Foreword

Welcome to “Covenant Eschatology: A Comprehensive Overview.” This work is designed for the new student in the area of Last Things (eschatology) as well as the person who has spent years evaluating these issues.

Both will find the story of Covenant Eschatology laid out in easy to understand language accompanied by numerous charts for additional study. Everyone is encouraged to look up and read all scripture notations and to listen to the eight audio tape lessons as often as needed in order to grasp the teachings herein.

While this study is meant to be comprehensive, in no way is it exhaustive. For an exhaustive study of these issues the reader/listener is encouraged to purchase a copy of The Cross and the Parousia of Christ, by Max R. King (approximately 800 pages. This book may be purchased from Presence Ministries International).

We feel a sense of deep gratitude and appreciation to Max for his research and writing ministry since the late 1960s. His insight is the impetus behind Presence Ministries International and this present work as well. While God alone should be followed, we are nonetheless appreciative of Max's lifetime of study and willingness to search the scriptures, allowing many to be benefited through a clearer perspective of God's completed plan of redemption.

A special note of thanks is in order to Navella King for her editing expertise, Jim Hopkins for his tireless assistance with the taping and his wife, Beth, for her willingness to format the written curriculum in such a fine and presentable way.

May God bless each of us as we embark upon this journey through His word. Whatever the student's background, if he/she will study the information contained within, the issues will be seen with more clarity than ever before. Our prayer is that in so doing each person will be enlightened to the wonderful blessings of believers through the fulfilled hope and inheritance received from the One who has returned in power and glory (Matthew 16:27, 28).

Timothy R. King
Jack C. Scott, Jr.

Presence Ministries International, P.O. Box 62055, Colorado Springs, CO 80962-2055
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Lesson 1: The Time Frame of Last Things

Definitions

1. Eschatology = “the doctrine of last things.”
   For Example: 2 Timothy 4:1 –
   “I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom.”

   The four concurrent events (i.e., last things) of 2 Timothy 4:1 are: 1) The coming or return of Christ; 2) Arrival of His Kingdom; 3) Resurrection of the dead; 4) Eternal Judgment.

2. Parousia = What we usually call the Second Coming of Christ. It is actually the word Parousia [P^ou-see-ah] and its literal meaning is “arrival” or “presence.”

3. Covenant Eschatology = the idea that the “coming” or “parousia” of Christ was a New Covenant Presence or arrival which fully replaced and fulfilled the Old Covenant at the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Covenant Eschatology holds to a transition period between the cross of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem (40 years or one generation) in which all the promises of God were being fulfilled. Therefore, Covenant Eschatology holds the time frame from the ministry of Jesus through the destruction of Jerusalem as the time Scripture calls “the last days.”

The Relationship between the Old and New Testaments

1. Covenant Eschatology is about the fulfillment of REDEMPTIVE history, not world history (See Luke 19:10; Matthew 5:17-18).

2. Redemptive history begins before time – “In hope, the God who cannot lie promised us eternal life before time began” (Titus 1:2).

3. In Genesis 12:3 God tells Abram that in him “all the nations of the earth will be blessed.” We see this taking root in the working of God in the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel).

4. Paul saw his ministry as confirming what God was doing through the work of Christ. In Romans 15:8 he says, “Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm (i.e., make good) the promises made to the fathers.”

5. Jesus said in John 4:22 that “salvation is of the Jews.”
6. In speaking with the disciples about his death, Jesus said, “that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses and in the prophets and in the psalms concerning me” (Luke 24:44).

7. Concerning this fulfillment Jesus also said, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled” (Matthew 5:17-18).

8. Therefore, Covenant Eschatology sees a 40-year transition period (the last days) as the time where the New Covenant is being established, that is, going from infancy to adulthood, and the Old Covenant is passing away. This process is consistent with the teaching of Hebrews 8:13 – “In that He says, ‘A new covenant,’ He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.” Likewise, 2 Corinthians 3:11 records, “For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious.”

9. Covenant Eschatology sees the importance of this last days period from statements such as the one Peter makes in Acts 3:24, “Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days.” “These days” are the last days, not of world history, but of redemptive history and take in the time where the salvation of the Jews, and therefore humanity, takes place at the Parousia of Christ (i.e., New Covenant presence of Christ).

10. Paul ties all of this fulfillment, not to new promises from what we call the New Testament, rather, he points to the origin of these things as being found in the Old Testament. In Acts 26:22 Paul states, “Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come.”

[We will go into greater detail concerning many of these passages in upcoming lessons.]

**New Testament Scriptures Limiting the Parousia to THAT Generation**


“For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

Matthew 24:29-31; 33-34

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

**VV. 33-34**
“So you also, when you see all these things, know that He is near – at the doors!
Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things
take place.”

**Matthew 26:64**

“Jesus said to him, It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the
Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

**Romans 13:11-12**

“And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now
our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at
hand.”

**1 Corinthians 7:29;31**

“But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have
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**1 Corinthians 10:11**

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**Hebrews 9:28**

“So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him
He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.”

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“For yet a very little while, and He who is coming will come and will not delay.”

**James 5:8**

“You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.”

**1 Peter 1:13;20**

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“They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead…. But
the end of all things is at hand… For the time has come for judgment to begin at the
house of God.”

**1 John 2:17-18**

“And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides
forever. Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is
coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know it is the last hour.”

**Jude 16-19**

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told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their
own ungodly lusts. These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the
Spirit.”

Revelation 1:1-3
“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants – things
which must shortly take place… for the time is short.”

Revelation 22:6
“Then he said to me, ‘These words are faithful and true. And the Lord God of the holy
prophets sent His angel to show His servants things which must shortly take place.’”

Revelation 22:7
“Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this
book.”

Revelation 22:10
“And he said to me, ‘Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at
hand.’”

Revelation 22:12
“And behold, I am coming quickly, and my reward is with Me, to give to every one
according to his work.”

Revelation 22:20
“He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming quickly.’”
Lesson 2: Issues of Life and Death

Introduction

1. The Bible starts with the introduction of death as the problem that needs removing. “And the Lord God commanded the man saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die’” (Gen. 2:16-17).

2. The Bible ends with the overthrow of death and the restoration of life. “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying . . .” (Rev. 21:4). “And the Spirit and the bride say come! And let him who hears say come! And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely” (22:17).

3. The question is, What is the death and life that is the ongoing focus of scripture?

4. Could a misunderstanding of the nature of death beginning in Genesis cause difficulty in grasping the overall direction of the Bible?

5. To illustrate this point let me ask the question, What is the definition of the word cool? You launch off into a discussion of barometric conditions and atmospheric phenomena that create the difference between cold and hot weather. And, you would be right if that were the issue. But what if the real issue is the word used by young people to describe something they perceive as good? You see, THE ISSUE DEFINES THE DEFINITION OF THE WORD, THE WORD DOES NOT DEFINE THE ISSUE!

6. We must allow the Bible to define the issue of death by allowing it to show us what the issue really is and what it is not.

Death Identified

A. Satan vs. God

1. Eve clearly understood God’s regulation: “but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the Garden, God has said, you shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die” (3:3).

2. Satan denied God’s declaration, “Then the serpent said to the woman, you will not surely die” (3:4).

3. It is a question of who was right, God or Satan.

B. Death can be identified and understood only in the judgment of God: “So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life” (3:24).

1. Adam went on to live to a ripe old age (Gen. 5:5), so obviously, physical death was not God’s intended focus.

2. The meaning of death is ‘separation.’ Just as we describe physical death as separation of the spirit from the body, true death is the separation of man from the eternal life source—God (1 Tim. 6:15-16; 1 Jn. 1:1-3).

3. God’s judgment is the determinative issue, not the presuppositions men bring to the text. Death, defined by the judgment of God is man’s being cast away from the presence and fellowship of God due to man’s choice (Gen. 3:24).
C. Death’s spiritual identity as opposed to physical death is substantiated by the New Testament: “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Rom. 5:12).

The Flow Of Death Through The Bible is Spiritual

A. The Old Testament
1. “And He will destroy on this mountain the surface of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all the nations. He will swallow up death forever” (Isa. 25:7-8).
2. “Your covenant with death will be annulled” (28:18).
3. “The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son” (Ez. 18:20).
4. “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death I will be your plagues! O grave I will be your destruction!” (Hos. 13:14).

B. The New Testament
1. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (Jn. 3:16-17). “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life” (36).
2. “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life” (5:24).
3. “Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word he shall never see death” (8:51).
4. “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). “Even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ” (2:5).
5. “But has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 2:10).
6. “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death. . .” (Rev. 21:4).

C. Throughout the Old and New Testaments the theme of death that God is addressing in His redemptive work is consistently and only the death that keeps man separated from Him—spiritual death.
Lesson 3: Understanding Constituent Elements

Chart 1: The Core Meaning of Eschatology and Scripture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is eschatology about?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The End of Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>- or-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the TIME of the END?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the Bible about?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The History of Humanity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- or-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the HISTORY of HUMAN REDEMPTION?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 2: Constituent Elements and Fulfillment.

All constituent elements of the Law must be fulfilled.

“Then He said to them, ‘These are the words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning me….’”

Luke 24:44-49
Chart 3: The Eschatology of Paul.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Testament Eschatology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Paul staunchly proclaims that they could not prove the accusation against him (Acts 26:22).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. If we are going to preach the one gospel that Paul preached, we must preach a gospel rooted in the promises made in the Law and the Prophets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. If we are to understand and preach the same eschatological message as Paul (of which resurrection is the central focus), then we must preach the resurrection (which is concurrent with the coming of the Lord and judgment) promised to Old Testament Israel.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 4: The Law, Prophets and Purpose of Jesus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matthew 5:17-18</th>
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<tr>
<td>New King James Bible</td>
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<td>“I tell you this: so long as heaven and earth endure, not a stroke will disappear from the Law until all that must happen has happened.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Englishman’s Greek New Testament Interlinear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chart 5: Fulfillment and the Passing of the Law.

**New Testament Eschatology**

1. Christ did not intend to destroy the Law, He intended to fulfill it, i.e., bring to consummation all of its hopes and promises.

2. Heaven and earth would not pass until all of these promises were fulfilled. There is a cause and effect relationship here; the passing of heaven and earth is tied to the fulfilling of all the Old Testament promises.

3. Undeniably, nothing would pass from the Law (i.e., the Law would not be removed) until all of what it anticipated was fulfilled.

Chart 6: The Unity of the Teaching of Paul and Jesus.

**New Testament Eschatology**

*Paul and Christ Agree!*

1. Jesus said that the Law and the Prophets would not pass till all was fulfilled.

2. Paul said his eschatological message of the resurrection was rooted in the promise made in the Law and the Prophets.

3. Therefore, the Law and the Prophets could not pass until all the Jewish eschatological promises including the resurrection promised in the Law and the prophets were fulfilled.

Chart 7: All Constituent Elements Must be Fulfilled.


All Constituent Elements of the Law Must Be Fulfilled

Jesus said:  “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law and the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.”

- Matthew 5:17-18

Suppose that:

A 
B 
C 
D 
E

} = All the Constituent Elements of the Law

According to Christ, ALL of these elements must be fulfilled before the Law could pass away.

Chart 8: The Inseparable Link Between The Fulfillment of the Law and Redemption.

All Constituent Elements of the Law Must Be Fulfilled

Jesus came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets Matthew 5:17

BUT -

Jesus came to seek and save the lost (i.e., redemption) Luke 19:10

THEREFORE -

In fulfilling the Law and the Prophets, Jesus completes the redemption plan (i.e., seek and save the lost).

Fulfilling the Law = Completing Redemption / Salvation

The two are inseparably linked.

Chart 9: Partial Fulfillment Equals Incomplete Redemption.

All Constituent Elements of the Law
Must Be Fulfilled

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
A & B & C \\
\downarrow & \downarrow & \downarrow \\
\text{Fulfilled} & \text{Not Yet Fulfilled} & \text{Elements of the Law}
\end{array}
\]

Suppose that:

Then according to Christ’s statements:

- The Law is still in existence and in power
- The salvation/redemption work of Christ is still incomplete.

Chart 10: Second Coming, Judgment and Resurrection as Constituent Elements.

All Constituent Elements of the Law

Must Be Fulfilled

Second Coming of Christ
Resurrection
Judgment

Are these events part of the constituent elements of the passing and fulfillment of the Law and Prophets?

- OR -

Are they constituent elements of the alleged passing away or fulfillment of the New Covenant age?

Traditional View → Elements of the Passing of the New Covenant Age

Covenant Eschatology → Elements of the Passing of the Old Covenant Law and Prophets

Chart 11: All Fulfillment Occurs Through the Promise Made to the Fathers.

All Constituent Elements of the Law
These **MUST** Be Elements of the Old Covenant Law and Prophets

Remember:
2. Since these promises were not fulfilled at the time Paul preached this message - nearly 30 years after the cross - the Law and the Prophets (and redemption) could not have been completed at the cross.
3. According to Paul’s gospel, the Gentile gospel would be fulfilled when the promises made to Israel were fulfilled (Acts 26:20-23; Romans 9:1ff; 15:27).

**Chart 12: The Second Coming as Part of the Law and the Prophets.**

**They Must Be Elements of The Old Covenant Law and Prophets**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Second Coming/Manifestation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Lift up a banner for the peoples! Indeed the LORD has proclaimed to the end of the world…Surely your salvation is coming; behold, His reward is with Him.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Isaiah 62: 10-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“For the Son of man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to His Works.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Matthew 16:27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“And Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with me…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Revelation 22:12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“…That you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets…knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days…saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming?’”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 2 Peter 3:2-4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See also: 1 Peter 1:9-13

**Chart 13: Logic, Second Peter 3, the Prophets and the Second Coming.**

Stated Logically

2 Peter 3 is about the second coming of Jesus Christ.
But, 2 Peter 3 is about what the prophets promised (2 Peter 3:2).

Therefore, the second coming of Jesus Christ is included in what the prophets promised.
The second coming of Jesus Christ is included in what the prophets promised.

But, things promised by the prophets are constituent elements of the Law and the Prophets.

Therefore, the second coming of Jesus Christ is a constituent element of the Law and the Prophets.
The second coming of Jesus Christ is a constituent element of the Law and the Prophets.

But, for the Law and the Prophets to pass, all constituent elements of the Law and the Prophets had to be fulfilled (Matthew 5:17-18).

Therefore, the second coming of Jesus Christ had to be fulfilled for the Law and the Prophets to pass.

Chart 14: The Resurrection as Part of the Law and the Prophets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>They Must Be Elements of The Old Covenant Law and Prophets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resurrection</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“…He will swallow up death forever.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Isaiah 25:6-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt…But you (Daniel) shall rest and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Daniel 12:2, 13:cf. 12:7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ezekiel 37:12-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Hosea 13:14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 15: The Judgment as Part of the Law and the Prophets.

| They Must Be Elements of The Old Covenant Law and Prophets |
Lesson 3: Understanding Constituent Elements

Judgment

“For behold, in those days and at that time…I will also gather all nations…and I will enter into judgment with them there….”
- Joel 3:1-2, 12-17

“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days…He shall judge between the nations and shall rebuke many people….”
- Isaiah 2:2,4

“For behold, the LORD will come with Fire…For by fire and by His sword the LORD will judge all flesh….”
- Isaiah 66:15-16

See also: Isaiah 2:19-21; 3:13; 4:4; 65:7ff

Chart 16: The Unacceptable Ramifications of Partial Fulfillment.

All Constituent Elements of the Law Must Be Fulfilled

A
B
C
D
E

\{\}

All the Constituent Elements of the Law

Suppose that:

A
B
Fulfilled

C = Second Coming
D = Resurrection
E = Judgment

Not Yet Fulfilled

Until every constituent element is fulfilled:

- The Law cannot be fulfilled or pass away.
- The salvation/redemption work of Christ is still incomplete.
Lesson 4: The Olivet Discourse

Introduction – The Setting

1. It is between the setting of universal judgment of Matthew 23 and the at hand coming of the kingdom in Matthew 25.

2. Matthew 23:35; “That on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

This cannot be a limited judgment upon Jerusalem (Jews) because Abel was not a Jew; he represents the first great injustice of humanity in Scripture.

3. Matthew 23:36; “Assuredly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.”

4. Matthew 23:38-39 “See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He whom comes in the name of the Lord!’”

The Jews applied Psalm 118:26 to the triumphal entry of Jesus (Matthew 21:9) because they thought he was going to make Jerusalem the ruling capital of the world (Messianic expectation).

Jesus applies it to himself in connection with His coming in judgment upon their city at the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem. Psalm 118:26 is about the coming of the Messiah and his salvation for his people. Thus, Jesus understands the salvation of his people as coming in the A.D. 70 destruction of the old covenant system (which could not redeem them from their sins; Hebrews 10:1,4).

Matthew 24

Section I. The disciples’ question (24:1-3)

1. Did the disciples ask about two different events widely separated in time (i.e., destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Coming of Christ)?

A quick search of the parallel in Mark 13:4 clearly demonstrates that they saw these things as occurring within the outworking of ONE indivisible event – “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when ALL these things will be fulfilled?” “These things” lump together the Matthew 24:3 question of the disciples. In the Mark passage the disciples want to know “the sign” when ALL “these things” will take place.

2. Did the disciples misunderstand what they were asking?

Some hold they did and that the response of Jesus corrects this misunderstanding. Those who take this position view Matthew 24 as two separate responses. Verses 1-35 supposedly answer the question about the destruction of Jerusalem and verses 36ff. speak about his Second Coming.
As we shall see, it is impossible to divide Matthew 24 into two separate topics of discussion without destroying the parallel teachings of this discourse as found in Luke 17. For now it will suffice to say that the technical word for the Second Coming of Christ is the word Parousia and is mentioned in Matthew 24:3, 27, 36 and 39. Not once does Jesus attempt to distinguish between His Parousia in verses 3 and 27 and a ‘supposed’ difference in verses 36 and 39.

