

BIBLE TRUTHS EXPLAINED

What God's Word teaches about

THE SECOND COMING

Gordon Lyons

KJV Edition

Important Notice

The series *Bible Truths Explained*
may be downloaded, printed and used free of charge
by individuals, groups, and institutions

However, none of these Doctrinal Notes
may be offered for sale or for commercial publication

Bible Truths Explained: The Second Coming
Revised: 1988, 1999, 2005
First published: 2005
1-word.com web site publication

Copyright Notices

Bible Truths Explained

The Second Coming

Copyright © 2005 Gordon Lyons
All Rights Reserved

Limited extracts from this work may be quoted elsewhere, on condition that the name and author of the original work is acknowledged in a format similar to the following:

'Quoted from
Bible Truths Explained: The Second Coming
Copyright © 2005, Gordon Lyons
Used by permission'

Scripture quotations taken from
The HOLY BIBLE
KING JAMES VERSION
unless otherwise stated

Additional Scripture quotations taken from
The HOLY BIBLE
NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION
Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, by International Bible Society
Used by permission

Principal Works Consulted

- Barnes, Alfred *Notes on The Bible*, Electronic edition (public domain)
- Bauer, Walter /
revised and edited by
Danker, Frederick William *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Third Edition BDAG) Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- Berkhof, Louis *Systematic Theology*, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1939, 1941 reprint.
- Calvin, John *Institutes*: [Beveridge Translation, 1800, Battles Translation Vols. 1-4, 1960] Rio, WI, USA: Ages Software, Inc., The John Calvin Collection, 2000, Electronic edition (CD).
- Clarke, Adam *Commentary on the New Testament*: Electronic edition (public domain)
- Dabney, R. L. *Systematic Theology*, [St. Louis: Presbyterian Publishing Company of St. Louis, 1871, second ed. 1878] Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust edition, 1985.
- Gill, John *Exposition of the Entire Bible*, Electronic edition (public domain)
- Hodge, Charles *Systematic Theology*, Vols. 1-3; Grand Rapids, Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977 reprint.
- Hodge, Charles *Princeton Sermons*, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1879, 1979 reprint.
- Jamieson, Fausset & Brown *Commentary on The Whole Bible* (Revised edition, 1961): Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, 1991.
- Murray, John *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955.
- Poole, Matthew *A Commentary on The Holy Bible* Vols. 1-3 (1685-1700): Edinburgh, Banner of Truth Trust, 1878, 2000 reprint.
- Robertson, A.T. *Robertson's Word Pictures*, Electronic edition (public domain)
- Ryle, J. C. *Practical Religion*: Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1939, 1941 reprint.
- Vincent *Vincent's Word Studies*, Electronic edition (public domain)
- Westminster Confession of Faith*, Inverness: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1976 reprint.

Special Acknowledgement

I must acknowledge a genuine debt of gratitude to the work of Dr. Charles Hodge. The writings of this theologian from a previous generation have helped considerably in preparing this work. On a number of occasions—as will be seen when reading these studies—I have cited or alluded to Dr. Hodge’s remarks in his three-volume *Systematic Theology*. These references have been acknowledged in the footnotes to the study text.

The Second Coming

Contents

BIBLE TRUTHS EXPLAINED	i
THE SECOND COMING	i
Contents	vi
Part 1	1
Synopsis: The Second Coming or Second Advent _____	1
Note 1 _____	1
Alternative Views _____	1
Note 2 _____	1
Some Taken, Some Left _____	1
Scripture References: Note 2 _____	1
Note 3 _____	2
Changed while Alive _____	2
Scripture References: Note 3 _____	2
Note 4 _____	3
Christ's Coming will be Visible, Glorious and Unexpected _____	3
Scripture References: Note 4 _____	3
Related Bible Truths _____	4
Part 2	5
Preliminary Remarks _____	5
Difficulty of Interpreting Prophetic Scripture _____	5
Historical Scripture _____	5
Prophetic Scripture _____	5
Example of Prophetic Foreshortening _____	5
Prophetic Scriptures Describe Events as a Whole _____	6
First Coming of Christ Misinterpreted _____	6
Prophetic Symbolism _____	7
Part 3	9
Doctrine of The Second Coming _____	9
The Millennium or One Thousand Years _____	9
Differing Views of the Millennium _____	10
Table 1 _____	10
1. The Pre-millennial View _____	10
2. The Post-millennial View _____	10
3. The Amillennial View _____	10
Part 4	11

Pre-Millennial View	11
Scriptural Basis for Pre-millennial View	11
Revelation Chapter 20 verses 1-6	11
Additional Scriptural Support Lacking	11
Objections to Pre-millennial View	13
Post-millennial View	16
Objections to Post-millennial View	16
Amillennial View	16
Part 5	19
The Second Coming	19
Principal Scripture Passages	19
Bible Passages Referring to the Second Coming	19
Table 2	19
Common Church Doctrine Regarding the Second Coming	19
Summary of Events Preceding the Second Coming	19
Table 3	19
Summary of Events Attending the Second Coming	20
Table 4	20
Part 6	23
Events Preceding the Lord's Second Coming (1)	23
1. The Universal Diffusion of the Gospel	23
2. The Conversion of Israel	23
3. The Antichrist or Man of Sin	24
Identity of Antichrist	24
Antichrist will Claim to be God	25
Antichrist will Deceive Many	26
Antichrist's Destruction	27
Part 7	29
Events Preceding the Lord's Second Coming (2)	29
4. The Great Tribulation and Apostasy	29
Pre-millennial View of the Great Tribulation	29
Objections to Pre-millennial View	29
Amillennial View of the Great Tribulation	31
God's People will be Preserved	32
The Great Apostasy or Falling Away	32
Many will Fall Away	33
The Underlying Reason for Falling Away	33

Part 8.....	35
Events Attending the Lord's Second Coming _____	35
The Lord's Coming will be Visible _____	35
The Parousia or Appearing _____	35
Christ will Come with His Saints _____	36
Accounts of the Lord's Second Coming _____	36
Accounts of the Lord's Second Coming _____	38
Table 5 _____	38
Matthew's Account _____	38
Mark's Account _____	38
Luke's Account _____	38
John's Account _____	38
One Taken, and the Other Left _____	39
The General Resurrection _____	39
Part 9.....	41
Events Following the Lord's Second Coming _____	41
The Last Judgment _____	41
Glorification of the Saints _____	41

Part 1

Synopsis: The Second Coming or Second Advent

At the second coming of the Lord in his glory, with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones, the Lord will send forth his angels to gather his elect from the ends of the earth. There will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. The bodies of those who have died in Christ will be raised and reunited with their immortal souls. These resurrected saints will then be caught up, together with those still alive, to meet the Lord in the air. Both the righteous and the wicked will appear before the judgment seat of Christ—although not necessarily at the same time. The Lord will then judge the righteous and reward them in proportion to their faithfulness to God. Those who have been unfaithful to God will lose their reward; but not their salvation. The righteous will be glorified, presented faultless and blameless before the throne of God with rejoicing, and will dwell with God and with the Lamb forever and ever. At the judgment seat of Christ, however, the Lord will judge the wicked and consign them to hell: that place of eternal torments prepared for the devil and the fallen angels.

Note 1

Alternative Views

We have based the above synopsis on that interpretation which assumes that all events attending and following the Lord's second coming will occur during one stage. Concerning the Last Judgment, this may conceivably be carried out over a prolonged period. There are, however, several alternative views regarding the sequence of events attending and following the Lord's second coming. We will briefly consider these alternative views on the pages that follow.

(See below under *Pre-millennial*, *Post-millennial*, and *Amillennial Views* respectively.)

