   - Millennium
   - Old Testament age
   - Church age
   - Eternal age
   - Today

   b. Christ will reign on earth through the influence of the gospel (or Christian principles)

8. **Amillennialism**
   a. The belief that the millennium of Revelation 20 is an analogy of the Christian age
   b. The millennium began with the death and resurrection of Christ and ends with his second coming
   c. Christ reigns on earth through the church

   ![Diagram of Amillennialism]
   
   - 1st coming
   - 2nd coming
   - Millennium
   - Old Testament age
   - Church age
   - Eternal age
No. 2

THE RETURN OF CHRIST

A Visible Appearance

1. Christ will return in a manner visible to all
   a. Every person alive at the end will see Christ (Matt. 24:30; Rev. 1:7)
      1) It is not certain if the viewing of Christ will be simultaneous
      2) The form in which Christ will appear is not yet known
         a) Perhaps his actual incarnation body (as resurrected from the dead)
         b) Perhaps his glorified body (as transformed in his ascension to heaven)
         c) Perhaps a created theophany form
   b. This visible form is likely for our benefit
      1) A human appearance during the second coming event is better for us than Christ appearing a radiant light of glory or an invisible spirit
      2) To substantiate our belief that the person appearing is the same as the incarnate person who promised to return
      3) To give us a realistic point of reference for when we “meet him in the air” (1 Thess. 4:17) or “stand before him” at the judgment (Matt. 25:31-32)
   c. Christ’s manner of appearance at the second coming does not necessarily indicate how he will later appear to us in heaven
      a) He may choose to continue in some kind of visible form throughout the eternal age
      b) But there is no necessity for him to do so once he has satisfied the Biblical prophecies regarding the second coming events

2. Christ will make a personal appearance
   a. The same divine person who became Incarnate as Jesus Christ will return to earth (John 14:3; Acts 1:11; 1 Thess. 4:16)
   b. Erroneous ideas
      1) Spiritual Eschatology, Realized Eschatology
         a) No literal return
         b) Second coming prophecies are fulfilled when people of the world start living the way Jesus taught and lived
      2) Existential Eschatology
         a) No literal return
         b) Second coming prophecies are fulfilled each time an individual chooses to live the way Jesus taught and lived
A Glorious Manner

1. **Christ will return to earth in a regal fashion**
   a. Like a victorious king prepared to judge his rebellious enemies (Rev. 19:11-16)
      1) The white horse of victory and conquest
      2) Judging and waging war
      3) Many diadems, an iron scepter, the title “King of kings, Lord of lords”
      4) A sharp sword to strike down the nations, a robe dipped in blood (Isa. 61:1-5)
   b. Accompanied by a heavenly army of angels (Matt. 24:30-31; 25:31; 2 Thess. 1:7; Jude 14-15; Rev. 19:14)
   c. Introduced by royal heralds
      1) The shout of an archangel (1 Thess. 4:16)
         a) Perhaps announcing “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.” (Rev. 11:15)
         b) Perhaps announcing “It is done” (Rev. 16:17)
      2) The blast of a heavenly trumpet (Matt. 24:31; 1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:16)

2. **The royal return will be in sharp contrast to his first coming**
   a. No longer the humble child in a manger
   b. Now returning in glory (Matt. 24:30; 25:31)

A Cataclysmic Event

1. **Christ’s return to earth will initiate a shaking up of the universe**
   a. Celestial bodies will be shaken (Matt. 24:29-30; Rev. 6:12-14)
   b. The whole earth will quake (Rev. 6:12-14)

2. **The ultimate fulfillment of the Old Testament “language of theophany”**
   a. Old Testament prophets used such imagery to dramatize the fear creation should have when God comes to earth with wrath (against sinful nations)
   b. Some propose that second coming prophecies are simply using figurative language and not describing a literal phenomenon
   c. But it is likely that the Old Testament imagery is grounded in the real eschatological event
      1) The coming immersion in fire sounds real (2 Thess. 1:7; 2 Pet. 3:7, 10)
      2) The terror of the lost sounds real (Rev. 6:12-17)
No. 3
THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

Resurrection Day

1. The resurrection of the dead
   a. The term "resurrection" refers to a deceased body being brought back to life and reunited with its soul
   b. The phrase “general resurrection” refers to the end-time gathering of all the dead
      1) The same type of supernatural action as in the individual cases of resurrection miracles recorded in Scripture
      2) But distinct in two key ways:
         a) Number: individual occurrences vs. a large-scale resurrection of all the dead
         b) Duration: a brief reprieve from death vs. an eternal destiny

2. A resurrection of every person who has ever lived and died
   a. Both the saints and the lost (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15)
   b. Everyone touched by the curse of death (1 Cor. 15:22)

A Singular Event

1. The Bible consistently speaks of the resurrection of the dead as a singular event
   a. On “the last day” (John 11:23-24)
   b. At “the last trumpet” (1 Cor. 15:51-52)
   c. At an “hour” when Christ calls (John 5:28-29)

2. A counterpart to the spiritual resurrection of conversion
   a. Jesus’ reference to two “resurrections” refers to two different types of resurrections
      1) A spiritual resurrection at conversion (John 5:24-25)
         a) A resurrection for believers that “now is”
         b) Compare to the New Testament portrayal of baptism as a spiritual resurrection (Rom. 6:4-5; Col. 2:12)
      2) A bodily resurrection of all the dead at the second coming (John 5:28-29)
   b. The “two resurrections” of Revelation 20 may be referring to the same thing
      1) Same author of the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation
      2) The three blessings of Rev. 20:4-6 are associated with Christian conversion
         a) A resurrection that exempts from the second death (Hell)
         b) The privilege of serving as priests and reigning with Christ
      3) “The rest of the dead” who do not participate in this “first resurrection” will only experience the second resurrection at the end (Rev. 20:5)
3. The popular dispensational view: multiple occasions of resurrections
   a. At the secret parousia: deceased Christians
   b. At the public appearance: deceased Old Testament saints
   c. At the end of the Millennium: anyone still remaining in the grave
   d. Some variation regarding other categories:
      1) Deceased Jews of the Christian age
      2) The lost of the Old Testament age
      3) The lost of the New Testament age

The Resurrection Body

1. A two-stage event
   a. Resuscitation of a dead body
      1) Vital operations of the body resumed
      2) Body and soul reunited
   b. Transformation into a spiritual body (1 Cor. 15:51-53)
      1) The physical body of the saints is changed into a condition suitable for heaven
      2) The physical body of the lost is changed into a condition suitable for hell
   c. Anyone alive at the Second Coming will skip resuscitation and proceed to transformation

2. Characteristics of the resurrection body of the saints
   a. Imperishable (1 Cor. 15:42)
      1) Incapable of wearing down or dying
      2) “Immortal” for the future, not to be confused with the eternality of God (1 Tim. 6:16)
      3) In contrast to the “corruption” and decay of the Curse (Rom. 8:20-23)
   b. Glorious (1 Cor. 15:43)
      1) Expect an attractive, beautiful form
      2) No indication whether or not it will have a resemblance to our physical body
   c. Powerful (1 Cor. 15:43)
      1) Not weakened by the effects of the Curse
         a) No sickness or disease
         b) No physical or mental disabilities
      2) Only as powerful as God designs and equips
         a) Not omnipotent like the Almighty God
         b) Perhaps with supernatural powers similar to the angels
   d. Spiritual (1 Cor. 15:44)
      1) Made of a different substance than our material bodies
      2) Perhaps similar to the spiritual substance of the soul
      3) Thus we will remain a dual-nature creature and not a free-floating spirit

3. Characteristics of the resurrection body of the lost
   a. Contemptible and miserable
   b. Sensitive to pain and suffering
   c. In a constant state of corruption (2 Thess. 1:9)
Our Christian Hope

1. The Christian hope: the resurrection of the dead
   a. Faith: focused on the death and resurrection of Christ
   b. Love: focused on God and others
   c. Hope: focused on the resurrection of the dead

2. The pattern for our resurrection: the resurrection of Christ
   a. The “firstfruits” (1 Cor. 15:20-23)
   b. The “firstborn” from the grave (Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5)
   c. Jesus set the pattern for both resuscitation and transformation
      1) We share with him in the body being restored to life (2 Cor. 4:14)
      2) We share with him in being transformed into a glorious state (Phil. 3:20-21)
   d. This completes the Christian goal “to be like Jesus”
      1) In this life: to imitate his moral nature and faithful service
      2) After death: to imitate his resurrection and glorification

3. The resurrection of the dead is a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith
   a. Beware of two erroneous ideas popular today:
      1) The anti-supernatural bias of modern philosophy and theology
         a) Denies the possibility of a bodily resurrection (for Jesus and us)
         b) Thus having no hope for life after death
      2) The dualism of eastern philosophy and New Age
         a) Matter is evil or illusion (*maya*)
         b) The only true reality is that beyond the material realm
         c) Thus no bodily resurrection
   b. A denial of the bodily resurrection does serious harm to the historical Christian faith
      1) It nullifies our faith in the atonement of Christ on the cross (1 Cor. 15:12-19)
      2) It nullifies our hope for a future life in heaven (2 Tim. 2:17-18)
   c. The resurrection of the dead is a fundamental doctrine (Heb. 6:1-2)
THE GATHERING OF THE LIVING

The Gathering of the Saints

1. **Christ will personally gather the saints when he returns**
   a. The deceased saints will be resurrected (1 Thess. 4:13-16)
   b. The living saints will be snatched up from earth (1 Thess. 4:17)
   c. All the saints will meet Christ in the air

2. **The popular dispensational concept of “rapture”**
   a. Christians taken to heaven at Christ’s “secret parousia”
   b. The lost left behind on earth for years of Great Tribulation
   c. A concept not expressed in 1 Thess. 4:13-17
      1) No mention of a “secret parousia”
         a) The sounds of a shout from heaven and a trumpet blast
         b) The sight of the dead rising from the ground and the saints rising up into the sky
         c) All phenomenon a “strictly literal interpretation” should have noted
      2) No mention of the lost
      3) No mention of people being left behind for several years
         a) Deceased saints leave “first” ahead of the living saints
         b) But no mention of the order in relation to the lost

3. **The English word “rapture”**
   a. The Latin *raptus* (“caught up”) in 1 Thess. 4:17
   b. Difficult to use today without the dispensational connotation

The Final Harvest

1. **A single gathering of saints and lost**
   a. Jesus’ parables typically described the second coming as a “harvesting” of both the good and the bad
   b. The Parable of the Tares pictures both weeds and wheat being gathered at the same time (Matt. 13:24-30)
      1) The weeds are removed “first” (Matt. 13:30, 40-41)
      2) Then the wheat is gathered and stored
   c. The Parable of the Dragnet presents a similar idea (Matt. 13:47-50)

2. **A gathering of saved and lost before God’s judgment**
   a. Both the sheep and the goats gathered and assembled before God (Matt. 24:31; 25:31-33)
   b. No indication in the teaching of Jesus of a significant time period between the gathering of the saints and the gathering of the lost
1. **The lost will be “taken away” to their destruction**
   - Jesus compared the second coming to the analogy of Noah
     1) Sinners outside the ark were “taken away” by the flood to their destruction (Matt. 24:36-39)
     2) This context suggests that the ones “taken” from the field and the grinding mill were taken away to their destruction (Matt. 24:40-41)
   - The popular dispensational interpretation of the saints being “taken away” to heaven does not fit the context

2. **The saints will be “left behind” to receive God’s blessings**
   - The lost are weeded from of the earth
   - The saints will still be standing after God sweeps away the wicked

3. **The victory of the saints**
   - The biblical imagery for the gathering of the saved and the lost is not intended to imply a significant difference in timing
     1) It is a single harvest (Matt. 13)
     2) It is a single gathering of all nations before God’s Judgment (Matt. 25:31-33)
   - The emphasis is upon removing from creation those who live outside the will of God (Rev. 11:18)
   - And upon the saints victoriously “inheriting the earth” (Matt. 5:5)
JUDGMENT DAY

A Universal Judgment

1. Everyone who has ever lived will stand before God’s judgment
   a. Everyone resurrected and raptured (Acts 10:42; 2 Tim. 4:1; 1 Pet. 4:5)
   b. Even the saints (Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10)

2. Judgment is the divinely appointed destiny for all mankind
   a. A fundamental doctrine (Heb. 6:1-2)
   b. A universal rule (Heb. 9:27)
   c. With no exclusions stated in Scripture (Christians or Jews)

A Singular Event

1. God’s judgment will occur immediately following Christ’s return
   a. Angels will assemble all people before the Judgment (Matt. 24:31; 25:31-33)
   b. No time reference has been given for the duration of the judgment proceedings
      1) An eternal God could judge one person at a time
      2) An omnipresent God could judge all individuals simultaneously
      3) The biblical phrase “day” of judgment (Acts 17:31) refers to an occasion, not necessarily to a 24-hour period
      4) It does not matter how long God will take to judge every person who has ever lived, because he will have plenty of time (an eternity)

2. The Bible consistently speaks of the final judgment as a single event
   a. The biblical language of Judgment is consistently in the singular
      1) A “day” of Judgment (Acts 17:31)
      2) A coming “Judgment” (Heb. 9:27)
   b. Contrasting categories of people are often linked to the same judgment experience
      1) The living and the dead (2 Tim. 4:1)
      2) The sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:31-33)
      3) The saints and the lost (as in Rom. 14:10-12)
3. There is no biblical basis for separate Judgments over a period of years
   a. Dispensationalism presents multiple occasions for Judgment
      1) The Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10)
         a) For the Church only
         b) At the secret rapture
      2) The Sheep and the Goat Judgment (Matt. 25:31-33)
         a) For Gentile nations as a group
         b) At the public appearance
         c) To determine who will remain alive for the millennium age
      3) The Great White Throne (Rev. 20:11)
         a) For all who have not yet been judged (and are subject to Judgment)
         b) At the end of the millennium
   b. There is nothing clearly stated in any of the Judgment texts to indicate that a particular Judgment passage is distinct from other passages

An Accounting for Deeds

1. We are saved by faith, but judged by works
   a. The Bible clearly emphasizes salvation by faith (and God’s grace)
   b. And clearly rejects any type of works-salvation
   c. But the Bible also clearly emphasizes a judgment focused upon our works

2. Our deeds will be revealed and examined at the Judgment
   a. Judged “according to our deeds” (Matt. 16:27; 1 Peter 1:17; Rev. 20:12-13)
   b. Judged by how we treated others (Matt. 25:31-46)
   c. Judged by every word we have spoken (Matt. 12:36-37)
   d. Judged by every deed good and bad (Eccl. 12:13-14; Rom. 2:5-10; 2 Cor. 5:10)

