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While so many today are happy to believe in some kind of Oz-like fantasy world, the fact remains that we inhabit the Creator's Reality. We are in the world where Truth wins. We live in a reality where those who sow to the wind (vanity, empty philosophy) will reap the whirlwind (chaos, destruction)!

It appears that a perfect storm of social chaos and spiritual conflict is moving through the United States. Sadly, the Western Church is not prepared for the storm or the aftermath that will certainly ensue. The Western Church now finds itself comfortable in a successful, materialistic culture while seekers coming out of this pagan culture find themselves quite comfortable in these "Titanic" churches. The resulting mutual admiration between pagan seekers and the Titanic church has developed naturally into gatherings of people who meet weekly for emotional, self-help seminars. Yet, the culture that sends these seekers to board the Titanic church is the very same culture that aggressively confronts traditional Christian values

While Christianity and biblical revelation are challenged, marginalized and legally discriminated against in Western democratic culture, the religion of Islam becomes more and more accepted. Islam increasingly waggles its way inward toward the center of the public arena in the Western world, whose mantra of "Tolerance, tolerance!" grows louder and louder. Yet - and at the same time - Christianity is ridiculed as offensive, which places even more peer pressure on the adolescent Titanic church to separate itself from Truth and embrace the cool, contemporary, relevant cultural clique.

A Titanic-like Theology Has Set the Church on a Perilous Journey without a Map on a ship that will ultimately require Lifeboat support.

This book was written to help provide lifeboats and maps for the coming disaster.



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OF THE WESTERN CHURCH

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Last Hope PUBLISHING

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This book is dedicated to my grandfather, Lot Wiemers, who fought in the Great War (WWI) that brought the Ottoman Empire to its demise in 1918 and returned to farm the soil of this great nation of America through the twentieth century. And, to my father, Orlyn Wiemers, who was a leader and administrator in public schools in the state of Iowa in the years when Iowa led the nation and the nation led the world in education.

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Toni,...thank you!

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PREFACE

Love is more than an emotion. Love is selfless unity. Love is described by John with the Greek word *agape*. This is the selfless, unconditional God kind of love that we are to show toward others. Unlike most in our culture today, John did not identify love with *eros* (“sensual love”), nor did Paul when he carefully described it in 1 Corinthians 13:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Jesus said of love: “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:3). This is the essence of *agape*.

So, consider this book my love for you, the believer in Jesus Christ. Or, for you, the American living in the twenty-first century. Or, for you, the one who holds to an alternative philosophy or religion. This book should not be cast aside as the fruit of anger, the work of a divisive spirit, or as the work of a man who is nothing more than a closed-minded bigot raging with hate.

If you must see it this way, I understand. I accept your conclusion, but I disagree. I know my heart.

I am writing as a pastor to the people in the body of Christ. Many times pastors are evaluated in terms of niceness. People say, “Our pastor is such a nice man.” Or, “Pastor So-and-so is just so friendly.” I guess that is fine at some level of pastoral qualities, but in my opinion, it is at the bottom of the list of essential qualifications. My pagan friends are nice. My atheistic, gay associates are friendly. But, they are **not** going to be my pastor.

I confess that I am not the nice pastor. Nor am I likely to be your BFF (“Best Friend Forever”). I am not writing this book so you will like me. If you can, please understand this statement and accept it for what it means: I am writing this book because I love you. I am writing this book because I want to help you. I am writing this book knowing full well that many people will instantly be offended and will reject it and its conclusions for many reasons. (Then again,

maybe not. Perhaps I flatter myself, assuming anyone is actually going to read this book.)

I mention maps and lifeboats in the title, but you will not find the typical chart at the back of the book illustrating in three simple steps how the author will lead you to a successful, happy life. Nor will you be comforted by any oversimplified "Lifeboat for Dummies" diagrams. There is no easy confessional chant-like incantation to make everything in your life better. There is no magical prayer to read aloud that will rid you of your cultural chaos, or deliver you from your addictions, or instantly make your worldview beautiful. This book is not going to provide you with peace. It will not help you sleep better at night.

Instead you will find explanations of how you got where you are, why things are the way they are, and a crucial alternative to your church's "Just be happy, keep loving, and everything will magically work out fine in the end" philosophy.

While so many today are happy to believe in some kind of Oz-like fantasy world, the truth is that we inhabit the Creator's Reality. We are in the world where Truth wins. We live in a reality where those who sow to the wind (vanity, empty philosophy) will reap the whirlwind (chaos, destruction)!

Right now you, my friend, are being told by someone who loves you, that your world is about to change, that the worst thing you can do for your temporal, physical life is to confess Jesus, the eternal Son of God, as Lord. If you want to see cruelty, share with others the hope you have in Jesus' return to earth to establish his kingdom, because the fastest way to the back of whatever line you are in is to share with today's Western Culture that that you believe literally the words of the ancient Jewish prophets and the revelation of the Lord's apostles concerning the past, the present, the near future, and eternity.

I love you, but the world is going to hate you. Learn to tell the difference between those who love you and those who use you.

Things are going to get confusing. I have tried to prepare a lifeboat supplied with hope and a map to guide you into glory. I hope to see you there, my friend, on the other side of history. Stay strong and keep your sword sharp!

Section One

THE PROBLEMS DEFINED

"For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man...

*Therefore **God gave them over in the sinful desires** of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.*

They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator – who is forever praised. Amen.

*Because of this, **God gave them over to shameful lusts...***

*Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God **he gave them over to a depraved mind**, to do what ought not to be done..."*

– Paul (Romans 2:21-28), 57 AD

Problem #1 - The Modern Church in the West

No one who boarded the Titanic on its first voyage could have suspected it was doomed.

Common knowledge was that the ship was "nearly unsinkable". Not only was it guaranteed to make it safely across the ocean, it was incredibly luxurious as well. Everything on board was designed for the comfort, delight, and entertainment of the passengers. In fact, everyone on the ship - including the crew - felt so secure that little of the usual care was taken.

And so, you had a ship that could supposedly not be defeated, a crew that was negligent in their overconfidence, technicians who were far more focused on pleasing their demanding "customers" than safety, and more than 1300 passengers who were either so well pampered or kept so deep in the bowels of the ship that even if they had been warned of the disaster approaching they may not have believed it - let alone known what to do to save themselves and their loved ones.

In many ways the Church in the West today is in a very similar situation.

It appears that a perfect storm of social chaos and spiritual conflict is moving

through the United States. And it is likely the Church senses a change in the cultural atmosphere around it. But it is even more likely that the Church in its arrogance interprets this change as “progress”, or even dismisses it as something it will deal with only if/as the need arises.

The ignorance and self-delusion of the Church prevents it from effectively evaluating these social “weather patterns” and keeps it from recognizing that the rising storm will claim its soul and force individual believers to make a choice: either abandon the faith completely, or seek the true transformation of their soul.

Sadly, the Western Church is not prepared for the storm or the aftermath that will certainly ensue.

Perceiving itself to be the unsinkable “light of the world”, the compromised church set sail through the abyss of failing social standards and began a social mission to bring light and truth to the community. However, having left behind the traditional navigation instrument of conformity to Scripture, the Church began to depend on its own self-directed compass based on emotion and the intuitive inner-voice of mysticism to guide it deeper into the darkness of culture.

Unknowingly (or at least without admitting it), the Church began to search for direction and meaning in the vast emptiness in which it found itself. Having abandoned the traditional message, the Church had no voice, no promise of hope, and no answers for those who had followed it into the blackness of the night; that is, until the Church discovered the “Northern Light” of Western Culture: Materialism.

The esteem of possessions, the security of wealth, the hope of the good life, the infallible medicines, and the inventions of science helped the Western Church regain its bearings. Armed with modern materialistic ideas, the Church soon found “the way”, and once again began to cry out - but this time with a different message of hope and a non-biblical promise of deliverance from despair. The Church had found a God of love (but nothing more). And, this God of love had given the Church a message of love. And, in this culture of materialism, love was security, love was wealth, love was possessions and the good life. If Jesus was the rock then the Church would preach a message of “security” and freedom from want.



The Western Church now finds itself comfortable in a successful, materialistic culture while seekers coming out of this pagan culture find themselves quite comfortable in these “Titanic” churches. Pagan “Christ-seekers” find no difficulty committing to a local church that is more than pleased to encourage them to stay put and continue their culturally-relevant, Titanic journey through the Church’s unchallenging spiritual atmosphere.

The resulting mutual admiration between pagan seekers and the Titanic church has developed naturally into gatherings of people who meet weekly for emotional, self-help seminars. Yet, the very same culture that sends these seekers to board the Titanic church is the same one that aggressively confronts traditional Christian values. And in the face of this confrontation, even the Titanic churches themselves are willing to abandon the validity of biblical teaching for the sake of preserving unity with pagan culture. In order to finish their building programs and christen their newly-constructed community centers, the Titanic church strains itself to remain culturally relevant, even going so far as to add the buzz word “tolerance” to the growing list of sanctified synonyms for the “love” of God.

Problem #2 - The Rise of a Powerful Rival

While Christianity and biblical revelation are challenged, marginalized and legally discriminated against in Western democratic culture, the religion of Islam becomes more and more accepted (Just hold onto this thought for now; it will be discussed in more detail later on.). Islam increasingly waggles its way inward toward the center of the public arena and the court of law in the Western world, whose mantra of “Tolerance, tolerance!” grows louder and louder. Yet - and at the same time - Christianity is ridiculed as offensive, which places even more peer pressure on the adolescent Titanic church to separate itself from Truth and embrace the cool, contemporary, relevant cultural clique.

Please understand the repercussions of this facet of the Titanic church’s voyage! If the Western church continues to focus on becoming more accommodating to the pagan culture in order to attract and keep pagan seekers, while this culture’s center becomes more and more influenced by Islam, then the Church is eventually going to have to make a choice to avoid hitting disaster head-on: sail around this “iceberg” to the right side or to the left.



On one side lies accommodation. If it goes this direction, the Titanic church will need to accommodate new cultural views to remain relevant. The Titanic church will need to embrace Islam as an equal and viable religious option. (Ironically, while the misinformed, historically irrelevant Titanic church may pursue this route, the Islamic religion is most likely not going to bring the same enlightened insight to the negotiation table; Islam will not offer to recognize the Church as “an equal and viable religious option.” To do so would undermine 1,300 years of Islamic practice and theology. But, if it makes you sleep better at night you can pretend the last 1,300 years doesn’t have anything to do with your current, relevant, brave new world. Just pretend you never read this.)

If it chooses the other route, the Titanic church will need to make a stand. It is never necessary for the Church to take a stand **against** Islam, but to be a truly faithful biblical church, it will need to take a stand **for** Jesus Christ. This means the Titanic church will somehow have to commit to the biblical revelation of Jesus Christ and communicate this insight firmly to their tolerance-frenzied Western Culture: Jesus, the man, is the Christ, the Son of God, the Creator of the Universe, the Second member of the Trinity, the crucified and resurrected Savior of the World and the King of the Kingdom of God.

In this scenario, the Titanic church will have to be very clear in its assertion that Muhammad did not agree with any of the facts above. In fact, if a person were to take such a stand for Jesus Christ that person would be classified as an infidel by Muhammad. (Research Islam’s treatment and conversion of infidels for further insight.)

So, the culturally-relevant Titanic church is destined for temporal disaster either way. The fate of the Titanic church is set. If it swerves to the left in peace it will be overthrown by assimilation. And if it swerves to the right in conviction it will be overthrown by force. Either way, the Titanic church will lose. The only question is will they lose their soul to destruction, or their worldly standing to spiritual transformation. Jesus discussed both scenarios during his ministry. First, to the one who chose compromise Jesus said:

Whoever wants to save his life will lose it... What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul.

– Jesus (Matthew 16:25-26), 30 AD



And to the one who would take a stand Jesus said:

If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. . .Whoever loses his life for me will find it.

– Jesus (Matthew 16:24-25), 30 AD

I predict the Titanic church will be pragmatic enough to anticipate its fate, whichever side of the Islamic iceberg it chooses. I also suspect that, following its well-ingrained and practiced response developed through years of rehearsal, the Titanic church will hold its straight and steady course, guided still by the North Star of cultural relevance and materialism. And as a result, the Titanic church will be absorbed - its Community Centers will become Islamic Centers, its pulpits will be filled with Islamic activists, and through the continuation of emotionalism and the practice of mysticism, the Titanic worshippers will adapt easily to prayer rugs.

Thus the voyage of the Titanic church will be complete. Its captains will be commended for their skill and wisdom in averting a Titanic-like sinking disaster. Its leadership teams will be praised for having demonstrated the courage to act on their insight, and safely leading their communities into a new age of religious unity, peace and love.



Section Two

THE CHURCH

*A Titanic-like Theology Has Set the Church
on a Perilous Journey without a Map*

"...fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience.

Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. . .

*If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction
of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, he is conceited and understands
nothing. . . . men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who
think that godliness is a means to financial gain...*

*People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and
into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and
destruction. . . . Some people, eager for money have wandered from the faith and
pierced themselves with many griefs." – Paul (1 Timothy 1:19 and 6:3-10), 62 BC*

To begin to understand the modern church in the West, we can think about a few of the ways it can be described.

Relevant

In an attempt to be culturally relevant the Church has essentially neutered itself and lost all historical and eternal relevance. Here is a relevant message to the Church that worships at the altar of cultural relevance: "You are irrelevant. You are dull. And, you are lost." Prepare to be trampled by the very men you tried to relate to by forsaking your integrity. You were meant to be the salt of the earth. "But if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men." - Jesus, 27 AD (Matthew 5:13)

Seeker-Friendly

By refusing to challenge the seeker with transformation because it feared losing them, the Church has itself become lost. This is the verdict for the seeker church that refuses to become the teaching church: "You will inevitably become the wandering church." As Jesus said, "Leave them; they are blind guides. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit." (Matthew 15:14)

Encouraging

Since the Church has misunderstood the power of the Word of God it has replaced the teaching pastor with the motivational speaker. The result of this folly will be the same as if cheerleaders were asked to replace the coaches, and rhythmic, rhyming chants took the place of offensive and defensive strategy! The team would simply become louder and more emotional as their defeat and lack of direction became more and more obvious. Hear the Word of the Lord spoken by Isaiah in 720 BC: *"For you this whole vision is nothing but words sealed in a scroll. And if you give the scroll to someone who can read and say to him, 'Read this, please,' he will answer, 'I can't; it is sealed.'"* (Isaiah 29:11)

Spiritual

Perceiving itself to be lifeless and spiritless, based on a merely emotional accusation, the Church has turned to mysticism. The Church has sought a personal revelation from the spiritual world instead of seeking the written revelation of Scripture. To this I say: *"Your mystic experience will open doors of demonic encounters with wicked counsel."* It is as Isaiah asked the people of his day: *When someone tells you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?"* (Isaiah 8:19)

Community-Centered

As a result of research based solely on community polls and studies of public opinion - instead of on studies of Scripture - the Church has discovered what people want the Church to be instead of understanding what Christ wants his church to be. Hear the Word of the Lord spoken by Jesus in 30 AD: *"Look, your house is left to you desolate."* (Luke 13:35) And in 96 AD to the Church in Ephesus (now a city in modern Turkey) Jesus said: *"Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place."* (Revelation 2:5)

"Christ"-Centered

An idolatrous image of Christ has been formed in his church by piecing together carefully-chosen fragments of culturally-acceptable Scripture. The culturally-centered church rallies around this idolatrous image of Jesus built out of selected illustrations from his life and ironically calls itself "Christ-centered". This idolatrous image accepted by the Church is an abandonment of the fullness of Christ. The Church worships only what culture approves and evangelizes the world with this idol, which is nothing more than a mirrored reflection of the world itself.



You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight.

– Jesus, 29 AD (Luke 16:15)

They loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.

– Jesus, 30 AD (John 12:43)

Mega

Here are a couple questions that should be discussed by today's "Laodicean" church's board of directors:

1. Is the mega-church representative of the great (mega) multitude that came out of the great (mega) tribulation (Rev. 7:14; also, Matt. 24:21), or is it more like the wide (plateia) gate and the broad (euruchor) way that leads many (polloi) to destruction (Matt. 7:13-14)?
2. Is the mega-church a gathering of the many people facing persecution for Christ, or is it the multitudes on the broad, fast track to destruction?

In John 6:1-15 the multitude ate the bread Jesus multiplied, but the very next day that same crowd walked away from Jesus when he made it clear that his message was not about the people getting physical bread for food, but about Jesus being the bread of life.

Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill' . . . On hearing it, many of his disciples said, 'This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?' Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, 'Does this offend you?' . . . From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.' Jesus asked the Twelve, 'You do not want to leave too, do you?' Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.' (John 6:26, 60-61, 66-69)

The New Testament Apostles Faced False Teachers in the First Century

Early in the New Testament, Jesus and the apostles warned that there would be false teachers who would appear and mislead the Church. Throughout the New Testament letters, we read about the apostles countering and confronting these false teachers. Finally, at the end of the New Testament period, we are shocked to realize that the false teachers had actually secured victory and established themselves within the Churches founded by the Apostles.



We see three phases concerning false teachers:

1. **The warning** that false teachers are coming (28-57 AD)
2. **The battle** within the Church against the false teachers (49-64 AD)
3. **The “victory”** of the false teachers over the apostles in the Churches (64-96 AD)

Three Stages of Interaction with False Teachers in the New Testament Church of the First Century		
Warning of Coming False Teachers	Confrontation of Apostle's with False Teachers	Churches Lost to the False Teachers
28-57 AD	49-64 AD	64-96 AD
Matthew 7:15, 21-22 John 10: Mark 13:5 Acts 20:29-30	Galatians 1:6-7, 10 Galatians 5:7-8, 10 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 2 Corinthians 11:4-5 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 Ephesians 4:14 Philippians 3:1-3 Colossians 2:4 Colossians 2:8 1 Timothy 1:3-4 1 Timothy 6:3-5, 9-10 Titus 1:10-11 Titus 1:13-14	2 Peter 2:1, 17-19 2 Peter 3:16 Jude 3-4 Jude 12-13 2 Timothy 1:15, 17-18 2 Timothy 4:10, 16 1 John 4:1-8 2 John 7, 9-11 3 John 9-10 Revelation 2:2-3, 6, 9, 14-16 Revelation 2: 20, 24-25 Revelation 3:1-2, 8-9, 17, 20

The Warning of the Rise of False Teachers:

Jesus in 28 AD:

Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. . . Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven. . . Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers.' (Matthew 7:15, 21-22)

Jesus in 29 AD:

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. (John 10)

Jesus in 30 AD:

Watch out that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many. (Mark 13:5)



Paul in 57 AD:

I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! (Acts 20:29-30)

The Battle with the False Teachers in the Apostles' Churches

As the early church began to take root and grow in its first 30 years (30-60 AD) the Apostles found themselves constantly in conflict with new, rising church leaders who tried to adapt the Christian message to worldly philosophies or pagan religions. Church leaders found it easier to present Christianity if they first took the edge off and made the Christian faith more relevant.

49 AD:

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel – which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. . . Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? (Galatians 1:6-7,10)

You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. . . The one who is throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty, whoever he may be. (Galatians 5:7-8,10)

51 AD:

We ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way. (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2)

55 AD:

For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough. But I do not think I am in the least inferior to those super apostles. (2 Corinthians 11:4-5)

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve. (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)



60 AD:

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. (Ephesians 4:14)

61 AD:

It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.. Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh. (Philippians 3:1-3)

62 AD:

I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. (Colossians 2:4)

See to it that no one takes you captive, through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. (Colossians 2:8)

63 AD:

As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work – which is by faith. (1 Timothy 1:3-4)

If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain... People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction... Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. (1 Timothy 6:3-5, 9-10)

64 AD:

There are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach – and that for the sake of dishonest gain. (Titus 1:10:11)

Rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the commands of those who reject the truth. (Titus 1:13-14)

The “Victory” of False Teachers in the Churches of the Apostles

The New Testament ends with Paul, Peter, John and Jude dealing with false teachers in the Christian community. This was very different from the problem of persecution they faced from their pagan culture early on, but it was bad in a new way. The cancer of false teaching within the local churches came from men the Apostles knew. The false teaching presented to the Church came through men who claimed to be believers in Jesus Christ. This false teaching threatened the life and health of the young body of Christ the Apostles had started.

By 62 AD the Apostles were being personally rejected by the Churches they had started and replaced by false teachers. This practice continued up through 85 AD and on into 96 AD when the Apostolic testimony came to a close. Hear the Apostles' own word of testimony concerning false teachers gaining prominence over the apostolic authority even while the Apostles still wrote letters to these churches:

Peter quotes the teaching of Jesus (and Paul) that predicted the rise of the false teachers. These false teachers are described by Peter as active in 64 AD in the Churches in the area of modern Turkey:

“There were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. . . These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them. For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity.” (2 Peter 2:1, 17-19)

Peter comments on how church leaders were treating Paul's letters and teaching in 64 AD: *“[Paul's] letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.” (2 Peter 3:16)*

Jude is compelled to write a letter refuting false teachers in 64 AD:

“Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. For certain men whose condemnation was written about

long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.” (Jude 3-4)

Jude identifies the characteristics of the false pastors in church leadership in 64 AD:

“These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm - shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted – twice dead. They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.” (Jude 12-13)

Paul rebukes the Church leadership of Asia and identifies two deserters by name in 67 AD:

“You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes.” (2 Timothy 1:15)

Paul identifies by name two false teachers in Ephesus and describes their false doctrine in 67 AD:

“Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some.” (2 Timothy 2:17-18)

Paul comments on a member of his ministry team in 67 AD:

“Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica.” (2 Timothy 4:10)

Paul writes concerning the lack of legal support in court from the Church leaders in Rome in 67 AD:

“At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them.” (2 Timothy 4:16)

John warns the Churches of Asia to not trust every traveling teacher in 85 AD:

“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” (1 John 4:1)

John writes concerning teachers in the Church in 85 AD with the spirit of anti-christ that were laying the doctrinal foundation for the future anti-christ:

“This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the anti-christ, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.” (1 John 4:2-3)

John distinguishes the seeker-church message from the believer’s message in 85 AD:

“They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.” (1 John 4:5-6)

John identifies the false teachers who traveled to churches and evangelized the world in 85 AD:

“Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the Antichrist.” (2 John 7)

John warns of traveling teachers who bring a false message that is beyond the Truth in 85 AD:

“Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work.” (2 John 9-11)

John identifies a church leader in Asia who will not let John teach in the Church and slanders John and his ministry in 85 AD:

“I wrote to the Church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us. So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers (traveling teachers trained and sent out by John). He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the Church.” (3 John 9-10)

In 96 AD John wrote seven letters of correction to the Churches in Asia.

These letters were written sixty-six years after the Church began in Jerusalem and forty-two years after Paul began these same Gentile churches in Asia:

- In Ephesus in 96 AD the false apostles attempting to bring updated doctrine with a more relevant message had been identified, tested and rejected. Also, a heretical group called the Nicolaitans who understood

the advantage of a compromise between the salvation message and the cultural standards had also been rejected: *"I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false... You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate."* (Revelation 2:2-3, 6)

- In Smyrna in 96 AD the true church was being slandered by a group of imposters claiming to be the true people of God: *"I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan."* (Revelation 2:9)
- In Pergamum in 96 AD the Church was tolerating two identified forms of false teaching. One was an early prosperity message called "the teaching of Balaam" that apparently justified paganism in the Church because it created church growth and increased offerings. The second false teaching accepted in the Church was from a group called the Nicolaitans. The supporters of this method of "doing church" were hated in Ephesus by both the Church and Jesus. The Nicolaitans had conformed their church to their pagan world by developing a compromised doctrine of salvation that allowed for a continuation of immorality and idol worship (false philosophy): *"You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Repent therefore!"* (Revelation 2:14-16)
- In Thyatira in 96 AD, for the sake of convenience and in order to maintain unity, the Church was tolerating a teaching prophetess whose mysticism was uncovering deep secrets from the spiritual realm that led the Church to sin sexually and to sacrifice to idols: *"You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols... Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets, 'I will not impose any other burden on you, except to hold on to what you have...'"* (Revelation 2:20, 24-25)
- Sardis in 96 AD was a church with a reputation for good deeds, but the Church was dead. The "good deeds" were merely a form of social activism approved by men (public services, community centers, basketball leagues, bake sales for youth trips, etc.), but void of any spiritual value in God's sight. *"I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up!"* (Revelation 3:1-2)



- In 96 AD Philadelphia was a church with little material strength in the midst of prospering churches and growing religious groups that called themselves the people of God yet denied his name and compromised his Word. The faithful church was weak among the more powerful compromised churches (or, "Titanic churches"), but still spiritually faithful and approved by Jesus: *"I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars – I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you."* (Revelation 3:8-9)
- In Laodicea in 96 AD, false teachers had completely compromised the Truth and rewrote spiritual reality. They had shipwrecked their faith, but did not know their church had already shattered into pieces, and was adrift in the icy sea of false philosophy and deviant standards of spiritual success. Despite their extravagant success and popularity, Jesus himself had left this church: *"You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked... Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."* (Revelation 3:17, 20)

The Worst of the False Leadership with Corrupt Teaching is Yet to Come

Both Jesus and Paul clearly indicated that the worst days of confusion and church corruption would be the final days. Paul said the false teachers would go from bad to worse: *"In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived."* (2 Timothy 3:12-13)

Both Peter and Jude taught that false teachers would continue to prosper until ultimately they denied the Lord's Second Coming in the very days directly preceding the return of Jesus: *"First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, 'Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.' But they deliberately forget..."* (2 Peter 3:3-5)

"But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, 'In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.' These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit." (Jude 17-19)



Paul spoke in agreement with Jesus' description of end time false teachers and the great separation of their understanding from reality, and of their teaching from the Truth. Paul spoke of this as a time of great delusion as judgment on those who had rejected the Truth. (Moses spoke in a similar way in Deuteronomy 13:1-3 when he said that the Lord would send false prophets to test the people's hearts.) Paul warned that in the final days there would be much confusion caused by the great delusion that is yet to come: *"The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness."* (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12)

Before Paul wrote the above words in 51 AD concerning the final days on earth before Jesus returns, Jesus himself had spoken in a similar fashion in 30 AD about these same final days: *"For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now – and never to be equaled again... At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect – if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time. So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it."* (Matthew 24:21-26)

Characteristics of False Teaching and its Followers in the New Testament

2 Peter is an aggressive attack on false teachers which is similar to other books written later in the apostles' lives, such as 2 Timothy, Jude, 2 John and 3 John. Peter compares the false teachers the early church were facing with the false prophets the people of the Old Testament had to combat. Peter and the early church were not facing "false prophets" because, in this case, these first-century false leaders were not claiming to have "revelation" directly from God, but were instead twisting, molding and misapplying Jesus' teaching and the teaching of the apostles. Peter calls the corrupt church leaders "false teachers" because they were misrepresenting the message that came from God through Jesus and the New Testament apostles. Yet, the style of ministry, the type of message, and the ultimate doom of the false teacher was the same as that of the Old Testament false prophet.

Peter uses the future tense in 2:1-3 and 3:3 (as does Paul in 2 Tim 2:16-17; 3:2-5, 13; 4:3-4) because he is likely quoting earlier apostolic teaching that foretold the rise of these false teachers and simply preserves the future tense in his text. This concept is captured in Jude: *"But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, 'In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.' These are the men who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit."* (Jude 17-18).

These false teachers were already present in Peter's day when he wrote 2 Peter 2:10-22. The false teachers were already doing these things in 64 AD:

- feasting, 2:13
- making converts, 2:14, 19
- perverting Paul's teaching 3:15-16

Peter is not focused on false prophets (although there were false prophets active in the Churches as can be seen in Paul's and John's letters) because the threat that Peter's churches were facing did not come from men receiving false revelation from God, but instead came from false teachers actively misrepresenting the message that had already been received. The New Testament revelation had been communicated by Jesus and the Apostles during the previous 35 years (27-64 AD). The Churches had been founded on solid teaching, but now false teachers were twisting the received revelation. The similarity between the false prophets of the Old Testament and the false teachers in the New Testament churches are seen in chapter two:

1. Same motivation
2. Same style of manipulation
3. Same type of person
4. Same immoral lifestyle
5. Same ultimate doom

False prophets in the Old Testament:

- **Deut. 13:1-5** – a false prophet is a test from God
- **1 Kings 22:5-28** – Micaiah (good) vs. Zedekiah (false)
- **2 Chronicles 18:21-22** – a lying Spirit in the mouth of prophets can be compared to teachers with doctrines of demons in 1 Tim. 4:1-5
- **Isaiah 9:15** – prophets who teach lies
- **Isaiah 28:7-8** – prophets who stagger when seeing visions
- **Isaiah 29:9-12** – stagger...deep sleep...sealed eyes of misdirected prophets...covered heads of misled seers
- **Jeremiah 2:8, 26** – prophets prophesied by Baal
- **Jeremiah 5:31** – prophets prophesy lies...priests rule by their own authority
- **Jeremiah 6:13** – prophets and priests practice deceit for gain saying “peace”
- **Jeremiah 14:13-15** – prophets say “peace”... present lies...not sent by God...prophecy delusions from their own mind
- **Jeremiah 23:9-40** – prophets follow evil course and use their power and position unjustly
- **Jeremiah 27:9-18** – warning to not listen to prophets who say false words and give false message
- **Jeremiah 28:1-29:8** - August 593 BC Jeremiah (good) vs. Hananiah (false)
- **Ezekiel 13:1-23** – prophets speak out of their own imagination
- **Ezekiel 22:23-31** – the priests and princes are violent in their positions of authority, but the prophets merely whitewash the deeds or these authority figures to justify the violence in the land
- **Micah 3:5-12** – prophets used position for financial gain... sun will set on prophets
- **Zephaniah 3:4** – prophets are arrogant and treacherous
- **Zechariah 13:2** – remove the prophets and the impure spirit manipulating them
- **Luke 6:26** – woe when men speak well of you, this is how they spoke of the false prophets
- **Matt. 7:15** – watch out for false prophets, they come as sheep, but are wolves
- **Acts 13:6** – Bar-Jesus the sorcerer at Paphos on Cyprus
- **1 John 4:1** – Do not believe every spirit, test spirits, many false prophets have gone out into the Churches



The false teachers that Peter refers to are already active, as chapter 2 indicates, and as Peter states clearly in 2 Peter 3:15-16. In 2 Peter 2:1, Peter says these false teachers will “secretly introduce destructive heresies”. The word “introduce” (pareisaxousin) has the idea of “smuggle” more than the idea of “secret” or “stealth”. The Greek word that “introduce” comes from, pareisago, means “to bring into, alongside of” and “to smuggle in”. The idea is to bring in something that is not expected along with something that is expected. It could be done “in secret” or carelessly. The Greek word used here literally means:

- **para** (by the side of) + **eis** (into) + **ayein** (to bring),
- or “to bring into by the side of”

Since the false teachers are described like this in 2 Peter 2:1 it would seem to indicate they were intentionally bringing in false teaching alongside of some accepted teaching in order to manipulate the listeners who were either not paying attention or not thinking critically about what was being taught.

“Heresies” (**haireseis**) is used elsewhere to mean “sects”. The word **haireseis** originally referred to a choice that was made between two options, but this word developed as it was used to refer to a group, a sect or a school of thought. There was still a positive use of the word and it can be seen used this way in these verses:

- Acts 5:17 – *“But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy...”*
- Acts 15:5 – *“But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, ‘It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses.’”*
- Acts 24:5; 26:5; 28:22

When Paul uses the word **haireseis** in 1 Corinthians and Galatians 5:20 he uses it to refer to a faction or division among the believers who held to a particular doctrinal slant. Eventually, the New Testament use of the word we translate as “heresies” (**haireseis**) began to mean a doctrine or a teaching that was no longer in agreement with the Truth. This is how Peter uses it in 2 Peter in 64 AD. The nature of these “heresies” is said to be “destructive” and includes these false doctrinal characteristics:

1. the denial of the coming of the Lord
2. the denial of the Lord’s future judgment
3. the acceptance of immoral lifestyle



The “destructive” aspect would include the natural destruction of the natural lives of those who accept and apply these heresies into their lifestyles.

The false teachers would face a similar destruction in their lives, but also a destruction that would extend to an eternal judgment of the false teachers by God. We see similarities in Jude 4 to this verse in 2 Peter when Jude writes: *“For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.”* (Jude 4)

Jude’s identification of the false teachers he was confronting around 63-65 AD indicates they had become the grievous threat that had been predicted. Ever since the beginning of the presentation of Truth there was also included within the message a warning of the quick appearance of false teachers.

The strategy of the false teacher is to gain acceptance among the Church like a parasite. False teaching would move into the Church alongside of (and, along with) the Truth. Another insight revealed by Jude is this - the parasite of false teaching will always ultimately manifest its evil source and live out its wicked nature of self-serving, materialistic lust and sexual immorality in both the mental and physical dimensions. In order for the evil nature of false teaching to continue operating in the Church it will have to justify the wicked behavior of the false teachers. In order to justify the false teachers’ sinfulness, their doctrines will ultimately have to degenerate to the lowest possible level: the denial of God the Father and Jesus the Christ. To survive in the Church, false teaching will eventually have to discredit and devour the true teaching of the character and glory of the Creator and his Christ.

In verse 4 Jude lists the nature of these teachers’ false doctrines:

1. “Secretly slipped in among you”
 - a. The verb used for “secretly slipped” or “crept in” is from **pareisduo**, and is almost identical to the word used in 2 Peter 2:1 (**pareisago**). The literal meaning of the word used by Jude can be compared to Peter’s word like this:
 - i. Jude: **para** (by the side of) + **eis** (into) + **duo** (two), or “two into by the side of”
 - ii. Peter: **para** (by the side of) + **eis** (into) + **ayein** (to bring), or “to bring into by the side of”
 - b. By using the word **pareisduo** Jude is focusing on the fact that two things come into the Church when the Church thought they were



only accepting one thing. This is detailed later by Jude in verse 16 – “These men are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage.”

- i. The parasite of false teaching is motivated by “their own evil desires”
- ii. In order to enter the Church “for their own advantage” the parasite of false teaching will initially present a single positive trait, but in reality the positive trait is an imitation cover for the parasite. Eventually the parasite will manifest the nature of a false teacher and introduce the false doctrine needed for the parasite’s nature to continue to survive. Jude gives a couple of examples of a positive trait imitated by the parasite:
 1. “they boast about themselves” – this “boasting” refers to the self-promotion of the false teachers’ positive qualities. The false teacher presents to the Church the personal qualities such as:
 - a. Qualifications for the position
 - b. Financially security
 - c. Social acceptability
 - d. Community influence
 - e. Leadership skills
 - f. Communication skills
 - g. And many, many more
 2. “they...flatter others”
 - a. Here the false teacher flatters and builds up others by demonstrating characteristics that impress the Church members:
 - a. An encourager
 - b. A team builder
 - c. A team player
 - d. Friendly
 - e. Easy to get to know
 - f. Easy to work with
 - g. Everyone’s best friend
 - ii. But, the parasite of false teaching is always serving its own evil desires and using people. (Many church leaders like to claim they are “loving people”, when in reality these church leaders are using people.) So, Jude says the real parasite behind the team-building encourager with positive personal qualifications is a man who, when met face to face with the Truth of God and his Word becomes:



1. "Grumbler" – (Greek: **goggustes**) is one who grumbles, murmurs and complains about situations and against God the sovereign Creator. The Exodus generation is an example of a generation of
 - a. "grumblers" (Exodus 16:7-9; Numbers 17:5-10) that eventually began to murmur against God's plan and God's process. They wanted to change God's reality into their own fantasy.
 - b. This leads to the sin of testing God (Exodus 17:2-3) and refusing to believe God (Numbers 14:11).
 - c. Failure to believe God prevents any possibility of being obedient to God (Numbers 14:22). (Paul refers to this in 1 Corinthians 10:10 and Philippians 2:14)
2. "Faultfinder" – (Greek: **mempsimoiros**) According to the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament this Greek word "indicates one who complained against the God who has appointed each man his fate." This person is a "malcontent" who is not satisfied with God's reality and their place in God's creation. In context a faultfinder is dissatisfied with God. This manifests as a constant urge to find something better than God's Truth, God's reality, God's Word, God's revelation, God's plan, etc. This is not referring to the man who writes a book condemning the Western church for having rejected God and his Word, but is referring to the man who rejects the Word of God, and then, leads the Western church in the pursuit of a better philosophy! (Point taken?)
3. "godless men" – (Greek: **asebes**) is a strong word used in 2 Peter 2:5. It means "ungodly" and "impious".
4. "change the grace of our God into a license for immorality"
 - a. The false teacher changes the meaning of "grace"
 - b. The false teacher changes the purpose of "grace"
 - c. The false teacher uses these changes (or, alterations) to the Truth to justify their immorality
 - d. Instead of preserving the Truth of the Word of God that sanctifies the believer, the false teacher's new doctrinal perversions allow or provide a "license" for people in the Church to continue sinful behavior
 - e. False teachers introduce doctrine and practice that does not require men to be transformed into the image of the Son of God
 - f. Through false teaching and false methods men can come to God



- as they are and remain as they are. God will accept men and adjust his standards to theirs, instead of providing men with salvation, transformation and glorification
5. "Deny the Master who bought them" (**ton agorasanta autous despoten arnoumenoi**) includes these words:
 - a. "to deny" (**arnoumenoi**) meaning the opposite of "to confess" the Lord:
 - i. John 1:20 – *"He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."*
 - ii. 2 Timothy 2:12 – *"if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us."*
 - iii. Titus 1:16 – *"They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works."*
 - iv. 1 John 2:22-23 – *"Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the Antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also."*
 - v. To "deny" the Lord is to say "no" in word or in deed, instead of agreeing by saying "yes" and living in agreement.
 - b. "Master" (**despoten**) – refers to masters of slaves in 1 Tim. 6:1-2. It is also used to refer to God. The main idea of the word is to focus on the legal right the master has over the subject. The concept of the "master" is intensified and clarified when Peter goes on to explain by adding the phrase "who bought them" (**ton agorasanta autous**).
 - c. "who bought them" (**ton agorasanta autous**) - This is the language used of a free man buying the slave and setting him free. It is called manumission. In the United States manumission was a common practice when the legal will of a slave owner called for the release of his slaves upon his death. The ancient papyri uses this same phrase as Peter does to refer to slaves who had been bought and then released. In these documents stipulations were included that would not allow the freed slave to be enslaved again. Violations were met with penalties.
 - d. Believers are those who belong to Christ:
 - i. 1 Corinthians 15:23 – *"But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ."*
 - ii. Galatians 5:24 - *"And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."*

These false teachers have been freed by the Lord, but have not only enslaved themselves again to false philosophies and immoral lives, but are also going



about the Church re-enslaving others with false teaching. Clearly their judgment should be swift and complete.

A False Teacher Takes Control of One of John's Churches in Asia

In 3 John the false leader Diotrephes had taken over his church in Asia and taught them to reject the following:

1. The Apostle John
2. The Apostolic teaching
3. All of John's student/disciples that were sent to teach or check the Church
4. Any believer who did not reject John and his teaching

Gaius was the member of Diotrephes' church who received the letter of 3 John. Gaius was in danger of being driven from this church because he had sided with John and held to John's teaching. Diotrephes considered this a threat to his own position of leadership in this Asian church.

Demetrius was the traveling teacher sent by John with the letter. Demetrius would stay in the home of Gaius, but this could result in Diotrephes expelling Gaius from the local church for giving support to a disciple of John that had been sent to teach in the Church where Diotrephes had taken control.

The Three Denials Taught by False Teachers

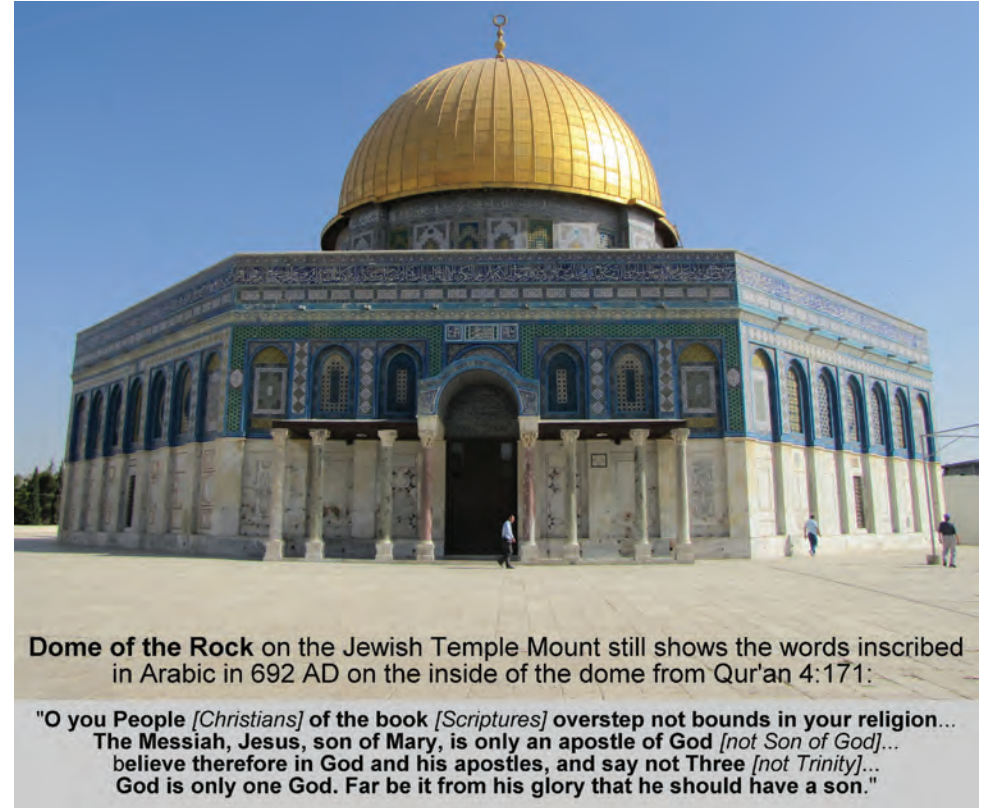
John explained the three denials, or the three teachings, of the false teachers who deny the Truth John taught:

1. 1 John 2:22-23 - There is no Father and Son as God (Deny the Trinity)
2. 1 John 4:3 – Jesus is not the Christ or savior sent from God (Deny Jesus is the Christ)
3. 2 John 7-11 – Jesus did not come in the flesh (Deny God incarnate)

Islam, Quran, and the Three Denials

Inside the Dome of the Rock, is a quote from the Quran (chapter 4, verse 171) written in classical Arabic. It was inscribed in 692 AD:

"O you People of the Book, overstep not bounds in your religion, and of God speak only the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, is only an apostle of God, and his Word which he conveyed unto Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from him. Believe therefore in God and his apostles, and say not Three. It will be better for you. God is only one God. Far be it from his glory that he should have a son."



Below are three translations of this same verse for comparison to show accuracy of translation:

Sahih International translation:

"O People of the Scripture, do not commit excess in your religion or say about Allah except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, was but a messenger of Allah and His word which He directed to Mary and a soul [created at a command] from Him. So believe in Allah and His messengers. And do not say, "Three"; desist - it is better for you. Indeed, Allah is but one God. Exalted is He above having a son. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. And sufficient is Allah as Disposer of affairs."

Pickthall translation:

"O People of the Scripture! Do not exaggerate in your religion nor utter aught concerning Allah save the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only a messenger of Allah, and His word which He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in Allah and His messengers, and say not "Three"

- Cease! (it is) better you! - Allah is only One Allah. Far is it removed from His Transcendent Majesty that He should have a son. His is all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. And Allah is sufficient as Defender."

Yusuf Ali translation:

"O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion: Nor say of Allah aught but the truth. Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) a messenger of Allah, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a spirit proceeding from Him: so believe in Allah and His messengers. Say not "Trinity"! desist! it will be better for you! for Allah is one Allah! Glory be to Him! (far exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth. And enough is Allah as a Disposer of affairs."

The Church is Valid Only When It is Fulfilling its Purpose

A Church is a valid institution of God as long as it is fulfilling the Great Commission (as given in Matthew 28:19) and empowering the believers for works of service (as identified in Ephesians 4:11-16).

"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19)

And,

"So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." (Ephesians 4:11-16)

The focus of the Church's commission is to go into all nations and bring people into union with Christ the Savior, who is the Son of God, the second member of the Trinity. The Great Commission commands the Church to go and proclaim Jesus' message, and to make disciples who are to be taught and empowered to do the work that Christ has assigned to them. These mature, effective disciples are not to be moved by the waves of culture or the winds of worldly teaching, but instead are to be transformed into the image of the Son

of God (Romans 8:29). They are to be transformed by renewing their minds, and are not to conform to the thinking and philosophies of the world around them (Romans 12:1-2). Then, they will be able to do the unique things God has willed for them to do while sincerely manifesting the very nature of the Son of God in their natural lives here and now (Romans 12:2-9).

If the Church understands who the triune God is, and what Jesus taught to and through his Apostles, then the Church will be prepared to become engaged in fulfilling the Great Commission. If the Church understands the process of making disciples and teaching them to know and obey the Truth, then the Church is prepared to empower people to be transformed into the image of the Son of God. The Church that truly embraces the Great Commission will refuse to neglect its responsibility to teach for the renewal of the believer's understanding, and will refuse to assist the world in conforming disciples of Jesus into the image of the culture around them.

If the Church aspires to proclaim the message of Jesus, then that message must match the life of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels, and the teaching of Jesus' apostles as recorded in the New Testament letters.

If the Church wants to present a message of love, peace and tolerance with a non-judgmental acceptance of all people no matter what, then let that become their presentation of the Good News to the lost world. Indeed, proclaim the Good News to the world! Let all men know and understand that God is love. God offers mankind peace. God is tolerant (in the sense that he is patient and wants no one to perish). God is waiting. God is patiently waiting. God is holding back his day of wrath.

However, understand this: God is accepting of all, but his "non-judgmental" attitude would more accurately be understood as "universally-judgmental". Or, as an "all-inclusive-judgmental" attitude! For all of us have sinned. All of us have been condemned. No one is OK. No one is safe. No one can stand before God on their own merit.

Yet, through Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, who died on the cross for the sin of mankind, all are free to come. All men are free to come to Christ just as they are, *but no one is free to come to Christ for acceptance of the way they are.* All will be accepted, but none will be allowed to stay the way they came. None. No one. Zero. Absolutely everyone must change. All must be born again and be transformed into the image of the Son of God.

All are welcomed into the kingdom of God, but none can enter without being born again.

All are free to come just as they are, but none will receive acceptance of who they are.

All are sinners who have failed, but none should seek validation of their sin and rebellion.

All can come to Christ, but all who truly come to Christ are required to be transformed into the image of the Christ.

You can come as you are, but you cannot stay the way you are.

The Failure of the Modern Western Church

The majority of Western churches today are not proclaiming the message of Jesus, so the majority of the Western church is no longer valid. If the majority of today's Western church is not the valid church, then many of the "Christian churches" are false and deceptive, and are thus misleading their "followers".

The modern Western church is a major part of the problem with today's Western culture. The modern church does not have answers for the world's problems. In fact, most modern churches can't even offer mankind the promise of eternal salvation.

As the Western Church and its followers contribute to society's problems, they call their attitude "hope" and their actions "Christian." But the truth is the Western church is not providing any real hope; instead it is bathing people in a false security. The members, followers and seekers involved with the Western church are not following the real Jesus, but a false, culturally-relevant Jesus. And, these followers and seekers do not know the difference.

The Western churches are dead and no longer a life source for Christianity. The main work of the Western church is deception – seeking happiness, pursuing relationships, worshipping emotions, following mysticism, encouraging worldly success, hosting weekly self-help seminars, and teaching prosperity. Suffering is a topic addressed in Scripture, promised by Jesus, and experienced by the prophets, the Apostles and believers throughout church history. But, the modern Western church considers suffering to be an indication of human failure and something a loving God would never permit his church to face. (Thus, the doctrinal need of the modern church for a pre-tribulation rapture scenario.)



Today's False Teaching

Numerous examples of false teaching, deviant doctrine, and misapplied Truth can be found in the quotes of celebrity pastors, and are illustrated by the practices of media-driven ministries. These deviant leaders create problems for believers in our nation and misdirect churches around the world who attempt to follow their examples and relay their corrupted message.

Here are several descriptions of characteristics and doctrinal errors that capture the essence of the Titanic theology that is being marketed to individual believers and imitated by local pastors. As you read them, consider any specific examples you have heard of these false doctrines and their corrupt application.

1. Faultfinder – the false teacher is unsatisfied with God or God's plan
2. Grumbler – this is one who wants to change God's reality to match their own fantasy
3. A plea for "human logic" – they encourage others to look more toward what they call "reason" (often actually nothing more than following one's "gut" or feelings) than revelation
4. Emotionalism – "How does this make you feel?"
5. God made into man's image – "If I were God, then I would..."
6. Justification of immorality based on any of the above false and foolish views
7. The parasite of false teaching will eventually attack the portion of the Truth that exposes its sin:
 - a. Sexuality
 - b. Money
 - c. Power
 - d. Materialism
8. Worldly philosophy – To accommodate worldly philosophies, the words and intentions of Scripture must be redefined

False Prophets and False Christs?

Consider also some examples of statements made by a few contemporary pastors that should be considered at best incomplete and inaccurate, if not bold, in-your-face false teaching:

- "We shape our God, and then our God shapes us." – Rob Bell in *Love Wins*
- "When we pray, believing that we have already received what we are praying, God has no choice but to make our prayers come to pass." - Creflo Dollar (www.creflodollarministries.org/BibleStudy/Articles.aspx?id=329)



- “For our own sakes, we might take a break from trying to convince ourselves that Jesus was and is God and to spend this twenty-first century meditating on the truth that God is like Jesus. Exactly like Jesus. When the veil that obscured God was torn in two, what did it reveal? A Suffering Servant who hangs on the Cross! Thus, every human conception we previously associated with ‘God’ is uprooted, root and branch!” – Peter Enns in *The Bible Tells Me So*
- “How can Christians possibly project a deity of such cruelty and vindictiveness whose ways include inflicting everlasting torture upon his creatures, however sinful they may have been? Surely a God who would do such a thing is more nearly like Satan than like God, at least by any ordinary moral standards, and by the gospel itself.” - Clark Pininock in “The Destruction of the Finally Impenitent” (Criswell Theological Review 4 Spring 1990;:246-47.)
- “My premise is that the Bible is the words of people who were influenced by God, and yet who were also shaped by the times in which they lived. The violence attributed to God in the Bible is a serious issue that Christians must address. It is inconsistent with the character of God described in many places in the Old Testament, and certainly inconsistent with the Word of God revealed in Jesus Christ who calls his followers to love their enemies.” - Adam Hamilton (jonathanmeritt.religionnews.com/2014/05/01/adam-hamilton-offers-scandalous-take-on-scripture/)
- “I think culture is already there and the church will continue to be even more irrelevant when it quotes letters from 2,000 years ago as their best defense, when you have in front of you flesh-and-blood people who are your brothers and sisters, and aunts and uncles, and co-workers and neighbors, and they love each other and just want to go through life with someone.” Rob Bell in *The Zimzum of Love*
- Clint Schneklath is one of the most prominent and influential pastors in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Pastor Schneklath wrote on the ELCA Clergy Facebook page:
 - “God is gay.”
 - “God is trans.”
 - “Here is what I want to know. It seems popular these days to go with the Gnostic notion that Jesus was married. But this seems to fall right into the hands of heteronormativity. If Jesus wasn’t single,

it’s pretty clear to me he was in a committed relationship with the beloved disciple, another man. Why do we assume he was attracted to women?” (www.exposingtheelca.com/exposed-blog/category/liberal-theology)

- Here are three quotes from Frank Schaeffer’s blog “Why Evangelical Bible Idolatry Sucks and Why I Go to a Greek Orthodox Church Even Though It’s A Mess Too”:
 - “If Jesus is God then Jesus has the right to contradict the very imperfect book in which he has the misfortune to have his biography trapped. Jesus transcends the book he’s trapped in.”
 - “Having elevated the Bible — or at least the nicer bits that they like — to the status of a magic book evangelicals have demoted God. Their ‘god’ is trapped in a book and kept somewhat like a tame rat inside the cage of ‘biblical inerrancy.’ Since the evangelical/fundamentalists worship a book rather than God they can’t admit that the Bible has flaws and is just plain crazy in places. So they spend lifetimes working to make ‘sense’ of something nonsensical, mean and stupid... Bible idolatry is a particularly evangelical/fundamentalist blind spot.”
 - “There are never good reasons for major choices. In fact there are no “good reasons” for anything, including what churches we join or don’t. Life is short and we humans are only minimally evolved. So between too few years and too few brain cells we don’t have enough information to make any choice. A best guess is all any choice really is” (www.patheos.com/blogs/frankschaeffer/2012/11/why-evangelical-bible-idolatry-sucks-and-why-i-go-to-a-greek-orthodox-church-even-though-its-a-mess-too/)
- “Romans 4:17 says God gives life to the dead and speaks of the nonexistent things as if they already existed. He created the world with faith-filled words (see Genesis 1). We are created in His image, and we can also call things that are not as though they are. We can speak positive thoughts about ourselves into the atmosphere and thereby ‘prophesy our future.’” - Joyce Meyer in “Your Mouth is a Weapon,” (Life in the Word March 1997, 4)
- “It wasn’t until the 300’s that what we know as the sixty-six books of the Bible were actually agreed upon as the ‘bible.’ This is part of the problem with continually insisting that one of the absolutes of the Christian faith must be a belief that ‘Scripture alone’ is our guide. It sounds nice, but it is not true.” – Rob Bell in *Velvet Elvis*

- “Of all the billions of people who have ever lived, will only a select number ‘make it to a better place’ and every single other person suffer in torment and punishment forever? Is this acceptable to God? . . . This doesn’t just raise disturbing questions about God; it raises questions about the beliefs themselves . . . What kind of faith is that? Or, more important: what kind of God is that?” – Rob Bell in *Love Wins*
- This was Rob Bell’s response when asked by Oprah when the Church was going to embrace same-sex marriage: “We’re close... Lots of people are already there. We think it’s inevitable, and we’re moments (away)... I think culture is already there, and the Church will continue to be even more irrelevant when it quotes letters from 2,000 years ago as their best defense. When you have in front of you flesh and blood people who are your brothers and sisters and aunts and uncles and coworkers and neighbors and they love each other, and they just want to go through life with someone.”
- God “wants you to live in abundance. He wants to give you the desires of your heart . . . God is turning things around in your favor” – Joel Osteen in *Your Best Life Now*
- “If you develop an image of victory, success, health, abundance, joy, peace, and happiness, nothing on earth will be able to hold those things from you.” – Joel Osteen in *Your Best Life Now*
- “I am an encourager and I don’t believe it is my role to condemn anyone... I’m there to encourage them. I see myself more as a coach, as a motivator to help them experience the life God has for us....” – Joel Osteen during an interview with Larry King
- “Everything I put my hands to prospers and succeeds! Friend, when you make those kinds of bold declarations, all heaven comes to attention to back up God’s Word.” - Joel Osteen in *Your Best Life Now*

If a church, pastor, or Bible teacher finds it necessary to separate their Christian belief system from the text of Scripture in the Old Testament, then they are following/seeking a false Jesus. They have compromised the revelation of Scripture for a man-centered, man-made message that is philosophically relevant to culture. The Jesus of the Gospels, Epistles and apostles matches perfectly with the LORD of the Old Testament. Jesus is the God of the Old

Testament. If there is any doubt that the angry God of wrath in the Old Testament matches Jesus, the Son of God, a reader needs to stop and seriously consider the biblical description of the return of Jesus to the earth in the New Testament:

“At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.” (Matthew 24:30-31)

“Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?’” (Revelation 6:15-17)

“I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. . . his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses. . . Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, ‘He will rule them with an iron scepter.’ He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.” (Revelation 19:11-16)

“God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction. And shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people.” (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10)

“Look, he is coming with the clouds and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.’” (Revelation 1:7-8)

Those following the false Jesus of Western culture will continue to insist on redefining and focusing on love, peace, acceptance, tolerance, and a non-judgmental attitude. Many will focus on the fact that we all sin. And, then, since we are all sinners, which of us can judge any other person’s sins? Their point seems to be, “I sin. You sin. We all sin. So, let’s just sin.” Indeed, we are all sinners, but the Jesus of Scripture has saved us and promised to transform us into his image.