Note 2

Some Taken, Some Left

At his glorious second coming, the Lord will send forth his angels to gather his elect from the ends of the earth, and from one end of heaven to the other. Two will be in the field: one will be taken, and the other left. Two will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken, and the other left. The elect (those comprising the true or invisible Church world-wide) will be taken. The lost (the remainder of fallen mankind, including many within the visible Church (i.e., the false professors)) will be left. This represents the harvest at the end of the age, when the angels will separate the righteous from the wicked for judgment. (Matt. 24:31; Mark 13:26-27; Luke 17:30-36)

Scripture References: Note 2

Matthew 24:31

⁽³¹⁾ And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (See vv.30-35)

Mark 13:24-27

⁽²⁴⁾ But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, ⁽²⁵⁾ And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the

powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. {*Isaiah 13:9-13; 34:1-4,8-10; Ezek. 32:7-8*}

- ⁽²⁶⁾ And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. ⁽²⁷⁾ And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. (See vv.21-37)

Luke 17:30-36

- ⁽³⁰⁾ Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. ⁽³¹⁾ In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. ⁽³²⁾ Remember Lot's wife.
- ⁽³³⁾ Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. ⁽³⁴⁾ I tell you, in that night there shall be two *men* in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. ⁽³⁵⁾ Two *women* shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. ⁽³⁶⁾ Two *men* shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. (See vv.26-37)

Note 3

Changed while Alive

Not all believers will have died when the Lord returns. Those who are alive at his coming will be changed or translated while they live. This change will take place as they are being caught up, together with those who sleep in Jesus, to meet the Lord in the air. Thus shall they ever be with the Lord. As previous examples of God's people being taken into his presence without passing through the veil of death, we need only consider Enoch and Elijah. The Bible states that 'Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.' Again, as regards Elijah, the Scripture tells us that God took him into heaven in a whirlwind. Elisha, who had been accompanying his master, Elijah, was suddenly separated from his master by a chariot of fire and by horses of fire. These signs attended Elijah's ascension into heaven in the whirlwind. (Gen. 5:24; 2 Kings 2:1,11; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:15-18)

Scripture References: Note 3

Genesis 5:23-24

- ⁽²³⁾ And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: ⁽²⁴⁾ And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him. (See v.22; see also Heb. 11:5)

Hebrews 11:5

- ⁽⁵⁾ By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. (See v.6)

2 Kings 2:11

⁽¹¹⁾ And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, *there appeared* a chariot of fire, and horses of fire,¹ and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. (See vv. 1-15)

1 Corinthians 15:51-52

⁽⁵¹⁾ Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,⁽⁵²⁾ In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (See vv. 53-55)

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

⁽¹³⁾ But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.⁽¹⁴⁾ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.⁽¹⁵⁾ For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.⁽¹⁶⁾ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:⁽¹⁷⁾ Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.⁽¹⁸⁾ Wherefore comfort one another with these words. (See also 1 Thess. 5:1-3)

Note 4

Christ's Coming will be Visible, Glorious and Unexpected

The Bible does not expressly teach a 'secret' rapture. Insofar as the resurrection is concerned, the only place where the Bible clearly implies a rapture is in Paul's First Letter to the church at Thessalonica. (1 Thess. 4:17.) According to the teaching of the Bible, Christ's second coming with his holy angels will be sudden and unexpected. This event, however, will be visible and glorious—not secret. The expression, 'like a thief in the night' does not refer to stealth or secrecy, but to unexpectedness and suddenness. The last trump will herald the arrival of the King of kings. All mankind will see him: for his glory will radiate to the ends of the earth—and the whole world will not be able to contain his glory. Myriads of holy angels will wait upon him. Lost mankind will wail because of his appearing. In their anguish and despair, they will cry out to the mountains and to the rocks to fall on them, and to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. For the Lord of glory who comes to gather his people home, also comes to judge the world in righteousness. (Mark 13:32-37; Luke 17:24; 1 Thess. 5:1-3; Rev. 1:7; 6:15-17)

Scripture References: Note 4

Mark 13:32-37

⁽³²⁾ But of that day and *that* hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.⁽³³⁾ Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.⁽³⁴⁾ *For the Son of man is* as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

¹ Some bright effulgence, which, in the eyes of the spectators, resembled these objects. [JFB]

⁽³⁵⁾ Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:
⁽³⁶⁾ Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. ⁽³⁷⁾ And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch. (See vv.21-31)

Luke 17:24

⁽²⁴⁾ For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one *part* under heaven, shineth unto the other *part* under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. (See vv.22-25)

1 Thessalonians 5:1-3

⁽¹⁾ But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. ⁽²⁾ For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. ⁽³⁾ For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

Revelation 1:7

⁽⁷⁾ Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they *also* which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. (See vv.4-8)

Revelation 6:15-17

⁽¹⁵⁾ And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;
⁽¹⁶⁾ And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:
⁽¹⁷⁾ For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?
(See vv.12-14)

Related Bible Truths

The doctrine of the second coming (or the second advent) relates closely to the resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked; to the Last Judgment, and to heaven and hell. When the Lord comes, he will raise the dead, and all mankind will appear before Christ's glorious judgment seat. The angels will separate the righteous from the wicked. Then, the Lord will judge each individual in each of the two categories according to their works.²

² See further on *Bible Truths Explained: Good Works; The Resurrection; The Last Judgment; Heaven; Hell*, by Gordon Lyons.

Part 2

Preliminary Remarks

Difficulty of Interpreting Prophetic Scripture

The details associated with the subject of eschatology (the study of the last things) are perhaps the most difficult to interpret correctly. Prophetic Scripture is not of the same nature as historical Scripture. Some of the differences between the two may be outlined as follows:

Historical Scripture

Historical Scripture is a plerarily inspired record of what has already taken place. As such, we possess a substantial amount of detail surrounding the precise nature of these events. For example, we know the details preceding, attending, and following the Noahic deluge. We know the details preceding, attending, and following the resurrection of Christ. These details are facts of historical Scripture: facts that can be substantiated by reliable and incontrovertible evidence. In the case of the deluge, we have the testimony of God's Word concerning the events preceding, during, and after, this catastrophic flood. In the case of the resurrection of Christ, this event too is attested to by the Word of God, and by the testimony of many competent and reliable witnesses.

The Word of God is sufficient, in and of itself, to substantiate every truth it contains—including the Noahic deluge, and the resurrection of Christ. God has testified to the veracity of these truths by causing them to be recorded in his Word by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. God cannot lie, nor can he cause error or inaccuracy to be recorded in his Word. In the original manuscripts or autographs, that Word was infallible and totally inerrant. The Word of God need only be correctly interpreted and understood.

Prophetic Scripture

Historical Scripture furnishes us with some degree of detail concerning occurrences from which we can construct a timetable of past events. *Prophetic* Scripture, however, has not been given with the intention of enabling us to construct a like timetable of future events. The nature of prophetic Scripture precludes this. Rather, the design of prophetic Scripture is to provide a general picture of future events, without necessarily preserving the perspective of that picture, or separating it into its constituent elements. Prophetic Scripture is often telescoped or foreshortened. This means, for example, that a particular prophecy may be seen as a single event, when in fact several distinct elements may have been merged into that one prophecy. In addition, these events may be separated from one another by a considerable period.

Example of Prophetic Foreshortening

As a single example of this kind of prophetic foreshortening, we cite the following passage from Isaiah. The Lord Jesus read this same passage in the synagogue at Nazareth, and applied the prophecy to himself:

Isaiah 61:1-2

⁽¹⁾ The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are* bound; ⁽²⁾ To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD ... (See vv.2b-3; cf. Luke 4:18-21)

Or, as this passage is rendered by the NIV:

Isaiah 61:1-2a

⁽¹⁾ “The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,³ ⁽²⁾ to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favour ...” (NIV)

When the Lord Jesus read this passage in the synagogue, he ended his reading with the words, “...to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favour...” (Isa. 61:2a; Luke 4:19; see vv.16-21). By stopping at this point in the prophecy, the Lord Jesus was omitting the following phrase: “...and the day of vengeance of our God...” (Isa. 61:2b) The prophet Isaiah had telescoped or merged two separate events into a single prophecy. Isaiah had spoken of the first coming of the Lord in salvation, and the second coming of the Lord in judgment, as though these events were to occur at the same time.

(We should note that, in the passage above, the slight variations between the text as written by Isaiah and that as quoted by Luke in his Gospel, reflects a variation between the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Old Testament. The rendering used by Luke indicates that the Lord was reading from the Greek Septuagint (LXX) version of the Old Testament—as was common practice at the time.)

Prophetic Scriptures Describe Events as a Whole

To illustrate further the nature of prophetic Scripture, we quote the following passage from Dr. Charles Hodge’s *Systematic Theology*:

“...In the Old Testament the Messianic period is described as a whole. The fact that the Messiah was to come and establish an everlasting kingdom which was to triumph over all opposition, and experience a glorious consummation, is clearly foretold. All these events were, so to speak, included in the same picture; but the perspective was not preserved.

“The prophecies were not intended to give the chronological order of the events foretold. Hence the consummation of the Messiah’s kingdom is depicted as in immediate proximity with his appearance in the flesh. This led almost all the Jews, and even the disciples of Christ themselves, before the day of Pentecost, to look for the immediate establishment of the Messiah’s kingdom in its glory.