3. A Judgment of deeds will ultimately reveal faith
   a. As Christ examines our deeds he will be “searching our minds and hearts” (Rev. 2:23)
   b. The purpose of examining deeds is to lay out objective data that will reveal the inner motives of the heart (1 Cor. 4:3-5)
      1) Genuine faith will try to do whatever God requires (John 14:15, 23-24; Eph. 2:8-10; 1 Thess. 1:3; Jas. 2:14-26)
      2) Genuine repentance will deal honestly with sin (1 Kgs. 8:47-48; Matt. 3:8)
   c. Deeds will objectively establish a life-style pattern
      1) Not judged by a single event from our past (good or bad)
      2) Not judged by the final act we do (good or bad)
No. 6

Rewards and Punishment

A Vindication of God

1. Our judgment will be known prior to the beginning of the proceedings
   a. You will already know your fate
      1) By your location in hades (Luke 16:22-23)
      2) By whether or not you meet Jesus in the air (1 Thess. 4:16-17)
      3) By your place before the judgment seat (Matt. 25:31-33)
   b. God has always known your fate by his foreknowledge
   c. The Lamb’s Book of Life was already written before creation (Rev. 13:8; 17:8; 20:11-15)
   d. Judgment day is not a day of decision, but a day of explanation
      1) The “sheep” are told what they did (Matt. 25:34-40)
      2) The “goats” are told what they did (Matt. 25:41-45)

2. God will explain why people are condemned to hell
   a. The pattern for the judgment against the lost (Matt. 25:41-43)
      1) Formal declaration: depart from me
      2) Explanation: because of what you did not do for me
   b. The objective data of deeds will demonstrate
      1) Sinful defiance against God
      2) Motives of self-interest
      3) Lack of submission to God’s will (lack of faith)
   c. Judgment day provides an opportunity to publicly vindicate God’s condemnation
      1) To establish God’s impartiality (Col. 3:25; 1 Pet. 1:17)
      2) To show that there are no excuses (Rom. 1:18-21)
      3) To confirm that God was true and just (Rev. 19:1-2)
A Display of Mercy

1. **God will explain why the saints are admitted into heaven**
   a. The pattern for the judgment of the saints (Matt. 25:34-36)
      1) Formal declaration: enter into the Kingdom
      2) Explanation: because of what you did for me
   b. Though we might be content to enter without explanation, God has determined that we need to hear the explanation

2. **God will demonstrate that we have been saved by grace and not by merit**
   a. A judgment of deeds will reveal a life forgiven by grace
      1) For unbelievers: a life not committed to God’s will
      2) For half-hearted Christians: a life not truly changed and committed
      3) For genuine Christians: a life not perfect, but committed and growing
   b. The deeds of the saints will demonstrate:
      1) We were once sinners:
         a) Whose primary motive was self-interest
         b) And who deserved to be condemned
      2) But at some point in our lives we changed our attitude
         a) We made a faith-commitment to the will of God
         b) We developed a repentant attitude toward sin
         c) We were publicly immersed into Christ
         d) We began trying to live for God rather than self
      3) Resulting in an objective pattern of spiritual growth and Christian service
   c. God will be at liberty to discuss as much of our life as he wishes
      1) The extent of his judging is not yet known
         a) Not likely a listing of good deeds and no reference to sin: an inaccurate picture
         b) Perhaps a mention of sin in general terms: accurate and gracious
         c) Perhaps listing of all (or representative) deeds good and bad: fully accurate
      2) The removal of the guilt of our sins does not mean that God cannot discuss our sins
         a) Guilt has been “forgotten,” but an omniscient God has not literally forgotten our actions
         b) Guilt has been “buried in the sea” (Micah 7:19), but sins themselves can not actually be buried
   d. Any mention of sins at the judgment will not be used to hurt the saints
      1) God will not deny his own terms for justification
      2) Our advocate will not allow any accusation of sin to count against us (Rom. 8:31-34)
      3) If God calls for an accounting for any sin
         a) Our accounting will be a humble acknowledgement with no excuses
         b) Our advocate’s response will be a reminder of our justification
   e. The end result of any accounting for sinful deeds by the saints would be the exalting of God’s mercy (Jude 20-21, 24)
      1) The worst you could experience: humility (shame)
      2) The effect you should experience: gratitude for God’s mercy
   f. Not yet known: Will others observe our judgment?
Degrees of Punishment

1. The suffering of hell may be proportionate to the individual sins committed
   a. Biblical language suggests the possibility of degrees in punishment
      1) A “more tolerable” judgment for some (Matt. 10:14-15; 11:22-24)
      2) A “greater condemnation” for some (Luke 20:47)
      3) A “greater flogging” for some (Luke 12:47-48)
   b. Degrees of punishment in hell would be consistent with what is done with temporal judgments
      1) Human systems of judgment have different levels of crime and punishment
      2) God’s Old Testament Law had different levels of crime and punishment
      3) God’s plagues upon the earth have ranged from lesser to greater sufferings
   c. Degrees in punishment does not necessarily imply any degrees in rewards for saints saved by grace

2. Whatever system of punishment God uses will ultimately be fair and just
   a. Judgment by works will vindicate God’s punishment of the lost
   b. And would likewise reveal why the different levels of punishment are given

The Rewards of Heaven

1. There may be some kind of distinctions in what the saints receive in heaven
   a. Biblical language does speak of “rewards” according to our deeds (1 Cor. 3:12-15; Rev. 11:18; 22:12)
   b. The universal principle of “reap what you sow” suggests some type of varied application to the judgment of Christians (2 Cor. 9:6; Gal. 6:7)
   c. However, it is not likely that people saved by grace will receive different degrees of blessings (Matt. 20:1-16)

2. Any distinctions among the saints will likely be in service assignments
   a. Jesus’ Kingdom parables sometimes suggest service distinctions for the eternal age (Luke 19:11-26)
   b. Distinctions in service assignments would be consistent with our experiences
      1) Consistent with the diversity of God’s gifts and calling in this life
      2) Consistent with our own sense of fairness with honors and promotions
   c. Degrees in service would not be in conflict with grace foundation for our salvation
      1) Blessings would remain uniform for all the saints
      2) Salvation would still be based upon God’s mercy and not our merit or works

3. Whatever system of service assignments God uses will ultimately be nothing less than fair
   a. Judgment by works will exalt God’s mercy for the saints
   b. And would likewise reveal why the different levels of service are given
No. 7

AMILLENNIALISM

Basic Idea

1. **The millennium is the Church Age**
   a. The millennium of Rev. 20 began with the death and resurrection of Christ

   OT Age | Church Age | Heaven
   --- | --- | ---
   Millennium |Hell

   First Coming | Second Coming

   b. Rev. 20 is a dramatic portrayal of the Great commission
   c. The millennium is not a future event, but a present reality
      1) The prefix *a* should not be read to mean no millennium, but rather, no future millennium
      2) The name is intended to reject premillennialism

2. **Bible prophecy is generally best interpreted figuratively**

3. **Key proponent: Augustine**
The Binding of Satan

1. The Great commission
   a. The millennium begins with the resurrected Christ’s instructions to evangelize the world (Matt. 28:18-19)
   b. The millennium vision serves as a divine promise that the church will not be hindered from carrying out its Great commission

2. Evangelizing the nations
   a. The “binding of Satan” is focused upon the restriction that he can no longer “deceive the nations” (Rev. 20:3, 8)
      1) The knowledge of God was limited to one nation throughout the Old Testament age
      2) The Great commission now instructs us to take the gospel to the nations
      3) Satan will not be permitted to stop the evangelistic efforts of the church
      4) No other limitations to the work of Satan are implied in this vision
   b. Rev. 20 is a symbolic reminder that the preaching of the gospel diminishes the kingdom of Satan with each conversion
      1) Converts move from the kingdom of Satan to the Kingdom of God (Acts 26:16-18; Heb. 2:14-15)
      2) As if Satan had been bound and plundered (Matt. 12:28-29)
   c. Rev. 20 completes the Great commission theme of the book of Revelation
      1) The First Seal and the church’s mission of conquest (Rev. 6:1-2)
      2) The great multitude in heaven from every nation, tribe, people, and language (Rev. 7:9)
      3) The bitter-sweet book and the mission to prophesy to the nations (Rev. 10:8-11)
      4) The eternal gospel for every nation, tribe, language, and people (Rev. 14:6-7)
Millennium Blessings

1. A spiritual resurrection
   a. Rev. 20 portrays two different types of resurrection
      1) The “second resurrection” is the bodily resurrection of all the dead at the end
      2) The “first resurrection” is only experienced by the saints
   b. The traditional amillennial view
      1) The souls of deceased saints will be “resurrected” and taken to heaven
      2) Weakness: the Bible never refers to this movement as a resurrection
   c. A better view
      1) The “first resurrection” is the spiritual regeneration that occurs at conversion
      2) Often associated with Christian baptism (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12-13)
      3) Consistent with the contrast of spiritual resurrection and bodily resurrection in John 5:24-29

2. Reigning with Christ
   a. Rev. 20 portrays a “reign with Christ” for Christian saints (Rev. 20:4)
      1) Those who give a public testimony to Christ
      2) And are willing to die for him
   b. The traditional amillennial view
      1) The souls of deceased saints are treated royally in the intermediate state
      2) Weakness: no Biblical reference to a royal treatment after death
   c. A better view
      1) The Church exercises a delegated authority on earth in behalf of Christ
         a) The authority of “the keys of the kingdom” (Matt 16:19)
         b) To put a sinning brother outside the fellowship (Matt. 18:15-20)
         c) To lay down the terms of admission into the kingdom of God (2 Cor. 5:20)
      2) Consistent with Paul’s view of Christians as already having been resurrected and seated on heavenly thrones (Eph. 2:1-6)

3. Spiritual priests
   a. Rev. 20 portrays a priestly service for the saints
   b. The traditional amillennial view
      1) The souls of deceased saints provide some kind of priestly service during the intermediate state
      2) Weakness: no Biblical reference to a priestly service after death
   c. A better view
      1) The Church presently exercises a spiritual priesthood on earth (1 Pet. 2:5, 9) offering spiritual sacrifices to God (Rom. 12:1; Heb. 13:15-16)
      2) Consistent with the statements in the book of Revelation that the church is a “kingdom and priests” of Christ (Rev. 1:6; 5:9-10)
The Second Coming

1. The end of the millennium
   a. The “1,000 years” is a symbol for a long, indefinite period of time
   b. The “loosing of Satan” at the end of the millennium represents the final assault of Satanic deception against the teaching of the Church
   c. The “battle of Gog and Magog” is a symbol of the spiritual battle between Satan’s deception and Christian truth

2. The final day
   a. Christ will make only one return to earth
   b. Visible and majestic
   c. Gathering all the dead and the living for judgment
No. 8

Postmillennialism

Basic Idea

1. The second coming of Christ will come after the millennium
   a. The millennium of Rev. 20 will begin sometime during the Church Age
      
      OT Age | Church Age | Millennium | Heaven
      
      First Coming | Second Coming

   b. World conditions will be improved by the majority influence of Christianity

2. Bible prophecy is generally best interpreted figuratively

3. Key proponents
   a. Alexander Campbell
   b. Dominion Theology

The Millennium

1. The beginning of the millennium
   a. The millennium will begin when Christianity becomes the majority influence on earth
      1) Older view: Aggressive evangelism will result in Christianity becoming the major religion of the world
      2) Recent view: Biblical principles will become a major influence on the world
   b. Postmillennial optimism is based upon Jesus’ promise that the church would eventually be victorious over the world (Matt. 16:18; Matt. 28:20)
   c. All other eschatological views are criticized for being pessimistic about the world, the church’s mission, and the power of God
   d. Critique: neither history nor current events has yet supported the idea that Christianity will become the prevailing influence on earth
2. **The nature of the millennium**
   a. The Kingdom of God is a spiritual reality that refers to the rule of Christ within the hearts of his people
   b. The messianic blessings prophesied in the Old Testament are generally fulfilled in a spiritual or figurative sense
   c. The difference between the Church Age and the millennium is more a difference in degree rather than a radical restructuring of life on this planet

3. **The blessings of the millennium**
   a. A higher ethical system
      1) Biblical principles will heavily influence all legal systems in the world
         a) People will not be required to become Christian
         b) But they will be expected to live by a Christian moral standard
      2) The application of Biblical principles will result in improvements in every aspect of society
   b. Peace among nations
      1) Since all nations will be operating with the same moral basis, no country will have the legal justification for initiating an aggressive war against another country
      2) Differences will be resolved through mediation rather than military conflict
   c. Increased health and prosperity
      1) The spread of the Christian world-view will result in changes in lifestyle that will benefit health
         a) Greater concern for healthy eating and drinking habits
         b) Greater concern for avoiding harmful drug substances (alcoholic beverages, tobacco, hallucinogenic drugs)
         c) Greater concern for exercise and proper rest
         d) Less participation in immoral sexual activity
      2) The Christian world-view will also minimize social ills such as illiteracy and poverty
         a) Promoting more education
         b) A more aggressive work ethic
         c) Greater creativity in scientific and cultural pursuits
      3) The Christian world-view will foster a spirit of compassion that will result in serious efforts to alleviate poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment
The Second Coming

1. The end of the millennium
   a. The “1,000 years” is a symbol for a long, indefinite period of time
   b. The “loosing of Satan” at the end of the millennium refers to a shift from a Christian majority to a non-Christian majority
      1) Satan will slowly regain the majority control he has traditionally held throughout history
      2) The “battle of Gog and Magog” is a symbol of the spiritual battle between Satan’s deception and Christian truth

2. The final day
   a. Christ will make only one return to earth
   b. Visible and majestic
   c. Gathering all the dead and the living for judgment
   d. Note the similarities with Amillennialism in the ending of the millennium
      1) The significant differences
         a) The nature of the millennium blessings
         b) The realistic future of the Church’s mission and influence
      2) Lewis Foster created an “End-millennium” view
No. 9

Dispensational Premillennialism

Basic Idea

1. The second coming of Christ will come before the millennium
   a. The “millennium” of Rev. 20 will begin after Christ’s visible return to earth

   - OT Age  |  Church Age  |  Great Trib  |  Millennium  |  Heaven

   - First Coming  |  Second Coming

   b. The millennium is intended by God as an opportunity to fulfill his Old Testament prophecies of blessings for Israel
   c. The second coming will be preceded by seven years of Great Tribulation
      1) Troubles from the Antichrist and plagues from God
      2) The church will be raptured away from most (if not all) of the Tribulation

2. Seven dispensations of earth history
   a. God has divided history into seven ages with distinct characteristics
      1) Distinct covenants, tests of obedience, terms for salvation
      2) Distinct worship and rituals, sacraments
   b. Dispensationalists agree on the seven-fold division, though not always on the places to mark the divisions in biblical history
      1) All begin with the original age of innocence and then the age of the Fall
      2) All end with the Church Age and the millennium
   c. Weakness: no indication in Scripture of this elaborate scheme