There is a vast difference between conforming Christianity into the image of the culture and transforming the Christian man into the image of the Son of God. The former is easy, market-driven and inoffensive. The latter is challenging, painful and will bring about tribulation in this world. The Christian is a sinner who has been saved from the penalty of sin and is currently in the active process of being transforming into the image of the Son of God. The false teacher wants the worldly man to be accepted by God just as the man is, without calling him a sinner and without confronting his sin. The false teacher then wants to transform God into the image of sinful man so the sinful man no longer has to deal with being transformed.

The way of today's false teacher is the way of paganism and human philosophy. In this model, the New Testament is exceptionally relevant for rebuking, correcting and training the cool, hip, contemporary Titanic church of the modern Western world. So relevant, in fact, that the text of Scripture must be avoided by the false church like an infection must avoid an antibiotic to survive.

Jesus Helps Identify the False Message of the False Jesus

"He said to them, 'You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins.' "
– John 8:24-25

"For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." – John 6:40

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."
– John 5:24

"Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets."
– Luke 6:26

The historical doctrines of a false Christ

1. A Jesus who never actually existed historically - In The Great Soviet Encyclopedia (Moscow, 1952) a two-line entry under "Jesus" includes these descriptive words: "the name of the mythological founder of Christianity"
2. A Jesus who was merely a spiritual manifestation with no body – This idea developed from Christianity's encounter with Greek philosophy in the Western world. The seeds of this compromise developed into Gnosticism

and resurfaced in false Christian philosophies such as Docetism (Greek word *dokein* means "to seem"). The Corinthians had trouble transforming their pagan culture's philosophy to this portion of the biblical revelation, and as a result rejected the physical resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15)

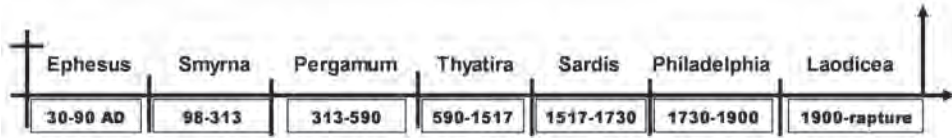
3. A Jesus who is the First-created being
4. A Jesus who was an angel
5. A Jesus who is both the Son and, at the same time, God the Father
6. A Jesus who was just a very good man – "Jesus gave us several good examples of putting others first and living selfless lives."
7. A Jesus who was one of many prophets that have appeared in history among many different people groups - all equally relevant
8. A Jesus who is seen as a "correction" or "refinement" of the "primitive Old Testament God" (a deity who is said to be merely a barbaric, tribal God - while Jesus proves him to actually be completely tolerant, forgiving, and patient)
9. A Jesus who should just be believed in, not necessarily known
10. A Jesus made in the "believer's" own imagination
11. A Jesus that has been adapted to a culture's level of acceptance. This could range from a peaceful hippie Jesus to a military warrior Jesus, from the Jesus of homeless poverty to a cultural superstar Jesus who would have definitely lived in a mansion and owned a personal jet
12. Genie Jesus

Laodicea – The Four Generation Cycle in the Modern Church

And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.

'I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.' (Revelation 3:14 to 22)

One way of interpreting Church history is by matching up the characteristics of each age with one of the churches addressed in Revelation chapters 1 through 3.



Looking at things this way, it can be argued that we are currently like the Laodicean church in many ways. This method also provides good insight into where we are and why we are the way we are.

The chart to the right describes the four basic characteristics that correlate to the four generations.

Laodicea

The Four Generation Cycle
that has led today's church into the
Laodicean Church Age

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**1880-1920**  
Systematic Growth  
Methodology  
Emotionalism