“Such being the character of the Old Testament prophecies, it cannot be fairly inferred that they have as yet received their full accomplishment; or that they are now being fulfilled in the silent progress of the Gospel. They include the past and the present, but much remains to be accomplished in the future more in accordance with their literal meaning.”⁴

First Coming of Christ Misinterpreted

Not fully appreciating the telescoping of certain prophetic passages, the Jewish teachers misinterpreted the details associated with the coming of the Messiah. Concerning their mistaken notions of prophetic Scripture regarding the first coming of Christ, Dr. Hodge wrote:

³ Hebrew; Septuagint *the blind* [NIV footnote to Isa. 61:1]

⁴ C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 3 [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1871, 1977 reprint], p.797.

“...With regard to the first advent of Christ, the Old Testament prophecies rendered it certain that a great Redeemer was to appear; that he was to be a Prophet, Priest, and King; and that he would deliver his people from their sins, and from the evils under which they groaned; that he was to establish a kingdom which should ultimately absorb all the kingdoms of the earth; and that he would render all his people supremely happy and blessed.

“These predictions had the effect of turning the minds of the whole Jewish nation to the future, in the confident expectation that the Deliverer would come; of exciting desire for his advent; and of leading the pious portion of the people to prayerful preparation for that event.

“Nevertheless, of all the hundreds of thousands to whom these predictions of the Hebrew Scriptures were made known, not a single person—so far as appears—interpreted them aright. Yet, when fulfilled, we can almost construct a history of the events from these misunderstood predictions concerning them.

“Christ was indeed a king, but no such king as the world had ever seen, and such as no man expected. He was a priest; but the only priest who ever lived of whose priesthood he was himself the victim. He did establish a kingdom, but it was not of this world. It was foretold that Elias [Elijah] should first come and prepare the way of the Lord. He did come; but in a way in which no man did or could have anticipated.

“...The utter failure of the Old Testament Church in interpreting the prophecies relating to the first advent of Christ, should teach us to be modest and diffident in explaining those which relate to his second coming. We should be satisfied with the great truths which these prophecies unfold, and leave the details to be explained by the event.”⁵

Prophetic Symbolism

In explaining those passages of Scripture that contain symbolic or metaphorical elements, we must not go beyond what the Bible actually intends to teach or to portray. Again, we must not interpret those symbolic elements—as found in parts of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation, etc.—as though they were intended to be understood literally.

In certain of these symbolic passages, God's Word itself interprets the symbolism. Where this is not done, however, these passages of God's Word that contain symbolic or figurative language must always be interpreted in the light of what the Bible teaches elsewhere on the same subject. That is, we should interpret these symbolic passages by comparing them with related didactic or narrative portions of God's Word. Failure to observe this rule (*the analogy of Scripture*) is bound to lead to misunderstanding and misinterpretation of God's holy Word. This, in turn, may lead to the teaching of erroneous doctrine.

⁵ C. Hodge, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p.791.

Part 3

Doctrine of The Second Coming

The Millennium or One Thousand Years

The word, 'millennium' means *a thousand years* (from Latin, *mille* = thousand, and *annus* = year).

The idea of a *millennial reign* derives principally from Revelation chapter 20, verses 4-6. This passage says that Christ will reign with the resurrected martyrs for 1,000 years—hence the term, *millennium*. Many people understand this passage to teach that Christ will reign on earth for 1,000 years. This interpretation assumes that the phrase, *a thousand years*, is intended to be understood literally. This, however, would appear to be an unsafe assumption. Much of the language used in the Book of Revelation is symbolic, and is intended to be understood figuratively. The passage where this phrase occurs contains several elements that are clearly symbolic. It is, therefore, entirely possible that the expression, *a thousand years*, may be a symbolic term denoting a period of extended or indefinite duration.

Symbols are representative. They do not necessarily correspond in kind with the events or circumstances that they represent. Bearing this principle in mind, the present writer is not altogether convinced that the millennial reign of Christ should be understood of a reign of one thousand literal years.

If, however, we were to insist that this passage *should* or *must* be understood literally, then, logically, we must also insist on placing a literal interpretation on other similar examples. This would mean that the *key*, *the abyss*, and the *great chain*, spoken of in the same passage (Rev. 20:1), be understood of a literal key, a literal abyss, and a literal chain. But how can Satan—who is a spirit—be bound with a literal, physical chain?

Clearly, these symbols *represent* literal truths. They are not, however, literal truths themselves. For example, consider the following possible interpretation:

- The *key* represents *power and authority* (to open or close, to provide access or to exclude from access, etc).
- The *abyss* represents *the place of everlasting darkness*, unending despair, and torments.
- The *chain* represents *the binding and restraining of Satan* by the power and authority of God.

In view of the symbolism in this passage, is it not possible that the 1,000 years of this same passage represents a *period of extended duration* during which Christ reigns—without necessarily restricting this period to one thousand literal years?

Again, we must remember that—with the Lord—one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years are as one day. (2 Pet. 3:8.) In the personal view of this writer, therefore, it would not be wise for us to assume a millennial reign of 1,000 calendar years, *unless this can be proved beyond doubt from other (non-symbolic) passages of God's Word*. We must interpret the book of Revelation in the light of the didactic passages of Scripture (i.e., the Gospels and the Epistles), and not vice versa. If, however, these didactic passages support a literal 1,000 year reign, then the literal interpretation must stand.

Differing Views of the Millennium

Concerning the time of the millennial reign, there are three principal views. We have summarised each of these views below:

Table 1

View	Summary
1. The Pre-millennial View	According to the <i>pre-millennial</i> view, at the second coming of Christ, the church (comprising true believers alone) will be raptured or caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Christ will then reign on earth, together with his saints, for a thousand years. After this millennial reign has ended, the Lord will then raise unbelievers from the dead to appear before the great white throne at the Last Judgment. The pre-millennial view assumes that there will be two resurrections: firstly, the resurrection of believers (the true church); and, secondly—after Christ's 1,000 year reign on earth—the resurrection of unbelievers.
2. The Post-millennial View	According to the <i>post-millennial</i> view, the second coming of Christ will not take place until after the millennial age (hence, 'post-millennial'). Before Christ's second coming, and during the millennial age, there will be a period of unparalleled peace on earth when the Gospel will prevail throughout the world. The second coming of Christ will occur at the end of this 'golden age', and it will be followed by the resurrection, and the Last Judgment.
3. The Amillennial View	According to the <i>amillennial</i> view, Christ is now reigning in heavenly glory, together with all those departed believers who are now with him in glory. The period designated <i>1,000 years</i> is understood to be a symbolic figure for a very long but unspecified period of time. The amillennial view holds that—at the second coming of Christ—there will be a general resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. The Lord, however, will send forth his angels to separate the righteous from the wicked. Then, each individual will appear before the judgment seat of Christ, or the judgment seat of God. Since already separated, the righteous and the wicked will not necessarily appear before Christ for judgment at exactly the same time.

We will consider each of the views outlined above more fully on the pages that follow.

Part 4

Pre-Millennial View

According to this view, Christ—at his second coming—will take his church out of the world. Since the Lord's second coming is expected to occur *before* the commencement of his millennial reign, this view is termed 'pre-millennial.'

This view assumes that, at the second coming of Christ, there will be a resurrection that is confined to believers alone. In other words, at the *parousia* or appearing of the Lord, the dead in Christ—and they alone—will be raised. Then, together with those believers still alive at the time, they will be caught up (or 'raptured') to meet the Lord in the air. (1 Thess. 4:17.) The remainder of fallen mankind, it is said, will not be raised until the end of Christ's millennial reign on earth. Having thus raptured his church, Christ will then establish his millennial kingdom. During this time, the Lord Jesus will reign on earth—together with his resurrected saints (the church)—for one thousand years. Throughout this millennial reign, Satan will remain bound. (Rev. 20:2-3)

Scriptural Basis for Pre-millennial View

Revelation Chapter 20 verses 1-6

The passage of Scripture that most seems to favour the pre-millennial view, is Revelation chapter 20. This passage says:

Revelation 20:1-7

- ⁽¹⁾ And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. ⁽²⁾ And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him **a thousand years**, ⁽³⁾ And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till **the thousand years** should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.
- ⁽⁴⁾ And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and *I saw* the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ **a thousand years**. ⁽⁵⁾ But the rest of the dead lived not again until **the thousand years** were finished. This *is* the first resurrection. ⁽⁶⁾ Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him **a thousand years**. ⁽⁷⁾ And when **the thousand years** are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison. (Bold emphasis added; see vv.8-15)