3. It should be noted also that the disciples ask Jesus about the end of the AGE (aeon), not the end of the world. The only world coming to an end is the Jewish world and its end will mark the “end of the age” under question in Matthew 24:3. Jesus places his Parousia at the end of the Jewish age (A.D. 70). Note the context of the disciples’ question is entirely related to the destruction of their temple. Likewise, based upon our constituent elements study in our last lesson, we should not be surprised to find that the parallel teaching of Luke 21:31 ties in the kingdom’s coming at the destruction of Jerusalem as well.

4. In sum, the disciples ask about the timing of the destruction of Jerusalem, the end of the age and the Parousia of Christ. Matthew 24:4ff. forms the basis of the answer of Jesus.

Section II. The time frame of the great commission (24:4-14)

1. In answering the question of the disciples, Jesus lists several things they may expect before his coming at the end of their age: false christs, wars, famines, earthquakes, hated by nations, brotherly betrayal, false prophets, a faith that grows cold (vv. 4-12); the parallel of Mark 13:9 mentions their being brought before “kings.” According to Matthew 24:34, all of these things took place in their generation.

2. Verse 13, “But he who endures to the end shall be saved.” The “end” is the same “end” in verse 3 – it is the end of the Jewish age.

3. Verse 14, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.” The “end” in verse 14 is the same end under discussion in verses 3 and 13 – the end of the Jewish age. Those who desire to evangelize the world today in order to usher in the Second Coming of Christ have missed the time frame of its fulfillment in Scripture. The following chart will help:

Matthew 24:14 as well as Matthew 28:18ff. is the command of the Great Commission. According to Romans 10:18; 16:26, as well as Colossians 1:6, 23, this command was fulfilled in their generation. Paul wrote concerning “the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world…” (Colossians 1:5-6). An examination of the following texts further demonstrates this point. Note the Greek word for “world” in each of the following contexts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMAND</th>
<th>FULFILLMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In all the world</td>
<td>In all the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew 24:14</td>
<td>Romans 10:18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek – oikoumene</td>
<td>Greek – oikoumene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Into all the world</td>
<td>Into all the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark 16:15</td>
<td>Colossians 1:6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek – kosmos</td>
<td>Greek – kosmos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To all creation</td>
<td>in all creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark 16:15</td>
<td>Colossians 1:23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek – ktisis</td>
<td>Greek – ktisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach all nations</td>
<td>Made known to all nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew 28:19</td>
<td>Romans 16:26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek – ethnos</td>
<td>Greek – ethnos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judea, Samaria, world</td>
<td>Into all earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts 1:8</td>
<td>Romans 16:26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek – ge</td>
<td>Greek – ge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In each case Scripture employs the use of a word to describe the mandate of Jesus to preach the gospel in all the world, and it also employs the same use of the word in demonstrating its first-century fulfillment.

Question: If the Parousia (coming) of Christ was to follow the fulfillment of the Great Commission, and this mandate was fulfilled some two-thousand years ago, what sense does it make that Jesus has yet to come? In what sense does the two-thousand year old fulfillment of Jesus’ first-century mandate assist the billions alive today and still awaiting his supposed arrival?

The clear promise of Matthew 24:15 is – preach the gospel to the world, AND THEN the end shall come. The END to come is the same END and encompasses the same events spoken of in Matthew 24:3 and Mark 13:4.

Scripture tells us the mandate of the Great Commission was met. Does Scripture teach us that the promise of His coming would be fulfilled as well? Covenant Eschatology believes it does.

Section III. The tribulation of the last days (24:15-28)

Three verses frame this section for us – 15, 21, and 27.

“Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand) [flee the city]…
For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be... For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the Parousia of the Son of Man be.”

In sum, Jesus tells them they would see (1) the abomination of desolation prophesied by Daniel, (2) experience a time of unparalleled tribulation, and (3) see his Parousia, all in that generation.

1. This prophecy of Daniel is found in Daniel 9:24-27 as well as 12:1ff. Since verse 1 speaks of “a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation,” we quickly identify this prophecy as the same one spoken of by Jesus in the Matthew 24:21 unparalleled time of trouble. You cannot have two unequal times of trouble as never before. Both Daniel and Jesus are speaking of the same event or one is contradicting the other.

2. Not surprisingly, since Matthew 24 speaks of the Parousia of Christ (v. 27 of this section in particular), we find some constituent elements mentioned in the prophecy of Daniel. Verse one speaks of a judgment – “And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book.” Also we find the resurrection in verse 2 – “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

3. It should not escape us that Daniel 9:24ff. is a prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem and is the time chosen by God “To bring in everlasting righteousness.” All of this falls in line with our studies to this point. The restoration of Israel to her everlasting kingdom is coordinate with the world above, not below (John 14:3). The removal of her world below clears the way for her reception of the world above (see Revelation 21:10).

4. As to the “Abomination of desolation” which occurred in the temple, we hold that this is not referring to the Roman army, rather, to the intense persecution between the Zealots and Jewish armies in the civil war prior to the Roman invasion (See Max King, Cross and Parousia, p. 239).

5. If there is no more significance to the end of the Jewish age than the end of the Jewish age, it is logical to ask why God employed such a time of unparalleled tribulation on this event. What does that do to the expected tribulation of the “last days” anticipated by the world of Christendom today?

Section IV. The language and time frame of the prophets (24:29-35)

1. While space does not permit a thorough dealing of apocalyptic literature found in this passage, the student is encouraged to see the same apocalyptic language employed in the Old Testament overthrow of Babylon (Isaiah 13), Idumea (Isaiah 34) and Egypt (Ezekiel 32). The removal of the “heavens and earth” prepares the way for the reception of the “new heavens and earth” (i.e., the new covenant) as promised in Jeremiah 31:31ff. We also have studied this in our discussion of Matthew 5:17-18. Therefore we should not find it surprising that verse 35 speaks of “heaven and earth” passing away.

2. Matthew 24:33-34 is explicit in its time statement. “So you also, when you see all these things, know that He is near – at the doors!... Assuredly, I say to you, this
generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.” All exegetes must deal with the fact that the language of verses 29-31 deals with an event that would take place during the lives of those to whom Christ was speaking.

Section V. Matthew 24 – United or divided? (24:36ff.)

The events studied to this point create no small amount of dis-ease among traditionalists. For this reason, various attempts have been made to divide Matthew 24 into two different sections. If it can be demonstrated that verses 1-35 apply to the destruction of Jerusalem, and that verses 36 and following deal with the Second Coming of Christ at the end of the world, then the traditionalist escapes the heat of the undeniable time statements found prior to verse 36 and is allowed to keep his/her end-time view of a future Second Coming.

Conversely, we would add, if it can be demonstrated that this passage stands as one complete unit addressing a single series of events, the traditionalist has lost any future claim of a return of Christ and needs to embrace what we believe to be the biblical teachings of Covenant Eschatology.

Is Matthew 24 divided?

1. One view holds that the use of the word “But” (Greek – “de”) in verse 36 points to a transition to a new topic.
   a. There are a couple of difficulties with this. One, what is the subject of “but of THAT DAY”? What day? In all of the teaching of Jesus concerning his coming (prior to Matthew 24), not one time does he speak in terms of anything other than an event to occur in THEIR generation. Find the text teaching otherwise.
   b. Also, if the word “but” demonstrates a change of subject, there are at least eight subject changes in Matthew 24 alone.
   c. Likewise, “but” (Greek DE) is a conjunction, not a preposition. It follows all that has gone before.

2. Another view holds that there are signs associated with the destruction of Jerusalem, but there are no signs associated with the Second Coming of Christ in verses 36ff. for this day could not be known.
   a. Jesus said that no one ‘knew’ the day or the hour of his return except the Father. He did not say that no one could know. This is the very reason he gave the signs and told them in verse 42 to watch and again in verse 44 to be ready.
   b. If Matthew 24 speaks of two different events, the time of one of which could not be known, how did Jesus know He would not return within the 40-year period between his prophecy of Jerusalem’s destruction (A.D. 70) and his speaking to the disciples (circa A.D.33)? Were the disciples to look for two comings? Two ends? One with signs? One without?
   c. Not knowing the precise day does not erase the promise that it would happen within the lifetime of “some” then living (Mark 9:1; Luke 9:26-27).
3. Yet another view reasons that Jesus speaks of “days” (plural) in verses 19, 22, and 29, but only of “day” (singular) in verse 36.

If this is true, don’t tell Luke. His parallel teaching seems to mix up everything for those insistent upon a division within Matthew 24.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matthew 24</th>
<th>Luke 17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17 “…him…on housetop…”</td>
<td>23 “…look here or look there…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 “Look here… or there…”</td>
<td>24 “For as the lightning flashes…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 “For as the lightning comes…”</td>
<td>25 “…this generation…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 “… carcass…eagles…”</td>
<td>26 “As it was in the days of Noah…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34 “…this generation…”</td>
<td>27 “They ate…drank…married…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37 “But as the days of Noah…”</td>
<td>30 “…Son of man…revealed…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38 “…eating, drinking, marrying…”</td>
<td>31 “…He who is on the housetop…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39 “coming of the Son of Man…”</td>
<td>35 “…two women grinding…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 “…two men…in field…”</td>
<td>36 “…two men…in field…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 “…two women grinding…”</td>
<td>37 “…body…eagles…”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As may be seen, the consequences of dividing Matthew 24 into TWO divisions result in dividing the parallel teaching of Luke 17 into FIVE divisions within a span of 14 verses. How could any of the disciples follow the conversation of Jesus if this is what he did? Are we really to believe this is what Jesus is doing in Luke 17, or is the solution to say that the writer is oblivious to what he is doing as he writes the account as he recalls? To the fundamental Bible scholar, neither choice is acceptable.

This chart should cause those desirous of separating what God has joined together serious contemplation.

Conclusion

Review and additional points…
Lesson 5: Letters to the Thessalonians

Introduction

For various reasons, the letters of First and Second Thessalonians are often used as proof for a yet future coming of Christ. Even some who view Matthew 24 as being fulfilled at the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 still link Paul’s letters to the Thessalonians to an “end of the world” Parousia of Christ. Probably the main reason for this is the mentioning of the resurrection of the dead and the gathering together of the saints in the clouds with Christ.

While at first reading this appears to have validity, we believe that by taking a closer look at the texts the futurist is faced with insurmountable difficulties in separating and distinguishing between the events of Matthew 24 and those of the Thessalonian letters.

Section I: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

1. Note the following themes – The Coming of the Lord (4:15), on the clouds (17), with an angel (16), at the sounding of a trumpet (16), being caught up together (vv. 16-17) and instruction for “we who are alive and remain” (17).

2. No one doubts this text is speaking about the ‘Second Coming’ of Christ. But is it addressing a “Coming” different from the one in our last lesson from Matthew 24 which was limited to their (first-century) generation? The following chart demonstrates the difficulties of attempting to differentiate between the two:

Chart 1: The Identical Teaching of Matthew 24 and 1 Thessalonians 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matthew 24</th>
<th>1 Thessalonians 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Coming of the Lord (verses 27-30)</td>
<td>The Coming of the Lord (verse 15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the Clouds (verse 30)</td>
<td>On the Clouds (verse 17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With the Angels (verse 31)</td>
<td>With an Archangel (verse 16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound of a Trumpet (verse 31)</td>
<td>Sound of a Trumpet (verse 16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gathering the Elect (verse 31)</td>
<td>Caught up Together (verses 16-17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This Generation Will Not Pass Away Till These Things Happen (verse 34)</td>
<td>We Who Are Alive and Remain (verse 17)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. By what principle of interpretation are these two texts separated? How are we to distinguish between them?

4. What has been the main reason given for making 1 Thessalonians 4 an end of the world event? While there are different reasons, certainly one of the primary ones is
the “gathering together” of the saints “in the clouds” to “meet the Lord.” A few questions are in order.

First, what is the origin of this teaching on a “gathering”? Is there precedence for this language being employed figuratively by the prophets and Jesus?

Within the Isaiah 2 context of events occurring within the “last days,” Isaiah spoke of a time God would judge Israel (3:18-24) while bringing about deliverance and salvation through the establishment of a new tabernacle on Mount Zion (4:4-6). The “gathering” of the people of God that would take place among the nations was recorded by the imagery of the following language: “And you will be gathered one by one, O you children of Israel. So it shall be in that day that the great trumpet will be blown; they will come who are about to perish in the land of Assyria, and they who are outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem” (27:12-13).

It is of no small coincidence that Jesus alludes to this prophecy in Matthew 24:31-34 in reference to the destruction of the earthly tabernacle (in Jerusalem). As the one who came to gather together the children of God scattered abroad (John 11:52), both the Isaiah prophecy and the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 24 logically form the basis for the teaching of Paul to the Thessalonians. Every point within this teaching of Paul comes directly from the teaching of the law and the prophets which Jesus came to fulfill (recall our constituent elements study).

What else could Paul have in mind as he taught the Ephesians that IN CHRIST they were being built up as the temple of God (Ephesians 2:19-22)? No longer would the earthly temple suffice in bringing man into the covenantal presence of God. This is a direct reference to the glory of the New Jerusalem of Revelation 21:22 where it is said that the “Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.” Believers were being built up in Christ.

All of these passages point forward to this New Covenant gathering of the people of God. Nothing more, nothing less, formed the basis of the teaching of Paul other than the law, the prophets, and the Christ who fulfilled them.

Second, how does their awaiting the great gathering fit into the context of New Testament Scripture?

1. We see in Romans 8:18ff. that the saints were awaiting their “adoption” and “redemption.” Note verses 24-25, “For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.”

Their adoption status would occur only at their gathering to the lord. This would take place as their hope of righteousness was fulfilled by Christ. At the writing of the Book of Romans, their redemption was still future. Not surprisingly, Jesus is called “the hope of righteousness” in Galatians 5:5. As such, he clearly foretold the followers of his ministry that when they saw the signs concerning Jerusalem’s destruction, “look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near” (Luke 21:28). Scripture’s great gathering would take place when the “ministration of death” (2 Corinthians 3:7) was
replaced with “the ministry of righteousness” (3:9), thus enabling the saints to be gathered into the New Covenant presence of God. This alone suffices as biblical adoption and redemption.

2. Scripture also draws upon analogies from the Priestly sacrificial system. In particular Hebrews 9:28 shows them “eagerly waiting” for the return of Christ from the Holy of Holies (the sign their sins had been forgiven). Note the clear language – “so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.” Hebrews 10:37 stresses that this return of Christ would take place in, literally, a “very” little while.

The entire New Testament context of last things consistently pictures the gathering together of the people of God as imminent. This gathering begins in the events of Pentecost at the initiation of the New Covenant and is consummated with the return of Jesus at the complete end of the “ministration of death” (2 Corinthians 3:7) which was “ready to pass away” in their generation (Hebrews 8:13). As promised by Jesus in Matthew 16:27-28; 24:3ff., this did in fact occur in the lifetime of some of those who stood and heard his proclamation.

Section II: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Does the rest of Paul’s letter demonstrate a consistency with what has been presented above? Would it lead the Thessalonians to believe these events would occur in their lifetime?

Note the reasoning of Paul:

1. (vv. 1-3) You know “perfectly” the things pertaining to the “day of the Lord.” Paul had spent a great deal of his time emphasizing this event with these people.

2. (vv. 4-5) As “sons of the day” they would not be overtaken as a thief in the night – the same language employed by Jesus in Matthew 24:42-43.

Also, note the identical imagery of this language with that of Romans 13:11-12, “And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.”

In Romans 13 the day was at hand. In 1 Thessalonians they were called the “children of the day.”

3. As children of “the day” (vv. 5, 8) they were to “watch” for the signs of these events (v. 6) which is the same admonishment given by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24:42) concerning his coming in THAT generation (24:34).

4. Likewise, as children of “the day,” they were waiting for their “salvation through [the] Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 9) which would occur at the “very soon” coming of Christ “eagerly being awaited” as recorded in Hebrews 10:37; 9:28.

In sum, all of the teaching of the coming of Christ in the Book of 1 Thessalonians is portrayed by the same language and time frame as those in Matthew 24. Nowhere does
Scripture indicate principles of interpretation that will allow us to separate these two events by thousands of years. As will be seen in the next section, the understanding of these first-century saints confirms this very point.

Section III: 2 Thessalonians

1. The second letter of Paul to the Thessalonians was to bring them assurance that those who were persecuting them were about to be repaid with tribulation at the coming of the Lord (2 Thessalonians 1:3-10). (Not much comfort if his return is over two-thousand years later.)

Consistent with the adversaries of the ministry of Jesus (the Jews) were the adversaries of Paul and the churches to whom he ministered. Specifically, the zealous nature of the Jewish opposition of the gospel is seen in Acts 17:1-13 with reference to the persecution of Paul and the Thessalonians; “But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds.”

2. Notice what Paul has to write to the Thessalonians in his second letter – they were “not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter… as though the day of Christ had come” (2:2).

Question: If this coming of the Lord was understood in the first century as it is in our day, how could they possibly think it had already occurred? To argue that they thought the day of the Lord was “about” to come is refuted by the clear language of the text. The Greek word is “enistami” and literally means present. (This same use may be seen in passages such as Romans 8:38; 1 Corinthians 3:22; Galatians 1:4 and Hebrews 9:9.)

Paul, writing around A.D. 54, some 16 years from the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, did not want these saints to think the day had already occurred or that it soon would. The time was still some years from occurring. However, the writer of Hebrews who wrote of this event as being “very” near (Hebrews 10:37) was within just a few years of the coming of the Lord in A.D. 70. Likewise, so was the “at hand” writing of the “Revelation of Jesus Christ” in A.D. 68.