**1921-1960**  
Showmanship  
Materialism  
Theology of Success

**1960-2000**  
Charismatic  
Individual/Personal Experience  
Mysticism

**2001-2040**  
Market Driven

~~~~~

"You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see."
- Revelation 3:17-18

1880-1920 – Systematic Growth, Emotionalism

Systematic, orchestrated, and methodical are words that can be used to describe church activity

- **Revivals** (1830) - Revivalism moved from the US northeast (New England) to the south and west, reaching Tennessee and Kentucky on the western frontier. The revival became more and more emotional as it moved west, and thousands of people were converted in this region in the early 1800's. In 1801 an estimated ten thousand people were in the camp meeting revival at Cane Ridge, Kentucky that was accompanied by people falling down, jerking, rolling, dancing and barking like dogs (Christianity Through the Centuries, by Earle E. Cairnes, 429). Soon the preaching, showmanship and emotional appeal of revival meetings would backwash from the western frontier eastward into the established churches in America's New England states. The Presbyterian churches did not use the new camp meeting techniques, but the Methodists and Baptist churches did, and began to grow.
- **Emotionalism** – The intense emotional experiences of the great revivals became the expected response to religion and spiritual reality in the late 1800's and early 1900's. People commonly responded to an assumed "spiritual" experience with shouting, falling, dancing, and other forms of outwardly emotional expression. As textual criticism continued to undermine the authenticity of Scripture in the academic world in the late 1800's and modern science and technology seemed to provide logical challenges to the existence of God, the Church took refuge in emotionalism. Instead of seeking the truth of God in the text of Scripture or in creation, the Church quickly turned to finding truth and proving the validity of its faith in the personal experiences of its members. This personal approach to finding truth and experiencing God is most easily described using expressions about the heart: "know in my heart it is true", "finding God in my heart", "asking Jesus into my heart", "feeling the presence of the Holy Spirit", etc. Emotionalism in the Church made personal faith a highly subjective "reality" that could easily be overturned with any subjective change in personal emotions, cultural beliefs, or temporal circumstances. With this phase of emotionalism the Church that was to be the house built on the Rock, was shifted to a foundation of sand. Things could only get worse for the Church, down on the beach with society.

- **Charles Finney** (1792-1875) studied law in New York and was admitted to the state bar. Since his study of legal books had led him to many biblical references, Finney began to study the Bible itself. He joined a church, studied for the ministry, and was ordained in the Presbyterian Church in 1824. Finney began to travel on horseback to villages speaking to crowds in an articulate courtroom manner, as an educated attorney trying to persuade a jury of common folk to accept his legal position. Finney wrote the following in "On Revivals of Religion":

"Men being so reluctant to obey God, will not act until they are excited."

Based on this opinion, Finney pursued an emotional connection with his crowds by exciting his listeners. Finney believed that as he did his work of exciting the people, the Holy Spirit would do his work of convicting and converting them. By 1834 Finney had left the Presbyterian Church and their doctrinal stance of Calvinism. Finney took his emotionalism and revival meetings to the mainstream church, and the Broadway Tabernacle (a Congregational church) was built for Finney to lead. The crowds that followed were moved by excitement, and demonstrated their strong feelings through shouting and groaning. Although this method was criticized, the fact remained that the churches that followed Finney's model grew.

Finney did not use just excitement to draw crowds, either. When he traveled, he was very well organized, preparing the communities and drawing the crowds even before he arrived. Local ministers and church members were recruited to organize prayer meetings, hand out handbills, post placards, and buy advertisements in newspapers. These methods, which contributed greatly to Finney's success, were also referred to in his 1835 "*Lectures on Revivals of Religion*" in this section titled "A Revival of Religion is Not a Miracle"(next page)



A REVIVAL OF RELIGION IS NOT A MIRACLE.

1. A miracle has been generally defined to be, a Divine interference, setting aside or suspending the laws of nature. It is not a miracle, in this sense. All the laws of matter and mind remain in force. They are neither suspended nor set aside in a revival.
2. It is not a miracle according to another definition of the term miracle -- something above the powers of nature. There is nothing in religion beyond the ordinary powers of nature. It consists entirely in the right exercise of the powers of nature. It is just that, and nothing else. When mankind become religious, they are not enabled to put forth exertions which they were unable before to put forth. They only exert the powers they had before in a different way, and use them for the glory of God.
3. It is not a miracle, or dependent on a miracle, in any sense. It is a purely philosophical result of the right use of the constituted means -- as much so as any other effect produced by the application of means. There may be a miracle among its antecedent causes, or there may not. The apostles employed miracles, simply as a means by which they arrested attention to their message, and established its Divine authority. But the miracle was not the revival. The miracle was one thing; the revival that followed it was quite another thing. The revivals in the apostles' days were connected with miracles, but they were not miracles.

– Charles Finney

I said that a revival is the result of the right use of the appropriate means. The means which God has enjoyed for the production of a revival, doubtless have a natural tendency to produce a revival. Otherwise God would not have enjoined them. But means will not produce a revival, we all know, without the blessing of God. No more will grain, when it is sowed, produce a crop without the blessing of God. It is impossible for us to say that there is not as direct an influence or agency from God, to produce a crop of grain, as there is to produce a revival.

– Charles Finney, 1835 in "*Lectures on Revivals of Religion*"



- **Charles Spurgeon** (1834-1892) – Nineteen year old Spurgeon became the pastor at the prominent but struggling New Park Street Chapel in London in 1854. With seating for more than 1,000 worshippers a mere 80 people attended Spurgeon's first Sunday in the pulpit. Spurgeon's style was unique, but became popular in London. As the Church grew past filling the 1,000 seats a public building that seated 4,500 was rented until the 12,000 seat Music Hall was packed. The local press described Spurgeon's preaching in these words, "All his discourses are redolent of bad taste, are vulgar and theatrical," and his style as "that of a vulgar colloquial, varied by rant. . . . All the most solemn mysteries of our holy religion are by him rudely, roughly and impiously handled." Indeed, Spurgeon was a theatrical performer, but also a theologically solid preacher who set the standard that many would try to emulate in order to gain the same growth and sustained popularity. In 1861 the Metropolitan Tabernacle was built to seat a weekly crowd of 6,000.
- **Dwight L. Moody** – By the 1880's the targeted revival areas switched from the frontier to the heavily populated, growing urban areas. Similar methods were set in place for mass evangelism to be conducted in massive public buildings. Dwight L. Moody was one of the first to move the public revival meetings out of the Churches and into public arenas. Now people were led in one way or another to make a public confession of Christ. Finney had encouraged people to stand up to express their confession of faith in Christ. Moody took this one step further and encouraged those who had stood up to confess Christ during his meeting to continue by going to a room to meet with people who could answer questions and provide prayer.

1921-1960 – Showmanship, Materialism, Theology of Success

- **Billy Sunday** – took Finney's "stand up to confess Christ" and Moody's "walk to the counseling room" to stand up publicly to confess Christ and then walk to the front of the arena to meet with the counselors. Billy Sunday left his mark on America's culture and the Western Church between the years of 1900-1935. Sunday gained attention as a former professional baseball player with spectacular mannerisms while preaching on stage and informal ministry style.
- **Materialism** – By 1914 Christendom had experience population increase, territorial expansion into every part of the populated world and unprecedented increase in material prosperity and wealth. In the modern



Western world the industrial revolution made the production of material goods abundant and attainable. With the high standard of material living possible and within reach of the average Western man, the average man's daily focus was on attaining and maintaining this material wealth and high standard of living instead of spiritual truth, spiritual development and the advancement of his soul. Churches had to follow, and this is most obvious when we consider that these material men were leading the Western church. A standard of success in life was materialism, and thus a successful church must also be materialistically comfortable and a reflection of the good life that would indicate God's blessing.

- **Theology of Success** found its way into the Western culture and the Western church when an old idea received new momentum with Civil War captain and Baptist pastor Russell H. Conwell's 1869 essay, 1882 message and, ultimately, 1890's book all entitled "Acres of Diamonds". The essay originated from an Arab guide who was leading Conwell's camel down the Tigris and Euphrates rivers while he was traveling from Baghdad. Conwell's guide told him a story of a man named Ali Hafed who owned a large farm with orchards, fields and gardens, but sold it to go in pursuit of diamonds. After years of fruitless wandering Ali Hafed died off the coast of Spain in the Mediterranean Sea as a failure with no money and no diamonds. But, the man who bought Ali Hafed's farm discovered diamonds on the very land Ali Hafed had abandoned to go search for diamonds. A portion of Conwell's lecture and the point of his message can be found in the quote below:

"I say that you ought to get rich, and it is your duty to get rich. How many of my pious brethren say to me, 'Do you, a Christian minister, spend your time going up and down the country advising young people to get rich, to get money?'
 'Yes, of course I do.' They say, 'Isn't that awful! Why don't you preach the gospel instead of preaching about man's making money?'"
Because to make money honestly is to preach the gospel. That is the reason . . . ninety-eight out of one hundred of the rich men of America are honest. That is why they are rich. That is why they are trusted with money. That is why they carry on great enterprises and find plenty of people to work with them. It is because they are honest men. . . . Some men say, 'Don't you sympathize with the poor people?' Of course I do, or else I would not have been lecturing these years. I won't give in but what I sympathize with the poor, but the number of poor who are to be sympathized with is very small. To sympathize with a man whom God has punished for his sins, thus to



help him when God would still continue a just punishment, is to do wrong, no doubt about it, and we do that more than we help those who are deserving. While we should sympathize with God's poor—that is, those who cannot help themselves-- let us remember there is not a poor person in the United States who was not made poor by his own shortcomings, or by the shortcomings of someone else. It is all wrong to be poor, anyhow . . . as Mr. Carnegie said, the great iron squeezers that laid the foundation of all the steel millions of the United States, 'we men' can invent anything under the stars!" (<http://ebooksoneverything.com/wealth/acresofdiamonds.pdf>)

At the time of Conwell's death in 1925 he had presented this story as a lecture 6,152 times and had earned \$8,000,000. Pretty good for a Civil War captain. The original audio of Russell Conwell's presentation can still be heard on YouTube. Today the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary still carries his name after his Theology school in Philadelphia merged with Gordon Divinity School.

- **World War I** - In spite of the growth and advancement of Christianity which was accompanied by the increase in wealth and material production the Christian countries (stronghold of Christendom from 900-1800 AD) erupted into World War between the years of 1914-1918 which resulted in the death of 9 million soldiers and 7 million civilians. Christendom in the midst of the Industrial Age had brought history's deadliest and most devastating conflicts.

Between 1926-1950 church membership in the United States increased 60% while the population growth of the United States for the same period of time was merely 29%. Church membership in 1950 was 57% of the whole population of the United States. (A History of Christianity, vol. 2, by Kenneth Scott Latourette, page 1410) Note that in 1800 that number was 7%; in 1850 it was 15.5% and in 1900 it was 36%. Church membership of the entire population of the United States had gone from 36% to 57% in fifty years. That is a 21% membership increase in the modern Western church of the United States between the years 1900-1950. It is easy to see how the ideals and attitudes in the Church in those years had an impact on the United States and, likewise, how the Western World had an impact on the ideals and attitudes in the church.

1950 the United States was the most powerful nation and its values and culture were being felt everywhere in the world.



- **Radio** – Radio broadcasting became popular in the 1920's and by 1925 it could be printed in an opinion article that "one out of every fourteen broadcasting stations in the United States is today owned by a church and operated by a church." (Popular Radio, New York, March 1925) Charles E. Fuller began broadcasting "The Old-fashioned Revival hour" in 1925 and by 1942 claimed to have a world-wide audience ("A History of Christianity", vol. 2, Kenneth Scott Latourette, page 1419) Soon, Christian broadcasting became a big American business.
- **Television** – With the upsurge of television beginning around 1939 entrepreneurial preachers realized their broadcasts required a ministry focused on entertainment, music, visual appeal, celebrity appearances and ministers with appealing personalities. By 1955 half of American homes had a TV set and by 1980 almost 50% of Americans watched weekly religious TV programming. This added to the drive of individual religion and personalization of the Christian experience and opinion.
- **Individualism** – The value of the individual sprang out of nationalism which had its roots in Christianity's stance on the dignity and worth of each person's self consciousness.
- **Norman Vincent Peale** (1898-1993) and preaching the Power of Positive Thinking instead of the Word of God – Peale was ordained as a Methodist minister in 1922, but in 1932 affiliated with the Reformed Church and took a 600 member church in Manhattan (New York City) to over 5,000 members. Peale began to use radio in 1935 and in 1952 wrote the book "The Power of Positive Thinking," the same year he began his TV show. Peale's teaching focused on the concept that our physical world could be controlled with our thoughts and a man could change his life, his health and his destiny by simply believing it. Below is one of my favorite, or actually least favorite, quotes of Peale's. This quote seems to me to be a form of self-abandonment to fate that is combined with a denial of reality but sweetened with self-hypnosis:

"Tell yourself every morning as you go to work that you love your job. Think of it as interesting, even fascinating. By so doing you will ultimately get enthusiastic about your work — and you will undoubtedly do a better job." (From "Power of the Plus Factor", 1987, by Peale)

Concerning the personhood of God, Peale said this:

"Who is God? Some theological being? He is so much greater than theology. God is vitality. God is life. God is energy. As you breathe God in, as you visualize His energy, you will be reenergized!" (From "No More Stress or Tension" in the monthly periodical "Plus: The Magazine of Positive Thinking" in May 1986, p. 22



In a 1984 interview with Phil Donahue Peale said: *"It's not necessary to be born again. You have your way to God; I have mine."*

Donahue countered Peale by saying, *"But you're a Christian minister; you're supposed to tell me that Christ is the Way and the Truth and the Life, aren't you?"*

To this Peale gave the politically correct answer before political correctness was clique when he said, *"Christ is ONE of the ways! God is everywhere."*

- **Evangelism with music** – Gospel hymns had become popular and had a wide appeal at revival meetings and over the radio
- **Methods, practices and forms of worship spread** from one denomination to another. If a church found success and growth by implementing a particular style or outreach it was sure to imitated and initiated by a hundred other churches. This included the use of songs, children's and youth ministries, summer assemblies/vacation Bible school
- **Billy Graham** – began in 1949

1960-2000 – Charismatic, Individual/Personal, Mysticism, Success

- **Charismatic Movement** – The charismatic movement was recognized in 1960 with Episcopal priest Dennis Bennett's public announcement to his congregation in California on April 3, 1960 that he had received the power and filling of the Holy Spirit with the manifestation of the gift of speaking in unknown tongues. This incident may have slipped by public notice, although similar events were occurring around the nation, unless the event had not been reported to and covered by Newsweek (July 4, 1960) and Time (August 15, 1960). By 1963 most Protestant publications and journals had published articles concerning the charismatic movement and the phenomena of glossolalia, or speaking in tongues. Every major protestant church had been influenced by these events and most accepted the movement with caution. This movement was seen as more than a prayer movement, but a renewal of the mission and development of the Church. Ultimately, the charismatic movement brought people closer to accepting a personal encounter, a personal word, personal direction and personal revelation from deity. More focus was moved towards a personal encounter with God, than with a personal understanding of the revelation given in the Scripture.
- **Individualism** – Individual's making decisions to place faith in Christ and individual's receiving the filling of the Holy Spirit and speaking in other tongues paved the way for individual's to form opinions about the nature of God, the interpretation of Scripture and the source of divine authority. Soon the common man was receiving personal directions, insights and

revelation from his personal Lord by means of an inner voice in his heart or the "spirit" speaking to his heart.

- **Mysticism** – Direct contact with and expression from the divine presence appeared to be much easier to attain to than the serious study of the Scriptures. Personal views, individual behavior and imaginary desires could easily be justified and pursued with the support of a mystical encounter with "god" or his "spirit." And, who could negatively judge one person's mystical encounter without themselves sounding unloving and not Christ-like? The need for church growth and church unity led the Church to abandoned accurate Bible teaching, and instead favor a more culturally relevant redefining of the character of God as tolerant and the nature of Jesus as loving and non-judgmental. This developmental direction allowed more tolerance of socially acceptable spiritual opinions.
- **Bill Bright** (1921-2003) – 1952 wrote "Four Spiritual Laws"; 1979 produced the "Jesus Film"; 1951 founded Campus Crusade for Christ. Although great evangelistic tools with accurate biblical insight, this work flooded Christianity with multitudes of converted, but untransformed individuals. The Church was unprepared and unfocused on transforming these converts and preparing them for true spiritual service of work in the Church. Instead, like the converts of other successful evangelists, these new additions to the Church helped conform the Church into the image of culture instead of themselves being transformed into the image of Christ.
- **Robert Schuller** (1926-2015) – Began his television program "Hour of Power" in 1970
- **Oral Roberts** (1918-2009) – Emphasized seed-faith giving; laid foundation for prosperity gospel and abundant life teaching ministries; 1947 began his radio broadcasting; 1954 began broadcasting revival meetings by television.

2001-2040 – Market Driven

- **Market driven church** – The market driven church is designed to create numerical growth (not conversion or spiritual growth). The New Testament message, purpose, growth process, success target and future goal is thrown under the bus. The foundational philosophy of the Church of this age is based on market-driven principles. The methodology is focused on marketing strategies, demographic studies and business techniques.
- **The Market driven church seeks spiritual enlightenment for temporal benefits** – According to the American Demographics article "Choosing My Religion" from April 1999, today's religious person claims to be:

“...into spirituality, not religion...Behind this shift is the search for an experiential faith, a religion of the heart, not the head. It’s a religious expression that downplays doctrine and dogma, and revels in direct experience of the divine – whether it’s called the ‘Holy Spirit’ or ‘cosmic consciousness’ or the ‘true self.’ It is practical and personal, more about stress reduction that salvation, more therapeutic than theological. It’s about feeling good, not being good. It’s as much about the body as the soul... Some marketing gurus have begun calling it ‘the experience industry.’”

- **Spiritual Gift assessment tests** are a perfect example of the market driven church tapping into it’s natural resources for organization purposes and effective management methods. This is the style of the in-house systematic approach the CEO (head pastor) and his support network (pastoral staff) use to turn a profit for their business (church)
- **Manipulation of Customer** (church members) and advertisement strategies
- **Bible studies** are led by a facilitator who does not teach, but seeks to include everyone’s opinion as the group’s ignorance is pooled together.
- **Product development of the Market Driven Church** is focused on “meeting people’s needs.” Originally Jesus sent his disciples out with the Great Commission,

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

Notice, Jesus’ commission was Jesus-centered – “All authority...given to ME”... “go and make disciples” to follow ME... “baptizing them in the name of” ME ... “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded”

Notice: Jesus’ commission was not man-centered – “Go solve world problems”... “Go meet people’s needs” ... “Go make people feel connected” ... “Go build relationships between people”

The Church is about Jesus. And, Jesus’ people will follow when Jesus is glorified. When the Church is made to be all about man, then men will follow that church. So, if the Church is built on the Gospel of Jesus Christ men will be offended and think of it as foolishness, but if the Church is built on a marketable product such as solving social problems, meeting people’s needs, or being tolerant, loving and not judgmental, then the world of men will pick



that product up and use it like a tool to advance their own social agendas and philosophies.

Yes, that’s right. When the system of any local church is up and running full speed, the leadership of that church will have made one of two choices:

1. Be rejected by the world by preaching the Gospel, teaching the Word of God and glorifying Jesus Christ.
2. Be used like a tool by the world to solve world problems, social issues and meet people’s needs without preaching the Truth, without teaching the Word and without glorifying the eternal Son of God, the soon coming king of God’s kingdom, the man, Jesus Christ!

The choice is between being the Church in Smyrna or the Church in Laodicea.

Smyrna was told:

“I know your afflictions and your poverty – yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer ... Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Revelation 2:8-11)

Laodicea was told:

“I am about to vomit you out of my mouth. You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.” (Revelation 3:14-22)

- **Rick Warren** (1954-present) – Rick Warren developed and implemented successful church growth methods beginning in 1980. Warren uses the Church as an instrument to transform people and communities. His 1995 book “The Purpose Driven Church” provides guidance and instruction for church leaders to repair people’s personal lives which will result in church growth and production. According to a Barna poll in 2005 pastors and church leaders in the United States voted this book as the second most influential book in their ministries and lives. The most influential book they voted for was Warren’s earlier book in 2002, “The Purpose Driven Life.”
- **Bill Hybels** (1951-present) – In 1971 Bill Hybels used relevant Bible studies, contemporary music, drama and the best multimedia of the day to grow a youth group of 25 to over 1,000 in less than 36 months.



In 1974 Hybels surveyed the community to discover people's attitudes towards church. He then used this information to design a new approach to church. Within two years the Church's attendance was 2,000. The enormous success of Hybels methods took the Church to a weekly attendance of 24,000 in 2010. His system has been promoted through seminars and his ideas sought through speaking engagements scheduled across the nation.

- **Joel Osteen** (1963-present) – Joel inherited his father's church in Houston, Texas in 1999 when his father, John Osteen, suddenly died. John Osteen started the Church in 1959 and had grown the weekly attendance to 6,000. Under Joel's leadership the Church attendance spiked to 43,500 per week by 2009. Joel is the author of the books:
 - "Your Best Life Now"
 - "You Can, You Will: 8 Undeniable Qualities of a Winner"
 - "It's Your Time: Activate Your Faith, Achieve Your Dreams and Increase in God's Favor"
 - "I Declare: 31 Promises to Speak Over Your Life"
 - "Break Out: 5 Keys to God Beyond Your Barriers and Live an Extraordinary Life"
- Christian A. Schwarz, 1990's research published in 2009 director of Institute for Natural Church Development conducted the most comprehensive research project in church history to discover the causes of church growth. Over a thousand churches in 32 countries were studied and 60,000 surveys were completed. The information is found in Schwarz's book "The ABC's of Natural Church Development" (online as .pdf here - http://www.ljcommunitychurch.org/pdfs/ABCs_Natural_Church_Development.pdf). Schwarz found eight consistent characteristics of growing churches that if set in place anywhere and at any time they will work every time. Below is the perfect formula for church growth. If you can market this you will have a successful church:
 1. Empowering leadership
 2. Gift-oriented ministry
 3. Passionate spirituality – this "spirituality" is not biblical because the Bible is not the source of their buzz-word definitions. These churches have gone to other sources to develop their meaning of "spirituality."
 4. Functional structures
 5. Inspiring worship – this refers to an enthusiastic worship service.
 - Here again is "emotionalism" which we have seen was the old-school key to revival identified by Finney in the 1830's



"excited" men.

- Schwarz explains that "people who attend inspiring worship services unanimously declare that the Church service is... 'fun'" (page 14 of "The ABC's of Natural Church Development").
- For the Church to maintain growth men will need an increasing level of "entertainment" to sustain their sense of "fun" in such an "inspiring worship". This is so very contrary to the true growth and examples of the true church in the scriptures and in history.
 6. Holistic small groups
 7. Need-oriented evangelism
 8. Loving relationships
- **Current buzz words:**
 1. Church growth
 2. Disciple making church
 3. Plugged in
 4. Small group
 5. A new way of doing church
 6. Mystery
 7. Spiritual journey

The Future of the Western Church

After church growth, what's next? The people that are collected during this market-driven church phase will have to be rallied around a purpose or goal to justify their continuation as a corporation. These people were attracted and brought into the Church by:

- Met personal needs (physical, social, etc.)
- Entertainment
- Emotionalism

But, now what?

Why will these people stay?

The Church that was organized by human methods through use of a worldly marketing strategy, instead of discipleship to Jesus Christ, will need to transition into a goal-oriented ministry, like a results-based service organization. Church leadership will be forced to fabricate a new purpose and a fresh sense of mission. Only then will church members be able to justify the continuation of their assembling as a community, while at the same time continuing to experience an emotional sense of personal purpose.



This phase was referred to as the “vanity cycle” in *Hope for America’s Last Generation* (page 84). As the Churches that modeled themselves on the mega-church’s market-driven social research move into a community centered service system, their focus will crystalize outward. This might involve the building of community centers to accommodate the people of their church with the intention of serving those outside the Church who are in the local community. Once again, the Church is focused on attracting, serving, and pleasing the unbeliever outside the Church instead of teaching and preparing those who are already in the Church. The Church leadership will strive to appeal to more unbelievers by using its members, instead of converting the unbeliever and transforming the believer. The former is easy and marketable, while the latter is challenging and detested. The first is the broad way; the second, the narrow way.

THE VANITY CYCLE of Church Activities



Pastors will defend their community service programs by pointing out that the members of their church are serving their community, by reaching out for Christ by “showing God’s love”. But just because you can train monkeys to slap at keyboards does not mean those monkeys are writing literature. In fact, just like the slapping monkeys are not communicating human thoughts or expression, neither are the unconverted church members able to fulfill Jesus’ command to “let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” The seekers who were brought into the Church through market research are merely monkeys slapping at an author’s keyboard. These monkeys are not authors and they cannot produce the works of an author.

Pagans who are manipulated and motivated by the clergy to assemble in an organization called “Community Church” and then sent to serve their pagan neighborhood are not the same as God’s people prepared for works of service to advance the kingdom of God. They are merely serving the kingdom of this world while making it darker by claiming their darkness is light.

The challenging, painful transformation process of true Christianity will continue in the Western world, but only as true Christians struggle in the face of society’s (even the Western church’s) rejection of this challenging, painful process.

In the coming days, cultural and political events are going to require Christians (believers, followers, seekers, church members, etc.) to choose between the Jesus of Scripture and the false Jesus of Western culture. Today’s easy, market-driven, non-offensive Christianity will grow rapidly in numbers of members, but will eventually be rolled over by Islam. Today’s shallow seekers are tomorrow’s Islamic converts. Churches will be converted into mosques. Church community centers will be tomorrow’s Islamic centers.

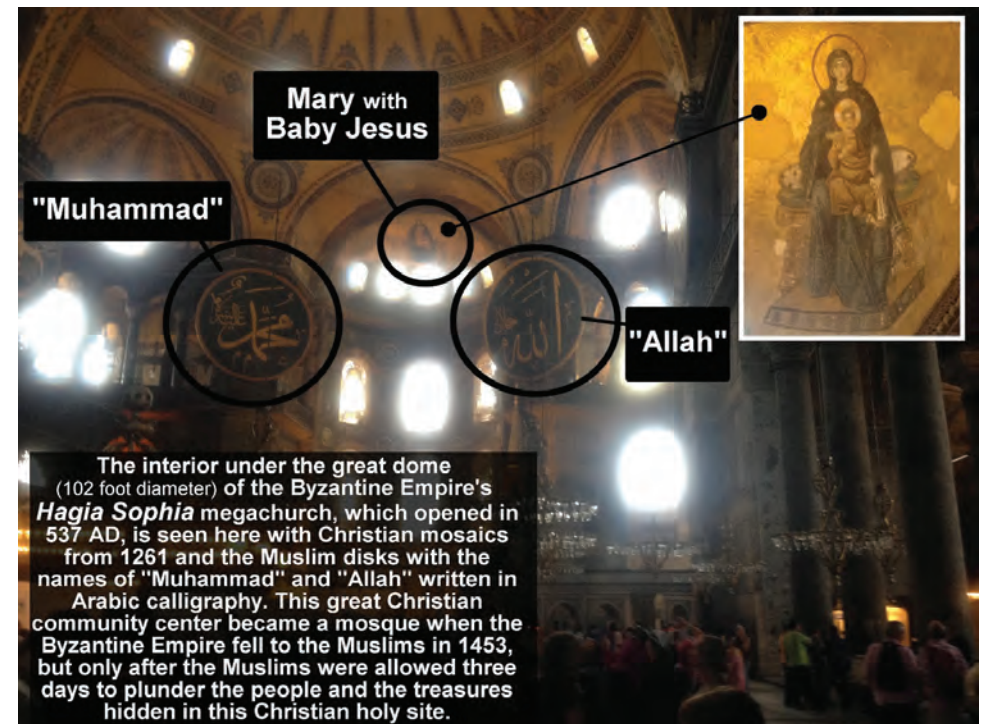


Photo by Larry and Linda Clauson

As true Christianity is purified, true disciples will also be rolled over by Islam - not by conversion in this case, but by Islamic persecution, resulting in multitudes of martyrs and masses of believers being eliminated as they proclaim their faith in the Scriptural Jesus, even in the face of Islamic denunciation. It is in this way the true believers will be sifted out of the Western Laodicean church and separated from those who will compromise with the world, and ultimately, with the antichrist.

Conclusion

Even though studies show that most people in the twenty-first century who leave church are leaving because of unanswered intellectual questions, today's church leaders continue to present their members with an emotional experience and distract their "converts" with entertainment and social programs (basketball leagues, youth groups, men's ministry activities, community service, etc.).

People are not leaving the Church because of relationship problems among the women in the women's ministry or as a result of an argument during a church league softball game. People are dismissing Christianity because it has become too emotional, too subjective, too centered on individualistic personal beliefs. People are leaving because even after years of attendance, service and worship the Church still has not answered intellectual questions.

Yet, the answers to these questions are readily available in books, in on-line videos, at seminars and much more. The disconnect comes when pastors and local church leaders fear the Church will lose attendance - and offerings will decrease - if people are given real information, and if service time were spent addressing intellectual subjects. These intellectual questions may seem boring and unnecessary. But for who? Not for the believer who is seeking growth, fellowship with their Lord, and understanding of the God they have embraced. But, yes, very boring to those who are only attending church to hear the cool band, to hook up with friends, or to find a place to belong - as if the Church were a bar in a sitcom or a sports program in a middle school. Yes, finding answers to intellectual questions and learning about the eternal Lord would indeed be a huge road block if your attendance at church were based merely on your personal social needs.

In other words, today's pastors are more attuned to entertaining the goats than they are to feeding the sheep. So, who is leaving the modern western church? Is the unbeliever leaving or is the believer leaving? Is the Church keeping the goats and driving away the sheep? If we were to base our answer

on the types of activities on the Church's calendar, it would appear the sheep are either starving to death or leaving in search of greener pastures (i.e., in search of teaching pastors). Meanwhile, the unconverted find themselves surprisingly comfortable at church and busily involved in helping to continue the conformation of the Church into the image of a tolerant cultural institution that can finally be respected by pagan society.

For this Titanic Church the time is too late. Our Western ship has been struck, and we are taking on water. Our situation is comparable to the days of ancient Israel in the north, that did not repent of the sin of Jeroboam because they could not repent. Israel's history had been rewritten and their true religion had been re-formed into the image of the pagan world that absorbed them. Even when the "good" kings came along and led the people in great reform, the Bible always adds:

"Nevertheless he clung to the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit; he did not turn away from them." (2 Kings 3:3)

Why did they not repent? They had lost the Truth. They had lost their way. They had re-created the image of God and could not find their way back without the real God. This is where we are today. We have misdirected Bible interpretation. We have re-created how God communicates with man. We have redefined the nature of God and, in so doing, have called the glory of God an abomination, unacceptable for a culture such as ours. In our arrogance we have become so ignorant that we are hopeless. No matter how hard we try, as a body, we will not be able to repent because we cannot turn away from our sin, which is like the sin of Jeroboam.





The most holy place in an Israelite high place in Arad, Israel from 700 BC with two altars and two deity stones used to worship Yahweh and a Canaanite goddess, Asherah.

For us, our sin of Jeroboam is:

1. Systematic revival
2. Marketed church growth
3. Worship of God focused on our entertainment and social activities
4. Personal relationship with God that comes complete with the full package of:
 - a. A personal word from God
 - b. A personal Jesus molded to our own personal image
 - c. A personal divine power sent to solve our personal problems
5. A self-serving theology of worldly success
6. A self-made religion that fully embraces materialism and a non-judgmental attitude
7. The doctrine of our best life now
8. A problem-solving God more interested in delivering us from our immediate worldly troubles than he is in developing us into Christlikeness
9. A relevant message that helps us live our dream life now
10. The promise of eschatological escapism with a Pretribulational rapture

Why is this true? Because, when a model (often an idol) or a system (often false doctrine) works, it will be copied, repeated and even "improved" or "intensified."

Finney copied the revivals. Billy Sunday copied Finney. Theology of Success copied the materialism of the United States. Mass evangelism copied Christian radio and television programming. Church services copied the entertainment of mass evangelism. Pastors copied the motivational speakers. Charismatics copied the personal decisions for Christ. The market-driven church copied all the success methods of Western Christianity, but added modern marketing research by conducting public opinion polls in the communities in which they were considering investing their church business.

Today's false Jesus is the personification of our culture and the reflection of contemporary celebrities. In light of this, we would be wise to keep John's final words in mind:

"Keep yourselves from idols." (1 John 5:21)

There are two gates, two roads, but only one Way and one Door. The wide, easy road is always the way of destruction, but is the most heavily traveled. The Scriptures make this clear. If you accept Scripture at any level you must take this into consideration.

Section Three

THE FOURTH GENERATION OF THE CHURCH IN AMERICA

In 2007 I wrote the book *Hope for America's Last Generation*. The book was based on the concept of the four sequential, declining generations of a society identified in Proverbs 30:11-14:

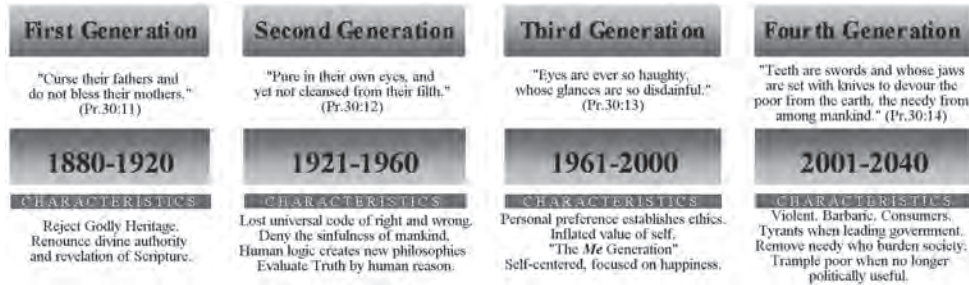
*There are those who curse their fathers
and do not bless their mothers;
those who are pure in their own eyes
and yet are not cleansed of their filth;
those whose eyes are ever so haughty,
whose glances are so disdainful;
those whose teeth are swords
and whose jaws are set with knives
to devour the poor from the earth
and the needy from among mankind.*

I began teaching this concept in the late 1980's. I still have a cassette tape of a session I taught in 1991 at a Sunday School Convention at the Civic Center in Oklahoma City.

I identified these four successive declining generations as forty year periods. When applied to the trend of society in the United States of America it seemed to fit fairly well. I matched the biblical character traits of each generation in Proverbs 30:11-14 with the historical traits of the culture. I thought I had found a fairly comparable match through the generations beginning in 1880 and projecting up to 2040.

Keep in mind, this teaching is merely a potential comparison of a potential biblical interpretation. But, it seemed to match and provide some guidance. The chart on the next page provides the basic description of the four generations of Proverbs and a comparison to the four generations of American society.

As I continued to study and teach through the 1990's I found biblical illustrations of this pattern and passages of Scripture where God referred to the discipline he administered to each of these deteriorating generations in both Gentile and Jewish cultures. A few passages of Scripture that provided

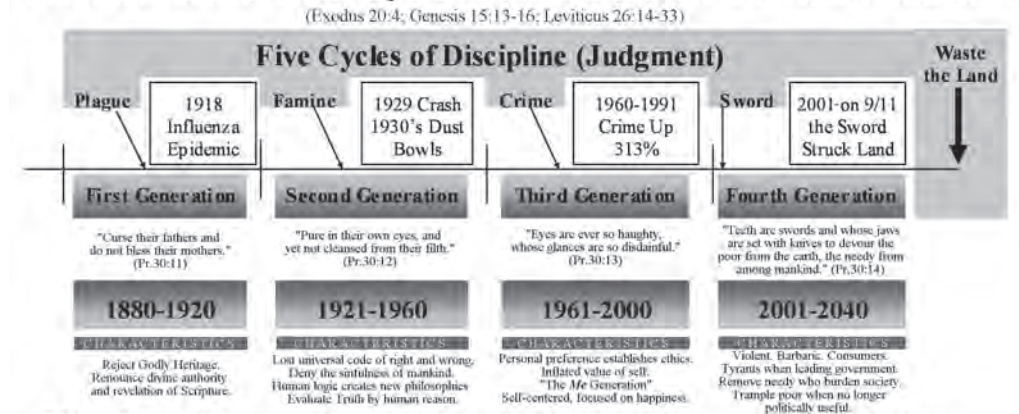


more insight into this cycle can be found in Genesis 15:13-16 where God promises Abraham that when the sin of the Amorites (Canaanites) reached its full measure in the fourth generation, the land of Canaan would be given to the Israelites. A generation was figured to be one-hundred years in earlier biblical history, but forty years by the time Joshua left the wilderness.

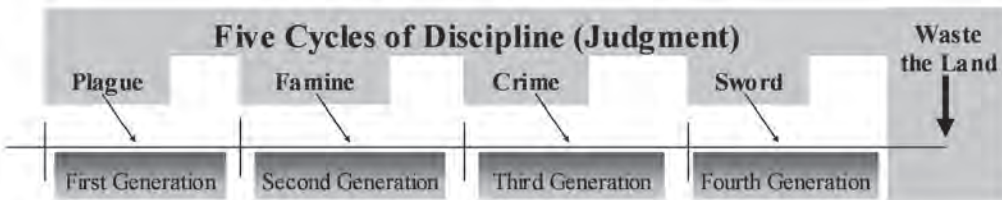
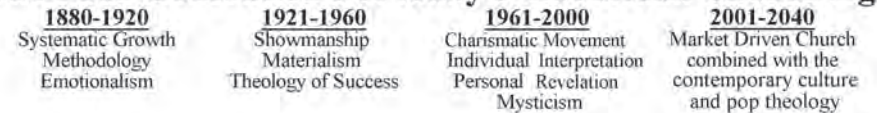
God warned Israel in the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:4 that he would observe the decline from one generation to the next generation, for up to four generations. If there was no improvement by that fourth generation God would visit the sin of that society with punishment. In Leviticus 26:14-33 God clearly identifies the punishment handed out during each of the four declining generations of a society. If there is no repentance and no return to the Truth during those declining years, God will then strike the land with the fifth phase of discipline which is national upheaval.

own personal experience and happiness. Typical of the world, these "seekers" merely want to voice their own opinions and have their own needs met. In the next diagram I have combined the illustrations from *Hope for America's Last Generation* with a diagram illustrating a point made in another diagram presented earlier in this book.

The Four Generation Cycle in the United States from 1880-2040



The Four Generation's of today's Laodicean Church Age



Earlier in this book I described the four generational decline of the Western Church in our society and documented it with examples. I presented that we have arrived at a point where the Church is disinterested in fulfilling its assigned responsibility to help believers mature, and is instead, driven by the cultural market. In an attempt to stay relevant, the Church has compromised the Truth of the revelation of Scripture.

Because the people of our pagan culture (including Christians) can no longer easily understand the teaching of the Bible, the Church has instead sought the "seekers" and has begun acquiescing to a society that is merely interested in its

The Church in the West was the hope of the West, but with its collapse into the cultural abyss, this society is now without hope. The Church was the light for the dark culture. The Church was the salt of this society. But, as Jesus said,

You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. (Matthew 5:13, ESV)

The Church should expect nothing less than the very thing the Lord spoke concerning its inability to maintain saltiness! A worthless Church will be trampled by the very culture it failed to flavor with the Truth. It seems a just penalty.

Jesus, speaking again, says:

If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! (Matthew 6:23, ESV)

The people of Jesus' generation (who were in the fourth generation in the cycle) had forty years between Jesus' words spoken in 30 AD and the Roman army's complete destruction of the land, Jerusalem, and the Temple in 70 AD, in which to respond. But, they did not, and judgement came to them just as it did to the people in the days of Jeremiah.

The people were so far gone and the Word of God was so poorly communicated that there was no hope of the masses hearing or understanding the Truth. Their light (philosophies and worldly opinions) was actually darkness. Jeremiah spoke to his own generation, who would face destruction and cultural overthrow:

*How can you say, 'We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us'?
But behold, the lying pen of the scribes has made it into a lie.
The wise men shall be put to shame; they shall be dismayed and taken;
behold, they have rejected the word of the Lord, so what wisdom
is in them?* (Jeremiah 8:8-9, ESV)

The Church has God's Word, God's command, God's blessing, and God's Spirit. The Church has the Truth. The Church is the hope, the light, and the salt for the lost pagan individual and society as a whole. But, if the Church would rather please the pagan and relate to his false realities, then hope is gone. Instead of teaching the lambs the Word of God, the pastors have chosen to entertain the goats. They have let the sheep starve while they built mega nurseries for pits of vipers. This culture is finished because the Church did not empower the saints, but instead, kept dancing to beat of the Canaanite culture in America. The Church will sink with the culture instead of standing to proclaim the Truth.

The democratic system does not produce truth; instead, it must operate on previously recognized truth. Lose truth, lose democracy. A democracy cannot continue to redefine what is "above water" as they sink into the icy sea. People cannot identify light if all they have known is darkness. Democracy is built on truth. Democracy does not define truth. Now the Church sinks into the darkness with its culture. Jesus said it himself, "if salt has lost its taste... it is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet." The church has failed and its trampling by the pagans is deserved.

The saddest part of this story is the most painful. When democracy defines its own truth, it is no longer possible for democracy to maintain itself. When what we have come to love and honor as democracy, fails to provide the "freedom"



we have come to expect, we will inevitably see the rise of tyranny. I expect this process to be fulfilled in this fourth generation.

To put it very clearly, tyranny will replace our "freedom" and in doing so, it will remove the need for the vote of its citizens. Please realize that even in our declining culture our form of democracy today still values individuals - but only because the commodity of political power still lies in the individual's vote - and a vote does not reflect wealth, health, education, religion, color, usefulness, power, or influence. One vote is equal to one vote.

So, the poor and needy are still catered to because they still have a vote, but according to Proverbs 30:14, once that vote is removed (likely and ironically, with the claim of benefiting and protecting the people) it will be replaced by the violence and governmental tyranny that always manifests in the fourth generation. This is the generation that will, as Proverbs 30:14 says, "devour the poor from the earth and the needy from among mankind."

What do you think that means?
What will that look like in a post-democratic America?

If we are in the fourth generation, then we can expect to see the rise to power of "those whose teeth are swords and whose jaws are set with knives to devour the poor from the earth and the needy from among mankind."

With the rise of "those whose teeth are swords and whose jaws are set with knives" over our government, the poor and needy will no longer possess the political commodity of the vote. Current political correct talking points such "love of the poor" and "concern for the underprivileged" will slip away, because today's political "concern" for people is more about a political "need" of people. Do not confuse being used by leadership with being loved by leadership.

In our fourth generation a person's value will dissipate like vapor when that person loses the influence of the vote. Leadership will no longer need the people, so they will no longer need to feign love for people. Instead the poor will be economically consumed and the needy will be mercilessly eliminated from being a burden on society. If we follow the biblical model, the poor, the needy and the oppressed will be forced to match like-for-like or sword-for-sword. This will unleash an age of rioting with multiple assassinations that our blessed nation has never before seen.



Yet, historically speaking, this next step down the rungs of the ladder will be merely a proceeding into the abyss of historical irrelevance where we will join the multitudes of previous nations and cultures that have risen under God's guidance but were later dismissed for their rebellion against his Truth, his Light, and his Absolute Eternal Reality.

In 2007 I wrote about "hope for America's last generation". But, now I write: "The hope is gone. It is over".

The institutional Church of the Western world has failed. Instead of transforming believers with the teaching of the Word of God, the Church instead sought to herd more and more and more people (read, "dollars") into the fold by switching their focus to a group they called "seekers". Instead of transforming the believer, the Church conformed to the declining culture of the "seeker" for one last chance at a piece of the collapsing materialistic culture. In a sense, the Laodicean church has begun to manifest the character of the fourth generation.

We have reached a similar place where Jesus' earthly life intersected with the Jewish culture in 30 AD, and where Isaiah spoke to his people in 712 BC. Is God speaking to us today from across the ages through the words those men spoke to their generations?

His watchmen (prophets) are blind; they are all without knowledge; they are all silent dogs (priests); they cannot bark, dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber.

The dogs have a mighty appetite; they never have enough. But they are shepherds (governmental leaders) who have no understanding; they have all turned to their own way, each to his own gain, one and all.

'Come,' they say, 'let me get wine; let us fill ourselves with strong drink; and tomorrow will be like this day, great beyond measure.'
(Isaiah 56:10-12)

Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit. (Matthew 15:14, ESV)



Section Four CULTURE

"The Instability of the Pagan Society's Foundation on Sand"
(Why Would the Church Seek to Follow This Model?)

"... God's household, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth." – Paul (1 Timothy 3:15), 67 AD

*"Go and tell this people:
'Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.'
Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes."* – Isaiah (Isaiah 6:9-10), 740 BC

"'Look! I am preparing a disaster for you and devising a plan against you. So turn from your evil ways, each one of you, and reform your ways and your actions.' But they will reply, 'It's no use. We will continue with our own plans; each of us will follow the stubbornness of his evil heart.'"
– Jeremiah (Jeremiah 18:11-12), 603 BC

To understand the Titanic voyage the Church is on we must understand the waters she has wandered into without a map - without the light and without the north or the south or the sunrise or the sunset - without in fact, any ability to distinguish between friend or foe, or a secure or treacherous course. The people of God have always lived in the midst of worldly cultures made up of fallen men who were left to make sense of their fate by creating philosophies. But there has also always been an alternate route, because God has always provided natural men with enough sense, direction, care, and mercy for each to find his way to God.

As in all generations the man of God in today's Western culture finds himself in the midst of a pagan society that has made a weak attempt to develop a comprehensive philosophy by which to understand itself. The unbelieving man makes a halfhearted effort to "discover truth" and "find meaning" in this dark world, while at the same time looking over his shoulder to make sure he doesn't get too far out of the shadows that conceal his personal wickedness. The last thing natural man wants to do is actually find the Truth! What could be worse than if that man accidentally stumbled into God's absolute reality and had



all his doubt removed? It is much better to call yourself a God-seeker (even if you are a lazy, haphazard seeker) than to know without a doubt that you, a finite creature, are in rebellion against the infinite, sovereign God, the Creator and Judge of the Universe. It is easier to sleep at night if you convince yourself you have really, really tried.

Natural man is like a person lost deep in a cave who can find his way out by moving toward a light in the distance. Paul told the philosophers in Athens that:

“God made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us.”

(Acts 17:26-27, ESV)

Paul goes on to quote Epimenides, the Cretean philosopher/poet:

“In him we live and move and have our being.” (Acts 17:28)

Paul then tells the philosophers of Athens that “even some of your own poets have” come so close to finding the Truth when they said, “For we are indeed his offspring.” (A quote from the Greek poet Aratus, 315-240 BC, in his poem “Phaninomena” in which he describes the constellations and teaches his discoveries made through his own observations of the solar system.)

By simply using common sense and logic Paul reasoned with the Greek philosophers in Athens that since we (Jews and Greeks) are God’s offspring, or creations, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold, silver, stone, or that God could be described by art or even man’s imagination.

“Being then God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.”

(Acts 27:29)

Not only did Paul rebuke the Greeks of Athens for their incomplete understanding of God’s natural revelation of himself in creation, but even the Roman philosopher Cicero rejected the philosophical errors of the Greek philosopher Homer (from around 750 BC) concerning his misinterpretation of the nature of deity. In 45 BC Cicero wrote:

“I am convinced entirely that that which could affect so many and such great things must be a divine power...I do not imagine the Gods to be delighted with nectar and ambrosia, or with Juventas presenting them with a cup; nor do I put any faith in Homer, who says that Ganymede was carried away by the Gods on account of his beauty, in order to give Jupiter his wine. Too weak reasons for doing Laomedon such injury! These were mere inventions of Homer, who gave his Gods the imperfections of men. I would rather that he had given men the perfections of the Gods!” (Tusculan Disputations, 1. I. c. 26)

Paul then explained the grace that God had given the Greek culture by overlooking their stupid philosophies and ignorant conclusions that missed the obvious revelation God had placed within natural creation. In fact, many Greek poets, philosophers, and prophets had danced all around the natural revelation in their writings and speeches, and had failed to fully recognize the glaring Truth that could be arrived at by simple logic and reason. But, since God has a fixed day in the future when he will hold all men accountable for their understanding (or, not understanding) natural revelation, and since on that day all men will be judged through a man who God had raised from the dead, it was now time to repent!

“The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.” (Acts 27:30-31)

Seven years after his Athens debate Paul builds on this concept of God’s general revelation in the opening chapter of his letter to the Romans written from Corinth in 57 AD. Paul agrees with both Greek and Roman philosophers of his day that God has provided evidence of his existence to all people and at all times through the existence and nature of the created world and in the created reality within which we exist.

“The supreme God holds himself invisible, and it is only in his works that we are capable of admiring him.” (Xenophon, 370 BC, Memorabilia, 1.iv.c.3)

“God the eternal, the chief ruler of the universe and its creator, the mind alone beholds; but that which is produced we behold by sight.” (Plato, 360 BC, Timaeus, Loc. C. 5)

“Thus, though you see not the soul of man, as you see not the Deity, yet, as by the contemplation of his works you are led to acknowledge a God.” (Cicero wrote in 45 BC in his series of books entitled Tusculan Disputations, 1. I. c. 28)

In Romans 1:19 Paul says that God has shown evidence to mankind concerning what may be known about God, God’s invisible attributes (eternal power and the divine nature), and God’s existence, which Paul affirms is clearly perceived since the creation of the world, and in the things he has made. This is the logic of the Greeks from 370 BC, of the Romans of 45 BC, and of Paul, the Jewish Rabbi from Jerusalem, writing to the Romans in Rome from the Greek city of Corinth in 57 AD. The natural world reveals the existence and nature of God.

That was 2,000 years ago. Now, today, in an attempt to explain the origin and details of life with the discovery of DNA, science has admitted that there is an advanced code programed into the chemical makeup of molecular structure. Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft, commented that “DNA is like a software program, only much more complex than anything we’ve ever devised.”

In 2007 I wrote *Hope for America’s Last Generation*, which includes this discussion of idols:

A strange tidbit of information I took away from my years in Sunday school was that idol worship is really, really bad. The problem was that I had never seen an idol. Whenever the Sunday school teacher would talk about idols, I would look around the classroom, trying to figure out if any of my peers were honestly struggling with the temptation to worship idols. I had a feeling nobody was... It was later explained to me that modern idol worship could include money, power, fame, or anything else we might put before God. But that didn’t sound right to me because I knew the people of Israel weren’t having trouble with money, power, or fame. They were worshipping actual stone idols. God was adamant that they not bow down to these graven images. So what would be the equivalent of an actual idol in our society today? ... There were four things an idol did for its worshippers:

1. Explained origin
2. Identified purpose
3. Developed ethics
4. Determined future

Therefore, the equivalent of idol worship in today’s society would have little to do with power or wealth, but would be some kind of world view that’s not biblical. It would be a philosophy that answers the essential questions of life without involving God. (page 20)



Philosophy can be divided into three useful time periods. And, upon these three periods the ideologies, societies and religions of culture can be organized;

Premodern (Up to 1500)

During the “premodern” age the natural and supernatural worlds existed side-by-side. Thus, each had an effect on the other. It was believed that the spiritual world effects events in our natural world, and that our natural efforts influence the unseen world. In the premodern age the spiritual world was seen as a world of reality inhabited by many spiritual beings, such as, demons, spirits, and god - and things like miracles and various superstitions were taken quite seriously. The source of knowledge and the authority for truth (epistemology) came from revealed knowledge from an authoritative source such as a god. Thus, the ones who held that knowledge - or had access to that source of authority - set the direction for the entire culture.

This was a God-centered worldview, and Absolute Truth was a real thing.

A few key events of the premodern age include:

- 4000 BC – Sumer in Mesopotamia
- 3150 BC – Egypt’s First Dynasty
- 900 BC – Assyrian Empire Falls; Babylonian Empire Rises
- 539 BC – Cyrus and the Persian Empire
- 400 BC – Plato
- 350 BC – Aristotle
- 334 BC – Alexander the Great and the rise of the Greeks
- 100 BC – Rise of Roman Empire
- 30 AD – Jesus begins the Church
- 313 AD – Constantine’s Edict of Milan
- 430 AD – Augustine
- 622 – Muhammad begins Islam
- 732 – Charles Martel stops Muslim advance into France at Battle of Tours
- 846 – Muslims sack Rome and Vatican
- 1054 – Greek and Latin Church Splits
- 1096 – Crusades begin
- 1274 – Thomas Aquinas
- 1453 – Muslims take Constantinople from Byzantine Christians

The positive side of the premodern worldview is that there was a belief in God and a spiritual reality that was embraced in daily life. The negative side was that, without the guidance of God’s word or by not embracing God’s reality of



natural revelation, a person could easily get caught up in pantheism (the belief that everything and everyone is god and god is everything and everyone; god is not personal, but an all-encompassing force), polytheism (belief in multiple deities), various superstitions, or animism (the belief that supernatural powers and a soul can exist in the material world in plants, inanimate objects and natural phenomena like waterfalls, caves, mountains, etc).

Modern (1600-1950's)

This is the current view of the majority of people in the Western world today. The focus is on reason, science, logic, and rationalism. The modern age coincides with the Age of Enlightenment (or the Age of Reason), which is generally believed to have begun between 1620 to the late 1700's. Two main approaches to knowing truth existed during this period:

1. Empiricism – knowing through the senses. This became the foundation of modern science as a methodology developed.
2. Reason (logic)

Authority no longer resided solely in the Church (or, in those with access to spiritual things), but transferred to two other groups:

1. Those who could demonstrate the absolute accuracy of their knowledge (i.e., the veracity of what they called “truth”). This class included scientists, scholars, professors, universities, and other institutions of higher learning.
2. Those who had the authority to enforce their logic/reason (governments, kings, militant leaders).

This was a Man-centered worldview, that provided a Method for man to find Truth and the right way. The modern age was focused on human reason, analysis of facts, and the development of individualism, rather than on the established authorities of the past that had held power over man's reason and individualism (namely the institution of the Roman Church and Christendom).

A few key events during this period include:

- 1456 – Johan Gutenberg's printing press
- 1517 – Martin Luther's 95 Theses
- 1543 – Copernicus' "On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres"
- 1626 - Death of Francis Bacon
- 1632 - Galileo's Relative Motion Theory
- 1650's – Scientific Revolution
- 1700's – Age of Enlightenment
- 1727 - Death of Isaac Newton



- 1776 - American Independence
- 1789 – French Revolution
- 1790 – The Rise of Napoleon
- 1799– Industrial Revolution
- 1800's – Age of Romanticism
- 1838 - Darwin's Theory of Evolution
- 1865- Mendel's laws of heredity
- 1905 - Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity
- 1914 - World War I
- 1939 - World War II
- 1945 - USA ends WWII with atomic bomb

Two specific movements within the Modern Age were:

1. Age of Enlightenment – It was argued that knowledge was gained through accumulated experience rather than by accessing some sort of outside truth such as mystical revelation or intuition. Measurement and exact knowledge were encouraged with Newton's development of calculus and optical theories. There was a growing belief that the chaos of the unknown could become clear and everything in the universe could be demystified, cataloged and known. This newly harnessed knowledge could be used by man to control and direct his world.
2. Age of Romanticism – Romanticism was a reaction to the rational, scientific thought in the Age of Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution which resulted. The Age of Romanticism was an intellectual movement that manifested in literature and the arts, but affected the development of education, science and individualism, and eventually grew into nationalism. The focus of Romanticism was individual expression, emotion, and feelings.

The positive side of modernism is its support for the concept of God's absolute truth and that God's truth is logical and attainable at some level through reason. The down side of modernism is its natural development into hyper-belief in human ability to accomplish anything and its rejection of God because an eternal God cannot fit into every single box individually developed through limited human logic.

Postmodern (1960's-present)

Postmodernism is a reaction to the many extremely negative and violent consequences of the Modern era, such as oppressive kings, revolutions, Napoleon, World Wars, Hitler, Stalin, etc. It arose as the questioning of both the man-centered view (Modernism) and the God-centered view (Premodernism).



No longer are people looking for the “right” way, but “any” way.
 No longer are people looking for a group direction, but an individual direction.
 No longer is there room for intolerance.
 No longer can anyone know what is best for any other individual.

Post-modernism’s epistemology (way of discovering knowledge and finding truth) finds the way through pluralism using multiple methods. Thus, people are again willing to look to pre-modern methods for finding truth: spirituality, mysticism, etc. But they are also willing to explore more empirical avenues, even though they know science is no longer the end of the discussion.

Because of this postmodern view concerning truth, authority, absolutes, and knowledge, all previous sources of truth, authority, absolutes and knowledge must be deconstructed. Authority will be dispersed, and hierarchies will be leveled.

This is an Earth/World-centered worldview that embraces the understanding that Pluralism leads to truth and the salvation of man.

A few key events of the post-modern age include:

- 1948 – Israel becomes a nation
- 1948 – Invention of the transistor
- 1948 – Television and mass marketing
- 1962 – Cuban missile crisis
- 1964 – Berkeley Free Speech Movement
- 1975 – Reyerabend’s “Against Method”
- 1980’s – Personal computers and even more mass marketing

The positive things that postmodernism brings to the game include a return to a pre-modern openness to spiritual reality, a recognition that humans are flawed, and a reawakening to the authentic need for relationships and the power of community. Postmodernism’s downfall, though, is its emphatic rejection of absolute truth and its engrained skepticism of any person and any institution that is committed to having an understanding of a portion of God’s absolute reality.

Postmodern attitudes can be seen in the Church in the pragmatic way the Bible is presented (and in some cases, the way it is not presented). The Bible itself is not pragmatic, but its truth is always relevant. But, when a postmodern culture cannot understand the Bible’s relevance they feel the need to prop up the revelation of Scripture with their own personal stories, entertaining

	Premodern	Modern	Postmodern
Defined	Divine revelation is the source of Truth. Find and establish Truth through revelation.	Human reason is the source of Truth. Find and establish truth through human reason and science.	Postmodernism believes it is impossible to correctly describe reality. Truth may exist, but we cannot know it. We cannot recognize, find or judge Truth.
Years	10,000 BC - 1500 AD (several millennia)	1500 - 1945 (several centuries)	1945 - present (several decades)
Events	4000 BC - Sumer in Mesopotamia 3150 BC - Egypt's First Dynasty 900 BC - Assyrian Empire Rises 605 BC - Fall of Assyrian Empire; Rise of Babylonian Empire 539 BC - Cyrus and Persian Empire 400 BC - Plato 350 BC - Aristotle 334 BC - Alexander the Great, Greeks 100 BC - Rise of Roman Empire 30 AD - Jesus begins Church 313 - Constantine's Edict of Milan 430 - Augustine 622 - Muhammad begins Islam 732 - Charles Martel stops Muslim advance in France at Battle of Tours 846 - Muslims sack Rome and Vatican 1054 - Greek and Latin Church Splits 1096 - Crusades begin 1274 - Thomas Aquinas 1453 AD - Muslims take Constantinople from Byzantine Christians	1456 - Johan Gutenberg's printing press 1517 - Martin Luther's 95 Theses 1543 - Copernicus' "On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres" 1626 - Francis Bacon 1632 - Galileo 1680's - Scientific Revolution 1700's - Age of Enlightenment (1620-1780) 1727 - Isaac Newton 1776 - United States 1789 - French Revolution 1789 - Napoleon 1800 - Industrial Revolution 1800-1850 - Romanticism 1858 - Darwin 1865 - Mendel's laws of heredity 1905 - Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity 1914 - World War I 1945 - WWII ends with atomic bomb dropped on Japan by USA	1948 - Israel becomes a nation 1948 - invention of the transistor 1950's - Television enters homes 1962 - Cuban missile crisis 1964 - Berkeley Free Speech Movement 1975 - Reyerabend's "Against Method" 1980's - Personal computers mass market
Philosophy	Ultimate Truth could be known. Knowledge could be acquired by direct revelation from a deity.	Rejection of mysticism in favor of materialism. Enlightenment (1780's) - from Kant, produced French Revolution Romanticism, an opposing intellectual movement, followed the Age of Enlightenment and the French Revolution	All truth is limited, approximate, evolving. No theory can ever be proven true. We can only prove a theory to be false. Physical reality is not deterministic. Scientific concepts are mental constructs. It is extreme skepticism.
Proponents	Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Aquinas, Augustine, Epicurus, Confucius, Anselm, Pythagoras, Machiavelli, Cicero, Sextus Empiricus	Francis Bacon (1562-1626) Rene Descartes (1596-1650) John Locke 1632-1704) Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) Voltaire (1694-1778) David Hume (1711-1776) Isaac Newton (1642-1727)	Friedrich Nietzsche Ludwig Wittgenstein Thomas Kuhn Taborsky Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) Kierkegaard
Values	Divine Revelation Authority Ultimate Truth	New Ideas Tolerance Science	Literacy Knowledge Multiple Religions
Quotes	"Finally, if nothing can be truly asserted, even the following claim would be false, the claim that there is no true assertion." - Aristotle	"Dare to know! Have courage to use your own reason!" - Immanuel Kant (1784)	"The only absolute truth is that there are no absolute truths" -Feyerabend
Pros	Premodern believed in God and a spiritual reality was embraced in daily life.	Modernism supports the concept of absolute truth, it works in God's arena of logic and reason.	Postmodern is open to spiritual reality, recognizes humans are flawed, understands the authentic need for relationships and the power of a community.
Cons	A premodern world void of correct understanding of God's natural revelation would embrace pantheism, polytheism, animism and superstitions that were mere speculation of mysticism, but always destructive.	Modernism developed into a hyper-belief in human ability to accomplish anything. It has to reject the concept of God because God cannot fit into their limited box of human logic and understanding.	Postmodern's downfall is its rejection of absolute truth and its skepticism of anyone or any institution committed to a portion of God's absolute reality. Its pluralistic, relativism is never applicable in science, engineering, technology since this philosophy would utterly fail in those areas.
Buzz Words	• Authority • Revelation	• Reason • Research	• Scientific Proof • Testing • Logic
Interaction with Scripture	"See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways...if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed...For the LORD is your life." (Deuteronomy 30:15-20)	Modernism denies the divine authority of Scripture. It leaves no middle ground for the Bible. The Bible is either inspired by a divine source (which is an impossible position for Modernism) or the Bible is stories, legends and myths mixed with a loose historical account written by men.	The Bible is not clear or understandable as it is. Postmodernism inside the church does not deny the Bible, but it adamantly denies the clarity of Scripture. Postmodernism denies our ability to know what the Bible means. We must access other sources to find meaning and clarity. Even if God is the author, we still do not understand the text without a mystical insight and a more complete understanding through conversations with others (even non-believers).