3. Bible prophecy should always be interpreted literally if possible
   In sharp contrast to the hermeneutics of amillennialism and postmillennialism
Historic Premillennialism

1. **The original version of premillennialism**
   a. Taught among the early Church Fathers
      1) Justin Martyr
      2) Irenaeus
   b. Typically presented as a simple scheme
      1) A millennium for all saints, Jewish and Christian
      2) Preceded by a general (indefinite) period of tribulation
      3) Minimal emphasis on Antichrist and divine plagues

2. **Modern proponents**
   a. George Eldon Ladd
   b. Millard Erickson
   c. Douglas Moo

Modern Premillennialism

1. **Dispensational premillennialism is a modern version of premillennialism**
   a. Originating in the early 19th century among the Plymouth Brethren
      1) John Nelson Darby (1800-1882)
      2) C. I. Scofield (1843-1921) and *The Scofield Bible*
   b. Drawing together a variety of speculative ideas into an elaborate end-time scheme
   c. Dispensationalism has become the dominant (popular) eschatology today
      1) Affecting doctrines outside eschatology (notably in soteriology and ecclesiology)
      2) Sometimes viewed as a test of real commitment to biblical truth

2. **Key names in dispensational premillennialism**
   a. Dispensational writers
      1) J. Dwight Pentecost (*Things to Come*)
      2) Charles Ryrie (*Dispensationalism Today*)
      3) John Walvoord
      4) Hal Lindsey (*The Late Great Planet Earth*)
      5) Tim LaHaye (*Left Behind* series)
      6) David Reagan
   b. Dispensational Bible colleges and seminaries
      1) Moody Bible Institute
      2) Dallas Theological Seminary
      3) Trinity Theological Seminary
      4) Grace Theological Seminary
   c. Dispensational television evangelists
      1) Pat Robertson
      2) Jerry Falwell
      3) Jack Van Impe
d. Dispensational denominations
   1) Several of the Churches of God
   2) The Christian & Missionary Alliance
   3) Several Pentecostal churches

e. One of the “Five Fundamentals” of early 20th cent. Fundamentalism

3. Progressive dispensationalism
   a. A moderated version of dispensationalism began to appear in the 1980s
      1) Influenced by the writings of George Eldon Ladd
      2) Reacting to criticisms from amillennialism
      3) Desiring to move away from the “excesses” of traditional dispensationalism
   b. Key proponents
      1) Robert Saucy
      2) Darrell Bock
      3) Craig Blaising

The Second Coming

1. Multiple returns by Christ
   a. A secret *parousia* and the rapture of the church
      1) Usually either pre-tribulation (Rev. 4) or mid-tribulation (Rev. 11)
      2) Post-tribulation is a minority view
      3) Followed by a few years for further opportunities for evangelism and conversion
   b. A public *epiphaneia* appearance as the official second coming
   c. A brief departure from earth during the millennium, and another return at the end

2. The Great Tribulation
   a. The final seven years preceding the second coming of Christ
      1) Derived from the “seventieth week” of Dan. 9:26-27
      2) Assumed to be the time structure for Rev. 4-19
   b. Great troubles for the earth and especially for the Jewish people
      1) A period of increased wickedness and immorality
      2) Divine plagues from heaven in response to the growing evil
      3) A political Antichrist who will unite nations against Israel
   c. An ultimate world-conflict at Armageddon
      1) A cataclysmic nuclear world war
         a) A conflict involving Arabs vs. Israel, Russia, China, and a western alliance led by the Antichrist
         b) Requiring 7 months to bury the dead and 7 years to rebuild cities (Ezek. 39:9-12)
      2) A divine intervention by means of the second coming of Christ
      3) The mass conversions of the Jews as they witness the arrival of Christ (Zech. 12:10; Rom. 11:25-27)
3. **Signs of the End**
   a. The actual time of the rapture could be “any moment”
   b. But the season of the rapture is evident through the fulfillment of “signs of the end”
   c. Each generation of dispensationalists tends to believe that they are witnessing the final signs of the end

**A Jewish Millennium**

1. **Israel is the key to Bible prophecy**
   a. God’s purpose for the first coming was for Jesus to set up a kingdom on earth for the Jews
      1) The Kingdom of God was not established because the Jews mistakenly rejected Jesus as their promised Messiah
      2) Israel experienced a temporary “hardening” (Rom. 11) and was placed under a divine discipline until the second coming
      3) The Kingdom of God will eventually be established by Jesus at the second coming, and enjoyed by the Jews throughout the millennium age
   b. Israel and the church are two distinct people of God
      1) The Jews are the “chosen people” and God’s primary plan
      2) The church is a secondary plan (“parenthesis”) during the period when Israel is rejecting Jesus as Christ
      3) The millennium promises are only for the Jews, and not intended for the church
      4) There will be an eternal distinction between Israel and the church in heaven

2. **The millennium**
   a. A millennium age focused upon the Jewish people
      1) Jesus Christ to sit upon a throne in Jerusalem
      2) The Jewish people to reign over the (friendly) Gentile nations
   b. God’s purpose for the millennium age is to deliver on the unfulfilled Old Testament prophecies of messianic blessings
      1) Restoration of the Jews to their promised land
      2) Rebuilding of the temple and reinstitution of the Jewish sacrificial system
      3) Establishing the Jews as a Kingdom of God and an authority over all the earth
      4) Providing the exceptional blessings described in Old Testament prophecies
   c. A literal 1,000 years
Preterism

The First Coming of Christ

1. The preterist interpretive principle
   a. Most Bible prophecies are fulfilled within biblical history
      1) Near the prophet’s time
      2) During the period between the Old Testament prophets and the first coming of Christ
      3) In the first coming of Christ and the apostolic age
   b. From the Latin praeter (completed in the past)

2. Preterist eschatology
   a. The basic idea
      1) Uses the preterist principle to focus Bible prophecies within biblical history
      2) Emphasizes a termination point with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD
   b. A fundamental idea
      1) The Roman assault of 70 AD was divine retribution for the Jewish rejection of Jesus as the Messiah
      2) Prophesied in the Old Testament and in the words of Jesus
   c. Some distinctive positions
      1) Biblical references to the “last days” are focused upon the end of the old covenant age
         a) Culminating in the death and resurrection of Christ
         b) And the 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem
      2) The book of Daniel is focused upon the end of the Old Testament age and the 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem
      3) Jesus’ Olivet discourse is focused (exclusively) upon 70 AD
      4) The book of Revelation was written in the 60s (under Nero) and prefigures the 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem
         a) The “Nero revividus” legend (Rev. 13)
         b) The “42 months”, “1260 days”, and “time, times, and half a time” (Rev. 11-12)
            1- The period of persecution by Nero
            2- The period of the Jewish wars with Rome, culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem
   d. Key proponents
      1) C. D. Beale (“Covenant Eschatology”)
      2) Max King (“Transmillennialism”)
      3) R. C. Sproul
      4) Ed Stevens (International Preterist Association)
e. **Weakness**
   1) Sometimes forces a preterist interpretation upon a text with language and imagery that naturally points toward the second coming
      a) For example, attempts to read the Matt. 24 portion of the Olivet discourse as exclusively 70 AD
      b) Not a natural reading of Matt. 24:29-31, 36-41
      c) Misses the context of judgment and readiness (Matt. 24:42-25:46)
   2) Misreads the dating and “judgment” imagery of the book of Revelation
      a) The early church traditional dating is consistently the Domitian persecution (90s)
      b) The judgment imagery at the end of each vision is best interpreted as the ultimate day of judgment against the opponents of God’s church
      c) Especially the second coming imagery of Rev. 19 and the heaven imagery of Rev. 21-22

  **Hyper-preterism**

  1. **The basic idea**
     a. The 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem was the “second coming of Christ”
        1) The prophesied “visitation” with wrath
        2) The only future “coming” envisioned by Jesus
     b. There are no Bible prophecies of a visible return of Christ to the earth or of an end of the world
     c. No eschatological (“end-time”) judgment day for all mankind
     d. Key proponent: John Noe

  2. **Weakness**
     a. Not a natural reading of the various “second coming” texts (and imagery)
        1) Notably the references to a “day” in which all are raised from the grave
        2) The references to a “day” of universal judgment (and the separation of the nations before God)
        3) The references to “every eye” seeing Jesus return to earth
     b. Runs counter to 20 centuries of Christian expectation of a personal return of Christ
     c. Often rejected as a type of “heresy” because it denies a single resurrection day
No. 11

Interpreting Bible Prophecy

Figures and Symbols

1. Two competing principles for interpreting Bible prophecy:
   a. Expect the language of Bible prophecy to be literal just like the rest of Scripture
   b. Expect the language of Bible prophecy to be figurative because it is a different type of literature than the rest of Scripture

2. Dispensationalists hold to a strict literal interpretation rule
   a. The literal interpretation rule
      1) Always assume a literal interpretation is intended
      2) Unless the context clearly indicates otherwise
         “These men used what may be called the golden rule of interpretation which the Biblical record of fulfilled prophecy indicates is correct. When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise.” (Hal Lindsey, The Late Great Planet Earth, p. 50)
   b. Arguments for the literal rule
      1) First coming prophecy texts were fulfilled literally
      2) It would be inconsistent not to interpret prophecy texts by the same rule used for the rest of Scripture
      3) A figurative approach would result in a multiplicity of guesses, with no clear and certain meaning from prophetic texts
   c. Literal vs. figurative interpretation for Bible prophecy: a fundamental issue within Eschatology

3. The best interpretive principle for Bible prophecy: Figurative
   a. Literal language is the rule in sections presenting factual data
      1) Narrative accounts, historical records
      2) Didactic instructions
   b. Figurative language is a common device in sections dealing with spiritual concepts
      1) Spiritual truths
      2) Poetry, song, and praise
      3) Visions of supernatural realms
      4) Prophecies of the future
   c. No single rule of interpretation fits the whole of the Bible
      1) Every type of Biblical literature should be interpreted according to its intended design
      2) Rather than applying an artificial standard to the variety of Biblical texts
   d. The best rule for interpreting Bible prophecy: Expect it to be written in figurative language
Old Testament Imagery

1. Some Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled literally
   a. The 70 years in Babylonian captivity (Jer. 25:11; 29:10)
   b. The release of Jewish captives by a man named Cyrus (Isa. 44:28-45:1)
   c. The fall of various sinful nations
      1) Egypt (Jer. 44)
      2) Philistia (Jer. 47)
      3) Moab (Jer. 48)
      4) Ammon (Jer. 49)
      5) Edom (Jer. 49)
      6) Babylon (Jer. 50)

2. Many Old Testament prophecies are obviously figurative
   a. Kingdoms and nations are often portrayed by imagery
      1) Trees in a forest (Judg. 9)
      2) Pieces of a giant statue (Dan. 2)
      3) Animals such as goats and rams (Dan. 8)
      4) Strange beasts (Dan. 7)
   b. John the Baptist is portrayed as a royal herald preparing an entrance for his king (Isa. 40:3-5)
   c. The Messiah is often portrayed by imagery
      1) King David on a throne (Ezek. 37:24-25)
      2) A branch from the stem of Jesse (Isa. 11:1)
      3) A stone with seven eyes (Zech. 3:8-9)
      4) A lamb led to slaughter (Isa. 53:7)

3. The first messianic prophecy set the pattern for figurative language
   a. Crushing the head of a serpent
   b. While being bitten on the heel (Gen. 3:15)
New Testament Fulfillment

1. Some Old Testament messianic prophecies were fulfilled literally
   a. The virgin birth (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:20-23)
   b. The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:4-6)
   c. The triumphal entry into Jerusalem on a donkey (Zech. 9:9; Matt. 21:2-5)
   d. The piercing of Jesus on the cross and his garments divided among the soldiers

2. Many Old Testament messianic prophecies were fulfilled figuratively
   a. The coming of Elijah (Mal. 4:5-6) was figurative of John the Baptist (Matt. 11:14)
   b. The stone rejected by the builders (Psa. 118:22) as a stumblingblock (Isa. 28:16) was
      figurative of Jesus’ rejection by the Jewish leaders (Acts 4:10-11; 1 Pet. 2:4-6)
   c. The rebuilding of David’s tabernacle (Amos 9:11-12) as figurative of the establishment
      of the Church and the inclusion of the Gentiles (Acts 15:13-18)

Bible Prophets and Signs

1. Old Testament prophets typically worked with cryptic figures and images
   a. Receiving their revelations through the medium of dreams and visions (Numb. 12:6-8)
   b. In the form of dark sayings (Numb. 12:6-8) and parables (Hos. 12:10)

2. The book of Revelation identifies itself as figurative
   a. Received through the medium of visions (Rev. 1:10)
   b. Written in an apocalyptic style (Rev. 1:1)
      1) “The apokalypsis of Jesus Christ”
         a) Apocalyptic: a style of ancient Jewish literature that presents a series of visions
         b) Filled with figures and symbols
         c) Describing troubles for God’s people and the promise of divine deliverance
   2) “. . . which Jesus signified to him” (King James)
      a) Greek semaino: to convey an idea by using signs
      b) As when he spoke of being “lifted up” (John 12:32-33)
      c) Or of Peter being dressed and led by others (John 21:18-19)
Jesus and Figures of Speech

1. Jesus typically described his messianic mission in figurative language
   a. He preferred to preach and teach in parable stories (Matt. 13:10-13, 34-35)
   b. He acknowledged his frequent use of figurative language (John 16:25)

2. A literal interpretation often misunderstood Jesus’ intended meaning
   a. Raising the temple
      1) “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19)
      2) Literal: it took 46 years to build this temple
   b. Be born again
      1) “You must be born again” (John 3:3-5)
      2) Literal: how can a man enter his mother’s womb again?
   c. Living water
      1) “Ask me for Living Water” (John 4:10)
      2) Literal: you have no bucket; give me some so I will not have to return to this well (John 4:11-15)
   d. Spiritual food
      1) “I have food to eat” (John 4:31-32)
      2) Literal: who brought him food (John 4:33-34)
   e. Manna from Heaven
      1) “Living bread from Heaven” (John 6:51)
      2) “Eat my flesh, drink my blood” (John 6:53)
      3) Literal: how can he ask us to eat flesh (John 6:52)
   f. Lazarus’ death
      1) “Lazarus is asleep” (John 11:11)
      2) Literal: he will wake up on his own (John 11:12-14)
Bible Prophecies and Biblical History

1. A general rule: most Bible prophecies have their fulfillment within biblical history
   a. The pattern with Old Testament prophecies
      1) Their beginning point: the days of the prophet and his audience
      2) Their fulfillment: within the period from their day to the coming of the Messiah
         a) The destruction of the northern kingdom Israel by Assyria
         b) The destruction of the southern kingdom Judah by Babylon
         c) The Babylonian exile and the post-exilic restoration
         d) The intertestamental period
         e) The first coming of Christ
         f) The great commission and the founding of the church
         g) The destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70
   b. The pattern with New Testament prophecies
      1) Their beginning point: the days of the prophet (Jesus, Apostles) and his audience
      2) Their fulfillment: within the period from the death and resurrection of Christ through¬
        out the 1st cent. (the “apostolic age”)
   c. This rule of fulfillment within biblical history works well with both figurative prophecies
      and literal prophecies

