

AMILLENNIALISM



WEIGHED

AND

FOUND WANTING

by
John R Ecob D.D.
for
The Herald of Hope Inc.



AMILLENNIALISM

WEIGHED

AND

FOUND WANTING

by
John R. Ecob D.D.
Editor of the Herald of Hope
Email:editor@heraldofhope.org.au

Published by
the editorial committee of
the Herald of Hope magazine
PO Box 4216, Marayong, NSW 2148
Australia

Index

Preface	3
Introduction	4
<i>What the Early Church Taught - The Three Pillars of Amillennialism -Spiritualizing Scripture - Replacement Theology - A General Resurrection.</i>	
Amillennialism Spritualizes Scripture	12
<i>Examples of Symbolic Interpretation - Symbolic Interpretation brings Uncertainty -An Amillennialist Interpretation of Revelation -The Message of the Book of Revelation - Things Which must Shortly Come to Pass - A Symbolic Temple? - Powerful Words from J C Ryle - Implications of a Symbolic Interpretation.</i>	
Amillennialism Teaches Replacement Theology	38
<i>He is not a Jew...He is a Jew - The Israel of God - The Seed of Abraham - Who's Who in the New Heaven and New Earth? - The Church a Mystery - Two Camps but Seven Dispensations - Romans Chapter 11 - The United Voice of the Prophets - The Testimony of Recent Events - Two Returns of Israel to the Land - God's New Covenant with Israel.</i>	
Amillennialism Teaches a General Resurrection	54
<i>The Past Resurrection of Old Testament Saints - The Future Resurrection of Tribulation Saints - The Future Resurrection of Church Saints - The First Resurrection in Several Stages - Two Resurrections: One for the Saved, Another for the Unsaved - Only Souls from Hell Appear at the Great White Throne - The Great White Throne Judgment is a Judgment of Works and the Believer Won't be There - No Mercy at the Great White Throne - Degrees of Punishment at the Great White Throne - Names in the Book of Life - Who are Raised at Christ's Second Coming? - The Day of Judgment - Judgment of the Living Nations - Hades,Gehenna and Tartaros - Warning to Amillennialists - The Rapture and the Second Coming.</i>	
The Imminence of Christ's Return	78
<i>Israel to Return in Unbelief to the Land - The Sign of the Fig Tree - The Sign of Europe - The Sign of the Merchants of Tarshish - The Sign of Increased Knowledge and Travel - The Sign of Apostasy in Christendom - What Must I do to be saved?</i>	

Preface

This book has been written to provide information for Christians who frequently find themselves confronted by those who have accepted the amillennial interpretation of Bible prophecy. It may also be helpful to some who have been unsure about whether amillennialism is the correct interpretation of the prophetic Scriptures.

The humble believer in the Lord Jesus Christ accepts the Bible as the verbally inspired, infallible, and complete Word of God to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be taken away.

Anyone who reads the Bible would naturally draw the conclusion that it contains God's plan for the salvation of man, a great deal of history, much exhortation to holy living, and many prophecies of future events. It would be impossible to avoid that conclusion.

It would not occur to the average Bible-believing Christian, however, that the Scripture should be interpreted any way other than literally. After all, when received, the Gospel produces changed lives, its history can be verified by archeological research and external records, its exhortations to holy living are practical and true to life, and many of the prophecies have already been fulfilled literally in minute detail while some have been partially fulfilled or are in the process of being fulfilled.

In addition, the prophets throughout history have constantly declared the faithfulness of God, proclaiming Him to be the covenant-keeping God who cannot lie and always keeps His word. He meant His Word to be understood in its literal sense.

Amillennialism rejects the literal interpretation of the text of Scripture and seeks secondary hidden meanings. To do this it becomes necessary to treat what normally would be real and literal as symbolic, and the type or shadow becomes the substance.

Where Scripture uses symbols, it usually provides their meaning. Illustrations and types beyond this require a predetermined doctrinal framework which, to be safe, must be found objectively taught elsewhere in Scripture in a straightforward literal sense.

Amillennialism has the wrong framework of doctrine, and it is that which is exposed in this book. Replacement theology and a general resurrection are the major elements of amillennialism, and these are shown from the Scripture to be false doctrines.

Introduction

In its simplest definition, amillennialism is that teaching of “last things” (eschatology) which denies that there will be a literal kingdom of Christ on earth lasting for 1,000 years. The word amillennial means “no millennium”. The denial of the doctrine of a 1,000-year reign of Christ after His second advent may be traced back to Augustine of Hippo, who wrote in the fifth century.

What the Early Church Taught

The writings of the early Church Fathers from the second and third centuries, indicate that the predominant view held by the Church during that period was that there would be a literal kingdom of 1,000 years over which Christ would reign after His second coming.

Irenaeus (AD120-202) wrote extensively, and in his *Against Heresies*, Book I Chapters 28-30 records:

“For when he (Antichrist) is come, and of his own accord concentrates in his own person the apostasy, and accomplishes whatever he shall do according to his own will and choice, sitting also in the temple of God, so that his dupes may adore him as the Christ; wherefore also shall he deservedly be cast into the lake of fire.

And he shall order an image of the beast to be made, and he shall give breath to the image, so that the image shall speak; and he shall cause those to be slain who will not adore it...And he will cause a mark [to be put] in the forehead and in the right hand, that no one may be able to buy or sell, unless he who has the mark of the name of the beast or the number of his name; and the number is six hundred and sixty-six, that is, six times a hundred, six times ten, and six units. He gives this as a summing up of the whole of that apostasy which has taken place during six thousand years.

...Then also Lateinos has the number six hundred and sixty-six; and it is a very probable [solution], this being the name of the last kingdom [of the four seen by Daniel]. For the Latins are they who at present bear rule.

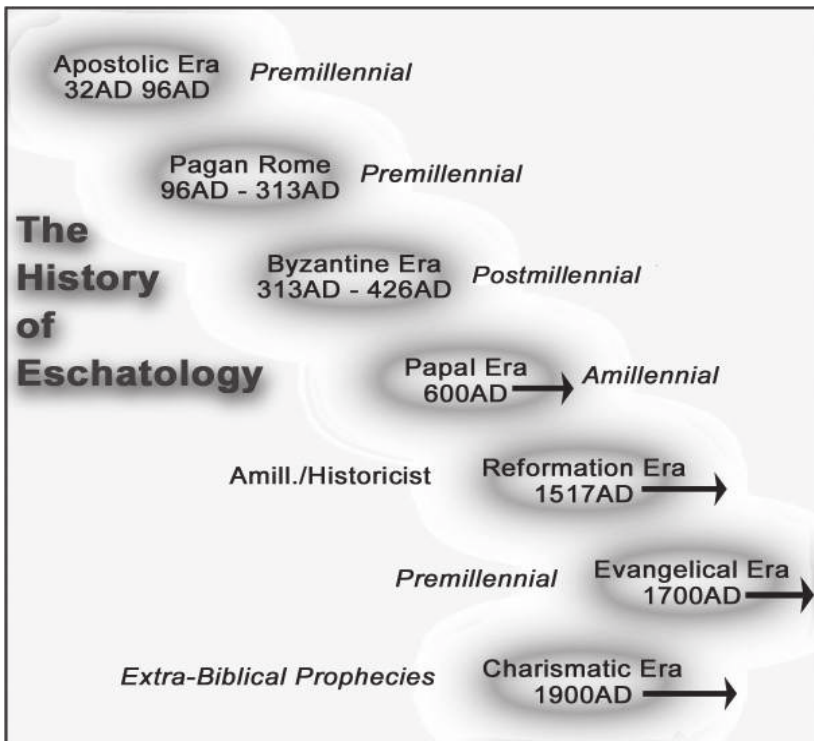
But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire; but bringing in for the righteous the times of the kingdom, that is, the rest, the hallowed

seventh day; and restoring to Abraham the promised inheritance, in which kingdom the Lord declared, that many coming from the east and from the west should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

Obviously Irenaeus understood the Book of Revelation and the Book of Daniel literally, and expected a literal kingdom of Christ on earth after the Great Tribulation.

Schaff’s *History of the Christian Church* reads:

“The most striking point in the eschatology of the ante-Nicene age (before AD325) is the prominent chiliasm, or millenarianism, that is, the belief of a visible reign of Christ on earth with the risen saints for a thousand years...It was indeed...a widely current opinion of distinguished teachers, such as Barnabas (end of 1st century), Papias (a disciple of John), Justin Martyr (born about AD100), Irenaeus (AD120-202) the disciple of Polycarp who in turn was the disciple of John, Tertullian (AD150-220), Methodius (3rd century), and Lactantius (end of 3rd and beginning of 4th century) ...” (Vol II page 614).



Amillennialism Weighed and Found Wanting

Amillennialism, however, was the dominant view held by the Church through the Middle Ages, when the Church came under papal domination in western Europe and the Scriptures were taken from the people. The spiritual darkness which settled over Europe during the Middle Ages has been described as the “Devil’s millennium”, and the theology of this period was greatly influenced by the writings of Augustine, who adopted the **symbolic method** of Biblical interpretation thus opening the door to many false doctrines.

Augustine of Hippo (AD354 to 430) was influenced by Bishop Ambrose of Rome and for some time lived a monastic life. He became Bishop of Hippo in North Africa in AD395. The code of conduct laid down by him was used to frame the constitutions of the Dominican and Franciscan orders within the Roman Catholic Church, and his eschatology has been adopted widely. It reappeared in commentaries and is taught in many theological seminaries throughout Christendom. Martin Luther belonged to the order of Augustinian Friars.

When the Reformation broke over northern Europe in 1517 the papacy lost much of its influence. Luther’s German Bible and Tyndale’s English translation (1526) placed the Word of God in the hands of the people. However, the symbolic method of interpretation which characterized Augustine’s writings was so ingrained in the minds of the Reformers that it was difficult for them to see clearly many of the truths relating to Bible prophecy. As a consequence, the amillennial teaching of Augustine persisted among the Reformers.

Following the Reformation came the great evangelical missionary awakening, beginning about AD1700 with the Moravian and Wesleyan revivals. Faith missionary societies blossomed and the Gospel was taken to the four corners of the earth. It was in this atmosphere that the premillennial truth of Christ’s return was revived, particularly during the 1800s. At this stage of Church history the Philadelphian era of the Church emerged and the hope of the Lord’s return burned brightly.

The final stage of Church history since 1900 has seen the Ecumenical/Charismatic Movement arise, with spurious claims to direct revelation and extra-Biblical prophecies. The Lord says to this Church, *“I will spue thee out of my mouth”* (Rev.3:16).

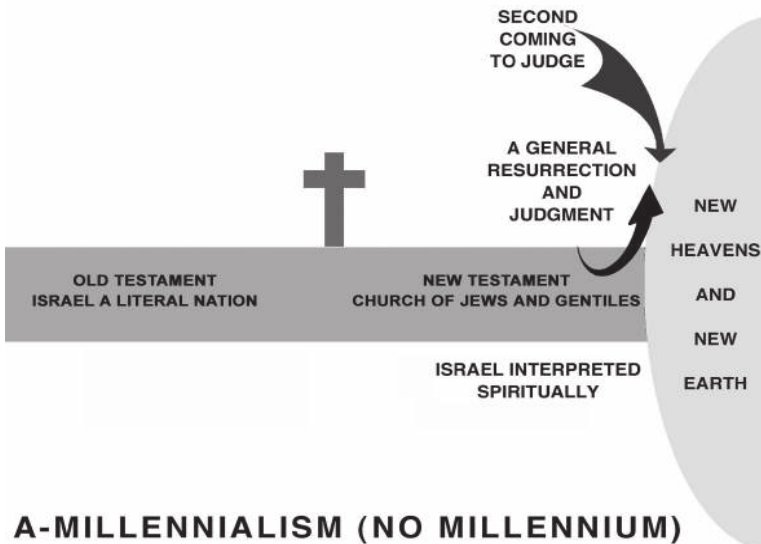
Augustine acknowledged that in his day (5th C) there were those who believed in a literal 1,000-year kingdom on earth. In his

comments on Revelation chapter 20, he writes:

“The Apostle John says... ‘And I saw an angel come down from heaven. . . . Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years’.

Those who, on the strength of this passage, have suspected that the first resurrection is future and bodily, have been moved, among other things, specially by the number of a thousand years, as if it were a fit thing that the saints should thus enjoy a kind of Sabbath-rest during that period, a holy leisure after the labours of the six thousand years since man was created, and was on account of his great sin dismissed from the blessedness of paradise into the woes of this mortal life, so that thus, as it is written, ‘One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day,’ there should follow on the completion of six thousand years, as of six days, a kind of seventh-day Sabbath in the succeeding thousand years; and that it is for this purpose the saints rise, viz., to celebrate this Sabbath.

And this opinion would not be objectionable, if it were believed that the joys of the saints in that Sabbath shall be spiritual, and consequent on the presence of God; **for I myself, too, once held this opinion... They who do believe them are called by the spiritual, Chiliasts, which we may literally reproduce by the name Millenarians”** (*City of God*, Book 20 ch.7).



The Three Pillars of Amillennialism

In this response to amillennialism we make reference to two authorities, one ancient and one modern. The first is Augustine of Hippo, who is considered the “father of amillennialism”. His views are expressed in 22 books published under one title, *The City of God* (AD413-426). These have influenced the course of the history of the Church. Catholics and Protestants alike subscribe to his views with their own twist of interpretation.

Augustine did not always subscribe to the amillennial position. As indicated, he once held the premillennial chiliast (1,000 years) view that Christ would return to establish a literal kingdom on earth for 1,000 years. It was the sacking of Rome by the Goths (AD410) that caused him to adopt amillennialism and interpret the Millennium as a “spiritual” kingdom established in the Catholic Church.

The grand vision of a “Christian” Roman Empire, as established by Constantine (AD313), representing the kingdom of God on earth, had been shattered by internal corruption and the attacks of the Goths. It became obvious that the Imperial Roman Empire was not the kingdom of God, but instead of going back to the Scriptures Augustine developed a philosophy of history which he then had to justify in Scriptural terms. The fruit of his endeavour was *The City of God*.

Philip Schaff, the Church historian, himself an amillennialist, wrote in the preface to an 1886 translation of Augustine’s book:

“*The City of God* is the masterpiece of the greatest genius among the Latin Fathers... It embodies the result of thirteen years of intellectual labour and study (from A.D. 413-426). It is a vindication of Christianity against the attacks of the heathen in view of the sacking of the city of Rome by the Barbarians, at a time when the old Graeco-Roman civilization was approaching its downfall, and a new Christian civilization was beginning to rise on its ruins. It is the first attempt at a philosophy of history, under the aspect of two rival cities or communities — the eternal city of God and the perishing city of the world. **This was the only philosophy of history known throughout Europe during the middle ages.**”

The recent writer to whom we will refer is the 20th century Michael Wilcock, whose book, *I Saw Heaven Opened*, is an amillennial approach to the Book of the Revelation. It is highly regarded by many amillennialists and may be taken as representative of their position.

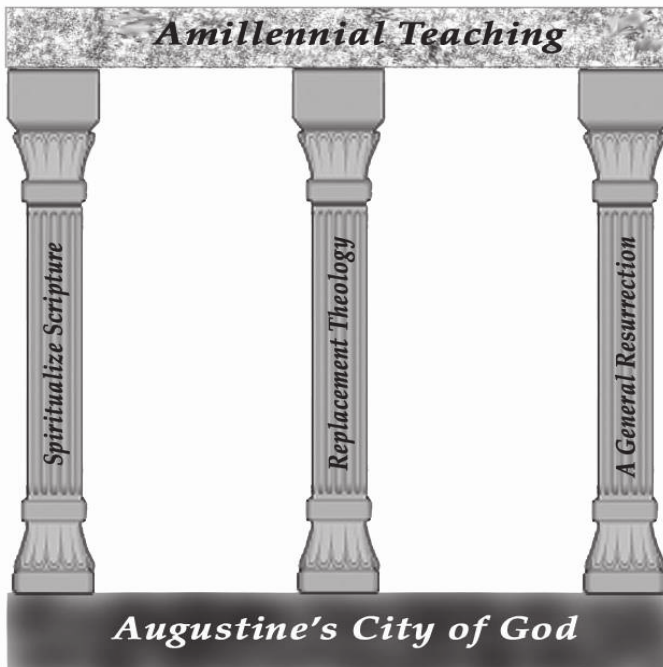
Michael Wilcock believes that the Book of Revelation is:

“Jesus’ word to His church, a word dramatized, painted, set to music, speaking of the power of her present salvation and the glory of her future hope”.

Since there is no mention of the word “**church**” between Rev. 3:22 and 22:16, we must seriously question his assertion, and we approach his interpretation with considerable caution when he says that the truths of Revelation are:

“a riotous procession of symbols, with a panoply of music and colour and texture, and even taste and smell” (Preface).

It seems to the writer that it is better to approach this wonderful book as a book of “**prophecy**”, which it claims to be (Rev.1:3; 22:7, 10, 18-19), and that we should expect to find in it a description of “*things which must shortly (suddenly) come to pass*”(Rev.1:1; 22:6).



Spiritualizing Scripture

Amillennialism could not survive without the licence of interpreting Scripture symbolically. This approach to Biblical interpretation is not applied to **fulfilled** prophecies of Christ's first advent, which are treated literally, but when it comes to the Church and Israel the principles of sound hermeneutics are abandoned and it meanders in the paths of imagination and symbolic interpretation.

The denial of a 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ on earth is only one of the pillars of amillennial teaching. The denial of a future kingdom of Christ on earth cannot be made without radically affecting other doctrines of Scripture, especially in the area of Bible prophecy.

Spiritualizing Scripture is a fundamental change, since it influences all interpretation from Genesis to Revelation. No longer can the amillennialist follow the normal rules of hermeneutics, which require a literal approach to Scripture except where the Bible itself clearly indicates it is speaking symbolically. Amillennialists therefore "spiritualize" vast amounts of the Old and New Testaments taking verses and whole books out of their literal and historical context. For this reason there is enormous diversity among amillennialists. Martin Luther is said to have observed that "everyone thinks of the book (of Revelation) whatever his spirit imparts". Given the licence of interpreting everything symbolically, there are no firm guidelines which can control Biblical interpretation.

Replacement Theology

The second adjustment that must be made by amillennialists is to **deny the existence of the dispensations of time** which divide the divine activity from the time of Adam to the future new heaven and new earth. Especially do they fail to understand the "mystery" of the Church. Although they speak of the Church as distinct from Israel, they believe that the Church has finally replaced Israel in God's prophetic plan. As a consequence, they re-interpret all of the promises made to Israel in a "spiritual" sense and apply them to the Church.

The return of Israel to the land in unbelief in the last days, and the details of the millennial temple as foretold by Ezekiel in the 36th and 37th chapters of his prophecy, are interpreted symbolically by

amillennialists and are therefore of no consequence in any literal Biblical sense. Strangely though, Augustine taught that Elijah will appear in the last days and the Jews will turn to the Lord.

The Church is seen as the “spiritual Israel”, and all references to the Jews in the Book of the Revelation are interpreted symbolically as the Church. We shall see that many interpretations are fanciful or even absurd.

An unavoidable consequence of replacement theology is the denial of a literal millennial kingdom on earth, and it is this element of the theological system which distinguishes it from the Truth.