Produced Results	Premodernism produced cultures dominated by religion, witchcraft, superstition and corrupt spiritual leaders. Eventually the corrupt, unbiblical church led society into the Dark Ages.	Conclusion – Modernism does not work. Modernism produced the atrocious leaders (Hitler killing 6 million; Stalin killing 50 million; etc.) in the 1900's. The absolutes of science and its natural laws developed in the Modern Age failed to adequately explain reality, origins, humanity, truth and morality. This was proven in the 1900's when authoritative governments and dictators defended their views with the "absolutes" of the Modern Age to justify mass killing, world wars and atomic weapons.	Postmodernism is a depressing philosophy. It is difficult to discuss, indirect in its approach and impossible to articulate. In its reaction against the overconfidence of science in the Modern Age when science attempted to explain reality, origins, truth and morals. Postmodernism has deconstructed logic, reality to a useless, directionless level. Postmodernism has delivered society from the hands of absolute scientific tyranny to a freefall into a bottomless pit of chaos.
Decline	The power base moved away from the church and began to settle on politics and in universities. The authority of religion and divine revelation was replaced by kings, governments, scholars, scientists and professors who could enforce or prove their position.	The seeds of destruction produced the fruit of destruction.	Postmodernism cannot sustain a democracy. The only philosophical virtue left is tolerance which is like a medical doctor diagnosing every infection, bacteria, cancer and mental disorder as "normal" and prescribing an antibiotic until the patient gets acclimated to their "normal condition."
Scriptural Response	"They say to the seers, 'See no more visions!' and to the prophets, 'Give us no more visions of what is right! Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions... This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: 'In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.' (Isaiah 30:10-15)	"The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them... their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools..." (Romans 1:18-23)	As to Postmodernism's rejection of absolute truth and light, Jesus' words apply: "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed." (John 3:19-20)

presentations, relevant self-help tips, and other pragmatic information that might keep a postmodern crowd interested. Besides, the humble, self-deprecating postmodern facilitator (not teacher) would never dare claim to understand the Bible.

The deconstructionism that postmodernism applies to culture has also been hard at work deconstructing the clarity of the Bible in the Church. Without the authority of a clear text of Scripture the Church is left with an endless conversation about a mystery that has no story line. So, instead of clearly teaching the text of Scripture so that all may understand, the facilitator meanders through his presentation in conversation style with God's people as the "spirit" leads. It may be interesting to note that the personal, mystical flavor of the Charismatic movement appeared in Western churches along with the rise of postmodernism in Western cultures.

The Church's counter response to the postmodern attack must be to sharpen the edge of the blade of the sword of the Word and to not allow the point of the sword to become dulled by philosophy, idols, relevance and marketing. The Word of God is a spiritual sword that the man of God must keep sharp and tipped with a point.

Paul and Philosophy

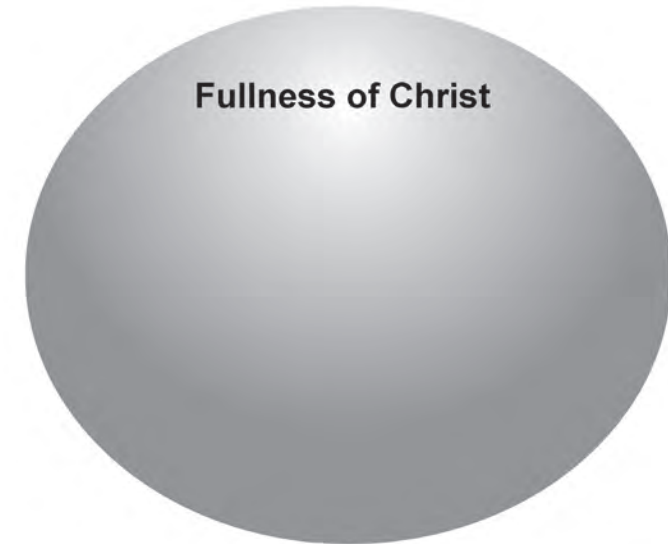
There are several places in the New Testament where Paul addressed the topic of philosophy and worldviews. In 60 AD Paul wrote a letter to the Church of Colosse. At the time, he was being detained in Rome for appearance in court before Emperor Nero. Paul warned the believers of the Colossian church not to confuse the "hollow and deceptive philosophy" of the world with the fullness of Christ.

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. (Colossians 2:6-10)

In contrast to "hollow and deceptive philosophy", Christ himself is described as the "fullness of Deity". Paul presents Christ as the foundation upon which the Colossians should build their philosophy and worldview. The false



philosophies are based on "human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ". I would like to present the "Fullness of Christ" in this illustration:



"Fullness of Christ" is the true philosophy.

Earlier in Colossians Paul had described Jesus Christ as "the image of the invisible God". This description agrees with the rest of Scripture and gives a correct understanding of the Triune God. Jesus is the second member of the Trinity and is eternal God.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.
(Colossians 1:15)

The words "the firstborn over all creation" does not mean that Jesus Christ was created, but emphasize his position in relationship to the created world as the supreme, rightful heir who rules "over all creation". More on that later. On the following page is the next in my sequence of illustrations used to explain the true philosophy of "the fullness of Christ" in contrast to the hollow philosophies that are idol worship:





*Christ is Eternal God and the fullness of Deity lives in Christ
and so the fullness of Christ is equal to the fullness of Deity.
All of creation will come from and through Christ.*

It was Christ, the eternal Son of God, who was the author of creation. Created reality came into existence from Christ's "fullness of Deity".



*Creation came from Christ and demonstrates the glory of Christ,
but creation cannot contain Christ.
All that Christ is cannot be adequately expressed by creation.
All of creation is in Christ. Jesus Christ is the fullness of Deity.*

Notice that God, Christ and the "fullness of Christ" are outside of the box of creation. Creation reflects the Creator, but does not contain the fullness of the Creator. Creation cannot encompass the fullness of Christ who is himself the fullness of Deity. Creation clearly reveals the invisible qualities and the divine characteristics of God, but creation itself does not fully possess, communicate or understand the surpassing eternal nature of God or the "fullness of Christ." This means that creation can reveal certain aspects of God, but the creation cannot reveal all that is God. Christ can contain all of creation, but creation cannot contain all of Christ. Creation can exist and find the fullness of its being in God, but God cannot exist in his fullness in creation.

The heavens declare God's glory and reveal God's knowledge:

*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his
handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals
knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard.
Their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world. (Psalm 19:1-4)*

But, creation cannot contain God:

But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built! (1 Kings 8:27)

The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain him.
(2 Chronicles 2:6 and 6:18)

God cannot be reduced to a temple built by human hands and cannot be limited by a human ideology. We, as creatures made by God, live our full lives in God. We cannot move anywhere in time or space that will be outside of God. Our entire being (spirit, soul and body) is always in God. This is the "fullness of Christ" in which we exist. This same "fullness of Christ", though, cannot be confined or reduced to a place, a portion, or a time in creation:

The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands... 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' (Acts 17:24-28)

As a side note, this "fullness of Christ" or the "fullness of deity" did exist bodily in the man Jesus Christ according to:

- Colossians 2:9, "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form."
- John 1:1-2, 14, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning...The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."
- Colossians 1:19, "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him..."

Creation includes the physical universe, but much more as well. When we speak of the things that Christ created we are speaking of both the material and immaterial parts, of visible and invisible things, of physical and spiritual beings. Creation includes:

1. Angelic beings
2. Concepts of time and gravity
3. All of material space
4. Mental concepts and the soul of man
5. Mountains, rivers and seas
6. Birds, animals and man
7. Sky, stars and galaxies

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.
(Colossians 1:15-16)

It can be shown like this:



A little more detail and definition for Christ's creation can be illustrated like this:



When we begin to understand that of the “Fullness of Christ” is outside the box of creation we can also begin to understand Paul’s explanation of idols and false philosophies in the New Testament. We will use the text of Romans 1:19-32:

What can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. (Romans 1:19-32)

Romans 1:19-20 supports the illustrations presented above concerning God’s creation revealing his nature, but not containing God. The things in creation give man evidence of God’s existence and God’s nature. This is not only revealed to people in Christian nations or believers in church, but all people everywhere at all times.

What can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. (Romans 1:19-20)

An article in *American Psychological Association* from December 2010 states some modern research that supports Paul’s assertion:

A common thread to those cognitions is that they lead us to see the world as a place with an intentional design, created by someone or something. Young children, for example, tend to believe that even trivial aspects of the natural world were created with purpose, according to a series of studies by Boston University psychologist Deborah Keleman, PhD. If you ask children why a group of rocks are pointy, for example, they say something like, “It’s so that animals won’t sit on them and break them.” If you ask them why rivers exist, they say it’s so we can go fishing. Adults also tend to search for meaning, particularly during times of uncertainty, research suggests. A 2008 study in *Science* (Vol. 322, No. 5898) by Jennifer Whitson, PhD, and Adam Galinsky, PhD, found that people were more likely to see patterns in a random display of dots if the researchers first primed them to feel that the participants had no control. This finding suggests that people are primed to see signs and patterns in the world around them, the researchers conclude. People also have a bias for believing in the supernatural, says Barrett. In his work, he finds that children as young as age 3 naturally attribute supernatural abilities and immortality to “God,” even if they’ve never been taught about God... “What we’re showing is that our basic cognitive equipment biases us toward certain kinds of thinking and leads to thinking about a pre-life, an afterlife, gods, invisible beings that are doing things — themes common to most of the world’s religions,” says Barrett...this tendency also set us up to believe in an omnipresent God- like concept. Taken together, it’s easy to see how these cognitive tendencies could allow our minds to create religions built on the idea of supernatural beings that watch over our lives, says Atran, director of research at the *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique* in Paris. Such research also supports the notion that religious thought is in many ways an unavoidable byproduct of the way our minds work. ...“We’ve had this long history of believing that the things of the spirit are in one camp and that science and technology are in another camp,” says Plante, professor and director of the *Spirituality and Health Institute* at Santa Clara University and president of APA’s Div. 36 (*Psychology of Religion*). “If anything, this work reiterates that we are whole people; the biological, psychological, social, cultural and spiritual are all connected.

In another article from November of 2008 Martin Beckford, Religious Affairs Correspondent for *The Telegraph* wrote the following:

Children are ‘born believers’ in God and do not simply acquire religious beliefs through indoctrination, according to an academic. Dr. Justin Barrett, a senior researcher at the *University of Oxford’s Centre for Anthropology and Mind*, claims that young people have a predisposition to believe in a supreme being because they assume that everything in the world was created with a purpose. He says that young children have faith even when they have not been taught about it by family or at school, and argues that even those raised alone on a desert island would come to believe in God. ‘The preponderance of scientific evidence for the past 10 years or so has shown that a lot more seems to be built into the natural development of children’s minds than we once thought, including a predisposition to see the natural world as designed and purposeful and that some kind of intelligent being is behind that purpose,’ he told BBC Radio 4’s Today programme. ‘If we threw a handful on an island and they raised themselves I think they would believe in God.’ ... Dr. Barrett will cite psychological experiments carried out on children that he says show they instinctively believe that almost everything has been designed with a specific purpose. In one study, six and seven- year-olds who were asked why the first bird existed replied ‘to make nice music’ and ‘because it makes the world look nice’. Another experiment on 12-month-old babies suggested that they were surprised by a film in which a rolling ball apparently created a neat stack of blocks from a disordered heap. Dr. Barrett said there is evidence that even by the age of four, children understand that although some objects are made by humans, the natural world is different. He added that this means children are more likely to believe in creationism rather than evolution, despite what they may be told by parents or teachers. Dr. Barrett claimed anthropologists have found that in some cultures children believe in God even when religious teachings are withheld from them. **Children’s normally and naturally developing minds make them prone to believe in divine creation and intelligent design. In contrast, evolution is unnatural for human minds; relatively difficult to believe.** *”(underlining and bold type are mine)*

After claiming that evidence for God’s existence is visible in God’s creation Paul states the problem, which is men themselves and their false philosophies. Men purposely exchange the glorious revelation that God has provided of himself and his character for things that exist within creation itself. So, instead of seeing God clearly through his creation, men choose to see only part of the created world and then adjust their worldviews and develop philosophies to fit that portion of creation they have chosen to focus on.



Now, whichever part of creation man chooses to focus on and build his philosophy around is itself a creation of God, and so is in itself “good” (as identified in Genesis 1:31, “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.”) It was created by God to reflect God and his nature. It is true and right, and a useful reflection of God by design. The problem comes when man tries to explain everything else in creation - including the glorious Creator himself - through that small part of the creation, because no matter how “very good” the favored part of creation selected by man is, it does not have the ability to replace the Creator or the “fullness of Christ.”

Therefore, that man’s worldview is going to be deficient. It cannot be otherwise. If the good thing designed to reveal the Creator is used in the wrong way (i.e., as the foundation upon which man will explain everything) it will lead to disastrous results, since it does not have the capacity to rightly explain other parts of creation. So, the rest of creation will be misrepresented, misunderstood, misused, and messed up by man. This is especially true when that selected thing will be required to compete with the fullness of Christ. Since, the creation cannot handle the “fullness of Christ”, creation will have to suppress the Creator and oppress other equally real parts of creation that cannot be explained. Paul explains it like this in Romans 1:21-23:

For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. (Romans 1:21-23)

“They became futile in their thinking” when they replaced the “fullness of Christ” (“the glory of the immortal God”) with a portion of the created world (“images” to represent the strength and glory of “mortal man” or a flying “bird” or a powerful “animal” and ultimately declining even to bugs.)

The result of this suppression of the “fullness of Christ” and the following of “hollow and deceptive philosophies” (Colossians 2:6-10) results in oppression and philosophical deconstruction. In Colossians Paul says that these “hollow and deceptive philosophies” which replace Christ are dependent on “human tradition and the basic principles of this world.” Creation and the creature (including man himself) become less than God intended because they are now fulfilling a baser function than what God intended when he created them and identified them as “very good”. This lowering of our own humanity and dragging creation with us to a base level is what Paul refers to next, in Romans 1:24-29. In these verses Paul identifies the false philosophies that ultimately dehumanize mankind:



Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness...
(Romans 1:24-29)

Since man built his philosophy (“worshiped and served”) around a part of creation (“the creature”) rather than the “fullness of Christ” (“the Creator”), man dehumanized himself below God’s intended “very good” purpose and deconstructed his world with his “debased mind”. In this dehumanized condition, with God’s reality deconstructed all around him, man is left to organize his world with a philosophy that can only produce the characteristics described in Romans 1:29-31:

- Unrighteousness
- Evil
- Covetousness
- Malice
- Envy
- Murder
- Strife
- Deceit
- Maliciousness
- Gossip
- Slander
- Hatred of God
- Insolence
- Haughtiness
- Boasting
- Inventing of evil
- Disobedience to parents
- Foolishness
- Faithlessness
- Heartlessness
- Ruthlessness



To compensate for their rejection of Truth, people must create a “truth” (that is, an alternate to Truth). However, any alternate truth would actually be a lie. Thus, any philosophy that runs counter to the “fullness of Christ” is:

- Only partial Fullness
- Deviation from Reality
- A twisting of Truth
- A cause of confusion within Creation
- An accusation of deception in the Word of God

Any philosophy or worldview that is in rebellion toward God’s Fullness, Reality, Truth, Creation, and Word is going to be insufficient for the creature (man) to adequately interact with his world - the world that was created by Christ. Every false philosophy will create some form of deficiency that results ultimately in dysfunction, disappointment, destruction and, death.

Romans 1:32 says the people who follow these false philosophies, or idols, know that such vile behavior deserves punishment and death, but far from turning away from it they give approval to others who do the same things. Apparently, they hope to win the spiritual battle by forming a majority that together can hide the light of truth and reality:

Though they know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them, but give approval to those who practice them.
(Romans 1:32)

In order to live a normal life in Christ’s creation, the man who rejects the “fullness of Christ” must balance himself within creation by embracing a philosophy that brings harmony to his daily life by assuming an alternate reality. The man who follows an idol has in, some form, deified a portion of creation. The idol worshipper, or the follower of a false philosophy, has exalted a part of the created Reality to the status of god. This same man must create a philosophy (worldview) by shaping truth and reality to match his favored part of creation. The aligning of “truth” and “reality” to the deified part of creation becomes the false philosophy that balances the unbeliever’s life.

In this scenario there will always be conflict with the Creation, with the Truth, and with the Reality that originates from the “fullness of Christ”. The subjects of these philosophical conflicts will be suppressed or deconstructed so they do not interfere with idolater’s false philosophy. This process is called reductionism because it reduces reality to make it fit into the idolater’s box. But, not everything in Christ’s Creation fits into the box created by an idolater’s false



philosophy. Since idolatry is limited in its thinking, it must imprison or suppress some portion of the “fullness of Christ” that is reflected in creation, or the false philosophy will quickly fall apart.

Some examples of recent idols and their philosophy include:

- Nazism – the idol taken from creation was race
- Communism – the idol taken from creation was economics
- Atheism – the idol taken from creation was human reason
- Materialism – the idol is created matter

In all these cases the part of creation that was chosen in place of the “fullness of Christ” was something Christ had created and originally called “very good.” But, when the created part is separated from Christ and used as the source of origin, purpose, ethics, and future destination, it becomes “very bad”. In order to make the false reality work, the false philosophy naturally begins to deconstruct the Creator’s Truth and Reality. However, this deconstruction will eventually cause a person to live in a way that is dishonoring to God’s intention for them and destructive to other people, things, relationships, circumstances, etc.

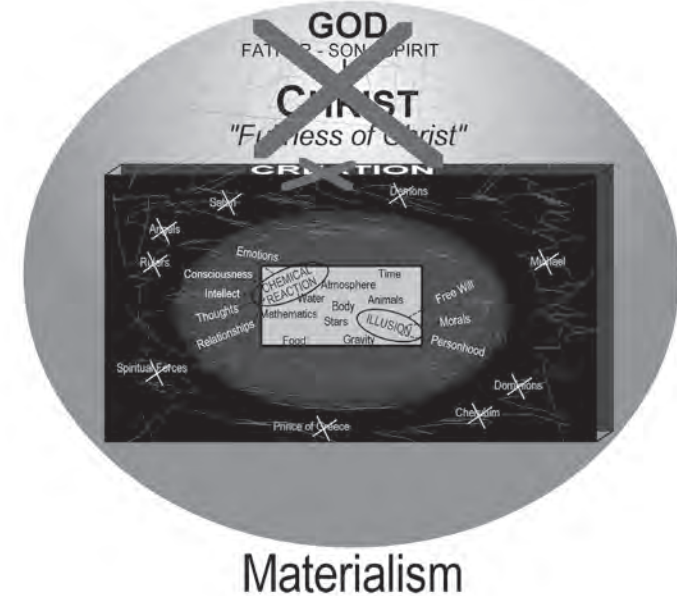
The situation can be illustrated like this: Materialism is an attempt to explain everything by one aspect of creation: the physical world. In the philosophy of materialism everything is explained by physical realities and processes - including all human behavior, which is reduced to merely the result of physical chemical reactions in the brain. So, based on this view, the idol of materialism must reject the soul, the spiritual dimension, and Christ himself. This is necessary if the idolater’s truth and reality are going to match its idol of Materialism.

God declared that material was “very good” in Genesis, but that only remains true if the material is left in its context as a created thing which finds its fullness in the “fullness of Christ”. But, if the glory of the Creator is to be limited by a materialistic definition then there is going to be conflict in the realm of reality and truth, because there are going to be some things that materialism cannot explain with its limited “fullness of materialism” philosophy.

For example, how can the false idol of materialism explain how material itself can be the original source of the existence of the material world? In that case the existence of an original material will have to be used as the explanation, to replace the concept of the original creation of material *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) by an eternal spiritual being. And, if there is an eternal spiritual being that is the cause of creation *ex nihilo*, how could a man who honors the idol of materialism

understand the Creator’s intended glory for any of the things created, but especially non-material things such as free will, moral choices, emotions, relationships, etc.? These things are too big for that idol’s box. They can only find their fulfillment in the “fullness of Christ”.

The illustration below shows what the idol of materialism needs to do to make sense of truth and reality created by Christ.



Materialism

In the “fullness of materialism” philosophy, all of our activity in the realm of the soul is triggered by the material world, which means our thoughts are not necessarily true or false. Or, our morals aren’t necessarily, right or wrong. These questions are decided by the desired outcome in the physical world. But, is the idol of materialism true?

According to materialism our decisions are based merely on a chemical reaction or our perception of an illusion, the outcome produced in the physical world. There is no right or wrong. Nothing is true or false. And, this would include your views on philosophy, including the philosophy based on materialism. This idol cannot defend itself in a reasonable battle of wits with the “fullness of Christ.”

C.S. Lewis sees through this fog when he says in *The Weight of Glory*:

If, on the other hand, I swallow the scientific cosmology as a whole, then not only can I not fit in Christianity, but I cannot even fit in science. If minds are wholly dependent on brains and brains on biochemistry, and biochemistry (in the long run) on the meaningless flux of the atoms, I cannot understand how the thought of those minds should have any more significance than the sound of the wind in the trees.

(“The Weight of Glory”, page 139; <http://tinyurl.com/pc77ncb>)

We need to see the world, reality and other people within the framework of the “fullness of Christ”, and not evaluate someone, something, some thought or any aspect of the created world outside the “fullness of Christ.” It is idolatry to try to place all thoughts and things (visible and invisible) into any philosophy that is not rooted in the “fullness of Christ.” The box of creation (visible and invisible) can only be understood in its correct context (which is “very good” according to the Creation account in Genesis 1:31) when it is understood as part of the philosophy based on “the fullness of Christ.”

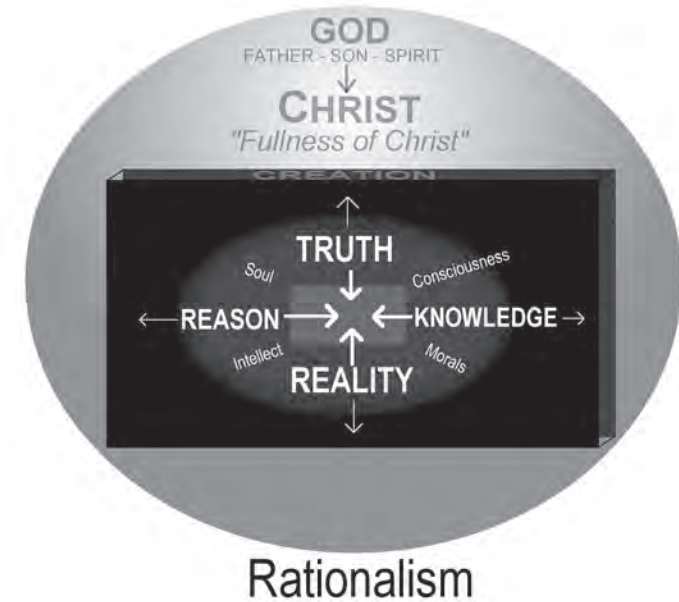
All idolatry (false philosophies) reduces its own philosophical view to an unreasonable level. All idolatry logically defeats itself intellectually, and historically, it destroys its worshippers. By the very nature of idolatry, the followers of a false philosophy will be destroyed by any faithful application of that philosophy in the real world.

Rationalism (1543-present)

Rationalism acknowledges the existence of innate knowledge such as mathematical shapes and concepts, moral concepts, the idea of God, perfection, eternity and the knowledge of personal existence. Rationalists would say these things are true, not because we know them or perceive them with our five senses, but because we can access this information through the process of reasoning. Rationalism is different from empiricism in that the understanding of morality (right and wrong) may be understood through reason, though not through experience. Rationalism describes humans as having an established human nature that is affected by more than our five senses. It says man has freedom to refuse to be manipulated like a machine or trained like an animal, which empiricism claims is the only way man responds.

Rationalism agrees with God’s revelation in the fact that the Creation does have rationally knowable structure, which includes the human mind that

has both structure and reasoning ability. But, Rationalism fails when our human reasoning doesn’t match reality when tested in the physical world. For example, Aristotle reasoned that a heavier object would fall to the earth faster than a lighter object, but Galileo showed through demonstration that this was not true. Intellectual reasoning and rational knowledge can be wrong and misrepresent the true physical world (not mention how wrong it can be about the spiritual world).



Empiricism (1600-1799)

Another example that illustrates the vanity of idolatry and the dead end of a false philosophy, can be seen in the philosophical theory of empiricism. Rising out of the 1600-1700’s was a theory which stated that all knowledge comes from sense experience. The philosophical view of empiricism holds that there is no such thing as innate knowledge. Anything we know must come through the five senses or be developed through the process of combining two or more sensual experiences by reasoning in the mind. Empiricism’s most famous argument is formed in the question, “How would you know what the color blue looks like if you were born blind?” The point the empiricist makes is that you must learn “blue” through your sense of sight. Without that sense you could not possibly obtain any knowledge of blue. Empiricists argue that reason is not the only way to obtain knowledge; in fact, the empiricist would use examples from history where reason was proven wrong once experience with the subject matter took place.

Empiricism does agree with God’s physical creation in acknowledging that it can be experienced with the five senses. Jesus was not afraid to appeal to man’s rational reasoning ability, but if that failed to stimulate understanding and faith, Jesus appealed to his crowd’s senses concerning the evidence they perceived from the world around them. In the verses below, Jesus uses both rationalism and empiricism as sources of knowledge, even revelation knowledge:

Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. (John 14:10-11)

Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk?’ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins—he said to the paralytic— ‘I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.’ And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, ‘We never saw anything like this!’ (Mark 2:9-12)

Jesus used empirical evidence as well as argumentation steeped in rationalism. This is the case throughout Scripture, in both the Old and New Testaments.

The philosophical problem with empiricism is that it limits natural revelation and completely ignores special revelation.



Empiricism
(1600-1800)



Romanticism

Romanticism was an intellectual movement that appeared between 1800-1850 in opposition to the worldviews coming from the Age of Enlightenment: Materialism, Rationalism, and Empiricism. The Enlightenment had created the impression that humans were mere machinery in an orderly physical world. In contrast, Romanticism embraced the free will of man and human creativity at a time when the Western world was witnessing the rise of the Industrial Revolution.

Once again, the world saw a portion of God’s created reality that it recognized, embraced, promoted and celebrated as the “fullness” of truth. But, as in the past, a “very good” part of God’s Creation was forced to the center and turned into the focal point of all reality. The truth of the human experience would now be limited to and explained by only emotion and intuition, excluding rationalism and reason. The “fullness of Christ” was rejected and replaced with individual imagination.

Just as the Age of Enlightenment had thrown off the bondage of superstition and the mysticism of misguided religion, the Romantics of this age rejected the shackles of natural law. Science and rationality were not honorable virtues when compared to the greater values of emotion, passion, individualism, imagination and the subjective creativity of the man freed from the restraints of the natural, mechanical, material world. Romanticism accepted a reality created by human choice and human will, instead of an ordered material world existing under the supervision of man. The art of this period focused on shipwrecks, uncontrolled cataclysmic extremes, and the uncontrolled power of nature.



Romanticism
1800-1850



Eventually the pendulum of idolatry would swing again as men searched for the balance that is only found in the “fullness of Christ”, and Romanticism gave way to the philosophical movement in the second half of the 1800’s known as Realism.

Paul’s Theology and Philosophy

Paul directly addressed the Greek philosophy that had entered into the Corinthian church when he wrote:

For it is written: ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.’ Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. (1 Corinthians 1:19-21)

Paul was not anti-intellectual. Instead, Paul sees intellect as being in the Creator. What Paul is against is trying to place Christ (the Creator) into an intellect. Intellect can discuss Christ, but intellect cannot exhaust Christ. Christ can both complete intellect and transcend its boundaries.

Paul goes on to say in 1 Corinthians 1:30-31 –

It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God — that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”

Again, it is not that Paul was anti-intellectual or even anti-philosophical. Although Paul’s writings have been understood as anti-intellectual, anti-philosophical and, even anti-logic by early church fathers, modern believers, and atheistic philosophers. It appears that even Augustine began to lead the Church and the western world into the Dark Ages with this very misleading understanding of what Paul said.

Charles Freeman gets this point wrong in his excellent book, *The Closing of the Western Mind*, when he tries to explain Paul’s words to the Corinthians like this:

In his first letter to the Corinthians (1:25) he writes, ‘The wisdom of the world is foolishness to God.’ There is something of the mystic in Paul’s disregard of logic (and paradox in the way he uses his considerable rhetorical skills to attack the very intellectual tradition of which rhetoric was part). This disregard had unfortunate consequences. As Paul’s writings



came to be seen as authoritative, it became a mark of committed Christian to be able to reject rational thought, and even the evidence of empirical experience. Christians would often pride themselves on their lack of education, associating independent philosophical thinking with the sin of pride...By proposing that Christian faith (which exists in the world of muthos) might contain ‘truths’ superior to those achieved by rational argument (logoi) it was Paul, perhaps unwittingly in that he appears to have known virtually nothing of the Greek philosophical tradition he condemned, who declared the war and prepared the battle field. (Freeman, Charles, “The Closing of the Western Mind: The Rise of Faith and the Fall of Reason”; First Vintage Books Edition, February 2005, page 120)

On the contrary, Paul was not dismissing logic, philosophy, reason or reality. Paul was not replacing facts with faith. Paul was condemning the world for having dismissed the fullness of logic and for accepting an incomplete philosophy. The world had misused reason in order to rearrange the facts to defend its various false realities. Paul was not anti-intellectual, but was putting the intellect of man in its proportionately proper position in discovering the fullness of Christ, the Creator. Paul still used mathematical facts and language skills. Paul still sailed at sea and traveled on the Roman road system. But, he saw Christ as the ultimate underlying personal force for these realities - a force that had to be in place and able to function under what would eventually be understood to be laws of nature and scientific principles. Nothing could be a clearer statement of Paul’s view of intellect and philosophy than Romans 1:19-20:

What may be known about God is plain . . . for since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made. . . .

So, Paul does not dismiss reality, but instead considers it to be part of God’s revelation of himself to man. There is undeniably room in the box labelled “Fullness of Christ” for reason, logic, scientific law, philosophy, intellect, and on and on and on. The problem comes when one of these two things happen (and, sometimes they happen at the same time):

1. Man tries to fit the fullness of Christ into scientific law or some other aspect of the created world
 - a. The fullness of scientific law, discovered and undiscovered, must fit into the fullness of Christ
 - b. The fullness of Christ could never fit into scientific law which is itself limited to the material creation of Christ



2. Man attempts to rearrange the created order (scientific law, human relations, government, morality, etc.) to reflect his own fallen nature:

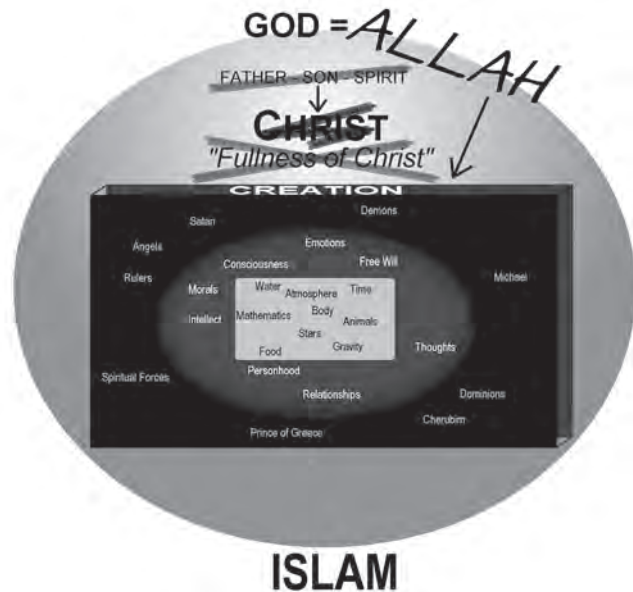
- a. Into man's own image, instead of the glory of God
- b. Into man's own desires, instead of God's plan
- c. Into man's own will, instead of the will of God

The Philosophy of Islam

Islam rejects the Trinity and so rejects the divine character trait of love and personhood of God. Only God in three persons can share the personal attributes of love. As C. S. Lewis said:

All sorts of people are fond of repeating the Christian statement that 'God is love,' but they seem not to notice that the words 'God is love' have no real meaning unless God contains at least two persons. Love is something that one person has for another person. If God was a single person, then before the world was made, He was not love.

If it is said that God's love presented God the need to create man in order to express his love, then that means God was not complete for all of eternity until man was created to meet God's need. Does the phrase "God's need" bother you? If this position were developed and held as doctrine it would have to be labeled as heretically in opposition to Scriptural teaching and thousands of years of Jewish and Christian understanding of God.



ISLAM

Thus, the Trinity (God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit) unified in the Godhead for all eternity follows logically from God's nature of love and personhood. When the word "love" is used do not think of emotional love as much as you think of "1 Corinthians 13 love" (and, do not think of 1 Corinthians 13 as a wedding poem!). The love described in 1 Corinthians is a love that describes the selfless service and desire for unity of purpose among parts of a body working as one for a common goal. 1 Corinthians 13 is the center chapter of three chapters in which Paul talks to the Corinthian church about working together as an organization of people with spiritual gifts from God, the Trinity. 1 Corinthians 13 is preceded by chapter 12, where he defines spiritual gifts in the body of Christ, the Church. Chapter 14 then describes how the Church should function as a unified body empowered by the concept of love.

So, when Islam rejects the Trinity it also rejects the personhood of God, and in doing so, reduces God's characteristic of personal love down to simple absolute dominion. This concept of God eliminates any ability for humans to have a free will response to God's love and makes it impossible for humans to manifest the divine characteristic of love, since the Muslim deity (Allah) by definition does not have love. Nor, does Allah have personhood. This fact is manifested in the Muslim worshipper's response to his god, because the only way man can respond to the absolute power of the Islamic deity is with submission.

In fact, as many know already, the Arabic word "islam" means "submission" or "surrender". Thus, the way Islam manifests the nature of its god is as oppression by dominion. Muslims must reduce the fullness of Christ, the personhood of the Trinity, and the nature of the true Godhead into the false philosophy of the absolute fatalism of the Muslim's unavoidable submission to Allah. Thus, the Muslim must dominate his world and conquer all life and people in any way possible, including the use of traps and deceit, lies and manipulation, war, intimidation and laws.

Muslims imitate the nature and character of their god by catching (aka, "converting") men, like men trap animals. Muslim philosophy must force the "fullness of Christ" and his creation into its idolatrous box. Islam deconstructs anything that does not fit into the box by making it something less than Jesus Christ, the Creator and Second Member of the Trinity, intended. People created in the image of the Eternal God must become less than the personal God of love intended them to be. Women and children must be forced into obedient submission and used by men who reflect the philosophy of the false god they have submitted to.

Since the god of Islam has no personhood those who worship him cannot worship him in a personal relationship. Islamic worship is mechanical, and

includes the repetitious recitation of the Koran by Muslim worshippers, who need not understand what they are saying, because the mere act of submission is all that this idolatrous philosophy can achieve. In Christianity, it is the understanding of the Truth that will renew a worshiper's mind and empower him to discern right from wrong and fulfill God's will in time and eternity. In Islam, however, even mindless recitation and mechanical ritual is the worship required to demonstrate adequate submission to the will of its god.

Yet, the worshippers of Allah were created by Jesus Christ, in the image of the Trinity, with personhood and capacity for love and a relationship with the true God. Sadly, the Islamic religion cannot handle the "fullness of Christ" and so Muslim worshippers must deconstruct the very Reality that Christ created them for.

As Paul prays in Ephesians 3:17-19:

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:17-19)

"Who is the liar? It is the man who DENIES THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST. Such a man is the ANTI-CHRIST - HE DENIES THE FATHER AND THE SON." (1 John 2:22)

"Every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the ANTI-CHRIST." (1 John 4:3)

"Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the ANTI-CHRIST." (2 John 7)

GOD = ALLAH

Attributes of **Allah**:
 - nonpersonal
 - knowledge
 - power
 - will
 - life
 - speech
 - hearing
 - sight

FATHER - SON - SPIRIT

CHRIST
 "Fullness of Christ"

CREATION

"O People of the Book! Do not exaggerate in your religion nor utter aught concerning God save the truth. The Messiah Jesus son of Mary was only a Messenger of God. So believe in God and His messengers, and say not Three - Cease! (it is) better for you - God is only One God. Far be it removed from His transcendent majesty that He should have a son" (From Quran 4:171 and was inscribed inside the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem in 692 AD)

ISLAM

"Islam" means = "**SUBMISSION**"
 ("muslim" means "**one who submits** [to God])

Worshippers of Allah cannot have a personal relationship with an impersonal God whose lack of personhood cannot have love. Muslims can merely submit to the impersonal "power" with ritual and recitation. Muslims interact with the Creation of Christ by conquering and inflicting dominion.

From Wikiislam.net: (http://wikiislam.net/wiki/The_Meaning_of_Islam)

Many people have wrongly attempted to equate the word Islam with peace by showing that Islam, meaning 'submission', shares a root word with Salaam, meaning 'peace'. But if such relationships between the meanings of Arabic words can be created then that would imply that there is a relationship between one of the derivations of the infinitive Salama, meaning the stinging of the snake or tanning the leather, and Salam, meaning peace; a relationship which obviously does not exist.

The Compendium of Muslim Texts, compiled by the USC-MSA, the Muslim Students Association at the University of Southern California, confirms this understanding:

Misconception 1 - Islam is "the religion of peace" because the Arabic word Islam is derived from the Arabic word "Al Salaam" which means peace.

- It might seem strange to think of this as a misconception, but in fact it is. The root word of Islam is "al-silm" which means "submission" or "surrender." It is understood to mean "submission to Allah." In spite of whatever noble intention has caused many a Muslim to claim that Islam is derived primarily from peace, this is not true. Allah says in the Qur'an (translated):
 [2:136] Say (O Muslims): We believe in Allah and that which is revealed to us and that which was revealed to Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus received, and that which the prophets received from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we have surrendered. [Arabic "Muslimoon"]
- A secondary root of Islam may be "Al-Salaam" (peace), however the text of the Qur'an makes it clear that Allah has clearly intended the focus of this way of life to be submission to Him. This entails submission to Him at all times, in times of peace, war, ease, or difficulty.

Conclusion

Within God's Reality there is enough evidence for God's existence for him to be recognized, pursued, and known by man. But, also within that Reality is the fact that patience, mercy, and the effort to reach out to man will eventually be removed. God's incredible attempt to surround us with the revelation of his eternal being through the apparent endlessness of space, the unfathomable concept of time, the limitlessness of the atomic world, the enormous mathematical precision of minuscule genetics, and on and on - through the unexplorable complexities of personhood and the spiritual dimensions will eventually come to an end.

If these concepts are suppressed by our false philosophies, all that is left is the dark hopelessness of the alternative. There is a point where God gives individuals and cultures over to the very philosophies that have been used by men to rebel against Truth by defining and explaining a reality that does not actually exist. These rebellious philosophies will be devoured in judgment when met face-to-face with the "fullness of Christ". The verses below explain God's method, and warn of the wrath that Truth and Reality will bring upon the empty philosophies of the world and those who have embraced them.

Romans 1:24, 26, 28

"God gave them up" is repeated three times in these verses.

Psalms 44:11

"You gave us up to be devoured like sheep and have scattered us among the nations."

Deuteronomy 32:20

"I will hide my face from them," he said, "and see what their end will be; for they are a perverse generation, children who are unfaithful."

Amos 8:11

"The days are coming," declares the Sovereign LORD, "when I will send a famine through the land— not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD."

John 9:4

"As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work."

Psalms 115:4 and 8

"But their idols are silver and gold, made by human hands... Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them."

Psalms 135:15

"The idols of the nations are silver and gold, made by human hands."

Ephesians 4:14

"Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ."

Colossians 2:8

"See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ."

Proverbs 1:24-32

"Since you rejected me when I called and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand, since you ignored all my advice and would not accept my rebuke, I in turn will laugh at your disaster; I will mock when calamity overtakes you -- when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and trouble overwhelm you. Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me. Since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the LORD, since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke, they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes. For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them."

Section Five**ISLAM**

When considered as a philosophy in light of Romans chapter one and Greek thinking, Islam gets it right. As a monotheistic religion Islam agrees with the view Romans chapter one describes as being clearly evident to all mankind. Abraham left the polytheistic religions of the ancient Chaldeans in Mesopotamia to follow the one true God. Moses led Israel out of Egypt and away from Egypt's pluralistic religion that worshiped multiple deities in order that Israel might worship, obey and serve the one true God. Likewise, Islam arrives at the same conclusion that there is only one true God. This is unlike the ancient religions of the Assyrians, Greeks, etc., and very different from many other religions that have come down to our modern world such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism. Islamic belief can be summarized like this:

- God created the world and all that is in it
- One should not worship other gods
- At the end of time, God will judge all people

One of the great services Islamic thinkers have provided the world is their advancement and development of Aristotle's concept of the Unmoved Mover, or the First Cause. This Greek cosmological argument was fully embraced by Islam, and began to be developed by Islamic scholars (primarily from the Sunni tradition) in the 800's AD. Over the next 400 years the Islamic cosmological argument developed into what we know today as the Kalam cosmological argument.

The Kalam cosmological argument attempts to prove the existence of the one God by starting with the existence of the world (the created universe) and arguing back to prove the necessary existence of God. The point of the Kalam argument is to say that the only adequate explanation for the existence of the world we live in is that it was created by God. This is exactly Paul's basis for stating in Romans chapter one that all men stand before God guilty, with full knowledge of his existence. All men are without excuse. In the 1200's the basis of the Kalam presentation entered the world of the Christian Scholastic movement through Christian philosophers such as Thomas Aquinas. On the next page is a basic diagram working through the Kalam argument of cosmology.

False: Questions?: **True:**

Does the universe exist?

No Yes

- impossible, it is here - we and the universe
- is it imagined? No - are here in reality

Was there a beginning?

No Yes

- impossible since it exists - everything has a beginning
- is universe eternal? No - number, measure = beginning

Was the universe caused?

No Yes

- Is universe endless? No, - everything has a cause
it is running out of energy - something greater has
caused universe

What was the cause?

Random, Directionless Force A Personal Agent

- tornados build houses? No. - a personal agent
- shaking makes a watch? No. - a purposeful planner

What was the cause like?

Limited to the Universe Separate from Universe

- Universe is self-existing? No. - God is powerful, free,
- Creation worship is idolatry intelligent, timeless,
- Is god nature, animals, man? No immaterial, causless

Islam's theological failure was its rejection of the revelation of God given to the Jewish prophets, to Jesus Christ and to the Apostles of the Church. Instead, Islam accepts the revelation of Muhammad who took his followers to a deviant revelation not from God and an alteration of the revelation that had already been received and proven true and authentic. The false prophet Muhammad derailed the brilliant cosmological argument the Muslims would develop from Aristotle's Greek philosophy before it even got started. Instead of accepting the Jewish and Christian revelation of the mystery of the Creator revealed to and recorded by the prophets and apostles, Muhammad rejected the eternal Son of God. Muhammad denied that deity had come in the flesh, and absolutely rejected God the Father and the Trinity. After the revelation of God in nature (Romans 1 and Acts 17), Paul referred to the mystery of God which is



not revealed in nature but is instead revealed through the Church. Paul called this revelation "the pillar and foundation of the truth" and referred to it as "the mystery of godliness" in 1 Timothy 3:15-16:

If I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth. Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great:

*"He appeared in a body
was vindicated by the Spirit,
Was seen by angels,
Was preached among the nations,
Was believed on in the world,
Was taken up in glory."*

In this verse Paul speaks of the very mystery of God as truth not revealed in nature, but given to the Church. The "mystery of godliness" concerns the manifestation of the eternal God in the flesh and the reality of the Trinity (which includes the Spirit and the glory of God the Father in heaven). This "mystery of godliness" can be contrasted with the "mystery of Babylon" spoken of in Revelation in reference to the kingdom of the Antichrist which will deny that God came in the flesh and that God is a Trinity.

Paul follows this verse at the end of chapter 3 in 1 Timothy with these very next verse in chapter 4:1:

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.

The apostles faced many false philosophies and devious religions of the pagans as they expanded the message of the Gospel into the Gentile world where either a multitude of gods were worshiped, or the existence of God was intellectually rejected. Still, only one philosophy is identified in Scripture as the spirit of the Antichrist. It was a spirit, or a philosophy, that was already active in the first century, but was later to come into our world as a religion and eventually, at the right time, will manifest fully as a person (2 Thessalonians 2:7-9). It was a philosophy or religious perversion already developing in the first century when contemporary Greek philosophy was mixed in with the revelation of Jesus and the apostolic teaching.

This spirit was not an attack on the general revelation received through creation, or the perversion of deifying a part of creation like the false religions



of the ancient world, or even the many false philosophies of the modern world (materialism, secular humanism, etc.). The attack came against the revelation of the mystery of deity – the Trinity and the Son of God in the flesh.

This is the same attack the Apostle John warned about in 1 John, 2 John, and Revelation.

In the Islamic attack on the Trinity of the Godhead, God the Son, and God in the flesh was denied, but the God who created the universe, maintained the universe, and would one day judge the universe was retained. Islam correctly identifies the Creator, but rejects the True God. Islam understands the natural revelation, but rejects the mystery. This is the most dangerous of false religions.

According to John, this false philosophy of the first century was the spirit of the Antichrist who would eventually emerge in time as a world-dominating religion that embraced the absolute authority of the creator, but denied the personhood of God, the Father God, the eternal Son of God, and the deity of the man Jesus Christ. Eventually, this spirit will manifest in time as a man who will himself claim to be God.

- 1 John 4:2-3 - *“By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.”*
- 1 John 2:22 – *“Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the Antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.”*
- 1 John 2:18 – *“Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come.”*
- 2 John 7 – *“For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the Antichrist.”*
- Revelation 13:11 – *“Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon.”*
- 2 Thessalonians 2:7, *“For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed.”*

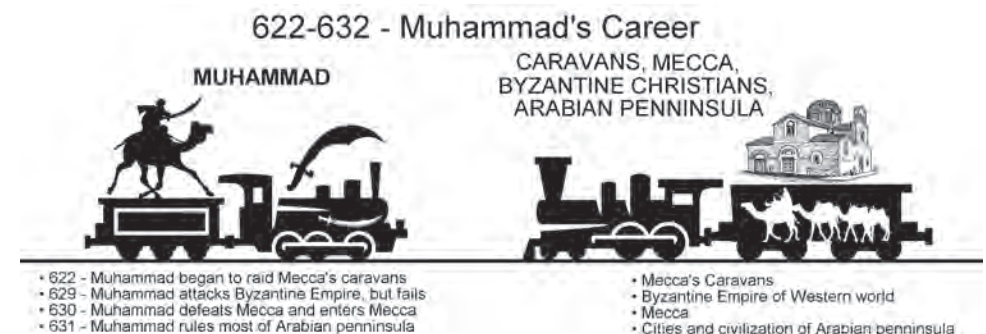
Islam takes Jewish and Christian eschatology and recasts it with an Islamic apocalyptic flavor.

Muslims do not deny the existence of Jesus, and the Muslim image of Jesus is not hostile. It is, however, a reframing and a redefining of who Jesus really is. In the Islamic tradition, Jesus is a key prophet who will return by descending back to earth as a faithful Muslim who arrives early enough to play a major role in the days leading up to the End. In one Muslim tradition Jesus returns by descending into Damascus, Syria to a spot which is today marked by a white minaret called the Minaret of Jesus located on a corner of the Umayyad Mosque. The Muslim vision of the end of the world incorporates two important strands of Judeo-Christian heritage:

1. Messianism, an idea that is intimately associated with the Jewish faith
2. Millenarianism, a central element of the Christian economy of salvation (D, page xi)

The Muslim Messiah is called the Mahdi. When he appears in history this man will be a distant descendant of the Prophet Muhammad and, according to some traditions, he will also be called Muhammad. The Mahdi will lead an army of faithful Muslims in an apocalyptic victory over the heathen.

Muslim history is a continuous flow of revolutionary movements that have attempted to present the Islamic apocalyptic view as immediately imminent, or having already begun. This is a typical unification technique and justification process used since Islam began. The first step in these so-called apocalyptic events that have broken out over the past 1400 years, is typically the identification of the Mahdi, either by his committed followers who are acting on his behalf or through self-proclamation (D, page xi).



With the death of Muhammad from a sudden illness in 632 the Muslim community was left without leadership. Muhammad had left no instructions, political plan, or government/constitution for his religious community for

when he was gone. The Muslim religious community, which covered all of the Arabian Peninsula, pragmatically decreed the need and the rightful place for a successor to fill Muhammad's leadership. The Arabic term for "succession" is "khilafa", or "caliphate." The caliph was the successor to the Prophet Muhammad's position. The caliph would be the supreme leader. The first four caliphs ruled from 632-661 during what is known as the Golden Age, although dissention within the Muslim community grew.



632-661 - Second Generation takes Middle East and North Africa

MUSLIMS

JERUSALEM, SYRIA, NORTH AFRICA,
IRANIAN EMPIRE, ANTIOCH and ALEXANDRIA

- 632 - Muslims conquer Meopotamia and Syria
- 634 - Muslims conquer Christians in Israel
- 635 - Muslims take Damascus from Christians
- 637 - Muslims conquer Jerusalem
- 641 - Muslims conquer north to Black Sea and Caspian Sea
- 642 - Muslims conquer Egypt

- Israel
- Jerusalem
- Egypt
- Iranian Empire
- Antioch, Damascus, Alexandria
- Black Sea, Caspian Sea

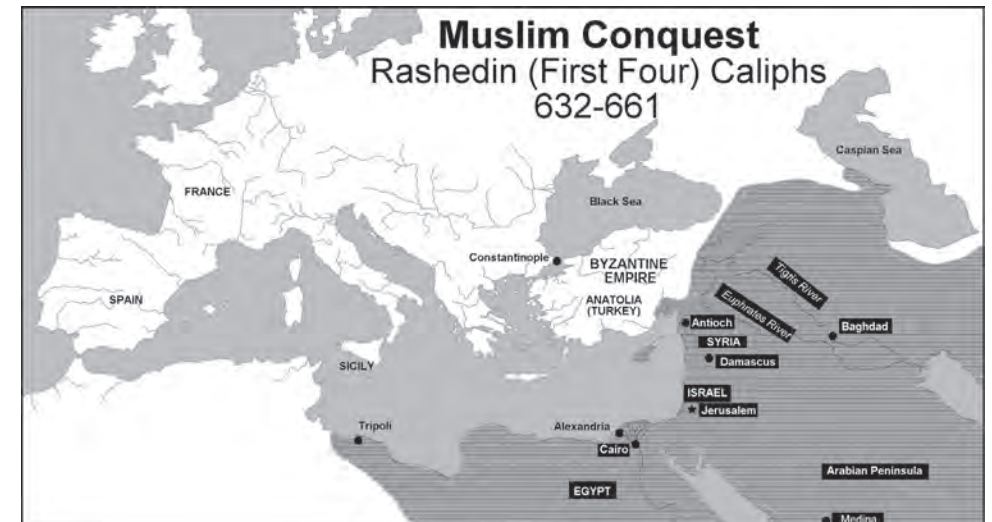
632-634: The first caliph to succeed Muhammad was Abu Bakr. He died after only two years.

634-644: The second caliph was 'Umar who ruled for ten years and lead an unstoppable expansion of Islam outside the Arabian Peninsula by defeating the Byzantine Empire, the Sassanid Empire, and Egypt

644-656: The third caliph was 'Uthman, who was actually one of Muhammad's first companions. 'Uthman used an alternative approach to leadership. Instead of focusing on continued expansion he focused on strengthening his family's privileges and his family's ability to start a dynasty succession. The military generals on the front lines disapproved. His city of Medina was besieged in 656 by Muslim rebels from Egypt. 'Uthman was assassinated in the revolt.

656-661: The fourth caliph was Ali ibn Abi Talib, a cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad. Ali is believed to be the first young male to accept his Uncle Muhammad's message when he became a Muslim at the age of twelve. In 656 Ali became the caliph with the support of the military. The Muslims from Syria accused Ali of instigating the Egyptian rebellion that had killed the previous caliph 'Uthman, but the Muslims in Iraq remained loyal to Ali. The Syrian Muslims rebelled against Ali while the Iraqi Muslims continued to support him. The Syrian Muslims became known as the Sunni and Ali's loyal Muslims in Iraq became known as the Shias. In a clash in the Euphrates valley in 657 the Iraqi Shias had the Syrian Sunnis defeated when the Syrian forces emerged with copies of the Qur'an lifted high in the air on the tips of their spears. Ali gave them peace, but in 661 he was assassinated. Ali is considered by the Shias to be the first Imam after Muhammad, but the Sunnis consider Ali to be the fourth and final rightly-guided caliph.

661: The Shias of Iraq accept Ali's son Husayn as the fifth caliph, but the Sunnis of Syria put forth Mu'awiyah, the general of the army that had been defeated by Ali.



661-680: Mu'awiyah makes Damascus the capital of the Muslim Empire and begin the Umayyad Dynasty that will last until 750. But, when Mu'awiyah dies in 680 the Shias of Iraq present Husayn, the son of Ali, as the true caliph. Since Ali had married Muhammad's daughter Husayn would have been the grandson of Muhammad. The Sunni Umayyads from Syria neutralized the Shias from Iraq, but both military camps claimed to be the Messenger of Allah and produced quotes from the Prophet Muhammad to prove their legitimacy. Much of the Muslim apocalyptic literature and theory comes from these days of early conflict and the rise of the Shias and the Sunnis.

In 683 the complicated relations between the Iraqi Shias and the Syrian Sunnis became inflamed when Syrian troops plundered Medina for three days while the revolting Muslims from Medina retreated into Mecca. The Syrian troops besieged Mecca for two months, even using catapults to hurl stones and posts of burning naphtha onto the Kaaba in Mecca which is the large cube shaped building inside the Great Mosque in Mecca, the holiest place in Islam. It was at this time the ancient Black Stone was broken into three pieces.

The Sunni Umayyad troops retreated from Mecca where Ibn al-Zubayr was proclaimed caliph in the Great Mosque in Mecca which is called the "noble sanctuary" or "sacred enclosure" (al-haram al-sharif). Ibn al-Zubayr was not universally recognized by Islam since he was one of three living caliphs at that time.

In 692 the Sunnis of Syria had restored order among the Shias in Iraq and so they returned to Mecca for a seven month siege that drove away thousands of the false caliph's supporters. Ibn al-Zubayr was killed in the fighting near Kaaba. These were the years when many of the hadiths were inspired and recorded. These became fuel for new and creative apocalyptic accounts used to detail future events.

During this time the Muslim Shias in Iraq refused to accept either the caliph of the Sunnis in Damascus or the imposter caliph from Mecca. The Shias instead supported the concept of the supremacy of the "Imam" as the leader. "Imam" literally means "the one who stands in front" or "the one who walks in front". The Imam would be the "rightly guided" one sent by Allah to reestablish justice on earth. Practically speaking, if this "rightly guided" one had actually been identified in Iraq and presented to the Muslim world he would have been killed by the Umayyad Dynasty, but if he was left unidentified and unrevealed, he would not face the military forces of the ruling Sunni caliph. So, the Shia Imam became known as the concealed Imam or the Imam hidden away from



humanity (although, realistically speaking, mainly hidden away from the rival Sunni forces) until the appropriate time for his appearance to the Muslim world.

At the right time, this concealed Imam, the Mahdi, would march from the east surrounded by black banners (or, flags) to direct the military destruction of the enemies of true Islam. Again, in the minds of the Iraqi Shias around 700 AD the enemies of true Islam were the Sunni Muslims of Syria, the Umayyad Dynasty. This is the origin of the two branches of Islam, and of the hidden Imam of the Shias, the coming Mahdi, who cannot be defeated because he cannot be found. Yet, the hope of his appearance one day has been the source of encouragement and hope for Shias for 1300 years.

Two verses from the supposedly recorded sayings of the Prophet Muhammad that Shias use for textual support are these popular Hadiths:

"Members of my family will suffer reverses, banishments, and persecutions until people come from the east with black banners. They will ask for charity, but they will be given nothing. Then they will fight and they will be victorious."

"Three men, one of them the son of a caliph, will fight in front of your treasure house. None of them will gain control of it. Black banners will then be raised from the east...When you see him, pledge him allegiance, even if you must wait in the snow, for it is him, the Mahdi." (From Encyclopédie de l'Islam, 8 volumes)

In 747 Abu Muslim led an anti-Umayyad uprising in Khurasan (on the border of Persia and Afghanistan). He used apocalyptic symbols to motivate his troops by marching under black flags as the Mahdi would do.

In 749 the Umayyad Dynasty was overthrown.

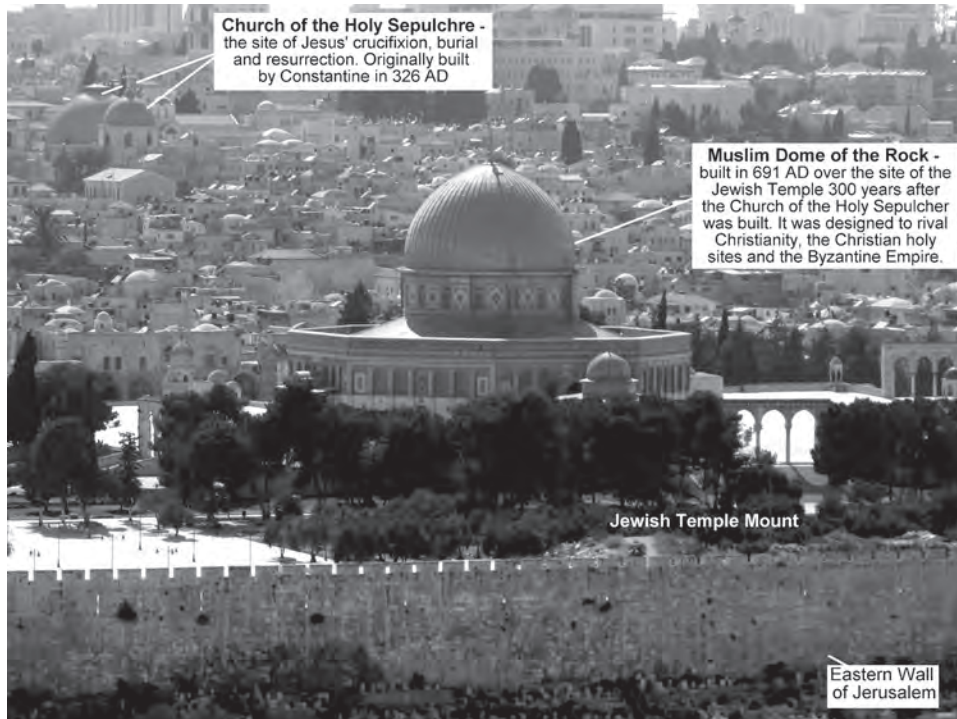
The Recognized Caliphates

1. The Rashidun Caliphate (632-661) ruled from the Arabian Peninsula
2. The Umayyad Caliphate (661-750) ruled from Damascus, Syria
3. The Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258) ruled in Iraq
4. The Fatimid Caliphate (910-1171) ruled from Egypt
5. The Mamluk Caliphate (1250-1517) ruled from Egypt
6. The Ottoman Caliphate (1517-1923) ruled from Turkey (Anatolia)



Five Facts About the Muslim Mahdi

1. The Mahdi is a distant descendant of the Prophet Muhammad
2. He will lead an army of faithful Muslims in an apocalyptic victory over the heathen
3. Sunni Muslims reverence the Mahdi
4. Shia Muslims go beyond mere reverence to call Mahdi the Master of the Age. Today the Shia believe:
 - a. The Mahdi's appearance is imminent
 - b. His appearance will mark the beginning of an age of universal justice
 - c. The age of universal justice is followed by the end of the world
5. The Mahdi is the last of the mystical line of imams hidden from mankind since the 700's



The Caliphate (or, "succession" after Muhammad, the "khilafa")

First Caliphs after Muhammad (632-661)

Abu Bakr ibn Quhafah (632-634)
 Umar ibn al-Khattab (634-644)
 Uthman ibn Affan (644-656)
 Ali ibn Abi Talib (656-661) - cousin, son-in-law of Muhammad
 Hasan ibn Ali (661) - grandson of Muhammad

Caliphs in Damascus (661-750) - Umayyad Dynasty

Muawiyah I (661-680) - Begin Umayyad dynasty
 Yazid I (680-683)
 Muawiyah II (683-684)
 Marwan I (684-685)
 Abd al-Malik (685-705)
 Al-Walid I (705-715)
 Sulayman (715-717)
 Umar II (717-720)
 Yazid II (720-724)
 Hisham (724-743)
 Al-Walid II (743-744)
 Yazid III (744)
 Ibrahim (744)
 Marwan II (744-750)

Caliphs in Baghdad (750-1258) - Abbasid Dynasty

As-Saffah (750-754) - Begin Abbasid dynasty
 Al-Mansur (754-775)
 Al-Mahdi (775-785)
 Al-Hadi (785-786)
 Harun al-Rashid (786-809)
 Al-Amin (809-813)
 Al-Ma'mun (813-833)
 Al-Mu'tasim (833-842)
 Al-Wathiq (842-847)
 Al-Mutawakkil (847-861)
 Al-Muntasir (861-862)
 Al-Musta'in (862-866)
 Al-Mu'tazz (866-869)
 Al-Muhtadi (869-870)
 Al-Mu'tamid (870-892)
 Al-Mu'tadid (892-902)
 Al-Muktafi (902-908)
 Al-Muqtadir (908-932)
 Al-Qahir (932-934)
 Ar-Radi (934-940)
 Al-Muttaqi (940-944)
 Al-Mustakfi (944-946)
 Al-Muti (946-974)
 Ar-Tai (974-991)
 Al-Qadir (991-1031)
 Al-Qa'im (1031-1075)
 Al-Muqtadi (1075-1094)
 Al-Mustazhir (1094-1118)
 Al-Mustashid (1118-1135)
 Ar-Rashid (1135-1138)
 Al-Muqtafi (1138-1160)
 Al-Mustanjid (1160-1170)
 Al-Mustadi (1170-1180)
 Al-Nasir (1180-1225)
 Az-Zahir (1225-1226)
 Al-Mustansir (1226-1242)
 Al-Mustasim (1242-1258)

Caliphs of Cairo (1261-1517)

Al-Mustansir II (1261-1262)
 Al-Hakim I (1262-1302)
 Al-Mustakfi I (1302-1340)
 Al-Hakim II (1341-1352)
 Al-Mu'tadid I (1352-1362)
 Al-Mutawakkil I (1362-1383)
 Al-Wathiq II (1383-1388)
 Al-Mu'tasim (1388-1389)
 Al-Mutawakkil I, restored (1389-1406)
 Al-Musta'in (1406-1414)
 Al-Mu'tadid II (1414-1441)
 Al-Mustakfi II (1441-1451)
 Al-Qa'im (1451-1455)
 Al-Mustanjid (1455-1479)
 Al-Mutawakkil II (1479-1497)
 Al-Mustamsik (1497-1508)
 Al-Mutawakkil III (1508-1517) Surrendered the title of Caliph to Selim I

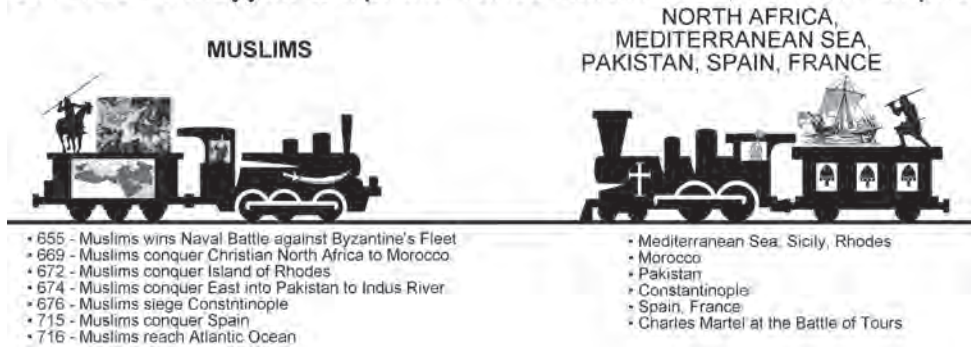
Caliphs of Ottoman Dynasty (1362-1924) - Ottoman Empire

Murad I (1362-1389)
 Bayezid I (1389-1402)
 Mehmed I (1413-1421)
 Murad II (1421-1451)
 Mehmed (Muhammed) II (1451-1481)
 Bayezid II (1481-1512)
 Selim I (1512-1520)
 Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-1566)
 Selim II (1566-1574)
 Murad III (1574-1595)
 Mehmed (Muhammed) III (1595-1603)
 Ahmed I (1603-1617)
 Mustafa I (1617-1618)
 Osman II (1618-1622)
 Mustafa I, restored (1622-1623)
 Murad IV (1623-1640)
 Ibrahim I (1640-1648)
 Mehmed (Muhammed) IV (1648-1687)
 Suleiman II (1687-1691)
 Ahmed II (1691-1695)
 Mustafa II (1695-1703)
 Ahmed III (1703-1730)
 Mahmud I (1730-1754)
 Osman III (1754-1757)
 Mustafa III (1757-1774)
 Abdul Hamid I (1774-1789)
 Selim III (1789-1807)
 Mustafa IV (1807-1808)
 Mahmud II (1808-1839)
 Abdülmecid I (1839-1861)
 Abdülaziz (1861-1876)
 Murad V (1876)
 Abdul Hamid II (1876-1909)
 Mehmed (Muhammed) V (1909-1918) - Caliph is constitutional monarch
 Mehmed (Muhammed) VI (1918-1922)
 Abdülmecid II (1922-1924) - Ceremonial Caliph under the Republic of Turkey

Islam's History of Conquering, War, and Conflict with Culture Since Muhammad's Death

- 632-661 Rashidun Caliphate (Arabian Peninsula)
- 632-634 - Caliph AbuBakr ibn Quhafah conquers in Mesopotamia and Syria
- 634 - Caliph 'Umar conquers Byzantine Christians in Israel and Sassanid Empire
- 635 - Damascus is taken from the Byzantine Christians
- 636 - Muslims defeat and take land west of the Tigris from Sasanian Empire (the last Iranian Empire before Islam conquered the territory of the old Persian Empire)
- 537 - Jerusalem falls to Muslim forces and Caliph 'Umar enters Jerusalem in 538
- 641 - Muslims conquer to the north into the land south of Russia between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea (Azerbaijan, Daghestan, Georgia and Armenia)
- 642 - Conquest of Egypt and defeat of Alexandria
- 634-644 - Caliph 'Umar conquers Egypt
- 644 - Muslims have totally conquered Egypt, Israel, Syria and, Mesopotamia
- 651 - The entire Persian empire has been conquered

661-750 - Umayyad Caliphate Takes North Africa, Roman Empire

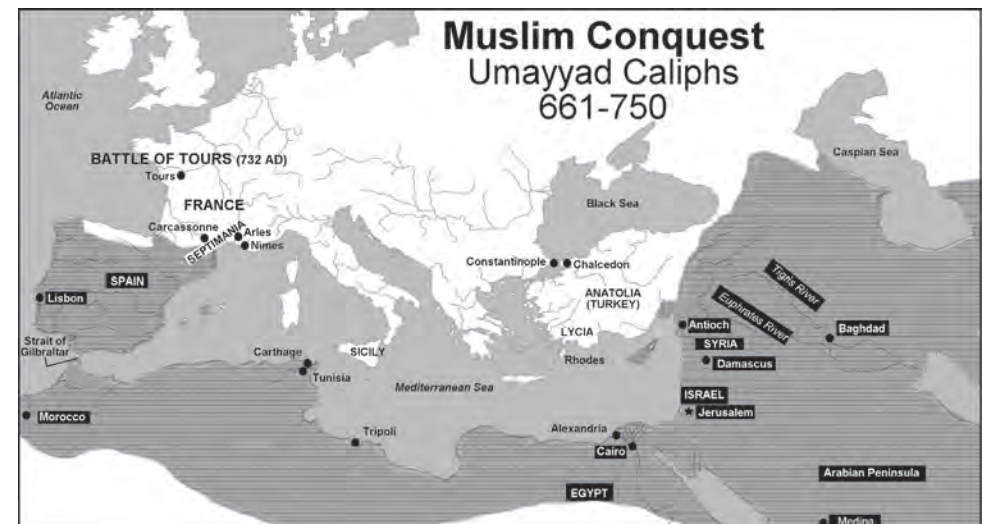
**661-750 Umayyad Caliphate (Damascus, Syria)**

- 655 – Muslim naval victory in the Battle of the Masts when Byzantine forces are defeated off the coast of Lycia (southern Turkey in Mediterranean Sea)
- Muslims occupy Chalcedon; Sicily is attacked by Muslims sailing from Tunisia; Constantinople is threatened
- 669 – Islam conquers North Africa (Christian lands) all the way to Morocco
- 672 – Muslims conquer the Island of Rhodes (in Mediterranean Sea south of Turkey)
- 674 – Muslims conquer to the east, reaching the Indus River in Pakistan
- 674-678 – First Muslim siege of Constantinople
- 683 - Caliph Muawiyah II plunders Medina, destroys the Kaaba, shatters the Black Stone
- 692 – Caliph Abd al-Malik takes control of Shias in Iraq
- 692 – Caliph Abd al-Malik conquers Mecca
- 698 – Muslims capture Carthage in North Africa
- 700 – Muslims invade the island of Sicily just south of Italy (just 570 miles from Rome)
- 711 – Muslims cross the Strait of Gibraltar to enter Europe from North Africa
- 711 – Islam has now conquered all of the Old Persian Empire and most of the Roman World; the Roman Empire is confined to Italy and the northern lands of Europe that the Romans took from the Barbarians
- 715 – Spain is under Islamic control
- 716 – Muslims have reached the Atlantic Ocean when they conquer Lisbon, Portugal
- 717-718 – Second Muslim siege of Constantinople
- 719 – Muslims enter France and attack Septimania, an eastern province on the coast of ancient Gaul in Europe north of Spain
- 724 – Muslims raid southern France and conquer the Christian cities of Carcassonne and Nimes; churches and monasteries are destroyed
- 732 – Battle of Tours: A massive invading Islamic army (40,000-60,000 cavalry

invades France (the land of the Franks), but the Frankish leader Charles Martel stops the Muslim advance into Europe with 1,500 foot soldiers

- o Historian Edward Gibbon wrote in 1776 concerning the Battle of Tours: "A victorious line of march had been prolonged above a thousand miles from the rock of Gibraltar to the bank of the Loire; the repetition of an equal space would have carried the Saracens (Muslims) to the confines of Poland and the Highlands of Scotland; the Rhine is not more impassable than the Nile or Euphrates, and the Arabian fleet might have sailed without a naval combat into the mouth of the Thames. Perhaps the interpretation of the Koran would now be taught in the schools of Oxford, and her pupils might demonstrate to a circumcised people the sanctity and truth of the revelation of Muhammad."

- o Looking at the event from the Muslim point of view we find that Islamic history does not even record the name "Tours" or "Charles Martel". The battle is mentioned as a minor military engagement entitled "The Highway of Martyrs" (Balat-al-Shuhada)
- o This was a crucial victory, considering the fact that Charles Martel was the grandfather of the great Charlemagne who became the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire (in 800), united Western Europe, and began the advance into the modern age for France and Germany. If Islam had won the Battle of Tours and conquered France it is easy to understand how different history would have been.
- 735 – Muslims capture the French city of Arles on the southern coast of France and southeast of Tours
- 747 – Shia leader Abu Muslim attacks Sunnis in Afghanistan
- 749 – Umayyad dynasty is overthrown by Muslims



750-1517 - Muslims Attack Rome, Invade France, Bosnia, Armenia

ITALY, FRANCE, SPAIN, GREECE, TURKEY,
PERSIA, SICILY, MALTA, CRETE, SARDINIA,
ARMENIA, BALKANS, BOSNIA, CROATIA,
DESTROY CHURCH OF HOLY SEPULCHER

MUSLIMS



- 813-828 - Muslims attack Italy's West Coast for 15 years
 - 838 - Muslims conquer Marseille France
 - 846 - Muslims attack Rome and destroy churches
 - 859-883 - Muslims conquer Sicily, Malta, burn Monte Cassino, Italy
 - 939-1015 - Muslims plunder Madrid, Barcelona, Pisa, Sardinia