2. Double-fulfillment prophecies
   a. Dispensationalists often respond to the figurative rule and the biblical history rule by
      proposing a double-fulfillment
      1) A fulfillment in biblical times (figurative or literal)
      2) Plus a literal end-time fulfillment (second coming)
   b. Argument: Bible prophecy is often “pre-filled” in symbolic type before it is literally
      fulfilled
      1) Example: prophecies of an evil ruler (an “abomination of desolation”) within biblical
         history will always have an ultimate fulfillment in a future end-time Antichrist
      2) Example: prophecies of a rebuilt temple and sacrificial system within biblical history
         will also have an ultimate fulfillment in the millennium
   c. The idea of a double-fulfillment prophecy is legitimate
      1) Some “doubles” are reasonable
         a) A historical fulfillment related to the prophet and his audience
         b) A messianic typology fulfillment
         c) A spiritual fulfillment related to the church and salvation
         d) An anagogical fulfillment in heaven
      2) But any double to be fulfilled in a future historical period (the Great Tribulation,
         the millennium) is pure speculation
   d. A good operating rule: work with the fulfillment you can clearly establish
      1) All proposed fulfillments that are yet future are speculative
      2) Only time will tell if any of the proposed interpretations will actually be true
      3) In the meantime, the only reliable interpretations of Bible prophecy will be those we
         can show within history
The Mystery of Christ’s Return

A Singular Event

1. The Bible consistently speaks of the return of Christ as a single event
   a. The “day” of the Lord is always in the singular (1 Cor. 1:8; 1 Thess. 5:2, 4; 2 Thess. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:10-12)
   b. The “coming” of the Lord is always in the singular
   c. The singular language is contrary to the popular dispensational view of multiple returns
      1) A secret arrival for the rapture of the church
      2) A public appearance to set up the millennium
      3) Plus a third return if you also count his return at the end of the millennium

2. The Bible does not distinguish a secret arrival to precede a public appearance
   a. Dispensationalists uses Greek word studies to argue for two different arrivals
      1) The Parousia
         a) Meaning: the arrival of someone onto a scene
         b) English translation: coming
         c) Dispensationalists say this is the term for the secret arrival for the rapture
         d) Coming for the (church) saints
      2) The Epiphaneia
         a) Meaning: the arrival of a royal dignitary
         b) English translation: appearing
         c) Dispensationalists say this is the term for the public appearance that “every eye will see”
         d) Coming with the (church) saints
      3) Apokalypsis
         a) Meaning: the revealing of something previously hidden or unseen
         b) English translation: revelation
         c) Dispensationalists say this is a second term referring to the public appearance
   b. The proposed distinction between these terms is not supported by the contexts in which the terms are used
      1) Parousia is used in texts that do not sound like a secret arrival
         a) With a shout from heaven, a trumpet blast, the dead rising from the ground, the saints being drawn up into the sky (1 Thess. 4:15-17)
         b) With the slaying of the man of lawlessness (2 Thess. 2:8)
         c) With the destruction of the earth by fire (2 Pet. 3:12)
      2) Parousia is used for Christ coming for the saints (1 Thess. 4:15-17) and also with the saints (1 Thess. 3:13)
c. The 3 Greek terms each refer to the same singular event, but with a distinctive emphasis from each term
   1) *Parousia*: Jesus is coming
   2) *Epiphaneia*: Jesus is coming in a royal manner
   3) *Apokalypsis*: that which has hidden in Heaven will finally be revealed

**Always Imminent**

1. **The Bible warns us to anticipate Christ coming at any moment**
   a. A key theme: stay ready (Matt. 24:42, 44; 25:13; Rev. 16:15)
   b. This warning was given to the 1st century church (and every generation thereafter)

2. **He is coming “like a thief”**
   a. The imagery of Christ coming like a thief reinforces the theme of readiness (Matt. 24:43; 1 Thess. 5:2, 4; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 3:3; 16:15)
      1) With a thief
         a) The time of entry into a home is not announced in advance
         b) Thus a homeowner must daily take precautions against the possibility of a break-in by a thief that day
      2) Likewise with the second coming
         a) The time of arrival is not announced in advance
         b) Thus the believer should daily prepare for the possibility of Christ’s return that day
   b. Objection
      1) The thief imagery only refers to the ignorance of the wicked
      2) Response: the thief imagery is used when speaking to Christians (1 Thess. 5:2, 4; Rev. 3:3)

3. **Stay ready for Judgment**
   a. Godly living is often linked to our anticipation of the second coming
      1) We are exhorted to live each day in a manner suitable for judgment
      2) This suggests the idea that Christ could come at any moment
   b. This is the practical application of eschatology
      1) Pursue holiness and godliness now (2 Pet. 3:11-14)
      2) Set aside sinful habits now (Rom. 13:12-14; Tit. 2:11-13)
      3) Exhibit faith, hope, and love now (1 Thess. 5:6-8)
      4) Perform your Christian service now (Matt. 24:45-46)
      5) Remain faithful in all things now (1 Pet. 1:13)

4. **Do not assume that something is lacking for Christ to return today**
   a. Assuming that there are more “signs” yet to be fulfilled contradicts the New Testament emphasis upon staying ready today
   b. Expect Christ to return on an ordinary day like today (Matt. 24:37-39; 1 Thess. 5:3)
   c. Our eschatology should be “any moment”
Deliberately Delayed

1. Every generation of Christians has felt that the return of Christ would be within their own lifetime
   a. This is a natural reaction to the prophecy statements of Scripture that sound imminent
      1) “I am coming soon”
      2) “You will see wars and rumors of wars . . . “ and other common “signs” that seem evident in our day
   b. Anticipation of an imminent return was especially appropriate in the first years of the church
      1) With the fall of Jerusalem and the temple (Matt. 24:1-3)
      2) With the rumor that Jesus had said the apostle John would live until his return (John 21:21-23)
      3) Especially if the Apostles were hoping for an imminent return
         a) The Old Testament prophets had not been told the details of the first coming (1 Pet. 1:10-11)
         b) Likewise the Apostles may not have know how long Jesus would be delayed before returning
   c. Church history documents a spirit of “adventism” in every generation

2. There was no “mistake” regarding timing in the teachings of Jesus
   a. A popular modern idea: Jesus erroneously assumed that during his lifetime he would fulfill eschatological kingdom prophecies and end-time prophecies
      1) Early proponent: Albert Schweitzer
      2) Proposed two “mistakes”
         a) Jesus thought his kingdom would begin during the preaching tour of his disciples
         b) Jesus thought his death would usher in the end
   b. But Jesus clearly stated that he did not know the timing (Matt. 24:36)
   c. Jesus’ prophecy that his generation would see the Son of Man come into his kingdom (Matt. 16:28): fulfilled in his resurrection, ascension, and founding of the Church
      1) Based on Daniel’s “Son of Man” prophecy in which the Messiah ascends to the throne in heaven (Dan. 7:13-14)
      2) Not a reference to the second coming to earth and the establishment of a kingdom on earth

3. The delay in Christ’s return is prophesied in Scripture
   a. Jesus’ parables often spoke of an extended delay
      1) The parable of the 10 virgins (Matt. 25:5)
      2) The parable of the talents (Matt. 25:19)
      3) The parable of the unfaithful steward (Luke 12:45)
      4) The parable of the pounds (Luke 19:11)
   b. Christ’s ascension to the throne of heaven was supposed to be followed by a period of waiting (Psa. 110:1 and Heb. 10:12-13; Acts 3:19-21)
4. Christ’s return will be “soon” from a heavenly perspective
   a. The New Testament gives the impression that Christ’s return was imminent for the 1st cent. church (Rom. 16:20; Heb. 10:37; James 5:8-9; 1 Pet. 4:7; Rev. 22:20)
   b. This may simply reflect their personal feelings (hopes) with their limited knowledge of God’s schedule (Acts 1:6-7)
   c. But it may also be intended to present the divine perspective on the ages of history
      1) A thousand years is but a day with God (2 Peter 3:8)
      2) Thus the delay is only a problem from man’s perception (2 Pet. 3:3-4), and not from God’s view of things
      3) The “thousand years is but a day” formula may have actually been intended to cryptically inform us to anticipate a few thousand years

5. Our attitude should be a balance of anticipation and realism
   a. Anticipate and hope that Jesus comes very soon
   b. But make reasonable plans for your future
      1) Retirement
      2) Christian service and personal growth
      3) Revival and reformation
   c. Never give away future resources on a hunch that Christ’s return is imminent

Known Only to God

1. The date of Christ’s return is known only to God
   a. Angels can not reveal the date
      1) They do not know the date (Matt. 24:36)
      2) Many details of God’s messianic plans are not known to angels (1 Pet. 1:10-12)
   b. The Incarnate Christ could not reveal the date
      1) He said he did not know the date during his Incarnation (Matt. 24:36)
      2) Though he is likely exercising his omniscience today (John 17:5; Rev. 2:23), the limitations of the Incarnation would not allow him to reveal divine truths not revealed to him by his Father
      3) It is futile to search the words of Christ for clues
   c. The Apostles have not been authorized to reveal the date
      1) They were told that God’s timing was not their business (Acts 1:6-7)
      2) It is futile to search their writings for clues

2. Even the “season” of Christ’s return is known only to God
   a. It is incorrect to suggest that cannot know “the day or hour” but can guess the year or generation
   b. There was no one in New Testament times who could reveal the season to us in their teachings
Impossible to Guess

1. The date of Christ’s return was intended to remain a mystery.
   a. It was intended to be something that “no one would know” except God (Mark 13:32-37)
   b. It was declared that it would happen in the manner of a thief (Matt. 24:43; Luke 12:39-40; 1 Thess. 5:2, 4; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 3:3; 16:15)

2. The date was intended to be a mystery for believers as well as unbelievers.
   a. It is incorrect to suggest that the mystery of the timing was intended only for unbelievers
      1) Jesus applied the mystery of the timing to “all” (Mark 13:37)
      2) Twenty centuries of failed guesses confirms that Jesus did not leave insider clues for believers
   b. It is incorrect to suggest that Christ will only come “as a thief” with unbelievers
      1) The “thief” imagery was used in a context speaking to the church (1 Thess. 5:2, 4-9; Rev. 3:3)
      2) Twenty centuries of failed guesses confirms that Jesus did not leave insider clues for believers
   c. It is incorrect to suggest that God has hidden clues within the text of Scripture
      1) The “Bible code theory” proposes that God has hidden messages within the text of Scripture that were unknown to the inspired writers
      2) Problem: the results of such speculation are always varied and highly subjective
      3) And contrary to the emphasis of Acts 1:6-7

3. A very practical argument for the mystery of the timing: 20 centuries of failed guesses
   a. Mathematical calculations have failed
      1) The classic: the “six millennium days” theory
         a) Based upon a creation date of 4004 BC, as calculated by Bishop James Ussher (1581-1656)
         b) The math formula: “One day with the Lord is as a thousand years” (2 Pet. 3:8)
         c) Earth will stand for “six days” or six thousand years, and then a “seventh day” millennium rest will begin near 2004 AD
      2) Problems with this theory
         a) Ussher’s guess was based upon the assumption that Bible genealogies are complete
         b) We now know that human history goes back further than 4004 BC
         c) Our “six millennium days” passed us by a long time ago
b. Fascination with changing millenniums have failed
   1) Popular feeling: the closing out of 1,000 years of human history must surely be
      marked by God with global and cosmic events
      a) Since 1,000 years complete a full “day” for God (2 Pet. 3:8)
      b) And 1,000 years is the number God used in his millennium prophecy of
         Revelation 20
      c) Especially when millennium numbers line up with the birth of Christ
   2) Problems with this reasoning
      a) History has already shown us in 1000 AD (and now 2000 AD) that a millennium
         can close out without cataclysmic events
      b) It is presumptuous to assume that God’s major events must line up with our
         calendar
         1- Our western calendar was created (and occasionally modified) by men
         2- And it is only one of many calendars in use (with more ancient calendars
            being used in oriental cultures, Judaism, Islam, etc.)
      c) It is a fallacy to assume that our calendar lines up exactly with the birth of Christ
         1- The birth of Jesus likely occurred in the Winter of 5/4 BC, prior to the death
             of King Herod in March 4 BC
         2- The 2,000 year mark was 1996
   c. Every generation produces classic examples of the futility of attempting to guess a date
      that cannot be known
      1) Perhaps the earliest miss was the rumor spread in the 1st century church of
         Thessalonica that the second coming had already come and gone (2 Thess. 2:1-2),
         prompting some Christians to quit working and live off the charity of their friends as
         they waited for Christ to come get them (2 Thess. 3:6-15)
      2) Paul’s admonition: get back to work

4. Be wary of all guesses regarding the timing of Christ’s return
   a. Prophecy speculation and date-setting has some dangers:
      1) If you set a date for the distant future, it diminishes the New Testament emphasis
         upon readiness now
      2) If you set a date for the near future:
         a) It can easily be verified (and proven false)
         b) Thus undermining your credibility as a Bible teacher
   b. Be cautious with prophecy speculators
      1) Especially with anyone who revises his speculations after failures and tries again
         a) A contemporary example: John F. Walvoord, Armageddon, Oil, and the Middle
            East
      2) And with anyone who invests the proceeds from the “business” of Bible prophecy
         into future dividends and retirement
Signs of the End

The Six Classic Signs

1. **A key prophecy text from the Gospels: the “Olivet discourse”**
   a. The occasion: Jesus’ private teaching for the apostles on the Mount of Olives during the “final week”
   b. Key texts: Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21

2. **Jesus’ Olivet discourse listed six things that would lead up to the “end”**
   a. Wars (Matt. 24:6-7)
   b. Natural disasters (Matt. 24:7)
   c. Persecution of Christians (Matt. 24:9)
   d. Apostasy (Matt. 24:10, 12)
   e. False teachers (Matt. 24:11)
   f. The gospel preached to the world (Matt. 24:14)

3. **A key hermeneutical question: the “end” of what?**
   a. The two subjects in Matt. 24
      1) The fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple in A.D. 70
      2) The second coming of Christ (and “end of the world”)
   b. Apply these six things to either (or both), and they still do not serve well as signs