A General Resurrection

The third adjustment that results from amillennialism is a denial that there will be a first and second **bodily** resurrection of the dead. Instead, they hold to a general resurrection of the saved and unsaved at the end of the world called the second resurrection, on the “day of judgment”. They will acknowledge that there is a first and second resurrection, but they “**spiritualize**” the **first resurrection** and include the saved and unsaved in the second resurrection. Scripture, however, states specifically that those raised to the “*great white throne*” judgment are only those who are delivered up by “*death and hell*”(the unsaved), which are **both cast into the lake of fire**.

The inconsistency of amillennialism is thus apparent, for they “spiritualize” the first resurrection but take the second resurrection to be literal.

These are the three pillars upon which amillennialism rests its case, and in this article we will examine them. It will be seen that each of the major elements of amillennialism is actually **a denial of Truth** rather than a positive exposition of the Word of God. Every Christian should be wary of teachings which do not have a sound basis of Biblical exposition.

Amillennialism Spiritualizes Scripture

Much is made by amillennialists of the fact that there is symbolic language in Scripture, and comparisons are made with early “apocalyptic” writings of between 100BC and AD200 which are not part of the canon of Scripture. It is inferred that the Book of the Revelation is to be interpreted in the same manner as these uninspired writings which are obscure; any attempt to interpret them requires a creative imagination.

Nobody will deny that there is symbolism in the Bible, but what many do not recognize is that the Holy Spirit, who is the author of the symbols, also provides the meaning of the symbols. At no time are we left to imagine the meaning of Biblical symbols. This is true of both the Old and New Testaments.

Examples of Symbolic Interpretation

The method of interpretation adopted by amillennialists is similar to that adopted by Origen about AD185. He interpreted the Scriptures literally, morally, and mystically. His moral and mystical methods required a “higher intelligence” and led him to allegorize and spiritualize Scripture to the point of gross heresy (See *Miller's Church History* page 204). In this respect amillennialism is similar in that it attracts those who enjoy an academic approach to Biblical interpretation. The following are illustrations of symbolic interpretation.

1) Concerning the Garden of Eden, Augustine writes:

“No one, then, denies that Paradise may signify the life of the blessed; its four rivers, the four virtues, prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice; its trees, all useful knowledge; its fruits, the customs of the godly; its tree of life, wisdom herself, the mother of all good; and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the experience of a broken commandment...These things can also and more profitably be **understood of the Church, so that they become prophetic foreshadowings of things to come.** Thus **Paradise is the Church**, as it is called in the Canticles; the **four rivers of Paradise are the four gospels**; the **fruit-trees the saints**, and the **fruit their works**; the **tree of life is the holy of holies, Christ**; the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the will's free choice”(Book 13 ch.21).

2) To illustrate just how wild Augustine's imagination could run, we cite his interpretation of Noah's ark.

"This is certainly a figure of the city of God sojourning in this world; that is to say, of the church, which is rescued by the wood on which hung the Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus. For even its very dimensions, in length, breadth, and height, represent the human body in which He came, as it had been foretold. For the length of the human body, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, is six times its breadth from side to side, and ten times its depth or thickness, measuring from back to front: that is to say, if you measure a man as he lies on his back or on his face, he is six times as long from head to foot as he is broad from side to side, and ten times as long as he is high from the ground. And therefore the ark was made 300 cubits in length, 50 in breadth, and 30 in height." (Writer's comment: Many of us would wish we had these proportions, but where did he measure the body?)

Augustine continues:

"And its having a door made in the side of it certainly signified the wound which was made when the side of the Crucified was pierced with the spear; for by this those who come to Him enter; for thence flowed the sacraments by which those who believe are initiated. And the fact that it was ordered to be made of squared timbers, signifies the immovable steadiness of the life of the saints; for however you turn a cube, it still stands. And the other peculiarities of the ark's construction are signs of features of the church"(Book 15 ch.26).

The three storeys of Noah's ark are said to mean:

"the circumcision, to wit, and the uncircumcision, or, as the apostle otherwise calls them, Jews and Gentiles; and to have three storeys, because all the nations were replenished from the three sons of Noah; OR,

someone may interpret these to mean the three graces commended by the apostle — faith, hope, and charity; OR, even more suitably they may be supposed to represent those three harvests in the gospel, thirty-fold, sixty-fold, an hundred-fold; OR,

chaste marriage dwelling in the ground floor, chaste widowhood in the upper, and chaste virginity in the top storey; or any better interpretation may be given, so long as the reference to this city is maintained"(Book 15 ch.26).

Amillennialism Weighed and Found Wanting

In other words, he concludes that the three storeys of the ark can mean anything, so long as it doesn't contradict the catholic faith. He states:

“although different explanations are given, yet they must all agree with the one harmonious catholic faith” (Book 15 ch.26)

This is symbolic interpretation gone mad!

3) Concerning the occasion when Shem and Japheth took a garment and walked backward to cover Noah's nakedness, Augustine says:

“Shem and Japheth, that is to say, the circumcision and uncircumcision, or, as the apostle otherwise calls them, the Jews and Greeks...The garment signifies the sacrament, their backs the memory of things past: for the church celebrates the passion of Christ as already accomplished” (Book 16 ch.2).

We might well ask what Noah's sons had to do with Jews and Gentiles, or the sacrament (the Catholic mass) with a garment? This is unbridled imagination which has no Biblical authority at all.

4) Concerning God's promise to Rebekah, Augustine interprets:

“‘The elder shall serve the younger,’ is understood by our writers, almost without exception, to mean that the elder people, the Jews, shall serve the younger people, the Christians.”

Where, in all the Bible, is there authority to interpret Jacob as the Christians and Esau as the Jews? It reminds the writer of an occasion when he questioned the Scriptural authority for infant baptism and was told that when Moses was a baby he was put in the River Nile! When this system of interpretation is applied to prophecy there is no control on where it may lead.

5) Michael Wilcock gives an extreme example with which, presumably, he disagrees, yet **he adopts the same conclusions**. It concerns identification of the 144,000 Jews, 12,000 from each of twelve tribes as described in Rev.7. Unwilling to accept that these are Jews, as the Bible plainly states, and intent on proving they are symbolical of the whole Church, the calculation goes as follows:

“The 144,000 represent the whole church of Christ. According to Scripture, they would say, 3 is God's number; 4 stands for creation, or the world; $3 \times 4 = 12$, which means the church, through which God is at work in the world; $12^2 = 144$, the whole church; 10 means completeness; $10^3 = 1,000$, three dimensional completeness; so $12^2 \times 10^3 = 144,000$, the whole church in all its completeness” (*I saw Heaven Opened*, Page 60).

6) Augustine reasons in similar fashion to prove that the 1,000-year millennial kingdom is only symbolic. He describes the 1,000 years as: “the number of perfection to mark the fulness of time. For a thousand is the cube of ten. The ten times ten makes a hundred, that is, the square on a plane superficies. But to give this superficies height, and to make it a cube, the hundred is again multiplied by ten, which give a thousand” (*City of God*, Book 22 ch.7).

Isn't that amazing? How could anybody be so naive as to think that God expected us to become proficient in mathematics before we could understand the plain statements of Scripture. It is reminiscent of those who claim there are hidden messages in the Bible written in numerical codes which can only be deciphered by having the original language manuscripts and a computer!

7) The system of spiritualizing the Book of Revelation becomes evidently absurd when we find Wilcock interpreting the 144,000 Jews from the twelve tribes of Israel as the Church (Rev.7:1-8), AND the innumerable company of Gentiles from “*all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues*” **also as the Church** (Rev.7:9-17)! He says: “These are one and the same” (*I Saw Heaven Opened*, Page 80).

The absurdity of this must have been apparent to him, for he asks: “How can a limited number, all Israelites, be the same as a numberless multitude drawn from every nation?...The total may be a symbolic number”(*I Saw Heaven Opened*, Pages 80-81).

This is a classic example of how symbolic, or “spiritual” interpretation can be made to teach whatever is in the heart of the interpreter, and although the evidence taken literally is compelling, it can be ignored and overruled by “spiritualizing”.

**SYMBOLIC INTERPRETATION
OF 144,000 JEWS**

**CAN YOU
BELIEVE IT?**

GOD (3) X WORLD (4) = The Church (12).

Church (12) x Church (12) = The Whole Church (144).

**Completeness (10) x Completeness (10) x Completeness (10) =
Complete (1,000).**

THEREFORE

The Whole Church (144) x Complete (1,000) =

The Whole, Complete Church (144,000)!!!

Amillennialism Weighed and Found Wanting

8) Other examples from Augustine's *City of God* reinforce the assertion that the Book of Revelation must be taken literally and its symbols interpreted strictly in accordance with the meanings expressly given by the Holy Spirit in the text.

Augustine gives the following meanings to symbols:

The beast with 10 horns in the Revelation = all the unsaved which he calls the "wicked city". His false prophet is either "Antichrist or that image or figment of which we have spoken" (Book 20 ch.14). Yet he sees the same beast in Daniel 7 as the fourth kingdom on earth, the Roman Empire, and accepts that Antichrist will conquer Rome and rule just prior to Christ's return (Book 20 ch.23).

The false prophet, the second beast of Revelation 13 = "the Antichrist"(Book 20 ch.14).

The image of the beast = "false professors"(Book 20 ch.9).

The bottomless pit where Satan is bound for 1,000 years = the hearts of all those wicked "whose hearts are unfathomly deep in malignity against the Church of God".

The seal placed on the bottomless pit is interpreted thus:"that it was designed to keep it a secret who belonged to the devil's party and who did not"(Book 20 ch.7).

The 1,000 years ="the sixth thousand of years of the sixth millennium...or...an equivalent for the **whole duration of this world**" (Book 20 ch.7). Take your pick!

Augustine's interpretation of the "little season" in which Satan is loosed at the end of the Millennium is confused with the time of the Great Tribulation but reverts to a literal meaning and = $3\frac{1}{2}$ years. He states:

"This last persecution by Antichrist shall last for three years and six months...as is affirmed both in the Book of Revelation and by Daniel the prophet"(Book 20 ch.13).

"*Death and hell*" which are raised at the second resurrection are interpreted as follows:

"death" = "the good" and "hell" = "the wicked". How does he explain that "*death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death*" (Rev.20:14)? But he also states:

"death and hell; by these names designating the devil and the whole company of his angels" (Book 20 ch15).

Augustine places the second coming of Christ at **the end** of the Millennium and believes the Church is now in a **symbolic**

millennium. Strangely, however, he accepts a literal $3\frac{1}{2}$ years immediately preceding the return of Christ. If the thousand years is symbolic, why is not the $3\frac{1}{2}$ years symbolic? How does he determine when to interpret literally and when symbolically?

Augustine's inconsistency is amazing, for when he discusses Daniel's prophecy (Dan.7) of the fourth beast with ten horns and a little horn, which he acknowledges is Antichrist who will reign at the end of the age for a **literal $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, he interprets the TEN horns symbolically!** He says:

"But he who reads this passage, even half asleep, cannot fail to see that the kingdom of Antichrist shall fiercely, though for a **short time**, assail the Church before the last judgment of God shall introduce the eternal reign of the saints. For it is patent from the context that the '*time, times, and half a time*', means a year, and two years, and half a year, that is to say, three years and a half. Sometimes in Scripture the same thing is indicated by months.

As for the ten kings, whom, as it seems, Antichrist is to find in the person of **ten individuals** when he comes, **I own I am afraid we may be deceived in this**, and that he may come unexpectedly while there are not ten kings living in the Roman world. For what if this number ten signifies the whole number of kings who are to precede his coming, as totality is frequently symbolized by a thousand, or a hundred, or seven, or other numbers, which it is not necessary to recount" (Book 20 ch.23).

Why, if $3\frac{1}{2}$ years is literal, can he not take 10 kings literally? Augustine's reason is stated: because he couldn't see ten kings in the Roman world in his day. So because he couldn't see ten kings, or the Roman world divided into ten kingdoms in AD413-426, he turns to a symbolic interpretation of the ten kings. It is better to believe God's Word, whether we can see its fulfilment or not. If we cannot see it, might it not be that it has not yet come to pass? We shall see also that Augustine's lack of understanding of Israel's role in the last days led him to believe that the Church will be on earth when Antichrist appears.

Symbolic Interpretation Brings Uncertainty

To interpret the Scripture symbolically without Biblical authority is not conducive to any firm conviction regarding prophetic subjects. How can we be definite about anything that depends on interpretation of symbols when we know that such interpretations

Amillennialism Weighed and Found Wanting

are largely a subjective evaluation of the text and without Biblical authority?

If the Bible is taken literally, and the symbols can be shown from other Scriptures to have a well-defined meaning, then such interpretations will bring great confidence because they are based on an objective evaluation of the written text which cannot change.

The Bible says we have a

“MORE SURE WORD OF PROPHECY; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed” (2Peter 1:19).

We are also told that

“the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2Peter1:21);

and that

“no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation” (1Peter 1:20).

If this is the case, and it is, then any method of interpretation which leads to uncertainty, surmise, and supposition cannot be right. Since the Holy Spirit wrote the Scriptures, **we can be sure of its message** by comparing Scripture with Scripture. No verse of Scripture should be considered out of its context, and every verse should be compared with other Scriptures bearing on the subject of the verse under consideration. That’s what it means that *“no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation”*.

One only has to read the writings of Augustine to see how much uncertainty is expressed, due largely to his symbolic method of interpretation. After all of his learned discussion he attempts to place the events of the last days in a chronological sequence but has to confess he is not sure. Furthermore, although he has maintained that there is no future for Israel throughout his thesis, he has to acknowledge that at the end of the age the Jews will be saved and Antichrist will reign for $3\frac{1}{2}$ years immediately before Christ returns! He wrote:

*“And at or in connection with that judgment **the following events shall come to pass**, as we have learned: Elias the Tishbite shall come; **the Jews shall believe**; Antichrist shall persecute; Christ shall judge; the dead shall rise; the good and the wicked shall be separated; the world shall be burned and renewed. **All these things, we believe, shall come to pass; but how, or in what order, human understanding cannot perfectly teach us, but only the experience of the events themselves.** My opinion, however, is, that they will happen in the order in which I have related them”* (Book 20 ch.30).

His uncertainty is further expressed:

“For what does he mean by, ‘For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now holdeth, let him hold until he be taken out of the way: and then shall the wicked be revealed?’

I frankly confess I do not know what he means. I will nevertheless mention such **conjectures** as I have heard or read” (Book 20 ch.19).

Of all the prophetic Scriptures of the New Testament, 2 Thess.2 is the most precise and definitive passage on the removal of the Church **before** the day of the Lord, the Great Tribulation. Paul is answering the fears of the Thessalonian believers that the Tribulation had **already come**. False teachers were writing to them and telling them that the Tribulation was *“at hand”*(2Thess.2:2), or *“now present”*.

In his first epistle Paul had made it abundantly clear that the day of the Lord would catch **the unbelievers** unawares but assures the believers that that day **would not overtake them** as a thief, *“For God hath not appointed us (believers) to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1Thess.5: 9). The *“wrath”* in this context can refer to nothing else but the Great Tribulation.

Paul said that someone was withholding the manifestation of Antichrist who must be revealed in the Tribulation. That someone was going to be *“taken out of the way. And THEN shall that Wicked (one) be revealed”*(2Thess.2:7-8). It is the Holy Spirit indwelling the Church who restrains evil in the world, and when He is withdrawn in the Body of Christ, *“then shall that Wicked (one) be revealed”*. The passage is quite clear if you don’t have the amillennial misconception that there is a general resurrection at the end of the Tribulation.

Augustine did not understand the true character of the Church, so he had no idea what was restraining the appearance of Antichrist. Neither did he understand the first resurrection of the saved, so, in his mind, the Rapture of the Church would occur **AFTER** Antichrist had reigned for 3¹/₂ years!

Where, then, did Augustine, the father of amillennialism, go wrong? We may summarize as follows:

1) He endeavoured to force the Scriptures to fit current events. The *“Christian Roman Empire”* was passing, and he sought to explain the kingdom of God when it became obvious that Rome was being

Amillennialism Weighed and Found Wanting

overthrown by the Goths and could therefore no longer lay claim to being the kingdom of God on earth.

2) His symbolic method of interpretation led him to teach a “spiritual” kingdom of Christ on earth which was visibly expressed in the Catholic Church. His theology left no room for a future earthly kingdom where Israel was the leading nation under the King of kings.

3) Having determined that the Catholic Church was the kingdom (or City) of God, his symbolic method of interpretation was then applied to all the promises to Israel, thus leaving no future for God’s covenant people, although he did believe that the Jews would be converted in the last days as a result of the preaching of Elijah, who would return before the second advent of Christ.

4) Having eliminated Israel from God’s future plans, and having wrongly defined the Church, it became impossible for him to get a clear picture of Biblical eschatology. He denied that the first resurrection was a bodily resurrection, and taught a general resurrection of saved and unsaved at Christ’s second advent. Consequently, he found no place for the millennial kingdom of Christ on earth. His confusion has been perpetuated within the Catholic Church and mainstream Protestantism.

An Amillennialist Interpretation of Revelation

Michael Wilcock has divided the Book of the Revelation using the “spiritual” symbolic method of interpretation. We have already noted that he describes God’s final message to mankind as:

“Jesus’ word to His church, a word dramatized, painted, set to music, speaking of the power of her present salvation and the glory of her future hope” - “a riotous procession of symbols, with a panoply of music and colour and texture, and even taste and smell” (Preface).

Wilcock also likens it to:

“The spell ‘for the refreshment of the spirit’ which Lucy Pevensie found in the Book of Magic (by C S Lewis)...when the book was closed, the spell (which was a story) began to fade from her mind, until all she could remember was that ‘it was about a cup and a sword and a tree and a green hill’. It is the images that stick. John’s pages are studded with them” (Page 25, *I Saw Heaven Opened*).

To treat the Book of the Revelation in such a manner is inconsistent with every other book of the Bible. It places the final chapters of God's Word in the realm of speculation and at the mercy of Wilcock's imagination. Wilcock states that he does not interpret the book literally, or even logically. He writes:

"It is no use reading Revelation as though it were...history projected into the future. You might as well analyze the rainbow...**Logical analysis is not what they are for.** They are meant to be used and enjoyed."

The Book of Revelation clearly claims to be a book of prophecy; the word occurs seven times throughout the book beginning with Rev.1:3. It describes "*things* (events) *which must shortly* (suddenly) *come to pass*" (Rev.1:1; cp.4:1), and it would be incredible for it not to require "logical analysis". Prophecy is history projected into the future. If it is not logical, then we ask, Is it illogical? And if illogical, how should we "*rightly divide*" this part of the "*word of truth*"?

If the Book of Revelation, which claims to be a book of prophecy, is not to be interpreted logically, how do we explain Peter's statement that "*we have a more sure word of prophecy*" (2Peter 1:19)? Michael Wilcock's only alternative is to begin with a preconceived scheme, which happens to be the amillennial scheme, and then to treat the holy Scriptures as a "riotous procession of symbols" which his fertile imagination can use to justify his view.

The Book of the Revelation does yield to logical analysis, and all it requires is intellectual honesty guided by the Holy Spirit in comparing Scripture with Scripture, in recognition of the principle that "*no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation*" (2Peter1:20).