Additional Scriptural Support Lacking

If this passage had indeed been speaking of a millennial reign of Christ on this present earth with his saints, and before the Last Judgment, then we would expect that teaching to find additional support elsewhere in the Word of God. This, however, is where we encounter a very serious problem: the pre-millennial interpretation of the above passage appears to have no clear parallel anywhere else in Scripture. Granted, in his first epistle to the Thessalonians, the apostle Paul teaches that the Church will be

caught up ('raptured') to meet the Lord in the air. (1 Thess. 4:16-17.) However, in his second epistle to the same church, this apostle also teaches that all mankind will be raised and judged at the coming of the Lord. (2 Thess. 1:7-10) Thus, the inspired apostle says:

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

⁽¹⁶⁾ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ⁽¹⁷⁾ Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (See vv.13-18)

2 Thessalonians 1:6-10

⁽⁶⁾ Seeing *it is* a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; ⁽⁷⁾ And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, ⁽⁸⁾ In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: ⁽⁹⁾ Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; ⁽¹⁰⁾ When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day. (See vv.1-12; see also 2 Thess. 2ff)

It cannot be argued that the resurrection of the righteous and the righteous of the wicked—together with the final judgment of both groups—are not concurrent events. The analogy of Scripture requires that these events be considered as concurrent. We should not consider the resurrection of the righteous (the Church), and the resurrection of the wicked (the remainder of fallen mankind), as consecutive events. That is, we should not think of them as events that are separated from one another by a period of 1,000 years or so. (Cf. Matt. 13:30,37-43; 25:31-46)

Concerning the sequence of events, God's Word says:

Matthew 13:30

⁽³⁰⁾ Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn. (See vv.24-29)

Matthew 13:37-43

⁽³⁷⁾ He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; ⁽³⁸⁾ The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked *one*; ⁽³⁹⁾ The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. ⁽⁴¹⁾ The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; ⁽⁴²⁾ And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. ⁽⁴³⁾ Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. (See vv.24-30)

Matthew 25:31-34

⁽³¹⁾ When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: ⁽³²⁾ And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats: ⁽³³⁾ And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

⁽³⁴⁾ Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: (See vv.35-40)

Matthew 25:41

⁽⁴¹⁾ Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: (See vv.42-45)

Matthew 25:46

⁽⁴⁶⁾ And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

All doctrinal interpretations must be sustained by supporting evidence from other passages of Scripture. However, not only has Revelation 20:1-7 no clear additional support from elsewhere in Scripture for the pre-millennial interpretation, but there are also some major difficulties attending the pre-millennial view. We cannot ignore these difficulties.

Objections to Pre-millennial View

To begin with, the kingdom of Christ is a heavenly and spiritual kingdom—not an earthly and secular one. Christ himself said that his kingdom was not of this world, thus dispelling the false notions of those who sought a secular Messiah and a secular kingdom.

John 18:33

⁽³³⁾ Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? (Cf. Luke 23:2)

John 18:36-37

⁽³⁶⁾ Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. (Cf. Matt. 26:64; John 6:15)

⁽³⁷⁾ Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. (See vv.28-40)

At the present time, Christ is reigning in glory at his Father's right hand. The glorified saints may indeed be reigning with him—but these believers are not on earth. At the second coming, however, the saints will participate with Christ in ruling and judging the world.

Concerning the fact that the saints will rule with Christ, God's Word says:

1 Corinthians 6:1-2

⁽¹⁾ Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? ⁽²⁾ Do ye not know that the saints shall judge ⁶ the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? (See vv.1-8)

2 Timothy 2:12

⁽¹²⁾ If we suffer, we shall also reign with *him*: if we deny *him*, he also will deny us: (See vv.11-13)

Revelation 3:21

⁽²¹⁾ To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. (See vv.19-22)

Revelation 5:10

⁽¹⁰⁾ And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. (See v.9)

Revelation 20:4

⁽⁴⁾ And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and *I saw* the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (See vv.1-7)

Following the Last Judgment, the glorified saints will reign with Christ over the new heaven and the new earth. This, however, will not occur until after the renovation of all things—including the renovation or renewal of this present earth. (Cf. Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:29-30.) In the meantime, it would seem most improbable that Christ's present heavenly reign should be localised on earth—even for a thousand years—while the earth remains in its present unrenewed condition.

Concerning the regeneration or renovation of all things, it is written:

Matthew 19:28

⁽²⁸⁾ And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (See vv.23-30; cf. Luke 22:29-30; Acts 3:21)

2 Peter 3:10-13

⁽¹⁰⁾ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

⁶ judge: i.e., *rule*, including judgment; as assessors of Christ. Matt. 19:28, *judging*, i.e., *ruling over*. [JFB]

⁽¹¹⁾ *Seeing then that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of *persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, ⁽¹²⁾ Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? ⁽¹³⁾ Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. (See vv.1-9; see also Rev. 21:1-5)

Another serious difficulty regarding the pre-millennial view is the implication of a double resurrection: firstly, of the Church; and, secondly—a thousand years later—of the rest of mankind. The reference quoted above from Revelation chapter 20, may appear—at first sight—to support the pre-millennial view. However, if we were to accept this interpretation, it would contradict the Lord's clear teaching on this subject. In that teaching, the Lord asserts that—at his coming in glory—both the righteous and the wicked will be raised. The angels will separate them into two distinct groups. Each individual in each group will then be judged—beginning with the righteous. Following the judgment of the righteous, this group will then join with their Lord in judging both the wicked and the fallen angels.

In his teaching on the subject, the Lord Jesus does not appear to make any provision for a one thousand year gap between the resurrection of the righteous and the righteous of the wicked. According to the Lord's teaching, and to the teaching of the apostles, both the righteous and the wicked will be raised, separated from one another, and judged at virtually the same time. Concerning these things, God's Word says:

Matthew 13:40-43

⁽⁴⁰⁾ As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. ⁽⁴¹⁾ The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; ⁽⁴²⁾ And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. ⁽⁴³⁾ Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. (See vv.24-30)

Matthew 13:47-50

⁽⁴⁷⁾ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: ⁽⁴⁸⁾ Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. ⁽⁴⁹⁾ So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, ⁽⁵⁰⁾ And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 25:31-34

⁽³¹⁾ When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: ⁽³²⁾ And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats: ⁽³³⁾ And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

⁽³⁴⁾ Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: (See vv.35-40)

Matthew 25:41

⁽⁴¹⁾ Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: (See vv.42-45)

Matthew 25:46

⁽⁴⁶⁾ And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Post-millennial View

Those who hold to the post-millennial view, believe that the second coming of Christ will not occur until after the millennium—hence the term, ‘*post-millennial*.’ According to this view, the millennium is understood to involve a period of unparalleled peace on earth before Christ’s second coming. The adherents of the post-millennial view believe that the preaching of the Gospel at the present time will result eventually in a period when the Gospel will be supreme among the nations. This conquering of the world by the Gospel, will—it is believed—result in the establishment of the millennium. Following this millennium, Christ is expected to appear the second time.

Objections to Post-millennial View

Perhaps the most serious objection to the post-millennial view is the idea of a ‘golden age’ before the second coming of the Lord. The Lord Jesus explicitly told his followers not to expect such a time. Rather, they would hear of wars and rumours of wars—and of disasters, plagues, and famines in various places—until the end of time. Again, an age of peace and tranquillity before the Lord’s second advent is contrary to the teaching of the Bible concerning the coming of the man of sin or the Antichrist. According to the Scriptures, the period shortly preceding the second advent of Christ will be a time of great persecution, trial, and tribulation. On these grounds alone, the post-millennial view must be rejected as unscriptural.

Amillennial View

Those who hold to the amillennial view, do not believe that the 1,000 years referred to in Revelation chapter 20, need be understood as referring to a literal 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth—hence the term, ‘*amillennial*.’ Rather, it is believed that Christ is presently reigning in heaven over all creation; and that—following his second coming and the consummation of the age—the Lord Jesus will continue to reign over the renovated or regenerated heaven and earth.

According, then, to the amillennial interpretation, the 1,000 years (millennium) is to be understood figuratively of a period of very long or indefinite duration. Although differing views obtain, this ‘*millennial*’ period may be said to extend from Christ’s ascension and exaltation to his second advent; after which the Lord will reign forever over the new heaven and the new earth, together with all his redeemed people. According to the amillennial view of the Lord’s second coming, there will be a general resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. In the process of gathering the elect, the righteous will be separated from the wicked and the former will be ‘*raptured*’ to meet the Lord in the air. Both the righteous and the wicked will appear before the judgment seat of Christ (or of God). Judgment will begin with the righteous.