3. In order to help the recipients of this letter better understand when the coming of the Lord would take place, Paul gives them more signs for which to look (2:3-12). One of these signs is the falling away apostasy (v. 3) identical to that prophesied by Jesus in Matthew 24:12.

In conjunction with this is the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 24:24 about the false christs and prophets who would appear (in THAT generation). Paul speaks of this when he speaks of the coming of “the man of sin… the son of perdition… who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped… sitting in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

He goes on to show that this lawlessness is already at work (v. 7). This demonstrates that their generation is indeed the one spoken of by Jesus, yet that while these things are in process, it will be awhile before they occur.
Conclusion

Both letters to the Thessalonians speak of the coming of the Lord. As seen in chart two, both letters are based upon the Olivet Discourse of Jesus in Matthew 24 (and parallels: Luke 17; 21; and Mark 13).

**Chart 2: The Identical Teaching of Matthew 24 and 2 Thessalonians 2.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matthew 24</th>
<th>2 Thessalonians 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some say the Lord has come (24:26)</td>
<td>Some were saying the Lord had come (2:1-2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The great gathering (v. 32)</td>
<td>Concerning our gathering (v. 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of the Apostasy (vv. 10-12)</td>
<td>Apostasy already at work (vv. 3 and 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abomination of Desolation (v. 15)</td>
<td>Man of Lawlessness (vv. 3 and 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False signs and wonders (v. 24)</td>
<td>Lying Wonders (v. 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Parousia (vv. 3, 27, 36, 39)</td>
<td>The Parousia (v. 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When you see these things know He is near (vv. 32ff.)</td>
<td>that day will not come except there first come the man of sin (vv. 2-3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This generation (v. 34)</td>
<td>mystery of iniquity already working (v. 7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These letters were to comfort the saints with the knowledge that their persecutors would be punished at the coming of the Lord. So imminent were these events that some believed the day of the Lord had already occurred.

In order to put this perspective to rest, Paul gives additional signs for which they are to look. These signs are identical to those given by Jesus in Matthew 24:12, 24, which were to take place in THEIR generation (Matthew 24:34).

After a careful review of the facts, nothing in the letters to the Thessalonians allows us to apply their contents to a yet future coming of Christ.
Lesson 6: The Worlds of 2 Peter 3

Introduction
1. That this is one of the premier eschatological contexts would be denied by few if any. Certainly when it comes to the “so-called” end of time—earth and judgment contexts, this one reigns supreme.
2. All eschatological systems appeal to this context for their teaching of what transpires on or to the earth at the end of time as man hypothesizes about it.
3. There are three fundamental, yet mutually exclusive, applications of the meaning of this context:
   a. A renewed “Edenic” like earth, as held by the Jehovah’s witnesses and some dispensational believers. (We acknowledge there are many differences in the overall approach of the dispensationalist and that of the Jehovah’s Witnesses.)
   b. The state of Heaven after all physical reality is completely destroyed, as held by the amillennialists and postmillennialists. (This view has no rational or consistent explanation for the “new earth.”)
   c. The new heaven and earth corresponding to the full establishment of the kingdom and new covenant of Christ foretold by the prophets, as held by those espousing Covenant Eschatology.
4. All three cannot be right. How does one determine the correct view? Does the text itself give us the guidelines for correct application? Yes, it does!

The Inspired Keys To Interpretation
A. Three key texts:
   1. 3:1-2: “Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior.”
   2. 3:13: “Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”
   3. 3:15-16: “. . . as also our beloved brother Paul. . . has written to you. . . in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things. . . .”
B. The task of those holding the three differing applications (or any other) of this context is twofold. First, to find the Old Testament prophetic promise supporting their unique explanation of this passage. Secondly, to be able to show the harmony of their view with Paul’s treatment of the same eschatological issues in his writings.

Defining The Issues For Discussion
A. What we agree upon
   1. That 2 Peter 3 is a redemptive, eschatological context.
   2. That the context deals with the parousia (coming, presence) of Jesus.
   3. That there would be mockers denying the day and its significance.
   4. That this coming would result in the fiery destruction of the old heavens and earth.
   5. That the glorious, righteous new heaven and earth would replace the old.
   6. That all of this is according to the promises of God’s inspired prophets.
Lesson 6: The Worlds of 2 Peter 3

B. The main constituent elements of this text foretold by the prophets are:
   1. Scoffers (i.e., mockers) deny this coming and judgment (3).
   2. The parousia of Christ (4).
   3. The previous destruction of a world, typifying the coming destruction of heaven and earth (6).
   4. Heaven, earth and elements receive fiery destruction (10-12).
   5. New heaven and earth characterized by righteousness replaces the old (13).

The challenge for each interpretive system is to produce the prophetic promises and background for their explanation of all the constituent elements found in this passage. Nothing less will suffice. We ask also, If there is more than one identifiable historical application in the prophets for this material, how are we to know which one Peter is quoting from, or applying this to?

C. The prophetic background for every constituent element as taught in Covenant Eschatology.

Chart 1: The Constituent Elements of Isaiah and 2 Peter 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISAIAH</th>
<th>2 PETER 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isaiah promised (51:16; 65:17)</td>
<td>Prophets promised (3:2,13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mockers deny (28:22)</td>
<td>Mockers deny (3:3-4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parousia of Christ (62:11)</td>
<td>Parousia of Christ (3:4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old heavens &amp; earth destroyed</td>
<td>Old heavens &amp; earth destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(24:4-6,18-21; 51:6; 64:1; 66:15)</td>
<td>(3:10-12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentiles to see (62:2; 66:22)</td>
<td>Conduct seen (3:11; 1 Pet. 2:11-12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Righteousness dwells (chs. 51-66)</td>
<td>Righteousness dwells (3:13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Isaiah promised every individual element found in 2 Peter 3, and links all the elements together in the setting up of the Messianic kingdom and the providing of man’s salvation.

2. Mockers/scoffers (same word in Greek; see Jude 18): The prophetic background for this issue is so clear it is stunning. Isaiah 28 prophesies the time that the “cornerstone/foundation” is laid in Zion (16; c.f. Heb. 12:22 showing the Church as that Zion). Would anyone deny that this cornerstone is Jesus (see Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11; Rom. 9:33; 10:11; Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:6-8)? This is the time the prophet says there will be “mockers” denying these events (28:22).

3. The parousia. First, we note that this is inspired evidence that the second coming of Jesus is beyond doubt a constituent element of the law and prophets. Therefore, it is part and parcel of the things which Jesus said must be fulfilled for the law to pass (Matt. 5:17-18).
2 Peter 3 is the second coming of Jesus Christ. But 2 Peter 3 is the promise of the second coming by the prophets. Therefore, the second coming of Jesus is promised by the prophets.

***************
The second coming of Jesus is promised by the prophets. But that which is promised by the prophets is a constituent element of the law and the prophets. Therefore, the second coming of Jesus is a constituent element of the Law and the prophets.

***************
The second coming of Jesus is a constituent element of the law and the prophets. But for the Law to pass every constituent element of the law and prophets had to be fulfilled (Matt. 5:17-18). Therefore, the second coming of Jesus—a constituent element of the law and prophets—had to be fulfilled for the law to pass.

4. Also, in agreement with Matthew 5, there is a destruction of heaven and earth associated with the fulfillment of what the prophets foretold.
5. Isaiah pictures the new heaven and earth of the Messianic age supplanting the old heaven and earth being removed.
6. This new heaven and earth is to be distinguished not by the transformation or destruction of its substance, rather, it is distinguished by righteousness as opposed to the old being characterized by ungodliness (2 Pet. 3:7).

Textual Considerations Supporting Covenant Eschatology

A. vv. 1-2
1. That which Peter reminds them of points to the fulfillment of Old Testament promises, not to the end of time (read 1 Peter 1:3-13; 4:5-7, 17).
   a. The salvation/heavenly inheritance that is to come at the revelation of Jesus (1:3-13).
   b. He identifies this salvation as the heart and focus of the Old Testament prophets (1:10-12).
   c. That this salvation was not for the prophets’ time (1:12).
   d. This salvation was for their time (i.e., Peter’s audience), signaled by the revelation of Jesus Christ (1:5,7,11-12).
   e. At that time, Jesus was ready to judge (4:5); the end of all things was at hand (4:7); and the time for judgment to begin had come (4:17). (See also James 5:7-11.)

Chart 2: The Promise and Time of Fulfillment of 1 Peter 1:3-9.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Peter 1:3-9</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promise</td>
<td>When</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living hope (3)</td>
<td>Ready to be revealed (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inheritance in heaven (4)</td>
<td>A little while (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation of souls (9)</td>
<td>At revelation of Christ (7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promise</th>
<th>When</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salvation</td>
<td>“What manner of time”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>(see vv. 5-7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things of the gospel</td>
<td>“grace to be brought”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angels desire to see</td>
<td>to you at the revelation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>of Jesus Christ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Peter links what the apostles have said on this issue with what the prophets foretold, not something completely different. Peter is not concerned with the end of time or the Christian age. Rather, he is concerned with the last things the prophets said would happen to usher in the new heaven and earth of the new covenant age—the full empowerment of the Christian age.

B. vv. 3-7
1. The weight and significance of the language that Peter employs becomes ominous when one tries to ignore the relationship between what Peter writes and what is foretold by Isaiah (28:16-22). Isaiah foretells the coming of a new heaven and earth/Jerusalem, following the fiery destruction of the old (28:22; c.f., 66:15), at the time of the setting up of the cornerstone in Zion (28:16). He further prophesies that in the midst of this great awesome work (28:21) that there would be “mockers” denying this destruction of heaven and earth (28:22a). Doesn’t this sound familiar?

2. The identity of the world awaiting destruction:
   a. It is prefigured by the world destroyed in Noah’s day (3:5-6).
   b. Neither the earth nor the universe was destroyed in the judgment of God in Noah’s day.
   c. Peter tells us clearly what world was destroyed in the flood and therefore, what it prefigures in the awaiting destruction and judgment. “For if God did not spare... the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly...” (2:4-5).
   d. Now consider this in light of what Jesus said: “And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the son of Man” (Lk. 17:26). Why guess what the identity of the world is when Peter, by inspiration tells us? The world being destroyed is the world of ungodliness. Note also that this is a worldly judgment, like that of Noah’s, which the faithful can escape. Not because of rapturing, or anything similar, but because of righteousness.

C. vv. 8-9
1. This is not a passage indicating that when God speaks in the language of time it has no meaning (see Ezek. 7:10-12 and 12:21-25). It says exactly the opposite. It says things get done on God’s time schedule. What man says takes 1000 years, God can do in a day; what man may want to see in a day, God may reveal over 1000 years.
2. God’s for bearance is due to His desire to see all His promises fulfilled to Israel (Jn. 4:22; Rom. 9:1-4; 15:8).
3. Recognize also that this whole line of reasoning directed to their objections makes no sense at all unless they are disputing the claim by Peter and the other apostles, that this coming foretold by Isaiah, over 600 years earlier, was to be fulfilled in their generation. This is exactly what Jesus promised (Mt. 16:27-28; 24:34).

4. Relative to the time of fulfillment for Peter’s heaven and earth destruction, we must see the comparison between 2 Peter 2-3 with the epistle of Jude.

**Chart 4: The Identical Promise of 2 Peter 2-3 and the Identical Fulfillment of Jude.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2 Peter 2-3</th>
<th>Jude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Judgment of ungodly, 3:7</td>
<td>Judgment of ungodly, v.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coming of Lord, 3:10</td>
<td>Coming of Lord, v. 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angels cast down, 2:4</td>
<td>Angels cast down, v. 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wicked like Sodom, 2:6-8</td>
<td>Wicked like Sodom, v. 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wicked after flesh, 2:10</td>
<td>Wicked - flesh, v. 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Despise authority, 2:10</td>
<td>Despise authority, v. 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reject dignitaries, 2:10</td>
<td>Reject dignitaries, v. 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural brutes, 2:12</td>
<td>Natural brutes, v. 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will Perish, 2:12</td>
<td>Will Perish, v. 11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2 Peter 2-3</th>
<th>Jude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spots/blemishes, 2:13</td>
<td>Spots/blemishes, v.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covetous, 2:14</td>
<td>Greedy, v. 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Way of Balaam, 2:15</td>
<td>Way of Balaam, v.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wells without water, 2:17</td>
<td>Clouds without water, v.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prophets foretold, 3:2</td>
<td>Long ago/Enoch, vv.4, 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apostles Warned, 3:2</td>
<td>Apostles warned, v. 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN last days, 3:3</td>
<td>IS last time, v. 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scoffers/mockers, 3:3</td>
<td>Mockers/scoffers, v. 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They're coming, 3:3</td>
<td>They're PRESENT, v. 19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A few points are in order:

a. Peter writes his epistle in the early 60’s A.D. In his epistle, Peter warns them about the very last days and the kind of people and problems they will face.

b. Jude writes just prior to A.D. 70; according to inspiration, it is the very “last time” (eschato chrono; v. 18). Peter says this is what the people and the days will be like. Jude writes and says that just as the apostles had foretold, the “days” and the “people—mockers” are here.

c. That Jude has reference to the fulfillment of the law and prophets also is clear when he says that these days and mockers were “long ago marked out” (v. 4), and that as far back as “Enoch, the seventh from Adam” (v.18), this coming and judgment was foretold.

d. There is only one difference in these two contexts that must be acknowledged. It is not the source of the prophecies, for they claim the same sources—the Old Testament prophets and the first-century imminent warnings of the apostles. It can’t be the difference of their applications, for there is no way to distinguish them (eighteen identical points of comparison). The only difference is the change of most of the verb tenses. Peter uses future tense verbs to describe what will be just prior to the destruction of heaven and earth and the coming of Jesus (note vv. 4.8,10-16,19). Jude, quoting the warnings of the apostles (v. 17), does not use future tense verbs, but uses present tense verbs. In other words, what and who the apostles said would characterize the very last time, Jude said was present in his time, which he calls the “last time” v. 18).

e. Jude quotes the signs of 2 Peter 2 and 3; he refers to the warnings of the apostles about these days. Then he says all those things have reached fulfillment in his day. So why isn’t Jude’s time the time for the fulfillment of 2 Peter 3?

f. Further, note that Jesus foretold the great apostasy of that generation (Matt. 24:8-13). Then He said, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (14). Jesus said that His coming judgment and the end should be expected when
the gospel had been preached in all the world. Paul said this had been done by A.D. 63 (see Col. 1:6,23). Note further, in a related passage, that Paul tells Titus: “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that. . . we should live soberly. . . and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Tit. 2:11-13). Note the correlation of the two. Jesus said (1) the gospel would be preached in all the world, then (2) the end would come. Paul says (1) the grace of God that brings salvation (i.e., the gospel) has appeared to all men, therefore (2) they were to “look for” (Greek: prosdekomai - meaning to “wait for, expect, anticipate” Bauer, Arndt & Gingrich “A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament” p. 712) the glorious appearing of Jesus. Peter uses a similar word when he says they were to “look for” the coming new heavens and earth, and His coming according to the promise of the prophets (2 Pet. 3:1-3, 13). “Look for” is the Greek word prosdekomai, a plural form of prosdokao, which means “to look for, be expectant of, anticipate” (The Analytical Greek Lexicon, p. 347). They are not being instructed, as per modern theology, just to “live as though it could happen at any time.” They are being told to eagerly expect and anticipate this event. Finally, we note that Jude has this same theme. He begins his epistle exhorting them to “. . . contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (v.3). Then towards the end he writes, “But you beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles. . .” (17); then he adds that they were to be “. . . looking for (prosdekomai - a present, plural participle of prosdekomai) the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. . .” (21). When would that mercy appear? When He comes with his saints (14). So the gospel had been delivered (3), therefore, they were to eagerly expect and anticipate the coming of Jesus.

D. vv.10-16
1. This judgment is reserved for ungodly men (3:7), and will come as a thief in the night (3:10). This is exactly what Paul discussed in 1 Thess. 5:1-5.
2. We already have demonstrated that the prophets as well as the Christ foretold the passing of a heaven and earth linked to the passing of the Jewish age/law (Isa. 24, 51, 66; Matt. 5:17-18).
3. According to vs. 12, they were both to “look for” and “hasten” the coming “day of God.” How does one “look for” what cannot be seen, or “hasten” that over which humanity has no control?
4. What is the meaning of the word “elements”? Does Peter have reference to air, soil, fire, water, etc? Or is there some other meaning for the word “elements”? The word is used seven times in the N. T. It is the Greek word “stoicheia.” It is used only five times outside of 2 Peter 3. Every other time it is used it always has reference to the “elements of the Jewish age.” Note the following:
   a. Gal. 4:3- “Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.” The context is birth into the system of the law.
   b. Gal. 4:9- “. . . how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?” Were they seeking bondage to dirt or fire or air?
   c. Col. 2:8, 20- “Beware lest anyone cheat you. . . according to the basic principles of the world. . .”; “Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world. . .why do you subject yourselves to regulations. . .?” The context of these passages, as in the Galatian letter, is the discussion of Christians being deceived into keeping the law of Moses as a standard of righteousness (see 2:16).
d. Heb. 5:12- “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God.” The context identifies these first principles as those things in the law that point to the redemptive work of Jesus.

5. Every other time the word stoicheia is used in the Bible, it has reference to the elements of the Jewish world/age. As we have seen from the context of Peter’s epistles, nothing in them would lead to a variant application of this word to the elements of the physical universe. To the contrary, everything in the text lends itself to all that the Bible has said on this issue relative to the passing of the Jewish age.