Furthermore, it is not the way the Church interpreted the Book of Revelation for the first 300 years of her existence, as we shall see. We again ask, Why did the Church Fathers believe in a literal 1,000-year kingdom of Christ on earth for 300 years, if it is not to be interpreted literally? Men like Irenaeus knew people who were disciples of the Apostle John, and surely they would have had some idea of how John interpreted prophecy?

The following is the manner in which Wilcock has interpreted the Book of Revelation:

Prologue : Chapter 1:1-8

Scene 1 : The Church in the World - Chapter 1:9 to 3:22

Amillennialism Weighed and Found Wanting

Scene 2:: Suffering for the Church - Chapter 4:1 to 8:1.

Scene 3 : Warning for the World - Chapter 8:2 to 11:18

Scene 4 : The Drama of History - Chapter 11:19 to 15:4

Scene 5 : Punishment of the World - Chapter 15:5 to 16:21

Scene 6 : Babylon the Whore - Chapter 17:1 to 19:10

Scene 7 : The Drama Behind History - Chapter 19:11 to 21:8

Scene 8 : Jerusalem the Bride - Chapter 21:9 to 22:19

Epilogue : Chapter 22: 20-21

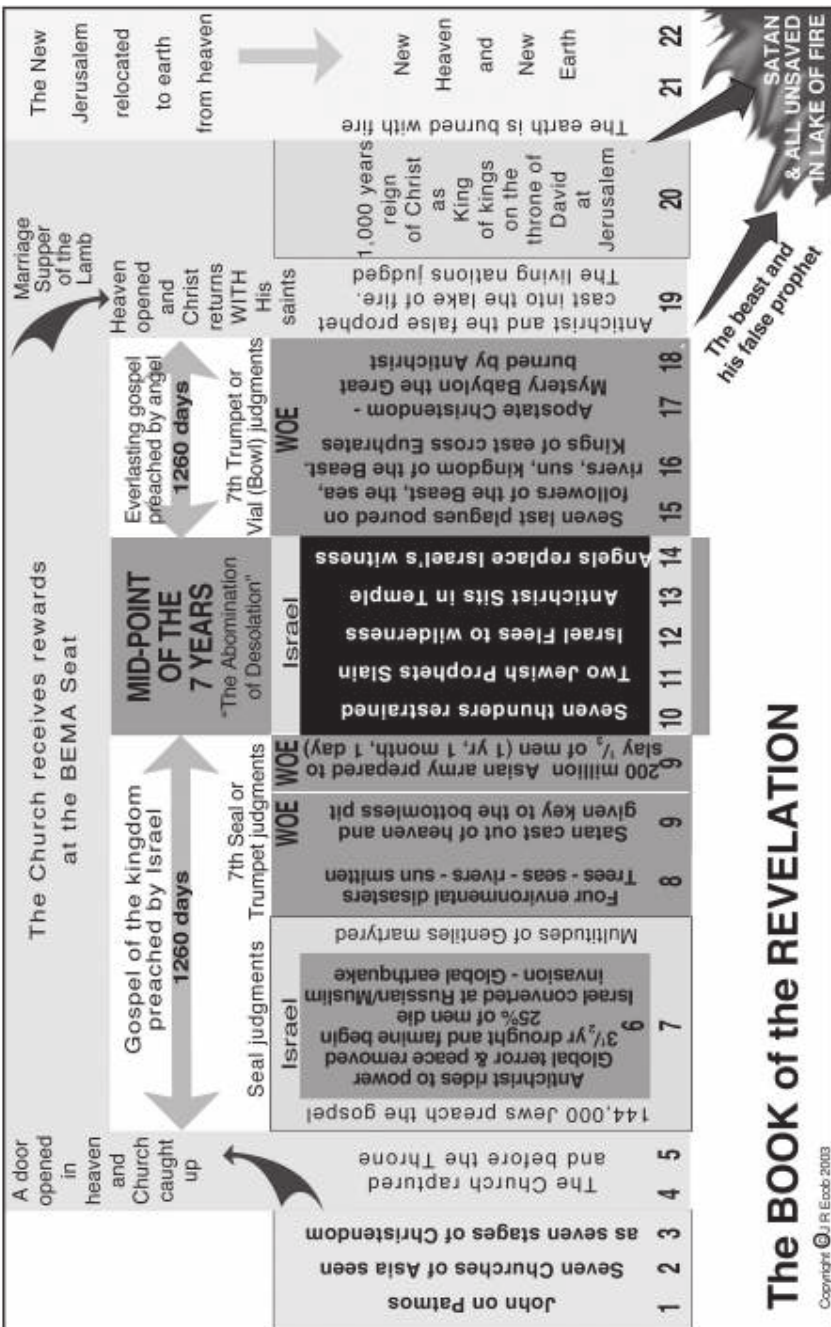
A glance at the manner in which Wilcock has interpreted Revelation gives a distinct impression that John, rather than receiving information about *“things which must shortly come to pass”*, was having a night out at the *“flicks”*. The actors on his stage are not real, but mere symbols. Israel is not really Israel; Jerusalem *“where also our Lord was crucified”*, is not really Jerusalem; Jews numbering 144,000 are not really Jews, no more than an innumerable company of Gentiles are Gentiles; and of course two Jewish prophets who preach at Jerusalem could not possibly be two Jewish prophets! With such denials of reality, it would be unthinkable that the measuring of the temple during the Great Tribulation could have anything to do with the construction of a temple on the Temple Mount.

The fact that there is no mention of the word *“church”* between Rev. 3:22 and 22:16, and that Israel appears again and again in those chapters, must surely say something.

The truth is that amillennialists are hooked on the false doctrine of **a general resurrection** and in order to defend that error they are obliged to deny the literal statements of Scripture. They cannot find a place for Israel, and therefore have no alternative but to *“spiritualize”* the Scriptures. Thus they arrive at the three pillars of amillennialism: 1) spiritualized interpretation, 2) replacement theology, and 3) a general resurrection.

The Message of the Book of Revelation

If the Book of Revelation is to be interpreted symbolically, what is its message? Since amillennialists see no future for Israel, they are obliged to understand that all the saved are part of the Church. Augustine preferred to refer to the saved as the *“City of God”*, so when amillennialists read the Revelation they look for applications involving the Church. The awful judgments that are poured out by God are therefore experienced by the Church except where God gives some measure of protection. But is this the message of Revelation?



The BOOK of the REVELATION

Copyright © J R Escob 2003

Amillennialism Weighed and Found Wanting

Some amillennialists suggest that the subject of the Book of Revelation is not primarily about future events but the story of Christ's triumph over evil in the life of His Church, and that the purpose of the book is to reveal the person of Christ.

The first verse of Revelation, however, summarizes its message. It is: *"The revelation of Jesus Christ, **which God gave unto him,** to show unto his servants **THINGS** which must shortly (suddenly) come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John"* (Rev.1:1).

The Revelation was **given to Christ** by the Father, who has put all the *"times and seasons"* *"in his own power"* (Acts 1:7). The subject of the Revelation is not the person of Christ but **THINGS**, or **EVENTS**, which must come to pass with great rapidity. The Father gave this revelation to Christ to pass on to John.

Barnes' Commentary, *Notes on the Book of Revelation*, supports this view:

"The subject of the Book of Revelation is **future events** for the following reasons:

- 1) Because it is expressly said in this verse (Rev.1:1) that it was a revelation **which God gave to Him;**
- 2) Because it pertains to **things** which must shortly come to pass; and
- 3) Because in fact the revelation is a **disclosure of events** which were to happen, and not of the person or work of the Lord Jesus Christ."

The words, *"of Jesus Christ"* (Rev.1:1), are in the possessive or genitive case, and Vincent, in his *Word Studies in the New Testament* Vol.II page 407, states: "Not the **manifestation** or disclosure of Jesus Christ, but the revelation **given by Him**".

The evidence is conclusive that the Book of Revelation is preeminently a prophetic outline of **EVENTS** which will occur in the future, from the Church age to the end of time.

Things Which must Shortly Come to Pass

Since amillennialists believe that the message of the Book of Revelation concerns the Church from Pentecost to the new heavens and new earth, and that the Tribulation described from chapters 6 to 18 has been in progress since the days of the Apostles, they go to great pains to prove that the Great Tribulation is not a

period of 7 years immediately prior to the return of Christ. They reason that the Tribulation was to begin “*shortly*” after John wrote the Apocalypse, or “*soon*” after that date (AD96). Furthermore, instead of the events occupying a short period of time, they believe that they were to take a **long period of time**. Michael Wilcock writes:

“It was the dream of Nebuchadnezzar...a succession of world empires beginning from his own. In the days of the last of these empires (Roman Empire), explains Daniel, ‘the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed’ (Dan.2:44).

And now John has seen the latter days arrive. The setting up of God’s kingdom **has begun** with the coming of Christ; and the promise that it shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, **is already starting to be fulfilled**. The fulfilment is a **process, not a crisis**; and a **lengthy one, not a sudden one**...The process itself will occupy **the whole of the gospel age**, from the inauguration of the kingdom to its final triumph”(Pages 32-33).

Wilcock’s main argument for an early start date for the Tribulation judgments described in the Revelation is based on a wrong interpretation of the first verse, which reads:

“*Things which must SHORTLY come to pass*”(Rev.1:1).

He translates “*shortly*” as “*soon*” come to pass, but the question is whether the Greek means that the events will “*soon*” BEGIN to come to pass, or “*quickly*” come to pass in a short space of time once they begin. Strong’s Greek Dictionary gives the meaning of the Greek word as: “**a brief space (of time) ie. in haste**” and it is translated elsewhere in the New Testament as “*quickly, shortly, speedily*”.

Wilcock admits that the Greek of the original text does not support his contention that many of the events described in the Revelation must “*soon begin*” to come to pass, but he says that to him, “*shortly*” or “*suddenly*” “*sounds most unnatural*”. Of course it would, if he wants to believe that the Tribulation began nearly 2,000 years ago! He is honest enough, however, to admit that it is legitimate to understand the word “*shortly*” as “*suddenly*”, and that it could refer to events beginning at the **end of the age** which will happen “*quickly*” and in “*a short space of time*”, which is what the

Amillennialism Weighed and Found Wanting

text demands. He writes:

“It is true that the word ‘soon’(AV ‘shortly’) could also be translated ‘suddenly’; and it could therefore be held that when the prophesied events did happen, they would happen speedily, but that they might not begin to happen till long after John’s time.

On this view the greater part of Revelation might still, even today, be unfulfilled.” Wilcock, *I Saw Heaven Opened* , Page 32.

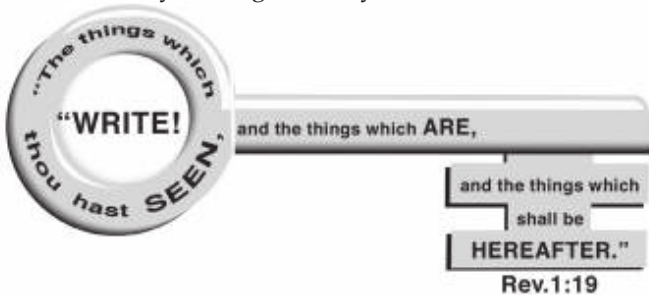
What is quite evident, is that Wilcock has missed the KEY to interpreting the Book of Revelation, which is Rev.1:19.

The book divides into three specific parts: the things which John had SEEN in his vision of the Lord on Patmos; the things which ARE, which is the prophetic outline of the present Church age from Pentecost to the Rapture of the Church; and the things which must be HEREAFTER the present Church age. After Revelation chapter 4 verse 1 the Great Tribulation will happen “quickly”, “shortly”, “suddenly” and “in a brief space of time”. The text indicates it. The martyrs from that period are told

“that they should rest yet for a LITTLE SEASON, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled”(Rev.6:11).

In chapter 10 the angel announces that “there should be TIME (delay) NO LONGER” (Rev.10:6). The two Jewish prophets who are slain in Jerusalem “prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days (1,260 days)”(Rev.11:3), and the Gentiles tread under foot the “holy city...forty and two months”(Rev.11:2).

In chapter 12 Satan comes down to the earth with “great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a SHORT TIME”(Rev.12:12). At this time, halfway through the 7 years of Great Tribulation, Israel



The Key to the Book of Revelation

is to flee into a wilderness place for 1,260 days (Rev.12:6) or 3¹/₂ years (Rev. 12:14). This will be the 42 months when Antichrist reigns (Rev.13:5), and in Rev.17:10 we read of the revived Roman Empire over which Antichrist will reign, that it “*must continue a SHORT SPACE*”.

How, then, can Wilcock say that the Tribulation events of the Book of Revelation had begun in AD96 and would be “**a process, not a crisis; and a lengthy one, not a sudden one**”? **He is obviously not interpreting the book literally by the normal rules of interpretation. He could only come to that conclusion if he adopted a symbolic “spiritual” method of interpretation which becomes a device to support the preconceived notion of a general resurrection at the second coming of Christ.**

The Tribulation will occur quickly, suddenly, once the Rapture takes place. So much must happen in only 7 years (Dan.9:24-27). It is not a long process but the greatest crisis in all history, and it will happen suddenly and unexpectedly, as a “*thief in the night*” (1Thess.5:2; Dan.12:1; Joel 2:2; Matt.24:21).

It is so obvious that there will be this short period of time that even Augustine concluded that Antichrist would come for 3¹/₂ years immediately before the second coming of Christ. In one of his lapses into a literal interpretation of Scripture, Wilcock admits that:

“Scripture does seem to envisage a time when at the very end of history an unexampled onslaught will be mounted against the church, and she will to all appearances ‘go under’”(Page 106).

Unfortunately, Wilcock has failed to understand that it is Israel that will endure the onslaught of Antichrist at the end of the age. The Church won’t even be on earth at that time.

Throughout the Book of the Revelation amillennialists interpret symbols contrary to the plain statements. We have already shown that Wilcock interprets 144,000 Jews as the Church and at the same time states that the innumerable company of Gentiles represents the Church. When he discusses the two Jewish prophets who prophesy in Jerusalem for the 1,260 days of the first half of the 7-year Tribulation, he interprets them as the Church (page 105).

To demonstrate the inconsistency of Wilcock’s symbolism we only need turn to what he says about Jerusalem in Rev.11. It is quite obvious that John is identifying the literal city of Jerusalem

Amillennialism Weighed and Found Wanting

when he says that the dead bodies of the two slain Jewish prophets will lie

“in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, WHERE ALSO OUR LORD WAS CRUCIFIED”
(Rev.11:8).

We have no doubt whatsoever about where our Lord was crucified; that was the literal city of Jerusalem. However, during the Tribulation, it will be so polluted with sin and idolatry by the Antichrist that it will be *“spiritually”* or symbolically called *“Sodom and Egypt”*. This suggests that Jerusalem could possibly be known for homosexuality at that time. It is not surprising therefore that the “gays” are planning an International Gay and Lesbian Parade at Jerusalem in 2005. The last was held at Rome and attracted half a million revellers.

Yet Wilcock likens Jerusalem to the saved, and Babylon to the world. Why would the Lord describe the saved as *“Sodom and Egypt”*?

A Symbolic Temple?

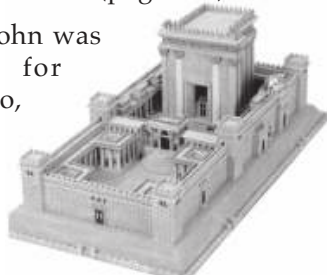
In Revelation chapter 11, John is told to

“Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months”(Rev.11:1-2).

To an amillennialist who denies any future for the nation of Israel, it is unthinkable that the Jewish temple should be rebuilt, in spite of recent growing interest by the Jews in the Temple Mount and the construction of a third temple. Michael Wilcock writes:

*“Here...we find the church’s security guaranteed, despite all its outward suffering. **For the temple cannot be taken literally. When John wrote, the temple at Jerusalem had been in ruins for a round score of years.** When they were told that the temple was to be measured **for preservation**, John’s readers must inevitably have perceived an allegorical sense”* (page 104).

Where did Wilcock get the notion that John was measuring an existing building for preservation? The Bible does not say so, and since the temple did not exist in AD96 that would obviously not be possible. However, every building is measured and **marked out for**



construction, and that is the obvious reason for the command to measure the site.

Why could the temple not be interpreted literally? If the Book of Revelation is prophecy, as it claims to be (Rev.1:3; 22:7,18, 19), why could this not be a prophecy that it will be rebuilt? This suggestion is strongly supported by the fact that two Jewish prophets bear testimony in Jerusalem for 42 months, which is half of the 7-year Tribulation period referred to in Daniel's prophecy.

At the end of the 42 months of testimony the two witnesses are allowed to be slain, and miraculously, 3¹/₂ days later, are raised and caught up to heaven. During the second half of the 7-year Tribulation the Gentiles will be permitted by God to tread the holy city under foot, until Christ returns and destroys the Antichrist who will be sitting "*in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God*" (2Thess.2:4).

Wilcock says of the two Jewish prophets:

"These two symbolize the witness of the whole church...They are untouchable, as is the church of Christ as a whole...They are invincible, producing proofs of God's power...The two witnesses preach for 1260 days...This period cannot be literal either; for the 'times of the Gentiles' were to begin, according to Christ, when Jerusalem was sacked by the Romans in AD70".

Here Wilcock reads into Scripture the words, "the times of the Gentiles". John did not write that the "*times of the Gentiles*" was for 42 months! Scripture simply says that Jerusalem would, at that time, be "*given unto the Gentiles*", to tread down for 42 months. With such a blunder, his whole objection to a literal 42 months falls apart.

The evidence in Scripture for a literal 42 months during which Antichrist will be given power, is so overwhelming, that even Augustine reverted to a literal 3¹/₂ years for Antichrist to reign immediately before Christ returns!

Augustine emphatically wrote:

"But he who reads this passage, **even half asleep**, cannot fail to see that the kingdom of Antichrist shall fiercely, though for a **short time**, assail the Church before the last judgment of God shall introduce the eternal reign of the saints. For it is patent from the context that the *time, times, and half a time*, means a year, and two years, and half a year, that is to say, three years and a half. Sometimes in Scripture the same thing is indicated by months (*City of God* Book 20 ch.23).

Amillennialism Weighed and Found Wanting

Irenaeus was one of the earliest Church Fathers. He lived from AD120 to 202 and knew Polycarp, who was the personal disciple of John, the writer of the Apocalypse. In his book *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus wrote:

“The apostle thus speaks in the second Epistle to the Thessalonians: *‘Unless there shall come a falling away first, and the man of sin shall be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself as if he were God.’* The apostle therefore clearly points out his apostasy, and that he is lifted up above all that is called God, or that is worshipped — that is, above every idol — for these are indeed so called by men, but are not [really] gods; and that he will endeavour in a tyrannical manner to set himself forth as God.