This view appears to harmonise more closely than either of the others with the Lord’s teaching about the sheep and the goats (the righteous and the wicked) as recorded in Matthew chapter 25. It also accords with the Lord’s teaching elsewhere, and with the teaching of the apostles.

In the parable of the sheep and the goats, the Lord says:

Matthew 25:31-34

⁽³¹⁾ When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: ⁽³²⁾ And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats: ⁽³³⁾ And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. (See vv.34-45)

Matthew 25:46

⁽⁴⁶⁾ And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

From the foregoing passage, and from other related passages, it is evident that both the righteous and the wicked will be raised at the second coming of Christ to appear before his glorious judgment throne. This, of course, means that there can be no resurrection of believers one thousand years before the resurrection of unbelievers. Both groups are raised at the same time, and both groups are judged during the same overall period. Following the Final Judgment, the wicked will be consigned to hell (or the lake of fire), and the righteous will receive their promised inheritance in glory. The righteous will then continue to live and reign with Christ forever and ever, over the rejuvenated physical universe.⁷

⁷ See further on *Bible Truths Explained: The Last Judgment; Heaven; Hell*, by Gordon Lyons.

Part 5

The Second Coming

Principal Scripture Passages

The chief Scriptural accounts of the second coming and its connected events are given below. Each account should be studied carefully, and compared with the others.

Bible Passages Referring to the Second Coming

Table 2

Subject	Teaching	References
Signs preceding and attending the second coming.	Christ's appearing will be glorious and visible to the whole world, but totally unexpected.	Matt. 24:1-51 Mark 13:1-37 Luke 17:20-37; 21:5-36
Christ will appear, without warning, while people are involved in the pursuits and activities of their everyday lives.	As it was before the flood, and before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, so will it be before the Lord's second coming.	Matt. 24:36-39 Luke 17:26-30 2 Pet. 3:3-10
Parable of the ten virgins. <i>(Preparedness)</i>	Be ready for the coming of the Lord—lest you be excluded from his kingdom.	Matt. 25:1-13
Parable of the watchful servants. <i>(Preparedness)</i>	Be ready by day and by night for the coming of the Lord.	Luke 12:35-40
Parable of the unprepared servant. <i>(Unpreparedness)</i>	Assigned to a place with the unbelievers at the coming of the Lord.	Luke 12:42-48

Common Church Doctrine Regarding the Second Coming

Concerning the second coming, the common Church doctrine is that there will be a second, personal, visible and glorious advent of the Son of God. The events preceding and attending this advent are summarised separately in Tables 2 and 3 below.

Summary of Events Preceding the Second Coming

Table 3

	Preceding Events	References
1.	The universal diffusion of the Gospel, or the	Matt. 24:14; 28:18-20

	ingathering of the elect. It is the vocation or calling of the Christian Church to preach the Gospel to all nations.	Mark 13:10; 16:15-16 Luke 24:46-48
2.	The conversion of Israel. This could prove to be a large scale (or possibly, national) event. However, it seems more likely that the Lord will gather his elect from among the Jewish people; although perhaps in much larger numbers than at present.	Rom. 11:5,11-12,23-31
3.	The appearing of the Antichrist or man of sin.	2 Thess. 2:3-12 1 John 2:18-23; 4:1-3 2 John 7
4.	The great tribulation; and the great apostasy, rebellion, and defection from the Church.	Dan. 12:1 Matt. 10:21-23; 24:9-13,21-25 Mark 13:12-13 Luke 21:12-19 1 Tim. 4:1 2 Pet. 2:1-22 Jude 17-19

Summary of Events Attending the Second Coming

Table 4

	Attendant Events	References
1.	The resurrection of the dead (righteous and wicked).	Dan. 12:2-3 Matt. 13:30; 24:37-41 John 5:28-29 Acts 24:15 1 Cor. 15:12-55 1 Thess. 4:13-18 Rev. 20:13
2.	The Last or Final Judgment.	Matt. 13:36-43,47-50; 25:31-46 2 Thess. 1:6-10 Jude 14-15 Rev. 20:11-15
3.	The end of the world, and the renovation of the universe.	Isa. 34:4

		Matt. 24:29
		Heb. 1:10-12
		2 Pet. 3:10-12
		Rev. 20:11
4.	The consummation of Christ's kingdom.	Isa. 11:6-9; 35:8-10
		Rev. 11:15-19; 19:6-9; 21:1-5,22-27; 22:1-5

The events listed in Table 2 will be considered below in more detail. The events listed in Table 3 above are covered more extensively elsewhere in this series.⁸

⁸ See further on *Bible Truths Explained: The Resurrection; The Last Judgment; Heaven; Hell*, by Gordon Lyons

Part 6

Events Preceding the Lord's Second Coming (1)

1. The Universal Diffusion of the Gospel

Before the second advent, the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ will be preached as a testimony to all nations. This, however, does not mean that everyone without exception must personally hear the Gospel. Rather, it means that the Gospel must diffused or spread abroad among all nations—although not necessarily to all individuals. Thus, the Scripture says:

Matthew 24:14

⁽¹⁴⁾ And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. (See vv.1-13; see also Matt. 28:18-20)

Mark 13:10

⁽¹⁰⁾ And the gospel must first be published among all nations. (See vv.1-9; see also Mark 16:15-16)

At the present time, the Gospel is in fact reaching all nations. This is being accomplished partly through the work of missionaries on the field, and partly through Christian radio and television broadcasting stations. These stations are transmitting the Gospel around the world in many different languages and dialects. By missionary endeavour; by world-wide Christian broadcasting; by Christian resources on the Internet; by the preaching of the Word in local churches; by the distribution of the Scriptures in many countries around the world, and by various other ways, God has been gathering in the full number of his elect (i.e., the true or invisible church world wide).

2. The Conversion of Israel

God set his love upon Israel and chose or elected that nation to be his own special and holy people. (Deut. 7:6-11) However, because of their persistent unbelief, unfaithfulness, and hardness of heart, Israel has come under the Lord's discipline. This had resulted in Israel being cut off from the true church of God—but not totally, and not finally. God's purposes in election must stand. His gifts and his call are irrevocable. He has chosen Israel; and although, at the present time, they have been set aside—except for a remnant—yet Israel will be restored to God. To this end, the Scripture says:

Romans 11:25-27

⁽²⁵⁾ For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. ⁽²⁶⁾ And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

⁽²⁷⁾ For this *is* my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. {*Isaiah 59:20,21; 27:9; Jer. 31:33,34*} (See Rom. 11:1-24)

The above passage does not imply that every individual will be saved. But it does imply that many within the Jewish nation will repent and acknowledge Jesus the Son of God as being the true Messiah and promised Deliverer.

Again, concerning Israel, the Scripture says:

Romans 11:28-29

⁽²⁸⁾ As concerning the gospel, *they are* enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, *they are* beloved for the fathers' sakes. ⁽²⁹⁾ For the gifts and calling of God *are* without repentance. (See vv.25-36)

Concerning the conversion of Israel, the common Church doctrine is that this event will occur before the second coming of Christ. However, those of the Lord's people who hold to the pre-millennial view of Christ's second advent, and who believe that Christ will set up an earthly kingdom over which he will rule for a thousand years, believe that the conversion of Israel will not occur until after Christ has returned and has set up this kingdom on earth.

3. The Antichrist or Man of Sin

Thus far, we have seen that—before Christ's second coming—the Gospel must be preached as a witness to all nations. We have seen too that Israel (or a sizeable proportion of Israel) will be brought to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. However, the Bible makes it very clear that there are yet two more significant events that must take place before the Lord's second advent. These are (1) the great apostasy or falling away from the church; and (2) the revealing of the man of sin or the Antichrist. The Antichrist or man of sin spoken of in the Scriptures refers to one specific person of extreme wickedness, whose coming will be according to Satan (or, with satanic power). His appearing in the world will be accompanied by many impressive—but deceptive—signs and wonders, and by counterfeit miracles.