**Conclusion: An Argument to Consider**

1. The things that Peter says about the “elements” of the heaven and earth that would pass away are things that Paul also wrote about in his epistles.

2. But the only “elements” that Paul wrote about in his epistles were the elements of the Jewish age.

3. Therefore, the elements of the heaven and earth that would pass away in 2 Peter 3 are the “elements” of the Jewish age.
Lesson 7: Resurrection of the Dead

Introduction

In order to put 1 Corinthians 15 into perspective, a few questions are in order.

1. What was the purpose of Christ’s coming to earth? “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

2. What was causing humanity to have a “less than” abundant life before God and what was the origin of this chasm? Sin – Genesis 3.

3. Why did Jesus perform miracles in his ministry? “Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The WORDS that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the WORKS. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves” (John 14:10-11). Here is the biblical principle – the WORKS confirm the WORDS. Any time Jesus performed a miracle, it always was to testify and to confirm a greater “spiritual” reality (biblical teaching).

4. Can you think of an event that would demonstrate this?

“Then behold, they brought to Him [Jesus] a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, ‘Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.’ And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, ‘This Man blasphemes!’ But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, ‘Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise and walk?’ But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’ – then He said to the paralytic, ‘Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house’” (Matthew 9:2-6).

5. What was the concern for this man that brought Jesus down to earth? Was it to correct his physical/biological substance through the removing of his paralysis – or was it to correct his STANCE before God by removing his sin? What was the purpose of His miracle? Did Jesus come to heal every person in the world or to save them from their sin?

6. Was the focus of the people and the focus of Jesus the same? Could it be said that humanity tends to think in terms of “physical” realities while Jesus worked in terms of “spiritual” realities? What passage would help us to see this more clearly?

Note John chapter six and “The Feeding of the Five Thousand.”

“They then a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His signs which He performed on those who were diseased” (John 6:2). However, when the conversation turned from what Jesus could provide the multitudes “physically” and focused upon the greater “spiritual” realities, the multitudes went home. “Most assuredly I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life” (John 6:26-27).
**Words and Their Meaning: The Gospel of John**

Chart 1: The Spiritual Teaching of Jesus and the Fleshly Interpretation of the Multitudes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Perspective of the Multitudes (= Physical Substance)</th>
<th>The Perspective of Jesus (= Spiritual Stance)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. John 6:35 (physical or spiritual?)</td>
<td>John 6:35 (physical or spiritual?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.”</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. John 6:51 (physical or spiritual?)</td>
<td>John 6:51 (physical or spiritual?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh....”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. John 6:53-54 (physical or spiritual?)</td>
<td>John 6:53-54 (physical or spiritual?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>John 6:63 (physical or spiritual?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. John 6:66 (physical or spiritual?)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because of the failure of the people to spiritually discern the teaching of Jesus, what was the result? “From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more” (John 6:66).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary Conclusion: With twentieth-century glasses we read John the sixth chapter and scoff at their inability to have spiritual discernment. Over and again we see the people wanting a fleshly king to reign in a fleshly city. Because Jesus came to establish a spiritual kingdom (Luke 17:20-21), many in the first century failed to see him for who he was and what he was doing.

Could it be we are guilty of the same thing when it comes to our understanding of the resurrection of the dead which took place at his parousia in that generation? Is it possible that just as many missed his first coming, that the identical fleshly perspectives of today have caused us to miss his second?

**Words and Their Meaning: Paul’s Letter To The Romans**

Note the terms Paul uses to denote the “IN CHRIST” status of believers:

Romans 6:4: Buried with Christ into death -- to receive life. (physical or spiritual?)
None deny that Paul speaks of spiritual principles in the Book of Romans concerning death, body and resurrection life. Why do they feel compelled to make a change from SPIRITUAL to PHYSICAL as they interpret his letter to the Corinthians?

**An Overview of 1 Corinthians 15**

**Section I: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11**

(vv. 1-4) The Corinthians are saved converts IF they continue to hold fast the gospel preached to them. Notice that the first thing Paul taught the Corinthians about the death, burial and resurrection of Christ was its **applied meaning** – the resurrection of Jesus confirmed the truth concerning the **removal of their sins**.

This parallels all that we have said above. The resurrection of Jesus followed the pattern of his ministry – his “works” served to confirm his “words” (John 14:10). The physical reality served to confirm the spiritual reality. If Christ did not rise from the dead, who would have believed his words about the **meaning** of his resurrection, i.e., delivering them from their sin?

Is there proof that the **physical** nature of Christ’s resurrection was a **SIGN** of a greater **reality** – i.e., his power to DEFEAT SIN? Matthew 12:39-40 says, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

Also note that the physical death that Jesus died was to “sin” not to “biological” death (Romans 6:10). Therefore, it was a **SIGN** of his ability to DEFEAT SIN. Jesus came that he might put away SIN by the sacrifice of himself (Hebrews 9:26). This answers the death Adam died in the garden (SIN-DEATH) and clarifies Scripture when it says, “If anyone keeps my word, he shall never see death” (John 8:51). (If this means biological death, we are all in trouble.)

(vv. 5-8) These verses state an unquestionable fact. The fact of Jesus’ resurrection was undeniable. We shall see that the resurrection controversy is NOT over whether Jesus was biologically raised from the dead, rather, it was an issue among the Gentiles concerning God’s cutting off His chosen people (O. T. Israel, i.e., the dead) who would not, in the view of some at Corinth, be raised.

**Section II: Verses 12-18**

(vv. 12-13) Ask yourself, If the issue under discussion at Corinth was that some were teaching that Christ was not biologically resurrected, what sense does this opening argument of Paul make? Here is his argument – “if some of you say there is no
resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.” They would all scream out, “no kidding! That’s our point!”

Here is the totality of Paul’s argument: if “the dead” are not raised, then neither is Jesus, as he is intricately connected with “the dead.” Therefore, if the dead are not raised, a) Christ is not risen, b) our preaching is empty, c) your faith is empty, d) we are found false witnesses, e) your faith is futile and f) you are still in your sins.

Based on this argument, Paul either is confirming what “some” are saying, or he is proving he is the worst debater of the age IF THE ISSUE IS THAT SOME WERE DENYING THE BIOLOGICAL RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

However, if they all believed and knew that Christ was risen, then these arguments of Paul confirm something about this class of people called “the dead” which “some” were denying would be raised. In other words, it isn’t the resurrection of Jesus that is being denied, it is the resurrection of a class of people called “the dead” that is being denied. Who are these people?

“The denial of the resurrection of the dead by some at Corinth was related to the question of the relevancy of Paul’s gospel in fulfilling God’s promises to Old Testament Israel. Some were being led to believe that Paul’s gospel represented a complete break with historical Israel; that there was not to be a resurrection of the dead (“the dead” in that context referring to faithful Jews of the Old Covenant).” The Cross and The Parousia of Christ. Max King, pp. 389-90.

(v. 14) Building upon their understanding that Christ indeed was resurrected, Paul shows them the ramifications of their denial that “the dead” are not going to be raised – then your faith is empty. Why would their faith be empty?

Jesus came from the tribe of Judah. He was a Jew. He told them that salvation was of the Jews (John 4:22). This salvation would come as he fulfilled the law and the prophets (Matthew 5:17-18). The Gentiles had to understand that they were being brought into Israel’s “spiritual things” (Romans 15:27). The roots of the gospel were in Old Testament Israel and apart from them, the Gentiles must see they have no life. In other words, if God does not fulfill His promises to Israel, into which the Gentiles come, then the Gentiles will not have life either! (Read Ephesians 2:11-14.)

Presently (at the writing of Paul’s letter), much of the Jewish nation was in a position of rejecting Christ as their Messiah for they did not want to give up their “fleshly” (earthly) things. This led Paul to ask, “Have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles” (Romans 11:11). From studying Paul’s letters, it may be seen that the purpose of much of his ministry was to overcome a Gentile separatism that was not consistent with the gospel for ALL nations that was “rooted” in O. T. Israel.

In Romans 11:15 Paul points out that Israel’s eventual acceptance will be “life from the dead” for the Gentiles. (For a broader study see Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament, p. 562, as well as King, Cross and Parousia, pp. 297ff.)

It must be seen how Paul connected “the resurrection of the dead” with “the hope of Israel” (Acts 23:6; 24:14-21). The resurrection of the dead is not “restricted” to Israel, but it is “of” Israel. Just as salvation is “of” the Jews, but to be spread to all nations.
Further, Paul makes the point that he and the other apostles are false witnesses if they preach that God raised Christ, whom He could NOT raise up if the “dead” do not rise. Again, not a very good argument if “some” at Corinth did not believe Paul’s teaching that Christ was raised from the dead. They would simply say, “You’re right. We believe you are a false witness.”

Christ is intricately and inseparably identified with the dead (O. T. Israel) to whom the promise of God was made: “And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers… why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?” (Acts 26:6-8).

Subsequently, if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. Again, not a very good argument if “some” are “arguing” that “Christ is not risen.” Paul would be confirming, not defeating their point. However, since it is said that Christ was the “first” to receive of the “promise” (Acts 2:33, i.e., resurrection life), we see the solidarity of Paul’s point. Jesus comes out of Israel. His resurrection is out from among Israel. Therefore…

Here is the thrust of Paul’s argument: If Christ is not risen (which none are denying), then their faith is futile and they are still in their sins! Remember lesson two of this series. We demonstrated that death was defined as being separated from God because of sin. Biblical resurrection is when one moves out of death (sin) and into life (sinlessness, 1 John 3:9). Therefore, Paul is saying, “If the dead do not rise, you are dead too!” Why? Because you are still in your sins, not because they would remain in their biological bodies.

“Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.” The point is, if “the dead” (Old Testament Israel to whom God made His promises and of whom Jesus was a part) are not raised, even New Testament converts to Christ who since have died (physically, v.6) are still in their sins, and therefore, are without hope of life (spiritually) as well. This point would be fatal to these Gentile separatists arguing salvation through Christ apart from Israel.

Section III: Verses 20-28

Literally this passage tells us that Christ was raised “out from among” the dead (specifically, O. T. Israel). This made him the “firstfruits” of those who had died and were awaiting their release from the Hadean realm into the heavenly realm (Note the defeat of death and Hades at the great judgment in Revelation 19:13-14).

The firstfruits were the first of the crop which was reaped, thus signifying the soon to come harvest of the remainder of the crop. Jesus was the first to be raised out of the soon to be “gathered” harvest. The critical point of Paul is to show that the firstfruits and the harvest essentially are one. This sets forth the solidarity of Christ and the dead (specifically, O. T. Israel). It also would set forth the solidarity of those “in Christ” (i.e., the recipients of this letter) with the dead. This is the strength of Paul’s argument – If the dead aren’t raised (i.e., O. T. Israel), then neither are you Gentiles, for Jesus is their Messiah as well as yours.

Just as Adam introduced death (sin-death) into the world, so Jesus answers by dying “to sin” (Romans 6:10), thus bringing life into this world. The “all” of Paul is in relationship to groups of people, not individuals. All die whether they are Jew or
Gentile and all are saved (by entering Christ; John 14:6) regardless of whether they are Jew or Gentile; for “there is no partiality with God” (Romans 2:11).

(v. 23) Regarding their (the recipients of this letter) being made alive, the order of the resurrection is Christ the firstfruits, and those (first-century converts/believers) who are his at his coming (I Thessalonians 4:17). These also were a “kind of firstfruits” (James 1:18) who were coming into maturity in Christ (i.e., in his body) and thus constituted the firstfruit community along with Christ.

Through their dying and rising with Christ, these saints were being prepared to be a part of the end of the age presentation to God (Romans 6:5; 2 Corinthians 4:12). New Testament Scripture pictures believers as part of the ONE BODY of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-20; note verse 20, many members, ONE body).

This is why the resurrection (the harvest which follows the gathering of the firstfruits) did not immediately take place after the cross of Christ – because Christ did not, by himself, constitute the “firstfruits.” His “inclusive” body (1 Corinthians 12:12-20) represented the firstfruits (i.e., those first-century believers being ADDED daily to his BODY; Acts 2:47; James 1:18). Since they were joined together in Christ as the firstfruits, the harvest (i.e., resurrection of the rest of the dead) could not come apart from the finished perfection of the firstfruits.

This was the purpose of their age-ending conversion to Christ and the need to preach the gospel into all the world before the end could come (Matthew 24:14). Therein, by the time of the removal of the first covenantal system, the great commission was fulfilled and the second system had come to maturity and the door was open for the reception of the rest of the harvest. The timing is clear. The firstfruits must first be gathered into Christ (by their entrance into the New Covenant), and THEN the garnishing of the rest of the harvest would occur (i.e., the general resurrection of the dead).

(vv. 24-28) “Then comes the end… when he puts an end to all rule and authority and power.” “He must reign until all enemies” are subjected. “The last enemy to be destroyed is death.”

The “end” in sight is the same end of the Jewish age and covenantal system of which we have been studying. (W. D. Davies notes that this word “end” is a “technical phrase denoting the final consummation”— Paul and Rabbinic Judaism, p. 295.)

Verses 24-28 focus on the ultimate establishment of the kingdom the writer of Hebrews said they were in the process of receiving at the time of his letter (Hebrews 12:28). This end-of-the-age reign of Christ was the time for the final blow to sin (and the death it had produced) as the kingdom of God comes to complete establishment in Christ.

While Christ delivers the kingdom up to God, he does not cease to reign (Revelation 22:3).

Section IV. Verses 29-34

Verse 29 has posed varied and significant problems for scholarship. This verse needs to be seen in light of the age-ending reign of Christ and his saints from Pentecost through the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D.70. Those firstfruit converts who were united with Christ in baptism (Romans 6:1-6) served to complete the redemptive plan of God and in this way opened up the heavenly sanctuary so that “the dead” (O.T. Israel) might enter.
In this way, these first-century saints served as a bridge community. Therefore, their immersion into Christ also held great significance for the dead who were waiting to be gathered or “harvested” unto God. Herein Paul spoke of baptism as being literally “on behalf of” the dead.

With the conversion of those mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:5-7 the way into the holiest of all was being made clear (Hebrews 10:19ff.). “A specific design of the maturity or perfection of the firstfruits was to open the way for the receiving of the harvest. The harvest in Paul’s firstfruit imagery signifies the faithful Israelites of the Old Covenant who awaited the time of Israel’s redemption, or the time when they would be ransomed from death (Hosea 13:14)” King, The Cross and Parousia, p. 515.

Here is Paul’s point: If the dead are not raised, then the conversion of these first-century saints was worthless as well. Why? “In being baptized for themselves, they also were being baptized for the dead, in terms of the age-changing design of their baptism. The solidarity of the firstfruits and the harvest is as inseparable as the solidarity of the promised seed (Christ) and the people of the promise (Israel).” King, The Cross and Parousia, p. 517.

Section V: Verses 35-49

With the discussion of verses 1-34, Paul has confirmed that the dead will in fact be raised. This must have been curious to some of the Corinthian believers who understood their baptism as an entrance into the BODY of Christ, and therefore, were left asking, How could those already dead enter the body of Christ and be raised? Would they enter a different body?

Verse 35: “But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?’” (Dead is plural; body is singular. The question is not what kind of bodies we will have in the resurrection.)

In answering this question, Paul turns to an analogy from nature. A seed is sown (the Corinthians were sown in Christ through baptism), the seed enters the process of dying (as they were buried, and therefore, dead with Christ; Romans 6:8) that it might produce the life inside (thus their future resurrection life, see Romans 6:5, 8, past and future tenses).

This process of dying and rising with Christ may be seen in such passages as Galatians 2:20 where Paul had been crucified (died) with Christ. Note what he says in Philippians 3 – that he might (v. 9) “be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law (Old Covenant), but that which is through faith in Christ (New Covenant)…(v. 10) that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection… being conformed to His death, (v. 11) if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. (v. 12) Not that I have already attained… . (v. 16) Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained….”

Clearly the subject matter in Philippians 3 concerning the resurrection is something other than a biological process. How could it be said that to a “degree” Paul had been biologically resurrected? Verse 21 speaks of a transformation from our lowly body as we are conformed to His glorious body. How do you change man? Is it by changing his substance before God or his stance before God? Man is raised from death to life when
his covenant standing (or world, heaven and earth, etc.) before God is changed from that of death to life.

Compare this with the 2 Corinthians 3:7ff. context of the Old Covenant ministry of death versus the coming New Covenant life with Christ. They were being transformed from glory (Old Covenant) to glory (New Covenant). The glory that exceeds was found in the New Covenant world of mankind, restored to the presence of God.

Verse 36: “Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies.” Compare this with the words of Jesus in John 12:23-24, “But Jesus answered them, saying, ‘The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.”

How much clearer could Jesus be that he is the inclusive seed body that dies, thus producing much fruit? Those IN CHRIST received the blessings OF CHRIST.

Verses 37-38: “And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain - perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body.”

The body that is sown is the inclusive body of Christ in death (sin-death), that he might be resurrected by the spirit of life (Romans 1:1-3). “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:19).

Note how this is connected with sin and our death and resurrection IN Christ – “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him…Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:4-8; 10).

As the “seed” of promise (Galatians 3:16), Christ was sown so that those who entered into him by being made in the likeness of his death also would be in the likeness of his resurrection. The Romans passage above shows how those “in Christ” had put away the “body of sin” and had become “alive to God in Christ.” Again we ask, what is the definition of resurrection? It is moving from death to life. From being dead in sin to alive in Christ, these first-century believers were participating in what the Book of Revelation calls the “first resurrection” (Revelation 20:5-6).