Moreover, he (the apostle) has also pointed out this which I have shown in many ways, that the temple in Jerusalem was made by the direction of the true God. **For the apostle himself, speaking in his own person, distinctly called it the temple of God.** Now I have shown in the third book, that no one is termed God by the apostles when speaking for themselves, except Him who truly is God, the Father of our Lord, **by whose directions the temple which is at Jerusalem was constructed for those purposes which I have already mentioned; in which (temple) the enemy shall sit,** endeavouring to show himself as Christ, as the Lord also declares: *‘But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, which has been spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let him that readeth understand), then let those who are in Judaea flee into the mountains; and he who is upon the housetop, let him not come down to take anything out of his house: for there shall then be great hardship, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall be.’*” (Pages 1105-1106).

Irenaeus wrote well after the destruction of the second temple, and even after Hadrian had ploughed over the city of Jerusalem when he put down a Jewish rebellion led by Bar Kochbar in AD135, yet he expected there to be another temple in Jerusalem for Antichrist to sit in during the final 3½ years before Christ returned. It wasn’t too hard for him to believe that when John was told to measure the temple he was doing so **for its reconstruction.**

Powerful Words from J C Ryle

In 1867 Bishop J C Ryle wrote a book on prophecy. It was a collection of sermons preached on the subject. In his day the traditional method of interpreting Scripture was that of “spiritualizing” all reference to future blessing upon Israel while acknowledging that the prophecies of Christ’s first advent were fulfilled literally.

Bishop Ryle goes down in the annals of history as a great evangelical, and, more than a century after he wrote, his Gospel tracts are still in print. When a new pulpit was built at St Paul’s Stradbroke, he had carved into the top where he could see it, the text, “Woe is me, if I preach not the gospel”(1Cor.9:16). When the workman had finished the carving he took the chisel and made a deep groove under the word “not”; such was his burden for lost souls and faithfulness to the simple message of redeeming grace.

In 1867 Bishop Ryle wrote his book entitled, *Coming Events and Present Duties*. It was reprinted by Christian Focus Publications in 1991 under the title, *Prophecy*.

Bishop Ryle fought hard against the symbolic interpreters of Scripture, as the following quotes will demonstrate. He wrote:

“I submit, then, that in the matter of Christ’s second coming and kingdom, the Church of Christ has not dealt fairly with the prophecies of the Old Testament...The apostles went into one extreme: they stumbled at Christ’s sufferings. We have gone in the other extreme: we have stumbled at Christ’s glory. We have got into a confused habit of speaking of the kingdom of Christ as already set up amongst us, and have shut our eyes to the fact that the Devil is still the prince of this world, and served by the vast majority; and that our Lord, like David in Adullam, though anointed, is not yet set upon His throne.

We have got into a vicious habit of taking all the promises spiritually, and all the denunciations and threats literally. The denunciations against Babylon and Nineveh, and Edom, and Tyre, and Egypt, and the rebellious Jews, we have been content to take literally and hand over to our neighbours. The blessings and promises of glory to Zion, Jerusalem, Jacob, and Israel, we have taken spiritually, and comfortably applied them to ourselves and the Church of Christ.

Now I believe this to have been an unfair system of interpreting Scripture. I hold that the first and primary sense of every Old Testament promise as well as threat is the literal one, and that

Amillennialism Weighed and Found Wanting

Jacob means Jacob, Jerusalem means Jerusalem, Zion means Zion, and Israel means Israel, as much as Egypt means Egypt, and Babylon means Babylon. The primary sense, I believe, we have sadly lost sight of" (*Prophecy*, Page 24).

To Bishop Ryle, Scripture taught that God has a great future for His chosen people Israel, and only a literal interpretation could unlock these prophecies. He continues:

"Christ will come again to this world with power and great glory...He will take to Himself His great power, and reign, and establish an universal kingdom. He will gather the scattered tribes of Israel, and place them once more in their own land. As He came the first time in person, so He will come the second time in person. As He went away from the earth visibly, so He will return visibly. As He literally rode on an ass, was literally sold for thirty pieces of silver, had His hands and feet literally pierced, was numbered literally with the transgressors, and had lots literally cast upon His raiment, and all that Scripture might be fulfilled, so also will He literally come, literally set up a kingdom, and literally reign over the earth, because the very same Scripture has said that it shall be so.

The words of **the angels**, in the first of Acts, are plain and unmistakable:

'This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven'(Acts 1:11).

So also the words of the **Apostle Peter**:

'The times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ...whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things'(Acts 3:19-21).

So also the words of **the Psalmist**:

'When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory'(Ps.102:16).

So also the words of **Zechariah**:

'The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee'(Zech.14:5).

So also the words of **Isaiah**:

'The Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously'(Isa.24:23).

So also the words of **Jeremiah**:

'I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it'(Jer.30:3).

So also the words of **Daniel**:

'Behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days... And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed' (Dan.7:13-14).

All these texts are to my mind plain prophecies of Christ's second coming and kingdom.

All are yet without their accomplishment, and all shall be literally and exactly fulfilled.

I say 'literally and exactly fulfilled', and I say so advisedly. From the first day that I began to read the Bible with my heart, I have never been able to see these texts, and hundreds like them, in any other light. It always seemed to me that as we take literally foretelling that the walls of Babylon shall be cast down, so we ought to take literally the texts foretelling that the walls of Zion shall be built up, that as according to prophecy the Jews were literally scattered, so according to prophecy the Jews will literally be gathered, and that as the least and minutest predictions were made good on the subject of our Lord's coming to suffer, so the minutest predictions shall be made good which describe our Lord's coming to reign" (*Prophecy*, Page 26).

To "spiritualize" Scripture is indeed serious. It may be supported by many commentaries, however, the believer's authority rests not with commentaries but the Word of God. Bishop Ryle rightly identifies the arguments of those who follow this system of interpretation as "semi-sceptical", as follows:

"I believe it is high time for the Church of Christ to awake out of its sleep about Old Testament prophecy. From the time of the old Fathers, Jerome and Origen, down to the present day, men have gone on in a pernicious habit of 'spiritualizing' the words of the Prophets, until their true meaning has been well nigh buried. It is high time to lay aside traditional ('spiritualizing') methods of interpretation, and to give up our blind obedience to the opinions of such writers as Pool, Henry, Scott and Clarke, upon unfulfilled prophecy. It is high time to fall back on the good old principle that Scripture generally means what it seems to mean, and to beware of that semi-sceptical argument, Such and such an interpretation cannot be correct, because it seems to us 'carnal'" (*Prophecy* page 32).

Amillennialism Weighed and Found Wanting

There is a clear parallel between the unbelieving Jews in Jesus' day and the amillennialist of our day. They believed in a literal kingdom but rejected the prophecies about Christ's first advent. The amillennialist accepts the literal prophecies of Christ's suffering and rejection by the Jews, and adopts a censorious attitude toward them for doing so, but promptly adopts the same unbelieving attitude toward the prophecies of Christ's second advent.

The inconsistency of the amillennialist's method is well expressed by Bishop Ryle when he commented on Luke 19:11-13:

*"Jesus 'spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God **should immediately appear**. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return...Occupy till I come' (Luke 19:11-13).*

Our Lord's disciples seem to have thought that the Old Testament promises of Messiah's visible kingdom and glory were about to be immediately fulfilled. They believed rightly that He was the Messiah, the Christ of God. But they blindly supposed that He was going at once to take to Himself His great power, and to reign gloriously over the earth.

They appear to have concluded that now was the day, and now was the hour when the Redeemer would build up Zion, and appear in His glory (Ps.102:16), when He would smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips slay the wicked, when He would assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah (Isa.11:4,12), when He would take the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession, break His enemies with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel (Ps.2:8-9), when He would reign in Mount Zion and Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously (Isa. 24:23), when the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven would be given to the saints of the Most High (Dan.7:27). Such appears to have been the mistake into which our Lord's disciples had fallen when He spoke the parable of the Pounds.

It was a great mistake unquestionably. They did not realize that before all these prophecies could be fulfilled, *'it behoved Christ to suffer'* (Luke 24:46). Their sanguine expectations overleaped the crucifixion and the long parenthesis of time to follow, and bounded onward to the final glory. They did not see that there was to be a first advent Messiah *'to be cut off'*, before the second advent of Messiah to reign. They did not perceive that the

sacrifices and ceremonies of the law of Moses were first to receive their fulfilment in a better sacrifice and a better High Priest, and the shedding of blood more precious than that of bulls and goats. They did not comprehend that before the glory Christ must be crucified, and an elect people gathered out from among the Gentiles by the preaching of the Gospel. All these were dark things to them. They saw that Christ was to have a kingdom but they did not see that He was to be wounded and bruised, and be an offering for sin...They understood the dispensation of the crown and glory, but not the dispensation of the cross and shame. Such was their mistake.

It was a mistake which you will find partially clinging to the disciples even after the crucifixion...They said, '*Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel*' (Acts 1:6).

...If the Jew thought too exclusively of Christ's reigning, has not the Gentile thought too exclusively of Christ's suffering? If the Jew could see nothing in Old Testament prophecy but Christ's exultation and final power, has not the Gentile often seen nothing but Christ's humiliation and the preaching of the Gospel? If the Jew dwelt too much on Christ's second advent, has not the Gentile dwelt too exclusively on the first? If the Jew ignored the cross, has not the Gentile ignored the crown?...I believe we have cherished an arbitrary, reckless habit of interpreting first advent texts **literally**, and second advent texts **spiritually**. I believe we have not rightly understood '*all that the prophets have spoken*' about the second personal advent of Christ, any more than the Jews did about the first...I entreat you to take heed, lest insensibly you commit as great an error about Christ's second coming and glory as they did about Christ's first coming and cross" (*Prophecy*, Pages 56-61).

Implications of a Symbolic Interpretation

All error has serious consequences for daily living. Doctrine is given to control practice, and whatever view of Scripture we adopt will impact on our walk and witness in the world. If we "spiritualize" Scripture, it will seriously limit our ability to share the Gospel with Jews.

Our Lord specifically asked that the Gospel go to the Jew first (Acts 1:8), and the apostles acknowledged Peter as the apostle to the circumcision (Gal. 2:7-9). Paul, though he was the apostle to the uncircumcision, made it his practice to preach the Gospel in the Jewish synagogues first, and afterwards to the Gentiles.

Bishop Ryle eloquently describes the importance of a literal interpretation of Bible prophecy when witnessing to Jews. He writes:

“I warn you that, unless you interpret the prophetic portion of the Old Testament in the simple literal meaning of its words, you will find it no easy matter to carry on an argument with an unconverted Jew.

You would probably tell the Jew that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah promised in the Old Testament Scriptures. To those Scriptures you would refer him for proof. You would show him Psalm 22, Isaiah 53, Daniel 9:26, Micah 5:2, Zechariah 9:9, and 11:13. You would tell him that in Jesus of Nazareth those Scriptures were literally fulfilled. You would urge upon him that he ought to believe these Scriptures, and receive Christ as the Messiah. All this is very good. So far you would do well.

But suppose the Jew asks you if you take all the prophecies of the Old Testament in their simple literal meaning. Suppose he asks if you believe in a literal personal advent of Messiah to reign over the earth in glory, a literal restoration of Judah and Israel to Palestine, a literal rebuilding and restoration of Zion and Jerusalem. Suppose the Jew puts these questions to you, what answer are you prepared to make?

Are you prepared to tell him that the Old Testament prophecies of this kind are not to be taken in their plain literal sense? Will you dare to tell him that the words Zion, Jerusalem, Jacob, Judah, Ephraim, Israel, do not mean what they seem to mean, but mean the Church of Christ? Will you dare to tell him that the glorious kingdom and future blessedness of Zion, so often dwelt upon in prophecy, mean nothing more than the gradual Christianizing of the world by missionaries and Gospel preaching? Will you dare to tell him that you think it ‘carnal’ to take such Scriptures literally, ‘carnal’ to expect a literal rebuilding of Jerusalem, ‘carnal’ to expect a literal coming of Messiah to reign, ‘carnal’ to look for a literal regathering and restoration of Israel? Oh, reader, if you are a man of this mind, take care what you are doing! I say again, take care.

Do you not see that you are putting a weapon in the hand of the unconverted Jew, which he will probably use with irresistible power? Do you not see that you are cutting the ground from under your own feet, and supplying the Jew with a strong argument for not believing your own interpretation of Scripture?

Do you not see that the Jew will reply, that it is 'carnal' to tell him that Messiah has come literally to suffer, if you tell him that it is 'carnal' to expect Messiah will come literally to reign? Do you not see that the Jew will tell you, that it is far more 'carnal' in you to believe that Messiah would come into the world as a despised, crucified Man of sorrows, than it is in him to believe that He will come into the world as a glorious King? Beyond doubt he will do so, and you will find no answer to give" (*Prophecy*, Page 62-63).

Nobody can accuse J C Ryle of being carried away with the euphoria of the re-establishment of the nation of Israel in 1948. Nearly a century before that date he believed the promises of God's Word would be literally fulfilled and that Israel would return to the land and turn to the Lord in the last days. He wrote in 1867, while the Zionist movement did not begin till 1881. The first Zionist Congress at Basle was held in 1897 - 30 years after Ryle wrote.

Significantly, Augustine resorted to a symbolic interpretation for the "ten horns" of Daniel 7 because he could not find ten kingdoms in the Roman Empire in his day; on the other hand, Ryle was prepared to believe God's Word when there was no evidence of Israel returning to the land in his day. Ryle was right!

"For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry"(Hab. 2:3).

Amillennialism Teaches Replacement Theology

If there is no future 1,000-year kingdom on earth, and if there is no bodily first resurrection of saints, then there can be no future for Israel in the prophetic Scriptures.

Having denied both of these basic truths amillennialists cannot allow any place for Israel in the present or future, and therefore they go to great lengths to seek Scriptural support for what has become known as “replacement theology”.

Replacement theology replaces Israel in Scripture with the Church. In spite of Paul’s exhortation to “*give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God*” (1Cor.10:32), amillennialists see only two classes of people, the Church and the world.

While acknowledging that Jews exist as a people, the amillennialist attributes many references to Israel in the New Testament to the Church in a “spiritual” sense.

Just how far they will go with this assertion is illustrated by a footnote in Wilcock’s book *I Saw Heaven Opened*, in which he quotes Leon Morris with approval (Page 80).

“The church can be referred to as the twelve tribes (James 1:1 cf Matt.19:28, Luke 22:30) and this is probably the thought when a letter is sent to ‘the dispersion’ (1Pet.1:1). The Christian appears to be the true Jew (Rom.2:29) and the church the ‘Israel of God’ (Gal.6:16). Descriptions of the old Israel are piled up and applied to the church (1Pet.2:9 Eph.1:11,14). It is the church which is God’s ‘peculiar people’(Titus 2:14), and Christ’s own who are ‘Abraham’s seed’(Gal.3:29) and ‘the circumcision’(Phil.3:3). Many hold that ‘Israel after the flesh’(1Cor.10:18) implies an ‘Israel after the Spirit’. Here in Revelation John in the same way speaks of those ‘which say they are Jews and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan’ (Rev.2:9 3:9). He regards the New Jerusalem as the spiritual home of the Christians (Rev.21:2) and it has on its gates the names of the twelve tribes (Rev.21:12). Leon Morris page 114 *The Revelation of St John* ” - end quote.

Leon Morris totally ignores the fact that Peter and James ministered to the “circumcision” (Jews) (Gal.2:7-8; Rom.15:16) while Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, and so when James addresses his letter to the “*twelve tribes scattered abroad*” Morris interprets this by his “spiritual” method and changes the meaning to the Church! (Ja. 1:1).

In support of this he quotes Matt.19:28, which records the Lord’s promise to the twelve apostles that

*“in the regeneration (Messianic restoration) when the Son of man shall sit in **the throne of his glory**, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel”.*

Incredibly, Morris suggests that this applies to Christians! The Lord will sit upon the “*throne of his glory*” when He returns to reign on the throne of David (Matt.25:31; Luke 1:32-33). The regeneration refers to the restoration of the kingdom about which the disciples asked the Lord just before He ascended:

“Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?”(Acts 1:6).

How could Israel be the Church in this passage of Scripture, when the Church had not been formed? Of course it was understood to mean literal Israel, and if the kingdom was never going to be restored to Israel, why didn’t the Lord advise them of it? His reply did **not** indicate that there would be no restored kingdom of Israel, but that the kingdom was **delayed** till a time known only to the Father.



In Peter’s message at the temple gate, he said that if the Jews repented God would send

“times of refreshing”, and “Jesus Christ...whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution (restoration) of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets”(Acts3:19-21).

The words of the prophets clearly refer to the restoration of Israel in the last days, and of this there can be no doubt (Isa.2:1-5; Isa.59:20-21; 60:1-22; Isa.66:15-24; Hosea 3:4-5 etc etc).

James stated that God would gather out from the Gentiles a people for His name (the Church), and that

*“after this I will return, and will build again the **tabernacle of***

Amillennialism Weighed and Found Wanting

David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up” (Acts 15:14-18).

If the Lord is going to restore the throne of David, and, as foretold by the holy prophets, make Israel the head of the nations, so that “*The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee (Israel) shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted*” (Isa.60:12), then according to Peter, all it requires is for Israel to repent. In fact Paul plainly stated that there was coming a day when Israel would “*turn to the Lord*” and “*the veil shall be taken away*” from their hearts (2Cor.3:16).

Leon Morris has avoided quoting any part of Romans 11, which states that God has “*not cast away his people*”(Israel)(Rom.11:1-2). Furthermore, after acknowledging that Israel has been temporarily removed from the place of blessing, Paul says there is coming a day, after the “*fulness of the Gentiles be come in*”, that “*all Israel shall be saved...for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins*”(Rom.11:25-27).

He is not a Jew...He is a Jew

How do we explain, then, the Scripture which says that “*he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart...whose praise is...of God*” (Rom.2:29)?

This verse does not say that Christians are Jews. It does not say that God has finished with Jews. What it does say, is that a genuine Jew is one who is saved.

In the Old Testament the term “Jew” was equivalent to being a believer in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Other nations worshipped pagan idols, but Israel worshipped the Lord. In the eyes of the world, to be a Jew was synonymous with being a believer, but many Jews professed faith in Jehovah and had a head knowledge of God but had never experienced the new birth, just the same as there are people who are members of churches today but have never been born again. A true Jew was circumcised in heart as well as in the flesh, and a true Christian is born again.

The Israel of God

The expression, the “*Israel of God*”, quoted from Gal.6:16, refers to the saved from among the Jews. The whole context of the Epistle to the Galatians is a controversy between Jewish and Gentile believers in the early Church. The Jewish believers thought that

the Gentiles should observe the ceremonial law and be circumcised in order to be saved. Paul's final greeting sums up by saying ,
"In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature (the new birth). And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God" (Gal.6:15-16).

There were two parties to the dispute, Gentiles and Jews, and Paul wishes peace on both parties. The "Israel of God" were the saved Jews as distinct from unsaved Jews.

The Seed of Abraham

Amillennialists love to quote Galatians 3:29:

"If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

From this they deduce that God has finished with the Jews, that Christians are the "spiritual" seed of Abraham, and the Church has therefore replaced Israel.

Abraham's seed should have been like Abraham and "believed God", then it would have been counted to them for righteousness (Rom.4:3). Every true believer is, in this sense, the seed of Abraham, because we have *"the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all"* (Rom.4:16). Only in this sense are we Abraham's seed, and to extend that to teach that the Church has replaced Israel forever is a gross distortion of Scripture.