4. **These six things have not effectively served as “signs”**
   a. They have been common throughout church history
      1) All are referred to in the New Testament as common experiences of the 1st century
      2) They are obviously not distinctively end-time events
   b. Even the “preaching of the gospel to the world” was fulfilled in the 1st cent. prior to the fall of Jerusalem (Acts 17:6; Col. 1:6, 23)
      1) Popular misconception in missions circles: Christ will not return until the gospel (or Bible translations) has reached every distinct people group
      2) Key texts:
         a) The preaching of the gospel linked to “the end” (Matt. 24:14; 28:19-20)
         b) The eternal gospel linked to the judgment at the end (Rev. 14:6-7)
      3) Problem with this interpretation: the apostolic church felt that they had taken the gospel to the world when they started accepting Gentiles
   c. These so-called signs have not yet pin-pointed the timing of the second coming (nor did they do so with the fall of Jerusalem)
   d. A true sign from God will be distinct and accurate
      1) The virgin birth (Isa. 7:10-14)
      2) The swaddling clothes and the manger (Luke 2:12)
      3) The miracles that served as “signs of the times” confirming that he was the promised Messiah (Matt. 16:1-3)
Precursors of the End

1. The Olivet “signs” are better viewed as “precursors” to the end
   a. Signs point to an event with precision
   b. Precursors simply precede an event and build anticipation
      1) General in nature and often repeated
      2) Not distinct enough to pin-point anything
   c. Jesus’ six precursors are intended to keep us alert and watching for the end
      1) They will make you feel like you are nearing the end
      2) Lewis Foster: “deliberate ambiguity”
   d. The Olivet precursors are similar to other precursors of the end in Scripture

2. False teaching and apostasy
   a. Many prophecies mention the rise of false teaching and apostasy
      1) The increase of false teaching and deception (1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-9; 2 Pet. 3:3-4; 1 John 2:18)
      2) The falling away of believers because of false teaching or persecution (2 Thess. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:1)
      3) Jesus’ “Olivet discourse” links “the end” with both false teachers (Matt. 24:5, 11) and apostasy (Matt. 24:9-10, 12)
      4) False teaching and apostasy are also mentioned in “the man of lawlessness” prophecy (2 Thess. 2:9-12) and the “Armageddon” prophecy (Rev. 16:13-14)
   b. These things are not reliable signs pin-pointing the timing of the second coming
      1) Always present, ever since the beginning of the church
      2) The New Testament refers to the prophecies in both future tense and present tense (1 Tim. 4:1-3, 6; 2 Tim. 3:1, 10, 14; 2 Pet. 3:5; 1 John 2:18)
      3) Jesus anticipated that the preaching of the gospel would always experience a certain amount of apostasy (Matt. 13:5-7, 20-22)
   c. False teaching and apostasy serve well as precursors because they have stirred the imagination of Christians in every generation
3. **Natural calamities and disasters**
   a. Christians have often assumed that natural disasters will precede the second coming
      1) Because Jesus’ Olivet discourse links “the end” with earthquakes and famines (Matt. 24:7)
      2) Because the book of Revelation describes a large number of plagues for the future
   b. But Bible prophecies typically do not mention natural disasters preceding the second coming
      1) Emphasis on the surprise element of Christ’s return (arriving “like a thief” without warning)
      2) The cosmic shaking is described as beginning at the moment Christ appears, not preceding his return
   c. These things are not reliable signs pin-pointing the timing of the second coming
      1) Always present, ever since the beginning of the church
      2) No prophetic “cataclysmic event” that is clearly identified as immediately preceding the second coming
   d. Natural disasters serve well as precursors because they have stirred the imagination of Christians in every generation

4. **The problem with reading precursors as signs of the end**
   a. There is no way to know if the troubles we are currently experiencing are the worst that is to come
      1) It is always possible for there to be greater troubles and more evil
      2) The evils of today could be a prelude to another great revival period
      3) The world is usually a mix of evil and good, and not simply an “apocalyptic evil age”
   b. All attempts to turn biblical precursors into signs have been failures
      1) Bible prophecy speculators typically display two weaknesses regarding their signs
         a) They keep reinterpreting the same “signs” that have failed numerous times before
         b) Antichrist: Mussolini – Hitler – Stalin – Hussein
         c) Armageddon: World War II – Six Day War – Persian Gulf Wars
      2) They quickly dismiss any failures on their part by moving on to newer signs

4. **A reasonable way to use the precursors of evil**
   a. Take advantage of the general sense that we might be nearing the end, fostered by these precursors
   b. Encourage repentance, Christian service, and faithfulness (1 Thess. 5:4-11)
The Abomination of Desolation

The End

1. Jesus’ Olivet discourse discusses a key prophecy of “the end”
   a. The apostles presented two questions to be answered (Matt. 24:1-3)
      1) What would be the signs of the end of Jerusalem and the temple?
      2) When would be the signs of the end of the world?
   b. Jesus’ response deals with two different (yet related) “ends”
      1) The fall of Jerusalem
         a) The destruction of the temple
         b) The end of the Jewish sacrificial system
         c) The end of Old Testament Judaism
      2) The second coming of Christ and the end of the world
   c. The key hermeneutical question for each verse in Matt. 24: the “end” of what?

2. Jesus deliberately linked the fall of Jerusalem with his second coming
   a. The fall of Jerusalem is apparently a type (symbol) of the end of the world
   b. Jesus’ comments on each of the two “ends” are intermingled in his answer
      1) The fall of Jerusalem (Matt. 24:15-22)
      2) The second coming (Matt. 24:29-31)
      3) The fall of Jerusalem (Matt. 24:32-35)
      4) The second coming (Matt. 24:36-51)
   c. The interchange and ambiguity in the text suggests a deliberate comparison / contrast between the two

Daniel’s Sign

1. Jesus’ Olivet Discourse offered one clear sign of “the end”
   a. Daniel’s sign of “the abomination of desolation” (Matt. 24:15)
   b. The original source: Dan. 9:26-27
   c. A sign so clear Jesus’ disciples were to flee when they saw it (Matt. 24:16-20)

2. Daniel’s abomination of desolation sign was focused upon the destruction of Jerusalem
   a. Jesus’ instruction to flee has no relevance to his second coming
   b. Jesus’ reference to “this generation” (Matt. 24:34) would limit the fulfillment to the 1st century
   c. Dan. 9:24-27 is a prophecy of the timing of the first coming of Christ (as noted in Dan. 9:25)
   d. A double-fulfillment is unlikely because of the instructions to flee
The Fall of Jerusalem

1. The Gospel of Luke explains the abomination of desolation
   b. An army that builds an earthen wall around Jerusalem (Luke 19:43-44)

2. History confirms the accuracy of this sign with the Fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD
   a. Jewish rebellion in 66 AD
      1) The emperor Nero sent general Vespasian to restore order to Judah
      2) The northern part of the province was subdued by 68 AD
      3) Vespasian was recalled to Rome to succeed Nero as emperor before he had opportunity to subdue Jerusalem
      4) His son Titus took over the campaign against the Jews
   b. A Roman army laid siege to Jerusalem during Passover of 70 AD
      1) The population had jumped from 250,000 to 2-3 million
      2) The siege lasted for about 5 months (143 days)
   c. The Romans inflicted “great tribulation” upon the Jews
      1) Approximately 600,000 to 1,000,000 killed
      2) Nearly 100,000 were taken into exile
      3) The city walls were leveled, except for the western wall and 3 towers
      4) The temple was burned, despite Titus’ orders to put out the fire and spare the temple
      5) The temple was later demolished and the temple mount plowed under in 132 AD
   d. The historical details correspond to the specifics of Jesus’ prediction
      1) “Not one stone left upon another” (Matt. 24:2)
      2) “A great tribulation such as has not occurred before” (Matt. 24:21)
      3) “Level you to the ground, and your children” (Luke 19:44)
      4) “Will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led into captivity” (Luke 21:24)

3. Christians heeded the abomination sign and fled Jerusalem
   a. Christians fled to the mountain fortress at Pella in Perea (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 3.5.3)
   b. The Jews retreated behind the walls of Jerusalem and suffered

4. The second coming has no clear sign like the abomination sign
   a. Jesus contrasted the clarity of the former vs. the mystery of the latter (Matt. 24:32-36)
   b. Thus the extended teaching on “staying ready” (Matt. 24:43-51; 25:1-46) is intended to speak to the timing of the second coming
The Seventy Sevens

Daniel’s “Seventy Sevens”

1. A key Old Testament prophecy text related to the Olivet discourse: Daniel 9
   a. The occasion
      1) Daniel’s prayer of repentance in behalf of the captives in Babylon (Dan. 9:1-4)
      2) God’s gracious response: a prophecy delivered by the angel Gabriel (Dan. 9:20-23)
   b. The focus of the prophecy: the first coming of Christ

2. Daniel 9 is the source of Jesus’ “abomination of desolation” sign
   a. Jesus referred his listeners back to Daniel’s prophecy (Matt. 24:15)
   b. The key hermeneutical question:
      1) Does Daniel 9 refer exclusively to the first coming?
      2) Or does it refer to both the first coming and the second coming?

3. Daniel 9 presents a unique prophecy of the timing of the first coming of Christ
   a. Focused upon the ministry of the coming Messiah (Dan. 9:24)
   b. Identifying a timetable for the Messiah’s arrival (Dan. 9:25)
   c. Predicting two key “ messianic” events (Dan. 9:26-27)
      1) The death of Christ
      2) A subsequent assault upon Jerusalem

4. The “seventy sevens” represents 490 years
   a. The literal reading is “seventy sevens” and not “seventy weeks” (King James)
   b. The phrase makes sense if converted to years
      1) The “sevens” represent a time period (hours, days, months, years)
      2) “Seventy sevens” is 70 times 7 or 490
      3) Since Daniel is about 500 years from the time of Christ, the most natural time unit would be years: 490 years
   c. From “the decree” to the beginning of the ministry of the Messiah would be 483 years
      1) “Seven sevens” (49 years) for rebuilding Jerusalem (Dan. 9:25)
      2) “Sixty-two sevens” (434 years) waiting until Messiah comes (Dan. 9:25-26)
      3) A total of “sixty-nine sevens” (483 years)
5. The count begins with the decree of Artaxerxes in 458 BC
   a. The Old Testament notes four exile decrees
      1) Decree of Cyrus in 536 BC (Ezra 1:2-4)
         a) 483 years would run to 53 BC
         b) Too early for the coming of Christ
      2) Decree of Darius in 518 BC (Ezra 6:3-12)
         a) 483 years would run to 35 BC
         b) Too early for the coming of Christ
      3) Decree of Artaxerxes in 458 BC (Ezra 7:11-28)
         a) 483 years would run to 26 AD
         b) Approximately the beginning of Jesus’ ministry
      4) Decree of Nehemiah in 444 BC (Neh. 2:4-8)
         a) 483 years would run to 40 AD
         b) Too late for the coming of Christ
   b. Of the known decrees, only the decree of 458 BC can be mathematically linked to the first coming of Christ

6. The count ends with the baptism of Jesus in 26 AD
   a. Jesus was born in Winter 5/4 BC (prior to Herod’s death in March 4 BC)
   b. Jesus’ baptism at age 30 (Luke 3:23) was about 26 AD
   c. The known dates for the rulers in Luke 3:1-2 fit the year 26 AD
      1) “The 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar”
         a) Step-son of Augustus
         b) Began a joint-rule with Augustus in 11 AD
         c) His “15th year” would have been 26 AD
      2) “Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea”
         a) Ruled Judea 26-36 AD
         b) Prominent in the Gospels crucifixion accounts
      3) “Herod was tetrarch of Galilee”
         a) Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great
         b) Ruled Galilee 4BC – 34 AD
      4) “Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis”
         a) Son of Herod the Great
         b) Ruled territories northwest of Judea, beyond the Jordan, 4 BC – 34 AD
      5) “Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene”
         a) Ruled territory north of Damascus
         b) No data on dates
      6) “in the high priesthood of Annas”
         a) Served 6-15 AD
         b) Still recognized by the traditional Jews
      7) “in the high priesthood . . . of Caiphas”
         a) Served 18-36 AD
         b) Officially recognized by the Romans
The Messiah Cut Off

1. The Messiah was to be killed in the middle of the final seven years
   a. He was to be “cut off” after the “sixty-nine sevens” (Dan. 9:25-26)
      1) The “seven sevens” (49 years) plus the “sixty-two sevens” (434 years)
      2) A total of “sixty-nine sevens” (483 years)
      3) Jesus’ death in 30 AD was indeed after 26 AD
   b. His death would “stop sacrifices” in the “middle of the sevens” (Dan. 9:27)
      1) The “seventieth seven” would be the seven years from 26 AD to 33 AD
      2) Jesus’ death in 30 AD was indeed “in the middle”
      3) Though Jews continued to present animal sacrifices for 40 more years, their
         appropriateness before God ended with the death of Christ

2. The Messiah’s death was prophesied to bring about several effects
   a. To attain atonement for sin (Dan. 9:24)
   b. To fulfill Old Testament prophecy (Dan. 9:24)
   c. To establish a new covenant (Dan. 9:27)
   d. To end Jewish sacrifices (Dan. 9:27)

The Abomination of Desolation

1. The Messiah’s death would be followed by abomination and desolation
   a. A prince would bring abomination and desolation to Jerusalem (Dan. 9:26-27)
      1) Destroying the city
      2) Destroying the temple
   b. The timing of the destruction is simply after the “seventy sevens”
      1) The “seventy sevens” is focused upon the death of the Messiah
      2) The abomination and desolation is not part of the time count, but simply subsequent
         to it
   c. Daniel does not indicate what the end of the final “seven sevens” leads to

2. The destruction of Jerusalem was to be in response to the Jewish rejection of Christ
   a. The abomination and desolation was to be God’s wrath against the Jews for rejecting
      their own Messiah and crucifying his Son
   b. Daniel 9 presents the Messiah’s death and the destruction of Jerusalem as parallel events
      1) The Messiah would be “cut off” and then the prince would come and destroy
         (Dan. 9:26)
      2) The Messiah would make a new covenant and end Jewish sacrifices (through his
         death) and then abomination and desolation would come (Dan. 9:27)
3. The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD is ultimately a “messianic” event
   a. God’s response to the Jewish rejection of their own Messiah (Luke 19:44)
   b. There is no legitimate reason for turning any of Daniel 9 into a second coming prophecy
      1) The “seventy sevens” fits precisely the timing of the first coming of Christ
      2) The prophecy accurately describes the ministry of Christ and the subsequent destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD
      3) There is nothing in the text to indicate a 2,000 year gap between the arrival of the Messiah and the rise of an evil prince
      4) No need to postulate a future event when history provides a clear, precise fulfillment
      5) Pure speculation to postulate a double-fulfillment prophecy with no supporting affirmation in the New Testament
         a) Jesus applied Daniel’s prophecy to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD
         b) And advised his disciples to flee