Identity of Antichrist

In his first epistle, the apostle John makes mention of many 'antichrists' who—at that time—were already in the world. Thus, the apostle writes:

1 John 2:18-19

⁽¹⁸⁾ Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. ⁽¹⁹⁾ They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. (See vv.15-17; see 1 John 4:3)

1 John 2:20-23

⁽²⁰⁾ But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. ⁽²¹⁾ I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. ⁽²²⁾ Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. ⁽²³⁾ Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. (See vv.24-27)

The apostle Paul, however, in his second epistle to the church at Thessalonica, does not use the term *antichrist*. Rather, Paul refers to this evil personage as *the man of lawlessness* [NIV] (*the man of sin* [KJV]); *the lawless one* [NIV] (*or the Wicked* [i.e., *wicked one*] [KJV]).

Thus, the apostle Paul writes:

2 Thessalonians 2:3

⁽³⁾ Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; (See vv.1-4; see also Dan. 7:8,25; 11:36)

2 Thessalonians 2:8

⁽⁸⁾ And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: (See vv.5-12)

The Antichrist, however, is not Satan. Paul makes this evident in the same epistle when he clearly distinguishes the man of sin from Satan. Thus, the apostle declares:

2 Thessalonians 2:9

⁽⁹⁾ *Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, (See vv.10-12; cf. Matt. 24:24)

Over the centuries, a number of different views concerning the identity of the Antichrist have been put forward. In the early church, the man of sin was considered by some to be the line of Roman emperors. The Emperor Nero, in particular, was thought to be the fulfilment of the prophecies concerning the Antichrist; undoubtedly, because of Nero's acts of great cruelty and barbarism toward professing Christians: many of whom died at his hands. Others believed that the Antichrist was represented by the papacy, or by the successive line of popes. This view became common after the Reformation, and it is still held in some quarters. However, this view does not enjoy the same degree of support as once it did.

Antichrist will Claim to be God

According to the teaching of the Bible, the Antichrist or man of sin will not appear in the world until the end time: i.e., immediately before the second coming of Christ. When he is revealed, the man of sin will exalt himself as God in the temple or sanctuary of God, blasphemously claiming and receiving divine honours and worship from a grossly deceived and deluded people. (2 Thess. 2:10-12)

Concerning these matters, the apostle Paul says:

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

⁽³⁾ Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; ⁽⁴⁾ Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. (See vv.1-2; see also Dan. 7:8,25; 11:36; Rev. 13:6)

The prophet Daniel had also foretold the coming of such a blasphemous personage:

Daniel 11:36

⁽³⁶⁾ And the king⁹ shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. (See vv.37-45)

⁹ *The king*: i.e., Antiochus Epiphanes in the first instance; antitypically and mainly, Antichrist. [JFB]

In his prophecy, Daniel had been speaking about the one who would foreshadow or prefigure the Antichrist: i.e., Antiochus IV Epiphanes of Syria. Antiochus Epiphanes was responsible for desecrating the temple of God in Jerusalem in 168 BC by setting up the 'abomination of desolation'—possibly, a statue of the Olympian god, Zeus. He was also responsible for committing sacrilege in that temple by causing swine to be sacrificed on God's holy altar in utter defiance of God's law.

Concerning these events, it is recorded in the books of the Maccabees:

1 Maccabees 1:54 KJV:

⁽⁵⁴⁾ Now the fifteenth day of the month Casleu [c. December], in the hundred forty and fifth year, they set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar, and builded idol altars throughout the cities of Juda on every side; (See vv.20-64)

And:

2 Maccabees 6:1-2 KJV:

⁽¹⁾ Not long after this the king sent an old man of Athens to compel the Jews to depart from the laws of their fathers, and not to live after the laws of God: ⁽²⁾ And to pollute also the temple in Jerusalem, and to call it the temple of Jupiter Olympius; and that in Garizim, of Jupiter the Defender of strangers, as they did desire that dwelt in the place. (See vv.3-6)

Or, as rendered by the RSV:

2 Maccabees 6:1-2

⁽¹⁾ Not long after this, the king sent an Athenian senator to compel the Jews to forsake the laws of their fathers and cease to live by the laws of God, ⁽²⁾ and also to pollute the temple in Jerusalem and call it the temple of Olympian Zeus.¹⁰

However, in the prophecy of Daniel quoted above (Dan. 11:36), Daniel is speaking more particularly of the one whom Antiochus IV Epiphanes prefigured: namely, the Antichrist. When he is revealed, the Antichrist will desecrate God's sanctuary, and will set himself up within the sanctuary, claiming the divine honours, prerogatives, and worship that belong to Almighty God alone.

Antichrist will Deceive Many

Because of their stubborn refusal to believe the truth, and so be saved, many people will be deceived by Antichrist's satanically induced ability to perform miraculous signs and counterfeit miracles. In their deluded state of mind, they will follow the man of sin—or the man of lawlessness—and worship him. To this end, the Scripture says:

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12

⁽⁹⁾ *Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, ⁽¹⁰⁾ And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. ⁽¹¹⁾ And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: ⁽¹²⁾ That they all might be

¹⁰ *Zeus (Gk. myth.):* the supreme god, whose epithet is 'father' and whose name means 'sky'. He was the god of weather and atmospheric phenomena (rain, thunder, etc.), protector and ruler of the family, son of Cronus whom he dethroned after being brought up in Crete. The Romans identified him with Jupiter. [Oxford Reference Dictionary]

damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.
(See vv.5-8; cf. Matt. 24:24)

These people have hardened themselves by rejecting the saving truth of God's Word. More especially, they have rejected the truth concerning the One who is the way, the truth, and the life. Instead of loving and embracing the truth of God, they have chosen to love and cherish the lie of Satan. They have taken pleasure in unrighteousness. Consequently, God has judicially hardened them so that they are no longer able to discern truth from error—or the truth from the lie—i.e., the lie that the man of sin is God.

Antichrist's Destruction

When the Lord comes in his glory, he will utterly destroy the man of sin with the splendour of his appearing. Thus, God's Word says:

2 Thessalonians 2:8

⁽⁸⁾ And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: (See vv.5-12)

Revelation 19:15

⁽¹⁵⁾ And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: *{Psalm 2:9}* and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

Revelation 19:20-21

⁽²⁰⁾ And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshiped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. ⁽²¹⁾ And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh. (See vv.1-19)

The awesome splendour of Christ's second coming, and of the outpouring of his righteous wrath upon the ungodly, is further illustrated by the apostle Paul in his letter to the church at Thessalonica:

2 Thessalonians 1:6-10

⁽⁶⁾ Seeing *it is* a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; ⁽⁷⁾ And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, ⁽⁸⁾ In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: ⁽⁹⁾ Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; ⁽¹⁰⁾ When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day. (See vv.1-12; see also 1 Thess. 2ff)

Part 7

Events Preceding the Lord's Second Coming (2)

4. The Great Tribulation and Apostasy

A period of great tribulation is frequently associated with the events preceding the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersal of the Jewish nation. This occurred in AD 70 when Jerusalem was surrounded by the Roman army under Titus. Eventually, the city was taken; the temple was desecrated by the idolatrous Roman standards and then both temple and city were destroyed. (Matt. 24:21-24; see also Josephus) However, by passing on to connect the events of that period of tribulation with the imminence of his second coming, it would seem that the Lord Jesus was also speaking of another and greater period of tribulation. There is some disagreement among interpreters as to the exact nature and timing of this period, but we will consider a few of these views below.

Pre-millennial View of the Great Tribulation

Those who believe in a double advent of Christ (firstly, for the church; and, secondly—a thousand years later—for the rest of mankind), believe that the period of great tribulation will not occur until after the removal of the church from the world. This would mean that the wicked alone would be exposed to this period of great trial and distress.

Objections to Pre-millennial View

The pre-millennial view of the great tribulation is contrary to the Word of God in the following points:

1. The period of tribulation described in the Bible clearly involves the true church—together with the rest of mankind. Thus, God's Word says:

Matthew 24:9-14

⁽⁹⁾ Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. ⁽¹⁰⁾ And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. ⁽¹¹⁾ And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. ⁽¹²⁾ And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

⁽¹³⁾ But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. ⁽¹⁴⁾ And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. (See vv.1-8)

Revelation 13:1

⁽¹⁾ And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast ¹¹ rise up out of the sea, ¹² having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. (See vv.2-6)

¹¹ *beast*: possibly, a world power.

¹² *sea*: possibly, of mankind.