Who's Who in the New Heaven and New Earth

Leon Morris claims that in the new heaven and new earth the New Jerusalem is the home of the Christians. He is quite right, but he also believes there is **nobody else there**. Who lives on the new earth?

There are three distinctly separate groups identified in the new earth. Firstly, there is the Bride, the Lamb's wife, who is married to Christ. She is not alone for there are **invited guests** at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Who are these? If there is only the Church in eternity then the Bride is also the guests at the great supper, and that would be a strange wedding indeed.

The foundations of the New Jerusalem have in them the names of the *"twelve apostles of the Lamb"* (Rev.21:14). We know that the Church is *"built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone"* (Eph.2:20).

Amillennialism Weighed and Found Wanting

Secondly, there is Israel. In the past Israel occupied the land around the city of Jerusalem. In the Millennium, Ezekiel indicates that the twelve tribes will be allocated a portion of the land around the millennial temple (Ezek.48). In similar fashion the saved Jews of all ages will occupy a privileged position around the New Jerusalem. Their names are on the twelve **gates** of the city (Rev.21:12).

Thirdly, there are the saved Gentiles from Old Testament times, from the Tribulation and the Millennium. These are not part of the Church or Israel.

*“And **the nations** of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honour into it”* (Rev.21:24).

To rightly divide the Word of Truth we must recognize the divinely appointed divisions among men: the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church (1Cor.10:32).

The Church a Mystery

Amillennialism merges the New Testament with the Old Testament and interprets the Old Testament as though the Church was the real subject in the historical and prophetic portions. That is not the case, as Paul makes clear in his epistles.

*“For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ **for you Gentiles**, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:*

*How that by revelation he made known unto me **the mystery**... Which **in other ages was not made known** unto the sons of men, as it is **now revealed** unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; **That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs**, and of the **same body**, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel”* (Eph.3:1-6).

Similar statements are repeated in Col.1:24-27 and Rom.16:25-26.

The Church was **future** when Jesus was here. He said, *“I will (future tense) build my church”* (Matt.16:18), and in John’s Gospel He indicated that this would bring a new relationship:

*“I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter...even the Spirit of truth...for he dwelleth with you, and **shall be in you**...At **that day** ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you”* (John 14:16-20).

The Holy Spirit was WITH the Old Testament saints, but He INDWELLS the Church. The Church is comprised of believers who

have been baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ (1Cor.12:13) and who are part of the “mystery” which is “*Christ in you, the hope of glory*” (Col.1:27). The New Testament Church is the “mystery” which was hidden in ages past.

Two Camps but Seven Dispensations

When Jesus came there was a remnant of true believers in Israel. The vast majority of the Jews were following a religious system built on the traditions of men. When the **believing Jews** heard Christ they received Him, but the purely religious Jews rejected Him. This is what Jesus meant when He prayed,

*“I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: **thine they were** (Old Testament saints), and thou gavest them me...all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them” (John 17:6,10).*

This sharp dispensational distinction between Old and New Testament saints is lost in amillennialism’s replacement theology. While it is true that in all seven dispensations of time there will be only two camps, the true and the false, the believer and the unbeliever, the saved and the unsaved, amillennialism fails to recognize that the two camps are administered differently in different dispensations, or administrations of time.

Who can say that God’s administration in the Garden of Eden was the same as the Age of Innocence from Adam to Noah? There was only one camp in Eden. Or who can say that God’s administration in the Age of Human Government from the Flood to Abraham was the same as in the Age of Promise in the days of the Patriarchs? And surely nobody would suggest that God administered His will in the Age of Law from Moses to Christ as He is now working in the Church Age, when there is “*neither Jew nor Greek*” but we are “*all one in Christ Jesus*”(Gal.3:28)?

Augustine recognized the two camps, or “two cities” as he called them, but utterly failed to acknowledge the unique character of the Church as distinct from Israel in the administration of God, or any of the dispensations of time.

There are different dispensations or administrations. Paul describes the “*dispensation of the grace of God...how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery (of the Church)*”. There are different ages. There are past ages (Col.1:26), other ages (Eph.3:5), this present age (“*world*”, Titus 2:12), and future ages (Eph.3:2:7). The sign of the “*end of the age*” is the Great Tribulation (Matt.24:3, 7-29).

Romans Chapter 11

Amillennialists vehemently oppose dispensational teaching because it recognizes the continuity of God's administration over the nation of Israel and sees the Church as a separate administration, rather than a replacement of the age of Law. If only they would honestly exegete the eleventh chapter of Romans!

*"God hath NOT cast away his people (Israel)...God hath **not** cast away his people whom he foreknew ...Have they (Israel) stumbled that they should fall? God forbid...(vs 1-2, 11)*

IF *the fall of them be the riches of the world...how much more their fulness? (v12).*

IF *the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?(v15).*

IF *they abide not still in unbelief...for God is able to graff them in again (v23).*

IF *thou (Gentiles) wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature...how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? (v.24).*

*Blindness in part is happened to Israel, UNTIL the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so **ALL ISRAEL SHALL BE SAVED**...this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins"(vs, 25-27).*

It is freely acknowledged that God has put Israel aside in this Church age, that the natural branch has been plucked out of the olive tree, that there is a veil over their hearts when they read the Scriptures, that they were blinded when they refused Christ the light of the world, but it is **not permanent**. Their blindness is only "in part"(Rom.11:25), "the veil shall be taken away", "when it (Israel) shall turn to the Lord"(2Cor.3:16). The amillennial interpretation does not require Israel to be a branch broken off, but an olive tree cut down. A branch removed can be grafted back, and it will be.

The United Voice of the Prophets

An examination of many Old Testament Scriptures will confirm that the nation of Israel will turn to the Lord in the last days.

Hosea prophesied:

*"For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king...**Afterward** shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness **in the latter days**" (Hosea3:4-5).*

Joel's great prophecy is clear:

*"Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people...and ye shall know **that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God**, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed. And it shall come to pass AFTERWARD, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh...for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance"* (Joel 2:18-32).

Ezekiel is explicit:

"Ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD" (Ezek.37:13, 14).

*"So the house of **Israel** shall know that I am the LORD their God FROM THAT DAY AND FORWARD... Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have **mercy upon the whole house of Israel**, and will be jealous for my holy name... When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations;*

*Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. **Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD"**(Ezek.39:22-29).*

Jeremiah wrote:

*"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the **house of Israel** and with the **house of Judah**... After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: **IF** those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then **the seed of Israel** also shall cease from being **a nation** before me for ever. Thus saith the LORD; **IF** heaven above can be*

Amillennialism Weighed and Found Wanting

measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD”(Jer.31:31-37).

Isaiah wrote much, but just a few quotations will suffice:

*“And it shall come to pass **in the last days**... many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up...to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for **out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem**”(Isa.2:2-4).*

*“**Thy people also shall be all righteous**: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified” (Isa.60:21).*

*“But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of **the Gentiles**, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves”(Isa.61:6).*

Daniel foretold a day when the Jews and Jerusalem would experience “*everlasting righteousness*” (Dan.9:24-27), and that has never come upon the Jews or Jerusalem. We have no alternative but to believe that it will come in God’s appointed time. The same prophecy accurately foretold the very day Messiah would present Himself to Israel as the Son of David, their king. Why should the rest of that great prophecy be spiritualized into oblivion?

The Testimony of Recent Events

No matter what theological position one takes, nobody can deny that the rebirth of the nation of Israel is a modern miracle; nor can anyone deny that it has occurred at a time when many signs are indicating we are approaching the end of the age.

The growth in Jewish population within Palestine tells its own story, as may be seen in the following table indicating the **number of Jews** in the land according to year:

1800.....	6,000
1856.....	17,000
1881.....	24,000
1914.....	85,000
1929.....	154,000
1932.....	185,000
1935.....	375,000
1944.....	560,000
2000.....	5,200,000

The plan to establish a national home for the Jews began with the rise of the Zionist Movement in 1881 and the Zionist Federation in 1897. In its early days the Jews were a minority in the land and very poor. Unemployment was high, and many survived on the charity of world Jewry.

The proportion of Jews to Arabs, within what we now know as Israel and the West Bank area, was as follows:

- 1918.....93% Arabs & 7% Jews
- 1936.....70% Arabs & 30% Jews
- 2000.....43% Arabs & 57% Jews

Within Israel itself the proportion in the year 2000 was:
16.2% Arabs & 83.8% Jews

As we have said, the figures speak for themselves. How can the replacement theologians continue to deny that God has a future for the nation of Israel?

If the replacement theologians are correct, how do they explain this last-days return of a nation which has been “scattered and peeled” among the Gentiles for over 1900 years?

Quite apart from the sign of Israel’s restoration, there are many other signs that indicate we are in the last days. There is the revival of the Roman Empire in the European Union (EU), the population explosion, increased knowledge, men running to and fro (travel), apostasy in the Church, and abounding iniquity, just to name a few.

Is it just a coincidence that the last hundred years has witnessed the amazing survival of Israel, after centuries of persecution and attempted genocide, to be established again in the land that was given to their forefathers by God as an “everlasting possession”? Is it a coincidence that these people have revived their Hebrew language that was dead for 1800 years?

Is it a coincidence that Jerusalem and the Temple Mount are at the forefront of today’s agenda for the international community? when God said:

*“I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto **all the people** round about....In THAT DAY will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for **all people**...though **all the people***



Amillennialism Weighed and Found Wanting

*of the earth be gathered together against it...In THAT DAY, I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon **the inhabitants of Jerusalem**, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon **me** whom **they have pierced**, and they shall mourn for him..." (Zech 12:2-10).*

Has this prophecy ever been fulfilled? When did Israel ever mourn that they pierced the Lord Jesus their Messiah?

How can the replacement theologians honestly read Zechariah ch.14 and then deny that it is part of the last-days scene?

Zechariah states that at the time of the battle of Armageddon God will

*"gather **all nations** against Jerusalem to battle...Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations...and the **LORD my God shall come**, and all the saints with thee...And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem" (Zech14:2-14).*

Israel's last-days military capability is foretold in this prophecy, and the threat of invasion hangs like a dark cloud over the land.

No future for Israel? Then how do we explain Romans ch.11? Let me remind you again that any honest exegesis of this great chapter can only come up with the unqualified conclusion that

*"God hath **NOT** cast away his people" (Israel), and that "if the casting away of them (Israel) be the reconciling of the world (Gentiles), what shall **the receiving of them** be, but life from the dead?" and*

*"if they abide not still in unbelief, (they) **shall be grafted in**: for God is able to **graft them in again**...blindness in part is happened to Israel, **until** the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so **all Israel shall be saved**" (Rom11:2-26).*

If Israel is forever replaced by the Church, why did Jesus say to His disciples that

*"in the regeneration **when** the Son of man shall sit in the **throne of his glory**, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, **judging the twelve tribes of Israel**" (Matt19:28)?*

Did Jesus mean what He said, or was He telling lies? One thing is certain, the disciples could not have understood His promise to mean that they would rule over the Church. The Church wasn't formed till more than two months later, and in any case, when did the Church ever have twelve tribes? The whole idea of "spiritualizing" Israel and making it mean the Church is absurd.

The timing of this prophecy is when the Lord sits on the throne of His glory (Matt 25:31) and Jesus judges **the living nations that survive the Great Tribulation**. It is AFTER Christ's second coming and not in the Church age!

No wonder they don't want to admit to a future for the nation of Israel in God's plan, for if they do, their whole theological world crumbles into a heap of debris. The most incredible fact is that Augustine, after replacing Israel with the Church, admits that the Jews will turn to the Lord in the last days!

Isn't it much better to take the Scriptures literally and believe that God said what He meant, and meant what He said?

Two Returns of Israel to the Land

According to the Palestinian covenant (Deut.28 to 30) God promised Israel blessing IN THE LAND if they obeyed His voice. They would be chastened and scattered OUT OF THE LAND if they disobeyed. However, if after they were scattered they turned back to the Lord, then God would bring them BACK TO THE LAND and bless them again.

It may be argued that the return of Israel to the land in the 20th century was not the result of any repentance by the Jews and therefore cannot be considered a fulfilment of the Palestinian covenant, and with this we most wholeheartedly agree.

The present return is **partial and in unbelief**, and is in fulfilment **not** of the Palestinian covenant, but of separate prophecies. Ezekiel indicated that there would be a return in the last days BEFORE the nation repented. It would be prerequisite to her conversion, the reason being God's sovereign will as He works out His purposes. Ezekiel writes:

"Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went.

And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.

For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.

THEN will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

Amillennialism Weighed and Found Wanting

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you”(Ezek.36:22-27).

The same order of events is foretold in Ezekiel chapter 37 and again in chapter 38.

First Israel is seen as dry bones, and the restoration of the nation is prophesied in three stages; the bones come together, sinews come on the bones, and finally breath enters the bodies to give life. The breath of God is His Holy Spirit, for we read:

*“I will... bring you **into the land of Israel**. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves... and shall **put my spirit in you**, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: **THEN shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, saith the LORD**”(Ezek.37:12-14).*

In chapters 38 and 39, it is specifically stated that Israel’s conversion would take place **AFTER** the nation had been re-established in the land. Russia and her Muslim allies invade the land:

*“In **the latter years** thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is **brought forth out of the nations**, and they shall **dwell safely** all of them” (Ezek.38:8).*

Joel describes this same northern invasion (Joel 2) and places it in **the day of the Lord**, which is the Great Tribulation. He says:

*“Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people... and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen: But I will remove far off from you **the northern army**, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate” (Joel 2:18-20).*

*“And ye shall know that **I am in the midst of Israel**, and that I am the LORD your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed” (Joel 2:27).*

Obviously there has to be a national identity in the land for this invasion to occur, and Ezekiel makes it clear that

*“the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God **from that day and forward**. And the heathen shall know that **the house of Israel** went into captivity for their iniquity: because they*



trespassed against me, therefore hid I my face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies: so fell they all by the sword.

*Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; NOW will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and **have mercy upon the whole house of Israel**, and will be jealous for my holy name; AFTER that they have born their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they **dwelt safely in their land**, and none made them afraid.*

*When I have brought them again from the people, and **gathered them out of their enemies' lands**, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations;*

*THEN shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have **left none of them any more there**. Neither will I hide my face **any more** from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD" (Ezek.39:22-29).*

It is clear from these Scriptures that Israel will be brought back to the land in unbelief, that there will come a day when the whole nation will turn to the Lord, and that God will pour out His Spirit upon them. THEN the **second return** will take place and it will not be partial. EVERY Jew on the face of the earth will be brought back when the WHOLE HOUSE OF ISRAEL repents of its rejection of Messiah. Never again will Israel turn away from the Lord.

Today the veil is over the hearts of Israelites, but Paul wrote:

"when it (Israel) shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away" (2Cor. 3:16).

If there is no future for Israel, how do amillennialists explain these Scriptures? There IS a glorious future for God's covenant people, and replacement theology has resorted to "spiritualizing" the plain statements of Scripture to deny the Truth.

God's New Covenant with Israel

God has promised a new covenant with Israel in the last days which will bring the entire nation into an experience of salvation and regeneration. Amillennialists say that this has been fulfilled in the Church, and quote Hebrews 8:8-13 and Galatians 3:15-17.

What they seem to have missed, is that these two epistles are particularly Jewish. Hebrews was written to Hebrews (Jews), and Galatians was correcting Judaistic error in the Church. The context is Jewish!

Amillennialism Weighed and Found Wanting

Galations shows that the Gentiles do not have to be circumcised to be saved. That was the token of the covenant with Abraham's physical seed, but the "**BLESSING of Abraham**", which was the imputed righteousness of Christ (Rom.4:3), has "*come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ*", because within that covenant there was ALSO promised blessing for all the Gentiles. God said, "*In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed*" (Gen.12:3).

The cup of wine which Christians take at the Lord's table is a reminder of "*the blood of the new testament (covenant)*" (Matt.26:28). Paul explains that the Gentiles have been able to **tap into** the blessings of the new covenant:

"Thou (Gentile)... wert grafted in among them (Jews), and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree"(Rom.11:17).

The new covenant has not become the exclusive possession of the Church. It shares the spiritual blessings with Israel.

The Epistle to the Hebrews quotes Jeremiah 31:31-34 to show the Jews that the old covenant made at Sinai was passing away. The Levitical ceremonies were fulfilled in Christ. His sacrifice was the one and only sacrifice that could take away sins.

"But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Heb.10:12).

The new covenant will be with literal Israel. Paul told the Hebrews that the Sinaitic covenant was "*ready to vanish away*" (Heb.8:13), but that did not mean God had abandoned Israel, for the last-days covenant prophesied by Jeremiah would still come, when God would make a **new covenant** with Israel:

*"Behold, **the days come**, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the HOUSE OF ISRAEL and with the HOUSE OF JUDAH: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:*

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

*And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall ALL know me, **from the least of them unto the greatest of them**, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more"*(Jer.31:31-34).

What the Hebrews needed to realize was that the old covenant of Sinai was only a

“shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things” which “can never with those sacrifices...make the comers thereunto perfect...For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Heb.10:1-4).

The Jews had made the shadow the substance, when God intended that the old covenant would only foreshadow Christ as the Lamb of God. In like manner there will be sacrifices in the Millennium under the new covenant. Sometimes events cast their shadow **before** them, and sometimes **after** them.

This latter-day covenant is NOT with the Church, but with the two kingdoms of **Israel and Judah**. It indicates that the ENTIRE nation of Israel will one day be regenerated and forgiven, and this is confirmed in Romans 11:26-27, Ezek.39:22-29, Zech.3:9.

Furthermore, God knew that amillennialists would want to “spiritualize” the covenant and apply it to the Church, and so He added:

“Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name:

***IF** those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall **cease from being a nation** before me for ever. Thus saith the LORD; **IF** heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD”(Jer.31:31-37. See also Jer.33:19-26).*

The preservation of the literal nation of Israel after nearly 2,000 years of dispersion is nothing short of miraculous. If God has kept that part of His promise to Israel in a literal sense, why wouldn't He keep the first part in a literal sense, and one day “*make a new covenant with the HOUSE OF ISRAEL, and with the HOUSE OF JUDAH*”?

Amillennialism Teaches a General Resurrection

Amillennialists believe in one general resurrection which they claim will occur when Christ returns. At this general resurrection ALL who have died will be raised and those living on earth at the time will be changed. Since Scripture speaks of **two** resurrections they say the first resurrection is the experience of conversion and is of the soul, not a bodily resurrection.

Augustine, the father of amillennialism, devotes a whole chapter to the subject of the two resurrections (*City of God*, Book 20 Ch.6). He wrote:

“So are there also two resurrections — the one the first and **spiritual resurrection**, which has place **in this life**, and preserves us from coming into the second death; the other the second, which does not occur now, but in the end of the world, and which is of **the body**, not of the soul, and which by the last judgment shall dismiss some into the second death, others into that life which has no death.”

Regarding the **first resurrection**, he explains:

“...the second resurrection, that is, the resurrection of the body, which shall be in the end, but of the first, which now is... this resurrection (the first resurrection) **regards not the body, but the soul**. For souls, too, have a death of their own in wickedness and sins.”

Augustine goes on to elaborate:

“For in this first resurrection none have a part save those who shall be eternally blessed; but in the second ... **all**, as we shall learn, have a part, **both the blessed and the wretched**. The one is the resurrection of mercy, the other of judgment.”