   Great Tribulation

1. The “great tribulation” is not eschatological
   a. The final seven years (the “seventieth sevens”) of Dan. 9 refers to the death of Christ, not the second coming
   b. The “great tribulation” of Matt. 24:21 is used by Jesus to refer to the Roman assault upon Jerusalem in 70 AD
   c. The tribulations of the book of Revelation are the sufferings common to all believers in every age
      1) Tribulations that the apostle John shared with his 1st century readers (Rev. 1:9)
      2) Tribulations that saints from all nations must pass through (Rev. 7:9-14)
      3) Tribulations that history has proven are quite common
         a) Second seal: wars (Rev. 6:3-4)
         b) Third seal: economic hardships (Rev. 6:5-6)
         c) Fourth seal: large-scale deaths (Rev. 6:7-8)
         d) Fifth seal: persecution and martyrdom (Rev. 6:9-11)
      4) The book of Revelation does not specifically refer to a “seven-year” period of “Great Tribulation”

2. There is no biblical basis for postulating a seven-year period of “Great Tribulation”
   a. The popular dispensational scenario is plagued with weaknesses
      1) The various details are not found in any one biblical text, but are assembled from a variety of biblical references
      2) The individual pieces of biblical text often lend themselves to a non-futurist interpretation within their original context
         a) A biblical history fulfillment
         b) A spiritual or anagogical fulfillment
   b. No New Testament text distinctly refers to a tribulation period lasting seven years
THE RISE OF EVIL

Prophecies of an Oppressive Power

1. End-time speculation typically imagines the rise of an ultimate evil power
   a. The typical scenario
      1) A political power who will lead a coalition of nations
      2) Oppressing those who are faithful to God
      3) Destroyed by God at the return of Christ
   b. Supported by the collective force of several prophecies of a coming hostile power in both
      the Old Testament and New Testament
      1) Daniel’s “fourth kingdom”
      2) Daniel’s “little horn”
      3) Daniel’s “abomination of desolation”
      4) Daniel’s “ten kings”
      5) Revelation’s “beast of the sea” and “beast of the earth”
      6) Revelation’s “Gog and Magog”

2. There is no clear biblical prophecy of an end-time evil power
   a. Each prophecy text has a natural fulfillment within history that would have been relevant
      to the intended readers
   b. The return of Christ is not contingent upon any particular world politics
      1) No eschatological reason for Christians to fear developments in world politics
      2) Nor to advance immoral political agendas as a fulfillment of prophecy
Daniel’s “Fourth Kingdom”

1. Daniel’s “fourth kingdom” was the Roman Empire
   a. Daniel’s prophecies
      1) The statue of four parts (Dan. 2)
      2) The four wild beasts (Dan. 7)
   b. The four kingdoms
      1) Babylon (Dan. 2:38; 7:4)
         a) The head of gold (Dan. 2:38), the lion (Dan. 7:4)
         b) Identified by name (Dan. 2:38)
         c) Rose to power in the 7th cent. BC, lasted for 70 years
      2) Medo-Persia
         a) The chest of silver (Dan. 2:39), the bear (Dan. 7:5)
         b) Identified by name (Dan. 8:20)
         c) Conquered the Babylonians in the 6th cent. BC, led by Cyrus, lasted for 200 years
      3) Greece
         a) The belly of bronze (Dan. 2:39), the leopard (Dan. 7:6)
         b) Identified by name (Dan. 8:21-22)
         c) Conquered the Persians in the 4th cent. BC, led by Alexander the Great, lasted for 130 years
         d) Split into four kingdoms following Alexander’s death
            1- Lysimachus (Asia Minor, Thrace, north)
            2- Ptolemy (Egypt, south)
            3- Seleucus (Syria, east)
            4- Cassander (Macedonia, west)
      4) Rome
         a) The legs iron (Dan. 2:40-43), the terrifying beast (Dan. 7:7)
         b) Not identified by name, but by history
         c) Succeeded the Greeks in the 2nd cent. BC, lasted for 500 years
         d) The most powerful of the 4 empires, and the most cruel and destructive when conquering other nations
   c. The Kingdom of God
      1) Daniel prophesied the establishment of the Kingdom of God
         a) God would set up an eternal kingdom in the days of the fourth kingdom (Dan. 2:44-45)
         b) The “son of man” would approach the Ancient of Days and come into his kingdom (Dan. 7:13-18, 23-27)
      2) Corresponds to the first coming of Christ
         a) The resurrected Christ was proclaimed our Lord and King
         b) He established and reigns over his church
2. Daniel’s four kingdom prophecies are not linked to the second coming
   a. Dispensationalism typically interprets Daniel’s fourth kingdom prophecies to be referring to the second coming
      1) The fourth kingdom is an end-time coalition of nations, led by the Antichrist, hostile to God’s people
      2) The kingdom established by God is the millennial kingdom for the Jews
   b. Nothing in the Daniel text suggests a 2,000+ year gap between the third kingdom and the fourth kingdom
   c. A double-prophecy fulfillment (Rome and an end-time power) is simply speculation

Daniel’s “Little Horn”

1. The little horn of the Greek empire
   a. Dan. 8 prophesied the coming of Antiochus Epiphanes
      1) Ruled Syria 175-164 BC, one of the four parts of the divided Greek Empire
      2) Led a strong campaign to Hellenize the Jews
         a) Enacted laws against Jewish practices
         b) Desecrated the temple
            1- Ordered a halt to temple sacrifices
            2- Set up an image of himself within the temple
            3- Sacrificed a swine on the altar
            4- Replaced the Jewish altar with an altar to Jupiter
      3) His title “Epiphanes” was considered blasphemous by the Jews
         a) “Manifestation” (of God)
         b) Coins: “King Antiochus, God manifest”
      4) For early Jewish descriptions (with references back to Dan. 8) see 1 Maccabees 1; Josephus Antiquities of the Jews X.11.7.
   b. The power of Antiochus Epiphanes (and the four kingdoms) cannot compare to the Kingdom to be established by Christ
      1) The Persian empire would be conquered by the Greek empire (Dan. 8:3-8, 20-22)
      2) The Greek empire would divide into four kingdoms (Dan. 8:8, 22)
      3) From within the southeast kingdom (Syria) would arise an evil ruler (Dan. 8:9, 23)
         a) He would oppress the Jewish people (Dan. 8:10, 24)
         b) He would do blasphemous acts against God and his sacred things (Dan. 8:11-14, 25)
2. The little horn of the fourth kingdom
a. Dan. 7 prophesied the appearance of an evil power during the Roman empire
   1) The rise of the four empires (Dan. 7:2-7)
   2) The appearance of an evil power behind the kings of the fourth kingdom Rome
      (Dan. 7:8)
      a) Rising up from behind the kings of the empire, in league with them, and yet distinct
         from them, revealing himself as their superior (Dan. 7:8, 19-20, 23-24)
      b) Speaking against God in heaven with boastful (blasphemous) words (Dan. 7:8, 11, 20, 25)
      c) Oppressing God’s people (Dan. 7:21, 25)
   3) Perhaps a prophecy of a particular Roman emperor who persecuted the church
      a) Nero (ruled 54-68)
      b) Domitian (ruled 81-96)
         1- The most likely candidate
         2- Blasphemous titles: “Lord and God Domitian” and “Son of the gods”
   4) Perhaps a symbol of the Devil himself, the ultimate evil power behind all oppressive rulers
b. The power of this little horn (and the four kingdoms) cannot compare to the Kingdom to be
   established by Christ
   1) The kingdoms of the world (Dan. 7:2-8) cannot compare to the heavenly throne of the Ancient
      of Days (Dan. 7:9-10)
   2) The kingdoms of the world will eventually be destroyed (Dan. 7:11-12), but the Kingdom given
      to the son of man will stand forever (Dan. 7:13-14)
   3) The four kingdoms will be great earthly powers (Dan. 7:17), but the Kingdom received by the
      saints will last forever (Dan. 7:18)
   4) The fourth kingdom and its little horn will oppress God’s people (Dan. 7:19-21), but God will judge
      them and bestow his favor upon the Kingdom of Christ (Dan. 7:22)
   5) The fourth kingdom and its little horn will be a powerful evil (Dan. 7:23-25), but all earthly
      governments will be destroyed by God while the Kingdom of Christ stands forever (Dan. 7:26-27)

3. Daniel’s little horn prophecies are not linked to the second coming
a. Dispensationalism typically interprets Daniel’s little horn prophecies to be referring to the second
   coming
   1) The little horn is an end-time Antichrist, leading a coalition of nations (the fourth kingdom), hostile
      to God’s people
   2) The kingdom established by God is the millennial kingdom for the Jews
b. The little horn prophecies have a natural fulfillment within biblical history
   1) In the Greek empire (Antiochus Epiphanes)
   2) In the Roman empire (Domitian)
c. A double-prophecy fulfillment (the historical oppressor and an end-time power) is simply speculation
Daniel’s “Ten Kings”

1. Daniel’s “ten kings” imagery represents all the kings of the Roman Empire
   a. Daniel’s prophecy: The ten horns on the fourth beast (Dan. 7:7, 23-24)
   b. The number 10 is a prophecy symbol for a full or complete package
      1) The number 10 works well as a symbol of all the rulers who oppress God’s people, whatever the actual count might be
      2) It has not worked well as a literal count of oppressive rulers
         a) All attempts to highlight 10 Roman emperors necessitate leaving out others
         b) A more natural reading of this imagery: all of Rome’s leaders will be powerful forces to reckon with

2. Revelation’s “ten kings” imagery likewise represents all oppressive rulers
   a. Revelation’s prophecy: The ten horns on the scarlet beast
      1) Seven heads represent seven kings (Rev. 17:3, 9-10)
      2) Ten horns represent another set of ten kings (Rev. 17:3, 12-13)
   b. The “seven kings” represent all the rulers of the Roman empire
      1) A double imagery of seven mountains (Rome) and seven kings (the emperors)
      2) The scarlet beast is the red dragon (Rev. 12), the Devil
         a) The power behind “the beast of the sea” and “the beast of the earth” (Rev. 13:1, 11)
         b) He “was and is not” (Rev. 17:11): a greater power before Christ, but suffered a major defeat from Christ’s death and resurrection (Rev. 12:7-12; 20:1-3)
         c) He is destined for “destruction” (Rev. 17:11) in the lake of fire (Rev. 12:12; 20:7-10)
         d) He is in league with “the seven kings” of Rome, and yet stands apart from them as “the eighth” (Rev. 17:7, 11)
   c. The “ten kings” represent all of the world’s opposition to God and his people
      1) They serve the purposes of “the beast” (Rev. 17:12-13)
      2) They represent all the oppressive rulers yet to come
      3) They “wage war against the Lamb” (Rev. 17:14)
   d. The number 10 is a prophecy symbol for a full or complete package
      1) The number 10 works well as a symbol of all the rulers who will oppress God’s people, whatever the actual count might be
      2) It has not worked well as a literal count of oppressive rulers or nations
         a) All attempts to highlight 10 Roman emperors necessitate leaving out others
         b) Speculation regarding 10 European nations forming an alliance (the European Union) has been nullified by a number exceeding 10
            1- 1950: 6 countries
            2- 1973: 9 countries
            3- 1981: 10 countries (Greece)
            4- 1986: 12 countries
            5- 1995: 15 countries
      3) A more natural reading of this imagery: all of the world’s opposition to God and his people will be powerful forces to reckon with
2. The ten kings prophecies are not linked to the second coming
   a. Dispensationalism typically interprets the ten kings prophecies of Daniel and Revelation to be referring to the second coming
      1) The ten kings are an end-time coalition of nations, led by the Antichrist, hostile to God’s people
      2) They set the stage for the final battle of Armageddon that ushers in the second coming of Christ
   b. The ten kings prophecies have a natural fulfillment within biblical history
      1) In the Roman empire
      2) In all the subsequent government powers that have been hostile to the Christian faith
   c. A double-prophecy fulfillment (Rome and an end-time power) is simply speculation

The Beasts of Revelation

1. Revelation’s “beast of the sea” imagery represents the Roman Empire
   a. The imagery is borrowed from the four beasts of Dan. 7:1-8
      1) A monstrous beast with elements of a leopard, a bear, and a lion (Rev. 13:1-2)
      2) Combines the first three of Daniel’s four beasts to create Daniel’s fourth beast
         a) Lion (Dan. 7:4): Babylonian Empire
         b) Bear (Dan. 7:5): Medo-Persian Empire
         c) Leopard (Dan. 7:6): Greek Empire
         d) Dreadful beast (Dan. 7:7): Roman Empire
      3) This link to Daniel’s four kingdom prophecies suggest the beast of the sea is the Roman Empire (the fourth kingdom)
   b. The “blasphemies” against God and heaven (Rev. 13:5-6) fit the Roman empire of the latter 1st cent.
      1) Domitian (ruled 81-96) used titles considered blasphemous by Christians and Jews
         a) “Lord and God Domitian”
         b) “Son of the gods”
      2) Another link to Daniel’s fourth beast (Rome): The little horn on the fourth beast speaks “boastful words” against God in heaven (Dan. 7:8, 11, 20, 25)
   c. The “fatal wound healed” (Rev. 13:3-4) fits the Roman empire of the latter 1st cent.
      1) Probably a play off the “Nero revivius” myth that arose after Nero’s death
      2) The fear that Nero might rise from the dead and resume his terror and persecution realized in the reign of Domitian
   d. The “war against the saints” (Rev. 13:7) fits the persecution of Domitian
2. Revelation’s “beast of the earth” imagery represents the Roman religions
   a. The imagery is drawn from the Roman cults of the 1st cent.
      1) Sanctioned by the Roman government, and thus loyal to Rome (Rev. 13:12)
      2) Claiming experiences of supernatural phenomenon, including talking statues
         (Rev. 13:13-15)
   b. Reflects the New Testament warning of the rise of false teachings
      1) The imagery is of a beast that looks like a lamb on the outside, but sounds like a
         dragon on the inside (Rev. 13:11)
      2) Similar to the warning of a wolf in sheep’s clothing (Matt. 7:15; Acts 20:28-30) and
         the Devil and his false apostles disguised as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14; Rev. 2:2)

3. The two beasts of Revelation are not linked to the second coming
   a. Dispensationalism typically interprets the two beasts of Revelation to be referring to the
      second coming
      1) The beast of the sea is an end-time coalition of nations, led by the Antichrist, hostile
         to God’s people
      2) The beast of the earth is an end-time coalition of religious faiths hostile to Christians
         who do not accept this religious pluralism
   b. The beasts of Revelation have a natural fulfillment within biblical history
      1) In the Roman empire
      2) In the Roman religions
   c. A double-prophecy fulfillment (Rome and an end-time power) is simply speculation
Time, Times, and Half a Time

1. Daniel's prophecies established a pattern for troubles and relief
   a. The “time, times, and half a time” (Dan. 7:25; 12:6-7)
   b. The “seventy sevens” (Dan. 9:24)
   c. The “time of the end” (Dan. 8:17, 19)