Revelation 13:7-8

⁽⁷⁾ And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. ⁽⁸⁾ And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Revelation 13:10

⁽¹⁰⁾ He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints. (See vv.9-18)

The tribulation is spoken of as a time of great persecution of the true people of God, or of the elect. But this implies that the elect are still present in the world. Thus, God's Word says:

Matthew 24:21-25

⁽²¹⁾ For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. ⁽²²⁾ And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. ⁽²³⁾ Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here *is* Christ, or there; believe *it* not. ⁽²⁴⁾ For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect. ⁽²⁵⁾ Behold, I have told you before. (See vv.15-35)

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

⁽³⁾ Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away¹³ first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; ⁽⁴⁾ Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. (See vv.1-7)

2 Thessalonians 2:8-12

⁽⁸⁾ And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: ⁽⁹⁾ *Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, ⁽¹⁰⁾ And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. ⁽¹¹⁾ And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: ⁽¹²⁾ That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (See vv.13-15)

The tribulation is directly associated with the church. But, once more, this makes it abundantly plain that the church is still present in the world. At this point, there has been no resurrection of the righteous and the wicked, and no rapture of believers. The great tribulation precedes the Lord's second coming, and the general resurrection. It does not follow it.

¹³ a *falling away* (NIV, the rebellion): Gk., 'the falling away,' or 'apostasy.' [JFB]

Again, God's Word says:

Daniel 12:1-2

⁽¹⁾ And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation *even* to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. ⁽²⁾ And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame *and* everlasting contempt. (See vv.3-13; cf. v.1b with Matt. 24:21)

Revelation 7:1-3

⁽¹⁾ And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. ⁽²⁾ And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, ⁽³⁾ Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. (See vv.4-8)

Revelation 7:9-10

⁽⁹⁾ After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; ⁽¹⁰⁾ And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. (See vv.11-12)

Revelation 7:13-15

⁽¹³⁾ And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

⁽¹⁴⁾ And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest.

And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation,¹⁴ and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ⁽¹⁵⁾ Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. (See vv.16-17)

It cannot be objected that the believers spoken of during the great tribulation do not constitute the whole church of God, but only those who have become believers after the second advent of Christ for the church. This would imply that a 'second chance' will be afforded to some of mankind to repent and believe the gospel; and that these 'post advent' converts will be taken into glory only after they have come through the great tribulation.

Amillennial View of the Great Tribulation

Those who believe that the coming of the Lord will occur in one stage only, believe that the great tribulation will take place shortly before the Lord's second advent. Throughout the centuries—and until the 19th or early 20th century—this has been the commonly accepted church doctrine on the subject. The great tribulation is often seen as a period in which the whole world will be under the most severe, and satanically induced, oppression and wickedness. This is connected with the appearing or revealing of

¹⁴ *great tribulation* (NIV, the great tribulation): Gk., 'the great tribulation'; 'the tribulation, the great one'. [JFB]

the man of sin or the Antichrist. The Bible speaks of those days as being 'shortened' for the sake of the elect. Since the elect constitute the true church of God world wide, then clearly this period of tribulation must occur before the coming of the Lord in his glory.

God's People will be Preserved

Concerning the great tribulation, the prophet Daniel said:

Daniel 12:1-2

⁽¹⁾ And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation *even* to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. ⁽²⁾ And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame *and* everlasting contempt. (See vv.3-4)

Concerning this time of unrivalled distress which will precede the second coming of the Lord and the general resurrection, the Lord himself said:

Matthew 24:21-22

⁽²¹⁾ For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. ⁽²²⁾ And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. (See vv.15-35)

While, in the first instance, this passage may have referred to the then coming destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman army, the context and the analogy of Scripture demand a much wider application. The time of tribulation experienced by the believers in AD 70 will be repeated on a world-wide scale before Christ's second coming.

The Great Apostasy or Falling Away

Associated with the revealing of the man of sin and the great tribulation, will be the great apostasy; i.e., the falling away from, and outright rebellion against, the church. This does not imply that any truly regenerated believers will apostatise or be lost—for the elect of God can never be lost. However, it does imply that there will be such a time of trial and distress as to put the saints of God under the most severe hardships, temptations, and difficulties.

During this time, God's people will be exposed to some very great perils and dangers. But the grace that brought them safely into God's kingdom through faith in his Son will continue to keep God's people safe in this hour of trial. For, as the apostle Peter says, they are being kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Pet. 1:5)

Many will Fall Away

In his second epistle to the church at Thessalonica, Paul says:

2 Thessalonians 2:3

⁽³⁾ Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away¹⁵ first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; (See vv.1-5)

During this time of great tribulation, however, large numbers of people within the visible church will abandon their profession. This will include many church attendees and nominal 'Christians'. It will also include many who have professed faith in Christ, but who failed to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit, and who have failed to live a life consistent with their profession. Again, it will include many who have been involved in some form of church work, service or activity in the name of Christ—including certain eminent or prominent church leaders—but to whom Christ will say on the day of judgment,

Matthew 7:23b

^(23b) ...I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. (See vv.15-23a)

The Underlying Reason for Falling Away

The reason why these people will forsake their profession, apostatise from the church, or ultimately be disowned by Christ, is because none of them had ever truly been regenerated and justified by the grace of God. They may have had all the outward appearances of being Christians, or of being pious or godly individuals, but they did not have the inward seal of the Holy Spirit. They may have had every appearance of being righteous, but they lacked the righteousness that comes from God. Like many of the very religious Pharisees of Jesus' day, they lacked the new birth and they lacked an inwardly sanctified life.

Concerning those who will apostatise from the faith, the Scripture says:

1 Timothy 4:1

⁽¹⁾ Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; (See vv.2-7)

At this time, many who claim to belong to Christ will abandon their outward profession and return to the world. Then it will be revealed who are the elect of God, and who are not. And even among the true people of God, the love of many will grow cold. (Matt. 24:12) The very elect would be deceived by the false doctrines and practises of the time, if it were not for the fact that the Lord will cut short this period of great tribulation by his glorious appearing. (Matt. 24:22,30-31)

¹⁵ a *falling away* (NIV, the rebellion): Gk., 'the falling away,' or 'apostasy,' viz., *the one of which Paul says: ...when I was with you I used to tell you...* (v.5). It is also the one of which the Lord himself gave some intimation. (Matt. 24:10-12; John 5:43)

Part 8

Events Attending the Lord's Second Coming

In the previous section, we considered some of the events that will precede the second coming of the Lord Jesus. In the section that follows, we will turn our attention to those events that will attend the second coming of the Lord.

The Lord's Coming will be Visible

The Scriptures speak of a 'rapture' but they do not teach a *secret* rapture of the saints. Rather, the second coming of the Lord will be clearly visible to all. At his appearing (*parousia*), the Lord's majestic glory will shine forth in all its hallowed brilliance around the world. As the Scripture says:

Matthew 24:23

⁽²³⁾ Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here *is* Christ, or there; believe *it* not.

Matthew 24:27

⁽²⁷⁾ For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. (See vv.21-31)

Momentous cosmic disturbances will attend the appearing of the Lord. These cosmic disturbances can hardly pass unnoticed by all the people of the earth. Thus, the Scripture says:

Luke 21:25-27

⁽²⁵⁾ And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; ⁽²⁶⁾ Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. ⁽²⁷⁾ And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. (See vv.20-31)

There will be nothing secret, therefore, about these eventful occurrences. Like a blaze of lightning illuminating the night sky from one end to the other, so will be the appearing of the Son of Man. Again, at the Lord's appearing, his mighty and glorious angels will be sent forth on their task of gathering the elect from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. As they gather God's people together, the angels will—in the process—separate the righteous from the wicked. (Matt. 24:31; see also Matt. 13:30, 39-43, 49-50)

The Parousia or Appearing

The Lord Jesus will come in the same way as he was seen to go. In other words, his second advent will be personal, bodily, visible, and glorious. Thus, at the Lord's ascension, two men in white said to the disciples:

Acts 1:11

⁽¹¹⁾ Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. (See vv.1-10)

The same Lord Jesus who ascended in bodily form into heaven, will descend—in bodily form—from heaven. At his first coming—his incarnation—the eternal Son of God veiled his glory (although he did not lay aside his deity), and humbled himself. However, at his second coming, God's Son will appear in the full radiance of his majestic glory—for he is King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the King of Glory—the Son of the Almighty, Eternal, and Invisible God, and the Sovereign Ruler of all creation.