Verses 38-41 depict the wide range of God’s glorious creation. As with the Old Covenant, all of God’s creation was glorious. However, just as there are some glories that surpass the glory of others (vv. 39-41), so also does the New Covenant gloriously surpass the Old. Note Paul’s description of this; “For if what is passing away was glorious (Old Covenant), what remains is much more glorious (New Covenant)” (2 Corinthians 3:11).
Verses 42-43 depict the difference between the body (Christ, whose body we are, 1 Corinthians 12:27) that is sown, and the body that is raised. Note, there are not two different bodies here. IT is sown, IT is raised. However, IT is sown in corruption, dishonor, and weakness. BUT, IT is raised in incorruption, glory, and power (vv. 42-44).

Verses 44-47 Paul tells us that there is the “natural man” and there is the “spiritual man.” These two modes of existence are not determined by biological substance or lack thereof. The natural man is man as he was created. Here today, gone tomorrow. The spiritual man is the one dependent upon God for life. As Jesus told Nicodemus, “You must be born again” (John 3:3ff.). Nicodemus had to change from the natural man into the spiritual man. Did this change entail anything physical – how can a man enter a second time into his mother’s womb? No. It involved being born into Christ (see the Romans text above).

This is where we see the inclusive nature of the first Adam (a living being) versus the second, Jesus, who was a “life-giving spirit.” “However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual” (v. 46). This falls in line with the plan of God from the foundation of the world (Acts 15:18; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 4:3; Revelation 13:8).

Adam was first. The second Adam (the Lord from heaven, v. 47) came to redeem humanity from their independent state of separation from God due to sin (and leveraged by the law). Remember, once law entered, sin abounded (Romans 5:20) in that man’s focus on life was on obtaining relationship with God through law observance. This forced him to live by his own strength which further led to a self-dependence.

Verses 48-49: As these believers (as well as Israel, the chosen people of God) had borne the image of the first Adam, so they were now being transformed into the image of Christ, the second Adam. We see this in Galatians 4:19 where Paul speaks of laboring on behalf of those saints “until Christ is formed in you” (this points not to individual perfection but to the eschatological perfection or coming of the new kingdom). Likewise, in the Book of Ephesians Paul shows that in Christ there is “ONE new man” (Ephesians 2:15-16) from the two, i.e., Jew and Gentile.

Therefore, this progressive dying and rising with Christ during the changing of the covenantal worlds served both Jew and Gentile as together (as firstfruits) they were brought into resurrection life through the body of Christ.

This is what Paul was speaking about when he wrote, “So then death is working in us (Jews), but life in you (Gentiles)” (2 Corinthians 4:12). Paul wasn’t speaking about biological principles; he wasn’t dying while they were getting younger with each passing day! The death of Israel to the Old Covenant mode of existence was working life for the Gentiles. The point of Paul is that ‘If you Gentiles have God cutting off His promise to give life to Israel, you deny life to yourself.’

It was critical that they (the Gentiles) understand that the event which forms the basis of their resurrection (along with all of those to whom the promises of God were made; Romans 4:16, and who were faithful, Romans 2:1ff.) is God’s faithfulness to Israel (Romans 9:11).
Section VI: Verses 50ff.

Verse 50: “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.”

As with Nicodemus (John 3), in order to enter into the kingdom of God you must be born again. This verse is not saying that in order to enter the kingdom one must get rid of one’s biological body. By this point in 1 Corinthians 15, we should realize that the teaching of Paul deals in terms of relationship (stance) with God, not biological composition (substance).

No flesh and blood person may stand before God on his own without the intervention of God through Christ. Remember verse 44, “there is a natural body (man’s approaching God on his own strength and merit) and there is a spiritual body (man’s coming before God, in Christ – cleansed by his blood). [Recall our earlier study of the passages in the Book of Romans. It was impossible for those in the “flesh” to please God (Romans 8:8), however, those IN CHRIST were not in the flesh, but in the “spirit” (Romans 8:9).]

“Flesh and blood” is representative of the natural man in need of being born again. To the Jews this was offensive; they had been born of Abraham and felt this was enough. It wasn’t. There was a changing of the worlds (Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Isaiah 65:17ff.; Matthew 5:17-18; Matthew 24:35; 2 Corinthians 3:7-18) that also would have the effect of changing the status of all O. T. faithful.

(Verses 51ff.) This changing of the worlds (covenants) was the last days process of a transition period lasting from the ministry of Christ to the complete destruction of the city of Jerusalem (thus the ending of the Jewish age) at his Parousia apart from sin, unto salvation (Hebrews 9:28). During this transition, believers in Christ were experiencing their firstfruit perfection as they were dying (to self) and rising with Christ (to the restored presence of God in the New Covenant world).

Not all of them would die (physically) before this covenantal transition was consummated. Together, faithful Jews and Gentiles, physically dead and alive, would be gathered (through their covenantal restoration in Christ) into the presence of God. This is when the corruptible put on incorruption and the mortal put on immortality.

This destruction of the Jewish city and age would be the event constituting the complete demise of the Old Covenant and the complete establishment of the New. At this time the saying would be fulfilled that “Death is swallowed up in victory” (v. 54). Notice that verse 56 says that the “sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.” THIS is the time when Jesus fulfills all of the law and the prophets which he came to fulfill. THIS is the time when believers who had “died to the law” (Romans 7:4) experienced their completed resurrection status in Christ, which Paul saw as nothing less than the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus, the complete attainment of his resurrection from the dead (Philippians 3:10-11, 14).

Section VII: Summary Conclusion

By way of review, this is what we believe to be the flow of 1 Corinthians 15:
1. “Some” at Corinth taught that “the dead” would not be raised.
2. “The dead” constituted Old Covenant Israel who had died before the ministry of Christ. Certain Gentiles felt that since the Jews had rejected Jesus as the Messiah, God had cut off the Jewish people.
3. Paul argued that if this were the case, the ramifications are deadly for the Gentiles. If “the dead” are not raised, then neither is Jesus, as he is intricately connected with “the dead.”

4. Furthermore, if the dead are not raised a) Christ is not risen, b) our preaching is empty, c) your faith is empty, d) we are found false witnesses, e) your faith is futile and f) you are still in your sins.

5. If Jesus were not raised, and those at Corinth were still in their sins, they knew perfectly well that they would not be the recipients of resurrection life either.

6. As the “firstfruits,” Christ was adding believers into his body (as a kind of firstfruits; James 1:18) that they might be perfected (through the complete establishment of the New Covenant), at which time the rest of the harvest (i.e., resurrection) would take place.

7. Once the firstfruits were perfected then the whole harvest (resurrection) would occur. At that time, Jesus would gather all believers together to present them to the Father (vv. 24-25).

8. The body prepared by God in which all were raised was the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27; 15:45-49). As the first Adam could bring only physical existence, the second Adam (Christ) brought everlasting life.

9. Some at Corinth would still be alive when this took place (v. 51).

10. The occurrence of this event would signal the time “death” lost its “sting” because the “law” lost its ‘grip’! The prophecy of Matthew 5:17-18 was fulfilled.

11. At the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the covenantal Parousia of Christ, in judgment and at his kingdom took place, and the dead were raised, thus fulfilling all of the constituent elements of 2 Timothy 4:1-2 where Paul admonishes Timothy:

   “I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom; preach the word! Be ready….”
Lesson 8: The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Introduction

1. No overview of eschatology can be called comprehensive unless it deals with the book of Revelation.
2. We believe that an overview look (as well as an exhaustive one) at the Revelation will support the claims of Covenant Eschatology.
3. We propose to do several things in this outline and tape that should help the listener/reader see the framework of John’s “Olivet discourse.”
   b. Identify the major time statements within the letter itself that allow no application other than a first-century fulfillment.
   c. Identify the enemies of God’s true covenant people to whom the great judgment texts of the Revelation are applied.
   d. Identify the “great city—Babylon—the harlot.”
   e. Identify the rich prophetic background of the Revelation, thereby showing the fulfillment of the Revelation necessary for the fulfilling of every “constituent element” of the law and prophets. (No other epistle in the New Testament comes close in its dependence upon the Old Testament than does the Revelation.)

1. Before we begin with the above tasks, however, we wish to ask a question that should resonate with our listeners if they have followed with us through the previous seven lessons in this series. “Question”: Since Jesus said that he came “to fulfill” the law and the prophets (Matt. 5:17-18), and in so doing would remove the heaven and earth of the Jewish age and accomplish salvation (Lk. 19:10), and since John’s Revelation is so dependent upon the Old Testament for the “Revelation of Jesus” (see Rev. 19:10) in removing the old heaven, earth and Jerusalem, so that he might set up the new heaven, earth and Jerusalem--where righteousness dwells--why isn’t John’s Revelation the actual fulfillment of these all-important issues?

Imminent Time Demands

A. “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. . . who bore witness. . . to all things that he saw. Blessed is he who reads. . . those things which are written in it; for the time is near.”
   1. It is one “Revelation,” not many.
   2. It applies to “all things that he saw” (Rev. 1:7).
   3. It is described as “this prophecy,” singular.
   4. It must “shortly take place” for the “time is near.”

B. “Because you have kept My command. . . I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world. . . Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have. . . he who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God. . . I will write on him the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.”
   1. The coming is tied to the events that literally “are about to come upon the whole world.” The faithful are promised deliverance from these ominous events.
   2. He is coming quickly! This has nothing to do with the speed with which He comes, when He eventually comes; it is an encouragement to endurance and watchfulness.
   3. It is tied to the arrival of the new heavens and earth (c.f. 21:1-3), which is a constituent element of the law and prophets (Isa. 24, 51, 65-66).
C. 6:11, “... that they should rest a little while longer...” (Greek: chronon mikron; literally, “little time”).
1. This exhortation is given to the martyrs pictured under the altar. They asked, “...How long, O Lord... until you judge and avenge our blood...?” (10).
2. They did not ask about the speed He would come with when He came; they wanted to know how long it would be before He came.
3. His answer: a “little time.”

D. 14:6-7, “Then I saw another angel... having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come...”
1. “Has come” comes from the Greek, aitthen, which is an aorist (i.e., past tense) verb. Literally, the hour has already come—is here.
2. The hour of God’s judgment is not tied to the end of time and planet earth, rather, it is tied to the completion of the everlasting gospel system to be preached to every nation, tribe and tongue.
3. It is also tied to the fall of “Babylon, that great city” (8).
4. A side by side comparison of this context with that of Joel’s last days prophecy is quite revealing, showing again the inseparable relationship with the law and prophets.

Chart 1: The Parallel Teaching of Joel 2-3 with Revelation 7-14.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Joel 2-3</th>
<th>Revelation 7,14</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Remnant Gathered</td>
<td>1. Remnant Gathered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2:32-3:1; c.f. Isa. 10,11)</td>
<td>(7:1; 14:1; c. f. Rom. 9-11; 15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Concerned remnant</td>
<td>a. Remnant also</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3:1)</td>
<td>(14:1ff; 7:1-8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Concerned all nations</td>
<td>b. All nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3:2,12)</td>
<td>(14:6; 7:9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Judgment of decision</td>
<td>c. Decision also</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3:14)</td>
<td>(14:7-8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Judgment leads to harvest</td>
<td>d. Harvest also</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3:13)</td>
<td>(14:14-16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Judgment of doom and victory</td>
<td>e. Doom and victory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3:7-14)</td>
<td>(14:8-20; 11:15-19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Judgment linked with fall of Jerusalem</td>
<td>3. Linked with fall of Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2:31; Acts 2:20; Mt. 24:27)</td>
<td>(14:8; 11:8; 18:24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3:17)</td>
<td>(7:15-17 [c. f. Isa. 25:8]; 21:ff)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E. 22:6,7,10,12,20, “... show His servants things which must shortly take place. Behold I am coming quickly... for the time is at hand... And behold I am coming quickly... Surely I am coming quickly.”
1. Without an apriori agenda to defend, one would never conclude anything relative to the timing of this prophecy other than what the epistle begins and ends with—imminence.
2. The imminence is not tied to some non-definable future coming, but is tied to the urgent need of the things mentioned in the context to be fulfilled for man’s welfare and standing with God.
3. Note that the fulfillment of this prophetic context is directly tied to God’s ability to extend the invitation of verse 17: “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him who hears say, Come! And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take of the water of life freely.”
4. We will have much more to say about the huge prophetic background of this section later.

Identification Of The Enemies

A. 2:9, “... I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.”
   1. There is simply no way to make sense of this by trying to apply it to Rome.
   2. Neither does it fit if the writing of this epistle falls after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish polity.

B. 3:9, “Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie... come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.”
   1. Again, that these enemies are Jewish should not be misunderstood.
   2. It is in the context of direct fulfillment of specific Old Testament prophecies (v. 7, c.f. Isa. 9:7; 22:22; and v. 12, c.f. Isa. 65:17).
   3. It is tied to an imminent time statement (v. 11).

C. 6:10, “And they cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’”
   1. Is the “earth” and those who “dwell on it” just a generic reference to all mankind, or something more specific?
   2. The enemies have already been identified as the Judaizers.
   3. The faithful are told to wait a “little while” (v. 11), until the persecution leading to judgment is completed (v. 11). This is in direct fulfillment of Jesus’ words (Matt. 23:32), and Paul’s (1 Thess. 2:16); all of which specifically fulfill Isaiah’s Prophecy of Wrath and judgment coming upon the old heaven, earth and Jerusalem. Note:
      a. Isaiah requests that God would rend the heavens and make the mountains shake (64:1).
      b. He requests specifically that God do this as He had at the beginning of Israel’s covenant (v. 3 showing this is a covenantal judgment).
      c. The request is directly related to their need for salvation, “You are indeed angry for we have sinned. . . and we need to be saved, but we are like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags” (vv. 5-6).
      d. This would all take place when, “Your iniquities and the iniquities of your fathers together” (65:7) were brought to fullness.
   4. It would be the time when the enemies would hide “... themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains” and would say, “... to the mountains and rocks, fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come...” (6:15-17).
      a. Isaiah foretold that this would come in the “last days” (2:2; c.f. Acts 2:16), when the house of God would be established in Zion (2:2-3; c.f. Heb. 12:22); at this time he would judge the nations (2:4; c.f. Joel 3:1ff.).
      b. At this time Isaiah said that those subject to this judgment would, “enter into the rocks and hide in the dust, from the terror of the Lord. . . they shall go into the
holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth... when He arises to shake the earth mightily” (2:10, 19).

D. 16:6, “For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due.”

1. Allowing Scripture to give commentary on Scripture, the identity of these enemies upon whom this judgment is coming cannot be missed. They are those who have killed the saints and prophets (see Matt. 23:35-36; Lk. 13:33).
2. They are the inhabitants of “the great city—Babylon” (v. 19). “And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth” (18:24).

The Identity of The Great City—Babylon—The Harlot

A. That all three descriptions concern the same thing is clear in chapter 17.

1. “And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” (v. 5).
2. “And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth” (v. 18).

B. 18:24

1. Babylon is the city responsible for the blood of the prophets and saints.
2. But Jesus said Jerusalem is the city responsible for the blood of the prophets and saints (Matt. 23:35-36; Lk. 13:33).
3. Therefore, Jerusalem is Babylon—the city responsible for the blood of the prophets and saints.

C. 14:8, “...Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city...”

1. Babylon’s fall is the result of her fornication and harlotry.
2. Jerusalem is consistently pictured in exactly this way by the prophets.
   a. “How the faithful city has become a harlot” (Isa. 2:2).
   b. The Israelites are called “... sons of the sorceress, you offspring of the adulterer and the harlot” (57:3).
   c. Note also, Jer. 2:20; 3:1, 6, 8; Ezek. 16:15-41; 23:1-49; all of Hosea.

D. 11:8, “And their bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.”

1. Without an agenda to defend, no one would ever conclude that the city where Jesus was crucified was Rome or any place other than Jerusalem.
2. Jerusalem and Israel are consistently pictured as Sodom (Isa. 1:9-10; 3:9; Jer. 23:14; Ezek. 16:46-56).
3. Israel’s identity became inseparably bound up with Egypt also (see Jer. 42-44, 46; Ez. 20, 23, 29-32).

E. Nothing within the Revelation itself or in supportive biblical contexts suggests any identity for the great city, Babylon, other than that of Jerusalem.

The Prophetic Background For the Concluding Chapters of Revelation


Old Testament Conceals
### New Testament Reveals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>O. T. Concealed</th>
<th>N. T. Revealed</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| 1. Marriage Feast - Messianic Banquet  
  *Revelation 19:7-9; c.f. Matthew 25:1-13*                                   |
| 2. Judgment  
  *Revelation 19:11-20:15*                                                   |
| 3. Resurrection - No More Death  
  *Revelation 20:12-21:4*                                                      |
| 4. Old Heaven and Earth Removed  
  *Isaiah 51, 65-66; Joel 3*                                                   | 4. Old Heaven and Earth Removed  
  *Revelation 20:11-21:1*                                                      |
| 5. New Heaven and Earth Established  
  *Isaiah 51, 65-66; Joel 3*                                                   | 5. New Heaven and Earth Established  
  *Revelation 21:1*                                                            |
| 6. New Jerusalem  
  *Isaiah 65:16*                                                                | 6. New Jerusalem  
  *Revelation 21:2, 9-19; Hebrews 12:22*                                     |
| 7. New Tabernacle - God’s Presence  
  *Revelation 21:2, 22*                                                       |
| 8. Curse Established  
  *Genesis 3; Daniel 9:11*                                                      | 8. Curse Removed  
  Revelation 22:3                                                                |
| 9. Tree and River of Life is Lost  
  *Genesis 3*                                                                   | 9. Tree and River of Life is Regained  
  *Revelation 22:1-2*                                                          |
| 10. Righteousness Will Shine  
  *Isaiah 51:8, 62:1-2; Daniel 12:3*                                           | 10. Righteousness Shines Forever  
  *Revelation 21:24-25; 22:17*                                                |

*The New Testament reveals God’s plan of redemption concealed in the Old Testament!*
Addendum A: The Context of Last Things

A Study of eschatological imminency in the New Testament writings as presented through the teaching of the Olivet Discourse.