 - 1009 - Muslims destroy Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem
 - 1073-1084 - Muslims conquer Ankara and Nicaea, Turkey and Antioch, Syria
- 1095-1272 - CHRISTIAN CRUSADES TO HOLY LAND**
- 1375 - Muslims conquer Armenia
 - 1382 - Muslims conquer in Bulgaria
 - 1456 - Muslims conquer Athens, Greece
 - 1463 - Muslims conquer Bosnia
 - 1493 - Muslims invade Croatia and Dalmatia
 - 1501 - Muslims conquer Persia
 - 1515 - Muslims conquer Anatolia and Kurdistan
 - 1517 - Muslims conquer Cairo, Egypt

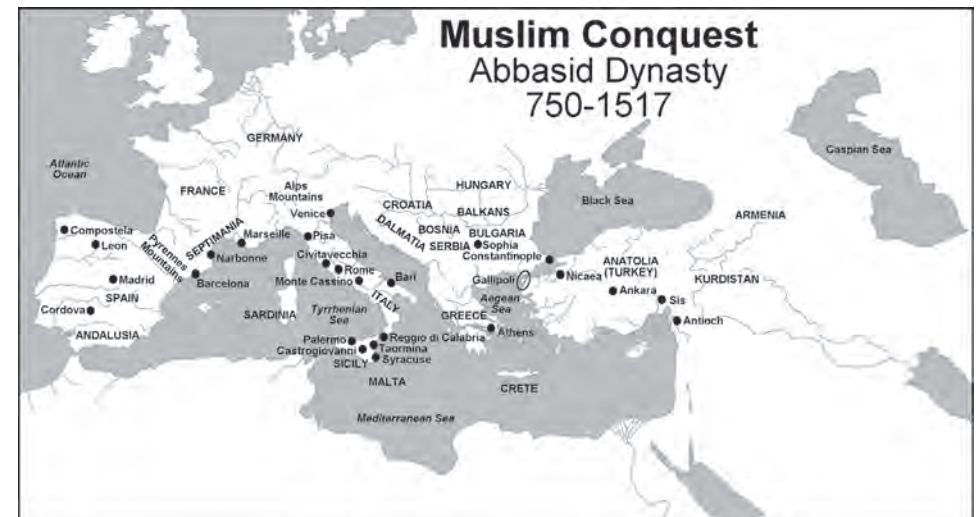
- Marseille, France
- Madrid, Spain
- Barcelona, Spain
- Antioch, Syria
- Sophia, Bulgaria
- Athens, Greece
- Dalmatia
- Constantinople
- Rome
- Cyprus
- Sardinia
- Nicaea
- Balkans
- Croatia
- Kurdistan
- Sicily
- Coast of Italy
- Pisa, Italy
- Holy Sepulcher
- Armenia
- Bosnia
- Venice
- Persia
- Malta

750-1258 Abbasid Caliphate (Iraq)

- 736-37 Charles Martel drives Muslims from Septimania, an eastern province on the coast of ancient Gaul in Europe north of Spain
- 752 Muslim government comes to an end in Nimes when Pepin the Short re-captures Nimes
- 792 - Jihad is declared against the infidels in Andalusia (southern Spain) and France; 10,000 Muslims advance from as far away as Syria to cross the Pyrenees Mountains (the mountain range between Spain and France) to conquer France; Narbonne is destroyed, but Muslims are finally stopped at Carcassonne (a town in southern France)
- 796 - Al-Hakam, the new emir of Cordova, continues jihad against Christians
- 813-828 - Muslims continuously attack the city of Civitavecchia which is 50 miles west-northwest of Rome on the coast of the Tyrrhenian Sea; the western coast of Italy is continuously attacked for 15 years which results in the Italians abandoning their homes and constructing a new city they called Leopolis after Pope Leo who granted permission to build the city and helped finance it
- 831 - Muslim invaders conquer the city of Palermo in Sicily and make it their capital
- 838 - Muslims raid and conquer Marseille, a port city in southern France
- 841 - Muslim raiders conquer Bari, a Christian city of the Byzantines on the east coast of Italy on the Aegean Sea
- 846 - Muslim ships sail from Africa up the Tiber River and attack Rome; the Churches of St. Peter and St. Paul are partly destroyed until Pope Leo IV promises an annual tribute of 25,000 silver coins to the Muslims; Leo then

builds the Leonine Wall

- 850-851 - Muslims execute a Christian priest and many other Christians in Cordova, Spain for insulting the Prophet Muhammad
- 858 - Muslims raid Constantinople
- 859 - Muslims conquer Castrogiovanni (also, called Enna), a city in the center of Sicily; Thousands of surviving Christian men are executed and the women and children sold as slaves
- 866 - Emperor Louis II leaves Germany with troops to engage Muslims in southern Italy
- 869 - Muslims invade the island of Malta
- 878 - Muslims conquer Syracuse, Sicily, and from there attack Greece and Malta again
- 883 - Muslims invade Italy and burn the monastery of Monte Cassino to ashes; the Benedictine abbot, Bertharius, is killed, along with some other monks at the altar of St. Martin in the Church of St. Salvatore
- 901 - Reggio di Calabria, a city on the southern tip of Italy directly across from Sicily, falls
- 902 - Muslims take Taorminia, the last Christian stronghold in Sicily; all of southern Italy has been conquered by Islam; Muslims are now in position to attack Rome, the seat of Christendom



910-1171 Fatimid Caliphate (Egypt)

- 911 - Muslims control all the passes in the Alps between France and Italy which cuts off trade, communication and military support between the two countries
- 916 - Greek and German forces unite with Italy to drive Muslims from Italy;

this ends Muslim raids into Italy which puts their 300-year attempt to conquer Rome on hold

- 939 – Muslims recapture Madrid, Spain
- 961 – Byzantines recapture Crete from Muslims
- 965 – Byzantines recapture Cyprus from Muslims
- 972 – Muslims in France surrender to Christian forces and their leaders ask to be baptized
- 981 – Muslims capture Leon, Spain, and the Christians must pay tribute
- 985 – Muslims plunder Barcelona, Spain
- 994 – Muslims return to destroy monastery of Monte Cassino a second time
- 997 – Muslims move north out of Cordova, Spain to conquer Christian lands to the north; Christians evacuate the city of Compostela in northwest Spain and the Muslims burn it to the ground
- 1004 – Muslims plunder the city of Pisa in Italy
- 1009 – Caliph Al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah of Egypt calls for the destruction of all Christian buildings and holy sites in Jerusalem; it is at this time the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, which was built by Constantine in 326, is completely destroyed; the only part of the original tomb of Christ that remains is the burial bench, because it was covered with the rubble
- 1015 – Muslims conquer Sardinia, a Mediterranean island to the west of Italy and east of Spain
- 1027 – The Christian Franks (French) from the West, who have permission to access and care for the Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, are replaced by the Byzantine Christians from the East; the Byzantine leaders begin the reconstruction of the Holy Sepulcher; Jerusalem is at this time under the control of the Fatimid Dynasty
- 1067 – Muslims from the East, the Seljuk Turks, conquer the Christian land of Armenia, which had been Christian since the day of the New Testament in the first century
- 1070 – Seljuk Turks take Jerusalem from the Fatimids and begin to persecute and oppress the Christians in the Holy Land; pilgrims begin to return with stories of oppression and persecution
- 1070 – Benedictine monks in Jerusalem begin an Order of Knights to protect pilgrims traveling in and to the Holy Land
- 1073 – Muslim Seljuk Turks conquer Ankara, Turkey
- 1078 – Muslim Seljuk Turks capture Nicaea, Turkey
- 1084 – Muslim Seljuk Turks capture Antioch, Syria
- 1089 – Christian Byzantine forces retake the island of Crete

CRUSADES BEGIN

- General reasons for the Christian Crusades:



- o Fear of the continued spread of Islam
- o Islam's occupation of Christian Holy Sites in Israel
- o Muslim persecution of Christian pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem to worship
- o Muslim destruction of churches
- 1074 – Pope Gregory VII begins to call for Crusades against the Muslims in the Holy Land who were harassing Christian pilgrims
- Byzantine Emperor at Constantinople had asked western European Christians for assistance against the Muslims (Seljuk Turks) invading Asia
- 1095 – Pope Urban II preaches of a crusade against the Muslims at the synod of Clermont as a way to help the Byzantine Emperor and to rescue the holy sites from the Muslim control
- **1095-1099 – First Crusade**
- 1096 – The First Crusade begins when a popular contemporary preaching personality known as Peter the Hermit stirs up the some disorganized knights and common people to follow him into the Holy Land. This is known as the Peasants Crusade (or, People's Crusade)
 - o The early phase of the First Crusade was a failure from the start
 - o They leave before the rest of the armies are ready
 - o They leave a trail of destruction across Europe and most die before they cross into Turkey
 - o After crossing the straits into Asia Minor they are cut down by the first major encounter with the Muslims at Apamea Cibotus (modern Dinar, Turkey) an ancient city in Phrygia; the rest are captured and sold as slaves
- 1097-1098 – The second wave of the First Crusade
 - o German knights slaughter Jews in Worms, Mainz, Trier, Neuss, and Prague as they make their way into the Middle East; their violent reasoning was that the Jews were like the Muslims - enemies of Christianity who had sided with Islam against Christians
 - o Arrive in Constantinople in the spring
 - o They quickly take Nicaea
 - o They arrive in Antioch by the fall
 - o Antioch is captured in the spring of 1098
- 1099 – Jerusalem is captured in June
 - o Because the Muslims in Jerusalem did not surrender, no prisoners are taken and everyone in the city is killed
 - o The Crusaders set up a feudal system like the one they had left in Europe
 - o Many castles were built and can still be seen today
 - o A Crusader kingdom is established
 - o Muslim pressure on Constantinople is reduced
 - o The Knights Templars are organized to protect pilgrims



- **1144-1155 – Second Crusade**
- 1144 – Muslims threaten the northeast territory of the Crusader kingdom and capture Edessa
- 1146 – A mystic preacher in Europe, Bernard of Clairvaux, preaches for a Second Crusade
 - o European interest and motivation is low from the beginning
 - o King of France and the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire lead the crusade which fails
 - o Many perish on the way
 - o Fail to take Damascus
 - o The Second Crusade ends as a failure
- 1187 – At the Battle at Hattin the Knights of the Middle East Crusader Kingdom are slaughtered
 - o On the hill known as the Horns of Hattin west of the Sea of Galilee, Saladin defeats the Crusader knights by cutting off the water supply route to the Sea of Galilee and burning the fields around them
 - o Saladin captures fifty Crusader castles soon after the victory in the Battle at the Horns of Hattin
 - o Saladin, Sultan of Egypt, recaptures Jerusalem
- **1189-1192 – Third Crusade**
- 1189 – Known as the King's Crusade with King Philip of France, King Richard of England and Emperor Frederick.
 - o Emperor Frederick drowns on the way
 - o King Philip goes home after having an argument with King Richard o King Richard continues and engages Saladin in battle
- 1192 – King Richard is defeated by Saladin
 - o Richard the Lionhearted, loses the Crusade to Saladin, but European Christians are promised access to Jerusalem as pilgrims
- 1200-1204 – Fourth Crusades – both are attempts to take Constantinople back from the Muslims
 - o A Christian disaster
 - o The original goal was to take Egypt and then to use Egypt as a base to recapture Jerusalem.
 - o Before the Crusade begin the Pope went to war with the German knights
 - o One Christian sect (the Cistercians) preaches against another Christian sect (the Albigensians) and massacres them before the Crusade begins
 - o When the Crusaders cannot pay for their transport ships from Venice they are forced to conquer a Christian city in the Adriatic to make payment to the Christians from Venice
 - o Ultimately the western Crusaders from the Roman Catholic Church merely conquered Constantinople and took control of the eastern Greek Church for the next sixty years



- **1212 – The Children's Crusade**
 - o Children from France and Germany are sent to fight under the leadership of two boys (Stephen and Nicholas) who are not yet teenagers
 - o The Church's theory was these boys were still pure and sinless, which meant they would be honored by God and successful in battle against the Muslims
 - o Many died on the way and those that made it to battle were captured and sold into slavery in Egypt
 - **1219-1221 – Fifth Crusade**
 - o Another plan to invade Egypt succeeds with the securing of a strategic Egyptian tower
 - o Muslims offer the Crusaders Jerusalem
 - o Crusaders run short of supplies during their inland attacks, retreat and are defeated
 - o An eight year peace treaty is signed
 - **1229 – Sixth Crusade**
 - o Focuses more on negotiation than military conquest
 - o The Pope (Gregory IX) and the Holy Roman Emperor (Frederick II) want to retake Jerusalem
 - o Frederick backs out, so the Pope excommunicates him
 - o Frederick makes a treaty to take Jerusalem, but it did not include possession of the Temple Mount, so the Pope excommunicate him again
 - o Frederick secures for Christians, through negotiations with the Muslims, safe passage to and from the cities of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, and a road to the sea
 - **1248-1250 – Seventh Crusade**
 - 1249 – King Louis IX of France goes to Egypt
 - o Christians attempt to defeat Egypt, the center of Islamic power
 - o 1250 - The Christian French king, Louis IX, is captured and held until a ransom could be paid that was 50,000 times the entire annual revenue of France
 - **1270-1272– Eighth Crusade**
 - o This failed crusade ends the Christian presence in the Holy Land
 - o Christians had lost Nazareth, Jaffa and Antioch
 - o The Christian plan is to take Tunis, a city on the north coast of Africa, for a base to attack and secure Egypt, and from there they would take Jerusalem
 - o Holy Roman Emperor Louis IX dies along with many of his men from drinking tainted water in Africa
 - 1290 – All Crusade territory in the Holy Land has been lost
 - 1291 – Acre falls back into the hands of the Muslims
- CRUSADES ARE OVER** (Crusades lasted 152-217 years)



1250-1517 - Mamluk Caliphate (Egypt)

- 1354 – Muslims (the Ottoman Turks) conquer the Christian Byzantine fortress at Gallipoli on a peninsula on the European side of the Aegean Sea in Thrace; this now opens up the opportunity for a Muslim advance north into Serbia and Hungary
- 1375 – Muslim Mamelukes take Sis, the capital city of Armenia, bringing an end to Armenian independence
- 1382 – Muslim Turks conquer the European city of Sophia, Bulgaria in the Balkans
- 1453 – Muslim Turks capture Constantinople and kill Emperor Constantine XI; this ends the Roman Empire in the East (the Christian Byzantine Empire)
- 1456 – Muslims capture Athens, Greece
- 1463 – Muslims capture Bosnia
- 1467 – Muslims conquer the land of Herzegovina which is the southern portion of Bosnia
- 1493 – Muslims invade Croatia which is the land north of Bosnia in Europe
- 1493 – Muslims invade Dalmatia which is the coastal land west of Bosnia
- 1499 – Muslims defeat the military fleet of Venice, and the city surrenders to the Sultan
- 1501 – Muslims conquer Persia, again
- 1514 – Muslim Sultan of Turkey attacks Persia
- 1515 – Selim I, Sultan of Turkey, conquers eastern Anatolia and Kurdistan
- 1516 – Selim I defeats Egyptian forces near Aleppo and annexes Syria to Ottoman Turkey
- 1517 – Muslim Turks conquer Cairo
- 1517 – Mecca surrenders to Selim I and comes under the suzerainty of the rising Ottoman Empire

1517-1923 Ottoman Caliphate (Turkey/Anatolia)**1517-1923 - Muslims Move into SE Europe; Holy Roman Empire**

- 1520 – Suleiman the Magnificent succeeds his father Sultan Selim I as the Sultan and Caliph of the Ottoman Empire in Turkey
- 1521 – Suleiman conquers Belgrade which is the largest city in Serbia
- 1521 – Suleiman begins to invade Hungary
- 1522 – Suleiman takes Rhodes from the Knights of St. John
- 1527 – Muslim jihad against India
- 1525 – Suleiman signs a seven-year truce with the King of Hungary
- 1526 – Muslims conquer Hungary in the Battle of Mohacs, killing King Louis II; Suleiman takes control of Budapest, the largest city in Hungary
- 1526 – Muslims become the preeminent power in Central and Eastern Europe
- 1526 – Suleiman the Magnificent begins a series of military conquests in Europe
- 1529 – Muslims of the Ottoman Empire attack Austria and plunder Vienna; Suleiman I takes Budapest and annexes Hungary to the Ottoman Empire
- 1546 – Muslim Turks occupy Moldavia which borders Ukraine
- 1560 – Ships of the Ottoman Empire rout Spanish fleet at Tripoli
- 1566 – Muslims of the Ottoman Empire are well established in Europe
- 1570 – Muslims plunder the city of Nicosia on Cyprus
- 1570 – Ottoman Empire declares war on Venice
- 1571 – Pope Pius V signs alliance with Spain and Venice to fight the Ottoman Empire
- 1571 – Muslims of the Ottoman Empire conquer the city of Famagusta on the east coast of Cyprus and massacre its inhabitants
- 1594 – Muslims conquer Raab, a market town on the Austro-Hungarian border
- 1596 – Muslims defeat the Imperial army at Keresztes in northern Hungary
- 1613 – Ottoman Empire invades Hungary, again
- 1620 – Muslims of the Ottoman Empire defeat Polish army at Jassy (or, Iasi), the largest city in eastern Romania
- 1645-1669 - Muslims war with the republic of Venice and her allies (Malta, Roman Catholic Papal States, and France) over Crete; the Ottoman Empire conquers and secures Crete
- 1663 - Muslims of the Ottoman Empire declare War on the Holy Roman Empire; they invade Transylvania and Hungary, and conquer the fortress of Nove Zamky in Slovakia
- 1671 – Muslims declare war on Poland
- 1683 – Jihad is proclaimed on Vienna, and Vienna is captured by July
- 1690 – Muslims reconquer Belgrade
- 1711 – Ottoman Empire at war with Russia
- 1736-1739 – Muslims of the Ottoman Empire at war with Russia, again

- 1738 - Take Orsova (a port city on the Danube River in southwest Romania) and drive Russian Imperial troops back into Belgrade
- 1739 - Approach Belgrade, and the Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI agrees to sign a peace treaty
- 1809 – Muslims of the Ottoman Empire agree to a treaty with Britain called the *Treaty of Dardanelles* which ends the Anglo-Turkish War; Britain received commercial and legal privileges in the Ottoman Empire and the United Kingdom promised the Ottoman Empire protection from the French who threatened them
- 1822 – Ottoman Empire captures the Greek island of Chios with their fleet of ships in the Aegean Sea and massacres the inhabitants
 - The Greeks respond by setting fire to the Muslim admiral's vessel
 - The Muslims then invade Greece
- 1824 – Muslims seize the Greek island of Ipsara, but are defeated
- 1827 – Muslims of the Ottoman Empire enter Athens
- 1827 – Caliph Mohammed II of the Ottoman Empire rejects the right of Allies to mediate in their invasion of Greece
- 1841 – The five Great Powers (Russia, Prussia, Austria, France, Great Britain) guarantee the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire
- 1869 – Ottoman Empire gives Greece an ultimatum to leave Crete, which Greece accepts
- 1883 – The beginning of Islam's 14th century (so the 1300's in Islamic counting) produced the Muslim conquest of Sudan by a Mahdi born in east Sudan
- 1885 – The Sudanese Mahdi takes Khartoum (the largest city in Sudan); British General Gordon is killed in the fighting and the British evacuate Sudan
- 1909 – Caliph Abdul Hamid II is deposed by Young Turks and replaced by his brother Mohammed V (The Young Turks were a political reform movement that favored replacing the absolute monarchy of the Ottoman Empire with a constitutional monarchy)
- 1912 - Muslims of the Ottoman Empire close the Dardanelles to shipping
- 1914, November 14 – Muslim cleric in Constantinople, the capital of the Ottoman Empire, declares Jihad calling Muslims from all around the world to attack Britain, Russia, France, Serbia and Montenegro
- 1914 – World War I begins: Russia and Britain declare war on the Ottoman Empire
- 1918 – After four centuries of ruling the Middle East and threatening Europe, Africa, and the Orient, the Muslim Ottoman Empire collapsed, creating a vacuum in the Middle East that is still unsettled today; Islam does not consider this issue over or the verdict of WWI - the war to end all wars - final



- 1979 – (the beginning of Islam's 15th century) – Mecca is the site of a messianic insurrection affecting the entire Muslim world; this event forces Islamic apocalyptic thinking back to the forefront; supporters of a self-proclaimed Saudi Mahdi seize the Great Mosque in Mecca, and is only stopped by a violent military response; also, the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan that followed fans these apocalyptic flames and give rise to leaders like Osama bin Laden (In Muslim history and geography the Russians are the Khurasans spoken of in medieval legend and apocalyptic literature); with this, an international jihad begins
- 2001 – The events of September 11
- 2003 – USA invades Iraq
- 2005 – the new Iranian President, Mahmud Ahmadinejad, claims to be shrouded in the light of the Hidden Imam as he speaks to the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York (the Hidden Imam is the Mahdi whose revealing has been 1300 years in the making); Ahmadinejad says that as he spoke he sensed the luminous radiance of the soon-to-appear Hidden Imam surrounding him like a halo; of course, when Ahmadinejad is challenged politically after the 2009 Iranian elections for voting fraud, he resolves the conflict by neutralizing his opposition with military force.

The preceding list of 1300 years of Islamic expansion to the east, south, west and north is undeniable, indefensible and unalterable evidence of Muslim behavior. When honestly responding to the previous 1300 years of world conquest, the Muslim's religious views of history, government, society and globalization are declared justified under the umbrella of the concept of Jihad found in verses in the Qur'an and the Hadith:

But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war); but if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practice regular charity, then open the way for them: for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. (Qur'an 9:5)

According to the Concise Encyclopedia of Islam, the concept of Jihad is summed up as "a Divine institution of warfare to extend Islam into the Dar al-harb (the non-Islamic territories which are described as the 'abode of struggle,' or of disbelief) or to defend Islam from danger." If all Muslims were to dedicate their lives to fulfilling their faith's "Great Commission", it is not yet known or yet revealed what would happen. What is known are the commands that exist within the foundational writings of Islam. And, what may be seen are 1300 historically documented years of Islamic interaction with the non-Muslim. This includes what we see daily in the world abroad and right here in our nation.

While there are many opinions within global Islam regarding the definition of jihad, it would be naïve and deadly to deny the record of history (One of the more sobering analyses and recollections of the threat of Islam's inherent militancy is found in Serge Trifkovic, *The Sword of the Prophet: Islam, History, Theology, and Impact on the World*, Boston, MA: Regina Orthodox Press, 2002). On the one hand, many Muslims express a moderate view in which the aggressive nature of Islamic teaching and practice has been curbed by such realities as the western value of civic tolerance and pluralism. On the other hand, the Islamic worldview retains the essential hope that all humanity will one day bow to Allah freely or by force. While it may be that only a fraction of Muslims are expressive militants, a much larger number manifest emotional, vocal, and monetary support of jihad. The negative reaction expressed by some Muslims when witnessing the collapse of the World Trade Center towers is unable to erase doctrinally engrained and historically buttressed Islamic hope that arises from the fall of the infidel. (S, *Understanding the Times*, Summit Press, Manitou Springs, CO, 2006; pages 400-401)

Present Crisis??



As history shows, whenever an Islamic apocalyptic revolution succeeds, the emerging messiah figure survives the social upheaval to found a new dynasty. In most cases those who identified and instigated the apocalyptic movement soon become disillusioned with their new messiah, Mahdi, or great Imam, which results in their being harshly repressed by their "messiah" for their ungrateful discontent. Thus, the newly institutionalized "reign of Messiah" spirals into political strife which is resolved with brutality and the repression of an unsatisfied base of supporters. This reignites the flames for a revision of the apocalyptic dream that simmers and burns until at some point in the future (sometimes years, sometimes centuries) this same process is repeated with revolution and a new Mahdi arises out of the sea of Islam.

The institution of the caliphate symbolizes the former world power of Islam. The yearning for its reinstatement has been a constant theme for radical Islamists...Its formal abolition in 1924 in Turkey, when the last Ottoman caliph, Abdul Majid, was sent off into exile, did not quite end the system as a political force. Congresses were held soon afterwards to explore the devolution of the title...but these ended in quarrels and disputes. These claims quietly lapsed and the caliphate seemed destined to be forgotten as a relic of Islam's past, unsuited to modern times and conditions. But it has refused to go away. The idea of the caliphate continues to exert a powerful pull on Muslims, and its restitution has been skillfully employed by Islamists of all hues as a shorthand for emergence of a Muslim super-state able to bestride the world stage. Even non-radical Islamists are attracted to the ideal, seeing in it the assertion of a global Islamic identity that must be reckoned with, as well as a way out of the perceived powerlessness and marginalization of Muslims. ..It is the politicization of the idea of the caliphate and its pivotal role in the ideology of radical Islamists that has brought a non-existent institution into the public domain. (F, page 162, Ali A. Allawi, *The Crisis of Islamic Civilization*, page 162)

The Qur'an (Koran) is a book of statements collected into 114 chapters (called suras) and divided into 6,235 verses which are considered to be revelation that Allah (god) made to Mohammad in a 22-23 year period between 609-632 while he was having seizures in Mecca and Medina. According to Muslim history these revelations were written down by scribes shortly before Mohammad died. (Mohammad was illiterate according to Muslim tradition, though many skeptics wonder how he could have been a businessman and merchant if he could not do math which used the Arabic alphabet for its number system. For example, in English A=1, B=2, C=3, etc. This, they say, is merely part of the miracle of the Qur'an.)

The Qur'an states that there are five things every Muslim must believe:

It is not righteousness that you turn your faces to the East and the West; but righteousness is he who believeth in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the Scripture and the prophets. (Sura 2:177)

Hadith are the recorded collection of the sayings, stories, accounts and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad that were written down 200 years after Muhammad died. Between the years 632-830 many memories about Muhammad and statements supposedly made by him had been presented to the Muslim community. Muslim scholars realized that many of these traditions and quotations were not accurate and that some were dangerously deviant for the Muslim community. Many of the Hadiths were created simply to support a sect's rebellion or to suppress revolts during these early years.

Several compilations of the material that made up these traditions were made in an attempt to create the purified, accurate account. The most authoritative is by Imam al-Bukhari (810-870). It is a collection of 600,000 quotes and stories about Mohammad. Al-Bukhari was able to verify 7,000 of these 600,000. Most of the verified Hadith were traceable back to statements made by Mohammad's friends or companions, his family and his fifteen wives. The people who handed down these traditional memories of Muhammad were culturally familiar with the Bible and Christian belief that had penetrated their society. This means that much of the Hadith was written with the backdrop of Christian theology and thus was in many cases a mere rewriting of Christian thought.

The six most authentic collections of Hadith were compiled by six famous imams who are together called *Sihah Sitta* or 'the authentic six'.

1. Muhammad bin Ismail al-Bukhari (810- 870) the author of *Sahih Bukhari*



2. Muslim bin Hajjah al-Nishapuri (821-874. His *Sahih Muslim* is second in authenticity, next to that of Bukhari
3. Abu Dawood, Sulaiman bin Al-Ash'ath bin Ishaq Al-Azdi As-Sijistani (817-888/9)
4. Imaam Tirmizi (824-892)
5. Abu Abd al-Rahman Ahmad ibn Shu'ayb al-Nasa'i (830-915)
6. Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Yazid ibn Majah al-Rab'i al-Qazwini, commonly known as Imam Ibn Majah (824-887) - the author of *Hadith Sunan Ibn Majah*

The Qur'an itself contains very little eschatological information, other than referring to "the Hour" which is the point in time when history ends and the resurrection and judgment take place.

The majority of Islamic eschatology comes from scattered pieces and random references recorded in the Hadith. And so it is very important that we keep in mind how the Hadiths came about. They are:

- The memories of Muhammad's friends, associates and wives
- Relayed to other people who recalled them
- During the first two hundred years
- Internally turbulent years of establishing authentic leadership and repressing internal uprising
- While expanding through military advancement into new territory in the Middle East

Understandably, Islamic scholars have not been able to create a solid eschatological system based on the scattered eschatological references in the Hadith. There are no charts, no diagrams, but instead, disconnected references that can be pieced together in a variety of ways.

Dr. Samuel Shahid, in *The Last Trumpet*, presents the idea that the major concepts of Islamic eschatology originate from the Old Testament, the New Testament and Zoroastrianism.

Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam, all believe that world history is indeed oriented towards an end, creating or recreating a new holy and complete world. All believe this world is temporary, incomplete, and imperfect but as it pursues its historical course it will achieve its completion and perfection, devoid of evil and conflict at the end of time...Islamic sources made it conspicuous that Christian data has been incorporated into the Islamic episodes of the end of time. Most of this



data is diluted with fairy tales like the incident of the Jassasa...Some of the Islamic narratives are based on ambiguous characters that will play a vital part in the historical events before the coming of the Hour (the resurrection and the Day of Judgment...Even the role Jesus Christ would assume in this world event is perverted to fit the Islamic concept of Isa (the Qur'anic name for Jesus) as a mere prophet who will return to proclaim to the entire world that Islam is the true religion of God. Thus, before the end of the world, only the faith of Islam will prevail and no other religion will survive. (B, page 14)

(Zoroastrianism is an ancient monotheistic religion from Iran that was most influential during periods of the Persian Empires (550-330 BC Achaemenid, 247 BC-224 AD Parthian, and 224-651 AD Sasanian. The philosopher Zoroaster developed Zoroastrianism when he simplified the pantheon of Iranian gods into two forces: Good and Evil - or, the progressive mentality called "Spenta Mainyu" and the destructive mentality called "Angra Mainyu".)

David Cook makes similar points in his book *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic*:

- Syria was the center of Islam for its first 100 years
- At this time Syria was influenced by Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism
- Muslim apocalyptic material is most often presented in a hadith to communicate information about the period of time right before the end of the world
- Muslim apocalyptic traditions developed from several sources:
 - Converts to Islam during those early years brought with them the eschatology of Judaism and Christianity
 - Polemic discussions (or, arguments within Islam) between different groups of local Muslims and their local apocalyptic traditions converged
 - Exegesis of applicable verses from the Qur'an
 - Explanations of contemporary historical events
 - The need to develop political security for the ruling class

Jesus

Jesus has a central place in Islamic apocalyptic tradition, but this tradition is not in agreement with Christian revelation. According to Islam, Jesus is the eleventh in a mystical line of twelve messengers of Allah that begins with Adam and reaches its end with Muhammad. The Qur'an calls Jesus "the Messiah, Issa, son of Mariam" (or, "the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary") in 4:171.



In many important ways the "historical account" of the life of Jesus recorded in the Qur'an is in conflict with the Christian account. For one, Islam teaches that Jesus was not actually crucified but was instead taken bodily and fully alive into heaven by Allah, in order to spare his prophet Jesus from the scheming and violence the Jews had planned for him. According to their understanding of dominion and conquering, the Muslims believe that for Jesus to have died on the cross would have meant the victory of the Jews over Allah and his eleventh prophet. This is Allah's way:

Verily Allah will defend those who believe. (Quran 22:38)

Allah gave the people the illusion they were beating and crucifying Jesus by giving Judas the appearance of Jesus. So, Judas died and was buried, but Jesus was not abused, never crucified, and never died. Instead, Jesus has been with Allah in heaven waiting for the time for the Mahdi to be revealed. Then Jesus will return to earth to live his life and support the Mahdi in the final days of world history. (Some Muslim scholars believe that Jesus asked for a volunteer to take his place on the cross and promised them they would go to heaven. Thus, it is common for some Muslims to say Simon of Cyrene accepted the offer.)

This view is from the Qur'an 4:157-158:

That they (Jews) said (in boast), 'We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah;- but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not:- Nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself; and Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise; - And there is none of the People of the Book (Christians) but must believe in him before his death; and on the Day of Judgment he will be a witness against them (Christians).

Jesus is referred to in more than 90 different verses in the Qur'an. The Qur'an agrees that Jesus was born to a virgin, was sinless, performed miracles, and even admits that Jesus was superior to all other prophets except Muhammad. Some interesting verses from the Qur'an that give insight into Jesus and his life that the Christian Bible knows nothing about are listed below.

- Jesus Speaks from the Cradle in Surah 19:27-35 when Mary is accused of immorality before she was properly married

At length she brought the (babe) to her people, carrying him (in her arms).



They said: 'O Mary! truly an amazing thing hast thou brought! O sister of Aaron! Thy father was not a man of evil, nor thy mother a woman unchaste!' But she pointed to the babe. They said: 'How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle?' He (Jesus) said: 'I am indeed a servant of Allah. He hath given me revelation and made me a prophet; And He hath made me blessed wheresoever I be, and hath enjoined on me Prayer and Charity as long as I live; (He) hath made me kind to my mother, and not overbearing or miserable; So peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life (again)!' Such (was) Jesus the son of Mary: (it is) a statement of truth, about which they (vainly) dispute. It is not befitting to (the majesty of) Allah that He should beget a son. Glory be to Him! when He determines a matter, He only says to it, 'Be', and it is.

- Allah speaks to Jesus concerning Allah's favor toward him and the miracles Allah gave him permission to perform. Notice that Jesus is not portrayed as doing the miracles on his own since he is not considered to be God, but was able to do them only because Allah granted permission. Also, note that Allah claims to have stopped the Jews from treating Jesus with violence since, according to the Quran, Jesus was snatched into heaven by Allah to protect him from the Jews, and they crucified Judas instead. Here is Surah 5:110:

Then will Allah say: 'O Jesus the son of Mary! Recount My favour to thee and to thy mother. Behold! I strengthened thee with the holy spirit, so that thou didst speak to the people in childhood and in maturity. Behold! I taught thee the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel and behold! thou makest out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, by My leave (or, permission), and thou breathest into it and it becometh a bird by My leave (or, permission), and thou healest those born blind, and the lepers, by My leave (or, permission). And behold! thou bringest forth the dead by My leave (or, permission). And behold! I did restrain the Children of Israel from (violence to) thee when thou didst show them the clear Signs, and the unbelievers among them said: 'This is nothing but evident magic.'

- In Surah 5:116-117 Allah questions Jesus concerning the origins of the false teaching of the Trinity (or in this case the Islamic view of the Trinity at that time), the deity of Jesus, Mary, and Allah. Jesus denies the accusation that he was the one to introduce the concept to the Christians:

Allah will say: 'O Jesus the son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of Allah?' He will say: 'Glory to Thee!



never could I say what I had no right (to say). Had I said such a thing, thou wouldst indeed have known it. Thou knowest what is in my heart, Thou I know not what is in Thine. For Thou knowest in full all that is hidden. Never said I to them aught except what Thou didst command me to say, to wit, "worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord"; and I was a witness over them whilst I dwelt amongst them; when Thou didst take me up Thou wast the Watcher over them, and Thou art a witness to all things.'

Muslims believe that Jesus came the first time and gave clear signs of Allah's truth, but Jesus will also return to finish his life and provide more signs at the end of the age (i.e., "The Hour").

- Qur'an 43:61-62 – "And Jesus shall be a sign for the coming Hour of Judgment: Therefore have no doubt about the (Hour), but follow you Me: this is the Straight Way."
- Qur'an 43:63-64 – "When Jesus came with Clear Signs he said, 'Now have I come to you with Wisdom, and in order to make clear to you some of the points on which you dispute: therefore fear God and obey me. For God, He is my Lord and your Lord: so worship you him: this is a Straight Way.'"

The text of the Qur'an found in 43:57-65 is a rebuke of the Arabs and the religions they follow (including Christianity and Judaism). They are not approached with apologetics or reasonable arguments, but are forcefully approached with rebuke and threatened with future retaliation for following their traditional religions instead of the new way of Muhammad. In this portion of the Qur'an the Arabs who are ridiculing Muhammad and rejecting his message are warned of the grave mistake they are making. An Islamic Commentary explaining the meaning of what this surah says:

"In this Surah a forceful and severe criticism has been made of the Quraish (the militant tribe of merchants that controlled Mecca and its Ka'aba in Muhammad's day and before) and the common Arabs' creeds and superstitions of ignorance in which they persisted, and their stubbornness has been exposed in a firm and effective way, so that every member of the society, who was reasonable in some degree, should be made to consider the evils in which the community was involved and its tyrannical treatment of the person [Muhammad] who was trying to redeem it."

Here is Qur'an 43:57-65 with explanatory footnotes taken directly from the Qur'an in brackets following each of the verses the footnote is explaining:



Qur'an 43:57. "When (Jesus) the son* of Mary is held up as an example, behold, thy people raise a clamour there at (in ridicule)!"

[*Jesus was a man, and a prophet to the Children of Israel, 'though his own received him not.' Some of the Churches that were founded after him worshipped him as 'God' and as 'the son of God', as do the Trinitarian churches to the present day. The orthodox churches did so in the time of the holy Prophet. When the doctrine of Unity was renewed, and the false worship of others besides God was strictly prohibited, all false gods were condemned, e.g., at 21:98. The pagan Arabs looked upon Jesus as being in the same category as their false gods, and could not see why a foreign cult, or a foreign god, as they viewed him, should be considered better than their own gods or idols. There was not substance in this, but mere mockery, and verbal quibbling. Jesus was one of the greater prophets: he was not a god, nor was he responsible for the quibbling subtleties of the Athanasian Creed]

Qur'an 43:58. "And they say, 'Are our gods best, or he?' This they set forth to thee, only by way of disputation: yea, they are a contentious people."

Qur'an 43:59. "He was no more than a servant: We granted Our favour to him, and We made him an example to the Children* of Israel."

[*A reference to the limited mission of the prophet Jesus, whose Gospel to the Jews only survives in uncertain fragmentary forms.]

Qur'an 43:60. "And if it were Our Will*, We could make angels from amongst you, succeeding each other on the earth."

[*If it were said that the birth of Jesus without a father sets him above other prophets, the creation of angels without either father or mother would set them still higher, especially as angels do not eat and drink and are not subject to physical laws. But angels are not higher.]

Qur'an 43:61. "And (Jesus) shall be* a Sign (for the coming of) the Hour (of Judgment): therefore have no doubt about the (Hour), but follow ye Me: this is a Straight Way."

[*This is understood to refer to the second coming of Jesus in the Last Days before the Resurrection, when he will destroy the false doctrines that pass under his name, and prepare the way for the universal acceptance of Islam, the Gospel of Unity and Peace, the Straight Way of the Qur'an.]



Qur'an 43:62. "Let not the Evil One hinder you: for he is to you an enemy avowed."

Qur'an 43:63. "When Jesus came with Clear Signs, he said: "Now have I come to you with Wisdom*, and in order to make clear to you some of the (points) on which ye dispute: therefore fear Allah and obey me."

[*True wisdom consists in understanding the unity of the Divine purpose and the Unity of the Divine Personality. The man Jesus came to reconcile the jarring sects in Israel, and his true teaching was just the same as that which was expounded in a wider form by Islam. He did not claim to be God: why should not the Christians follow the doctrine of Unity rather than what has become their ancestral and traditional custom?]

Qur'an 43:64. "For Allah, He is my Lord* and your Lord: so worship ye Him: this is a Straight Way."

[*In verses 26-28 an appeal is made to the pagan Arabs, that Islam is their own religion, the religion of Abraham their ancestor; in verses 46-54, an appeal is made to the Jews that Islam is the same religion as was taught by Moses, and that they should not allow their leaders to make fools of them; in verses 57-65 an appeal is made to the Christians that Islam is the same religion as was taught by Jesus, and that they should give up their sectarian attitude and follow the universal religion, which shows the Straight Way.]

The above verses are the text directly taken from the Qur'an and the verses are followed with footnote comments taken from The Holy Qur'an whose text, translation and commentary are provided by Abdullah Yusuf Ali. (page 1336-1337, published by Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, Inc. Elmhurst, NY; 2005)

Do notice the Islamic claim that Jesus the son of Mary was a prophet who spoke in full agreement with Muhammad. Also, the emphatic denial that Jesus was God or the Son of God. It is a repeated claim in the Qur'an and in the provided Islamic footnote/commentary that Islam is the "Gospel of Unity", "doctrine of Unity" and "the universal religion." It is made clear that "Islam is the same religion as was taught by Moses" to the Jews and "Islam is the same religion as was taught by Jesus". This all makes supposed sense because Islam is "the religion of Abraham".

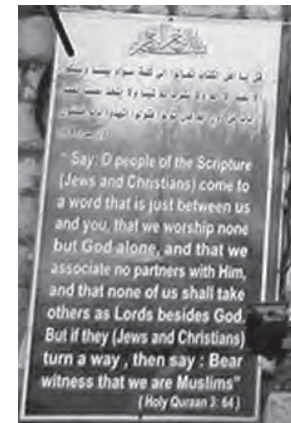
The introductory notes to the verses of Qur'an 43:57-64 say that Jesus was merely a man and a servant of God sent to quiet and resolve the warring



religious sects. He was not sent to create a new religious order. Jesus came to preach the one True God and point people to that God. But, people rejected the truth Jesus taught, which was actually Islam, and began to argue about details and formed even more religious sects. Here are the introductory notes of commentary for Qur'an 43:57-64:

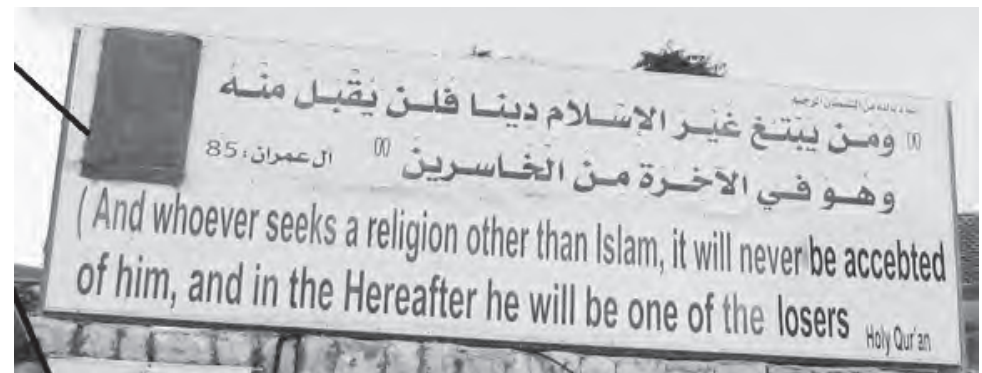
If Christians go back to Jesus, he was but a man and a servant of God: he came to still the jarring sects, not to create a new one: he preached the one True God, his Lord. So give up disputing, and join in devotion to God. That is the Way to the Garden of Bliss, but the opposite leads to the fire. Beware! The Truth has come, and God knows how you receive it. He is Lord of power and mercy. The Truth must prevail; resist it not. *(The Holy Qur'an text, translation and commentary by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, page 1336)*

Dr. Samuel Shahid says, "Any scholar who endeavors to examine the eschatological Islamic data of the second coming of Christ has to resort to the Hadith and not to the Qur'anic scriptures. The Qur'an is surprisingly silent about this significant event and does not reveal any information except what is recorded in chapter 43:61 (see above), "And (Jesus) shall be a sign (for the coming of) the Hour (of Judgment) therefore have no doubt about the (Hour) but follow ye me: this is a Straight Way."



This is one of the Muslim signs visible in the previous photo taken in Nazareth. The quote is from Qur'an 3:64 is posted as a warning to Christians worshipping at the Church of Annunciation:

"Say: O people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) come to a word that is just between us and you, that we worship none but God alone, and that we associate no partners with Him, and that none of us shall take others as Lords besides God. But if they (Jews and Christians) turn a way, then say: Bear witness that we are Muslims."



This is a second Muslim sign seen in the photo showing the Church of Annunciation in Nazareth, Israel warning the Christian worshippers that "whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it [other religion] will never be accepted of him, and in the Hereafter he will be one of the losers. (Holy Qur'an)"

The Hour

Qur'an 43:61 is the only reference to include both Jesus and the Hour in the same verse in the Qur'an, but the Qur'an does refer multiple times to "the Hour", which is an event that afflicts all of creation with judgment. The Hour is described in the Qur'an in this way:

Qur'an 81:1-19:

When the sun (with its spacious light) is folded up; When the stars fall, losing their lustre; When the mountains vanish (like a mirage); When the she-camels, ten months with young, are left untended; When the wild beasts are herded together (in the human habitations); When the oceans boil over with a swell; When the souls are sorted out, (being joined, like with like); When the female (infant), buried alive, is questioned - For what crime she was killed; When the

scrolls are laid open; When the world on High is unveiled; When the Blazing Fire is kindled to fierce heat; And when the Garden is brought near; (Then) shall each soul know what it has put forward. So verily I call to witness the planets - that recede, Go straight, or hide; And the Night as it dissipates; And the Dawn as it breathes away the darkness;- Verily this is the word of a most honourable Messenger.

Other references to the Hour in the Quran are as follows:

- 15:85 – “We created not the heavens, the earth, and all between them, but for just ends. And the Hour is surely coming (when this will be manifest). So overlook (any human faults) with gracious forgiveness.”
- 15:99 – “serve thy Lord until there come unto thee the Hour that is certain.”
- 16:77 – “To Allah belongeth the Mystery of the heavens and the earth. And the Decision of the Hour (of Judgment) is as the twinkling of an eye, or even quicker: for Allah hath power over all things.”
- 22:1-3 – “O mankind! fear your Lord! for the convulsion of the Hour (of Judgment) will be a thing terrible! The Day ye shall see it, every mother giving suck shall forget her suckling- babe, and every pregnant female shall drop her load (unformed): thou shalt see mankind as in a drunken riot, yet not drunk: but dreadful will be the Wrath of Allah. And yet among men there are such as dispute about Allah, without knowledge, and follow every evil one obstinate in rebellion!”
- 22:55 – “Those who reject Faith will not cease to be in doubt concerning (Revelation) until the Hour (of Judgment) comes suddenly upon them, or there comes to them the Penalty of a Day of Disaster.”
- 12:107 – “Do they then feel secure from the coming against them of the covering veil of the wrath of Allah,- or of the coming against them of the (final) Hour all of a sudden while they perceive not?”
- 31:34 – “Verily the knowledge of the Hour is with Allah (alone).”

The Final Judgment and The Hour

Proceeding the Hour, the Final Judgment, there will be signs that indicate the Hour is near.

These signs are divided into two groups:

1. Small Signs or Minor Signs
2. Great Signs

The Small Signs set in motion the events that lead to the occurrence of the Great Signs which lead up to the Final Judgment. (D. page xix)



The Minor Signs

1. An increase in:
 - a. False prophets - Thirty (or, thirty-one) false prophets (among them are four women) will come forth
 - b. Apostasy - Copy the misdeeds of the previous nations. People follow the stars and reject their preordained destiny established by Allah
 - c. Alcohol use
 - d. Sexual sins
 - e. Natural disasters - Earthquakes, plagues, murder
 - f. Political corruption - Power of authority is entrusted to unfit people or unqualified people
 - g. War and rebellions (even among Muslims)
2. There will be ignorance within Islam concerning their faith
3. Muslims will become Christians quickly and easily
4. People will follow astrology
5. Islamic apostasy
6. Muslims will build luxurious mosques – materialism, overflowing money
7. Women will outnumber men by 50 to 1 (reason unknown, but may be due to war, jihad martyrs)
8. The seat of Islamic authority known as the caliphate will be established in the “Holy Land”
 - a. But, it is not clear what land is the “Holy Land” in this context
 - i. If Saudi Arabia...then this was controlled by 632
 - ii. If Israel...then the return of the Jews has caused a concern
9. The Arabs will be destroyed
 - a. What does “destroyed” mean? To what extent? Where?
 - b. In the 1500s the Ottoman Empire controlled the Middle East and were Turks not Arabs
10. Habitations of Medina greatly extended - Habitations of Medina would extend to Ihab or Yahab (location of the tomb of Muhammad)
11. Muslims must fight the Turks and the Tartars (but, this has been done before)
12. Arabs must conquer Constantinople - The best of the Muslims, the people of Hijaz, will march against the Byzantine and they will conquer Constantinople
 - a. Muslims did this in the 1400’s AD
 - b. Arabs have not done this
13. Mecca will be ruined - City of Mecca is turned into ruins by an obscure Ethiopian man named Thu al-Suwayqatayn
14. A people will emerge who eat with their tongues as cows do
15. Many will desire death because times are so bad and life is so hard



16. Time will contract
 - a. A year will be like a month
 - b. A month will be like a week
17. Wild beasts will speak to men
18. The Euphrates River will uncover a mountain of gold and people will fight to death to possess it (Ninety-nine out of one hundred will die hoping that one of them survives to possess it)
19. The believers of that time will die peacefully and gracefully and leave the wicked alive to indulge in their lust until the appointed hour of the resurrection (similar to the Rapture)

The Days will be violent and social breakdown will be bad before the Hour comes:

20. The Hour will not be established until: "There is a war between two groups among whom there will be a great number of casualties, though the religion of both of them will be the same
21. The Hour will not come until a man from Qahtan appears who would drive the people with his staff (This refers to the Mahdi of the pre-Islamic Himyarite era "whose duty is that of herding his people together preparatory to the resurrection and Day of Judgment")
22. Muslims murder their leader, fight among themselves, and the worst of the people will inherit all their worldly possessions
23. Commotions that will cause a man to be a believer in the morning but an infidel in the evening, and an infidel in the evening will become a believer in the morning
24. Muslims will fight people whose shoes are made of hair and until they fight the Turks whose eyes are small, their faces are red, the tips of their noses are flat, and their faces as stricken shields

MINOR SIGNS

- Ignorance of faith within Islam
- Muslims will easily convert to Christianity
- Apostasy from Islam
- Muslims build luxurious mosques
- Materialism
- Caliphate established in Holy Land (Saudi Arabia? Jerusalem?)
- Population Growth of Medina
- Arabs conquer Constantinople
- Mecca ruined
- Time will contract
- Wild beasts speak
- Mountain of gold found under Euphrates River

next: **THE HOUR** →

These are the signs that will take place in a continuous series over time. But, many are normal events that characterize any society that is experiencing cultural change. Typically these cultures become more materialistic, more individualistic and more irreligious. Muhammad's "righteous society" was the model of the Islamic community.

According to the understanding of Islamic ethics Islamic societies have suffered the manifestation of these minor signs since the rise of the Umayyad Dynasty. This materialistic, individualistic, irreligious slide of the Islamic community continued its descent downward in urban areas throughout the Abbasid Dynasty.

Some of these Minor Signs are extraordinary and simply make no sense as far as being historically apocalyptic. All great societies move through these same phases as they decline. We saw the same thing happen in Greek, Roman, Persian and Egyptian cultures. The Hour will not come until these things happen, but most of these Minor Signs are normal events that plague any declining society in the course of its history.

The Major Signs

The Hour begins when these major signs begin to take place. They will take place in sequence, similar to the way the seals, trumpets and bowls are often understood to occur in the book of Revelation.

1. The appearance of the Antichrist (Dajjal)
2. The return of Jesus
3. The invasion of Gog and Magog
4. The reign of Jesus
5. The appearance of the beast
6. The smoke
7. Three land slides
8. The sun will rise in the west
9. A great fire in Yemen (or, "south of Eden")
10. The three trumpets
11. "The Hour" or the Day of Resurrection
12. The Day of Reckoning
13. The Day of Judgment
14. Crossing the Bridge that spans the gulf of Hell
15. The Gathering at the pool
16. The Intercession
17. Paradise
18. Hell

The Major Players in Islamic Eschatology:

1. Mahdi / the Twelfth Imam / the Hidden Imam
2. Antichrist / The Dajjal
3. Jesus, son of Mary
4. Daabba (an animal or creature that will appear in the end times)

In Islamic eschatology the second advent of Christ synchronizes with the advent of the Mahdi (the rightly guided Imam). Together, the Mahdi and Jesus Christ join forces to defeat the Dajjal, the Islamic "antichrist". In Islam, the Mahdi and the Messiah are two different people, but they come at the same time. The Mahdi will come as the Imam and Jesus as his follower. (N, page 136)

The Mahdi is the Messiah of Islam

(pronounced: Ma'-dee)

The coming of the Mahdi is the first of the Major Signs. According to Ibn Kathir, Muslim scholar from the 1300's: "After the lesser signs of the Hour appear and increase, mankind will have reached a stage of great suffering. Then the awaited Mahdi will appear; He is the first of the greater clear signs of the Hour." He will appear on the scene of history to engage the armies of Islam against the heathen in battle. (D, page xix)

The Mahdi will come from the family of Muhammad and bear Muhammad's name (D, page xix). The Mahdi will be preceded by an army from the East carrying black flags of war.

The Messenger of Allah said: The black banners will come from the East and their hearts will be as firm as iron. Whoever hears of them should join them and give allegiance, even if it means crawling across snow. (Abu Nu'aym and As-Suyuti, related by Thawban, as quoted in Izzat and 'Arif, *Al Mahdi and the End of Time*, 44)

Then Mahdi will join the black flags and conquer Israel where they will slaughter Jews.

Rasulullah [Muhammad] said: "Armies carrying black flags will come from Khurasan. No power will be able to stop them and they will finally reach Eela [Baitul Maqdas in Jerusalem] where they will erect their flags." (Tirmidhi as quoted in Zubair, *Signs of Qiyamah*, 42, and Abdullah, *Islam, Jesus, Mehdi, Qadiyanis, and Doomsday*, 54.)



The Prophet said... "the last hour would not come unless the Muslims will fight against the Jews and the Muslims would kill them until the Jews would hide themselves behind a stone or a tree and a stone or a tree would say: 'Muslim, or the servant of Allah, there is a Jew behind me; come and kill him.'" (Sahih Muslim, Book 041, Number 6985)

The Mahdi will be a universal leader for all Muslims, and He will also rule the non-Muslim world. Islam's Mahdi is their Messiah or Savior. The appearing of the Mahdi is to the Muslims what the return of Jesus Christ is to the Christians. The Mahdi is believed to be the ruler of the world.

He will reappear on the appointed day, and then he will fight against the forces of evil, lead a world revolution, and set up a new world order based on justice, righteousness, and virtue... ultimately be righteous will take the world administration in their hands and Islam will be victorious over all the religions. (G, on page 24, quoting "Al-Sadr and Mutahhari, *The Awaited Savior*, prologue, 4-5; see also 23-40)

One Hadith says that Mahdi's reign will begin at a time when there is a peace treaty between the Arabs in the East and the Christians in the West. This Hadith declares that the lineage of the Aaronic priesthood will be involved in mediating this seven-year covenant:

There will be four peace agreements between you and the Romans [Christians]. The fourth agreement will be mediated through a person who will be from the progeny of Hadrat Haroon [Honorable Aaron] and will be upheld for seven years. (Rasulullah [Muhammad])

Mahdi will do other things that are also described in the Hadith collection:

- Mahdi will control the wind and the rain and the crops
- The Mahdi will ride on a white horse
- The Mahdi will uncover some previous undiscovered archaeology evidence including ancient Bible scrolls and the Ark of the Covenant

The Second Major Sign: The Appearing of Dajjal - The Islamic Antichrist

- The Dajjal (Al-Maseeh Dajjal, or "The Messiah, the Deceiver")
- Dajjal is pronounced /di-al/
- Dajjal is the Great Deceiver
- Has miraculous powers that will hold power over the whole earth temporarily
- He will be blind in one eye



- Dajjal is marked with the word “infidel” (kaafir) between his eyes
- Dajjal will claim to be Jesus Christ
- Dajjal will claim to be divine
- Dajjal will travel at great speeds on his giant mule and can cover the whole earth
- Dajjal will not be able to enter Mecca, Medina, or Damascus
- Muslims will be protected from the Dajjal if they have memorized the first ten verses of Surat al Kahf (Chapter of the Cow)
- Dajjal will be a Jew
- Dajjal will be followed by Jews and women
- Dajjal will be killed by Jesus, son of Mary, who is himself a Muslim

On the Dajjal and Jesus:

In all of Sunni Muslim apocalyptic, this is one of the most important cycles, and is very well developed. Here we have an End-times duel between two diametrically opposite beings, who are, despite this fact, connected in some undefined manner: the true messiah (Jesus) and the false messiah (the Dajjal). The word dajjal means a deceiver and comes from the Syriac daggala. (E, page 93)

Dajjal “will claim to be God Himself.” (Al-Daylami, II, 360, no. 2954; al-Hindi, XIV, 603, no. 39,694; a-lastu bi-rabbikum, Qur’an 7:172)

The Dajjal is said to come from a number of different locations, but, “in all likelihood, the identification of the Dajjal with Khurasan and the East came about as a result of the similarity between the name Khurasan and the name Chorazin, where according to Christian tradition the Antichrist is to be born: (E, page 94 referring to Ps Meth, 152, 236; “Apocalypse of Peter,” BJRL 15 (1932), 189)

“A key point is that the Dajjal is said to be Jewish in most accounts, something common to Christian apocalyptic also, though a few say that he will come from the Arab tribe of Thaqif.” (E, page 95)

“Many different descriptions are given for the Dajjal himself:

1. Curly, abundant hair, short, walking with his toes turned in.
2. Albino (dead-white), enormously fat, tall, with the hair on his head looking like the branches of a tree, and his eye shining like the morning star
3. Bald on the forehead, blind in one eye, with a broad upper chest
4. Having hairy arms, a non-existent neck, and non-existent eyes, with the

word kafir (“infidel”) written between his eyes

5. Having his toes turned in, reddish in color, disproportionate build, and blind in one eye, one of his hands longer than the other
6. Having extremely curly hair.” (E, page 96)

Consistent in all the Islamic traditions is that the Dajjal is blind in one eye or, at least, is said to have some kind of eye trouble.

The Dajjal does not attract people because he wins battles or has a great strategy. His mere person seems to draw people who are ignorant of the Muslim message - particularly women and Jews. The Dajjal speaks to each group of people in their own language. He will perform miracles to impress his followers and to convince those who are undecided. The Dajjal’s miracles include:

1. Healing lepers, paralytics, the blind
2. Raising the dead
3. Causing vegetation to grow and the sky to rain
4. Causing livestock to prosper or to die
5. Moving mountains (Mt. Tabor or Mt. Sinai)
6. Stopping the sun’s movement (E, page 100)

A small group will resist and warn people about Dajjal: the biblical Tabitha, the prophet Elisha, and the two witnesses of Revelation 11:3-12 who are identified as Elijah and Enoch. But, unlike in the biblical narrative, the witnesses are not killed, but harassed and end up fleeing to various places. About 20,000 join the resisters (E, page 102).

The Dajjal will appear from the sea and is commonly said to attack 20,000 Muslims in Jerusalem with 70,000 Jews (E, page 104). Jesus will descend among the Muslims assembled for Morning Prayer, that is to be led by the Mahdi at the Al-Aqsa Mosque on the south side of the Jewish Temple Mount. When prayer is begun Jesus orders the doors of the mosque to be opened, only to see the city surrounded by the Dajjal and his 70,000 Jewish troops. When the Dajjal sees Jesus he melts like salt in water. Jesus hunts down the Dajjal and the Muslims hunt down the hiding Jews (B, p.81, Samuel Shahid, Ph.D., The Last Trumpet: A Comparative Study In Christian-Islamic Eschatology, page 81).

There will be a deep fog over Jerusalem (probably symbolic of the great evil of the Dajjal), then, as morning breaks, the fog will lift and Jesus will suddenly appear among the Muslims to pray the morning prayers. He then goes out to kill the Dajjal. Interestingly enough, the phrases involving the Dajjal’s end are

very similar to those appearing in Christian apocalyptic about the same event, though there they are related to the two witnesses...After the Dajjal is killed, there is a general massacre of his Jewish followers. (E, page 104)



There are three other Islamic traditions or accounts of this future event that are written in other hadiths. One is similar to the one above, but occurs at Jabal al-Dukhan (Smoky Mountain) where the Muslims are ready to fight to their death in a darkness so intense that a man cannot see his own hand. Then Jesus descends from heaven, leads the Muslims in prayer and then marches out to secure the victory.

A second account of Jesus' return to fight the Dajjal locates Jesus' descent from Allah to be at the minaret in Umayyad Mosque (built over the site of a Christian basilica, a Byzantine mega-church, in 634 AD which had been dedicated to John the Baptist) in the city of Damascus. This minaret is known as the Jesus Minaret.

Yet, another account of Jesus' return to fight the Dajjal and slaughter the Jews is also located in Syria at a place near the Sea of Galilee. The Dajjal will come

down the Yarmuk Valley while the Muslims are gathered on the other side of the Jordan River. A third of the Muslims are killed, a third of the Muslims flee, but a third continue fighting until Jesus descends during the Morning Prayer.

As we continue to compare Islamic eschatology with Christian eschatology the parallels are clear. The parallels are antithesis, but they do run amazingly consistent as opposites of each other.

"One can fairly say, for example, that the identification of the Jews' expected messiah with the Antichrist (Dajjal) is so firmly rooted in Muslim apocalyptic that it even appears in certain conservative works, as well as appearing in all radical ones. This identification enables them to see the Arab-Israeli conflict in its entirety as an apocalyptic event and one in which the Arabs are destined to be victorious, despite the present gloomy situation." (C, page 232; David Cook, *Contemporary Muslim Apocalyptic Literature*, p. 232)

The Third Major Sign: The Return of Jesus

Remember that Islam does not accept the belief that Jesus:

1. Is the Son of God
2. Is God in the flesh
3. Died on the cross
4. Paid for sins
5. Was resurrected

Islam teaches that Allah rescued Jesus from death by the hands of the Jews and took him into heaven alive. Jesus has since been waiting in heaven with Allah to return to earth and support the Mahdi.

The Islamic version of Jesus (Isa) differs greatly from the Christian:

- Jesus will return to do combat with the Antichrist (Dajjal) first in Damascus and then in Israel (D, page xix)
- Jesus will return to earth just outside Damascus
- Jesus will submit to the Mahdi who is the caliph (vice regent) and imam of all Islam
- Jesus will be a faithful Muslim
- Jesus will be a community leader under the Mahdi and will institute Islamic Law
- Jesus will lead the Christians to Islam
- Jesus will abolish Christianity by:
 - Breaking crosses (which indicates he is converting the churches and community centers to mosques and Islamic centers)
 - Killing all swine

- Abolishing the jizyah (pronounced: jezee-ya) tax (a Muslim tax on non-Muslims that allows non-Muslims to live)
- Kill the Antichrist (Dajjal, the “Muslim antichrist”) and all his followers
- Jesus will slaughter the Jews

Daabba

Daabba is an animal or creature that will appear in the end times. The appearance of the Daabba is one of the Major signs. This beast comes from the earth with the ring of Solomon and the rod of Moses. He will destroy the nose of every unbeliever with the rod and write “kafir” (infidel) on their forehead. The Daabba will distinguish the believer from the non-believer so that everyone will know who is and who is not a Muslim by simply looking at their faces. Muslims will be stamped between the eyes with *Mu’imim* (“faithful believer”).

In the Qur’an Allah is quoted as saying in Surah 27:82:

Translation One: “When the word is fulfilled concerning them. We shall bring forth a Daabba from the Earth to speak unto them because mankind had no faith in our revelation.

Translation Two: “When the Word is fulfilled against them (the unjust), we shall produce from the earth a beast to (face) them: He will speak to them, for that mankind did not believe with assurance in Our Signs.”

The other question is where to fit the two Qur’anic cycles of the dabba and Yajuj and Majuj. Both of these have no obvious political overtones, which is probably the reason for their retarded state of development. The dabba is connected with the Dajjal by the comments of the Muslim apocalyptists, who sought to identify it with the figure of the jassasa in the ‘*Dajjal Chained in the West*’ Cycle. Having at this moment no better solution to the problem of the identity of this creature, I have adopted this connection. As for Yajuj and Majuj, since in a number of traditions they are the final event (though not in all), here they are used to bring the survey to a close. These conclusions could be contested, since clearly the dabba is a harmless creature and does not belong topically in the company of the Dajjal, while Yajuj and Majumj are just as clearly nightmare entities designed to frighten. (E, - Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic, by David Cook, Page 93)

Islamic Eschatology

THE HOUR

MAJOR SIGNS

The Major Signs happen in sequence:

- Humanity has reached a stage of great suffering
- A great army from the east appears carrying black flags of war

1st of the Great Signs – The Appearing of the Mahdi

- THE HOUR has begun
- Mahdi joins the Black Flags and rides on a white horse
- Mahdi conquers Israel and slaughters Jews
- Mahdi will ascend to power
- Mahdi will secure final seven year peace treaty with Roman Christians
- Mahdi rules the world in both Muslim and non-Muslim lands
- Mahdi will uncover scrolls of ancient biblical text that refute the Jews
- Mahdi uncovers the Ark of the Covenant at the Sea of Galilee and brings it to Jerusalem

2nd of the Great Signs – Appearance of Dajjal, the antichrist

- Dajjal is likely a Jew and has mainly Jewish followers.
- Dajjal will claim to be a prophet, and then, claim to be Deity
- Dajjal comes from the east, possibly Chorazin
- Dajjal also comes from the sea and attacks Jerusalem
- Dajjal performs miracles of healing, raising the dead, rain/drought, move mountains, stop the sun
- Dajjal is destroyed by the return of Jesus

3rd of the Great Signs – Jesus Returns

- Jesus returns in Damascus to the white minaret on east side
- Jesus is a faithful Muslim and submits to Mahdi
- Jesus will serve as a community organizer and institute Islamic Law worldwide
- Christians will be brought to Islamic Faith and convert to Islam
- Jesus will break crosses
- Jesus will slaughter Jews
- Jesus will kill Dajjal, who is the antichrist, and his followers

4th of the Great Signs – Gog and Magog Invasion

- After thousands of years of being imprisoned behind an iron wall built by someone like Alexander the Great the barbarous tribes of Gog and Magog will be released from the North.

5th of the Great Signs – Three Landslides

- One landslide in the East, one in the West and one in Arabia to swallow everything

6th of the Great Signs – Maskh, Khuf and Qazf

- Some people will experience: Maskh – physical change in appearance (like becoming an animal); Khuf – a landslide; Qazf – bombardment

7th of the Great Signs – Sun rises in the west instead of the east

- After this sign Allah will not accept repentance, conversion or declarations of faith.

8th of the Great Signs – Appearance of Daabba, the Beast

- Daabba comes from the earth with Solomon’s Ring and Moses’ Rod
- Daabba destroys the nose on unbelievers and writes KAFIR (“infidel”) on their forehead

9th of the Great Signs – Smoke and fire in Yemen

- Smoke covers whole earth for 40 days. Muslims get colds, non-Muslims unconscious

10th of the Great Signs – The Pleasant Wind

- The biblical rapture of all remaining Muslims; only unbelievers remain on earth

11th of the Great Signs – Destruction of the Kaaba in Mecca

- An Ethiopian will destroy the Kaaba and steal its treasure; Pilgrimage will cease

12th of the Great Signs – The Fire

- Fire originating from Yemen will drive people to gather for Day of Resurrection

13th of the Great Signs – Three Trumpets

- First blast, everyone will feel terrified
- Second blast, everyone will drop dead
- Third blast, everyone will be resurrected - Day of Resurrection

AFTER “THE HOUR”

After the Day of Judgment and the Resurrection these events take place:

- **Cross Bridge** that spans Hell - unfaithful fall or are burned by fire
- **Gather at the Pool** - faithful meet at Pool of the Prophet and when they drink their thirst vanishes
- Enter through the gates into the **Garden (Paradise)**

Modern Muslim Apocalyptic Events

In most scenarios the apocalyptic events begin with an Arab-Israel conflict. First, the demonic Dajjal (the Muslim antichrist) appears and, except for a few Muslim countries, gains control over the world. The Dajjal is a Jew who controls the world through a conspiracy as presented in *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which is an anti-Semitic hoax put forth as a Jewish plan to dominate the world.

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion is a “fraudulent document that served as a pretext and rationale for anti-Semitism in the early 20th century. The document purports to be a report of a series of 24 (in other versions, 27) meetings held at Basel, Switz., in 1897, at the time of the first Zionist congress.” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1990, volume 9, page 742)