Christ will Come with His Saints

When the Lord Jesus comes with his holy angels, he will come with all his saints: i.e., with all those who have died, and who are now in the presence of God. The souls of these redeemed saints will be reunited with their resurrected bodies. Then, together with the saints still alive on earth at Christ's return, they will be caught up (raptured) to be with the Lord forever. Thus, the Scripture says:

Zechariah 14:5c

^(5c) ...and the LORD my God shall come, *and* all the saints with thee. (See vv.1-11)

1 Thessalonians 3:13

⁽¹³⁾ To the end he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints. (See vv.11-12)

1 Thessalonians 4:14

⁽¹⁴⁾ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. (See vv.13-18)

Again, the apostle Paul says:

1 Corinthians 15:51-52

⁽⁵¹⁾ Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁽⁵²⁾ In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (See vv.50-57)

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

⁽¹⁶⁾ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ⁽¹⁷⁾ Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (See vv.13-18)

Accounts of the Lord's Second Coming

Regarding the actual appearing of the Lord Jesus in his glory, and concerning the momentous cosmic disturbances which will attend that glorious appearing, we have the accounts given in each of the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke). We will compare these three accounts below. Then—in the book of Revelation—we will consider what the apostle John says about the second coming of the Lord.

In his Gospel, the apostle John speaks of some eschatological matters—especially in regard to the general resurrection and the Last Judgment. (John 5:25-29; 11:23-26,40-44). John does not give us an account of the Lord's second coming in his Gospel that runs parallel to the accounts given in the synoptic Gospels. However, the apostle John does speak of the second coming of the Lord in the book of Revelation: the Revelation or 'unveiling' given him by the risen, ascended and glorified Lord Jesus himself. To aid in making comparisons, similar verses in Matthew, Mark and Luke have been shown in

parallel columns in the following table. John's account, however, is shown for comparison only: it is not intended to parallel exactly the other three writers.

Accounts of the Lord's Second Coming

Table 5

Matthew's Account	Mark's Account	Luke's Account	John's Account
According to Matthew, the parousia or the appearing of the Lord will occur as follows:	Mark—who was possibly using the apostle Peter as his source—gives us this account of the parousia:	Employing his usual meticulous attention to detail, the physician Luke gives us this account:	Concerning the second coming of the Lord Jesus in his majestic glory, John writes in the book of Revelation:
<p>Matthew 24:29</p> <p>⁽²⁹⁾ Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: {Cf. Isaiah 13:9-13; 34:4,8-10}</p>	<p>Mark 13:24-25</p> <p>⁽²⁴⁾ But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, ⁽²⁵⁾ And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. {Isaiah 13:10; 34:4}</p>	<p>Luke 21:25-26</p> <p>⁽²⁵⁾ And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; ⁽²⁶⁾ Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.</p>	<p>Revelation 1:7</p> <p>⁽⁷⁾ Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they <i>also</i> which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. {Cf. John 19:34,37} (See Rev. 1:4-8)</p>
<p>Matthew 24:30</p> <p>⁽³⁰⁾ And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. {Cf. Dan. 7:13; Rev. 1:7}</p>	<p>Mark 13:26</p> <p>⁽²⁶⁾ And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.</p>	<p>Luke 21:27</p> <p>⁽²⁷⁾ And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.</p>	<p>Revelation 6:12-14</p> <p>⁽¹²⁾ And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; ⁽¹³⁾ And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. ⁽¹⁴⁾ And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. (See vv.1-11)</p>

<p>Matthew 24:31</p> <p>⁽³¹⁾ And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. {Cf. 1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:16} (See Matt. 24:26-35)</p>	<p>Mark 13:27</p> <p>⁽²⁷⁾ And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. (See vv.21-37)</p>	<p>Luke 21:28</p> <p>⁽²⁸⁾ And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. (See vv.20-31)</p>	<p>Revelation 6:15-17</p> <p>⁽¹⁵⁾ And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; ⁽¹⁶⁾ And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: ⁽¹⁷⁾ For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?</p>
---	---	--	--

The above passage from Revelation should be compared with the passage from the Gospel of Luke (Luke 21:25-26; quoted in the same table above.) Note also the striking similarities between the synoptic Gospels and Revelation in the description of the cosmic phenomena immediately preceding and attending the Lord's appearing.

One Taken, and the Other Left

Concerning the Lord's second advent, the Scripture says that one will be taken and the other left. Thus, the Lord says:

Luke 17:34-36

⁽³⁴⁾ I tell you, in that night there shall be two *men* in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. ⁽³⁵⁾ Two *women* shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. ⁽³⁶⁾ Two *men* shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. (See vv.26-37)

This means that—in separating the righteous from the wicked—God's redeemed people will be taken, and the others left. This, however, does not imply that all believers will disappear secretly at the rapture, leaving only unbelievers in the world. Both groups will appear (separately) before the judgment seat of Christ. When, therefore, the Lord appears in his glory, together with the holy angels, there will be a general resurrection of the just and the unjust. Those who are still alive at the Lord's coming will be changed or translated.

The General Resurrection

The general resurrection is the raising from the dead of both the righteous and the wicked. The righteous—who will be raised and caught up to meet the Lord in the air—will then appear before the judgment seat of Christ. The wicked also will be raised, to appear in great fear and trembling before Christ's glorious judgment seat.

Thus, God's Word says:

Daniel 12:2

⁽²⁾ And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame *and* everlasting contempt. (See vv.1-4)

And, concerning his appointment as the Judge of all mankind, the Lord himself said:

John 5:28-29

⁽²⁸⁾ Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, ⁽²⁹⁾ And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. (See vv.24-30)

Again, God's Word says:

Acts 17:31

⁽³¹⁾ Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead. (See vv.22-34)

The resurrection of believers (i.e., of the righteous) is the fulfilment of God's redemptive plan for all his elect. When a believer dies, his soul enters immediately into the presence of the Lord. However, not until the resurrection, will the believer's body be reconstituted, translated, and adapted for eternal existence in heaven, in union with his immortal soul. This present earthly body must be changed to a spiritual body. It must be made incorruptible: i.e., not susceptible of decay. This is what will happen when it is raised to become a glorified body.¹⁶

¹⁶ See further on *Bible Truths Explained: The Resurrection*, by Gordon Lyons.

Part 9

Events Following the Lord's Second Coming

The Last Judgment

Concerning the second coming of the Lord Jesus in his glory, the Scripture says:

Jude 1:14-15

⁽¹⁴⁾ And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, ⁽¹⁵⁾ To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard *speeches* which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. (See vv.3-19; see esp. v.4)

For the unbeliever (the wicked), the Last Judgment will be the final confirmation and execution of the sentence of condemnation under which they were abiding while still on earth. The wicked will stand silenced to hear the terrible sentence of condemnation—against which there will be no right of appeal. Then, they will be consigned to shame and dishonour in the everlasting torments of the lake of fire: that eternal hell which God has prepared for the devil and his angels.

The believer will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. But, for him, there will be no condemnation. His debt of sin has been fully met in Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ bore the believer's sentence of condemnation and the full measure of his punishment. Our Lord and Redeemer obeyed perfectly the law and the will of God in the believing sinner's room and stead. By means of Christ's perfect obedience and vicarious atonement, the believer has been justified: i.e., forgiven, pardoned, pronounced righteous, and reconciled to God.

The believer, however, will be required to give an account of the deeds done while in the body. He will be judged for his faithfulness to the Lord, and to his service. On the ground of this judgment, he will be rewarded—or will lose his reward—according to his deeds. In the event of loss, the believer's salvation will remain secure. He will escape—but only as one escaping through the flames.¹⁷

Glorification of the Saints

In heaven, the saints (sanctified or holy ones) will be freed at last from the remaining corruption and pollution of their sinful nature. Their sanctification will be completed, and they will be glorified: i.e., they will be perfected in holiness, and presented before God the Father—free from all accusation, fault, and blame. The glorified saints or children of God will inherit the kingdom prepared for them by their heavenly Father from before the creation of the world. The redeemed, sanctified and glorified children of God will share in all the blessings of that kingdom, together with the Lord Jesus Christ—the Lamb of God.

The kingdom of God and of the Lamb is an eternal kingdom. The redeemed people of God will be fitted to dwell there in an incorruptible body and unblemished soul. This will be their everlasting joy, peace, and happiness; when, in the presence of their heavenly Father and his beloved Son, they will live and reign with Christ over the new creation. In that new creation, they will share with the Son of God in his eternal kingdom of glory and of everlasting righteousness.

¹⁷ See further on *Bible Truths Explained: The Last Judgment*, by Gordon Lyons

In this glorious kingdom, sorrow, sickness and death will be abolished. All temptations to sin will be removed. And, in that kingdom, nothing that defiles will ever enter in.¹⁸ For, as the Scripture says:

Revelation 21:27

⁽²⁷⁾ And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination, or *maketh* a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

¹⁸ See further on *Bible Truths Explained: Heaven*, by Gordon Lyons.