By Tim King

Introduction

In studying the Old Testament prophets, it is not long before one begins to see the common foci of the writers with reference to the coming Messiah; He is to be One of both suffering and glory. That the prophets understood the coming Messiah as such is confirmed by Peter as he speaks about the inquiry of the prophets concerning the salvation that was to come in Christ. Peter states they searched “what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the suffering of Christ and the glories that would follow” (I Pet. 1: 11).

Growing up, it was not uncommon to hear messages utilizing the illustration of the two mountains. The first mountain represented the suffering of Christ and the second represented His glory. The premise of the illustration is that as the prophets looked at these two mountains from a distance, they appeared to be very closely connected. However, as the first mountain was reached (the one of Christ’s humiliation and suffering, i.e., the cross event) it became clear that the second mountain (the one of His revelation in glory, i.e., second coming) was significantly removed and distant from the first - in this case, some two-thousand years and counting. The purpose of this illustration is clear - it is given to deliver one from the obvious conclusion that the prophets believed that the sufferings of Christ and His glory followed very closely when, in fact, we have waited some two-thousand years and Christ’s coming in power and glory is presumably still future. Is this interpretation correct? Will such an ‘illustration’ stand in light of Scripture?

The purpose of this paper is to view the second mountain and its related proximity to the first through the eyes of the New Testament writers. What better perspective of the nearness of the second mountain can one receive than that given by Jesus Himself as He taught those who would write concerning His arrival in glory. For this reason we wish to use Christ’s teaching as presented in the Olivet Discourse as the basis for our evaluation of the length of time between His suffering and His appearing in glory.

Coming To The First Mountain

As we see Christ entering into His ministry and coming to the first mountain (i.e., the place of His suffering), we learn from Paul the time of this occurrence - “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law. . .” (Gal. 4:4).

Commenting on this passage Berkouwer observes that, “This is not just a highly significant phase that turns out to be relative after all, or a subdivision of the total time-continuum with the character of eternity. No, it is the ‘hour of all hours, because it has the weight of eternity. Here if anywhere all notions of futurism are strikingly absent.’”

For Paul, this “fullness of time” is the point in history when all things are to be “summed up in Christ” (Eph. 1:10). In other words, this ministry of Jesus begins when, from the eyes of God, time is full: but what “time” is “full”? What had transpired before the coming of Messiah that was ordained by God to run its course and accomplish its purpose? What was Paul, this “Hebrew of Hebrews,” referencing when He wrote that Jesus entered into His ministry “when the fullness of time had come”?

Perhaps a glance at what Jesus was thinking would be helpful in answering this question. Mark records the early message...
of Jesus as proclaiming that "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mk. 1:15). Ridderbos sees this as "...the announcement of an all-inclusive reality in the history of salvation... these words summarized all that had been the object of Old Testament prophecy and of Israel's expectation of the future from the oldest times."

Consistent with this is Paul's defense before Agrippa as he proclaims that in his gospel message he spoke of "no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come ..." (Acts 26:22).

Still further we see that for Jesus, the time being fulfilled meant that something was now ready to take place that was not previously. Ridderbos describes this "Time" as "the great turning-point of history, promised by God himself for the full revelation of his kingly glory; the time for the liberation of his people and the punishment of his enemies. It was this time that would bring the consummation and which had reached its 'fullness.' Thus the general character of Jesus' preaching of the kingdom has from the outset been qualified as the preaching of fulfillment in the prophetic, historical-soteriological sense of the word."

For Jesus, it is time to come to His own (Jn. 1: 11). He must come to His own because it is they who have been given the earthly kingdom that is but a type and shadow of the heavenly (Col. 2:15-17). Therefore, He arrives in this fullness of time to bring to a close the Jewish age (the earthly) and usher in that which is eternal (the heavenly). He is to come to His own because they are the people to whom is given the assurance of "adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises" (Ro. 9:4). The glory that is to follow the suffering is nothing less than the salvation (i.e., resurrection life) that is of the Jews (Jn. 4:22); which is to say it will only come about should Jesus "make good the promises made to the fathers" (Ro. 15:8, cf. Isa. 25:8, Hos. 13:14, 1 Jn. 5:11).

This time of the coming kingdom is defined by the prophets as the "last days" (c.f. Isa. 2:2, Dan. 2:44, Joel 2:8ff.). This is confirmed by Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-17ff.) as he interprets the events as being those prophesied earlier by Joel (Joel 2:8ff.). Note that Peter sees the content of Joel's prophecy as that which would take place "in" the last days. This interpretation and confirmation by Peter is significant because it supplies proof that these "last days" are something other than the "last days" of the Christian age, for the Christian age is to begin 'in' or 'during' the last days. In other words, the last days are already in progress before the initiation of the Christian age. However, the Jewish age had not yet ended. Therefore, which age is more likely to be brought to a close by the last days - the age that has not yet begun (Christian age) or the age that has not yet ended (Jewish age), yet is only a generation away from its removal? The answer seems clear. The age which is "filled full" and in need of consummation is the "Jewish age" into which the Messiah enters on His way to the first mountain - the mountain of suffering: the mountain which serves as a prelude to His glory.

It is during this last days period that the kingdom of God is to be established (Isa. 2:2, Dan. 2:44). The establishment of this kingdom is no more a one day event than is the establishment of a child into a man. Here we see, in this last days time frame, a period when the kingdom is in the process of arriving at its consummated fullness. It is a time when Ishmael is being cast out, thus making Isaac the sole heir (Gal. 4:21 ff.). This last days period is the time pictured in Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 and 14 where the saints do battle with the beast: a time when the ways of Judaism yield to the completed arrival of Christ and His kingdom in power and glory at the total demise of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (Matt. 16:27, 28; Luke 21:31).

In keeping with the message of Pentecost we may see this as a time when "the great and awesome day of the Lord" is nearing. Peter draws upon the words of Joel to proclaim the arrival of such by the use of common apocalyptic language and events such as "the sun being darkened and the..."
moon turning to blood” (Acts 2:20, Joel 2:31). These words are those of the Lord’s in Matthew 24:29ff., and also serve to connect the broad judgment pronouncement of Matthew 23 with that of Joel 3:1ff. It is a time when the gospel of Christ will be met head on by that which is “Anti-Christ.” It is the time when the promise of Genesis 3:15 will be realized and the bruising and defeat of Satan will be forever complete and the people of God will be freed from the bondage of sin through a New Covenant relationship with Christ.

Pre-Olivet Teachings
Before entering into the content of the Olivet Discourse, it is appropriate to see what Jesus previously taught concerning His coming. Were we the disciples of Jesus, what information or perspective would we bring with us to the mount? What teachings would we already have received from Jesus concerning His second and final coming that would help us to understand the context of this additional information we are about to encounter? Would we be prejudiced toward an imminent, or delayed, Parousia of Christ?

Prior to the teachings of the Olivet Discourse, there are only three passages (and their parallels) which specifically reference the eschatological coming of Christ. The first text is Matthew 10:23. Note the distinct time limitations within this text.

When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes. That this verse appears in the text of a limited pre-cross mission is reason for much discussion. However, for the purposes of this study we need only ask, What would the disciples of Jesus understand from this verse concerning the time of His coming? Would they not have reason to believe that Jesus was to return in their lifetime? Is this not a teaching of imminency? Does this not appear to make the proximity of the second mountain closer than two-thousand years from the first? If this is not referring to the glorious eschatological coming of Christ, why would Jesus speak of the coming Son of man?

Note the response of Hendriksen with reference to this title “... in the other Matthew passages in which the coming of the Son of man is mentioned and described the reference is linked with the second coming. It is a coming ‘in the glory of his Father,’ ‘with his angels,’ ‘to render to every man according to his deeds’ (16:27-28); a coming when Christ shall ‘sit on the throne of his glory’ (19:28); a coming that will be ‘visible’ (24:27); ‘sudden and unexpected’ (24:37, 39, 44); a coming ‘on clouds of heaven with power and great glory’ (24:30; cf. 25:31; 26:64). It would be strange therefore if from 10:23 any reference to Christ’s exaltation which attains its climax in the second coming would be wholly excluded.”

Based upon the content of this passage, one would have to conclude that the disciples, at this point in the ministry of Jesus, would have an imminent view of Christ’s return (c.f. Acts 1:6); especially in light of Jesus invoking the term Son of Man.

Another pre-Olivet text to be evaluated is Matthew 16:27-28. Again, note the impression the disciples would have as to when the arrival of Christ in glory might take place. “For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

This glorious event is to take place within the lifetime of “some” then living. Surely He is not discussing the events of Pentecost day (just weeks away at the time of this statement) or else He would have said “most” of you standing here will see. . ., etc. He says “some” because this event is distant enough that many in the audience would not be alive, yet imminent to the degree that some would. This alone rules out the day of Pentecost. It is “Not to be denied. . . that the kingdom had its beginning then, but Christ did not come in his kingdom with power and glory then. If so, what reward did he give at that time? Matthew said, ‘Then he shall
reward every man according to his works.’ This fits his coming in the end of Judaism, but not Pentecost. John applies the ‘rewarding’ to the end of the Jewish age: ‘And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.’ (Rev. 22:12). That is the same coming as in Matt. 16:27, 28, and the same judgment or rewarding, and it is equated with Luke’s record in chapter 21:27-32. It is the time Christ came in his kingdom with power, glory, and judgment, and Luke applies it to the fall of Jerusalem.”

“The point is, while not near, none of His disciples would have placed His coming in glory outside of the lifetime of some then present.”

The third text (which precedes the Olivet Discourse) to be evaluated with reference to the eschatological coming of Christ is Luke 17:20-37. Though not part of the Olivet Discourse, it is obvious by comparison that this passage is a direct parallel teaching. While the significance of this passage will become clearer as we begin working through Matthew 24, there are some key factors within this text that need to be seen at this time: information which the disciples had, and no doubt used, as part of their interpretive framework of last things as Jesus would later begin delivering to them the contents of His Olivet message.

Beginning with Luke 17:20 Jesus emphasizes the nature of His kingdom and the manner of its coming - “The kingdom of God does not come with observation. . . .” While already at work in the presence and power of the Messiah, the nature of the coming kingdom is to be observed only by those who have eyes to see and ears to hear (Matt. 13:16-17). Jesus knows that just as there will be some who will understand His crucifixion (of which he speaks in 17:25) to be the world-changing event that it is, so, too, will there be those who will see only a Jew, on a cross, outside of a city, dying a singular death on a typical day. Therefore, as Jesus responds to the question of the Pharisees, the emphasis is not placed upon the “time” of the coming of the Lord in His kingdom, rather, the emphasis is placed upon the “manner” of His coming. This does not mean the “time” is not important; it means only that the time is irrelevant if those who are present (in this case the Pharisees) do not first recognize the “manner” of its coming.

As Jesus speaks about the process of this coming kingdom, He does so by declaring that just as there were “days” of both Noah and Lot which led to the "day" of Noah and Lot, so would there be "days" of the Son of man which would lead to a certain “day” (cf., 17:26-30). The somber remembrance of “Lot’s wife” (v.32) serves to bring to mind the need to place little value on physical possession and location. The portrait of immediacy and decisiveness is clearly communicated in 17:33-36, leading to that which is left behind and in need of disposal (17:37). All of these factors are critical in laying the foundation for what is to follow in the teachings of Jesus concerning His arrival in power and glory.

In sum, after an evaluation of the pre-Olivet teachings of Jesus concerning His coming, we see that they point to an event closely following His suffering. Should it be argued that neither Matthew 10:23 nor 16:27-28 refers to His glorious coming, the consequences are that we arrive at the Olivet Discourse without any prior teaching of Jesus concerning the approximate “time” of His return. Therefore, we must rely solely upon the discourse itself to define for us the proximity of the second mountain to that of the first. These are our choices. We come to the Olivet Discourse with an imminent view of Jesus’ return, or we come to it with a blank slate, allowing the text itself to form for us the basis, and time, of Christ’s arrival in glory (i.e., the second mountain).

The Olivet Discourse

I. The disciples’ question (Matt. 24:3)

As we come to the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24, we find it nestled between the important teachings of the judgment in
Matthew 23 and further information on judgment and the kingdom in chapter 25, all of which serve to strengthen the proposed context of Matt. 16:27-29. The scope of the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 23 sets the stage for the disciples’ question in Matthew 24:3. Concerning Christ’s teaching about judgment in Matthew 23, we see a greater scope of judgment than just a local judgment on a Jewish city and its people. The larger implications of Jesus’ teaching are found in that this coming judgment (which was to be experienced by “that generation” Matt. 23:36) is so comprehensive that it extends back to the day of Abel, i.e., the first family of creation. The significance of this is seen in that Abel was not a Jew. There were no Jews in the day of Abel. Therefore, this judgment of which Jesus speaks is more than a Jewish judgment upon a people and their city. The scope of this judgment is all-encompassing. That such a comprehensive judgment should be referenced in light of the first generation Olivet fulfillment should not be a surprise for modern commentators; for Paul himself reaches back to the first prophecy in scripture (Gen. 3:15) to proclaim that its fulfillment is shortly to come to pass (Ro. 16:20).

After Jesus delivers this message concerning the desolation of the house of Israel, He exits the temple with the parting confirmation that “not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down” (Matt. 24:2), thus prophesying the certainty of Jerusalem’s destruction. As Christ arrives at the Mount of Olives, His disciples come to Him privately with a specific question based upon the teaching they have just received - “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming (Parousia), and of the end of the age?”

A quick check of the parallel references and the unity of their inquiry may be seen. In Mark 13:4 the disciples ask, “What will be the sign when all these things take place?” They did not ask for different signs for different events, separated by thousands of years, rather, they asked for “a” sign (singular) when “all of these things” would be fulfilled. In other words, there is nothing in this teaching, or Jesus’ previous teachings, that would lead the disciples to believe that the events of Christ’s arrival, judgment, kingdom, and the destruction of Jerusalem would be separated in time. Should it be contended that in the response of Jesus we see Him correcting His disciples, then we are left to wonder why Paul, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, later picks up this same erroneous train of thought and likewise correlates these events as he writes, “I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom” (2 Tim. 4:1). Though Kik labors to show the disciples in error with reference to their question, he understands, nonetheless, how they could make such a mistake. Kik writes, “Matthew reveals that in the mind of the disciples the destruction of the Temple indicated the coming of the Lord. The word he uses for ‘coming’ is ‘parousia,’ indicating the second coming of Christ. The question as stated in the Gospel of Matthew reveals that to the disciples the destruction of the Temple was to occur at the second coming of the Lord. . . . Throughout the ministry of Christ the disciples had been taught about the coming Day of Judgment (Matt. 10:15; 11:22; 12:36, 41, 42; 13:39, 49). Therefore, when they heard Christ pronounce a judgment against Jerusalem and its Temple, it seemed natural for them to associate it with that great Day of Judgment about which they had heard so much. And as they had also been taught that the Day of Judgment was to occur at the second coming of the Lord, they associated the destruction with his second coming.”

It would seem that the above evidence would provide enough reason and stimulus to consider whether it is the modern interpreter who misunderstands the nature of the disciples’ question instead of the disciples themselves. In light of the pre-Olivet teachings directly referencing the approximate time of the eschatological parousia of Christ (i.e., Matthew 10:23, 16:27-28), why is it unreasonable to think that the disciples should have anything
other than a unified expectation concerning these end-time events? We agree with Kik's summation of the disciples' thinking but not his conclusion. Why did the disciples think the second coming of Christ was to coincide with the destruction of Jerusalem? Why did they believe the destruction of Jerusalem was the great Day of Judgment and associate it with the second coming of the Lord? They believed it to be so because of the clear statements of Jesus concerning His second coming (Matt. 10:23), His teaching about the second coming and judgment (Matt. 16:27-28), and His teachings communicating the impending universal judgment that was to come upon that generation (Matt. 23). This is why Kik and others who hold a postponed view of such things can find an abundance of evidence to point to the disciples' supposed confusion. However, in doing so, it becomes too evident that the disciples had plenty of reasons for being confused, if, as is charged, the parousia of Christ would not take place in that generation. Perhaps the followers of Jesus were not confused after all. What must be seen next is whether Jesus deviates in any way from His previous teachings as He responds to this question posed by His disciples.

II. The Time Frame of the Great Commission (vv. 4-14)

Starting with Matt. 24:4 Jesus begins to supply an answer to when all these things (destruction of Jerusalem, Parousia, and end of the age) will take place. Note that throughout this discourse Jesus is speaking about events related to His Parousia (cf., vv. 3, 27, 37, 39). With reference to this, Jesus warns, “Take heed that no one deceives you.” He is concerned that His disciples are not deceived. This alone should serve as confirmation that the essence of the disciples’ question was correct, otherwise, He certainly would have corrected it before beginning His discourse. If not deceptive, it would at a minimum be confusing to answer correctly an incorrect question, without first addressing the nature of the question's incorrectness! However, for Jesus, the questioning of His disciples is sound and there is no need to alter it - “When will the end of the age, the destruction of Jerusalem, and your glorious arrival (Parousia) take place?”

Jesus emphasizes that much tribulation will serve as a prelude to the occurrence of these things (vv. 5-14). During this time, the disciples are to be busy with the message of the gospel of the kingdom. This gospel is to be taken to the whole world before the end can come, thus marking the first mention of the Great Commission. Christ is careful to qualify this period of suffering as that which leads to the end, but is not the end itself (24:6). The role of the disciples is to continue the mission, persevering till the end (24:13, 14).