This false document is still widely circulated and believed in certain circles today. *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was originally published in Russian in 1903 and translated into multiple languages. It was widely discussed and lectured on throughout the international community in the early 1900’s. In the 1920’s Henry Ford funded and distributed 500,000 copies. Obviously, Adolf Hitler took the work seriously and had it taught as fact in German classrooms beginning in 1933, although as early as 1921 *The Times of London* proved *The Protocols* to be a fraud. The basic context of the fraudulent work is the Jewish systematic plan for taking over the world by corrupting the morals of the Gentiles while controlling the press and the world economic system.

The paranoid anti-Semite has placed himself in a closed circle from which neither logic, facts, nor reality, can extricate him. He is literally in a prison of his own creation. . . The use of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is a predominant feature of the contemporary Arabic-language Muslim apocalyptic scenario. It is the lens through which the apocalyptic writers view the world and interpret everyday events occurring in the political, religious, economic, and cultural arenas. One can see how and why they have focused on the concept of freedom as being the enemy, because for them it is the true enemy, denying them their power over their audience. (C. page 33-34; David Cook, *Contemporary Muslim Apocalyptic Literature*, page 33-34)

The Dajjal will lead the Western world and Israel against the Muslims.

Insight Into the Final Conflict, or the Hour

- Muslims consider “the West” and “Christian” to be synonymous; so a Muslim attack of the West is actually a religious attack.



- It is a conflict that has been coming for over 1,400 years
- Islam must confront the West and cannot accept the West without accepting the superiority of Christianity
- The US is the Great Babylon (as in Rev. 17:3-4) and the Anti-Christ. American presidents are agents of the Antichrist. America’s economy and culture reflect the demonic forces of antichrist. Allah will punish America with earthquakes, nuclear attacks, etc
- After Islam attacks and conquers Israel it will move on to attack the West and America
- Not all Muslims agree on the details since various Muslim countries have differing views and differing political alignments. For example:
 - Some see the US as having forced Iraq to invade Kuwait...so, are pro-Iraq
 - Some, for example Egypt, see Iraqi as evil and under the control of Israel
 - Some see the US and Russia as under the influence of Israel
- In classic Muslim apocalyptic writings the Jews are rarely mentioned outside of this quote: “*The Hour [of Judgment] will not arrive until the Muslims fight the Jews, and the Muslims will kill them until the Jew will hide behind rocks and trees, and the rock and the tree will say: ‘O Muslim, O servant of God, there is a Jew behind me- come and kill him!’*”
 - Yet, in modern Muslim apocalyptic writing, Israel receives the strongest threats and is prominently attacked
 - Modern Muslim apocalyptic writings place Israel under the control of Dajjal who deceives the world to support Israel...This modern scenario helps explain Islam’s inability to rid the world of Israel, a country that is small, scorned, developing...yet, cannot be stopped by Allah
- Muslim vs. Arab (Arabs are Muslims who have compromised and accepted the Western ways): This conflict goes back to the origin of Islam when they were just a small group of “believers” facing the world. The “true” Muslim (the fundamentalists) will invade other Muslim countries and kill the infidel Arabs (who may also be Muslim, but connected with the “cool kids” or the “in crowd” in the local government and the local economy)

ISLAM VS THE MODERN WESTERN WORLD

In his book *The Cross in the Shadow of the Crescent*, Erwin W. Lutzer titles seven chapters in Part II with seven lessons that today’s church needs to learn:

1. We cannot take the continued existence of the Church for granted
2. Faithfulness to Christ requires an acceptance of persecution
3. Even when a church is in the devils’ hands, it is still in God’s hands
4. The Crescent cannot destroy the Church



5. Compromise weakens the Church
6. Things are not what they appear to be
7. The remnant will triumph (N)

Muhammad, the Koran, and those who interpreted Muhammad's life believe Islam is superior to Christianity because of Islam's superiority in battle and conquest. The military success over Christendom is taken as proof that Muhammad is superior to Jesus. Christian lands have been seized by Muslim soldiers, and thousands of churches have been converted to mosques (N, pages 137-138).

We must understand both the rationale behind this logic and the fallacy of judging spiritual advancement by such logic. Since Muhammad began his quest for conquest, Islam has spread steadily and continues to grow and sweep over Christianity. If we are keeping score this way, we need to consider converting, because of the thousands of churches that have become mosques over the centuries. But how many mosques have been converted to churches?

And we have to consider not just geographical area, but population too.

In fact, in terms of numerical growth, Islam today is outpacing Christianity. That's not only because of mere population growth it is also because there are large numbers of Christians being killed in Muslim lands today. (N, page 139)

Based on research by the Pew Research Center released in April of 2015 (see reference T), Muslims will outnumber Christians worldwide by 2070. This will end a 2000-year Christian population dominance over Islam for the first time in history. According to the research, Islam is projected to grow more than twice as fast as any other major religion in the next fifty years. Not only that, but Christianity will lose its majority status in traditionally Christian countries such as the United Kingdom, France and Australia.

Commenting on these results and the fact that rapid population growth in poor countries can result in economic hardships, heavy migration, and political unrest, David Voas, professor of Population Studies at England's Institute for Social and Economic Research cautions that conditions like this can also create extremist violence. Voas says: "The very rapid growth of population, combined with limited opportunities even for the educated young people, but particularly for less educated ones, has created social and therefore political tensions, and that has fueled things like immigration to Western countries, political upheaval."



It is clear that Islam will grow rapidly in the next ten years (2015-2025), and based on this research the Islamic population will grow from 23.2% of the planet's people in 2010 up to 29.7% by 2050. This rapid, explosive growth of Islam will occur worldwide while Christianity is predicted to hold at 31.4% of the world population without change during the same forty year period. Islam will pass Christianity in population by 2070, but will be virtually equal with Christianity in world population in 2050 at 30% Muslim and 31% Christian, if the numbers are rounded off.

This same research project indicates that the number of people who are religiously unaffiliated will drop! To some people, a decline in secular views even being possible in our modern age is unbelievable. Yet, the trend back toward religious affiliation has begun and is predicted to change from 16.4% of the world's population being unaffiliated with a religion to 13.2% - a drop of more than 3%.

There is clear statistical information that shows our world is becoming more involved in religion and spiritual matters, and Islam is gaining by far the greatest advantage of that swing. If momentum continues to build, the speed of this process will easily increase.

I mentioned this coming trend in my 2007 book, *Hope for America's Last Generation*, when I made the following statement and included a warning of what is now inevitable in our culture:

We should worry less about proving our side scientifically and turn our attention to what's coming on the horizon – a so-called "new spiritual dimension." The pendulum is swinging from denying the existence of God to embracing some kind of spirituality. This poses great danger for those who've failed to grow in their knowledge of the Bible. Without a full understanding of God's truth, people won't be able to face this new enemy. This enemy that won't just deny the existence of God, but will be a spiritual, demonic force claiming to be the one true God. (125)

Islam is a political ideology that uses religion to protect and support itself (N, page 140). If the politics and government of Islam were not propped up with the protection, support and fanaticism of religion, it would not survive as a viable political or legal option in the world.

Islam will follow the liberal movement into the Western World. But, what will follow Islam? It cannot contain itself. Its religion is flawed and its philosophy



is false. Islam can bring the sword, but can it bring revival to a dead, immoral culture? Islam can bring the conqueror and the oppressor, but can it deliver the freedom and creativity necessary for advancement in culture?

The greatest political and religious power of all time will be the Antichrist. Are his military victories an indication of the truthfulness of his religion? Does the conquering antichrist lead the cultures of the world into a new age of productivity, life, creativity, freedom and justice? No! The Antichrist leads the world into war, famine, cultural oppression, martyrdom of opposition, and ultimately into the darkest days known to humanity. The one thing that is more destructive to humanity and society than denying the existence of God, is to embrace a false God. The USA has experienced the deconstruction of a society based on Christian principles with the rise of secular humanism. And, deconstructed it has been! But, now, prepare for the impact of a crumbling secular culture that embraces a false god after having embraced a false reality.

Islam is a religion that embodies a detailed system of laws that “regulate all manner of behavior in the secular sphere – economic, social, military, legal and political” (quote on N, page 175 comes from “Shariah: The Threat to America – An Exercise in Competitive Analysis Report of Team BII (Washington, DC: The Center for Security Policy, 2010) p. 2).

Islam governs “all aspects of civil society and human life, both public and private” (quote on N, page 175 from “Shariah: The Threat to America – An Exercise in Competitive Analysis Report of Team BII (Washington, DC: The Center for Security Policy, 2010) p. 5).

Consider also this statement by Abdurahman Alamoudi in an online article called “The Twelfth Imam”:

I have no doubt in my mind, Muslims sooner or later will be the moral leadership of America. It depends on me and you, either we do it now or we do it after a hundred years, but this country will become a Muslim country. (N, page 152)

And this, from a sign carried by a Muslim demonstrator:

We will use the freedoms of the Constitution to destroy the Constitution!
(N, page 175)

And also this, by Mohamed Akram of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1991



Our work in America is a kind of grand jihad in eliminating and destroying the Western civilization from within. (N, page 175)

On pages 125-126 of “Shariah: The Threat to America” the key tactics of the Muslim Brotherhood’s plan to wage a civilization jihad on the USA were uncovered in documents seized by the FBI in 2004. These strategies are not outrageous or unbelievable, but very basic and applied in a very simple day-to-day active advance on American Democracy. Here is the list provided by The Center for Security Policy in 2010:

1. Expand the Muslim presence by birth rate, immigration, and refusal to assimilate
2. Occupy and expand domination of physical space
3. Ensure the “Muslim Community” knows and follows the Muslim Brotherhood doctrine
4. Control the language that non-muslims are permitted to use in describing the enemy
5. Ensure that non-muslims do not study the Shariah Doctrine
6. Co-opt (nominate, choose, appoint) key leadership
7. Force compliance with Shariah Law at local levels
8. Fight all counterterrorism efforts
9. Subvert religious organizations
10. Employ “lawfare” – the offensive use of lawsuits and threats of lawsuits (The word “lawfare” is coined by combining the words “law” and “warfare”, so instead of “warfare” the concept is “lawfare”)
11. Claim victimization and demand accommodations
12. Condemn “slander” against Islam
13. Subvert the United States education system and in particular infiltrate and dominate US, Middle East and Religious Studies programs
14. Demand the right to practice Shariah Law in segregated Muslim enclaves
15. Demand recognition of Shariah Law in non-muslim spheres
16. Confront and denounce Western society, laws and traditions
17. Demand that Shariah replace Western Law

Even the United Kingdom, the land that produced the Magna Carta in 1215, came under Shariah Law influence in 2013 with 85 Shariah councils and 5 Muslim Arbitration Tribunals that were able to make thousands of legal rulings due to the Arbitration Act of 1996 - even though the Muslim councils and tribunals ruled contrary to UK law. Shariah councils and Muslim Tribunals provide no concept of the legal safety nets known to the Western world – there is no monitoring of the justice system, the imams are the judges, legal representation is not guaranteed, court proceedings are not recorded, there is



no right to appeal, and the list goes on and on. (N, page 177) Remember, this is taking place in the twenty-first century in the Western World in a culture that developed many of the founding principles of just and democratic government.

Do not think Islam is going to do anything to support the homosexual agenda. The only thing Islam is going to do with gay rights is use them as a job to weaken the United States before Islam brings the knockout punch. The Islamic knockout punch to Western culture will not be merciful to all the political players that we have become accustomed to throwing jabs and body punches to weaken America during its decline.

The crusaders failed against Islam in military engagement for 300 years. And, the crusaders were most often warriors, prepared with the best weaponry of their age and backed by the wealth of the Church and the state, while supported back home by their culture. Yet, the Crusaders attempt to drive Islam back was at best a neutralizing effort that caused little but the slaughter of thousands on both sides.

How does that compare with our attitude and preparation today? Today, the USA does not have public support, religious support, or governmental support to engage in a military conflict with Islam. The USA does not even have the capacity to identify Islam as a threat to our society, to our nation, to our families, or to our future as a democracy. How is it that we do not understand this threat? How is it that our scientists, our academics, and our educational and political leaders perceive the distant threat of global warming, but cannot identify Islam as the very near threat?

Erwin W. Lutzer says: "Not all Muslims are on board with this agenda" (in N, page 176). Erwin then speaks of a secular Muslim in Turkey who is opposed to the forced imposition of Shariah Law. This secular Muslim claims there are millions of Muslims just like him who do not believe that Shariah Law should be the rule of the land in Muslim countries in the East, or in Western non-Muslim countries. But, of course, these secular Muslims are targeted by other Muslims who do advocate Sharia Law and who threaten them with death for contradicting the clear teachings of the Qur'an.

Lutzer further writes:

The Islamist and hardliners who wish to bring Shariah Law to the West are not representative of the majority of Muslims. But, what many Americans do not realize is that even if the extremists are vastly outnumbered,



it is they who wield the political and religious authority in Islam, as Paul Marshall and Nina Shea explain in their book "Silenced": 'In the contemporary struggle of ideas within Islam, those who are empowered by such restrictions are the extremists, who use law and intimidation to determine which ideas are accessible and acceptable in their society. In contrast, Muslim religious and political reformers, who protest the extremists' agenda and work to lift their societies out of stunting, ideological conformity, are the first to be silenced.' (N, page 176)

The point here is that even if there *are* Muslims who are tolerant of outside ideas and seek to reform Islam, they are *not* the ones setting the agenda. It is the extremists who use force, intimidation, infiltration, violence, and many other tactics to silence those who are viewed as either criticizing or questioning the religious authority of Muhammad, the Qur'an, or Allah. Of course, historically, those who disarm and attempt to bring change are always overwhelmed by those who use the sword to bring change. How can it be any different in this Reality?

As Ali A. Allawi, says in his book "The Crisis of Islamic Civilization":

Not all Muslims would agree that to flourish Islamic civilization needs the protection of a powerful (Islamic) state... A Muslim state's open embrace of Islam and Islamic causes is not only anathema to secularists, but can also lead to dangerous foreign entanglements and reaction... Cultural differences lie at the heart of the conflicts and struggles that underlie the 'clash of civilizations' thesis. Religion is, of course, only one aspect of civilization, but the religious inheritance is probably the most significant and salient characteristic of a civilization. Hence western civilization is underpinned by the Judeo-Christian tradition, even as the major western powers are determinedly secular and liberal in their political culture. In a similar vein, China is the inheritor of the Confucian legacy, even though it is currently governed by a nominally atheistic communist state... No Muslim state has proclaimed that its adherence to Islamic norms or conduct and behavior has been the essential factor in its success in worldly matters. Thus, where Muslim countries have excelled (in relative terms), say in Malaysia, the cause is partly attributed to 'Asian', rather than to Islamic, values. Similarly, the success of Turkey in transforming its economy is attributed to the modernization of its corporate culture along modern capitalist lines rather than to a particularly Islamic quality of its economy or society. Dubai, the glittering emirate which sees itself as the embodiment of the wired and globalized city, compares itself, if it ever does so any more, to Singapore and Hong Kong, and not to some Islamic paradigm of success. (F, pages 144-145)



Mega Church and the Hagia Sophia - A Practical Lesson from History

Constantinus, the Christian Roman Emperor, repaired Byzantium's old pagan temples and built the magnificent Hagia Sophia Church (see photo in section two, page 63). He also dedicated the city as the new capital of the Roman Empire on May 11, 330. The city was named Constantinopolis. (The pronunciation of the city name changed to Stinpolis, Stinpol, Estanbul and today is Istanbul.)



Photo by Larry and Linda Clauson

The earliest church in Istanbul was built during the reign of Emperor Constantinus as a basilica. It was the cathedral church of the city. It was first called **Megala Ekklesia** ("Mega Church") but beginning in the 400's this mega church became known instead as **Hagia Sophia** - "the Church of Divine Wisdom" or "the Church of Holy Wisdom". The original church was burnt during a rebellion on June 20, 404, but was rebuilt by Emperor Theodosius II and reopened on October 10, 415. This church was destroyed by fire again in 532 during the Nika uprising. When the Emperor Justinian ordered the Hagia Sophia to be rebuilt he desired it to be done with great stature and magnificence. Eight columns of red porphyry were brought from the great Temple of Diana in Ephesus. Additional marble was obtained from other ruined classical sites, with even more coming from some of the Byzantine Empire's finest marble quarries.

Justinian's work began in 532 and was completed in five years, eleven months and ten days by 1000 masons and 10,000 apprentices. Emperor Justinian dedicated the new improved "megachurch" on December 27, 537. Hagia Sophia was restored in 562 and the dome was raised twenty feet, six inches. In the 800's bronze doors were installed. Emperor Basuleios II added Mosaics in 990. When the Christians of the Latin Church (i.e., the Roman Catholic Church in the West) invaded Istanbul (Byzantium), the capital of the Eastern Christian Empire, during the Crusade of 1204, Hagia-Sophia was again raided and stripped of its finest ornaments, including the bronze doors which were mistakenly perceived as gold by the Crusaders (L, page 36-37).

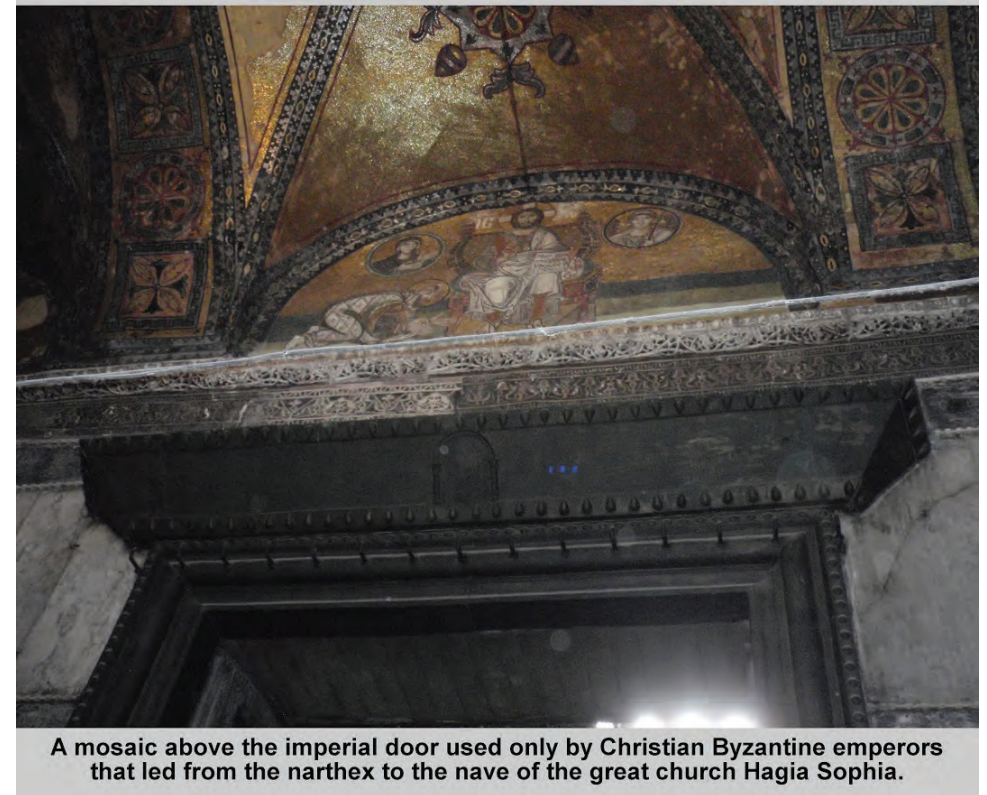


Photo by Larry and Linda Clauson

In 1453 the Muslims were led by Sultan Mehmed II of the Ottoman Empire to conquer Constantinople. After the conquest of the capital of the Christian Byzantine Empire, the mega church Hagia-Sophia was converted into a mosque. During the time of the Ottoman Empire, four Muslim prayer minarets were added, one on each corner of the complex. The Christian church bells, altar and other ritual objects were removed. The beautiful mosaics depicting Jesus, Mary, Christian saints, and angels were either removed or plastered over. The mega church Hagia Sophia remained a mosque for almost 480 years when it was closed in 1931 for four years while the Hagia Sophia Mosque was renovated.

On February 1, 1935 Hagia Sophia was reopened as a public museum. Many of the Christian mosaics had been uncovered and restored, along with many other objects. The building itself covers an area of 100 x 70 meters, or 1.7 acres (Ref, L).

The evidence of history reveals the fate of the Christian mega-churches and community centers of the past - and so potentially indicates the future fate as well. The cultural direction we witness daily in our Western world makes the momentum of our Western culture clear. Today's Western churches and their community centers will soon be mosques and Islamic centers. We cannot outrun history. Neither can we misquote enough Bible verses or mis-teach Christian doctrine often enough to squeeze ourselves out of reality. Your church's building program has just financed the construction of your community's first Islamic Center. Call it whatever you want today. Its conversion is just a matter of time.

The Islamic Antichrist

Beginning with the earliest days of Islam's rise the church has identified Islam by its creed and conduct as the possible religion of the antichrist. Islam was considered by Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley and others to be either the kingdom of the Antichrist, or intertwined with other powers to produce the Antichrist:

John of Damascus classified Islam as merely a recent Christian heresy when he wrote in 750 AD and casually dismissed Islam in its early days as "the still prevailing superstition of the Ishmaelites, the forerunner of the Antichrist" (Encyclopedia of Christianity, Islam and Christianity, 2.2).

During the Crusades, after Islam had reconquered Jerusalem in 1187 under the leadership of Saladin, Joachin of Fiore identified the fourth head of the Dragon in Revelation with Muhammad and the sixth head as Saladin himself. Then in the 1190's AD Joachin identified the Beast that came out of the sea in



Revelation 13:1 and was fatally wounded in the head but yet lived, as Islam - which had recovered from the Crusader's conquering of Jerusalem and risen to retake the city.

John Calvin believed the two legs of Daniel's prophetic image to be the ancient pagan Roman Empire, but its division into two legs referred to the contemporary rise of Islam in the East and Roman Catholicism in the West. Calvin also noted that Muhammad tore away the eastern half of Christendom while the Pope was tearing away the Western half.

Johnathan Edwards "held to a historicist interpretation of the Book of Revelation... In looking at the demonic locusts and horsemen in Revelation 9, Edwards saw a clear allusion to the Muslim armies: 'Satan's Mahometan (Muslim) Kingdom shall be utterly overthrown. The locusts and the horsemen in the 9th chapter of Revelation have their appointed time set there, and the false prophet shall be taken and destroyed. And then - through Mahometanism (Islam) has been so vastly propagated in the world, and is upheld by such a great empire - this smoke, which has ascended out of the bottomless pit, shall be utterly scattered before the light of that glorious day, and the Mahometan Empire shall fall at the sound of the great trumpet which shall then be blown" (Shoebat in "God's War on Terror" quoting Johnathan Edwards in The Fall of Antichrist, Part VII, page 399, S. Converse, New York, 1829).

John Wesley was not impressed with the character of Islam in history or of the Muslims of his day. Wesley used the people, their religion and their culture as one of several examples of the sinfulness of humanity in its unconverted state. Wesley seems to refer clearly to a similar view that saw Islam as part of the fourth beast with its "Iron Teeth" in Daniel 7:7:

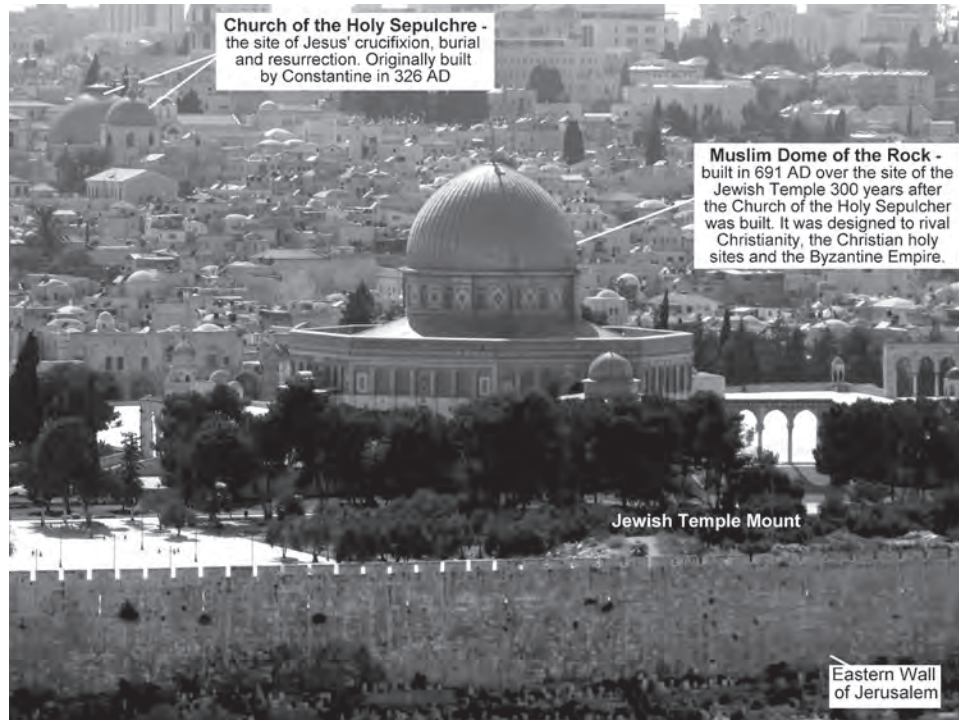
It is not therefore strange, That ever since the Religion of Mahomet appeared in the World, the Espousers of it, particularly those who under the Turkish Emperor, have been as Wolves and Tygers to all other Nations, rending and tearing all that fell into their merciless Paws, and grinding them with their Iron Teeth. That numberless Cities are rased from the Foundation, and only their Name remaining. That many Countries which were once as the Garden of God, are now a desolate Wilderness; and that so many once numerous and powerful Nations are vanishe'd away from the Earth! Such was, and is at this Day the Rage, the Fury, the Revenge, of these Destroyers of Humankind! (Wesley, John, "The Doctrine of Original Sin: According to Scripture, Reason, and Experience, published 1757, page 47. Available online at <https://archive.org/details/doctrineoforigin00wesl>)



And finally, consider this warning to wise Christians from Jean-Pierre Filiu who writes about the Muslim authors of today's Islamic apocalyptic material:

These authors seldom belong to the religious hierarchy; indeed, their overriding purpose is to turn a vengeful reading of history, and especially of its end, against the clergy itself. (D, page xi)

The end of the world is a serious matter – especially for those who are busy preparing for it. (D, page xi)



Resources used in Section Five

- (B) *The Last Trumpet: A Comparative Study In Christian-Islamic Eschatology*, by Samuel Shahid, Ph.D, 2005, Xulon Press
- (C) *Contemporary Muslim Apocalyptic Literature*, by David Cook, 2005, Syracuse University Press
- (D) *Apocalypse in Islam* by Jean-Pierre Filiu, translated by M.B. DeBevoise, 2011, The Regents of the University of California
- (E) *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic*, by David Cook, 2002, The Darwin Press, Princeton, NJ
- (F) *The Crisis of Islamic Civilization* by Ali A. Allawi, 2009, Yale University Press
- (G) *The Islamic Antichrist: The Shocking Truth About the Real Nature of the Beast*, by Joe Richardson, 2009, WND Books, Los Angeles, CA
- (H) *God's War on Terror: Islam, Prophecy and the Bible*, by Walid Shoebat, 2008, Top Executive Media
- (I) *The Fatal Embrace: Jews and the State*, by Benjamin Ginsberg, 1993, University of Chicago Press
- (J) *What Every American Should Know About the Middle East*, by Melissa Ross, 2008, Plume, Penguin Books
- (K) *Understanding the Threat of Radical Islam*, by Guy Rodgers and ACT! For America, 2012, National Highlights
- (L) *Istanbul*, by Aksit Kultur ve Turizm Yayincihk, 2014, Istanbul, Turkey
- (M) *They Must Be Stopped: Why We Must Defeat Radical Islam and How We Can Do It*, by Brigitte Gabriel, 2008, St. Martin's Press
- (N) *The Cross in the Shadow of the Crescent: An Informed Response to Islam's War with Christianity*, by Erwin W. Lutzer with Steve Miller, 2013, Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, OR
- (O) *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, by Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan, 2015, Regan Arts, NY
- (P) *Islam and the Jews: The Unfinished Battle*, by Mark A. Gabriel, Ph.D., 2003, Charisma House
- (Q) *Culture Clash: Islam's War on the West*, by Mark A. Gabriel, Ph.D., 2007, Front Line
- (R) *The Coming Islamic Invasion of Israel*, by Mark Hitchcock, 2002, Multnomah Publishers, Sisters, OR
- (S) *Understanding the Times*, Summit Press, Manitou Springs, CO, 2006
- (T) www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050/

SECTION SIX

Tribulation and the Rapture of the Church

Awake and Watching

We are to be “watching” for the Lord’s return. This probably doesn’t mean we should be looking up into the sky like the disciples were at Jesus’ ascension. “Watching” means we should be living in a way that would please the Lord when he returns, but it also means we should be comparing our world events with Biblical prophecies to see if our current historical situation lines up with the prophecies that speak of Jesus’ return. The reason we are told to be looking for the Lord’s return is to keep us alert so we are not surprised by the events that surround the day of his return. In Scripture the opposite of “alert” would be conditions such as “drowsy”, “asleep” or “drunk”.

*It will be good for those servants whose master finds them **watching** when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night. (Luke 12:37-38, NIV)*

*Blessed are those servants whom the master finds **awake** when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants! (Luke 12:37-38, ESV)*

Jesus commands his disciples on a couple of occasions to be watching for his return. The word he uses in Luke 12:37 above is the Greek word **gregoreo** which means “to watch”. It is used in the New Testament in reference to “keeping awake” and being “spiritually alert” (W.E. Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, MacDonald Publishing Company, McLean, Virginia, page 1,224). So **gregoreo** means “to watch”, “to stay awake”, “to be vigilant”. It is a word that has both ethical and religious overtones. The word indicates the proper attitude of a believer. The present imperative tense of Matthew 24:42 indicates a constant vigil (Rogers, Cleon L., Jr., and Rogers, Cleon L., III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*, 1982, pages 55 and 480).

Later, in the final days of his ministry, Jesus says the same thing again to his disciples, and Paul refers to the same event in the same way with the same wording in 1 Thessalonians 5:4-6.

Matthew 24:42-43 –

NIV - Therefore **keep watch**, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have **kept watch** and would not have let his house be broken into.

ESV - Therefore, **stay awake**, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have **stayed awake** and would not have let his house be broken into.

1 Thessalonians 5:4-6 – *But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us **keep awake** and be sober.* (ESV)

Agrupneo means to be sleepless and to be watchful. **Agrupneo** is a compound word made from **agreuo** meaning “to chase” and hupnos meaning “sleep” (W.E. Vine, Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, MacDonald Publishing Company, McLean, Virginia page, 1,224). **Agrupneo** means “to chase sleep away, to be watchful, to be alert, to be on the lookout for, to be vigilant (Rogers, Cleon L., Jr., and Rogers, Cleon L., III, The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament, 1982, page 97). Rogers and Rogers refer to Lohannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida in their edited addition of Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains, New York: United Bible Societies, 1989, page 5 in their Greek Linguistic and Exegetical Key when they cite: “To make an effort to learn of what might be a potential future threat” as the meaning and intention of the Greek word **agrupneo** that we translate “awake”.

Mark 13:33 –

NIV – *Be on guard! **Be alert!** You do not know when that time will come.*

ESV – *Be on guard, **keep awake**. For you do not know when the time will come.*

Luke 21:36 –

NIV – ***Be always on the watch**, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.*

ESV – *But **stay awake at all times**, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.*



Indeed, not only do we not know the day or hour of Christ’s return, we have not even been given the ability to perceive it. It is a mystery kept with God the Father:

But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. (Matthew 24:36, ESV; also, Mark 13:32)

He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.” (Acts 1:7, ESV)

This day and its associated events will definitely surprise the world.

What we have to realize is that there is a difference between attempting to identify the exact date of Jesus’ return and being alert to prophecies recorded in the Bible to which we are commanded to give our attention. This is the difference between attempting to predict the future and comparing biblical prophecy with current world events.

The results are likewise different. Besides the fact we are told in scripture that “about that day or hour no one knows” and, “It is not for you to know times or dates the Father has set by his own authority” (Matthew 24:36 and Acts 1:7, NIV), setting a date and attempting to predict the future will lead to deception, confusion, and ultimately, to a loss of confidence in the Truth that we have been given. But, we will become more faithful and more productive when we are alert to prophecy and “watching” contemporary events in history - as we are commanded to do in Scripture by Jesus and the Apostles. We are told to “watch” and “be awake” so we do not fall away from the Truth (as Jesus said, many shall “fall away and will betray one another and hate one another”, Mt. 24:10) or become intoxicated by the pleasures and the worries of the world (as Paul commanded: “let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night”, 1 Thess. 5:6-7).

In other words, we are not to be *predicting*, but we are to be watching! We are not be ignorant of the Lord’s return; instead, we are to understand it.

Even establishing an eschatological model that details exactly how end time events will occur can be dangerous for a people’s faith. What if things don’t match the model exactly? Will they have enough independent Bible knowledge to recover, or will they lose faith?



Consider, for example, the Pretribulation rapture model. It has good research. It has ample Bible references. It has more than enough proponents supporting it. In some social circles it is even considered a heresy to disagree with the concept. Is this healthy? Is this safe? Is this good use of an individual believer's priesthood? Creating a model to suggest possible connections and sequences is practical and possible. But, to actually establish a model that gets all the events correct and the continuity of the sequence exactly right is beyond human capability, because:

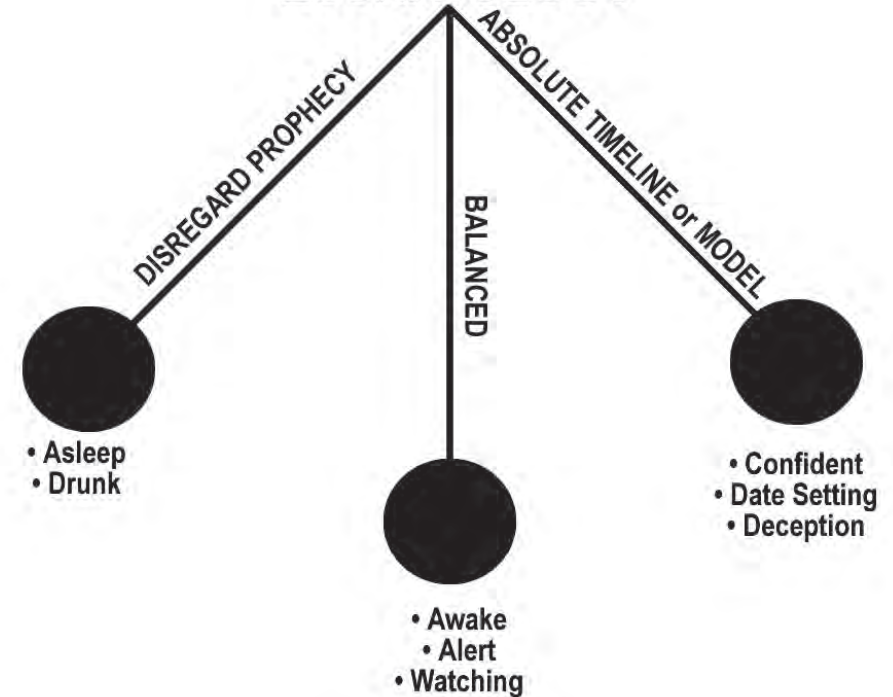
- These things are known only by the Father's own authority
- These things are still in the mystery stage
- These things are still future and have not manifested yet in human history
- Everyone in every age of the Bible and church history who claimed to have it all nailed down overstated their assurance, and in their arrogance often ended up resisting the work of the Lord - in one famous case, they even rejected the prophesied Messiah and had him crucified as a blasphemer. Yes, you know that is right! The prophecy gurus and authorities of Scripture completely misunderstood the prophecy they had lectured on when it became an actual historical event

What's my point?

We should study. We should be watching for the Lord's return. We should compare prophecy with current events. We should create and compare eschatological models. And, we definitely should have an opinion! To deny any of these things is to deny the command in scripture to be alert, to be watching, to be ready...even if it is later than we anticipate! The alternatives are wrong:

- Ignoring or being ignorant concerning the teaching of the Lord's return puts you in the category of the "sleeper" (1 Thessalonians 5:1-7; Matthew 25:1-13)
- The believer who is consumed with worldly living, false philosophies and their temporal life is drunk on the world and not spiritually sober (1 Thessalonians 5:1-7; Matthew 24:45-51)
- The believer (Is such a title even possible?) who denies the Lord will return, is the false teacher Peter warned was coming (2 Peter 3:3-5; 16)

ESCHATOLOGY



So, the problem is not with those who are watching, comparing events with scripture, forming an opinion, and making charts. This group is clearly awake, alert and watching. This group is centered. They are the balanced group. They are living in the world, but still watching and waiting.

The problem comes when someone in that group of watchers and waiters becomes overconfident and in their arrogance begins to reject others who are also watching. In other words, a group of watchers can fellowship together, but once one of the watchers becomes a "knower" and establishes his model as "authoritative", then we begin to have a conflict.

"Knowers" do not like "watchers." Watchers are alert and studying, but they are not drunk on the world or on a particular eschatological model. You can be committed to your idea, but you cannot be dogmatic.

Why?

Because these events have not happened yet. These events are mysteries. Jesus even told his own disciples they would be surprised when it all came

together. And, most importantly, even Daniel, the great prophet whose prophecies are always used by both prophecy “watchers” and prophecy “knowers” was still asking questions at the end of his vision. Even after seeing the vision that many of us study, Daniel himself said, “I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, ‘My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?’” (Daniel 12:8). If Daniel, who wrote the book, was still confused and asking questions at the end of the book, then I had better be smart enough to know when to stop saying, “I know the answer”.

Even Daniel didn’t know all the answers. And, when Daniel asked the angel for more information he was told, “Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end... As for you, go your way till the end” (Daniel 12:9-13). So, I need to teach what I can, diagram what I understand, but be willing to tolerate other watchers, encourage the students and not get drunk on my own teaching! And, when I speculate on the things that are not clear or diagram the mystery, I need to have enough courage to say, “I do not know, but here is my speculation. Here is my model. Use it if it is useful, but make corrections when you have more insight.”

Jesus even begins his eschatological teaching in Matthew 24 by saying, “Watch out that no one deceives you!”. Likewise Paul, in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 says, concerning the Lord’s return: “Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way.”

A Correct Eschatological Basis

Even though I said above that, “The problem comes when someone in that group of watchers and waiters becomes overconfident and in their arrogance begin to reject others who are also watching”, I do want to quickly attempt to establish a correct eschatological basis.

Even though I pointed out that Daniel himself said, “I heard, but I did not understand... what will the outcome of all this be?”, I also have to point out that we still do have to begin to make some distinction between right and wrong biblical eschatology. If we are going to be “watchers” we will eventually need to classify the wide variety of eschatological teachings as doctrinal statements, correct interpretations, possible scenarios, speculation, imaginative creations, defective interpretations, deception and denials of the Truth.

An example of what I would consider a doctrinal statement would be: “We believe in the deity of Jesus Christ and in his personal return to earth in power and glory.” That statement is supported by Scripture, but does not speculate on the date of his return to earth. This doctrinal statement does not include an



interpretation of scriptural evidence concerning how Jesus returns to earth in power or glory. Also, this statement can be used in a variety of eschatological models amid a wide range of sequences of events.

An example of what I would consider to be a denial of the Truth would be similar to Peter’s warning of the words of false teachers:

Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since the fathers died everything goes on as it has since the beginning. (2 Peter 3:4)

Millennium: A-millennial, Pre-millennial, Post-millennial?

The Bible mentions a millennial reign of Jesus Christ:

They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (Revelation 20:4)

The questions concerning this “thousand year” reign of Christ might begin with “when?”, which cannot be answered until we address the “how?” and “where?”. For example, will Christ reign on earth or from heaven? Will Christ reign on earth through his church or will he himself return to reign on earth as a king himself? And, then, when will Christ do this? Did it begin with his ascension in 30 AD? Or, will he eventually begin to reign in history as church-led governments advance around the globe? Or are we waiting for some point in the future when Jesus will interrupt history with his physical return to earth in order to establish his kingdom on earth?

The early church writers who were personally acquainted with the Apostle John, the author of Revelation, and the students of John’s disciples in the second century (100-200 AD), can be shown to be supporters of a literal millennium (or, thousand year) kingdom on earth ruled by Jesus Christ after his return to earth at his Second Coming. The Greek word for this position is “chiliasm”, which means “millennialism”. Of course, anyone who wants to argue their own theological position will appeal to the early church writers after they have exhausted their arguments from Scripture. I understand that and I respect that. So, I will try to briefly provide some quotes from the early church writers and make some brief commentary on these ancient texts.

Justin Martyr, 150 AD – In a recorded debate with a Jew named Trypho we have doctrinal testimony from a Christian apologist from 150 AD. Justin is responding to this question by Trypho: “Trypho to this replied, ‘Tell me, do you really admit that this place, Jerusalem, shall be rebuilt; and do you expect your people to be gathered together, and made joyful with Christ and the



patriarchs, and the prophets, both the men of our nation, and other proselytes who joined them before your Christ came?' To this Justin says:

I am not so miserable a fellow, Trypho, as to say one thing and think another. I admitted to you formerly, that I and many others are of this opinion, and [believe] that such will take place, as you assuredly are aware; but, on the other hand, I signified to you that many who belong to the pure and pious faith, and are true Christians, think otherwise. Moreover, I pointed out to you that some who are called Christians, but are godless, impious heretics, teach doctrines that are in every way blasphemous, atheistical, and foolish. But that you may know that I do not say this before you alone, I shall draw up a statement, so far as I can, of all the arguments which have passed between us; in which I shall record myself as admitting the very same things which I admit to you. For I choose to follow not men or men's doctrines, but God and the doctrines [delivered] by Him. For if you have fallen in with some who are called Christians, but who do not admit this [truth], and venture to blaspheme the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; who say there is no resurrection of the dead, and that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven; do not imagine that they are Christians, even as one, if he would rightly consider it, would not admit that the Sadducees, or similar sects of Genistæ, Meristæ, Galilæans, Hellenists, Pharisees, Baptists, are Jews (do not hear me impatiently when I tell you what I think), but are [only] called Jews and children of Abraham, worshipping God with the lips, as God Himself declared, but the heart was far from Him. But I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, [as] the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare.'

Justin is confirming his belief in:

- The physical resurrection of believers
- A thousand year reign in Jerusalem by Jesus
- The fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies given to the Jews

At the same time Justin is saying that groups of Christians who deny a physical resurrection, but yet say believers will be with God in heaven with no hope of a physical resurrection, are making a grievous error. In fact, Justin says, "do not imagine that they are Christians".

This is an amazing statement since many Christians in the Western church today have never ventured past this assumption. They comfortably believe



that if they "get saved" their souls will go to heaven after death. And, that's the end of their understanding. This is the same corruption that Greek philosophy had on the theology of the Corinthians in Paul's day in 55 AD, when he wrote chapter 15 of First Corinthians to correct their denial of a physical resurrection of the dead. The point we want to see here is the early church's persistence in holding to a physical resurrection and a physical kingdom of God on this physical earth. This is in agreement with a literal understanding of Old Testament prophecies, Jesus' teaching, Jesus' physical resurrection from the grave and physical ascension into heaven, the Apostles' teaching, and especially Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 15.

Along these same lines, Justin wrote in chapter 10 his work *On the Resurrection*:

The resurrection is a resurrection of the flesh which died... The Savior in the whole Gospel shows that there is salvation for the flesh, why do we any longer endure those unbelieving and dangerous arguments, and fail to see that we are retrograding when we listen to such an argument as this: that the soul is immortal, but the body mortal, and incapable of being revived? For this we used to hear from Pythagoras and Plato, even before we learned the truth.

Notice the battle in the ancient world was also between God's reality and false philosophies of the world. The challenge we face today is the same as it was in the days of the Apostles and their disciples who took the message into the second century. There is a natural tendency to smooth the road between Truth and culture. The easiest fix was done by compromising Christian Truth so that it fit the culturally-relevant thinking of Greek philosophy.

Clement of Rome, who traveled and ministered with Paul (Philippians 4:3), wrote the following while John was still alive around 98 AD:

Abraham, called "the friend," was found faithful, inasmuch as he obeyed the words of God. He, in the exercise of obedience, went out from his own country, and from his kindred, and from his father's house, in order that, by forsaking a small territory, and a weak family, and an insignificant house, he might inherit the promises of God. For God said to him, "Leave your country, and your kindred, and your father's house, and go into the land which I shall show you. And I will make you a great nation, and will bless you, and make your name great, and you shall be blessed. And I will bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you; and in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed." And again, on his departing from Lot, God



said to him. "Lift up your eyes, and look from the place where you now are, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see, to you will I give it, and to your seed forever (1 Clement to the Corinthians, chapter 10) ... "Of a truth, soon and suddenly shall His will be accomplished, as the Scripture also bears witness, saying, "Speedily will He come, and will not tarry;" and, "The Lord shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Holy One, for whom you look. (1 Clement, chapter 23)

Irenaeus, who wrote extensively between 150-202 AD, says:

Since, again, some who are reckoned among the orthodox go beyond the pre-arranged plan for the exaltation of the just, and are ignorant of the methods by which they are disciplined beforehand for incorruption, they thus entertain heretical opinions. For the heretics, despising the handiwork of God, and not admitting the salvation of their flesh, while they also treat the promise of God contemptuously, and pass beyond God altogether in the sentiments they form, affirm that immediately upon their death they shall pass above the heavens and the Demiurge, and go to the Mother or to that Father whom they have feigned. Those persons, therefore, who disallow a resurrection affecting the whole man, and as far as in them lies remove it from the midst [of the Christian scheme], how can they be wondered at, if again they know nothing as to the plan of the resurrection? For they do not choose to understand, that if these things are as they say, the Lord Himself, in whom they profess to believe, did not rise again upon the third day; but immediately upon His expiring on the cross, undoubtedly departed on high, leaving His body to the earth. But the case was, that for three days He dwelt in the place where the dead were. (Irenaeus, *Against Heretics*, Book V, Chapter XXXI, 1)

Inasmuch, therefore, as the opinions of certain [orthodox persons] are derived from heretical discourses, they are both ignorant of God's dispensations, and of the mystery of the resurrection of the just, and of the [earthly] kingdom which is the commencement of incorruption, by means of which kingdom those who shall be worthy are accustomed gradually to partake of the divine nature; and it is necessary to tell them respecting those things, that it behoves the righteous first to receive the promise of the inheritance which God promised to the fathers, and to reign in it, when they rise again to behold God in this creation which is renovated, and that the judgment should take place afterwards. For it is just that in that very creation in which they toiled or were afflicted, being proved in every way by suffering, they should receive the reward of their suffering; and that

in the creation in which they were slain because of their love to God, in that they should be revived again; and that in the creation in which they endured servitude, in that they should reign. For God is rich in all things, and all things are His. It is fitting, therefore, that the creation itself, being restored to its primeval condition, should without restraint be under the dominion of the righteous; and the apostle has made this plain in the Epistle to the Romans, when he thus speaks: 'For the expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature has been subjected to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope; since the creature itself shall also be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.' Thus, then, the promise of God, which He gave to Abraham, remains steadfast. For thus He said: 'Lift up thine eyes, and look from this place where now thou art, towards the north and south, and east and west. For all the earth which thou seest, I will give to thee and to thy seed, even forever.' And again He says, 'Arise, and go through the length and breadth of the land, since I will give it unto thee;' and [yet] he did not receive an inheritance in it, not even a footstep, but was always a stranger and a pilgrim therein. And upon the death of Sarah his wife, when the Hittites were willing to bestow upon him a place where he might bury her, he declined it as a gift, but bought the burying-place (giving for it four hundred talents of silver) from Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite. Thus did he await patiently the promise of God, and was unwilling to appear to receive from men, what God had promised to give him, when He said again to him as follows: 'I will give this land to thy seed, from the river of Egypt even unto the great river Euphrates.' If, then, God promised him the inheritance of the land, yet he did not receive it during all the time of his sojourn there, it must be, that together with his seed, that is, those who fear God and believe in Him, he shall receive it at the resurrection of the just. For his seed is the Church, which receives the adoption to God through the Lord... Thus, then, they who are of faith shall be blessed with faithful Abraham, and these are the children of Abraham. Now God made promise of the earth to Abraham and his seed; yet neither Abraham nor his seed, that is, those who are justified by faith, do now receive any inheritance in it; but they shall receive it at the resurrection of the just. For God is true and faithful; and on this account He said, 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.' (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book V, Chapter XXXII, 1,2)

Here Irenaeus is arguing for a physical resurrection and an earthly kingdom ruled by Jesus Christ. Where Justin Martyr argued against a Jew in the

ancient world in favor of a premillennial return of Jesus to establish an earthly kingdom, Irenaeus argues for the same thing against the Greek philosophy of the ancient world. Thus, both the Jewish religious culture and the Gentile philosophy of this time is seen to be in opposition to the Christian understanding of a millennial physical kingdom of God on earth.

Dr. Thomas Ice, the Executive Director of the Pre-Trib Research Center, has said in an online article (<http://www.ldolphin.org/premillhist.html>) the following concerning premillennialism:

It is generally recognized within the scholarly world of early church historians that premillennialism was the most widely held view of the earliest church tradition. One of the leading experts on the doctrine of the early church is J. N. D. Kelly, who says:

“Millenarianism, or the theory that the returned Christ would reign on earth for a thousand years came to find increasing support among Christian teachers...This millenarian, or ‘chilastic’ doctrine was widely popular at this time...The great theologians who followed the apologists Irenaeus, Tertullian and Hippolytus, were primarily concerned to defend the traditional eschatological scheme against Gnosticism... They are all exponents of millenarianism.” (J. N. D. Kelly. *Early Christian Doctrines* (San Francisco Harper & Row, 1978). p.465, 467, 469.)

Philip Schaff, the dean of American church historians and himself a postmillennialist, provided the following summary of the early church’s view of the millennium:

“The most striking point in the eschatology of the ante-Nicene age is the prominent chiliasm, or millenarianism, that is the belief of a visible reign of Christ in glory on earth with the risen saints for a thousand years, before the general resurrection and judgment. It was indeed not the doctrine of the Church embodied in any creed or form of devotion, but a widely current opinion of distinguished teachers, such as Barnabas, Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Methodius, and Lactantius.” (Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, VIII vols., Grand Rapids. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973, vol. II, p. 614)

European scholar and church historian, Adolph Harnack echoes Schaff and tells us,

“First in point of time came the faith in the nearness of Christ’s second advent and the establishing of His reign of glory on the earth. Indeed it appears so early that it might be questioned whether it ought not to be regarded as an essential part of the Christian religion.” (Adolph Hamack, “Millennium,” *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, 9th edition (New

York Charles Scribner’s Sons. 1883), vol. XVI p. 314 cited in Ronald E. Showers. *There Really Is a Difference*, (Bellmawr, NJ, The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 1990), p. 117)

As the Church continued to take root in the Western world of Asia, Greece, and Rome, there was continual pressure from Greek philosophy on Christian theology to “straighten up and fly right”. As is seen above, Greek philosophy from the days of Plato had held to the immortality of the soul, but had rejected the eternal state of the physical body.

Greek philosophers, such as Origen in Alexandria, Egypt, who were raised Christian or converted to Christianity, brought with them their Greek philosophy and their exegetical style of allegorical interpretation. Between the years of 205-254 Origen taught Christianity and suffered persecution for his faith on numerous occasions. Yet, Origen set the stage for others to follow his creative allegorical approach to scriptural interpretation instead of the literal approach to interpretation. Origen destroyed much of the eschatological teaching in the Church and was one of the first to introduce the concept of amillennialism. In fact, in his commentary on Matthew, Origen had completely spiritualized Christ’s Second Coming by associating it with Christ revealing himself to individuals. (This would be similar to saying in today’s evangelical world that the Second Coming of Christ occurs when a person is born again.) This set the stage for Augustine, who then set the stage for the whole of Christian theology through the Middle Ages.

Augustine (354-430) was a convert from premillennialism to amillennialism. Dr. Norman Geisler writes in *Systematic Theology*, volume four, page 571:

The early Augustine was premillennial, but he changed his view when he overreacted to a chiliastic cult and adopted an allegorical approach, a crucial error that amillennialist and postmillennialists have perpetuated since his time...Why did Augustine forsake premillennialism? (Geisler then quotes Augustine from Augustine’s book *City of God*)

They assert that those who then rise again shall enjoy the leisure of immoderate carnal banquets, furnished with an amount of meat and drink such as not only to shock the feelings of the temperate, but even to surpass the measure of credulity itself; such assertions can be believed only by the carnal.

With what did Augustine replace literal interpretation? With allegorical: ‘This resurrection [in John 5] regards not the body, but the soul. For souls, too, have a death of their own wickedness and sins....

But, as Geisler points out, it is highly improbable that Jesus was speaking allegorically in John 5 about the soul, since in context and in his own words, Jesus was speaking about bodies coming out of the graves to live again.

If a person is willing to accept this position that theologically supports a physical resurrection of the body living again on the earth in a future physical kingdom, then they should know that the Scriptures themselves fully support the concept of a premillennial return of Jesus to the earth and the Lord's establishment of his kingdom on earth:

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:10)

Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? (1 Corinthians 6:2-3, ESV)

The kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. (Daniel 7:27, ESV)

Who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. (Philippians 3:21, ESV)

It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it. (Isaiah 2:2, ESV)

Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. (Matthew 24:29-30, ESV)

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flames of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white

horses... Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ... When the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them. (Revelation 19:11-20:9)

On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward. And you shall flee to the valley of my mountains, for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azal. And you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him. On that day there shall be no light, cold, or frost. And there shall be a unique day, which is known to the Lord, neither day nor night, but at evening time there shall be light. On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea. It shall continue in summer as in winter. And the Lord will be king over all the earth. On that day the Lord will be one and his name one. Whole land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. But Jerusalem shall remain aloft on its site from the Gate of Benjamin to the place of the former gate, to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's winepresses. And it shall be inhabited, for there shall never again be a decree of utter destruction. Jerusalem shall dwell in security. (Zechariah 14:4-11, ESV)

Theological Road Construction

In 2012 I was teaching through the book of Revelation like I have since 1986. It was at least the sixth or seventh time in twenty-five years that I had taught verse by verse through John's epistle addressed to the seven churches of Asia. In addition to these teachings, I had also used Revelation on innumerable other occasions as I taught through other books of the Bible or explained other subjects and areas of theology and eschatology.

But, one night in 2012 I hit a snag as I was rolling through my notes and firing away with my verbal commentary in front of the class. It was the sixth seal

that caused that overwhelming feeling of anxiety that a teacher recognizes when what they are thinking doesn't agree with what they are saying. It is that time in the middle of a lecture when the teacher realizes his notes and his explanation are illogical. As a teacher you don't know where to go with your next point. Your thought process stops! You can't even remember how you explained this verse all the other times you taught it. On that evening in 2012 I didn't know how to logically explain what I had just read out loud from Revelation 6:12-17.

Actually, this happens more than once every twenty-five years for me, but usually it is due to insufficient study or a lack of understanding. Since I am a teacher it is common for me to listen to other people teach and to track the teacher's thought process as they speak or write. As I listen to them teach I can feel their discomfort when they hit these roadblocks of theological logic. Most drive right through the barriers that warn them of an approaching theological "construction zone". In an attempt to get to their point or to cover the material, these teachers ignore the flashing signs that indicate the road they are driving on is not complete.

When this happens to me while I am teaching I can feel my body respond to the mental panic with rising blood pressure and an adrenalin rush. I admit that I usually do not stop to observe the construction zone during class, but quickly take the most convenient detour around the theological mess. Other times I look around at the "passengers" in my class to see if any of them may have also seen the warning sign. If no one seems to have noticed the conflict in the text of scripture with my verbal commentary, I just step on the gas, pick up the next text and read right through it. Then, I return to figure it out later on my own.

As a teacher this problem never goes away. Theological road construction is never finished. The more you study and the more you teach, the more information you have traveling around on those highways, and it is inevitable in our fallible human understanding that there are going to be times we need to stop and revisit some intersections of concepts, widen some lanes to accommodate more understanding, and improve entrance and exit ramps to access the growing number of topics we address. The best scenario is when, as a skilled teacher, you have the ability to not only maintain speed, but also do the required road maintenance and theological work as you drive through the construction zone. I have also successfully done this. This happens most often, though, when the passengers start asking questions during class as we begin moving through a rough patch of road.



So, in 2012, I came upon some road construction on a long stretch of eschatological interstate. I was driving about 10 miles per hour over the posted speed limit because I had traveled this road many times before. But, when I read Revelation 6:12 the road ahead of me seemed suddenly to have been completely washed out. I remember thinking that this patch of road had been rough in the past and may have needed some work, but this time it had really deteriorated.

Since I had not been on the lookout for detour signs, and I realized I could not honestly make an Evel-Knievel-like daredevil jump over my washed out theology surrounding this verse, I hit the brakes. I told those attending class that night, "I don't understand this. It doesn't fit! It seems like we are talking about the final day of the tribulation and the Second Coming of Christ, but we are just at the sixth seal?! How does this fit?"

I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. The kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?' (Revelation 6:12-17)

Now, today in 2015, after three years, I have reconciled this verse. The reconstruction has made some improvements and some changes on this stretch of theological highway. I will now try to present to you some thoughts concerning the Second Coming of the Lord, the physical resurrection, the future of the Church, and the Tribulation - while also keeping in mind some of the things we have already talked about: the Laodicean-like condition of the Western church, the collapse of Western culture, the rise of Islam to resume their march to the West and, to mention it again, the problems of the Western church...

To begin with, I reject two current trends in the Western church: Mysticism, and the Easy-Good-Life mentality that is so popular now.

Mysticism has led us to go beyond a personal relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ - to pursue a personal Word or revelation from God and an experience with God directed by our personal understanding, wishes



and desires, while rejecting the necessity of understanding the written, authoritative Word of God. We have embraced a form of mysticism that leads us away from Truth (or, "The Faith") and toward the doctrines of demons (1 Timothy 4:1-2) and powerful delusions that are lies (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

The success, prosperity, and ease of the Western church in the 1800's and 1900's has led to several false interpretations of Scripture, applications of Christianity, and understanding of theology. It is hard to expect a church living in material luxury, social acceptance, and political affluence to correctly present an eschatology that places itself in the midst of a seven-year Tribulation and going face-to-face with the oppressive kingdom of the Antichrist and living day-to-day under the influence of the greatest manifestation of evil the world will ever know.

My worldview coming out of the 1960's and 1970's led me to embrace both mysticism and a Pretribulation rapture theology. But, in the 1980's and 1990's I experienced the harvest produced by a theology influenced by mysticism. Over the past few years this has led me to understand why my "Pretrib" eschatology might also need to be revisited.

"According to the Lord's Own Word"

Consider Paul's statement, "according to the Lord's own word" used in 1 Thessalonians 4:15. Was Paul referring to some personal revelation Jesus had shared with the Apostle sometime after Paul's conversion in 35 AD, but before 50 AD? Or, when Paul wrote "according to the Lord's own word" was Paul referring to "the Lord's own word" spoken to the Disciples during Jesus' earthly ministry which had surely been taught in the Churches during the first 20 years (30-50 AD). These words of Jesus were already recorded and available to the Church in written form when Paul wrote to the Thessalonians in 51 AD. (Matthew may have been written in 50 AD and there were many other written sources in existence according to Luke 1:1 who wrote between 60-62 AD.) If Paul was referring to a revelation he had received personally from Jesus, we would assume, at the least, it was in agreement with the teaching Jesus had given to his disciples while he was on earth. But, it is more likely that Paul was attempting to untangle an eschatological misunderstanding in the Thessalonian church, and at the same time comfort the Thessalonians, by appealing to an already established text and teaching circulating in the Churches (1 Thes. 4:15, NIV).

For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen



asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words. (1 Thes. 4:15-18, ESV)

This means that the events described and explained by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11 could find a parallel set of verses in the Gospels - which themselves could be based on a text from Isaiah 26:19-21. This is, in fact, what I am going to show you now.

This discussion of end-time chronology is not mere theological exercise, but may be a big part of the map you will need in the coming days. Before you run me off the highway in a fit of theological road rage, I literally beg you to please consider that what I am telling you might be true. At the least, I think the eschatological model I am presenting has merit. But, merit does not mean it is true. And, in the same way, no eschatological model can be said to be "true" (as in flawlessly, perfectly true) today. At least, not yet!

Yes, scripture is True. Jesus' eschatological teaching is perfect and exact. Paul's words are divinely inspired and without error. And John's book of Revelation testifies to itself with the testimony of John, an angel and Jesus Christ when it says:

John, who testifies to everything he saw – that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ... The angel said to me, 'These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place.' ... 'I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the Churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.' (Revelation 1: 1-2; 22:6, 16)

Please understand! Every eschatological model is supported by the study of its academic scholars, the opinions of whom are then disseminated by hundreds of personal blogs arguing for their side in the debate. This book is not about those debates, but is instead about providing a map through those endless debates which may be useful when history itself begins to testify to the Truth.

There is no real answer at this time to any of these debates, since each of them have their strengths (and weaknesses). What matters ultimately is history. What happens historically will be True. So what is happening historically? Is "History" not the book that the angel Gabriel read from when he spoke to Daniel - the



Book of Truth, which is the pre-recorded events of history (Daniel 10:20-11:2). The Bible is True. And, history is Reality. We are living in time, holding onto the Scripture and awaiting their fulfillment in history. Thus, we believe, we watch, and we live by faith.

This is not about who wins the eschatological argument in a debate or online in a Facebook post. This is about what happens in history. The same person who wins the argument, could be completely taken by surprise when history doesn't behave the way his argument predicted it would. The academic who stuns his class into silence with graphs, models, texts and charts may himself be confused when history doesn't follow any neat eschatological model. Because history follows the Truth.

History will not follow my eschatological model any more than it will choose to follow your eschatological model. The prophetic future is apparently already written in the Book of Truth (Daniel 10:21), which is referred to by the angel Gabriel (Daniel 8:16). History will happen as it has been recorded. The great advantage of arguing with hermeneutics, theological systems, and exegetics is that, "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17).