2. The time, times, and half a time
   a. God's people would face oppression and tribulation for "a time, times, and half a time" (Dan. 7:25; 12:6-7)
   b. The meaning of this symbol
      1) The present cycle of troubles (Babylonian Empire)
      2) Another and another (Persian Empire, Greek Empire)
      3) Then in the midst of another (Roman Empire), God intervenes
         a) The Messiah arrives
         b) Establishes the Kingdom of God
   c. Revelation borrows this symbol using three phrases
      1) 42 months (Rev. 11:2; 13:5)
      2) 1260 days (Rev. 11:3; 12:6)
      3) Time, times, half a time (Rev. 12:14)
   d. The conversion of “time, times, and half a time” into the number 3 ½ years may have been prompted by several notable periods of opposition and tribulation for God's faithful people
      1) The prophet Elijah hid from King Ahab and stopped the rain for 3½ years (Luke 4:25; James 5:17)
      2) Antiochus Epiphanes of Syria occupied and desecrated Jerusalem (June 168 – Dec. 165 BC)
      3) The Roman army besieged Jerusalem before its fall (Feb. 67 – Aug. 70 AD)
      4) Christ’s ministry from his baptism to his death
   e. But the symbol remains the same as its original usage in Daniel
      1) God’s people will always face trouble, relief, trouble, relief
      2) Until Christ comes to establish the Kingdom of God and bring the ultimate relief
3. **The seventy sevens**
   a. Daniel prayed for God to end their Babylonian captivity (Dan. 9:1-3, 16-19)
      1) He used Jeremiah’s prophecies of captivity and 70 years of divine discipline (Jer. 25:9-14; 29:10-14)
      2) He applied them to the 70 years of Babylonian oppression
         a) About 50 years since the fall of Jerusalem
         b) About 70 years of Babylonian empire
   b. God used the 70 years to teach about troubles, relief, and more troubles
      1) The 70 years of Jeremiah’s prophecy was symbolic
         a) The number 7: a full measure
         b) The number 10: a full measure
         c) God’s wrath would burn for a long time, until God was ready to bring it to an end
      2) Because of Daniel’s humble repentance (Dan. 9:3-15), God chose to grant Daniel’s request (Dan. 9:20-23)
   c. The Babylonian captivity would end soon
      1) The 70 years of Babylonian oppression would be sufficient for now
      2) A decree would soon be issued to send the captives home (Dan. 9:25)
      3) And Jerusalem would be rebuilt
   d. But their troubles would not be over in 70 years, rather in “seventy sevens” (Dan. 9:24)
      1) God was multiplying the symbolic number 70
      2) Similar to Peter’s “seventy times seven” (Matt. 18:21-22)
      3) Their troubles would last for a long, long (indeterminate) time
      4) As each oppressor would fade away after their “70 years,” another oppressor would arise for another “70 years”
   e. Thus the same theme as throughout the book of Daniel
      1) Four oppressive kingdoms, one succeeding another
      2) Troubles for a time, times, and half a time
   f. The precise count to the first coming of Christ was a bonus
      1) Perhaps God chose to use the symbolic “seventy sevens” as a literal 490 years because he already done the same with Daniel’s “70 years” request
      2) But the count would not have been obvious to Jewish scholars at the time of Christ
         a) There were multiple decrees at the end of the Babylonian captivity, making the starting date unclear
         b) The number would have been a recognizable symbolic number
         c) The countdown to Jesus’ arrival is easier seen after the fact
   g. The primary symbolic meaning should not be lost
      1) God’s people will always face trouble, relief, trouble, relief
      2) Until Christ comes to establish the Kingdom of God and bring the ultimate relief
4. **The time of the end**
   a. Daniel’s prophecies of “the end” have a reference point to the troubles of the Jewish exiles, not the end of the world
   b. The immediate end: the end of the Babylonian captivity
   c. The reoccurring end: the end of one oppressive kingdom (and the beginning of another)
   d. The messianic end: the end of God’s wrath against Israel for their sins (Dan. 8:17-19)
      1) The end of Israel’s divinely-appointed discipline under the oppression of foreign nations
      2) The end of the Old Testament age of waiting for the Messiah
      3) The end of the guilt of their sins through the atonement of Christ (Dan. 9:24)

5. **Daniel’s recurring troubles prophecies are not linked to the second coming**
   a. Dispensationalism typically interprets these type of prophecies to be referring to the second coming
      1) The 3 ½ years passages represent the two halves of the seven-year Great Tribulation
      2) Prophecies of “the end” refer to the second coming of Christ
   b. The recurring troubles prophecies have a natural fulfillment within biblical history
      1) In the succession of oppressor nations Israel faced
      2) In the succession of oppressive powers the church continues to face even after the persecution of the Roman empire
   c. A double-prophecy fulfillment (the historical oppressor and an end-time power) is simply speculation

**Antichrist**

1. **John’s warnings of an “antichrist” refer to false teachers**
   a. The apostle John’s description is focused upon false teachers
      1) Who deny the Incarnation (1 John 2:22; 4:2-3; 2 John 7)
      2) Who were present in large numbers in the 1st century church (1 John 2:18; 4:3)
      3) And have remained ever since
   b. No Scripture uses the word “antichrist” to refer to an end-time evil power
      1) No reference to a single individual called “Antichrist”
      2) No reference in John’s writings to a political world leader
         a) Appearing near the end
         b) Establishing peace in the Middle East
         c) Breaking the treaty and attacking Israel

2. **The antichrists in John’s writings are not linked to the second coming**
   a. Dispensationalism typically use the term “Antichrist” to refer to their idea of an end-time political leader
      1) Leads an end-time coalition of nations, hostile to God’s people
      2) Attempts to destroy the Jewish people
   b. The term “Antichrist” is biblically inaccurate as a reference to an end-time political leader
The Man of Lawlessness

1. The man of lawlessness prophecy refers to a Satanic deception within the church
   a. The only biblical reference: 2 Thess. 2:3-12
   b. The apostle Paul describes a powerful false teacher
      1) Leading an apostasy from the faith (2 Thess. 2:3)
      2) Exalting himself as equal to God (2 Thess. 2:4)
      3) Working false miracles, signs, and wonders (2 Thess. 2:9-10)
   c. His “seat in the temple” (2 Thess. 2:4) is not likely a physical Jewish temple
      1) Not the 1st century temple
         a) No historical record of a religious leader doing this
         b) Even the Roman army that assaulted Jerusalem did not do this
      2) Not likely an end-time temple
         a) No temple presently exists (or is in the works)
         b) This would create a sign that would not allow Christ to return today
   d. His “seat in the temple” is most likely the church
      1) The Church is a spiritual temple (1 Cor. 3:16-17; Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:5)
      2) Church history has often produced examples of false teachers of this sort
         a) Exalting themselves to God’s level of authority
         b) Practicing a supernatural deception
      3) While this could be a prophecy of a particular false teacher near the end, it easily
         lends itself to the idea of false teaching all throughout church history
      4) Popular guesses:
         a) The rise of the Roman Catholic papacy
         b) The rise of modern cults

2. The man of lawlessness may be the Devil himself
   a. The prophecy may be intended to highlight the power and influence behind all false
      teachers (1 Tim. 4:1)
      1) The ultimate “lawless one” (rather than the man of lawlessness)
      2) Who can masquerade as “an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:13-15)
      3) Who is already at work and will continue working until the end (2 Thess. 2:7)
         a) Perhaps now restricted from full evil until a “loosening” near the end
         b) Perhaps now prevailing until his destruction comes (Weatherly)
         c) Perhaps now hidden from our awareness until he is revealed
      4) Who will one day be revealed to us (2 Thess. 2:3, 6, 8)
   b. The purpose of the prophecy is to indicate a key event for the second coming:
      the destruction of the Devil
      1) The initial issue: had the second coming already passed? (2 Thess. 2:2)
      2) Answer: if you have not seen the lawless one exposed and destroyed, then there has
         not yet been a second coming (2 Thess. 2:3, 8)
      3) The “revealing” and “slaying” are not a sign of the end, they are the end
THE FINAL CONFLICT

Armageddon

1. “Armageddon” is the symbol of the final conflict before the end
   a. Biblical data
      1) Only one biblical reference to the term “Armageddon”: Rev. 16:12-16
      2) Other biblical prophecies of a great war in the future are often linked to Armageddon
   b. Dispensationalism enlarges upon the minimal details in Rev. 16 by borrowing prophecies of conflict from various Old Testament texts
      1) A multi-nation war
         a) Arabs vs. Israel
         b) Russia (“Gog and Magog from the north”)
         c) China with 200 million soldiers (Rev. 9:16)
         d) Western allies led by the Antichrist
      2) The ultimate threat to humanity (perhaps nuclear or biological warfare)
      3) The ulterior motive of the Antichrist: to use a multi-national coalition to destroy the nation of Israel

2. The modern concept of Armageddon is not explicitly stated in Rev. 16
   a. The Dispensational details are imported from other texts, often outside the book of Revelation
   b. And no actual conflict is described in Rev. 16

A Battle Against God

1. The name “Armageddon” is a symbol, not an actual place
   a. The ancient town of Megiddo was the site of many classic Old Testament era battles, and thus a natural symbol of conflict in an apocalyptic writing
      1) Deborah led Israel against Sisera (Judg. 5:19)
      2) Jehu hunted down and killed King Ahaziah (2 Kings 9:27)
      3) King Josiah confronted an army from Egypt, and died in battle (2 Kings 23:29)
      4) The plains of “Megiddo” serve as a great symbol for warfare
   b. The prefix har is apparently also symbolic
      1) Hebrew har: mount, mountain
      2) There is no mountain on the plains of Megiddo
      3) Battles are typically fought on plains, not on mountains
   c. Perhaps the imagery of a “mountain” conflict is intended to symbolize the direction of the conflict: sinful man against God and heaven
2. Armageddon is a conflict between a hostile world and God
   a. Rev. 16 does not mention a conflict between nations (or even against Israel)
   b. The “war” imagery in Revelation is typically between sinful nations and God
      1) “Blasphemies against God” and “war against his saints” (Rev. 13:6-7)
      2) “The war of the great day of God the Almighty” (Rev. 16:14)
      3) “War against the Lamb” (Rev. 17:14)
      4) “War against the rider on the white horse” (Rev. 19:19)
   c. Armageddon may be a symbol of sinful man’s defiance against God
      1) A spiritual conflict
         a) Common throughout the ages
         b) Intensifying as we near the end
      2) Allowing for a relative peace from physical conflict on the day Christ returns
         (1 Thess. 5:3; Matt. 24:37-39)
   d. Armageddon may also be a symbol of God’s ultimate wrath against sinful man
      1) The sinful nations are “gathered” for battle by the providential workings of God
         a) God pours out the “sixth bowl” that allows the evil spirits to gather the kings of
            the earth at Armageddon (Rev. 16:12)
         b) God allows the “ten kings” to have “one hour” of authority in which they will
            wage war against the Lamb (Rev. 17:12-14)
         c) Christ anticipates the gathering the kings and armies to wage war against him and
            he prepares in advance to slaughter them (Rev. 19:17-18)
      2) Armageddon may ultimately be another symbol for God’s final judgment and hell
ISRAEL AND PROPHECY

A Messianic Role

1. God’s plan for the nation of Israel culminated in the first coming of Christ
   a. Not an eschatological role
   b. But a messianic role (Rom. 9:3-5)
      1) To prepare the way for the coming Messiah
      2) To give birth to the Messiah

2. The Jewish faithful formed the foundation nucleus for the Messiah’s Kingdom
   a. The gospel message first called together a remnant of believing Jews (Acts 2:5; Rom. 9:27-29; 11:1-5)
   b. The gospel later added believing Gentiles to the fellowship
      1) The early church slowly learned to extend the gospel invitation to encompass Gentiles (Acts 10:28, 34; 11:18; 15:7-9)
      2) Believing Jews and Gentiles were joined together as one single body in Christ (Eph. 2:11-22)
      3) The church did not replace Old Testament Israel, but rather, it fulfilled the divine purpose of Israel
         a) To welcome Jesus as the promised Messiah
         b) To extend the boundaries of God’s people to include believing Gentiles (Amos 9:11-12; Eph. 3:4-6)
   c. The composite group of believing Jews and Gentiles became the “new Israel”

3. The New Israel maintains the Old Testament heritage of the original Israel
   a. Continues to use the Old Testament names
      1) Kingdom of God (Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:6)
      2) Children of Abraham (Gal. 3:7-9, 29)
      3) Israel of God (Gal. 6:16)
      4) A chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of God (1 Pet. 2:9-10)
   b. Continues to use Old Testament imagery
      1) A spiritual priesthood with spiritual sacrifices (Heb. 13:15-16; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9)
      2) A spiritual temple (1 Cor. 3:16-17)
      3) A spiritual circumcision (Phil. 3:3)
   c. Claims the fellowship of the Old Testament saints (Heb. 11)

4. The New Israel claims the fulfillment of Old Testament messianic prophecies
   b. The promise of a new covenant (Jer. 31:33-34 and Heb. 8)
   c. The vision of an enlarged tent (Amos 9:11-12 and Acts 15:13-19)
   d. The promise to bless all nations through Abraham (Gen. 22:16-18; Gal. 3:8-9, 14)
Divine Rejection

1. The Jews who have rejected Jesus have been rejected by God
   a. John the Baptist warned the Jews against resisting God’s plan (Matt. 3:7-10)
   b. Jesus warned the Jews against resisting God’s plan (Matt. 8:10-12; 21:28-41; 23:37-39)
   c. The Old Testament prophets had warned them regarding the messianic “stumbling block” (Matt. 21:42-45; Acts 4:10-12; Rom. 9:30-33)
   d. God has pruned unfaithful Jews from the Messianic vine (Rom. 11:20-22)

2. “Israel” is now restricted to those who accept Jesus as the promised Messiah
   a. An unbelieving Jew can claim the Jewish religion and the Jewish culture
   b. But inclusion in the spiritual Israel requires faith in Jesus Christ
      1) Based upon faith, not race (Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 3:6-9, 26-29)
      2) Requiring faith (and repentance) in Christ (Acts 3:12-26)
      3) Distinguishing an Israel of the flesh from the “true Israel” (Rom. 9:6-8)

3. There is no favored status for Jewish people today
   a. Dispensationalism maintains that the Jewish race is eternally favored by God
      1) The Jews possess an eternal unconditional covenant
      2) Superior to God’s “Gentile plan” through the Church
         a) God’s primary plan is the “Abrahamic plan”
         b) The two peoples of God will remain distinct even in Heaven
            “The essence of dispensationalism, then, is the distinction between Israel and the church.” (Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p. 47)
      3) Anyone who speaks or acts against the Jewish people will receive a divine curse (Gen. 12:3)
   b. However, the New Testament says that Jews who do not accept Jesus as the Messiah have been pruned for their lack of faith
   c. The only hope of salvation for the Jewish people is by faith in Jesus Christ
   d. The classic Dispensational view of the church as a “parenthesis” and secondary plan contradicts the Bible’s high view of the church and God’s purpose
   e. Progressive Dispensationalism is to be commended for granting a higher view of the church, though they still maintain the priority of Israel
New Testament Prophecies