Michael Wilcock supports a general resurrection, and states:

“The ‘first resurrection’ is...what the New Testament in many places describes as a passing from death to life, namely, a man’s rebirth as a Christian” (Page 192).

When he comes to the second resurrection, which amillennialists believe is a general resurrection, Wilcock agrees with Augustine but obviously has serious doubts, for he adds a footnote:

“It may be disputed whether...**the judgment of the Christians might not be a separate affair from the judgment of the great white throne**; and whether Rev.20:15 implies that any of the ‘dead’ (who appear before it) are found written in the book of life” (Page 196). (emphasis ours)

We shall see from Scripture that his doubts are well founded.

What amillennialists are saying is that Christians participate in the first resurrection at conversion, and that the saved are raised, WITH all the unsaved, in a general resurrection when Christ returns in the last days. The saved obtain mercy, and the unsaved, judgment in the lake of fire.

Whether this amillennial view is true or not depends on how it survives the test of Scripture.

It is true that the Church (those who are *“in Christ”*) is comprised of those who *“were dead in trespasses and sins”* (Eph.2:1), but God has *“quickened us together with Christ...and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”*(Eph.2:5-6), and we are to *“set our affection on things above”* because we are *“risen with Christ”*(Col.3:1-2). That is our position *“in Christ”*. The Church is distinct from Old Testament saints in that we are the Body of Christ, and Christ is risen to the right hand of God. We have been united to Christ by the baptism of the Holy Spirit at the moment of conversion, *“for by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body”* (1Cor.12:13).

The Church partakes of the risen life of Christ who, by His Spirit, dwells not only in the individual believer in this Church age, but also in the Church as a whole. In this sense it is true that we are risen with Christ.

However, Augustine has wrongly assumed that this is the first resurrection, and that the second resurrection therefore must include both saved and unsaved since all must ultimately receive a resurrection body.

The Past Resurrection of Old Testament Saints

If ALL the dead receive a resurrection body at one general resurrection, then it must all occur at the same time, and this is totally inconsistent with the Scripture. Scripture indicates that the

Amillennialism Weighed and Found Wanting

Old Testament saints rose with Christ, and

“many BODIES of the saints which slept arose, and CAME OUT OF THE GRAVES after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many”(Matt.27:52-53).

This was a BODILY resurrection at the time that Christ rose, and it is clearly stated that they were “SAINTS” who came “out of the graves”. If ALL the saints are raised in a general resurrection in the last days as Augustine affirms, then how does he explain this resurrection? And who did Christ lead captive when He ascended on high (Eph.4:8)?

The Future Resurrection of Tribulation Saints

Next, how does Augustine explain the resurrection of those who are martyred in the Great Tribulation?

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

*But **the rest of the dead** lived not again until the thousand years were finished. **This is the first resurrection.***

*Blessed and holy is he that hath part in **the first resurrection**: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years” (Rev 20:4-6).*

In Augustine’s thinking, these Tribulation saints are the Church, which he believes lives in a symbolic Millennium now. Yet he agrees that Antichrist (the beast) will appear for 3 1/2 literal years at the end of the age and is confused as to whether to include 3 1/2 literal years in the period of the 1,000 symbolic years, i.e. whether they are BEFORE the Millennium or in it! Since he believes that the Church is NOW in the symbolic Millennium, he has difficulty fitting these who are beheaded (which he believes is the Church) by the beast in the Tribulation into a 3 1/2 -year period which obviously occurs BEFORE the Millennium! How can they then be the Church?

Such is the confusion that arises when one adopts the “spiritualizing method” of interpreting the Book of Revelation.

The fact is that Rev.20:4-6 is a description of those who are saved in the Tribulation and have been beheaded by Antichrist. That these will be raised **BODILY** from the dead when Christ returns to set up His millennial kingdom is clear, because John calls this the **first resurrection!**

*“This is the **first resurrection**. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the **first resurrection**: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years” (Rev.20:5-6).*

Obviously Augustine is wrong when he claims the first resurrection is of the soul and not of the BODY. These Tribulation saints were **ALREADY** saved and have sealed their testimony with their blood, yet **AFTER DEATH** they participate in the first resurrection.

The Future Resurrection of the Church

What, then, of the Rapture of the Church described in 1Thess.4:13-18? Nobody could possibly question the fact that it will be a **BODILY** resurrection.

“The dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1Thess.4:16-17).

These, who are said to be “in Christ”, are preserved from the “day of the Lord” by the Rapture, which Paul goes on to speak about in the following verses.

“The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night...But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that THAT DAY should overtake you as a thief...For God hath not appointed us (the Church) to wrath (of the ‘day of the Lord’), but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Thess.5:2-9).

The “day of the Lord” is that period of God’s wrath when He will judge the nations, and occurs immediately prior to the return of Christ. Christ actually returns in the “day of the Lord”. Zechariah states:

*“Behold, **the day of the Lord cometh**...Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations...And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives...and **the LORD my God shall come**, and all the saints with thee” (Zech.14:1-5).*

Furthermore, there is no resemblance between the Rapture and a general resurrection of saved and unsaved. At the Rapture the **souls** of those who “**sleep in Jesus will God bring with him**” (1Thess.4:14), and only saved people are raised. If the Bible taught

Amillennialism Weighed and Found Wanting

a general resurrection of ALL the saved and unsaved, it could not occur BEFORE the day of the Lord, and would not fit the description in 1Thess.4:13-18.

The First Resurrection in Several Stages

Jesus said:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live” (John 5:25).

Augustine makes much of the words, *“the hour...now is”*, to support his theory that the first resurrection is the conversion experience; a resurrection of the soul and not a resurrection of the body.

However, when we realize that the first resurrection **begin** with the **BODILY** resurrection of Christ and the Old Testament saints, it becomes obvious that his theory is erroneous. The hour, or time, when the first resurrection would begin, had come. The *“hour is coming, and NOW IS, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live”*.



The Herald of Hope Keys to Bible Prophecy 20-3 © J.R. Cook 1988

From the cross, Jesus went to paradise with the Old Testament saints, including the repentant thief, and all those who were in paradise heard the voice of the Son of God and lived in resurrection power “*after his resurrection*”(Matt.27:52-53). Then, “*when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive*”; paradise with all its occupants was taken into heaven (Eph.4:8; 2Cor.12:1-5). That required a resurrection of all Old Testament saints.

Two Resurrections - One for the Saved, Another for the Unsaved

There are two resurrections. Jesus spoke of “*the resurrection of the just*” (Luke 14:14) when rewards will be dispensed to the righteous, and the “*resurrection of damnation*” for all the unsaved. Jesus states: “*All that are **in the graves** shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto **the resurrection of life**; and they that have done evil, unto **the resurrection of damnation***” (John 5:28-29).

If those who participate in the first resurrection are described as “*blessed and holy*” (Rev.20:6), then the second resurrection must involve those who are unholy. John describes the resurrection of all the unsaved:

*“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away ...and I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God...and **death** (the bodies) **and hell** (the unsaved souls) **delivered up the dead which were in them...and death and hell were cast into the lake of fire**. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire”*(Rev.20:11-15).

In order to prove that the above Scripture describes a general resurrection one must demonstrate that there are saved people present, and this is totally inconsistent with all that is said.

The timing of this judgment places it 1,000 years AFTER the resurrection of the Tribulation saints described in Rev.20:4. When John describes the resurrection of these saints, he says:

*“They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the **REST OF THE DEAD** lived not again UNTIL the thousand years were finished”* (Rev.20:4-5).

However you may interpret the 1,000 years, literally or symbolically, it is evident that both events **do not occur at the same time**. To say otherwise is to declare oneself a bigot and to deny the straightforward meaning of words.

Only Souls from Hell Appear at the Great White Throne

Who does Scripture say will appear before the great white throne? If it is a general resurrection of saved and unsaved, then souls must be brought from heaven and hell to receive their new bodies, but that is not what Scripture says. Scripture is specific:

“And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and DEATH AND HELL delivered up the dead which were them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And DEATH AND HELL were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death” (Rev.20:13-14).

Resurrection involves the reunion of soul and body, and here we have those raised coming from physical death and hell. Only **unsaved** people could be described in this way.

While affirming that a general resurrection of the saved and unsaved occurs at the great white throne, Wilcock incredibly prefers to avoid the issue by saying:

“We may even be off the mark in enquiring too closely into who the ‘dead’ are” (Page 196).

Augustine gives a strange and contradictory interpretation. He writes:

*“And perhaps it was not without reason that neither death nor hell were judged sufficient alone, and both were mentioned - **death to indicate the good**, who have suffered only death and not hell; **hell to indicate the punishment of hell”** (Book 20 ch. 15).*

Then, in the same paragraph, Augustine adds:

*“After saying, ‘They were judged every man according to their works,’ he briefly added what the judgment was: ‘Death and hell were cast into the lake of fire’; by these names designating **the devil and the whole company of angels**, for he is the author of death and the pains of hell” (Book 20 ch.15).*

In the same breath Augustine gives different interpretations of who or what “*death and hell*” are! It can’t mean the “good” and the “wicked” men, and the devil and his angels, at the same time! It obviously is not angels because Scripture says every MAN was judged “*according to their works*”(Rev.20:13).

The fact is that the amillennial view that a general resurrection is described in Revelation ch.20 is utterly wrong. Death and hell can

only be the bodies and souls of lost unbelieving sinners, and no saved soul will ever be there.

The Great White Throne is a Judgment of Works and Believers Won't be There

If all the dead who appear before the great white throne include the saved, then why are they judged “*according to their works*”? Such a suggestion is a denial of the Gospel of Christ which removes our sin from even the memory of God and imputes to us the righteousness of Christ. The believer, whether he be from the Old Testament age, the Church age, or from the Tribulation, has been justified by faith and has had imputed to him the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ (Rom.4:5). All believers “*shall not come into condemnation*” but have **already** “*passed from death unto life*” (John 5:24).

Wilcock squirms as he seeks to explain how believers can be judged “*according to their works*”, when he says,
“They are therefore accounted righteous because of His righteousness”.

He is confused and says:

“The judgment is still according to works; the question is, whose works?” (Page 196).

Scripture makes it clear. It is “*according to THEIR works*” (Rev.20:13). It cannot refer to Christ’s perfect works which are imputed to them. They, that is, ALL who are raised from hell to this “*great white throne*”, will be judged according to THEIR works, and that cannot include even one justified saint.

For God to bring the saved before the great white throne to be judged “*according to their works*” would negate all that He has assured us of concerning our eternal security. No wonder Wilcock has doubts about whether the

“judgment of Christians might not be a separate affair from the judgment of the great white throne” (footnote page 196)!

When the Church appears before the judgment seat of Christ it is not a judicial judgment but a bema seat where rewards for faithful service are distributed, just as gold, silver, and bronze medals are awarded to athletes. Praise God, the question of sin was settled for every child of God the moment we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ.

No Mercy at the Great White Throne

Amillennialists claim that **mercy and judgment** will be dispensed at the great white throne. Augustine wrote:

“In the second (resurrection)... all...have a part, both the blessed and the wretched. The one is the resurrection of mercy, and the other of judgment. And therefore it is written in the psalm, ‘I will sing of mercy and of judgment: unto thee, O Lord, will I sing’”(Book 20 ch.6).

The psalm quoted by Augustine is Ps.101:1, which has nothing to do with the great white throne judgment and illustrates how verses can be taken entirely out of context. The truth is that there is no mercy at the great white throne.

Ezekiel saw the throne of God and the glory of God *“as the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain”* (Ezek.1:28), and when John was caught up through the open door of heaven to the throne *“there was a rainbow round about the throne”(Rev.4:3)*. The rainbow was the token of the covenant which God made with the earth after the Flood. God said, *“the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh”* (Gen.9:15). It was a guarantee of God’s mercy.

When John entered into heaven through the open door he foresaw his own rapture and the catching up of the Church into heaven (Rev.4:1-2.) The rainbow indicated that it was a throne of mercy, but at the great white throne at the end of the Millennium there is no rainbow. Justice, and not mercy, is dispensed at the great white throne, because only the souls of **the unsaved** who have been in hell are raised, to receive sentence *“according to their works”*.

Degrees of Punishment at the Great White Throne

Hell is God’s remand centre where guilty unbelieving souls go after death. However, prisoners are only kept in a remand centre until the judge can hear their case, and then the judge determines their sentence. The lake of fire is where the sentence is served.

“And that servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required”(Luke 12:47-48).

There are degrees of punishment for unsaved souls in the lake of fire. The greater the privilege, the greater the responsibility, and

this is the purpose of the great white throne judgment. It has nothing to do with those believing souls whose judgment has already passed at the cross, and since this is the case, no believer will be raised at the second resurrection. The first resurrection must refer to the **boldly** resurrection of the redeemed and cannot refer to the experience of conversion as amillennialists suggest.

In the court systems of the world there is always the possibility that innocent persons may be charged and later acquitted. However, in God's remand centre there are no mistakes. God knows the truth about every man's condition. *"The Lord knoweth them that are his"* (2Tim.2:19).

Names in the Book of Life

The determining factor as to whether souls are forever lost in the lake of fire is not whether their works are bad enough, but whether their names are found in the book of life.

"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev.20:15).

Here also we find misunderstanding by the amillennialists. Wilcock contends that

*"Those however who...**have never had their names written in the book of life**, have nothing to plead...to exempt them from the 'second death', the death of the soul"* (Page 197).

This is a mistaken concept, which lacks Biblical support. If some have never had their names written in the book of life, we must ask the question, How do people get their names in the Lamb's book of life? Is it a divine act of election and predestination, or is it through receiving Christ as their personal Saviour? Can it be true that, as the chorus goes,

*"There's a new name written down in glory,
And it's mine, Oh yes it's mine;
And the white-robed angels tell the story,
A sinner has come home."*

How, then, do we explain the Scripture which speaks of some *"whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world"*(Rev.17:8)?

Augustine writes:

"This book...symbolizes His predestination of those to whom eternal life shall be given" (Book 20 ch.15).

Amillennialism Weighed and Found Wanting

Calvin got his theology from Augustine, and Calvinists would say that only the elect are written there, but they also believe that those who are saved cannot be lost. How, then, does the Calvinist explain the fact that **names are blotted out?** (Exod.32:33; Rev.3:5; Ps.69:28; Rev.22:19). Does this mean the elect can be lost?

Nowhere in Scripture are we told that names are written in the book of life **when we believe**, but we have solemn warnings that names are blotted out of the book of life (Exod.32:33; Rev.3:5; Rev.22:19; Ps.69:28).

Also, if names are written in the book of life when we believe, what of the millions of babies that have died, not to mention millions of aborted unborn? How could they believe and have their names written in the book of life? or are they automatically damned?

The answer is simple. Before the foundation of the world God, in His infinite foreknowledge, wrote EVERYBODY'S name in the book of life. That's why it is called the book of life. Those who will not repent are blotted out, so that when the Lamb's book of life is opened at the great white throne judgment of the unsaved it is to show them that they are lost eternally **by their own choice**.

An objection may be raised on the basis that Rev.17:8 speaks of names which "*were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world*" (Rev.17:8). The problem is one of translation. The SAME Greek word translated "*were not written*" in Rev.17:8, is translated "*are not written*" in Rev.13:8. Why? Because the Greek is in the perfect tense, which signifies "**a present condition resulting from a past action**". There is no direct equivalent in English. The names are not there **now** because of a **past action**; they were blotted out. That past action was their choice to refuse God's mercy.

The great white throne is no general resurrection of saved and unsaved, but the final sentence of judgment on all the unsaved. Only "*death and hell*" deliver up the dead for this judgment. The first resurrection will have passed; Old Testament saints were gathered with Christ, the Church will have been caught up to Christ, the Tribulation saints will have been raised to reign with Christ for 1,000 years, and no doubt millennial saints will be raised.

Who are Raised at Christ's Second Coming?

We have already dealt with the Scriptures which teach that Tribulation saints will be raised at the second advent of Christ, and this is reinforced by a prophecy from Isaiah:

"Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise.

*Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and **the earth shall cast out the dead**" (Isa.26:19).*

The context of this verse is the second advent of Christ. It is part of what has been called the "little Apocalypse" in the Book of Isaiah, from chapters 24 to 28. It graphically describes the Great Tribulation and how Israel will acknowledge the Lord in that day in the midst of intense suffering and death. The passage quoted is the Lord's assurance to the suffering remnant that those who die at the hand of Antichrist, or otherwise, will be raised **just as Christ's dead body was raised**. They are told:

*"Hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, **the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity**" (Isa. 26:20-21).*

Daniel, however, speaks of **SOME unsaved** being raised at the second advent of Christ. We read:

*"And **at that time**...there shall be a time of trouble (Tribulation), such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time **thy people** (Israel) shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, **SOME** to everlasting life, and **SOME** to **shame and everlasting contempt**"(Dan.12:1-2).*

We know that when Christ returns, the beast and the false prophet are cast "**alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone**" (Rev.19:20). This is 1,000 years BEFORE the great white throne judgment when the second resurrection occurs and the souls of the unsaved come from **hell** to be cast into the **lake of fire**.

After the 1,000 years the Devil will be cast into "**the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet ARE...**"(Rev.20:10).

It seems therefore that some unsaved will be raised when Christ returns, and, like the "goats" from the living nations, will go directly to "**everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels**" (Matt.25:41).

It is quite apparent that Antichrist and the false prophet will NOT appear before the great white throne, but will receive their resurrection bodies at Christ's second advent and be consigned **directly** to the lake of fire.

The "**SOME**" consigned to everlasting shame and contempt in the **lake of fire** at Christ's second advent will therefore include the beast and the false prophet, and all who "**worship the beast and his image...(who) shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God...tormented with fire and brimstone...for ever and ever**"(Rev.14:9-11).

Amillennialism Weighed and Found Wanting

Hell and the lake of fire are different places. Those in hell will be cast into the lake of fire where Satan will be confined for all eternity (Rev.20:10,15).

The passage in Daniel 12 destroys any suggestion of a general resurrection when Christ comes. Only "SOME" are raised when Christ returns, and if only SOME are raised then, there cannot be a general resurrection at Christ's return.

The Day of Judgment

Having rejected a literal millennial kingdom on earth after Christ's return, amillennialists follow Augustine in chronologically placing the second resurrection (which they call a general resurrection) of all saved and unsaved at the second advent of Christ. This automatically places the day of judgment and the destruction of the earth by fire immediately after the second coming of Christ. Does Scripture teach this order of events? Certainly not!

Peter makes it clear that **only the ungodly** are reserved to the "day of judgment".

"The heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (2Peter3:7).

This Scripture says two things; it tells us **who** will be judged, and **when** they will be judged. Those judged are the "UNGODLY", and it will occur when the heaven and earth is burned with fire at the end of the millennial kingdom (2Peter3:7), and there is "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev.21:1).

Believers will not appear at the day of judgment. Jesus said,

"He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and SHALL NOT COME INTO CONDEMNATION; but IS PASSED from death unto life" (John 5:24).