After the first mountain is passed (i.e., the sufferings of Christ) Jesus will issue this commission as a command (see Matt. 28:18ff., Mk. 16:20ff.), the accomplishment of which is necessary in bringing about the end of the age, the destruction of Jerusalem, and His arrival in glory (the second mountain). Paul states in Rom. 10:18 and Col. 1:6 and 23 that this commission was indeed accomplished during the course of this first century/last days mission, further qualifying it as the time of the end.¹⁷

A composite picture of this is given to us in Romans 9-11. Here we see why a last days period of time is needed in accomplishing the fulfillment of all things written (Lk. 21:22). It is a period when the message of God is to be taken to the Jewish people and beyond. The gospel offering to the Gentiles is to accomplish the promise of God to Abraham by extending life to all nations, and at the same time it serves to provoke a hardened Israel to jealousy. It is the time when the unnatural branches are grafted into Israel’s olive tree from whence their life is attained. This ingrafting prepares the way for the natural branches to be brought back into their tree after, as declared by Paul, the fullness of the Gentiles comes in. At this point the Deliverer will come out of Zion to take away the sins of Israel by establishing His eternal covenant with them (Ro. 11:25-27).
As seen in the writings of Paul (2:Cor. 3:7-18) the last days are the time of covenantal transition from the ministry of the old (3:7) to that of the new (3:8). The old, which is glorious, is passing away (v. 11), giving place to the new and more glorious covenantal ministry of Christ. The writer of Hebrews also speaks of this transitional period of time as he writes, “In that He says ‘A new covenant,’ He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away” (Heb. 8:13).

III. The Tribulation of the Last Days

In Matthew 24:15 and following, Jesus takes up the prophecies of Daniel to help frame the events about to take place within the closing period of the Jewish Age. Both Jesus (Matt. 24:21) and Daniel (Dan. 12:1) declare these days to be a time of unparalleled tribulation. This is significant. We must ask ourselves why God would foretell and then bring about a time of unequalled tribulation - only to end the Jewish age. Respectfully we ask, Is that the best He could do? If the ending of the Jewish age is only representative of the ending of the Jewish age, and nothing else, does it not seem strange that God would spend the greatest period of tribulation ever in the history of mankind as a pre-cursor to this event?

However, if the focus of Daniel and Christ is on redemptive history and not world history, then the tribulation leading to such an event is more clearly warranted. That such a redemptive focus is in the mind of Daniel and Jesus may be seen from the context. Certainly the Noahic flood, which destroyed the entire inhabitable earth was greater in magnitude than was the destruction of Jerusalem. Likewise, any traditional future second coming, world ending, earth-burning destruction would be greater as well. Yet Jesus draws in and confirms the prophecy of Daniel by relating it to the time leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem, which the prophets, He Himself, His disciples, and, as we shall see, the New Testament writers saw as the end of the age and the time of His coming (parousia) in power and glory. Therefore, one must remain within the immediate Olivet context in order to see the realm (the redemptive/historical plane) where the greatest tribulation ever was to be experienced.

For Jesus, the suffering (represented by the first mountain) which must be endured and which leads to His glory (represented by the second mountain) is nothing less than the cross event. Jesus declares in Luke 17:25 that “He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.” The participatory role of His followers is clear. These early saints were united with Jesus in His death and resurrection, with the aim of becoming fully conformed to His death and resurrection through their involvement in His age-changing reign (Rom. 6:3-5). They became sons of God through faith as they were clothed with Christ (Gal. 3:26,27) thus receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) which served to seal their salvation and to guarantee their inheritance “until the redemption of the purchased possession” (Eph. 1: 13-14).

From this we may better understand the context of Paul in Romans 8 as he writes, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God” (Ro. 8:18-19).

For Paul, this last days period of tribulation was not to be compared to the glory that would be revealed. Therefore, these saints were to take a lesson from Lot’s wife (cf., the words of Jesus, Lk. 17:32) and leave behind that which was passing away (the old covenant creation, I Cor. 7:31) and press on toward “the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:1-14). While this process was one which involved their suffering, it inevitably would lead to their glory. The question of the day was, When would this happen? Again Paul writes saying, “For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory” (Col. 3:3-4).

Peter adds to this by saying, “Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to
be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 1: 13). . . . “He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you” (1:20). . . . but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy” (4:13). . . . and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away” (5:4).

In Matthew 24:30 and Luke 21:27 the time of Christ’s appearing in glory is none other than the destruction of Jerusalem and therefore, of necessity, the time when the sons of God would be revealed with Him in glory.

For Peter, “the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God” (I Pet. 4:17). “They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead” (I Pet. 4:5). This dovetails with the Matthew 24:15, 21 time of greatest tribulation as connected with that of Daniel 12:1-2 where Daniel proclaims, “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.” This represents the hour to which Jesus looked as He proclaimed, “the hour is coming and now is when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God. . . .” (Jn. 5:25). It is the judgment of Matthew 23 and 16:27-28. All of this is written and seen by Peter in light of the fact that “the end of all things is at hand” (I Pet. 4:7). According to Peter the saints must understand their role in suffering for yet a little while so that Jesus Christ might be able to “perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle” them (I Pet. 5:10).

From this it may be seen that the mountain of Christ's suffering and the mountain of His glory are only a generation apart. This generation is compared by Paul in I Cor. 10 to that of the wilderness wanderings in the Exodus event. Paul states that, “All these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (I Cor. 10:11). This is prefaced by Paul as he remarks that “the time is short” and “the form of this world is passing away” (I Cor. 7:29, 31 respectively). Therefore, they are to “come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Cor. 1:7-8). John is even more emphatic as he proclaims that “the world is passing away” - even to the degree that he calls it “the last hour”! (I Jn. 2:17-18). Proof of this is seen in that the Anti-Christ are present (I Jn. 2:19). Also present are the prophesied “scoffers” (empaiktai) of the last days (cf., 2 Peter 2:3, Jude 17, 18).

The Holy Spirit working through Peter placed great emphasis on this period of time by writing, “Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days” (Acts 3:24). Through inspiration, Peter understands that THESE are the days of which ALL the prophets spoke, the last days of the Jewish world: the time when Jesus said “all things written shall be fulfilled” (Lk. 21:22), the time when the redemptive history of God's people would be completed.

IV. The Language and Time Frame of the Prophets

With Matthew 24:29-34 comes the common apocalyptic language of the day. Here we have the language of the prophets being utilized by Jesus to mark the great and glorious day of His return. In this passage we see Jesus limiting the fulfillment of such things to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. This assists us in understanding why Peter uses the Book of Joel for his Pentecost message. Joel also prophesies concerning the great and awesome day of the Lord by using this same terminology. Both Jesus (Matt. 24:29ff.) and Peter (Acts 2:16ff.) use or reference this language in speaking about the coming day of the Lord. Both limit these events to the last days of the Jewish age.

Note the identical manner in which this language is employed in other New Testament passages. The next use of this language to describe the day of the Lord is when Paul is writing to the Thessalonians.
In describing the Parousia of Christ in I Thess. 4:16, Paul writes that “the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God.” At this point, a question is warranted. What is it about this passage that would cause us to interpret it differently from the way this language is used by Jesus in Matthew 24:29ff.? Why is this suddenly to be understood and applied differently from all other apocalyptic language previously used in scripture? Perhaps an even better question would be, Why does Paul not tell us that he now is using this language differently from Jesus, much as Paul does with reference to his teaching on divorce? (see I Cor. 7:12). If Joel speaks of the great and awesome day of the Lord by employing this language (Joel 2), and Peter uses Joel’s account to describe what is taking place during his lifetime (Acts 2:16ff.), and Jesus has used this same language with reference to the great and glorious day of His return at the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem, how is it that Paul can be referencing, for the First time in Scripture, a totally different and future event and fail to qualify it in any way?  

In what terms do we think when visualizing the return of Christ? Have we not heard multiple lessons about the second coming of Christ which drew upon the imagery of clouds, trumpets, angels, rapture, and glory? Are these not the details listed by Jesus in Matthew 24:29ff., which He attributes to the fall of Jerusalem? If the fall of Jerusalem is not the final coming of Christ, does this not mean that the very language used by the New Testament writers to describe the Parousia of Christ is language which Jesus Himself never once used to describe His own second, final coming? Is the trumpet which sounds in I Cor. 15:52 at the resurrection of the dead different from the trumpet which sounds in Matt. 24:31 at the gathering of the elect? If so, where does Paul speak of this difference? If all that Jesus has previously taught referenced something other than that which Paul is now addressing (while using the identical terms of Jesus) where is this indicated by Paul? Did not Daniel place the resurrection of the dead after the time of great tribulation which Jesus confirms would be experienced by that generation (Dan. 12:1-2, Matt. 24:15ff.)? Where do Jesus, Paul, or any other New Testament writer distinguish between these two comings, trumpets, sets of clouds, etc? Are there two resurrections?  

In an attempt to have Jesus address His second coming, and to deliver the time of its occurrence from a first-century fulfillment, it has been common practice to divide the Olivet Discourse into two divisions. The first division (24:1-35) supposedly addresses only the destruction of Jerusalem while the second division (24:36ff.) speaks of the second and final coming of Christ. The problems created by this approach are numerous and we believe it to produce an untenable position.  

As noted earlier, by this time in the ministry of Jesus the disciples have already received His teaching as recorded in Luke 17:20ff. Therefore, any parallel teaching Jesus offers in His Olivet Discourse must be in harmony with that of Luke 17. However, when a comparison study is done, it is clear that if Matthew 24 is to be divided into two sections, then the identical, parallel teaching of Luke 17 must be divided into 5 sections within a span of 18 verses! In reading Luke 17:20-37, is it at all evident that there are five different subject changes concerning Christ’s teaching on the destruction of Jerusalem versus that of His second coming? Certainly, this is not the case.  

In pursuing this further, attention needs to be turned to Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians. In attempting to define the time frame for the coming of the Lord in I Thessalonians, it is helpful to take note of Paul’s admonishment in chapter 5. “For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. . . . But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. . . . let us who are of the day be sober. . . For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Thess. 5:2, 4, 5, 8, 9).
This message clearly follows the Olivet teaching of Jesus as He warns His disciples to know the signs and be watchful for the day of His arrival (cf., Matt. 24:42-44ff.). Since this was to take place in that generation, it is not difficult to understand why Paul refers to the contemporaries of His time as “sons of light and sons of the day.” However, it is of great import to understand that the fact that Jesus knew (as well as His followers) that He would return in that generation, in no way presupposes that He knew “the day” and “the hour” of His return. The Olivet teaching of Jesus does not proclaim that the day of His return could not be known - it merely proclaims that it was not known: thus the reason for the giving of the signs. This is why Paul could tell the Thessalonians to “watch” so that they would not be caught unawares. Like the recipients of the Hebrew letter, if they had “eyes to see” (Matt. 13:16) and would watch, they could “see the day approaching” (Heb. 10:25).

Should it be argued that Jesus spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem as a separate event from His Parousia, and that He did not know the “time” of His Parousia, how is it that He could know that He would not return before the end of the Jewish age and the destruction of Jerusalem some forty years hence? Would we dare claim that Jesus did not believe His coming to be imminent? Does not Scripture provide enough proof to the contrary (Matt. 10:23, 16:27-28, Lk. 17:20ff., cf., Matt. 24:ff.)? Is it possible to see Jesus having a postponed view of His coming and still believe the Holy Spirit guided Paul and the other New Testament writers into thinking it was imminent (Heb. 10:37)? Furthermore, did those Thessalonian believers really take seriously the command of Paul to watch for the second coming of Christ when His prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem had not yet even come to pass? Were they to watch for two days of the Lord? One, the time of which was not known, yet could not come about before the other? For which event was the “end of all things at hand” (I Pet. 4:7)? Which event was John crediting as being in its last hour (I Jn. 2:18)?

Perhaps even more importantly, if the Thessalonians held the traditional concept of the second coming of Christ, how could they possibly wonder if it had already arrived (2 Thess. 2:2)? Does not Paul's writing against such a notion coincide with the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 24:26 that His disciples are not to be deceived by those who would teach that He had already COME?

At this point, let us turn our focus to another of Paul's writings. Notice the words of encouragement he writes to the church in Rome - “And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand” (Ro. 13:11-12a).

In Luke 21:28 Jesus ties to the apocalyptic language concerning the destruction of Jerusalem the statement, “When these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.” This redemption equals the “times of refreshing” of which Peter spoke (Acts 3:19-21) when the future blotting out of sins would be complete. It was the time of the first-century saints to whom Peter writes, “who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials. . . . Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith - the salvation of your souls. Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven - things which angels desire to look into. Therefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the
grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. . . He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Peter 1:5-6, 8-13, 20).

Note the content of Peter’s writing. He speaks of the “salvation” that is “ready to be revealed” in the “last time.” He speaks of being in the generation “spoken of by the prophets.” They are encouraged to “gird up” and hold on for the “revelation of Jesus Christ.” What does all of this tell us about the mountain of Christ’s suffering versus the mountain of His glory? Is this language consistent with the concept of two-thousand years between the two? Are we willing to hold on to a divided Olivet (which we have seen to be untenable) in order to seek “more” salvation, “more” last generation girding up, “more” revelation of Jesus Christ, etc.? Why should we be willing to continue to read from the Book of Revelation backward in order to construct an end-time view built on double application?

Since Peter is writing in light of the “at hand end of all things” (1 Pet. 4:7), certainly he sees what is approaching. Peter stresses that Christ was “manifest in these last times” for them (v. 20). It is in this light that we must approach the second letter of Peter.

Note the apocalyptic theme of 2 Peter 3. Again the language is employed without any qualification of its being used differently from its previous use by the prophets, Jesus, or Paul. Is Peter breaking with the former teachings of inspired writers to tell us of a separate event some two-thousand years from his day? Will he do this at the expense of overlooking his speech in Acts 2 about the last days while completely ignoring his previous use and application of Joel’s apocalyptic? Could it be that through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Who has written all scripture to date, Peter now is being inspired to segregate this teaching from the rest of scripture? Again, there is nothing present within the text that would indicate an end time different from that which Jesus limits to His generation.

Further proof of this is that Peter is writing his message by way of “reminder” concerning that “which was spoken before by the holy prophets” (2 Pet. 3:2). In other words, Peter begins this teaching by confirming that its contents are nothing different from those previously recorded by the prophets. Concerning such, Jesus proclaims that these are the days of vengeance in which all things written will be fulfilled (Lk. 21:22). Therefore, the entire content of 2 Peter 3 (which had previously been spoken by the prophets) falls under the authority of the statement of Jesus in Luke 21:22, and constitutes the substance of that which is to be fulfilled in that generation.

A problem some have in accepting this stems from Peter's language concerning the “promise of new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pet. 3:13). Any study regarding the new heavens and earth must begin with the prophetic teachings of Isaiah. A brief overview of Isa. 65 and 66 reveals that, while having a limited fulfillment in the return of Israel from Babylonian captivity, these passages are ultimately understood to have a final fulfillment in Christ. This being the case, where does Jesus give us permission to leave the context of His Olivet Discourse in determining their fulfillment? If the ultimate fulfillment of the prophets is to be accomplished in Jesus, why would we seek to build a scheme of fulfillment outside of, and in addition to, that which is built by Christ Himself?

Note the content of these prophesied events. It would be a day when the Lord would come with fire (66:15-16); God's enemies would be destroyed (65:1-7, 11-12, 66:15-16) and a remnant would be saved (65:8-10). This would entail the making of a new people (65:13-16) and the giving of a new name (65:15).

In speaking about the reception of the kingdom, the writer of Hebrews picks up the theme of creation and applies it to the new covenant as he writes, “See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, “Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also
heaven,” Now this, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:25-29).

All of this is seen by the writer of Hebrews in the same limited time frame as that of the Olivet Discourse. The writer notes that Jesus has entered behind the veil (6:19) into the heavenly presence of God (9:24). This occurs because of the necessity for Him to appear “once at the end of the ages” to “put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (9:26). The ramifications of this for these early saints is “To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation” (9:28). The time of this appearing is uncompromisingly limited to a soon, very soon coming of Christ, “For yet a very little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry (10:37).”

Likewise the passing of heaven and earth in the writings of Peter is equal to that mentioned by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 34:35); it represents the same passing old covenant system to which Paul refers when he speaks of the world passing away (I Cor. 7:31) and is the same “last hour world” which is soon to pass away in the writings of John (I Jn. 2:17-18). The Olivet setting of Christ’s coming in His kingdom (Lk. 21:31) is pictured by Isaiah in terms of a new heaven and earth (Isa. 65:17-19, 66:22), by Joel (3:14-21) and Amos (9:11-15) as a redeemed earth that has at its center the heavenly city of God (to which Abraham looked, Heb. 11:10) which the Book of Revelation displays as the heart of the new world (Rev. 21:9-27).

All of this centers around the new and heavenly creation of God and leads us to the last writing of scripture - the Book of Revelation. As the Olivet Discourse provides the cornerstone of Covenant Eschatology - the Book of Revelation brings to light its capstone. In this great book we see a portrait of the final things of God’s redemptive plan for man. From its beginning (Rev. 1: 1) to its end (Rev. 22:20) we are continuously brought back to the time frame of nearness as established by Christ in His Olivet Discourse. When we take seriously the time statements within this book, combined with John’s being told to “Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this” (1:19), it may clearly be seen that the Spirit of inspiration is serving notice that the contents of this book are to be realized in John’s day and do, in fact, represent the “summing up of all things in Christ” (Eph. 1:10).