1. The New Testament does not include the Jewish people in its eschatological prophecies
   a. Not in the prophetic statements of Jesus
      1) No mention of a future restoration to the land or a rebuilding of the temple
      2) The “abomination of desolation” upon Israel was to be experienced in the Roman assault upon Jerusalem, not in an end times period of Great Tribulation
   b. Not in the prophetic statements of the Apostles
      1) No mention of a future restoration to the land or a rebuilding of the temple
      2) No mass conversion of the Jews at the Second Coming
         a) Paul’s single reference to “all Israel will be saved” (Rom. 11:25-26) is in a context of the preaching of the gospel (Rom. 10:1-18)
         b) The great success of the gospel among the Gentile nations will hopefully arouse a “jealousy” that will encourage more Jews to accept the gospel (Rom. 10:19-21; 11:11-15)
         c) The gospel invitation will always be available to the Jews until the very end (Rom. 11:16-24, 28-31)
   c. Not in the prophecies of the book of Revelation
      1) No mention of a future restoration to the land or a rebuilding of the temple
      2) References to Jews are minimal, and critical of their opposition to Jesus and his Church (Rev. 2:9; 3:9)
      3) The classic millennium chapter (Rev. 20) does not mention the Jews, but rather, those who are willing to die for their witness to Jesus Christ (Rev. 20:4)

2. The Dispensational focus upon the Jewish people is based entirely upon Old Testament prophecies
RESTORATION PROPHECIES

The Restoration of Israel

1. The pre-exilic prophets foretold a restoration of the nation of Israel
   a. A return to the promised land
   b. A restoration of the Jewish government and religion
   c. The rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem

2. Dispensationalism associates Old Testament restoration prophecies to the end times
   a. The end-time scenario for Israel
      1) A restoration to their land
      2) A rebuilding of the temple and a restoration of the sacrificial system
      3) The establishment of a Jewish kingdom of God with Christ reigning from Jerusalem
      4) An age of peace and prosperity for God’s people
   b. Based upon the assumption that Old Testament prophecies for Israel have not yet been fulfilled
      1) Even if you grant a spiritual fulfillment, no literal fulfillment yet
      2) Even if you grant a literal fulfillment within biblical history, the prophecies intend a “double-fulfillment” for the end times
   c. Dispensationalists consider the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 to be a significant fulfillment of prophecy
      1) “The paramount prophetic sign” and “a miracle of history” (Hal Lindsey’s *The Late Great Planet Earth*, p. 43, 45)
      2) The “eschatological clock” began ticking in 1948
A Post-exilic Fulfillment

1. Consider the following rough chronology:

   **837-724 BC**  Writings by Joel (837), Isaiah (760), Amos (760), Hosea (750), Jonah (746), Micah (724)

   **722 BC**  The fall of Israel

   **640-586 BC**  Writings by Zephaniah (640), Nahum (630), Habakkuk (612), Jeremiah (604), Obadiah (586)

   **586 BC**  The fall and captivity of Judah

   **570 BC**  Writings by Ezekiel (570), Daniel (570)

   **536 BC**  The return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city (Cyrus' decree)

   **520 BC**  Writings by Zechariah (520), Haggai (520)

   **516 BC**  The temple rebuilt by Zerubbabel

   **458 BC**  Ezra's return to continue rebuilding the city

   **445 BC**  The walls of Jerusalem rebuilt by Nehemiah

   **430 BC**  Writing by Malachi (430)

2. **God has fulfilled all of his restoration promises to Old Testament Israel**
   a. A Jewish remnant returned to their homeland beginning in 536 BC
      1) Jewish exiles from the Babylonian captivity
      2) No prophecies of a gathering of the Jews in their homeland after 536
      3) Books after 536: Haggai (520), Zechariah (520), Malachi (430), the New Testament
   b. A Jewish temple was rebuilt and the sacrificial system was restored in 516 BC
      1) Zerubbabel’s temple was completed in 516
      2) No prophecies of the building of a temple after 516
      3) Books after 516: Malachi (430), the New Testament
   c. History records a literal fulfillment of the Old Testament restoration prophecies after the Babylonian captivity
The New Temple

1. A major component of Dispensational speculation: an end-time temple
   a.Dispensationalism maintains that a Jewish temple must be constructed in order for
      Bible prophecy to be completely fulfilled
      1) On the site of the original temple (the “temple mount”)
      2) Accompanied by a restoration of the Jewish priesthood and sacrifices
      3) Preparations are said to be underway
         a) Building materials are already being gathered
         b) The birth of a red heifer (for the dedication) has been announced
         c) Small pockets of support among the Jews
            1- “Ultra-nationalists” (like the Temple Mount Faithful)
            2- A revived Sanhedrin (Jan. 2005)
   b. God will provide a way through the present logistical problems
      1) The temple mount occupied by the Muslim Dome of the Rock mosque
      2) The state of Israel led predominantly by secular Jews

2. An end-time temple is not clearly indicated by Bible prophecy
   a. No New Testament prophecy of a rebuilding of the temple
      1) Not in the Olivet discourse or any of Jesus’ eschatological statements
      2) Not in the Romans assessment of the Jewish people (Rom. 9-11) or any of Paul’s
         eschatological passages
      3) Not in the book of Revelation
   b. Old Testament temple prophecies already have a literal fulfillment in Zerubbabel’s
      temple
      1) The temple rebuilding prophecies have a clear link to the post-exilic restoration led
         by Zerubbabel
         a) The decree by Cyrus would lead to the temple foundation being laid (Isa. 44:28)
         b) Ezra, Haggai, and Zechariah not only spoke of a future temple, but also
            participated in the building of Zerubbabel’s temple
      2) There are no Old Testament temple prophecies after the temple project was
         completed in 516 BC
      3) The prophecy that the messiah would come to his temple (Mal. 3:1) was literally
         fulfilled by Jesus
         a) When he was presented in the temple by his parents
         b) As he taught and preached in the temple
         c) In his triumphal entry into Jerusalem
   c. Old Testament temple prophecies also have a spiritual fulfillment in the church
      1) The church is called the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21)
      2) The temple will be built by the Messiah himself (Zech. 6:12-13)
      3) The messianic temple will include both Jews and Gentiles (Zech. 6:15)
d. Old Testament temple prophecies have an anagogical fulfillment in heaven
   1) Those who “overcome” will be a pillar in the heavenly temple (Rev. 3:12)
   2) The great multitude in white will serve in the heavenly temple (Rev. 7:15)
   3) The presence of God in heaven will be the ultimate temple (Rev. 21:22)
e. A restoration of blood sacrifices would contradict New Testament teaching
   1) The inefficacy of animal sacrifices (Heb. 10:1-4)
   2) The finality of Jesus’ sacrifice (Heb. 10:11-18)
The Consummation

Eschatology and History

1. Eschatology encompasses the end and all that led to the end
   a. The primary focus is upon “the last things” (eschaton)
   b. A secondary focus is upon the path that led up to this ending
      1) Where did it all begin
      2) What was the intended goal and ending
      3) What was the path that led to the end
      4) How does the end relate to all that transpired from the beginning
   c. Thus eschatology also deals with a philosophy of history

2. Erroneous views of history
   a. An endless cycle
   b. A meaningless (purposeless) digression
   c. A doomed experience

3. A biblical view of history
   a. A purpose and goal set by God
   b. A linear progression
      1) A distinct beginning
      2) A forward progression
      3) A climatic end
   c. An experience with eternal consequences (Heb. 6:2)

4. The consummation
   a. The events of the second coming are designed by God to bring creation history to a point of completion and fulfillment (Eph. 1:9-10)
   b. The theological term for this final state of creation is “consummation”
   c. Various biblical themes can be used to summarize the flow of history and its final consummation at the second coming
      1) The life and death and life theme
      2) The Kingdom of God theme
      3) The new creation theme
The Kingdom of God

1. A key biblical theme for the consummation of history: the Kingdom of God

2. The basic idea of "kingdom"
   a. The Hebrew word for kingdom: malkut
   b. The Greek word for kingdom: basileia
   c. The primary meaning: to rule or reign (1 Kings. 2:12; Dan. 1:1; Luke 19:12, 15; Rev. 17:18)
   d. Both words can carry the secondary idea of the territory (realm) over which one reigns, but that usage is not often found in the Bible

3. Reign vs. realm
   a. The writings of George Eldon Ladd (1911-1982) made a significant contribution to the field of eschatology by establishing the meaning of the biblical concept of the Kingdom of God
      1) Ladd introduced the phrase "reign vs. realm"
      2) And demonstrated that the biblical idea of Kingdom of God is about God’s rule over creation, and not about the realm or territory over which he rules
   b. The significance of this distinction
      1) It challenges the traditional premillennial view that the Kingdom of God has not yet begun because Christ and his people have not yet claimed a territory on earth as their Kingdom
         a) No realm, no throne, no military force, etc.
         b) None of the trappings of an earthly kingdom, such as the kingdom of David and Solomon
      2) It affirms that the Kingdom of God has already begun
   c. The Kingdom of God already has begun in the church’s relationship to Christ
      1) Christ is our Lord and King
      2) The church pledges its allegiance to the authority of Christ
   d. The Kingdom of God is ultimately a relationship
      1) Regardless of its location (realm) or its furnishings (throne, army, etc.)
      2) Similar to when King David moved his kingdom into exile outside the territory of Judah (2 Sam. 15)

4. The Kingdom of heaven
   a. The phrase "Kingdom of heaven" is a parallel expression for "Kingdom of God"
      1) It essentially means “the rule of heaven” with heaven representing God
      2) Similar to the use of “the White House” to refer to the President
      3) “Kingdom of heaven” would have been popular for Jews who were cautious not to speak the name of God carelessly (“in vain”)
   b. Both phrases are used synonymously in the Gospels (as in Matt. 13:11, 31 and Mark 4:11, 30-31)
5. The Kingdom of God in biblical history
   a. God originally established his Kingdom (rule) at creation
   b. The kingdom of God was disrupted by the sin of Adam in Eden
      1) Man turned his allegiance from God to the usurper Satan
      2) A kingdom relationship was established with Satan
      3) God expelled the rebels from his service and presence
   c. The Old Testament prophets anticipated the re-establishment of the Kingdom of God
      1) Prophecies of the coming of the King
      2) Prophecies of the establishment of a Kingdom that would never end
   d. The Son of God came to earth in the Incarnation as the fulfillment of the Kingdom prophecies
      1) Jesus arrived as “the son of David” of prophecy (Matt. 2:2)
      2) He claimed to be a king (John 18:36-37)
      3) He announced that the Kingdom of God was at hand (Matt. 4:17)
      4) He revealed his power and authority as Lord of creation in his resurrection (Matt. 28:18; Rom. 1:3-4; Phil. 2:9-11)
      5) He ascended to heaven and sat upon the throne of God to begin his reign (Acts 2:32-36; Eph. 1:20-22; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12-13)
   e. Christ established a Kingdom of God relationship with his churches
      1) Our confession of faith: Jesus is Lord (Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3; 1 Tim. 6:12-15; 1 Peter 3:15-16)
      2) Our purpose: to serve Christ and do his will (Eph. 1:20-23; 5:23-24)
      3) Our great commission: to challenge others to leave the defeated kingdom of Satan and join the kingdom of God through Jesus Christ (Acts 26:16-18)
      4) Our message to the Jews who believe the messianic prophecies of a coming king: Jesus is the fulfillment of the "Kingdom of God" prophecies (Acts 8:12; 19:8; 28:23, 31)
      5) The church acts as a Kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:6)
   f. At the second coming Christ will establish the Kingdom of God over all creation
      1) At the judgment every person will acknowledge the authority of God and Christ (Isa. 45:23-24)
      2) In the dungeon of hell the lost will be eternally subject to rule of God (Matt. 25:31-33, 41)
      3) In the royal home of heaven the saints will continue to serve their Lord forever (Matt. 25:31-34; 2 Pet. 1:10-11)

6. Two biblical perspectives on the Kingdom of God
   a. There is a sense in which the Kingdom of God exists now (in the church)
   b. There is a sense in which the Kingdom of God is yet to come (in its eternal manifestation)
   c. The Kingdom of God is both “now and not yet”
The Restoration of Creation

1. A key biblical theme for the consummation of history: the new creation

2. The ultimate goal that drives the events of the second coming
   a. God’s desire to restore creation to a state of perfection similar to its condition in the beginning
      1) A “restoration of all things” (Acts 3:21)
      2) A “regeneration” (Matt. 19:28)
   b. Thus many of the Old Testament messianic prophecies portray Christ establishing an idyllic paradise reminiscent of man’s original condition in Eden
   c. And many biblical depictions of heaven portray a new garden of Eden (Rev. 22:1-4)

3. The original goodness of creation will be restored
   a. In the beginning all of creation was “very good” (Gen. 1:31) before man sinned and God responded with a curse upon creation (Gen. 3)
   b. In the eternal age to come, neither the sinfulness of man nor the curse of God will affect the new heavens and new earth (Rom. 8:19-23; Rev. 21:27; 22:3)
   c. The saints in heaven will experience a perfect paradise similar to what Adam and Eve experienced in the original garden of Eden (Rev. 21:4-8; 22:1-4)

4. The original holiness of man’s body and spirit will be restored
   a. In the beginning man was created with a body and spirit that God considered “very good” (Gen. 1:31)
   b. In the eternal age to come, the saints will once again enjoy a perfect body because at the second coming their cursed bodies will be resurrected to a glorious state of existence (1 Cor. 15:42-44, 51-54)
   c. In the eternal age to come, the saints will once again enjoy a pure spirit because at the second coming their sinful spirits will experience glorification (Col. 3:4; Heb. 12:22-23; 1 John 3:2-3)

5. The original friendship between God and man will be restored
   a. In the beginning the relationship between God and man was so intimate that they could even walk together and talk in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:8)
   b. In the eternal age to come, the saints will once again enjoy an intimate relationship with God because the guilt of their sins will have been dismissed at the Judgment (Rom. 8:31-34; Rev. 21:3; 22:3-4)

6. The original rule of God over all creation will be restored
   a. In the beginning all of creation was in complete submission to the will of God
   b. In the eternal age to come, all of creation will be brought back into submission to God, with every man acknowledging and living under God’s Lordship (Isa. 45:23-24)
      1) The wicked will experience and acknowledge the rule of God as they face his wrath in hell (Rom. 14:10-12; Rev. 11:15-18)
      2) The saints will experience and acknowledge the rule of God while they worship and serve him in heaven (Rev. 7:14-17; 22:3)