To even suggest that any believer will have to give account at the day of judgment is a denial of the Gospel of Christ! The believer's judgment day took place during three hours of darkness, on an old rugged cross raised between heaven and earth at the place called Calvary, nearly 2,000 years ago. There the work was finished, atonement was made, and each believer has the Saviour's own word that we shall never, never, come into judgment!

Listen again to what Peter says:

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to RESERVE THE UNJUST UNTO THE DAY OF JUDGMENT TO BE PUNISHED" (2Peter 2:9).

It is the unrepentant, unsaved, unjustified, ungodly, who are *“reserved unto the **day of judgment** to be punished”* - not believers! Our sins have already been punished when Jesus Christ *“bare our sins in his own body on the tree”*(1Peter 2:24).

Jesus referred exclusively to unsaved in connection with the day of judgment. He told His disciples that for those who would not receive them, *“It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the **day of judgment**”*(Matt.10:15).

Jesus upbraided the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum *“which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day...But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the **day of judgment**, than for thee”* (Matt.11:20-24).

John makes it clear that God by His Spirit dwells in the believer, and that this gives us assurance and *“boldness in the **day of judgment**”*(1John 4:17). How could we have boldness if we are to be judged *“according to our works”*?

Hades, Gehenna and Tartaros

It would help us to understand the second resurrection if we appreciate the significance of the different Hebrew and Greek words translated “hell” in the Bible.

In the Old Testament the Hebrew word “sheol” is translated more than 30 times as “hell”, and a similar number of times as “grave”. On a few occasions it is translated “pit”. It should never be translated as “grave” since the Hebrew word “qeber” specifically means “burying place”.

Sheol means the “unseen world” of the dead, and in the Old Testament it included the place where the souls of the saved and unsaved went after death. “Hades” is the Greek equivalent.

The rich man and Lazarus both went to “hades”(sheol), and when Jesus died He also went to “hades”(sheol) with the penitent thief.

Before Christ rose and took the Old Testament saints to heaven (Eph.4:8), “hades”(sheol) had a place of torment **and** a place of blessedness called “paradise”(Luke23:43) or “Abraham’s bosom” (Luke 16:19-31). These were separated by a *“great gulf fixed”* (Luke 16:26).

Amillennialism Weighed and Found Wanting

The rich man in “hades” was in torment but Lazarus was comforted, and Jesus spent three days in paradise before taking all the Old Testament saints into heaven (Matt.27:52--53; Eph.4:8-10; 2Cor.12:4). Since then, “hades” consists only of torment where the souls of unsaved go after death.

“Hades” is the Greek for the Hebrew word “sheol”, and in fulfillment of Ps.16:8-11 Christ’s **soul** was not left in “hades” (the paradise section) (Acts 2:31). He rose on the third day and His body did not “*see corruption*”.

“Gehenna” is a Greek word translated “hell” and is usually associated with the **body and soul**. It therefore is equivalent to the lake of fire where the resurrected BODIES of all the unsaved will spend eternity. See Matt.5:29-30; 10:28; 18:9; and Mark 9:43-47. The word “gehenna” does not occur in the Book of Revelation, which instead uses the term “*the lake of fire*” for the place where “death”(the body) and “hell”(the souls of unsaved in hades) are cast after the second resurrection.

“Tartaros” is translated “*cast down to hell*” and is used only once in the New Testament (2Peter 2:4). It refers to the “abyss” or “bottomless pit” where fallen angels await the day of judgment.

Judgment of the Living Nations

The amillennial doctrine of the “day of judgment” misinterprets the judgment of the living nations at the “*throne of his glory*” as described in Matthew 25:31-46. It interprets the “*throne of his glory*” as the “*great white throne*”(Rev. 20:11). The “*throne of his glory*”, however, is **on earth**, and will have gathered before it the nations that survive the terrible Great Tribulation. There is not the slightest suggestion that any resurrected person will stand before the “*throne of his glory*”.

As we have seen, amillennialists wrongly believe that everybody is raised from the dead when Christ returns, and immediately all, both saved and unsaved, stand before the great white throne judgment. On this basis the judgment of the **living nations** described in Matthew 25 would have to be the same as the great white throne judgment. But is it?

Please notice, there is absolutely nothing in Matthew 25 about a resurrection. The “sheep” and “goats” are **living** nations which survive the Great Tribulation. Rev.20:4 describes a resurrection of those who were slain for refusing the mark of the Antichrist during the Tribulation, and then tells us that “*the rest of the dead lived not again until the 1,000 years were finished*”(Rev.20:5).

If words mean anything, not everybody is raised from the dead when Christ comes. Tribulation saints who have died will be raised *“to everlasting life”* but **“SOME”** (unsaved from the Tribulation period) will be raised to *“everlasting shame and contempt”*. The *“rest of the dead”* wait until the 1,000 years are expired.

We know that after Christ returns there will be **natural** people on earth, because Zechariah tells us:

“In that day, I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem” (Zech.12:9), and *“His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives...”*, *“And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles”*(Zech.14:4,16).

Furthermore, Zechariah goes on to say that any nation that will **not go up** to Jerusalem, *“even upon them shall be no rain”* (Zech.14:17). So we must conclude that there will be a new generation born which will have the same sinful nature as ours. If these do not worship the Lord in Jerusalem, *“even upon them shall be no rain”*. That certainly does not sound like the earth is destroyed with fire immediately after Christ returns. Nor does it indicate that only resurrected people inhabit the earth after Christ returns.

Isaiah tells us that after *“the Redeemer shall come to Zion”* (Isa.59:20) and He makes a new covenant with Israel,

“Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them...the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee” (Isa.60:9-10).

How can this be, if the earth is burned with fire when Christ comes, and there is a new heaven and new earth in which John tells us *“the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was NO MORE SEA”* (Rev.21:1)? How could the ships of Tarshish bring the converted Jews back to the land if there is no more sea?

Obviously, the separation of the sheep and goats in Matthew 25 has nothing to do with the great white throne judgment of Revelation 20. So we ask, Into what kingdom will Jesus release the sheep at the judgment of the living nations, if there is no millennial kingdom to follow Christ's return?

It simply can't refer to the new heaven and new earth. It has to be an earthly kingdom, so let us throw out this symbolic 1,000 years

Amillennialism Weighed and Found Wanting

and just believe the Bible that Christ will sit upon “*the throne of his father David*” for a literal thousand years in Jerusalem, exactly as Gabriel promised to Mary! (Luke 1:32-33).

Warning to Amillennialists

The Holy Spirit foresaw the amillennial error and said to Gentile Christendom:

“Boast not against the branches (Israel). But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I (Gentiles) might be grafted in.

*Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. **Be not highminded**, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches (Israel), take heed **lest he also spare not thee** (Gentiles). Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, **IF** thou continue in his goodness: otherwise **thou also shalt be cut off**” (Rom. 11:18-22).*

Just as the Jews followed a lifeless form of religion and knew nothing of circumcision of the heart, so Christendom has become a system of religion exercising political power. God described apostate Israel as a harlot (Hosea 1 to 3), and He describes unbelieving Christendom as “**MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH**” (Rev.17:5). Christendom will be cut off at the end of the Tribulation, and its destruction is vividly foretold in Revelation chapters 17 and 18.

Apostate Christendom is prophetically described in the letters to the Churches at Thyatira, Sardis, and Laodicea. (For an exposition of this prophecy see MA Butler’s book *The Big Picture of Church History*, available free from Herald of Hope magazine).

Thyatira speaks of Roman Catholicism; Sardis, Protestantism; and Laodicea, ecumenical charismatic Christendom. Roman Catholicism will be “*cast...into great tribulation*” (Rev.2:22); Protestantism has a name to live but is dead, and the Lord says:

“I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee” (Rev.3:1-3).

Ecumenical charismatic Christendom will be spued out of the Lord’s mouth (Rev.3:16).

Please note that Paul wrote to the Thessalonian Christians that “*the **day of the Lord** so cometh as a thief in the night...but ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that **that day** should overtake you as a thief*” (1Thess.5:2-4).

The warning is clear to those who reject the words of Scripture in their literal sense, whether they be modernists “spiritualizing” the first 11 chapters of the Bible or amillennialists “spiritualizing” the last 22 chapters of the Bible. “Spiritualizing” may not be taking away the words of Scripture but the sense of Scripture is removed, and John writes:

“And if any man shall take away from the WORDS of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book”(Rev.22:19).

Salvation is by grace, through faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is not suggested that all amillennialists are not saved, but they should seriously consider the magnitude of their error in rejecting the plain meaning of the words of Scripture. *“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Rom.10:17).

Many amillennialists would condemn modernists for denying a literal six days of creation. They would point out that each day is defined as “evening” and “morning” which demands a solar day, not a long period or age. They would faithfully insist on a literal interpretation of these words, yet when it comes to the 1,000 years of Christ’s kingdom they fall into the same symbolic trap as the modernists and interpret it as an indefinite period, the Church age, or the whole of time!

If the amillennialist can take the promises of salvation literally sufficient to give him assurance of eternal salvation, why can’t he take the *“more sure word of prophecy”* literally? It is a serious matter to tamper with God’s words.

The whole concept of spiritualizing Scripture confuses the unsaved and befuddles those believers who allow themselves to be influenced.

The writer recalls that when he was employed as a marketing manager for a design and construction firm, a new secretary joined the company; a young married woman of 25 years. She had been educated in a Ladies College run by one of the Protestant denominations and had listened intently to her chaplain as he “spiritualized” Scripture during devotions. She thought how difficult it must be to interpret the Bible.

When she joined my company she was warned that I might try to “convert” her, but this only aroused her curiosity. Being an

Amillennialism Weighed and Found Wanting

intelligent girl, she began to ask questions and soon realized that I believed the Bible literally from Genesis to Revelation.

The concept was new to her, and she determined to read the entire Bible to see if it made sense when read from a literal standpoint. Was there really a garden of Eden? Did the flood cover the entire earth? Was Jonah really swallowed by a whale? Day after day she asked questions, and the following Christmas finished a book I had lent her on the subject of prophecy.

Later she told me that after lunch that Christmas she read the last chapter and fell on her knees to receive Christ as her Saviour. Six months later her husband came to the assurance of salvation.

I have no doubt that God opened her understanding to the Gospel message when she believed the Word literally. While she thought the Bible was to be “spiritualized” she was confused about the way of salvation. Faith came by “*hearing, and hearing by the word of God*”.

The Rapture and the Second Coming

Amillennialists have confused the great truth of the Rapture of the Church with events surrounding the second coming of Christ.

The Rapture is separated from the second coming of Christ by a period of 7 years, and cannot occur at the same time for the following reasons:

- 1) The Rapture is Christ coming to the air FOR His bride (1Thess.4:13-18; Eph.5:23-33). The second coming is Christ coming to the earth WITH His bride, who will have already “*made herself ready*” at the bema seat (Rev.19:7-9; Zech.14:4).
- 2) The Rapture is BEFORE the Tribulation (1Thess.5:1-11; 2Thess.2:1-12). The second coming is “*immediately after the Tribulation*” (Matt.24:29).
- 3) The Rapture is for those who are “*in Christ*”(1Thess.4:14,16). The second coming of Christ is especially for the Jews, those who pierced Him (Rev.1:7; Isa.25:9; 59:20).
- 4) The Rapture is over in an instant and therefore unseen by the world (1Cor.15:51-54). The second coming of Christ will be prolonged and every eye shall see Him (Rev.1:7).
- 5) The Rapture must occur before Antichrist appears (2Thess.2:6-8). The second coming occurs after Antichrist has been reigning for 3¹/₂ years (Rev.13:5).

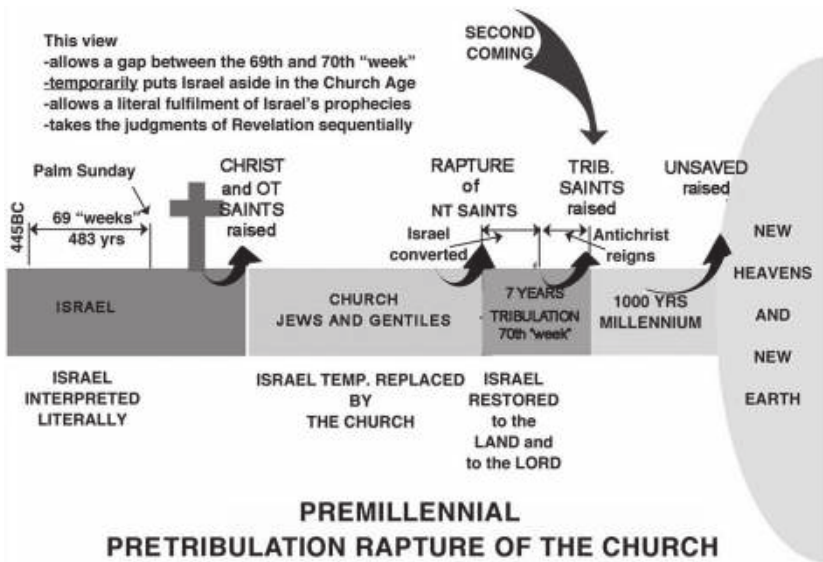
6) The Rapture involves only the *“Lord himself”* and the archangel (1Thess.4:16). At the second advent Christ is accompanied by *“the armies which were in heaven”* and *“his mighty angels”* (Rev.19:14; 2Thess.1:7).

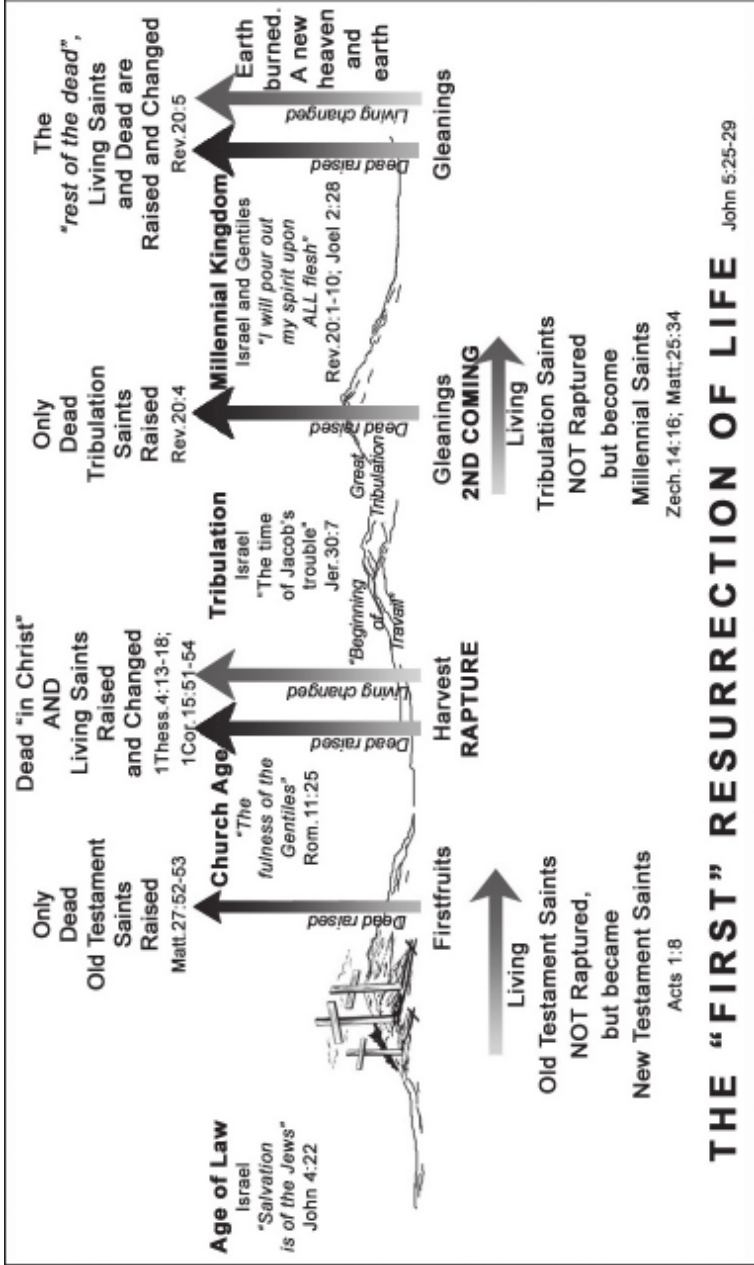
7) The Rapture is in the clouds (1Thess.4:17). The second coming is *“in flaming fire”* (2Thess.1:8) and *“out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations”*(Rev.19:15).

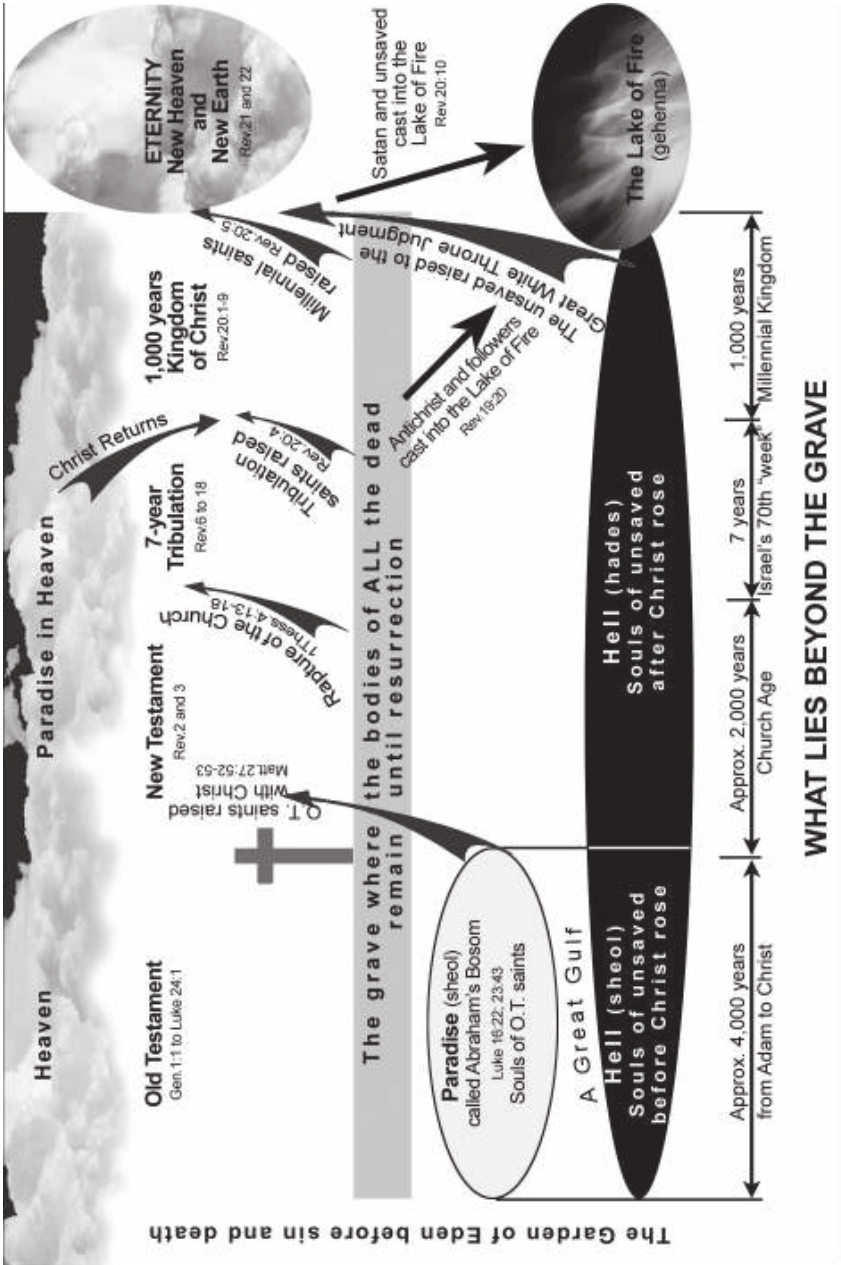
8) At the Rapture only those who are baptized by the Spirit into the Body of Christ are raised, i.e. the Church (1Thess.4:17). At the second coming only those martyrs who have refused Antichrist’s mark are raised (Rev.20:4).