In holding to the context of Matthew 24 and 16:27-28, Jesus speaks to the seven churches of Asia assuring them of His coming (1:4, 3:11). To five of the seven churches He mentions their need to repent and what will happen when (not if) He returns should they refuse to do so. This dovetails with John’s message about the fall of Babylon, i.e., Jerusalem (11:8), and the arrival of the coming kingdom of God (11:15-17). At this time comes the new heaven and earth (21:1), the center of which is the new Jerusalem (21:9ff.) where the “river of life” flows from its midst (22:1-2). The time of these events is limited by the statement that these are things “which must shortly take place” (22:6). So sure is this message that Jesus again confirms, “Behold, I am coming quickly!” (22:7). At this the angel instructs John not to “seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand” (22:10). Twice more the Lord confirms He is coming quickly (22:12, 20) and this final message draws to a close.

In the Book of Revelation the time is at hand as the final minutes of John’s last hour (I Jn. 2:18) are ticking away. Soon, those who pierced the Son of God would witness His arrival in power and glory (Rev. 1:7, Matt. 26:64, 24:30, Zech. 12) as the power of the holy people would be shattered and “all things” would “be finished” (Dan. 12:7). Soon, the reward of John, the lone disciple of twelve whose faith drove him to stand at the base of the cross where his Messiah was hanging, would experience the fulfillment of His Lord’s prophecy (John
21:20ff.) as once again he would stand as the lone disciple - this time witnessing, not the mountain of His Lord’s suffering, but instead, the mountain of His glory.

Footnotes

1 Note the differences between the suffering Messiah of Isaiah (Isa. 53) and Daniel’s Messiah of conquering glory (Dan. 7, 9, and 12). This is not to say that the prophets did not have a balanced perspective of both the suffering and glory of Messiah. John represents Isaiah as one who saw His glory as well, see John 12:41.


4 Ibid., 13-14.

5 It also is worth noting that of all the parables, none of them warrants an application removed from the time frame stated by Christ in His Olivet Discourse. Some examples to consider in favor of the imminent judgment language consistent with the Olivet Discourse would be - Matt. 13:24-33, 47-50, 21:33ff., 22:11ff., and Luke 19:11-17.


8 Johnson sees the force of the use of “Son of man” with reference to Matt. 10:23 as he writes, “No doubt because this tradition was in circulation, the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem for the most part remained there until the very outbreak of the Jewish War of 66-70. Eusebius (Church History III. 5. 3) says that at that time, in obedience to a divine revelation, they moved to Pella in Trans-Jordan. This saying was formulated by Christians who thought of Christ primarily as the heavenly Son of man.” Sherman E. Johnson The Interpreter’s Bible, vol. 7, The Gospel According to St. Matthew, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, reprint, 1990) 369.


11 Berkof is typical of those who would attempt to escape the heat of imminency by attributing to Christ different comings other than His eschatological coming. He writes. “Jesus did indeed teach that His coming was near, but this is not the same as teaching that it was imminent. In the first place it should be borne in mind that in speaking of His coming, He does not always have in mind the eschatological coming. Sometimes He refers to His coming in spiritual power on the day of Pentecost; sometimes to His coming in judgment in the destruction of Jerusalem.” L. Berkof, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., reprint 1988) 697. How interesting that some would label Pentecost as a time of Christ’s “coming” when He Himself labeled it as a time of His “going” (cf., John 16:7).

12 Here we believe Kik misses the scope of the judgment scene in Matt. 24:1-34. One justification Kik uses for the division of Matt. 24 is that “The picture of the First Section is judgment upon earth in Palestine; the picture of the Second Section is judgment in Heaven upon all nations” J. Marcellus Kik, An Eschatology of Victory (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1971) 73. What Kik fails to realize is that the judgment of Matthew 24:1-34 is just as comprehensive as that of Matthew 25:31ff.

13 With reference to the connection between Gen. 3:15 and Paul’s statement in Rom. 16:20, Kasemann observes that “It leads to a stream of apocalyptic tradition which emphasizes the Imminence of the parousia. .

Likewise, the parallel of Luke 21:7 is similar in construction.

While there are other possibilities for the translation of this verse, it must also be conceded that the above rendering is certainly a viable one as well.

Kik, 87-88.

It is interesting to see Ladd deal with the time frame of the parousia of Christ in relation to the explicitness of Matt. 24:14. Ladd writes “Our text is the clearest statement in God's Word about the time of our Lord's coming. There is no verse which speaks as concisely and distinctly as this verse about the time when the Kingdom will come.” From here, Ladd chooses to ignore the contents of passages such as Rom. 10:18, Col. 1:6, 23, and labors to show how this commission must be fulfilled today in order to bring about the parousia of Christ. For a passage providing “the clearest statement in God's Word about the time of our Lord's coming” it is ironic that Ladd should miss it so badly. George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., reprint, 1988) 124.

It seems like a waste of a good tribulation, does it not?

We agree with Beker as he writes “. . .the Christ-event in and of itself is not the final climax or closure event. The expression ‘first fruits’ signifies that the time strains toward its actualization in the harvest of the final resurrection of the dead. The connection between the resurrection of Christ and God’s final triumph is confirmed by Paul's view of the Spirit. As Christ is related to the general resurrection, so also is the Holy Spirit related to the coming glory of God. In fact, the Spirit, according to Paul, is the agent of the future glory of God in the present; it is the first down payment (Rom. 8:23) or the guarantee (2 Cor. 1:22) of the end time and thus the signal of its coming and of God's imminent triumph.” J. Christiaan Beker, *The Triumph of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 32.

The association of the term “Anti-Christ” was applied to those who went out from the midst of the people of God, i.e., the Judaizers. Compare the “going out” language of I Jn. 2:19 with that of Acts 15:24. Berkhof notes that “The antichrist is not separated from Christ. Without Christ he is absolutely unthinkable, he is bound to Christ and must attest Christ's dominion also in that he exists by fighting against everything Christ means in the world. He is at the same time Christ's competitor and caricature who contests Salvation by replacing it with his own salvation.” Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christ the Meaning of History* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979) 114-15.

Passages such as Isa. 13, 24-34, 51-52, Jer. 4, Ezek. 32, Joel 1ff., Zeph. 1 and 14 are all examples of this kind of language with reference to the downfall of a nation.

Typical of this approach and consistent with those of my immediate fellowship would be a work such as that of J. Marcellus Kik, *An Eschatology of Victory*.


Bailey is correct in observing “Attention is now focused upon the disturbance of mind in the Thessalonian church because at least some of its members have been led to believe that the day of the Lord has come. The KJV reads is at hand; but the Greek word is found six other times in the
N. T. and always with the idea of 'present.' Here it means ‘has set in.’” John W. Bailey, *The Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 11, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, reprint, 1990) 325. For the six other usages see Ro. 8:38, 1 Cor. 3:22, 7:26, Gal. 1:4, 2 Tim. 3:1, Heb. 9:9. This Thessalonian passage must be combined with that of 2 Timothy 2:17-18 to challenge both our view of the Parousia and the resurrection. If the final resurrection involves corpses rising out of graves, how could Hymenaeus and Philetus convince anyone? Every tomb in Palestine would speak against them.

In Daniel 8:26, Daniel is told to seal his writing because the time of its fulfillment “refers to many days in the future” (Dan. 8:26). The contents of Daniel’s prophecy were not to occur for some 500 years after his writing. John, however, is told not to seal the contents of his prophecy for “the time is at hand” (Rev. 22:10). Based upon this prophetic paradigm, how is it possible that any of the contents of the Book of Revelation could apply to our future and still qualify as “at hand” in the day of John?
Addendum B: Identical or Similar? A Closer Look at Acts 1:11

By Jack C. Scott, Jr.

Acts 1:11

“. . . Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”

Many profound and cogent arguments are presented by the view of Covenant Eschatology. From the simple examination of the widespread usage of imminent time statements, to the weighty evidence of comparative biblical terminology, to the deeper examination of resurrection through both of the testaments, the amount of arguments supporting Covenant Eschatology is truly impressive.

The tendency of detractors of Covenant Eschatology is not to deal with these many arguments head on, rather, a tactic born of desperation is the chosen method of dealing with these issues, i.e., to throw out one or two passages that they perceive cannot be harmonized with Covenant Eschatology. This can only be called a stop-gap measure, meant to extract one from the pressure of the moment. The only way to deal honestly with an argument is to examine the context upon which it is based. If a reasonable and consistent explanation can be given that removes the seeming contradiction, then any validity to this approach is removed.

We are not distracted or intimidated by this approach. Presenting an “apparent” inconsistency does not prove the case. The apparent inconsistency may very well be based upon the presuppositions or traditions of the one protesting, rather than sound exegesis. If someone begins by assuming what he and others like-minded say is the truth on the matter, and then sets up questions or assumed proof-texts that confirm those presuppositions, he must be challenged.

We are not the only ones who must defend their view. Valid hermeneutics and exegeses have no place for assumptions, presuppositions or tradition.

We believe that Acts 1:11 can be perfectly harmonized with the framework of Covenant Eschatology. Further, we believe that literal demands of this passage are inordinate and inconsistent.

The Problem Stated

The problem in this passage, as envisioned by the traditionalist, is easily stated. This is important because a problem well articulated is already partially solved.

The traditionalist argues that when Jesus ascended into heaven He did so literally, physically, bodily, audibly and visually. Therefore, if He is going to come back “in like manner” as they saw Him go, His return must be literal, physical, bodily, audible and visual.

The Problem Examined

The key to understanding the return of Jesus, as to its nature, is the meaning of the phrase, “in like manner” (Greek: hon tropon). Thayer’s lexicon defines the phrase to mean “as, even as, like as” (p. 631).

This phrase, by definition and usage, is used in two ways. First, it is used to express identical form or action. When Peter was defending the Gentile mission before the Jerusalem council he said, “But we believe. . . we shall be saved in the same manner as they” (Acts 15:11).

Peter’s argument to his Jewish brethren was that they would be saved in exactly the same way as the Gentiles. The same work of God and the same response of faith were required in both Jew and Gentile. As Paul would write to the Church at Rome, “For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek. . .” (10:12).

The phrase also is used to express a comparative relationship, action or
consequence. For instance, Paul writes, “Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these resist the truth...” (2 Tim. 3:8). Paul is not suggesting that the apostates of his day were doing the same thing that was done when the Egyptian magicians stood against Moses. Instead, he is showing that there is comparative relationship with all apostates and rebels. They all withstand God, but not in the same way.

Is The Return Literal?
The futurist demands a “literal” return because it was a “literal” departure. The question is not whether the return is to be literal; the question is whether it must be physical to be literal. Can something be both spiritual in nature yet literal? Many things in the Bible are spiritually literal. “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). Surely no one would argue that because God is spiritual He is not literal.

We agree that Acts 1:11 is the literal return of Jesus as He Himself foretold. However, as the following questions will demonstrate, this return cannot be a physical return. In fact, to stay consistent with the physical demands will be impossible without appearing ridiculous.

Is It A Physical-Bodily Return?
The futurist demands must be understood. “In like manner” means exact form and fashion. If this is the paradigm for this passage, then we must demand consistency.

Also, we cannot allow this paradigm to be conveniently set aside when its demands become silly or impossible to justify. Any attempts to do so is patently a surrender of the physical paradigm. Traditionalists will consistently jump to spiritual applications when their physical paradigm cannot possibly be defended.

The inconsistency of this approach is demonstrated again and again with literalist approaches to the Book of Revelation. They will attempt to literalize everything except those symbols that are so patently symbolic they appear ridiculous when literalized. The problem with this approach is that it is based upon man’s ability, or lack thereof, to accept something as too far out to be literal, therefore demanding a spiritual application.

Will Jesus literally reassume the same physical body that He had while on earth—the one He had at the time of His ascension? Will the literalists contend that Jesus will reassume His physical fleshly body just for the purpose of fulfilling their expectations of this passage, so that He might come back in “like manner”? According to their demands, He must do so.

If He does, how will all mankind witness this at the same time on a global scale? Remember, like manner means exactly the same way.

A Troubling Text
The futurist idea stumbles on the implications of 1 John 3:2, where the coming of Jesus to reveal the Father is discussed. John writes: “Beloved... now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

If the identity of Jesus at His return is to be in the same manner as His departure, then John’s words in this context are peculiar, if not contradictory.

This is John, the apostle, the beloved friend and companion of Jesus—His closest disciple. John was among that close-knit group of disciples who witnessed the ascension of Jesus.

In doing so, John surely witnessed the bodily identity and appearance of Jesus at this occasion; “...why do you stand gazing up into heaven?” (Acts 1:11). How then, could this same apostle, who knew the person and identity of Jesus better than any man—a man who personally witnessed all of the ascension event, say that we don’t yet know “...what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2)?

This one passage dispels the futurist’s literalistic contention. John saw it all in the ascension, but relative to His parousia he says they didn’t know. Two observations are in order. First, John did know His ascended appearance, and secondly, he said
our identity when He returns will be like His. Note the following:
1. John did not yet know what our identity and appearance would be at the return of Christ.
2. But when He did return, he said that our appearance would be like Christ’s appearance and identity.
3. Therefore, John did not yet know the returning identity of Christ.

Now Note:
1. John did not yet know the returning identity of Christ.
2. But John did know the departing and ascending appearance and identity of Christ.
3. Therefore, the departing and ascending identity of Christ and His returning identity and appearance are not the same.

These arguments show the weakness of the traditional views. For the appearance of Jesus to be a physical issue, one must admit that John here is mistaken.

Some have ventured that this is the “glorified” body of Jesus, and that Jesus had in fact been in that body since His resurrection. Yet Jesus said to His disciples who were thinking that they were seeing something from the spiritual realm—something non-physical: “...Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have” (Luke 24: 37-39).

Also note that man in the flesh and limited to the flesh cannot see God; for “No one has seen God at any time.” (John 1:18). Why? Because “God is Spirit...” (John 4:24).

Clearly, for Jesus to have ascended back to the dimension of the Father, there must have been a change back to His pre-fleshly spiritual mode and appearance. Or else He would not be able to see or enter the dimension of the Father.

Also, we are still troubled by John’s statement (see 1 John 3:2). If Jesus were in His glorified eternal body either after His resurrection or any time through His ascension, then John would have been wrong in saying, “we don’t yet know.” He should have said, “I was there; I saw it, and this is what it was like.”

With the setting of the traditionalist view in mind, there simply is no way to harmonize this passage.

**Will It Be Audible And Visual?**

What does “in like manner” demand? The futurist says “identical” action. We then ask, To whom will it be audibly and visually witnessed?

Hear the answer: “It will be seen and heard by all humanity, dead and alive, around the world at precisely the same time.” Does that do justice to the requirements of “in like manner” required in the literalist view?

No, it does not. To whom and where was the ascension of Christ visible and audible?

Was it not exclusively on the Mount of Olives and to the apostles that His ascension was witnessed? Did all of humanity globally witness this event? We all know the answer.

One cannot have this a literal, physical event “in like manner” without the same limitations of the physical ascension. In like manner, taken literally, demands that Jesus reassume His physical body, come to the Mount of Olives and appear to a select group of eleven disciples.

Seeing that we cannot approach this text literally and physically without glaring contradictions, we ask, Is there a way to see this context that honors the demands of “in like manner,” yet does not have the contradictions?

**The Problem Solved**

Since the phrase “in like manner” cannot mean exact form or action, it must have a comparative and relational meaning. Why can’t “in like manner” have reference to the spiritual impact and significance of His ascension and return, rather than its physical orientation?

In its spiritual significance, the ascension as well as the return are “in like manner.” In fact, viewed from the spiritual vantage point, “in like manner” (hon tropon) can have either an “exact” or “relational” meaning.

Great sense is made of the context when we see the phrase modifying the relationship of the ascending and coming Christ to sin. Jesus departs personally victorious over sin.
But, still, he must enter into the presence of God as our High Priest and offer His own blood for our sins (Hebrews 8:3).

So as our High Priest, He entered into, “. . . the Presence behind the veil. . . having become a Priest forever. . .” (Heb. 6:19-20). Doing so, He became for those in that time, “. . . a surety of a better covenant” (7:21).

Armed with this understanding, the writer could speak of the soon to come to pass full removal of the Old Covenant system, with the resulting full establishment of the New Covenant age. He writes: “In that He says, a New Covenant, He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away” (8:13).

Thus, the ascension of Christ, personally victorious over sin was to finish that eternal covenant that would ensure the same victory over sin to His people. He clearly tells them of the ‘soon return’ of Jesus.

“For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: ‘For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry’” (10:36-37). Why was the soon return of the High Priest so critical? Because just as the Jews knew the atonement was not finished or accepted until their high priest returned from the Most Holy Place, these saints were told to await Christ’s return out of heaven—the true Most Holy Place, to gather them to God. “To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation” (9:28).

Just as Christ ascended, apart from sin—victorious over sin, He would return very soon, “in like manner” apart from sin for the benefit and reception of His people. This brings richer meaning to Acts 1:11, while keeping His return as High Priest inseparably tied to His departure.

Jesus, in some of His last words prior to His crucifixion, made clear that the sole intent of His going away was to bring man back into the personal relationship with God that had been lost due to sin (John 14:1-23). The return of Jesus accomplishes that goal (14:23). No return, no restoration.

**His Coming Again**

Seeing the significance of His going away, the clear intent of His coming again is vividly portrayed. His coming was the final act consummating the transition from the Old Covenant of death, to the New Covenant of life. John writes, anticipating this great judgment of Jesus, so that just “. . . as He is, so are we in this world” (1 John 4:17). The return and judgment of Christ was for the purpose of making us like him (i.e., in like manner) in this world.

Jesus said He would come with the clouds in that first generation (Matthew 24:30; 26:64). We can believe Jesus or modern day deniers. But with the coming—return of Jesus tied consistently to the completion of salvation and the empowerment of the New Covenant age, isn’t it better to acknowledge and accept what the angels declared to those very disciples who witnessed His ascension? “This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”
Covenant Eschatology: A Comprehensive Overview

By Timothy R. King and Jack C. Scott, Jr.

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