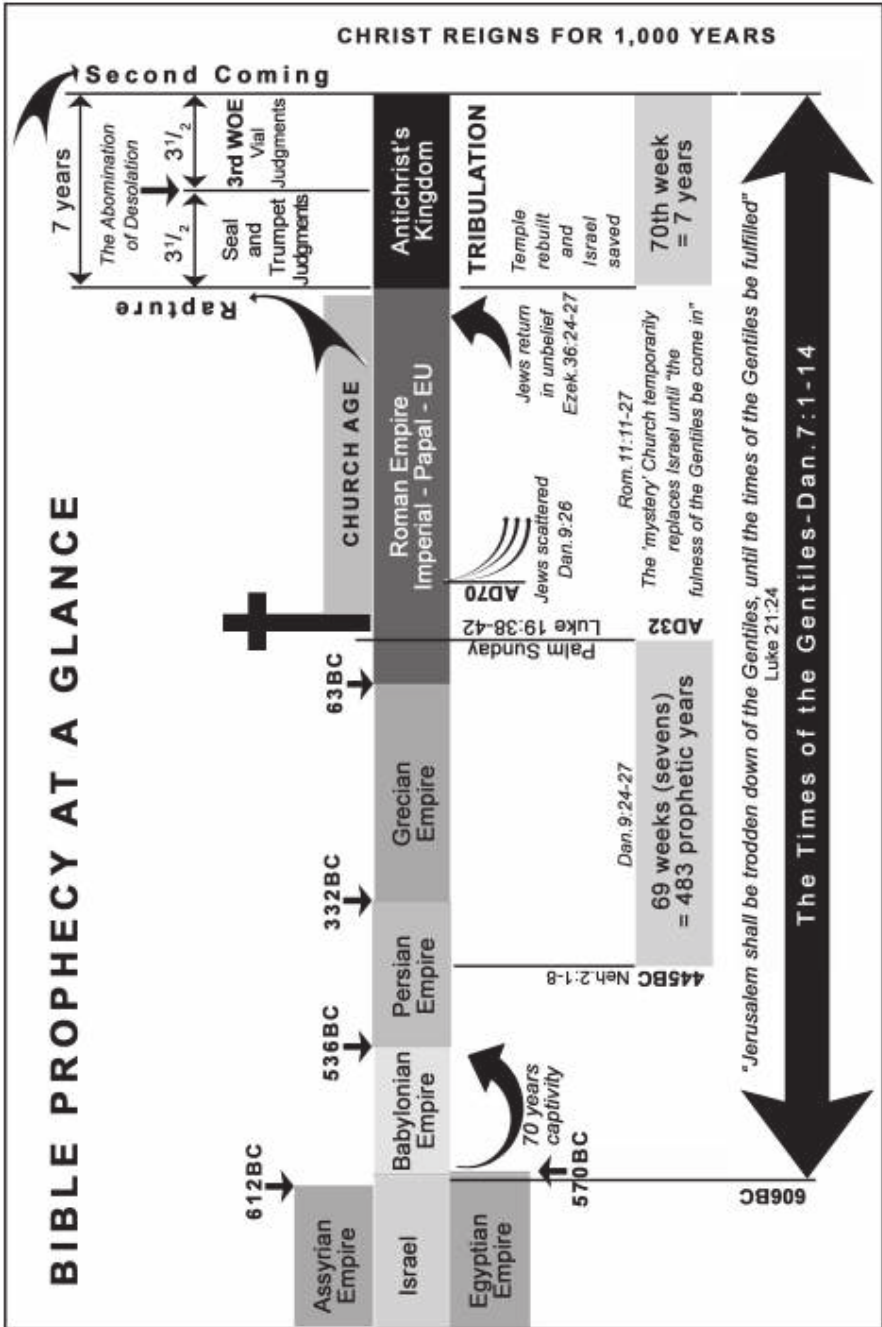
9) At the Rapture the **living** saints are instantaneously given resurrection bodies (1Cor.15:52). At the second coming of Christ the **living** saints enter the earthly kingdom in natural bodies (Matt.25:34; Zech.14:16).

The Rapture could take place at any time, and the lost need to repent and receive Jesus Christ as personal Saviour while they have the opportunity. To miss the Rapture would be a fearful thing.

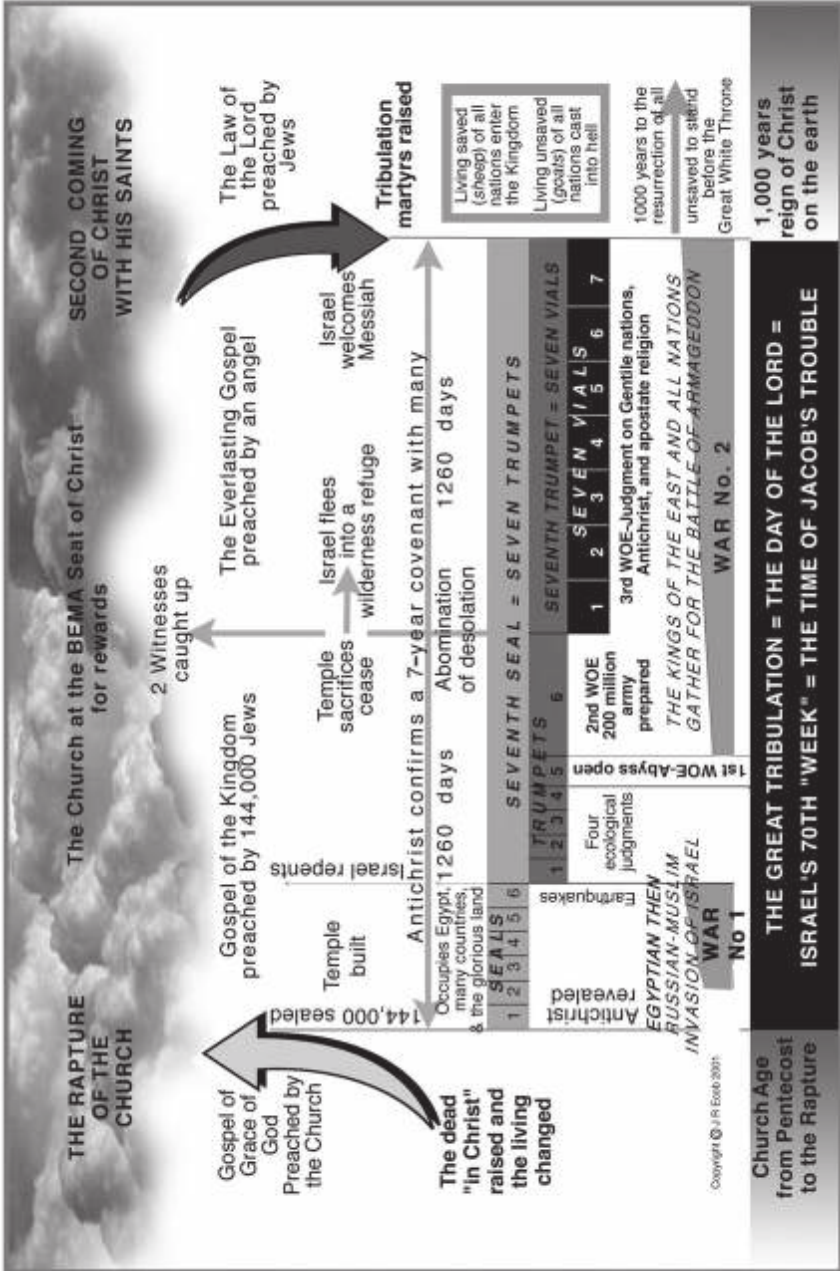








CHRONOLOGY OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION



The Imminence of Christ's Return

Perhaps the major impact amillennialism has had on the Church of Jesus Christ has been to rob Christians of any sense of the imminence of Christ's return. Its theological system is utterly devoid of any thought that Christ could return at any time, Why?

We know that Jesus repeatedly warned the disciples to be ready, *"For in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh"* (Matt.24:44).

After telling His Jewish disciples that He was going to return, He said, *"Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come"*(Matt.24:42).

In the Olivet discourse (Matthew 24 and 25) Christ urged the disciples to watch and be ready. They had asked, *"When shall these things be? and what shall be the **sign** of thy coming, and of the end of the world (age)?"*(Matt.24:3).

You will search in vain through amillennial writings to find warnings about the approaching end of the age. Last-days events are pushed off into the future, into obscurity, and the oft repeated statement is heard: "I'm more concerned about how I live now than with worrying about the future". It is as though it is "carnal" and "unspiritual" to be watching for the signs of our Lord's return, or for millennial saints to enjoy material blessings in the millennial kingdom. Jesus said:

*"**BLESSED** are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching...And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants...Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not"* (Luke 12:37-40).

It is true that Jesus told the disciples immediately before His ascension, *"It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power...ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth"* (Acts 1:7-8), but that was spoken to Jewish disciples who did not understand that the millennial kingdom would be **deferred** until the end of the Church age.

Amillennialism doesn't understand the doctrine of imminence because it has rejected any future for Israel, and many signs of the

last days have to do with the re-establishment of the kingdom of Israel. As we draw close to the end of the age signs are being fulfilled. Paul said:

"The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks (Gentiles) seek after wisdom"
(1Cor.1:22).

The Lord was pursued by Jews asking for signs to be performed. The word appears ten times in Matthew's Gospel, beginning in chapter 12:38:

"Master, we would see a sign from thee".

The Jewish disciples asked, *"What shall be...the sign of thy coming etc"*(Matt.24:3).

The Lord gave a sign to the **Jewish believers** so that they could escape the foretold destruction of Jerusalem in AD70. He said:

"When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh" (Luke 21:20).

It has been said, "Signs are for Israel; sounds are for the Church", but if the Church knows her Bible she will see many of the signs to Israel before the Rapture, and these will give a sense of imminence. The thought that Christ might come at any moment is an incentive to evangelism and holy living.

"Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he (Christ) is pure" (1John 3:3).

To be a **sign**, it must be seen! Jesus said:

"When ye SEE Jerusalem compassed with armies...then know" (Luke 21:20). *"When ye therefore shall SEE the abomination of desolation...flee"*(Matt.24:15-16).

"And then shall appear the SIGN of the Son of man in heaven...and they shall SEE the Son of man coming" (Matt.24:30).

Signs of the last days are visible indicators of the end of the age previously revealed in the Word of God. However, since amillennialists reject a literal interpretation of Bible prophecy, and ignore or reject any future for Israel, **any sense of imminence is removed from the doctrine of the Lord's return.**

What are the signs which tell us that Christ's return is imminent?

Israel to Return in Unbelief to the Land

First and foremost there is the return of the Jews to the land in unbelief. Ezekiel 36, 37, and 38 all separately foretell a day when Israel will be partially back in the land dwelling in unwalled

Amillennialism Weighed and Found Wanting

villages. Furthermore, Scripture indicates that this is the precursor to Israel's conversion at a time when the land will be invaded by Russia, Iran, Turkey, Libya and Sudan (Ethiopia). It will be "*in the latter years*" (Ezek.38:8).

It is an indisputable fact that the 20th century saw Israel re-established in the land as an independent nation with one of the most powerful military forces in the world. She is there in unbelief, and is preparing to confront an invasion which has been promised by Iran! How could amillennialists be so blind as to miss the obvious sign which indicates the day of Israel's conversion is imminent?

The Sign of the Fig Tree

In the Olivet discourse Jesus told His Jewish disciples that they should learn a parable of the fig tree, which is unmistakably a sign of Israel. Joel referred to an invasion of Israel which was likened to a locust plague, and said:

*"They have barked **my fig tree**"* (Joel 1:7).

Jesus told a parable of a man who planted a fig tree in his vineyard; it bore no fruit, and after three years of cultivation the command was given for it to be cut down. One day the fig tree (Israel) will bear fruit, for fig trees normally have fruit **before** the tender leaves appear. Jesus said:

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors" (Matt.24:32-33).

When a saved Jewish nation in the Tribulation sees the signs that Jesus gave of the "*end of the world (age)*", e.g. Antichrist's idol in the rebuilt temple, they will know that Christ's return in glory and power is near.

If today we can see Israel in possession of the Temple Mount and moves afoot to rebuild the temple, surely that must indicate that the Rapture of the Church, which precedes the Tribulation, must be imminent. Amillennialists reject a literal rebuilt temple.

The Sign of Europe

According to Bible prophecy the fourth world empire on earth would be Rome, after Babylon, Persia, and Greece (Dan.2 and 7). Rome must continue till Christ returns and be revived under a confederacy of 10 kings immediately prior to the Lord's return to

reign. Antichrist will be Rome's final ruler, and will "confirm" a covenant with Israel's unbelieving leaders immediately after the Rapture. He will be cast into the lake of fire when Christ comes.

Who could be so blind as to miss the revival of the Roman Empire under the 12 stars of Mary on the EU flag? On 1 May 2004, 10 more nations, mostly from eastern Europe, joined the EU to make 25 nations with a population of 455 million people. It is now the largest trading block in the world and challenges America's place as the only world super power. Furthermore, Israel is an associate member of the EU! Amillennialists must have blinkers on when they fail to see this sign of the imminent return of Christ.

The Sign of the Merchants of Tarshish

Britain and America, as the "merchants of Tarshish" and her young lions, are to join with the Arabian Peninsula nations "Sheba and Dedan", to challenge the Russian/Muslim invasion of Israel in the Tribulation (Ezek. 38:13). Britain and America are merchants indeed. They have strong interests in Arabian oil, its production and marketing.

The Sign of Increased Knowledge and Travel

Daniel was told to seal up his prophecy "even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (Dan.12:4).

WWII brought an explosion of knowledge, and the "cold war" period saw billions of dollars invested in scientific research. Modern jet aircraft now transport vast numbers each day around the globe.

The Sign of Apostasy in Christendom

Apostasy in the Church is an obvious sign of Christ's near return. It is the "spirit of antichrist" (1John 4:3). Paul declared:

"In the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared as with a hot iron" (1Tim.4:1-2).

No more perfect description could be given of the modern-day Charismatic tongues movement which hypnotically deludes multitudes into believing they are healed when they obviously are not. "Speaking lies in hypocrisy".

The tongues spoken on the day of Pentecost and at Corinth were **known languages**, but Charismatic tongues is an experience which leaves the participant open to demonic influence.

Amillennialism Weighed and Found Wanting

And what shall we say of the Ecumenical movement, or Christendom's acceptance of homosexuality among its leaders and members? Everything points to the fact that Jesus Christ is coming soon!

What Must I do to be Saved?

To the unsaved, we say, *"Prepare to meet thy God!"* Since we are in the last days there is no time to lose in seeking peace with God. God has done all that is necessary to provide pardon, and a home in heaven for guilty sinners. Christ has come from heaven, lived a perfect life as a man among men, and has died as an atoning sacrifice on the cross for our sins. On the third day He rose from the dead, and now lives to give victory over sin. How, then, can we be saved?

Men and man's religions would say turn over a new leaf, and do good deeds, but that is not good enough to get us into heaven. God's standard is perfection, and no matter how hard we try, the Bible says: *"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God"* (Rom.3:23).

The Bible is God's Word, and tells us how we can be saved.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts16:31).

"By grace (undeserved favour) are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast"(Eph.2:8-9).

God's mercy is free; the question is, Will you receive Christ and be saved?

"As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God"(John 1:12).

The moment you trust Christ, you receive eternal life. Jesus said:

"He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, HATH everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but IS PASSED from death unto life" (John 5:24).

"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that **ye may know** that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God"* (1John 5:11-13). ●

For further help contact:

The Editor, Herald of Hope, PO Box 4216 Marayong, NSW 2148
Australia.

After the Rapture

by John R Ecob

Behold a door is opened wide
And a voice is heard like an ocean tide,
It sounds like a trumpet talking with me,
Calling me upward, forever to be.

In an instant, so quickly, the Church will arise
With all of our loved ones we'll meet in the skies,
We'll enter that door soon opened for us,
And praise our Redeemer, Who died on the cross.

What glories await us, for there on the Throne
One precious like jasper and sardine stone
Before Him an ocean of crystal-like sea,
About Him a rainbow - God's mercy our plea.

The heads of the elders a gold crown adorns,
They remember that Jesus,- wore one of thorns
They sing a new song, "for Thou hast been slain
And redeemed us to God, together to reign."

Where ever we look there are angels galore,
In the midst, round about, and even before,
But only one Person is worthy of praise
It's Jesus, the Lamb Who fills all our gaze!

What honor He wears, what majesty bright,
Creator, Upholder, great power and great might,
His riches and wisdom are there to behold,
What glory and blessing begin to unfold.

But what of this book that's closed up and sealed?
Its pages now shut and message concealed
No one is found worthy to open this book
Or even found worthy upon it to look

That book's in the hand of God on the Throne
But who dares to take it, who? who alone?
Then there in the midst, stood a Lamb that was slain,
He's worthy ! He died! It's perfectly plain.

No other could open the seals of this book,
He only is worthy, for judgment He took
On Calvary's cross, where sin's debt was paid
And all of our guilt upon Him was laid.

Literature Available

The Herald of Hope Inc. has produced Australia's bi-monthly Bible Prophecy magazine since 1948. For over half a century it has maintained the premillennial truth of the Lord's return in magazine articles, printed publications, conference ministry, and more recently in its web page on the internet. A complimentary copy of the magazine is available upon request and may be obtained by subscription.

Free Study Booklets

The Basics of Bible Prophecy

The BIG Picture of Daniel

The BIG Picture of Church History

Seventh day Adventism Weighed and Found Wanting.

Preterism Weighed and Found Wanting

Tracts Available for Distribution

God's Prophetic Plan and *The Story of Mr Eternity*

Book for Sale

The Bible Prophecy Handbook by John R Ecob DD is available for purchase. (Over 400 pages of teaching illustrated by 113 charts, maps and graphics).

Herald of Hope Inc.

PO Box 4216, Marayong, NSW 2148

Australia

Email: editor@heraldofhope.org.au

All Scripture quotations are from the
Authorized King James Version of the Bible

*"We have also a **more sure word of PROPHECY**; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:*

*Knowing this first, that **no PROPHECY of the scripture is of any private interpretation.***

For the PROPHECY came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:19-21).

"For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the PROPHECY of this book, If any man shall add unto THESE THINGS, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:

And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of THIS PROPHECY, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the THINGS which are written in this book" (Rev.22:18-19).

Copyright © 2004 John R. Ecob

Second Edition August 2006