But, in the process you might want to keep your options open so that you are not deceived. As surely as you can be deceived by committing to nothing, or tolerating everything, you can be equally deceived because you committed to something without considering this reality: no one of us gets it absolutely right. Do I need to take time to provide the long list of biblical people who got eschatology wrong in their day? I will not take time to explain Noah's understanding of Enoch's prophecy; Abraham with Isaac on Mount Moriah; Moses' frustration in the wilderness with Israel for forty years; Elijah's depression with God's patience in the historical process; Jeremiah, who said God had betrayed him, as he expressed his frustration with God's final decision to destroy Jerusalem; Habakkuk's dismay at God's choice of the savage Babylonians; Daniel's inability to understand the final consummation after having been walked step by step through pages of prophecy; John the Baptist sending messengers to ask Jesus if maybe the Jews should be looking for a different Messiah; Peter rejecting Jesus' "self-defeating" plan of "giving up and returning to Jerusalem to die"; the disciples not understanding what Jesus meant by "in three days I will rise again!"; Paul's prayer being rejected when God told him, "My grace is sufficient"; Peter understanding the vision of the sheet in Joppa, but then acting completely contrary to it in Antioch; John falling down to worship an angel, two times, in the midst of writing the book of Revelation.

This list does not include all the people who heard the prophets and then killed them. The biblical scholars, scribes and priests were the ones who quoted verses of Scripture to rebuke Jesus as he historically fulfilled the very text of Scripture they were using against him. On the cross, Jesus quoted Psalm 22 while the religious leaders literally acted out their parts and spoke their lines just as Psalm 22 had prophesied.

So, argue your case. Present your charts. Develop your model. And, I especially encourage you to form an educated, defensible eschatological opinion. But, realize that no one will boast about their eschatological savvy on the day it all happens; instead, as the Lord once warned his people through Jeremiah (9:23-24):

This is what the Lord says:

*'Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom
Or the strong man boast of his strength
Or the rich man boast of his riches,*

But let him who boasts boast about this:

*That he understands and knows me,
That I am the Lord, who exercises kindness,
Justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight.'*

Paul used this same quote from Jeremiah when he wrote against the Corinthians' "advanced theology" that had taken Christianity and weaved it into Greek philosophy to give the message of Christ only *some* merit:

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God... Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ... we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles... For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength... He chose the lowly things of this world and the despise things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: 'Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.'
(1 Corinthians 1:18-31)

Pretribulation Rapture

I will not attempt a complete obliteration of the Pretrib rapture theory, but I will call it into question with these points:

- Pretrib rapture is possibly not supported by the best interpretation of Scripture or the original intention of the writers of scripture
- Pretrib rapture is possibly not the ancient church's understanding of Scripture
- Pretrib is possibly a relatively recent innovation that began in the Western church and rapidly infested the eschatology of the Laodicean church period (1880-2040); the Western "Laodicean" church has also embraced a variety of other novel, self-centered, success-driven, pain-free theological systems to accommodate its materialistic culture

If the Pretribulation rapture scenario proves to be a historic truth, I will be the first to say, "Thank you, Lord!" To hope that the Pretrib rapture does not occur would be the equivalent of hoping the Titanic sinks. If I were a passenger onboard the Titanic, why would I be disappointed if the ship I was sailing on arrived safely on the North American coast? As the passengers happily disembarked, would my response to a safe arrival be to sit and pout on the docked ship because we did not plunge to our deaths in the icy water? No!

Likewise, we could ask, who *doesn't* want the rapture to happen before things completely fall apart on earth? Who would rather face the persecution of the Antichrist, instead of being physically resurrected to meet the Lord face to face at his glorious appearing? Who would want to try to build a mega, market-driven, seeker church on an eschatological system that promises the Sunday morning crowd it is likely they will suffer and die as martyrs if they become regular attenders?

So, if you are determined to have a market-driven church that focuses on attracting seekers from our modern Western culture you may want either to include the Pretrib rapture theory in your eschatology, or simply follow the postmodern philosophical system that basically remains neutral and leaves the door wide open for all personal interpretation. So, yes, Pretrib rapture is preferable, and it has been the eschatology that I have held to since 1977. And, I have taught it since 1986. I can still teach the Pretrib system. At the time of this writing my audio and notes on this topic are still available to everyone online.

There is no doubt in my mind that there is a future rapture - the **harpazo** which means "catch up", "take by force", "carry away", "seize" - and is a word used in Acts 8:39 of Philip, in 2 Corinthians 12:2, 4 of Paul, and in 1 Thessalonians



4:17 of the Church. There will be a rapture of the Church. This is the exegetical meaning, the literal interpretation, the consistent theological understanding and the early church's historical position for reading Paul's reference in 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

What I am calling into question is the timing of the rapture in relation to Jesus' Second Coming. I am going to present to you an eschatological model that will move the event known as the rapture as little as 43 months to as much as 72 months. Remember, **no one** knows the day or hour. Even if you read in the news that the seven-year treaty with Israel has been signed or you see on a Facebook post that the Antichrist has proclaimed himself "God" on the Temple Mount and put an end to the Jewish sacrifices, this window of time, roughly 30 months, will not give you a precise day or hour for the Lord's return. You will still have to follow Jesus' and Paul's admonition to "watch" and see the signs. You will certainly know that the time is near if you are spiritually "awake" and "sober".

In a sense then, this is really no different than knowing through the Pretrib model that the Second Coming is exactly 84 months after the rapture. Or, through the Posttrib model, that the Second Coming and Rapture will be 84 months after the signing of the seven-year treaty - or three and a half years (42 months or 1,260 days) after the Antichrist claims himself to be God on the Temple Mount.

I *am* going to say as did Jesus, Daniel and Paul that the signs of the seven-year treaty, the revealing of the Antichrist, the abomination of desolation, and the forsaking of the faith by many are the signs for the Church to know the Lord's return is near. No one predicted the day or hour, but we are clearly commanded in Scripture: "*When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.*" (Luke 21:28)

Remember, I am simply suggesting you consider this as a possibility. In fact, you can even hold to a Pretrib position, but keep a note of this concept in the back of your Bible, just in case you find yourself in the midst of a seven-year treaty and face-to-face with the Antichrist before you are face-to-face with Jesus Christ. The model I present here can be your backup model, something you can turn to if history gives you no other option. If the eschatology of today's modern, Western, Laodicean church does not develop as planned, this might be the eschatological model that will be able to:

- Prevent your love from growing cold,
- Stabilize you so you do not lose your faith,
- Strengthen you so you do not betray other believers, and



Keep you from believing the great delusion.
(Matthew 24:10-12, 24; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12)

Paralleling the Verses

I would like to parallel Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11 with Jesus' words in Matthew 24. (Which themselves may partially be based on the prophecies of Isaiah found in Isaiah 26:17-21.) Then I would like to parallel the sixth seal of Revelation 6:12-17 with the same words of Jesus in Matthew 24 to begin the reconstruction of my own eschatological interstate system. My intentions are to present a general map through coming historical events that might be useful.

Jesus' Words in Matthew 24 Paralleled with Daniel, Luke, Paul and John					
	Daniel	Matthew	Luke 21	Paul	Revelation
165 BC - 70 AD	9:26 - Messiah Comes (30 AD) 9:26 - Sanctuary destroyed (70 AD)		21:12-18 - (30-70 AD) - early church persecuted by Jews 21:20-24 - (66-70 AD) Jewish war with Rome & destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple	1 Th 2:16 - (50 AD) Paul writes: "God's wrath has come upon them [Jews] at last" since a conflict with Rome was brewing: (1) riot/ massacre in Jerusalem (48-49 AD) (2) Expulsion of Jews from Rome (49 AD) (3) Anticipating Jewish war with Rome as foretold by Jesus (66-70)	

Jesus' Words in Matthew 24 Paralleled with Daniel, Luke, Paul and John (Cont.)					
	Daniel	Matthew	Luke 21	Paul	Revelation
General History		24:4-8 - false Christs, many deceived, wars, nations rise, kingdoms fall, famine, earthquakes in various places. This is not the end.	21:8-9 - false Christs, wars, but the end will not be at once. 21:10-11 - (time up until the end times) 21:12-19 - (30-70 AD) Luke 21:20-24 - Jerusalem trampled by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (70 AD until the Second Coming)	2 Th 2:7 - secret power of lawlessness is already at work 2 Th 1:4-10 - enduring persecutions making you worthy of the kingdom of God for which you are suffering... God will grant you relief and inflict vengeance "when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven"... "when he comes on that day."	
Tribulation Begins	7:19 - 4th beast 7:23-24 - Ten horns; 9:27 - Covenant	24:9 - Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death			
Anti-Christ Begins to Rule	7:20 - horn took three horns 7:24-25 - One horn speaks against God			1 Th 5:1-3 - people (Jews) saying peace + safety because they have entered into a treaty of protection with the Antichrist 2 Th 2:9-12 - Coming of the lawless one is activity of Satan with power, false signs, deception	6:1-8 - The world faces the rise of antichrist: (1) Conqueror conquering (2) Sword to slay people (3) Famine and Economic chaos (4) Death to 25% of earth

Jesus' Words in Matthew 24 Paralleled with Daniel, Luke, Paul and John (Cont.)					
	Daniel	Matthew	Luke 21	Paul	Revelation
<p>Persecution of Church</p> <p>"The Rebellion"</p>	<p>7:21 - horn made war with saints</p> <p>7:25 - speaks against god; changes times and law</p>	<p>24:9-13 - delivered up to tribulation, put believers to death, hated by all nations for Jesus name. RESULT? Rebellion in the Church: -turn from faith -betray believers -hate each other -love grows cold Christian's flee church and Christianity</p>		<p>2 Thess. 2:3 - <u>First Sign:</u> Rebellion comes first – 'christians' turn against Christ and the Church</p>	<p>6:9-11 – Martyrs in heaven ask for retaliation since they had died for: (1) Word of God (2) Testimony They are told to wait until the full number of their brothers to be killed as they had been was done. Martyrdom forced many to flee Church and abandon the faith</p>
<p>Truth Proclaimed to the Whole World as a testimony before God Sends the Strong Delusion</p>		<p>24:14 – Gospel proclaimed to whole world as testimony.</p>		<p>2 Th 2:9-12 – Antichrist brings deception to those who refused to love the truth and be saved... God sends a strong delusion so they believe what is false</p>	<p>6:9-11 – Christians dying as they proclaim the Truth to the world concerning the Word of God and their witness that Jesus is Lord</p>
<p>3 ½ Years Middle of Trib. Antichrist Enters the Temple "Abomination in The Temple"</p>	<p>9:27 - put an end to sacrifice ... on the wing of abominations, one who makes desolate 11:36-45 - Above every god</p>	<p>24:15-20 – abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel standing in the holy place</p>		<p>2 Th 2:3-5,8 - <u>Second Sign:</u> the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every god, takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaims himself to be God</p>	

Jesus' Words in Matthew 24 Paralleled with Daniel, Luke, Paul and John (Cont.)					
	Daniel	Matthew	Luke 21	Paul	Revelation
<p>Jews Hunted by Antichrist</p>	<p>11:40-41 – At the time of the end... He will invade the Beautiful Land... Edom, Moab and Ammon will be delivered from his hand</p>	<p>24:16-28 – Those who are in Judea flee to the mountains</p>			<p>11:1-14 – the two witnesses 12:1 – 14:5 12:6 – The Jews flee into the desert... for 1,260 days 12:13 – The dragon pursued the woman (Israel)</p>
<p>DAY OF THE LORD</p> <p>Sun, Stars, etc. Disappear Due to Sign of the Son of Man Appearing</p>	<p>12:1 – At that time shall arise Michael, who has charge of your people... a time of trouble [for Jews]</p>	<p>24:29 – sun will be darkened... moon not give light... stars fall... powers of heaven shaken, sign of the Son of Man</p>	<p>21:25 – signs in sun, moon, stars, powers of heavens shaken</p>	<p>1 Th 5:4 – you are not in darkness for this day to surprise you [church] like a thief... let us not sleep, let us keep awake and be sober.</p>	<p>6:12-14 – sun goes black, moon like blood, stars fall, sky vanishes; mountains and islands move.</p>

Jesus' Words in Matthew 24 Paralleled with Daniel, Luke, Paul and John (Cont.)					
	Daniel	Matthew	Luke 21	Paul	Revelation
<p>DAY OF THE LORD</p> <p>Rapture of Church</p> <p>Sign of the Son of Man</p> <p>Second Coming</p>	<p>7:9-11 - the fiery throne with wheels was moved and set in place, the Lord is seated, 10,000's stood before him; Yet, the horn, or the beast, was still speaking on earth.</p> <p>12:1-2 – <u>many who sleep in the dust shall awake to life</u></p>	<p>24:27-29 – like lightning is the coming of the Son of Man... the light from the sun, moon, stars cannot be seen due to the glory of the throne whose appearing is the Sign of the Son of Man...</p> <p>24:30 - Sign of the Son of Man appears... all men will see the Lord in the air... and, all men will mourn because they see the Lord in the air</p> <p>24:31 – “He will send out his angels with a loud trumpet ...they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”</p> <p>24:36-25-30 – the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect</p>	<p>21:25-28 – they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud... when <u>these things begin to take place your redemption is drawing near</u></p>	<p>1 Th 4:14-18 – God will bring with Jesus those who have died... the Lord will descend from heaven... with a shout of command... the archangel... the trumpet... the dead will rise first... those still left alive will be <u>caught up together with them</u> ...with the Lord forever.</p> <p>2 Th 2:1 – The Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered <u>together</u> to him</p> <p>2 Th 2:13-17 – you may <u>obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ</u></p> <p>2 Th 1:6-7 - God will grant you relief and inflict vengeance on those who afflict you “when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who” afflict you “when <u>he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints.</u>”</p>	<p>6:12-17 - Sign of the Son of Man 1:7 – “He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him.” (Zec 12:10-14 – “[the Jews] will look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him”) 6:15-16 – All men see the throne and the Lamb. All men say, “Hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.” 6:17 – Question: “the great day of their wrath has come and who can stand?” 7:9 - Answer: “a great multitude ... from every nation... standing before the throne and before the lamb clothed in white...” 7:9-17 – The raptured church, the multitude coming out of Great Tribulation</p>

Jesus' Words in Matthew 24 Paralleled with Daniel, Luke, Paul and John (Cont.)					
	Daniel	Matthew	Luke 21	Paul	Revelation
<p>DAY OF THE LORD</p> <p>Church Delivered and Standing Before the Lord's Throne and Preparing to Return to the Earth with the Lord</p> <p>Wrath of Lamb</p> <p>The Trumpets</p>	<p>7:26 - court seated, horn's power destroyed, eternal kingdom given to saints</p> <p>12:1 - Michael shall arise, time of trouble, but the Jews will convert and be delivered on earth.</p> <p>12:1 - but, your people [Jews] shall be delivered, those with name in the book</p>	<p>25:1-46</p>	<p>21:34-36 – this day will come upon all who dwell on the earth like a trap if they are weighed down with cares of this life... Stay awake so you may have the strength to <u>stand before the Son of Man</u> [on his throne in the air] and escape all the things that are going to take place on the earth at this time.</p>	<p>1 Th 5:1-3 - destruction</p> <p>1 Th 5:9 - <u>No wrath for church</u>, instead we will have obtained salvation</p> <p>2 Th 1:7-10 - God inflict vengeance on those who afflict you “when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who” afflict you “when <u>he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints.</u>”</p>	<p>6:16 - hide us from throne and wrath of Lamb! 6:17 - Great day of their wrath has come! 8,9,11 – The Trumpets: 1- Third of earth, grass, trees burn 2-Third of sea, fish, ships destroyed 3-third of fresh water destroyed 4-third of the light from the sun and moon blacked out (the Sign of the Son of Man, his throne from heaven is in the atmosphere blocking light) 5- Abyss unlocked to release demons 6- Four bound angels at Euphrates are released to kill third of mankind 7- The Temple</p>
<p>DAY OF THE LORD</p> <p>Judgment/ Punish</p>	<p>7:22 7:26 – “his (horn, beast, antichrist) dominion shall be taken away to be consumed and destroyed to the end” 7:27 9:27 – “until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator” 11:45 – “he shall come to his end, with none to help him.”</p>			<p>2 Th 1:7-10 2 Th 2:8 - antichrist overthrown and destroyed by Jesus</p>	<p>19:11 – Heaven [with the throne and Lamb in air] is opened 19:12-14 – Jesus and saints come to earth 19:20-21 – antichrist is captured and thrown into lake of fire</p>

The Gospel of the Kingdom

Daniel lists four kingdoms that rise and fall, and indicates that one of them will be revived to coincide with the coming of the Lord's earthly kingdom, which will be a kingdom that never ends. The first four mentioned are Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. The Roman Empire, Daniel's fourth kingdom, morphed into the Christian Byzantine Kingdom on May 11, 330 AD. And that kingdom finally fell to Muslim conquest on May 29, 1453, becoming part of the Muslim Ottoman Empire, which itself fell during WWI on October 31, 1918 with the signing of the Armistice of Mudros. These kingdoms prophesied by Daniel are actual kingdoms with actual governments, kings, military, and citizens. Why would (and even, how could) then, his reference to the Lord's kingdom be mere allegory?

Gabriel, speaking to Mary, says that her son who is to be called Jesus will be great and will sit on the throne of his father David. Is this a literal or allegorical reference? Are we to understand this as an actual historical event? Has it happened, or is it yet future? First, understand that there was a lot of contextual baggage for Jews associated with the phrase "sit on the throne of David" in the year 5 BC when it was spoken to a Jew. Second, Jesus himself spoke of sitting on a throne when he returned, and promised to place others on thrones to rule when the kingdom of God was established.

In Matthew 24:14, Jesus says,

This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

This verse comes in the middle of Matthew 24, just after Jesus had given several warnings to his followers in Matthew 24:4-13:

- Do not be deceived
- Many military and religious imposters will come in Jesus' name or claim to be Christ, which will result in many people being deceived
- There will be wars and rumors of wars; nation will rise against nation; kingdoms will rise against other kingdoms
- There will be seasons of famine, and natural devastations such as earthquakes

But, after giving all these warnings, Jesus is quick to inform and provide greater detail when he says: "this is not the end". These things he warned about must happen before the end. They are not signs of the end, but "all this is the beginning of birth pains."



The Two Signs: The Rebellion and The Abomination

Jesus continues in Matthew 24, saying that after this long period of history where imposters claim they are the Christ, when nations rise and kingdoms fall, seasons of famines come and times of disasters such as earthquakes overthrow entire societies, there will eventually arise a time when the first of two major signs (given by Jesus to the believer) will occur.

The first sign can be watched for and compared to world events by those in the Church who are awake and sober. First there will be a sifting of believers through persecution so that a faithful and true witness can be given to the world. This persecution will not only produce a base of faithful witnesses, but it will also necessarily cause a large number of people in the Church to fall away. Worldwide persecution will result in the martyrdom of faithful witnesses and a falling away from the faith by the mere seeker. This type of apostasy can be used to identify where the Church may be historically in relation to the Second Coming. Paul calls this "the rebellion" in 2 Thes. 2:3. Jesus describes it like this:

Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another, And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increase, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. (Matthew 24:9-13)

After a period of general human history that involves religious deception, international conflict, and history-altering natural disasters Jesus says, "**Then...**" (Mt. 24:9, ESV). Here is the first sign that you are getting close to the end. Jesus says **then** "you" (believers, Christians, Church) will be handed over for persecution and put to death.

Here is how it will fall out:

- "You" (believers, Christians, Church) will be hated by all nations because of your association with Jesus Christ
- The hatred will result in religious persecution "at that time" (Mt. 24:10, NIV)
- Because of this, the "Rebellion" will take place, and many of those being persecuted (believers, Christians, seekers):
 - Will turn away from the faith
 - Will betray each other
 - Will hate each other
 - Will be deceived when many false prophets appear
 - Will increase in wickedness
 - Will allow their love to grow cold



Jesus then provides words of encouragement and direction for the believers who will stand up to face this persecution without compromise. First, Jesus promises us that he who stands firm to the end will be saved. Second, Jesus explains his purpose for this period of persecution and provides us with directions when he says, "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations..." (Matthew 24:14). As the forces of antichrist are hunting Christians and sifting through societies by going door to door, the gospel will be proclaimed day after day by those being martyred as a testimony to the world concerning the Truth of the Word of God and to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The world's rejection of this proclamation of the Truth will set them up to instead believe the lie, the promised great delusion spoken of 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12.

Jesus ends verse 24:14 by saying, "then the end will come." Notice the contrast between this "then the end will come" in Matthew 24:14 and Jesus words, "but the end is not yet" in Matthew 24:6. When Jesus states "see that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet" he was referencing general historical events such as deceivers, war, national upheavals, famines and earthquakes. These are not signs of the end. Not every earthquake, war or famine is a sign that Jesus is coming. Those are just historical events that match Paul's description of creation waiting for its day of redemption:

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. (Romans 8:19-22)

But, when we reach Jesus' words in Matthew 24:14 we are safe to assume Jesus is now being very specific (Paul will build on these specific words of the Lord in his epistles, for example, 1 Thes. 4:15). Jesus says "then the end will come," after a time of intense worldwide persecution of believers (the Church) who were used by the Lord to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom throughout the whole world and to every nation:

*And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and **then the end will come**. So when you see the **abomination of desolation** spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place... (Matthew 24:14-15)*



The second sign for believers to recognize the days before the Second Coming of Jesus is also given here:

When you see standing in the holy place [the Temple] "the abomination that causes desolation..."

Jesus' use of the words "spoken of through the prophet Daniel" makes this a direct link to an already established time marker going back to Daniel's prophecy in Daniel 9:27. There are numerous historical examples, speculations, and guesses at when, who and where Daniel's "abomination of desolation" has or will occur. Here are a few:

- A potential fulfillment occurred in 167 BC when Antiochus IV Epiphanes set up an altar to the Olympian Zeus and a statue of himself in the temple. But, this was not the fulfillment since Jesus says it is yet future when he spoke in 30 AD
- A potential fulfillment occurred in 26 AD when Pontius Pilate arrived in Judea as governor and brought the Roman military standards with images of eagles and other idolatrous symbols of the Roman emperor into Jerusalem. But, this occurred four years before Jesus spoke in Matthew 24
- A potential fulfillment occurred in 41 AD when Emperor Caligula ordered a bigger-than-life statue of himself be set up in the temple
- Fortunately King Herod Agrippa I convinced Caligula not to follow through with his plan; Caligula died in 41 AD and the decree was never fulfilled
- A potential fulfillment occurred in 67-68 AD when the Jewish rebels (the Zealots) occupied the temple; during this time common people (i.e., not priests) entered the Most Holy Place and committed murder in the temple; these same Zealots eventually fled to seek refuge at Masada, where their resistant stand against the Romans ended in May of 73 AD
- A potential fulfillment occurred when the same Zealots allowed the Idumeans (Edomites) to enter the city of Jerusalem to help plunder the city and kill as many as 8,000 Jews (including the high priest) on the Temple mount
- A potential fulfillment occurred in the Jewish actions of continuing the Old Testament sacrifices after their rejection of the true Lamb of God, Jesus Christ; advocates of this theory connect Matthew 23:38 when Jesus pronounced judgment and left the temple, with Ezekiel 10:18 when the glory of the Lord departs the temple
- A potential fulfillment occurred in 70 AD with the destruction of the Temple by the Romans

Notice that all of these options were either fulfilled before Jesus spoke of this event as a yet future event, or in the case of the ones that took place between



30 and 70 AD, they are certainly not definitive. Not even those who believe the event already happened in the first century do not agree on what it was.

In his book supporting the preterist position, *Last Days Madness* (page 109), even Gary DeMar admits that any attempt to place the abomination spoken of by Daniel between 30-70 AD will be met with disagreement, even by those who support the preterist position:

While disagreement remains as to what form the abomination took, Scripture makes it clear that it occurred soon after Jerusalem was surrounded by armies. As history attests, Jerusalem was surrounded just prior to the temple's destruction in the fall of A.D. 70. The abomination brought desolation.

The clearness of Jesus' warning, and the fact that he is simply restating and clarifying a prophetic reference already made by Daniel, would seem to give the impression that when this event does occur there will be no need to host prophecy conferences with scheduled breakout sessions designed to discuss the possibility of this event having or having not taken place. It seems to be a very specific event that will be very obvious when it is finally fulfilled according to the scriptural references spoken by Daniel in 539 BC, Jesus in 30 AD, Paul in 52 AD, and John in 96 AD.

When Paul writes to the Thessalonians in 52 AD concerning this future event, he definitely gives the Gentile believers the impression that this prophetic event will be obvious. The abomination will be a clear sign to serve as a reference point for believers to mark their place in the progression of end time events:

Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? (2 Thessalonians 2:1-5), ESV

Paul identifies the same two events that Jesus used to identify "the end":

The Rebellion – Paul uses the Greek word *apostasia*, a word that means "falling away", "rebellion", "revolt", "apostasy" (Rogers and Rogers, *The New*

Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament, Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI, 1998, p. 483). The Greek is written as "*he apostasia*" which means "**The** Apostasy", not merely apostasy or an apostasy. It is a specific apostasy Paul refers to as "The Apostasy". I believe Paul is referring to "the apostasy" Jesus warned of in Matthew 24:9-14. Strong's *Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words* says the following:

This word means a 'defection, revolt, apostasy' and is used in the NT of religious apostasy; (1) in Acts 21:21, it is translated "to forsake," literally, 'thou teachest apostasy from Moses.' (2) In 2 The. 2:3 'the falling away' signifies apostasy from the faith. (3) In papyri documents it is used politically of rebels.

(James Strong, *The New Strong's Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001, page 981).

This is the rebellion that Jesus said would mark the time of the end when persecution comes against believers from all nations because of their association with the name of Christ (Matthew 24:9-14). The use of this word in Paul's writing to refer to rebellion within the Church matches the use of the same Greek word in ancient papyri documents we have from the same time period. The ancient papyri documents use this word "*rebellion*" (*apostasia*) to refer to a revolt against your former political group, a rebellion against your former religion, or a forsaking of your former national allegiance. Paul is making a reference to a future historical event that could include multitudes of seekers in Western Christianity abandoning the Church, betraying other believers, rebelling against the Christian faith, and turning away from the scriptural Jesus Christ because of persecution arising from the Antichrist.

The Man of Lawlessness is Revealed – Paul then clearly presents a second sign to watch for with his comments concerning the "abomination of desolation" predicted by Daniel and referenced by Jesus as a future event and sign that his Second Coming was near. Paul does the same for the Church in Thessalonica making it clear that the Church's gathering together to meet the Lord could not happen until these two signs unfolded as historical events:

Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed... that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed... (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3)

Notice the parallel references used by Paul that align with the words of Jesus:

	2 Thessalonians 2:1-12	Matthew 24:9-31
Warning of Deception	"not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter" "Let no one deceive you in any way."	"Many false prophets will arise and lead many astray."
Persecution of the Church	"the man of lawlessness...son of destruction...opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship."	"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake."
Rebellion in the Church	"For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first..." ...with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved."	"Then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another." "Because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold."
Testimony to the World	"they refused to love the truth and so be saved....in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth."	"The one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."
The Abomination	"For that day will not come, unless...and the man of lawlessness is revealed."	"So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel,
In the Temple	"he takes his seat in the temple of God," proclaiming himself to be God."	"see the abomination of desolation...standing in the temple."

continued on next page

	2 Thessalonians 2:1-12	Matthew 24:9-31
Return of the Lord	"Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" "...to the effect that the day of the Lord has come" "For that day will not come, unless..." "...whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming."	"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."
Gathering Together	"our being <u>gathered</u> together to him" ["gathered" is <i>episunagoge</i> which means "meeting, assembling, gathering together, collection, collecting together. The preposition in the compound is directive. The word is used in 2 Macc. 2:7 indicating a future time when God shall gather His people together." (Rogers, Linguistic Key, page 483)]	"He will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will <u>gather</u> his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." ["gather" is <i>episunago</i> which means "to bring together", "to gather together", to bring together to others already assembled, to gather together against". Also, Mark 13:27 in same context, but in Luke 17:37 referring to the vultures "gathered"]

The verses in Matthew 24:16-26 are not on the chart above and have no parallel in Paul's writings, because they are addressed specifically to the Jews. The Jews will be able to enjoy a time of "peace and safety" early under the Antichrist's reign while the Church is hunted down and slaughtered. The Jews' covenant with the world leader (antichrist) also gives them access to the Temple Mount for the restoration of their daily sacrifices. But, in verse 24:15 of Matthew that "peace and safety" for the Jews comes to an end and they are told to flee Judea (into the lands of modern Jordan and Saudi Arabia just as Daniel 11:41 and Luke 21:21 indicate). In these verses the Jews are also warned to stop looking for a great political leader ("Look, he is in the inner rooms," supposedly signing peace treaties and political alignments) or a great military leader ("Look, he is in the wilderness," supposedly assembling his troops and preparing to invade Judea and reconquer Jerusalem).

So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea [Jews only] flee to the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. Then if anyone says to you [the Jews], 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. So, if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they say, 'Look, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

The Sixth Seal

When the throne of God and the wrath of the Lamb appear to the people on earth after the sixth seal is opened (Rev. 6:12-17), Revelation chapter six ends with this question: "The great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?" (Rev. 6:17). This question is answered in the beginning of the next chapter, Revelation 7.

There, two groups are identified as being able to stand:

1. Believers who have been taken to meet the Lord in the air where they stand before the Lord who has just appeared on his throne
2. The Jews left on the earth who have just recently converted after seeing the throne of the Lamb, the sign of the Son of Man, appear in the sky; these recently converted and now believing Jews will receive the seal of God before the wrath of God is sent to destroy the earth

Group One, the raptured church, is the group discussed in Revelation 7:9-17. This is the Church that went to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:17) when the Sign of the Son of Man appeared on his throne (Matt. 24:30; Revelation 6:16) whose glory had overwhelmed the light of the sun, moon and stars (Rev. 6:12; Luke 21:25-27) while causing cataclysmic events in the physical world (Matt. 24:27-29; Rev. 6:12-14). The angels gathered the elect from the four winds of heaven (Matt. 24:31). The Church are the only ones who can stand before the Lord (Rev. 6:17; 7:9; Luke 21:36) as they meet him in the air to appear before

him on his throne to "be with the Lord forever" and "are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple" (1 Thess. 4:17; Rev. 7:15) where, "Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." (Rev. 7:16-17).

This is what Paul meant when he said, "and so we will be with the Lord forever."

*After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to **meet the Lord in the air**. And so **we will be with the Lord forever**. Therefore **encourage each other with these words**... For **God did not appoint us to suffer wrath** but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may **live together with him**... Therefore **encourage one another and build each other up**, just as in fact you are doing. (1 Thes. 4:17-18; 5:9-11)*

Jesus says he will return in the sky with the sign of the Son of Man. This sign correlates with the sign Ezekiel saw when the Lord appeared on the flying throne in Ezekiel 1. It is possible to refer to the appearance of Jesus in the air on this same heavenly throne as the "Sign of the Son of Man" because Ezekiel says that riding on this chariot "high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man" (Ezekiel 1:26). This is a particularly solid understanding when we combine what Ezekiel saw with what Daniel saw and with what Jesus said. Daniel refers to the end time appearance when he says:

I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, ... and to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom... his dominion is an everlasting dominion... (Daniel 7:13-14, ESV)

When the high priest asked Jesus at his trial, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" Jesus replied:

I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming with the clouds of heaven. (Mark 14:62, ESV)

Another note of interest concerning the identification of "the sign of the son of man" may be to approach it from the other direction, from the human side, instead of the divine. Interestingly, the results will be the same. Throughout the book of Ezekiel, the One on this throne is continuously referring to Ezekiel as "son of man". Whenever the Lord spoke to Ezekiel from this heavenly chariot

with the wheels, the lightning, the fire, the glory, and the cherubim the Lord always addressed Ezekiel as “son of man.” So, it is reasonable to consider that when the divine Son of Man appears he will appear the way the son of man, Ezekiel, the human, saw Him. This time, every human eye will see what Ezekiel, the son of man, saw.

The difference in this discussion is between Jesus, “The Son of Man”, who addressed Ezekiel as “son of man.” The consistency in this discussion is that the Sign of the Son of Man would be Jesus appearing in the air on his glorious heavenly throne, the chariot of fiery whirling wheels with flashes of lightning and cherubim.

Group Two, the Jews left on the earth, are the nation of Israel who would have just recently repented after the chariot of the Lord, the Sign of the Son of Man, appeared with the wrath of the Lamb, the one they had pierced. This group of Jews is the group identified and discussed in Revelation 7:1-8. The angels are seen “standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree.” This may be the same “four winds of heaven” that Daniel saw in his vision in 553 BC:

In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. (Daniel 7:2)

Also in Zechariah 6:5, the four winds (spirits) of heaven, are seen going out from standing in the presence of the Lord of the whole world. They are sent out to accomplish the Lord’s eschatological purposes for Israel during their days of restoration after the Babylonian captivity in 519 BC.

In Revelation 7, the angels in charge of these four winds are told, “Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.” Then, 144,000 Jews are sealed after apparently having repented after having seen the Sign of the Son of Man appear and the Church receive deliverance.

Up to this point, the unbelieving Jews will have continued to watch for the rise of a militant, worldly Messiah. They will have finally found what they had been looking for when the Antichrist presented himself to them with a treaty, the restoration of Temple services, and likely, a promised place of Jewish prominence in his plan of world domination.

This faulty thinking of the Jews reaches back to the earliest days of King David. In the Old Testament the Jews looked to their kings in Judah for Messianic leadership. After the rise of Syrian opposition in 168 BC the Jews looked to Judas Maccabaeus and his family that followed him, the Hasmoneans. In the days of Jesus Christ the Jews rejected and pierced their actual Messiah with Roman crucifixion in 30 AD. In the same generation as Jesus’ crucifixion the Jews followed their insurgents and the Zealots of 66 AD into a disastrous nation-ending war with Rome. They did this again in 132 AD when they followed an assumed militant Messiah, Simon bar Kokhba, to total annihilation and a deportation that lasted until the 1900’s AD.

With the rise of the Antichrist the Jews will finally find their militant, worldly messiah as Jesus warned about in John 5:43: “I have come in my Father’s name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him.” They will be given a treaty by the Antichrist (Daniel 9:27), who is the worthless shepherd of Zechariah (Zechariah 11:4-17) and gain access to the Temple Mount in the early days of the Tribulation. By doing this the Jews will have continued in their error of rejecting Jesus while looking for another more militant, more worldly, more kingdom-oriented Messiah.

What they will find and accept is the false Messiah (antichrist) of Zechariah 13:7-9, and will accept the same offer Satan gave Jesus in Matthew 4:8-9: “The devil took [Jesus] to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ‘All this I will give you,’ he said, ‘if you will bow down and worship me.’” The Jews will align themselves with the world-conquering, politically savvy, nation-unifying Messiah that they have been looking for. The only problem is this Messiah is in some fashion the incarnation of Satan whose intention is to destroy them.

In 1981, Father Seraphim Rose gave a lecture [as viewed from the Greek Orthodox position of eschatology] at the University of California at Santa Cruz in which he said, ‘Another sign that the times of the end are approaching is the present state of the Jews in Israel, in the city of Jerusalem. According to the prophecies of the Scriptures and the Holy Fathers, Jerusalem will be the world capital of Antichrist, and there he will rebuild the temple of Solomon where he will be worshipped as God...Of course, it is very significant that only since 1948 has Jerusalem been once more in the hands of the Jews, and only since 1967 has the place where the temple was, the Mosque of Omar, been in their hands, since this had been in the part held by the Moslems...If you were to ask anyone who’s aware

at all of political events in the world a question, 'What would be the ideal city to have as the world capital if there was going to be a world empire?' – it's obvious what the answer would be in most people's minds. It can't be New York because that's the capital of capitalism; it can't be Moscow because that's the center of Communism. It can't even be Rome, because Roman Catholicism is still some kind of limited division. The logical place is Jerusalem, because there three religions come together, three continents come together. It's the most logical place where there could be peace, brotherhood, harmony: all those things which look good, but unless they have a solid Christian foundations are not God-pleasing. These things will be used by Antichrist.' Significant preparations are presently underway in Israel to restore the actual worship ceremonies formerly conducted within Solomon's temple. Sacred vessels have been formed, priestly garments sewn. As Ice and Price report in their 1992 book, *Ready to Rebuild*, 'The Temple Institute, then, is preparing vessels and garments for the Temple service, and seeking to produce a valid red heifer in Israel for the future purification of the priests and worshipers in the Temple. The leaders of this organization firmly believe that we are in the *achari ha-yamim* ('last days') which include the coming of the Messiah. They expect the building of the Temple to begin shortly.' The Messiah whom the Jews anticipate, however, bears little resemblance to the Jesus Christ who voluntarily died to save sinners. They look for a world leader to rule all the nations from his capital of Jerusalem, to initiate a political regime of 'peace' and 'prosperity,' and to vindicate Israel for her centuries of suffering at Gentile hands. 'They do not want Christ as He is,' cries contemporary writer Alexander Kalomiros. 'They do not want the Christ Who refused to submit to the devil's temptations in the desert... They want a Christ Who desires the kingdoms of the earth, a Christ Who will turn the stones into bread so that men may be satiated, a Christ who will overwhelm the world with miracles that inspire awe and constrain men to submit... a Christ Who will talk about his life and not the other, a Christ Who will offer the pleasures of this life and not of the next... They do not want Him as ruler of the future age, but of the present one.' In a word, after two centuries of incredible suffering for their blindness, the Jews as a whole have not changed. Myopically, they still want what they wanted two thousand years ago. And this time, they will get it! (From reference source B, pages 54-56)

<p>Jesus identifies how he will NOT return at the Second Coming. This is a warning to the Jews, and to others, who are waiting for a man to appear in history as the Messiah.</p>	
<p><i>"Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. So, if they say to you,...."</i></p>	
<p>FALSE OPTION #1 - THE MILITANT</p>	<p>FALSE OPTION #2 - THE POLITICIAN</p>
<p>" 'Look, he is in the wilderness' " <i>[...forming his military to advance into Israel and capture Jerusalem],</i> do not go out <i>[...to join the forces of the antichrist]."</i></p>	<p>" 'Look, he is in the inner rooms' " <i>[...negotiating treaties and forming political alliances],</i> do not believe it <i>[...because this is the work of the antichrist and the false prophet]."</i></p>
<p>THE ONLY OPTION - THE APPEARANCE OF THE SIGN OF THE SON OF MAN</p>	
<p><i>"Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. So, if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they say, 'Look, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matthew 24:23-31)</i></p>	

Halfway through the treaty period the Antichrist will end the treaty, end the sacrifices, and enter the Temple proclaiming himself to be God. This treachery is revealed by Daniel, Jesus and Paul:

Daniel: *He shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.* (Daniel 9:27, ESV)

Jesus: *So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand, then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak... For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.* (Matthew 24:15-21)

Paul: *While people are saying, 'There is peace and security,' (a reference to the treaty between the Jews and the Antichrist) then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. (1 Thessalonians 5:3, ESV) and Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, ESV)*

When the Jews realize they have been betrayed by what they thought was the Messiah - or at least the man who would lead them to the Age of the Messiah - they will not know where to turn. The Jews will be out of options. The persecution that the believing Church has faced for three and a half years will now expand and begin to afflict Jews all around the world. As the Jews cry out for help to a savior they do not know and have rejected, the Sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky and every eye will see him. Those who pierced him, the Jews, will see him as well:

Zechariah: *when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.* (Zechariah 12:10)

John: *Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him.* (Revelation 1:7, ESV)



The Jews will see their deliverer appear in the sky, but the deliverer will be the pierced one, the crucified one, the lamb that had been slain! This time when the Lord appears it is actually his re-appearing, or Second Coming. What is more, when the Lord appears in his wrath he first brings deliverance and salvation to his church, not to the Jewish people. The Lord will gather his church from the four winds of heaven to meet him in the air at the time of his coming. The Jews will witness the Lord's deliverance of a people who are not even a nation. On that day it will be the believers in the crucified Messiah, Jesus Christ, who will be delivered. It will not be the chosen nation who stand in the presence of the Lord in his glory "when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints and to be marveled at among all who have believed" (2 Thess. 1:10).

It is at this time that Moses' words spoken to Israel in 1400 BC will be fulfilled:

I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding. (Deuteronomy 32:21)

Paul also quotes this verse in Romans 10:19 right before he describes the goal of his own ministry:

I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. (Romans 11:13-14)

It is in this context that Paul's statement, "All Israel will be saved", will find fulfillment. After having rejected Jesus Christ, the pierced, crucified Messiah and following after a worldly, kingdom-building Messiah, the Jews will finally realize their mistake when they are betrayed by their new Messiah (Antichrist) and forced to watch a worldwide manifestation of the Lord's deliverance of the Church. It is at this point that the Jews will repent. They will repent in vast numbers. They will repent as they did on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-41) when, after explaining the manifestation of the Holy Spirit and proclaiming that "Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs", Peter accused them of having crucified the Jewish Messiah:

This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. (Acts 2:23, ESV)

On that Day of Pentecost in 30 AD, when confronted with the sign of tongues and the realization that they had pierced their Messiah, the Jews cried out in sorrow.



Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?' (Acts 2:7)

The Jewish response to the rapture and deliverance of the Church out of the Tribulation will result in similar national mourning and repentance:

On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. The land shall mourn, each family by itself: the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of teahouse of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself, and their wives by themselves; and all the families that are left each by itself, and their wives by themselves. On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness. (Zechariah 12:11-13:1, ESV)

God then seals 144,000 of these Jews as believers in Jesus Christ, the pierced and bruised Messiah, and they are given divine protection against Satan's last attempt to wipe them out. With the appearing of the Sign of the Son of Man and the Lord's glorious presence in the earth's atmosphere, not only is the light of the sun, moon and stars no longer visible, the earth's gravitational forces are wreaking havoc with tsunamis, disappearing islands and collapsing mountains, but also, Satan himself has lost his place as "the prince of the power of the air" and will be cast down to the earth:

'Woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!' And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child... (Revelation 12:12-13)

These forces will continue the time of judgment and tribulation for Israel's testing, cleansing, and purifying before their final day of deliverance comes.

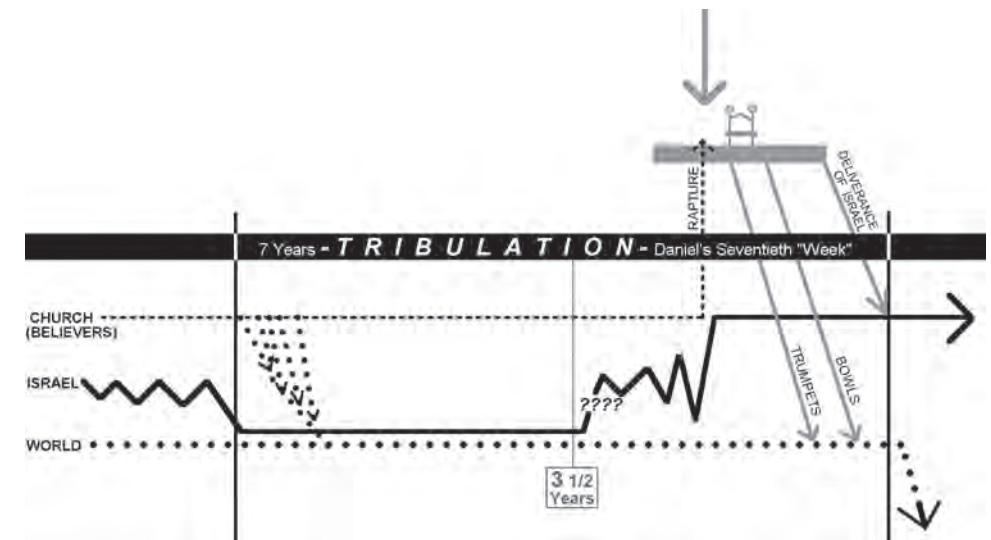
Malachi: "Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap." (Malachi 3:1-4, ESV)

Jeremiah: "Alas! That day is so great there is none like it; it is a time of distress for Jacob; yet he shall be saved out of it... I will discipline you in just measure,

and I will by no means leave you unpunished... All your lovers have forgotten you; they care nothing for you... Behold, I will restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob and have compassion on his dwellings; the city shall be rebuilt on its mound and the palace shall stand where it used to be." (Jeremiah 30:7-18, ESV)

Paul: "Has God rejected his people? By no means!...if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?... So do not become proud, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you (referring to the Gentile church)... Lest you be wise in your own sight, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved." (Romans 11:1-26, ESV)

Once the fullness of the Gentiles has come to an end, the Sign of the Son of Man appears in the sky, the believers rise to meet him in the air, Israel witnesses this deliverance of a people who are not a nation, and Israel repents. It is at this point the words of Scripture are fulfilled: "In this way all Israel will be saved."



The Day of the Lord

The Day of the Lord comes after the celestial disasters which follow a time of human oppression and tribulation against believers. Biblically, the "The Day of the Lord" is the Lord's judgment of sinful mankind after the Lord has delivered the Church out of the Tribulation.

And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood,

before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. (Joel 2:30-31, ESV)

The earth quakes before them; the heavens tremble. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining. The LORD utters his voice before his army, for his camp is exceedingly great; he who executes his word is powerful. For the day of the LORD is great and very awesome; who can endure it? (Joel 2:10-11, ESV)

Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light. I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will put an end to the pomp of the arrogant, and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless. I will make people more rare than fine gold, and mankind than the gold of Ophir. Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place, at the wrath of the LORD of hosts in the day of his fierce anger. (Isaiah 13:9-10, ESV)

Jesus says:

... it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man. (Luke 21:35-36, ESV)

In this passage, Jesus appears to be saying that “all people” - not “all people except the Church” - will experience these times. He also warns them to “stay awake” in order to be aware of the signs and the times. Jesus commands them to pray that they will “have strength to escape all these things”, which is not a reference to escaping the tribulation by means of the rapture, but escaping the evil of those days so that when Jesus does appear they will not have fallen asleep with the philosophies of the world, but would instead be awake and alert, waiting for Jesus to return so they might meet him in the air and stand before him instead of being left in the world to endure the trumpets and the bowl judgments.

The Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 is a response by Jesus to his disciples designed in part to distinguish the first-century destruction of the Temple from the end of the age when the Son of Man will come. Thus Jesus notes that the disciples will see certain catastrophic events surrounding the destruction of the Temple, but explicitly explains that those events do not signal the end has come (Matt. 24:5-13).



Any reference to the “day of the Lord” carries with it the original meaning assigned to this phrase in the Old Testament. The “day of the Lord” was a day, an event, or a period of time when God would intervene in human history to punish his enemies and vindicate his people, and prove true the words of his prophets. Ultimately in the Old Testament “the day of the Lord” would culminate in, what we know today from New Testament revelation, the Second Coming of the Christ (The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible, volume 2, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, page 46). In the Old Testament, the “day of the Lord” is followed by a special time of divine blessing and the kingdom of the Messiah. Today many refer to this as the millennial kingdom (See Isaiah 2:12-21; 13:6-16; Ezekiel 30:3; Obadiah 15; Zephaniah 1:14-2:3).

This must be the context in which the Jewish Pharisee, educated rabbi, and highly skilled scholar we know as the Apostle Paul, used the phrase “day of the Lord”. Knowing this, it comes as no surprise, then, that in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5 Paul uses “parousia of the Lord Jesus” and the Church’s “gathering to him” as synonymous with “the day of the Lord.”

*Now concerning the **coming [parousia] of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him**, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the **effect that THE DAY OF THE LORD has come. Let no one deceive you in any way. For THAT DAY will not come, unless:***

(1) the rebellion comes first, and

(2) the man of lawlessness is revealed,

the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? (2 Thess. 2:1-5)

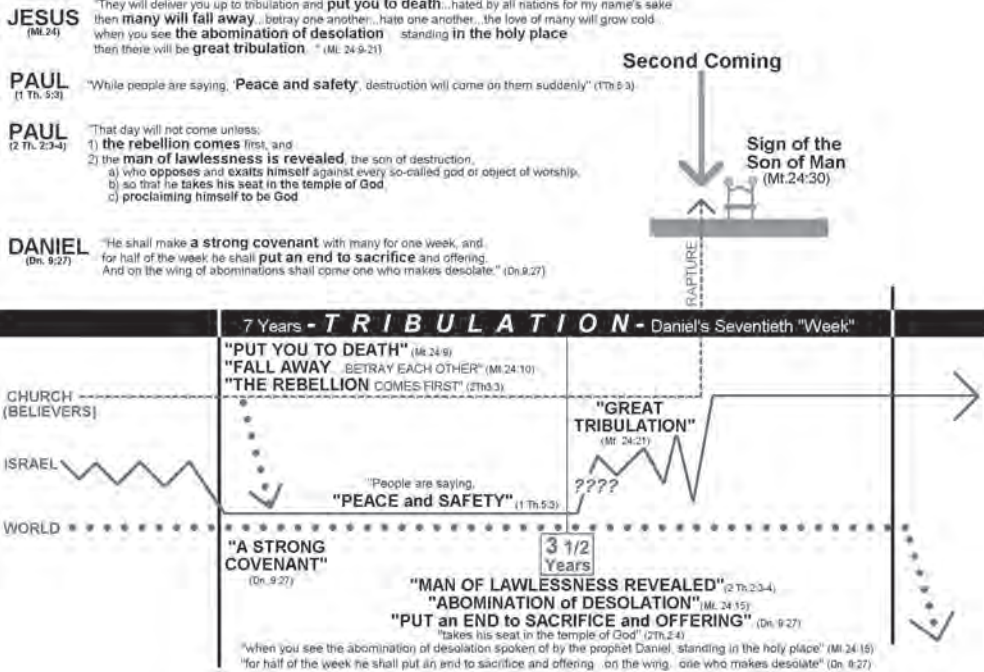
The Testimony of the Early Church

The early writers in the Church after the days of the apostles seem to be consistent regarding the timing of the rapture. A pattern of general agreement appears on several basic points in the time following the closing of the New Testament, when the students of the apostles were left to hand down the traditions and teachings of the disciples of the Lord. They all seemed to understand the intention of the Apostles’ teaching to support:

- A future time period known as the Tribulation
- A literal man in future history known as the Antichrist
- A serious persecution of the Church in the Tribulation by the Antichrist
- A Second Coming of Jesus to take his church after this time of great suffering



SIGNS: Warned to Watch for These Signs



nine months the birth will take place. And yet it is very uncertain. For some bring forth at the seventh month, and others at the ninth. And at any rate the day and the hour is uncertain. With respect to this therefore, Paul speaks thus [in 1 Thessalonians 5:3]. And the image is exact. For there are not many sure signs of travail; many indeed have brought forth in the high roads, or when out of their houses and abroad, not foreseeing it. And he has not only glanced here at the uncertainty, but also at the bitterness of the pain. For as she while sporting, laughing, not looking for anything at all, being suddenly seized with unspeakable pains, is pierced through with the pangs of labor – so will it be with those souls, when the Day comes upon them. (Thessalonians, Homily 9 on 1 Thessalonians 5:3)

Chrysostom has captured the concepts of watching for the signs of Christ's return and knowing his return is imminent, while preserving the warning that no man knows the day or hour. Christ's return will be a surprise, but it is near. The signs will indicate when it is near, but we will not be able to neglect our daily responsibilities in order to wait upon a hill for Jesus to return.

Augustine writes in *The City of God*, Book XX, chapter 30:

In connection with [the last] judgment the following events shall come to pass, as we have learned: Elijah the Tishbite will come; the Jews will believe; Antichrist will persecute; Christ will judge; the dead will rise; the good and the wicked will be separated; the world will be burned and renewed. All these things, we believe, will 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.

Polycrates (130-196 AD) followed Paul, Timothy, John, etc. as a church leader in the city of Ephesus when he was the bishop there. He is recorded by Eusebius to have said:

For in Asia also great lights have fallen asleep, which shall rise again on the day of the Lord's coming, when he shall come with glory from heaven, and shall seek out all the saints.

John Chrysostom (347-407) explains "imminence" and the "signs" of Christ's Second Coming:

But it may be worthwhile to ask, If antichrist comes, and Elijah comes, how is it 'when they say peace and safety', that then a sudden destruction comes upon them? For these things do not permit the day to come upon them unawares, being signs of its coming. But he [Paul] does not mean this to be the time of antichrist, and the whole day, because that will be a sign of the coming of Christ, but Himself will not have a sign, but will come suddenly and unexpectedly. For travail, indeed, you say, does not come upon the pregnant woman unexpectedly: for she knows that after

Didache: Just like ancient manuscripts were discovered in the late 1800's and early 1900's to contradict the liberal claim that the texts of scripture are not first century documents, so the 1873 discovery of a Greek manuscript containing the Didache (found in Constantinople) undermined the claim that the early church held to a pre-trib rapture. The Didache ends with details about the Second Coming.

The *Didache* is a Syrian church manual from 85-120 AD that likely originated from Antioch. Its full title is *"The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles"*, and it is made up of a collection of traditions and teachings of the apostles as the second generation of Christians remembered them. The book was written during

the years 100-150 AD. The *Didache* unambiguously teaches that the Christian church is going to go through the Tribulation.

Given all this, it is important that we be aware of what the *Didache* records about meeting the Lord in the air, Antichrist, the Tribulation, and the Second Coming. Remember, Antioch was one of the largest cities in Syria. It was the home church of the Apostle Paul and a church that heard the teaching of Barnabas, Peter, John Mark and many other early church leaders who went up from Jerusalem and from the Gentile churches. The *Didache* states the following in chapter 16:4-8:

For as lawlessness increases, they will hate and persecute and betray one another. And then the deceiver of the world [Antichrist] will appear as a son of God and “will perform signs and wonders,” and the earth will be delivered into his hands, and he will commit abominations the likes of which have never happened before [great tribulation]. Then all humankind will come to the fiery test, and “many will fall away” and perish; but “those who endure” in their faith “will be saved” [delivered from the day of the Lord] by the accursed one himself. And “then there will appear the signs” of the truth: first the sign of an opening in heaven, then the sign of the sound of a trumpet, and third, the resurrection of the dead [resurrection] — but not of all; rather, as it has been said, “The Lord will come, and all his saints with him.” Then the world “will see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven.

Notice the order and the details of the traditions handed down from the Apostles to an apostolic church within 40-90 years. It is even possible that John was still alive when this document was being written out, but it is certain that Ignatius, a disciple of John and the bishop of Antioch, was alive or had just recently faced martyrdom.

In its presentation of events the *Didache* clearly presents a chronology that has the Church enduring the persecution of the Antichrist, and there is no clue or hint of meeting the Lord in the air before the end time trouble begins. Here is the order as presented in the *Didache*:

1. Persecution, betrayal and hatred are directed toward believers
2. Antichrist appears as a son of God
3. Antichrist performs signs and wonders
4. Antichrist rules the earth
5. Antichrist commits abominations never committed before
6. Many fall away from the faith and perish with the world
7. Some endure and will be saved



8. Signs of the Truth appear
9. Heaven is opened
10. The Trumpet sounds
11. Resurrection of those who are in Christ, who are returning with Christ
12. The world sees the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven

This order matches the presentation put forth in this book: Antichrist’s persecution of the Church causes many to fall away, but others stand firm and are destroyed. There will be deliverance when the Sign of the Son appears in the sky and the Church is raptured from the earth and the dead in Christ are resurrected to meet the Lord in the air. The world will visually see the Lord return and the raptured Church with him in glory before the judgment of the earth begins.

The last chapter is devoted to exhortations in view of the woes expected at the end of the world. The author urges an attitude of watching in view of the uncertainty of the time of the end....This language, however, cannot be taken to mean an ‘any-moment rapture,’ for the author proceeds to sketch the consummation of the age in which he warns the Church against the peril of falling away from the faith when Antichrist appears...The Didachist looks forward to the appearance of Antichrist who will rule the world and inflict men with severe persecution. The many who are to be offended and be lost are professing Christians who do not stand true; for only those who endure in their faith shall be saved...The purpose of the Didachist in writing this exhortation was to prepare the Church for the Great Tribulation and the sufferings to be inflicted by the Antichrist. (F, 20-21)

Watch over your life; let your lamps be not quenched and your loins be not ungirded, but be ready, for you know not the hour in which your Lord comes. And you shall gather yourselves together frequently, seeking what is fitting for your souls; for the whole time of your faith shall not profit you, if you be not perfected at the last season. (Didache 16:1-5)

The Epistle of Barnabas

George Eldon Ladd, in his book *The Blessed Hope*, writes the following about *The Epistle of Barnabas*, whose actual author is anonymous, but was written between 70-130 AD:

The author of this little tract is looking not only for the second coming of Christ but also for the last time of trouble. He warns believers to seek out earnestly those things which are able to save them, and to flee from all the



works of lawlessness and to hate the era of to his present time that they might be loved in that which is to come...for 'the final stumbling block is at hand'...This means that the Antichrist is at hand...According to this, Barnabas expected the Church to go through the Tribulation and Christ to return only at its termination. This is again asserted in 15:5:

'When his Son comes, he will destroy the time of the wicked one and will judge the godless, and will change the sun and moon and the stars, and then he will truly rest on the seventh day.'

...That Barnabas could not have looked for an any-moment return of Christ is proven by his expectation that the end would not come until the Roman empire should fall....Antichrist would arise after the Roman empire had broken down into ten kingdoms. This obviously could not occur at once, for in the first century Rome's might and stability was at its apex.

The Shepherd of Hermas

The Shepherd of Hermas was written around 100 AD. Paul addressed a man named Hermas in Romans 16:14, and in 200 AD Origen wrote that this man was the author, which could date the writing of the book to 90 AD. This date would make sense since Hermas mentions Clement of Rome. However, three ancient witnesses date Hermas to around 140-150 AD and claim that Hermas was the brother of the bishop of Rome at that time. Either way, this book is an early church document from the second or third generation of Christians, and here is what it has to say on this subject (Vision 2:2:7-8):

Blessed are you, as many as will endure patiently the great tribulation that is coming, and as many as shall not deny their life. For the Lord has sworn concerning His Son, that those who denied their Lord should be rejected from their life, even they that are now about to deny Him in the coming days; but to those who will never deny Him, to them mercy was given of His great loving kindness.

Justin

In 150 AD Justin Martyr clearly anticipated the Church being present in the Tribulation and facing the persecution of the Antichrist when he wrote in his Dialogue with Trypho:

He shall come from heaven with glory, when the man of apostasy, who speaks strange things against the Most High, shall venture to do unlawful deeds on the earth against us Christians, who, having learned the true worship of God from the law, and the word which went forth from Jerusalem by means of the apostles of Jesus, have fled for safety to the



God of Jacob and the God of Israel...Now it is evident that no one can terrify or subdue us who have believed in Jesus over all the world. For it is plain that, though beheaded, and crucified, and thrown to wild beasts, and chains, and fire, and all other kinds of torture, we do not give up our confession; but the more such things happen, the more do others and in larger numbers become faithful, and worshippers of God through the name of Jesus.

Irenaeus

Irenaeus (130-202 AD) came from Smyrna in Asia Minor and was trained by Polycarp, a disciple of the Apostle John and the pastor of the Church of Smyrna who is addressed in Revelation 2:8. Irenaeus wrote the following around 180 AD in his book Against Heresies (5:26:1 and 5:30:1-4).

In the sections below, Irenaeus clearly states that the Antichrist will "put the Church to flight" and "when this man comes we may avoid him". Irenaeus also provides other insights into his understanding of the chronological order of events and what he considers a correct eschatological view as we watch and wait:

In a still clearer light has John, in the Apocalypse, indicated to the Lord's disciples what shall happen in the last times, and concerning the ten kings who shall then arise, among whom the empire which now rules [the earth] shall be partitioned. He teaches us what the ten horns shall be which were seen by Daniel, telling us that thus it had been said to him:

'And the ten horns which thou saw are ten kings, who have received no kingdom as yet, but shall receive power as if kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and give their strength and power to the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, because He is the Lord of lords and the King of kings.'

It is manifest, therefore, that of these [potentates], he who is to come shall slay three, and subject the remainder to his power, and that he shall be himself the eighth among them. And they shall lay Babylon waste, and burn her with fire, and shall give their kingdom to the beast, **and put the Church to flight**. After that they shall be destroyed by the coming of our Lord. For that the kingdom must be divided, and thus come to ruin, the Lord [declares when He] says: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand." It must be, therefore, that the kingdom, the city, and the house be divided into ten; and for this reason He has already foreshadowed the partition and division [which shall take place].



Concerning the number of the beast, 666, Irenaeus further says:

This number being found in all the most approved and ancient copies [of the Apocalypse, the book of Revelation], and those men who saw John face to face [Polycarp, Papias, Ignatius, etc.] bearing their testimony [to it]; while reason also leads us to conclude that the number of the name of the beast, [if reckoned] according to the Greek mode of calculation by the [value of] the letters contained in it, will amount to six hundred and sixty and six; that is, the number of tens shall be equal to that of the hundreds, and the number of hundreds equal to that of the units ... there shall be no light punishment [inflicted] upon him who either adds or subtracts anything from the Scripture, under that such a person must necessarily fall. ... These men, therefore, ought to learn [what really is the state of the case], and go back to the true number of the name, that they be not reckoned among false prophets. But, knowing the sure number declared by Scripture, that is, six hundred sixty and six, let them await, in the first place, the division of the kingdom into ten; then, in the next place, when these kings are reigning, and beginning to set their affairs in order, and advance their kingdom, [let them learn] to acknowledge that he who shall come claiming the kingdom for himself, and shall terrify those men of whom we have been speaking, having a name containing the aforesaid number, is truly the abomination of desolation. This, too, the apostle affirms:

'When they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction shall come upon them.'

And Jeremiah does not merely point out his sudden coming, but he even indicates the tribe from which he shall come, where he says,

'We shall hear the voice of his swift horses from Dan; the whole earth shall be moved by the voice of the neighing of his galloping horses: he shall also come and devour the earth, and the fullness thereof, the city also, and they that dwell therein.'

This, too, is the reason that this tribe is not reckoned in the Apocalypse (Book of Revelation) along with those which are saved. It is therefore more certain, and less hazardous, to await the fulfillment of the prophecy, than to be making surmises, and casting about for any names that may present themselves, inasmuch as many names can be found possessing the number mentioned; and the same question will, after all, remain unsolved. For if there are many names found possessing this number, it will be asked which among them shall the coming man bear. It is not through a want of names containing the number of that name that I say this, but on account of the fear of God, and zeal for the truth:

for the name ***Evanthas (EYANΘΑΣ)*** contains the required number, but

I make no allegation regarding it.

Then also ***Lateinos (ΛΑΤΕΙΝΟΣ)*** 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: I will not, however, make any boast over this [coincidence].

Teitan too, (TEITAN, the first syllable being written with the two Greek vowels ε and ι, among all the names which are found among us, is rather worthy of credit. For it has in itself the predicted number, and is composed of six letters, each syllable containing three letters; and [the word itself] is ancient, and removed from ordinary use; for among our kings we find none bearing this name Titan, nor have any of the idols which are worshipped in public among the Greeks and barbarians this appellation. Among many persons, too, this name is accounted divine, so that even the sun is termed "Titan" by those who do now possess [the rule]. This word, too, contains a certain outward appearance of vengeance, and of one inflicting merited punishment because he (Antichrist) pretends that he vindicates the oppressed. And besides this, it is an ancient name, one worthy of credit, of royal dignity, and still further, a name belonging to a tyrant. Inasmuch, then, as this name "Titan" has so much to recommend it, there is a strong degree of probability, that from among the many [names suggested], we infer, that perchance he who is to come shall be called "Titan."

We will not, however, incur the risk of pronouncing positively as to the name of Antichrist; for if it were necessary that his name should be distinctly revealed in this present time, it would have been announced by him [John] who beheld the apocalyptic vision. For that was seen no very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign. But **he indicates the number of the name now, that when this man comes we may avoid him, being aware who he is:** the name, however, is suppressed, because it is not worthy of being proclaimed by the Holy Spirit. For if it had been declared by Him, he (Antichrist) might perhaps continue for a long period. But now as "he was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the abyss, and goes into perdition," as one who has no existence; so neither has his name been declared, for the name of that which does not exist is not proclaimed. 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.'

In summary, about 80 years after the Apostle John wrote the book of Revelation and after having been trained in John's church in Smyrna by several of John's disciples, Irenaeus writes that the Church should await the fulfillment of prophecy, but will need to prepare to avoid the Antichrist when he comes since the Antichrist will pursue the Church.

Tertullian

Tertullian, from Carthage in North Africa, wrote *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* in 208-212. Tertullian clearly teaches that the rapture and glorification of the Church occurs at the Second Coming and after the reign of Antichrist when he quotes 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17:

For the apostle makes a distinction, when he goes on to say,
'For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked,'

which means, before we put off the garment of the flesh, we wish to be clothed with the celestial glory of immortality. Now the privilege of this favor awaits those who shall at the coming of the Lord be found in the flesh, and who shall, owing to the oppressions of the time of Antichrist, deserve by an instantaneous death, which is accomplished by a sudden change, to become qualified to join the rising saints; as he writes to the Thessalonians:

'For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.'

(Chapter 41, "The Dissolution of Our Tabernacle Consistent with the Resurrection of Our Bodies")

Tertullian clearly states around 210 AD that those who suffer at the hand of the Antichrist "deserve by an instantaneous death, which is accomplished by a sudden change, to become qualified to join the rising saints" at "the coming of the Lord", which occurs at "the time of Antichrist". Tertullian then sites Paul's words to the Thessalonians concerning the rapture. Tertullian also understood the rapture to take place at the time of the Second Coming which delivers the Church from the Antichrist.

Tertullian believed that the end could not come at any moment but would be heralded by signs of warning... The object of Tertullian's hope and prayers is not a secret any-moment coming of the Lord to rapture the Church; it is the hope of standing before the Son of man after a series of cosmic signs have appeared and 'all of these things have taken place.'(F, p27-28)

Pseudo-Ephraem

Many supporters of the Pretribulation rapture theory use the text of Pseudo-Ephraem as proof that the early church's eschatology supported a Pretribulation rapture. The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ephraem is a document from Syria dating to the 600's AD. The writer of this document attempts to credit it to Ephraem of Syria (306-373), a bishop and teacher in theological schools in the 300's AD. The document was actually not written by Ephraem, but comes from sometime between 450-700 AD. Four Latin copies survive, and one is credited to Isidore of Seville (560-636 AD).

In his book, *When the Trumpet Sounds*, in an essay called "A Pretrib Rapture Statement in the Early Medieval Church", Grant Jeffrey says that "the Pretribulation rapture is taught so clearly in the New Testament that it is virtually impossible that no one ever taught this doctrine in the 18 centuries before 1830" (page 105).

Jeffrey wants to believe he found pre-1830 support for the Pretrib rapture in Pseudo-Ephraem when the author writes the following around 600 AD:

Why therefore do we not reject every care of earthly actions and prepare ourselves for the meeting of the Lord Christ, so that He may draw us from the confusion, which overwhelms the world?...Because **all saints and the Elect of the Lord are gathered before the tribulation which is to about to come and are taken to the Lord**, in order that they may not see at any time the confusion which overwhelms the world because of our sins. (Pseudo-Ephraem, Section II)

First, we will take a look at the linguistics of this passage.

It is worth mentioning that in his book, *First the Antichrist*, Bob Gundry writes:

Let us first observe the use of the present tense of the verbs of **gathering** (*colliguntur* both in Section 2 of Pseudo-Ephraem's Latin sermon and in the sermon's Latin Ephraemic source; **sunagontai** in the Greek Ephraemic source) and of **taking** (*adsumuntur* both in Section 2 of Pseudo-Ephraem's Latin sermon and in that sermon's Latin Ephraemic source). Of course, the present tense is often used in a futuristic sense, as elsewhere in Pseudo-Ephraem's sermon. Section 1 provides an example: 'Whenever the Roman Empire has begun to be consumed by the sword, the coming of the Evil one is at hand [Latin: *adest* – present tense] . . . In those days two brothers will come [followed by a string of further verbs in the future tense, so that 'is at hand' must mean 'will be at hand'].' But more frequent than a futuristic use of the present tense is its use for an action or state of being in progress. As every student of Greek and Latin knows, this use is often translated best into English by a form of the verb *to be* plus an *-ing* form. Thus, a likely better translation of the second passage under contention in Section 2 reads as follows:

"For all the saints and elect of God are **being gathered** prior to the tribulation that is to come, and **are being taken** to the Lord lest they ever see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sins."

This understanding is favored not only by the greater frequency of the progressive present tense, but also by the contrast between meeting the Lord Christ after the tribulation, and being gathered and taken to the Lord before the tribulation. (175-176 - bold mine)

The real Ephraem used the image of a Jewish pilgrimage to Jerusalem as a symbol of nations being evangelized and gathered to the Lord. It would seem that Ephraem is referring to believers being gathered and taken to the Lord through evangelism and conversion not in the rapture before the Tribulation begins. These church age believers are renewing their minds as they grow into spiritual maturity. They are obeying the admonition of Jesus and the apostles to be alert and sober as they prepare themselves for the Day of the Lord.

Second, we will compare this verse to the text that precedes it to establish the context:



We ought to understand thoroughly therefore, my brothers, what is imminent or overhanging. Already there have been hunger and plagues, violent movements of nations and signs, which have been predicted by the Lord, they have already been fulfilled (consummated), and **there is no other which remains, except the advent of the wicked one** in the completion of the Roman kingdom. Why therefore are we occupied with worldly business, and why is our mind held fixed on the lusts of the world or on the anxieties of the ages? Why therefore do we not reject every care of worldly business, and why is our mind held fixed on the lusts of the world or on the anxieties of the ages? Why therefore do we not reject every care of earthly actions and **prepare ourselves for the meeting of the Lord Christ, so that he may draw us from the confusion**, which overwhelms all the world? (Section II)

It seems clear the writer is focused on rousing the believers in the Church to awake and be sober and prepare themselves for "meeting the Lord" [renewing their minds and maturing in their faith] so that the Lord can "draw us from the confusion." This is just what Peter says in 1 Peter 1:13 and Paul says in Romans 12:2-3:

Preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 1:13)

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2)

Third, we can compare this verse to Scripture to see if any of the themes that the Bible associates with the rapture are mentioned in the context of Pseudo-Ephraem, and we will find that there is nothing in the text that can be paralleled with:

- Christ's coming as in the 1 Thess. 4:16-17 rapture
- The resurrection of the dead as in 1 Cor. 15:51-52
- The glorification of living Christians as in 1 Cor. 15:51-52
- The believers being taken into heaven according to pre-trib doctrine based on John 14:2-4; Rev. 4:1-2

Fourth, we examine other passages in Pseudo-Ephraem that seem to describe and prepare Christians who are on earth during the Tribulation facing the terrors and persecution of the Antichrist:

When therefore the end of the world comes, there arise... constant



persecutions, slaughters and massacres everywhere, fear in the homes, panic in the cities. (Section III)

In those days people shall not be buried, neither **Christian**, nor heretic, neither Jew, nor pagan, because of fear and dread there is not one who buries them; because all people ignore them while they are fleeing. (Section IV; Bold mine)

In these three years and a half...there will be in those days lack of bread and water, and no one is able to sell or to buy of the grain of the fall harvest, unless he is one who has the serpentine sign on the forehead or on the hand...those who wander through the deserts, fleeing from the faces of the serpent, bend their knees to God, just as lambs to the udders of their mothers, being sustained by the salvation of the Lord, and while wandering in states of desertion, they eat herbs. (Section VIII)

When this inevitability has overwhelmed all people, just and unjust, the just, so that they may be found good by their Lord; and indeed the unjust, so that they may be damned forever with their author the Devil, and, as God beholds the human race in danger and being tossed about by the breath of the horrible dragon, he sends to them consolatory proclamation by his attendants, the prophets Enoch and Elijah, who, while not yet tasting death, are the servants for the heralding of the second coming of Christ, and in order to accuse the enemy. And when those just ones have appeared, they confuse indeed the antagonistic serpent with his cleverness and they call back the faithful witnesses to God, in order to (free them) from his seduction (Section IX)

When the three and a half years have been completed, the time of the Antichrist, through which he will have seduced the world, after the resurrection of the two prophets, in the hour which the world does not know, and on the day which the enemy of son of perdition does not know, will come the sign of the Son of Man, and coming forward the Lord shall appear with great power and much majesty, with the sign of the wood of salvation going before him, and also even with all the powers of the heavens with the whole chorus of the saints, with those who bear the sign of the holy cross upon their shoulders, as the angelic trumpet precedes him, which shall sound and declare: Arise, O sleeping ones, arise, meet Christ, because his hour of judgment has come! (Section X)

And finally, we ask: If the author of Pseudo-Ephraem held to a pre-trib rapture



theory, why does he not focus on the hope the Church has in the pre-trib rapture and encourage believers that they will not face any of the hardships and persecutions described in his document? Instead, he expends his energy detailing the horrors of the tribulation, and his best exhortation is to tell the Christians who will live through it, to prepare for it by drawing close to the Lord and leaving their worldly passions behind.

And, what is more, the author does not use his description of the horrors of the Tribulation as leverage to convince the unbeliever to get saved in order to escape the coming Antichrist. Nor does he warn backsliding Christians that if they don't straighten up and walk the walk, they will miss the rapture and enter the tribulation.

The author of Pseudo-Ephraem seems to be focused primarily on preparing believers in the Church for the day they encounter the Antichrist. To me he seems to be saying, ***“Stop trying to have your best life now and get spiritually sober so the Lord can draw you into the Truth and lead you through this most difficult time period you are about to face.”***

After studying the entire text, I have to conclude that Pseudo-Ephraem wrote his sermon with the belief that, (1) The Church would find itself face-to-face with the “serpent” (Antichrist), and (2) The resurrection of the saints would occur at the Second Coming of Christ, not seven years before it.

Pseudo-Ephraem is important to examine because it is the strongest claim the Pretribulation teachers have of an early church document that “clearly teaches” the Pretribulation rapture. But the fact is, it is not even close to supporting the Pretrib scenario, and it is even further from (i.e., knows nothing of) the modern Western seeker church mentality.

I reproduce the entire text of Pseudo-Ephraem below, so that you may judge for yourself.

On the Last Times, the Anti-Christ, and the End of the World

A Sermon by Pseudo-Ephraem

The Last Trumpet - Pseudo-Ephraem Section I

Dearly beloved brothers, believe the Holy Spirit who speaks in us. We have already told you that the end of the world is near, the consummation remains.



Has not faith withered away among mankind? How many foolish things are seen among youths, how many crimes among prelates, how many lies among priests, how many perjuries among deacons! There are evil deeds among the ministers, adulteries in the aged, wantonness in the youths--in mature women false faces, in virgins' dangerous traces! In the midst of all this there are the wars with the Persians, and we see struggles with diverse nations threatening and "kingdom rising against kingdom." When the Roman Empire begins to be consumed by the sword, the coming of the Evil One is at hand. It is necessary that the world come to an end at the completion of the Roman Empire. In those days two brothers will come to the Roman Empire who will rule with one mind; but because one will surpass the other, there will be a schism between them. And so the Adversary will be loosed and will stir up hatred between the Persian and Roman empires.

In those days many will rise up against Rome; the Jewish people will be her adversaries. There will be stirrings of nations and evil reports, pestilences, famines, and earth quakes in various places. All nations will receive captives; there will be wars and rumors of wars. From the rising to the setting of the sun the sword will devour much. The times will be so dangerous that in fear and trembling they will not permit thought of better things, because many will be the oppressions and desolations of regions that are to come.

Section II

We ought to understand thoroughly therefore, my brothers, **what is imminent or overhanging.** Already there have been hunger and plagues, violent movements of nations and signs, which have been predicted by the Lord, they have already been fulfilled (consummated), and **there is no other which remains, except the advent of the wicked one** in the completion of the Roman kingdom. Why therefore are we occupied with worldly business, and why is our mind held fixed on the lusts of the world or on the anxieties of the ages? Why therefore do we not reject every care of worldly business, and why is our mind held fixed on the lusts of the world or on the anxieties of the ages? Why therefore do we not reject every care of earthly actions and prepare ourselves for the meeting of the Lord Christ, so that he may draw us from the confusion, which overwhelms all the world? Believe you me, dearest brother, because the coming (advent) of the Lord is nigh, believe you me, because the end of the world is at hand, believe me, because it is the very last time. Or do you not believe unless you see with your eyes? See to it that this sentence be not fulfilled among you of the prophet who declares: "Woe to those who desire to see the day of the Lord!" **For all the saints and elect of God are gathered,**

prior to the tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sins. And so, brothers most dear to me, it is the eleventh hour, and the end of the world comes to the harvest, and angels, armed and prepared, hold sickles in their hands, awaiting the empire of the Lord. And we think that the earth exists with blind infidelity, arriving at its downfall early. Commotions are brought forth, wars of diverse peoples and battles and incursions of the barbarians threaten, and our regions shall be desolated, and we neither become very much afraid of the report nor of the appearance, in order that we may at least do penance; because they hurl fear at us, and we do not wish to be changed, although we at least stand in need of penance for our actions!

Section III

When therefore the end of the world comes, there arise diverse wars, commotions on all sides, horrible earthquakes, perturbations of nations, tempests throughout the lands, plagues, famine, drought throughout the thoroughfares, great danger throughout the sea and dry land, constant persecutions, slaughters and massacres everywhere, fear in the homes, panic in the cities, quaking in the thoroughfares, suspicions in the male, anxiety in the streets. In the desert people become senseless, spirits melt in the cities. A friend will not be grieved over a friend, neither a brother for a brother, nor parents for their children, nor a faithful servant for his master, but one inevitability shall overwhelm them all; neither is anyone able to be recovered in that time, who has not been made completely aware of the coming danger, but all people, who have been constricted by fear, are consumed because of the overhanging evils.

Section IV

Whenever therefore the earth is agitated by the nations, people will hide themselves from the wars in the mountains and rocks, by caves and caverns of the earth, by graves and memorials of the dead, and there, as they waste away gradually by fear, they draw breath, because there is not any place at all to flee, but there will be concession and intolerable pressure. And those who are in the east will flee to the west, and moreover, those who are in the west shall flee to the east, and there is not a safer place anywhere, because the world shall be overwhelmed by worthless nations, whose aspect appears to be of wild animals more than that of men. Because those very much horrible nations, most profane and most defiled, who do not spare lives, and shall destroy the living from the dead, shall consume the dead, they eat dead flesh, they drink

the blood of beasts, they pollute the world, contaminate all things, and the one who is able to resist them is not there. In those days people shall not be buried, neither Christian, nor heretic, neither Jew, nor pagan, because of fear and dread there is not one who buries them; because all people, while they are fleeing, ignore them.

Section V

Whenever the days of the times of those nations have been fulfilled, after they have destroyed the earth, it shall rest; and now the kingdom of the Romans is removed from everyday life, and the empire of the Christians is handed down by God and Peter; and then the consummation comes, when the kingdom of the Romans begins to be fulfilled, and all dominions and powers have been fulfilled. Then that worthless and abominable dragon shall appear, he, whom Moses named in Deuteronomy, saying:-Dan is a young lion, reclining and leaping from Basan. Because he reclines in order that he may seize and destroy and slay. Indeed (he is) a young whelp of a lion not as the lion of the tribe of Judah, but roaring because of his wrath, that he may devour. "And he leaps out from Basan." "Basan" certainly is interpreted "confusion." He shall rise up from the confusion of his iniquity. The one who gathers together to himself a partridge the children of confusion, also shall call them, whom he has not brought forth, just as Jeremiah the prophet says. Also in the last day they shall relinquish him just as confused.

Section VI

When therefore the end of the world comes, that abominable, lying and murderous one is born from the tribe of Dan. He is conceived from the seed of a man and from an unclean or most vile virgin, mixed with an evil or worthless spirit. But that abominable corrupter, more of spirits than of bodies, while a youth, the crafty dragon appears under the appearance of righteousness, before he takes the kingdom. Because he will be craftily gentle to all people, not receiving gifts, not placed before another person, loving to all people, quiet to everyone, not desiring gifts, appearing friendly among close friends, so that men may bless him, saying;-he is a just man, not knowing that a wolf lies concealed under the appearance of a lamb, and that a greedy man is inside under the skin of a sheep.

Section VII

But when the time of the abomination of his desolation begins to approach,



having been made legal, he takes the empire, and, just as it is said in the Psalm:-They have been made for the undertaking for the sons of Loth, the Moabites and the Ammanites shall meet him first as their king. Therefore, when he receives the kingdom, he orders the temple of God to be rebuilt for himself, which is in Jerusalem; who, after coming into it, he shall sit as God and order that he be adored by all nations, since he is carnal and filthy and mixed with worthless spirit and flesh. Then that eloquence shall be fulfilled of Daniel the prophet:-And he shall not know the God of their fathers, and he shall not know the desires of women. Because the very wicked serpent shall direct every worship to himself. Because he shall put forth an edict so that people may be circumcised according to the rite of the old law. Then the Jews shall congratulate him, because he gave them again the practice of the first covenant; then all people from everywhere shall flock together to him at the city of Jerusalem, and the holy city shall be trampled on by the nations for forty-two months, just as the holy apostle says in the Apocalypse, which become three and a half years, 1,260 days.

Section VIII

In these three years and a half the heaven shall suspend its dew; because there will be no rain upon the earth, and the clouds shall cease to pass through the air, and the stars shall be seen with difficulty in the sky because of the excessive dryness, which happens in the time of the very fierce dragon. Because all great rivers and very powerful fountains that overflow with themselves shall be dried up, torrents shall dry up their water-courses because of the intolerable age, and there will be a great tribulation, as there has not been, since people began to be upon the earth, and there will be famine and an insufferable thirst. And children shall waste away in the bosom of their mothers, and wives upon the knees of their husbands, by not having victuals to eat. Because there will be in those days lack of bread and water, and no one is able to sell or to buy of the grain of the fall harvest, unless he is one who has the serpentine sign on the forehead or on the hand. Then gold and silver and precious clothing or precious stones shall lie along the streets, and also even every type of pearls along the thoroughfares and streets of the cities, but there is not one who may extend the hand and take or desire them, but they consider all things as good as nothing because of the extreme lack and famine of bread, because the earth is not protected by the rains of heaven, and there will be neither dew nor moisture of the air upon the earth. But those who wander through the deserts, fleeing from the face of the serpent, bend their knees to God, just as lambs to the adders of their mothers, being sustained by the salvation of the Lord, and while wandering in states of desertion, they eat herbs.



Section IX

Then, when this inevitability has overwhelmed all people, just and unjust, the just, so that they may be found good by their Lord; and indeed the unjust, so that they may be damned forever with their author the Devil, and, as God beholds the human race in danger and being tossed about by the breath of the horrible dragon, he sends to them consolatory proclamation by his attendants, the prophets Enoch and Elijah, who, while not yet tasting death, are the servants for the heralding of the second coming of Christ, and in order to accuse the enemy. And when those just ones have appeared, they confuse indeed the antagonistic serpent with his cleverness and they call back the faithful witnesses to God, in order to (free them) from his seduction ...

Section X

And when the three and a half years have been completed, the time of the Antichrist, through which he will have seduced the world, after the resurrection of the two prophets, in the hour which the world does not know, and on the day which the enemy of son of perdition does not know, will come the sign of the Son of Man, and coming forward the Lord shall appear with great power and much majesty, with the sign of the wood of salvation going before him, and also even with all the powers of the heavens with the whole chorus of the saints, with those who bear the sign of the holy cross upon their shoulders, as the angelic trumpet precedes him, which shall sound and declare: Arise, O sleeping ones, arise, meet Christ, because his hour of judgment has come! Then Christ shall come and the enemy shall be thrown into confusion, and the Lord shall destroy him by the spirit of his mouth. And he shall be bound and shall be plunged into the abyss of everlasting fire alive with his father Satan; and all people, who do his wishes, shall perish with him forever; but the righteous ones shall inherit everlasting life with the Lord forever and ever.

There is No Pre-tribulation Rapture

Paul, in 1 Thess. 5:2-4, declares that the Day is coming "as a thief". But this fact has no point if Christians will not be here for it. Christians do not need instruction (1 Thes. 5:1) concerning "times and seasons" because they already know whose coming will precede the Lord's coming. Who? The Anitchrist! Paul told them when he was with them (2 Thes. 2:5) and refers to it again.

Contrary to the common Pretrib scenario where the rapture happens suddenly with no warning and no one knows what happened after it's done (i.e., it is

"secret"), the true reason the Pretrib rapture can be considered "secret" is because it is not identified in the Bible. All the rapture verses in the Bible connect with the boldly-proclaimed Second Coming verses. So, in actuality, the rapture is not quiet, and it is not secret. The Rapture is bold, revealed, loudly-proclaimed, and every eye will see it - everyone, including the Jews.

Jesus simply does not describe a Pretribulation rapture. And if the Pretrib rapture is described in the New Testament at all, it also does not come from the writings of John. The writer of the book of Revelation addresses the Church and he goes into great detail about the return of Jesus. In light of this, two questions should be asked: One, why so much detail about the Second Coming of Jesus if the Church is going to be taken away seven years before that event? And, Two, why is there no reference to the rapture of the Church in a book that is all about eschatology - especially considering that it is addressed to the Church? John had no trouble making things vivid, clear and unforgettable; yet the Pretribulation rapture is at best vague, elusive, and unrecognizable - unless you are determined to find it in the text even before you start reading.

It has often been argued that the word "church" is only found in chapters 1 through 3 of Revelation, and then only once more in 22:16. This is supposed to be proof that the Church is therefore never addressed or referred to in chapters 4 through 21. And this, in turn, is supposed to mean that the Church is not in the tribulation. And so, it is asserted, there is scriptural evidence of a Pretribulation rapture.

To begin with, while interesting, it is not necessarily important that John uses the word "church" eighteen times in chapters 1-3 and 22. John never once used the word "church" in the Gospel of John, the letter of First John, or the letter of Second John. It is only three times in the fourteen verses that make up Third John that John uses the word "church" outside the book of Revelation. If we want to use this as an argument of scriptural support for a Pretrib rapture, then are we to assume that Jesus' words in John 14-17 about sending the Holy Spirit, the world knowing us by our love, the vine and branches, bearing fruit, and preparing a place for us in heaven also do not apply to the Church - since the word "church" is nowhere in the Gospel of John?

But the fact is, we do know that John is talking about the Church in John 14-17 by the context and by other ways of referring to the Church and the Church Age. Is it possible, then, that he did the same in Revelation chapters 4-21?

When John uses the word "church" in Third John he is not talking about the Church Universal but is instead addressing a situation in a specific local church body. This is also how John uses the word "church" in Revelation. Every time John writes "church" in Revelation he is talking about a local church or the local churches in the area he is addressing. In the Gospel of John and the epistles of John, any reference to the universal body of Christ is identified by other words: children, brother, lady, sister.

The real problem with stating that the "church" is not in Revelation 4-21 is the fact that the Church has to be identified somewhere and somehow in these verses since there are scenes describing believers on earth and believers in heaven. There are believers in the presence of God the Father and the Lamb, and believers in the presence of the Antichrist and the false prophet. Are none of them the Church? The Church is either on earth or in heaven, and the Church is either in the presence of God or in the presence of the Antichrist.

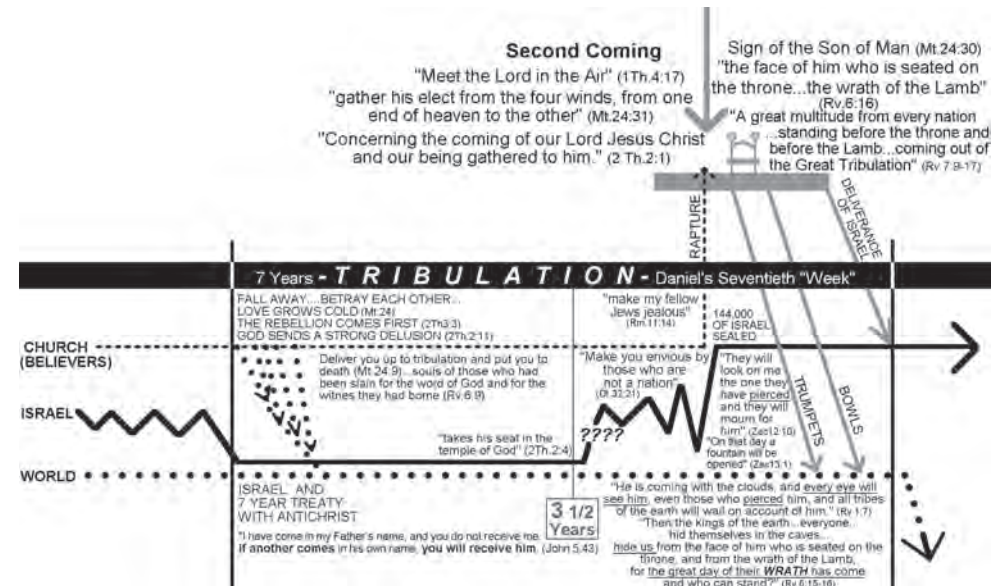
But, if we accept the theory that no mention of the "Church" is scriptural support that renders the Pretrib doctrine irrefutable, we have a problem. Because, if we continue along these same lines of logic, then it must be true that the Church has ceased to exist in Revelation 4-21. But are not words such as these possible references to "church" people:

- "souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained"
- "servants"
- "brothers"
- "elders"
- "saints"
- "kingdom of priests"
- "they who have come out of the great tribulation"
- "they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"
- "servants the prophets"
- "a great multitude"
- "his bride"
- "those who are invited"
- "armies of heaven were following him"
- "souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God."
- "those who wash their robes"
- "God's people"

Furthermore, in the Pretrib system the Church comes back to Earth with Christ in Revelation 19:11-16. Yet there is no mention of "church" in those verses either. It seems to me that this fact seriously undermines the scriptural evidence that proponents of the Pretrib model choose to use. If we are to be consistent, the lack of "church" in these verses means the Church is still on the earth (because it is not mentioned as coming back with Jesus), which would then be scriptural "proof" that there was no rapture at all in the way Paul understood it.

In all honesty, it is best to at least allow room for a possible understanding that the Church is on the earth during part of the tribulation, and that there could be a rapture of the Church during the tribulation before Jesus returns. My intention is merely to call into question the claim to absolute doctrinal authority of the Pretrib rapture advocates and suggest we make room for a possible tribulation confrontation of the Church with the kingdom of the Antichrist.

I am simply watching and attempting to prepare the Church for what would be the most horrific days of church history. And yes, I do understand, that if we do get raptured before the tribulation begins, I will probably not be invited to the after-parties in heaven sponsored by the pastors and Bible teachers of the twenty-first century Western church. In that way, it will be a lot like my life here on earth.



John Darby (1800-1882)

I do not have time to dismantle John Darby's eschatological experience and his presentation of the Pretribulation rapture model. And since I have been a supporter of Darby's since the 1970's I do give him credit as a scholar and a faithful believer, but, like all of us (including myself as I write these words), Darby was a man of his time. We all march to the beat of the drum that is sounded by our culture, by our religious society, and by the spirit of the age in which we live.

John Darby was a man from an age that included the young, creative, anything-is-possible world of England and America of the 1830's. Things were changing and happening all around him. In fact, four of the most well-established Christian cults known to the Western world were started and spread like wildfire during John Darby's lifetime:

- Mormons (1830)
- Seventh Day Adventists (1844)
- Christian Science (1875)
- Jehovah's Witnesses (1884)

Some Christians would add even John Darby's promotion of the Pretribulation rapture to the list above.

The early nineteenth century was a time of great apocalyptic expectation in America, as we've just seen with the movement William Miller so easily started. At the same time, a self-proclaimed prophet named Joseph Smith, Jr., was weaving bizarre fantasies into a book known as the Book of Mormon, published in 1830. Joseph Smith, Jr., gave his group of followers, whom people were calling Mormons, the apocalyptic-sounding name of the Latter Day Saints. Also, 1830 is the year that a man by the name of John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) took complete control of a somewhat obscure sect of Protestants in England known as the Plymouth Brethren... According to Floyd Elmore, a modern disciple of Darby, 'His parting of the ways with the established church [of England] corresponded with his new understanding of the division between Israel and the true church... Darby's belief in eschatology [the doctrine of future things] grows out of his ecclesiology [the doctrine of the nature of the Church]'. . . Darby asserted 'None are more untrustworthy on every fundamental subject than the mass of primitive Fathers.' In other words, Darby believed he had a clearer insight into the Scriptures than all who came before him, especially the early Church – which had the preaching of the Apostles still ringing in its ears. Darby actually seemed to revel in the novelty of his doctrines,

which he frequently characterized as 'rediscovered truths'... This disdain for Church history, though, was hardly unique to Darby during the nineteenth century. (Reference D, 72-73)

William Miller predicted the end for 1843, gathering thousands of Americans into an apocalyptic frenzy. A contributing factor to this mania was a spectacular meteor shower that filled the skies for several nights in November of 1833. Rural folk, their minds full of Miller's predictions of Armageddon, remembered Christ's words in Matthew 24:29 about heavenly phenomena preceding the Second Coming. Surely, they thought, doomsday couldn't be far off. To add further fuel to the flame, a large comet streaked across the sky in February of 1843, a month before Miller's March 21, 1843, deadline for the Second Coming. (Reference D, 203)

Evangelicals often cooperated in Bible conferences, beginning in 1875. These conferences, organized to study the Bible and prophecy, were held at Niagara-on-the-Lake, New York, from 1883 to 1898. The so-called five points of fundamentalism were linked with the 1878 conference, but the statement at that conference had fourteen points composed by a Presbyterian minister, James H. Brooks (1830-97). The premillennialism in the conferences was linked to dispensationalism by J. N. Darby (1800-1882), who preached these ideas on his seven trips to the United States and Canada from 1859 to 1874. He said that Christ would come for His church before the Great Tribulation and that the Jewish Millennial kingdom would be set up on earth after the completion of the Tribulation. William E. Blackstone (1841-1935) in his popular *Jesus Is Coming* (1908) and D. I. Scofield in his Scofield Bible of 1909 popularized these ideas as well as inerrancy. (Reference I, page 480)

Pretribulationism is a teaching which arose in the nineteenth century among the Plymouth Brethren whence it came to America where, for historical reasons which can be discerned, it was warmly received and widely propagated. However, many devout men who first accepted this teaching were later, upon mature study, compelled to reverse themselves and admit that they could not find this doctrine in the Word of God. (Reference F, 61)

W. G. Moorehead of Xenia Theological Seminary from 1873-1914, appears in the call for the first prophetic conference in 1878 and his name will be found in the Scofield Reference Bible as a consulting editor... has written, 'There are only two other places in the New Testament where the

phrase “to meet” occurs...and in both of them the party met continues to advance still in the direction in which he was moving previously.

Augustine perceived this:

“It is as He is coming, not abiding, that we shall go to meet Him.”

Christ does not return to heaven with His saints; He comes on with them to the earth. As an ancient writer expresses it,

“We shall be caught away to meet Christ, that all may come with the Lord to battle.”

Here is a clear rejection by an editor of the Scofield Bible of the Pretribulation rapture of the Church with the two comings of Christ which is found in the Scofield Bible. (Reference F, 50)

Robert Cameron had accepted John Darby’s teaching about a Pretrib rapture in 1878, but in 1922 Cameron wrote a work entitled *Scriptural Truth About the Lord’s Return* devoted to refuting Darby’s theory. In it he says:

The Coming for and the Coming with, the saints, still persists, although it involves a manifest contradiction, viz., two Second Comings which is an absurdity...Everywhere in the New Testament it is taught that to suffer for Christ is one of the highest honors Christians can have bestowed upon them. Desire to shirk suffering for Christ is a sign of degeneracy. At the close of this dispensation, it will still be counted an honor to suffer shame for our adorable Lord.

Church and Israel in Tribulation Period Together?

If the Church began as recorded in the Book of Acts and existed before 70 AD, then the Church was in existence during the final forty years before Israel’s dispersion began. And if that is true, then the Pretrib assertion that the Church and Israel cannot exist on earth at the same time cannot be completely correct. It is, therefore, totally possible and even extremely likely that the Church will be active in the days of Israel’s restoration.

At the very least, we must be willing to admit that it is possible, and it is *not* heretical, to consider that the Church may move along with Israel into the days of the Tribulation. It is certainly not a doctrinal error to allow the possibility that the rapture may not occur before the Tribulation begins, but, may instead occur sometime during those final seven years. Biblically speaking the Church may meet the Antichrist:

In the chronological question concerning the rapture, the dispensational issue centers in the field of ecclesiology. An absolute silence in the OT



about the present age, a total disconnection of the Church from the divine program for Israel, and a clean break between dispensations would favor Pretribulationism: the Church would not likely be related to the seventieth week of Daniel, or tribulation, a period of time clearly having to do with Israel. But a partial revelation of the present age in the OT, a connection (not necessarily identification) between Israel and the Church, and a dispensational change involving a transitional period open the door to the presence of the Church during the tribulation. (A, 12)

Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 28:25, 64, 65 and 30:1-4 that Israel would experience a worldwide dispersion among the nations in historical time, and this has been taking place during the Church Age. So, if the Church is now occupying a period of time that Moses spoke of in 1400 BC concerning Israel, why is it not possible that the Church would also be on the earth to occupy the time period of regathering, testing, and persecuting of Israel?

This becomes especially plausible when we consider Paul’s New Testament use of Moses’ Old Testament words concerning the emotional effect the Church would have on Israel. These Old Testament words clearly describe one of the Church’s roles in helping draw Israel to God by making Israel jealous when the Jewish Messiah returns to gather together a people who are not even a nation, delivering them at the time of the rapture, while ignoring his own chosen nation because they had ignored him. Paul indicates that Israel will at some point become envious of the Church. Has this ever been the case? When or how could the Church ever make Israel jealous?

I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry in the hope that I may somehow **arouse my own people to envy** and save some of them. (Romans 11:13-14)

Here are the words of Moses as quoted by Paul in Romans 10:19:

I will **make you envious** by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding. (Deuteronomy 32:21)

If the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, which was prophesied to the Jews by Daniel (Daniel 9:26), occurred during the Church Age why is it such an eschatological travesty to consider that a church event such as the rapture of the Church could take place during another time period foretold by Daniel (Daniel 9:27).



This is precisely the point that Robert H. Gundry makes in his book *The Church and the Tribulation*:

Not only did the OT predict the present age, but the NT applies OT prophecy to the Church...They affirm at least partial fulfillments of the OT in the Church and the present age. Peter says, 'This is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel...' (Acts 2:16-21) A stronger equation between OT prophecy and fulfillment in the Church age could NOT be stated. WE do not read, 'This is like what was spoken,' but, 'This is what was spoken.'... If then the main event on the very birthday of the Church was prophesied in an OT passage within an Israelitish context, it should not seem strange that the Church bears a relationship also to end-time events similarly prophesied in the OT, even though they are Israeliteish in cast. In fact, since the beginning of the Church age bears a marked relationship to OT predictions concerning Israel, we are not hindered dispensationally from presuming that the same will be so at the end of the Church age. (15)

Imminence

Many times verses are used to teach the imminent return of Christ. The idea of the imminent return means that none of the end time events (mainly the Tribulation) can possibly occur until Jesus has returned to rapture his bride from the earth. The problem with these verses being used this way is that, in context, they are directly related to the signs the believer is to be watching for that will indicate the Lord's return is near. Three of these verses are:

- Matthew 24:42
- Matthew 25:13
- Matthew 24:44

A variety of difficulties arises once we begin to set up such a dichotomy between scriptures that speak of Christ's unexpected and imminent coming and scriptures that speak of Christ's coming being preceded by signs...[for this] reasoning to have full force...there is an absolute distinction between two sets of scriptures that speak of Christ's return. The 'second' coming, meaning the rapture, cannot be preceded by signs: 'There will be no signs for the Rapture, no warning that it is about to occur,... Yet, as anyone who peruses the doomsday literature quickly learns, the current belief that the rapture can happen at any moment is not based on a merely generic doctrine of 'imminence,' but on the signs of Christ's return supposedly being reported each day on CNN's 'Headline News' and ABC's 'World News Tonight.' ...for example, the 1948 restoration of Israel and the talk of 'peace and safety' (1 Thess. 5:3) that many believe will occur before

the rapture...[Pretrib advocates say] 'Thus it is not only possible for the Rapture to occur at any moment, as it always has been, but now it is highly probable – certainly more probable than at any time in history!'...In other words, why would Christ leave signs to indicate the nearness of His final return in glory if the Church has been raptured off the planet and there is no one around to watch for them? ... the signs Jesus says will precede His return are like birth pangs, slowly growing in intensity until the end arrives: 'Moreover, it would seem that these signs begin prior to the Rapture. Then how could the Rapture comes as a surprise? Because these signs when they begin, will by their very nature be phenomena which have always been known on the world scene: earthquakes, famines, pestilences, wars.' In other words, Jesus told us to watch for 'signs' so vague as to be virtually meaningless, leaving us without a clue as to the nearness of the rapture. But, according to [advocates of the Pretrib rapture], we know the rapture is near today because of the signs pointing to the Second Coming – but these signs are so vague and general they don't really count as 'signs' of the imminent rapture. (D, 172-174)

In the early Church, the expectation of the coming of Christ *included* the events which would attend and precede His coming. When the early Church presented an attitude of expectancy of Jesus' return, they looked for this entire complex of events to occur in this order: Antichrist, then Tribulation, then the Return of Christ. And they expected these events to occur "soon".

This is not the same thing as an imminent return of Christ.

Walvoord recognizes the importance of imminency in the Pretribulation rapture model in his book *The Rapture Question*. He writes:

For all practical purposes, abandonment of the Pretribulation return of Christ is tantamount to abandonment of the hope of His imminent return.

The Paradox of Suffering

Suffering is promised to the Church in the New Testament.

When he wrote the letters in the early chapters of Revelation, John was clearly writing to the Church, since he addressed his readers as "brothers". By that time he had already outlived the other apostles, who had all been violently executed for their faith. He begins his letter concerning the Tribulation by referring to himself as, "your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom." It seems that if the modern Western Church wants to be part of the

kingdom John is referring to, it is going to have to embrace the same kind of tribulation that John and the Church he addressed had suffered together.

I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. (Revelation 1:9, ESV)

Paul addressed the young churches of Galatia by strengthening their souls with teaching, encouraging them with words of hope to continue in the faith, but also by reminding them that the journey into the kingdom of God will include tribulations for the faithful believer:

They returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. (Acts 14:22, ESV)

Paul also said to the Church:

*if we endure, we will also reign with him;
if we deny him, he also will deny us (2 Timothy 2:12, ESV)*

*Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”
(2 Timothy 3:12, ESV)*

For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake. (Philippians 1:29, ESV)

Paul may have spoken like this to the Church, promising them trouble, persecution, and tribulation on their way into the future physical manifestation of the Kingdom of God, because the Lord had spoken similar words to Paul:

*For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.
(Acts 9:16, ESV)*

Or, Paul may have learned it from those who had traveled with Jesus and were apostles before him, because they themselves had been beaten and flogged for their faithful testimony concerning Jesus. Most of these men would eventually be executed for their faith.

Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. (Acts 5:41, ESV)



When the early Church faced persecution and death, the apostles encouraged them to remain true to the point of death. In this passage John relays a message from Jesus in 96 AD to the Church John oversaw in Smyrna of Asia:

Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. (Revelation 2:10, ESV)

Suffering was promised by Jesus.

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world. (John 16:33, ESV)

If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. (John 15:18-20, ESV)

Suffering was experienced by Jesus. His great victory over death came only after he had suffered much.

From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. (Matthew 16:21, ESV)

He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. (Mark 8:31, ESV)

Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead.’ (Luke 24:46, ESV)

What God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. (Acts 3:18, ESV)

Suffering, persecution, and tribulation was experienced by the apostles and the first century Church.



When they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. (Acts 5:40, ESV)

With far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. (2 Corinthians 11:23-27, ESV)

For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. (2 Corinthians 1:8, ESV)

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair. (2 Corinthians 4:8, ESV)

Consider this list of only a very few of those who experienced death in the early Church as martyrs for their faith - by sword, crucifixion, torture, flaying, stoning, falling, exposure, and more: James son of Zebedee, Stephen, James brother of Jesus, Peter, Paul, Mark the Evangelist, Philip, Andrew, Jude , Bartholomew , Thomas , Simon the Zealot, Fabian, Sebastian, Giovanni di Paolo, Alban, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna, Justin Martyr, Scillitan Martyrs, Perpetua and Felicity, Ptolemaeus and Lucius, Pothinus, and Blandina, Martyrs of Lyon and Vienne, Felix and Adauctus, Marcellinus and Peter, Origen, Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, Euphemia.

Many more martyrs and groups of believers could be listed throughout Church history. This list would include names of believers who were even executed by the institutional Church itself. And it is not just a phenomenon of the past. The persecution and martyrdom of Christians continues around the world today. In fact, today (July 30, 2015) the news is reporting on a story entitled, "Pope Warns of 'Genocide' As Persecution of Christians Rises Worldwide."

Now, with this background in mind, why would the Western Church think they are the only geographic area at the only period in history in the only phase of church history, where true believers could not be persecuted? And that, in fact, God's will for this modern, Western group of believers is that they have

their best life now and testify to the world the glorious message of Jesus Christ through their materialistic, luxurious, compromised lifestyles?

So consider! Is it really possible that the list of believers who suffered persecution, martyrdom and tribulation in the Western Seeker-Church phase of Christianity will be blank? Can it really possibly read something like this:

NONE
THEY WERE ALL RAPTURED BEFORE THEY SUFFERED.
AFTER ALL, THEY WERE THE BRIDE OF CHRIST!

Really?
How does that even make sense?

How does someone with that mindset even consider himself to be part of the same Church as the apostles?

Christians of the end times must learn what their brethren of the Church's earliest years knew well – how to suffer. As Saint Paul reminded young Timothy, 'All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution' (2 Timothy 3:12). God's gift of salvation in heaven does not necessarily improve one's earthly situation; it merely renders it irrelevant. 'It is of no consequence where you are in the world – you who are not of it,' Tertullian pointed out. (Reference B, 224-225)

Leonid Ouspensky described the paradox in these terms: 'The Cross is then the concrete expression of the Christian mystery, of victory by defeat, of glory by humiliation, of life by death – symbol of an omnipotent God, Who willed to become man and to die as a slave, in order to save His creature.' The paradoxes of Christianity range from the historical to the doctrinal. The Lord taught that 'the last will be first, and the first last' and Saint Paul declared that 'the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God'... The Church makes no attempt to resolve this spiritual mystery in a material fashion, or according to human logic. Instead, she opens the eyes of her children to faith and wisdom, and bestows a vision which, encompassing more than this earthly domain, reaches into heaven itself. (Reference B, 228-229)

Giving all for the faith has always meant enduring some degree of isolation, ridicule, and estrangement from the society of man. This is not an easy task, and there is always the danger of complacency and compromise

with worldliness. In apostolic times, as now, Christ called His followers to be on guard against this. (Reference B, 230)

God's Wrath is not the Same as Suffering or Tribulation

The English Bible uses the words "wrath" and "tribulation" to translate three different Greek words. In the Greek, the difference between "wrath" and "tribulation" is easy to see.

The English word "wrath" comes from the Greek words *orge* or *thumos*. The Greek meaning is not the same as *thlipsis*, a word translated into English as "tribulation". This is often noticeable even within the English text where the words are used.

Orge is translated as "wrath" and means "anger, indignation, wrath." BDAG (the (Bauer, Danker, Arndt and Gingrich Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature) describes *orge* as both "a human emotion" and, also, as "the divine reaction towards evil, not so much as an emotion as in terms of the outcome of an angry frame of mind (judgment),...but more often is to be expected in the future, as God's final reckoning with evil." Vines Dictionary explains that *orge* originally meant any "natural impulse, or desire, or disposition," but came to signify "anger" as the strongest of all passions. And, Thayer's Dictionary identifies *orge* in Biblical Greek as "anger, wrath, indignation...anger exhibited in punishing"; hence, *orge* is a word used for punishment itself. In the New Testament *orge* is attributed to God when God "stands opposed to man's disobedience, obduracy and sin, and manifests itself in punishing the same." Believers are promised to be "delivered from" the *orge* of God in Rom. 5:9; 1 Thess. 1:10 and 5:9. The anger of God is against sinners and unbelievers, not the believers who have been delivered from God's *orge*. Individuals who are saved during the Tribulation should not experience the *orge* of God, since this is what they are saved from.

Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath (*orge*) of God. (Romans 5:9, ESV)

...wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath (*orge*) to come. (1 Thessalonians 1:10, ESV)

For God has not destined us for wrath (*orge*), but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:9, ESV)

Thlipsis literally means pressing or pressure. Frequently used in a figurative sense of oppression, affliction, or tribulation. BDAG describes *thlipsis* as being rarely used outside the Biblical Greek, but when it is used in the ancient Greek outside of Scripture it is used to refer to "pressing" or the application of "pressure". *Thlipsis* is frequently used in the Septuagint (LXX, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures and used in New Testament times). *Thlipsis* is used in the New Testament in the figurative sense to refer to "oppression, affliction and tribulation." Vine's Dictionary identifies the primary meaning of *thlipsis* as "a pressing, pressure...anything which burdens the spirit." In the forty-five times *thlipsis* is used in the New Testament, it refers to believers forty-two those times. Clearly, according to the New Testament there will be *thlipsis* in the world for the follower of Jesus. There is also a time of *thlipsis* mega, or "pressure great", Great Persecution (Matthew 24:21). However, this is not "wrath".

This example clearly refers to unbelievers persecuting believers:

Then they will deliver you to tribulation (*thlipsis*) (Matthew 24:9)

This is Jesus promising the Church it will have tribulation in the world:

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation (*thlipsis*). But take heart; I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)

Here Jesus identifies the second portion of the seven-year Tribulation as the great *thlipsis*, in comparison to the earlier part referred to in Matthew 24:9, when he had earlier said, "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation (*thlipsis*) and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake."

For then there will be great tribulation (*thlipsis*), such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. (Matthew 24:21)

Thumos means "passion, passionate longing and anger, wrath, rage." *Thumos* is the fury of a state of intense anger, with the implication of passionate outbursts. Vine says, "*Orge* is less sudden in its rise than *thumos*, but more lasting in its nature. *Thumos* expresses more the inward feeling, *orge* the more active emotion. *Thumos* may issue in revenge, though it does not necessarily include it. It is characteristic that it quickly blazes up and quickly subsides, though that is not necessarily implied in each case." Thayer agrees when he writes that *thumos* can be translated as "wrath" just like the Greek word *orge*,

yet *thumos* is different since it has the meaning of “passion, angry heat, anger forthwith boiling up and soon subsiding again, (*orge* on the other hand, denotes indignation which has arisen gradually and become more settled.)” Strong’s Expanded Dictionary says, “*Orge* takes over when *thumos* has subsided and longs for revenge and desires to injure the one causing the harm.” *Thumos* is used in these verses in Revelation:

Woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath (*thumos*), because he knows that his time is short! (Revelation 12:12, ESV)

If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God’s wrath (*thumos*), poured full strength into the cup of his anger. (Revelation 14:10, ESV)

Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath (*thumos*) of God is finished. (Revelation 15:1, ESV)

One of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath (*thumos*) of God who lives forever and ever. (Revelation 15:7, ESV)

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, ‘Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath (*thumos*) of God.’ (Revelation 16:1, ESV)

There are two places in Revelation where the Greek words *thumos* and *orge* are used together to identify God’s “fierce wrath” poured out on the world.

God remembered Babylon the great, to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury (*thumos*) of his wrath (*orge*). (Revelation 16:19, ESV)

He will tread the winepress of the fury (*thumos*) of the wrath (*orge*) of God the Almighty. (Revelation 19:15, ESV)

The seven year Tribulation includes a period of persecution (*thlipsis*, “tribulation”) of the Church by the world and a period of God’s judgment (*orge*, “wrath”) on the world. The time of persecution of believers is not the same as the time of God’s wrath. This is clear for several reasons.

First, the “wrath” (*orge*) is not mentioned in Revelation until the sixth seal is



opened and the Lord appears in the sky. It is at that time the people of the world cry out, “hide us from the wrath (*orge*) of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath (*orge*) has come, and who can stand?” (Revelation 6:16-17)

The next time the word “wrath” (*orge*) is used is in Revelation 11:18 when the seventh angel blows his trumpet and those around the throne (presumably, the one in the sky that everyone can see) say, “The nations raged, but your wrath (*orge*) came.”

Second, the seven seals broken in Revelation chapter six would logically and historically be seven seals on the outside of the same scroll, not seven seals placed somewhere within the scroll to be exposed as it was unrolled. This means that the scroll contains the wrath of God, and so the seven seals are not the wrath of God itself; in fact, they are seals holding back the wrath of God. This means that the breaking of the seals, or the releasing of the Antichrist, is God allowing the full manifestation of evil in time (thus, the extreme tribulation and persecution of the Church) before his wrath on evil is revealed.

In Revelation 5:1 we see one scroll “sealed with seven seals”. When the Lamb, the only one who is worthy, breaks the first seal the Antichrist’s Tribulation activities begin. With the breaking of the last seal the outpouring of God’s wrath begins.

The believers (the saints, the Church, etc.) in the Tribulation will not face the trumpets or receive the bowls of God’s wrath, which are poured out on the unbelievers who are clearly identified in the underlined text below:

First bowl – “So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth, and harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image.” (Rev. 16:2) and “If anyone worships the beat and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.” (Rev. 14:9-10)

Second and third bowls – “Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!” (Rev. 16:5-6)

Fourth bowl – “They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the



name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory." (Rev. 16:9)

Fifth bowl – "The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds."

Sixth bowl – "They are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty...they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon." (Rev. 16:14-16)

Seventh bowl – "God remembered Babylon the great, to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath." (Rev. 16:19)

Top Ten Reasons to Consider the Presence of the Church in the Tribulation

1. The Pre-trib rapture is not explicitly taught in Scripture.
2. Early church writers (70-450 AD) teach and use Scripture to support a premillennial return of Jesus. But, they never present a rapture of the Church before the revealing of the Antichrist and the Tribulation. In fact, the early writers warned of the Tribulation and prepared people to face the Antichrist.
3. The word "meet", as used in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 when believers "meet the Lord in the air", is the word *apantesin*. *Apantesin* is used in only two other places in the New Testament, and both times it is used to refer to a group of delegates who go out to meet a dignitary and accompany him back to the place where they came from.
 - a. One example is Acts 28:15
 - b. Another is Matthew 25:6 - a parable about the Second Coming which ties the use of *apantesin* in 1 Thes. 4:17 into the Second Coming
4. A consistent sequence of events in Matthew, Paul, Revelation.
5. Laodicea (which is a representation of our modern seeker church) does not present a good reason to rapture the Church. It is more likely a reason for this church to enter the Tribulation. This church needs to come to some decisions and make some tough choices.
6. "Wrath" (*orge* or *thumos*) which refers to God's anger against sin, does not mean the same thing as "Tribulation" (*thlipsis*) which refers to the world's persecution of believers.
7. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 refers to the "assembling to meet him" on "the day of the Lord" that Paul is trying to explain to them. Here (again) the rapture

and the Second Coming seem to be the same event.

8. The "gathering" that is spoken of in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 is the same word used in Matthew 24:31 in an extremely clear reference to the Second Coming.
9. The "rebellion" (*apostasia* – "falling away, rebellion, revolt, apostasy"; usually referring to a military, political or religious switching of allegiances) of 2 Thessalonians 2:3 is the rebellion of believers falling away from the faith and switching allegiances during the Tribulation when the "man of lawlessness" is revealed.
10. If Paul had had pre-trib understanding it would have been easier for him to explain that "the day of the Lord" (or, the Tribulation) has not arrived by saying, "Look, you are the Church and you are still here! So, the Tribulation cannot be here yet." Or, if Paul doubted the Thessalonians' salvation he could at least say, "Look, the Church will not see the Tribulation. I'm an apostle of the Church. I'm still here. Next question, please."

And although not in the Top Ten, here are a few more things to consider on this topic.

- John Walvoord, who is a champion of the Pretribulation rapture model, writes in his extensive defense of the Pretribulation rapture position that "there is no single verse of Scripture that by itself clearly teaches the Pre-Trib Rapture" (*The Rapture Question*, 72).
- Many of the leaders and pillars of the protestant church were not Pretrib in their eschatology. A few examples would include names like: John Calvin, Martin Luther, George Whitefield, John Wesley, John Bunyan, Charles Spurgeon, Charles Finney, and more.
- Even Tim LaHaye acknowledges the scriptural lack of any explicit Pretribulation passages. (*No Fear of the Storm*, 188)
- Many teachings that are used to support the Pretrib rapture view are merely teachings that developed out of the preconceived assumption that Pretrib rapture teaching was correct. If a person's assumption is that the Pretrib rapture model is scriptural, then many other things can also be assumed true. These "truths" are then re-circled in the argument to be used as proofs for the Pretrib rapture position. Much of the reasoning behind arguments used to support a Pretribulation rapture is circular, and is ultimately trying to make the claim for the absolute necessity for the continuation of the belief in a Pretrib rapture system.

But ultimately, erring in the timing of the rapture theologically, is not nearly as devastating as erring in the application of the Truth. Failing to be sober, awake,

alert and watching when these things actually take place historically will have eternal repercussions at some level. History will not bow to a theological model, because when history happens it will be the Truth. History will crush all eschatological models and leave humanity in the wake of Reality.

Our modern Western educational system has trouble explaining the reality of the history that has already taken place. Why would we think the modern Western Church has any greater ability to unravel the prophecy of history yet future?

Titanic-like Theology

This generation (like Laodicea) in the Western Church of the USA is on sedatives. The Church is spiritually drugged with luxury, pleasure and self-help sermons based on a best-life-now-theology.

Adding to this stupor is the promise these believers have been given that they will avoid any kind of judgment or evaluation of their life in eternity, because they have some get-your-mansion-for-free coupon through faith in Jesus Christ. If that weren't enough to put the believers to sleep, they are also taught that there will be a prompt evacuation of all believers from earth before any eschatological conflict or tribulation persecution begins. Armed with this kind of thinking, a believer is basically free to live his life in a spiritual coma.

Paul warned the Church of Rome concerning the development and acceptance of a Titanic-like theology. Paul warned the Gentile church to "not be arrogant, but afraid" concerning their place in the program of God and to not "be ignorant of this mystery" concerning Israel. Despite the warning, it seems the Western church may have done these very things. For one, it has arrogantly overrated its place in God's divine program. For another, it has ignorantly discounted Israel and its place in fulfilling the mystery of God's plan for history.

Do not be ARROGANT, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either... (23) if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. (Romans 11:20-21)

I do not want you to be IGNORANT of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved... (Romans 11:25)



Honestly, today's Pretribulation rapture theology might just be the eschatological equivalent of the Titanic arrogance Paul warns Rome about in verses 11:20-21. Why make room for lifeboats? This eschatological model cannot fail! We hear them claim, "The Lord will not let his Church suffer!" But the fact is, he did, he has, and he is. He actually promised it would!

Every eschatological model created out of the study and speculation of man has and will fail. What if you have mis-estimated the rapture by 42-84 months? It would be a small mistake in time certainly, but a tremendously disastrous mistake for those without the faith to understand the tests and trials they are about to endure.

My purpose in this section is simple: to give you a map and a lifeboat to take along with you on your Titanic journey as a supplement to the Titanic-like faith it produces. Because, if you happen to hit an iceberg you did not see coming (due to ignorance or arrogance), you will be glad to have them.

The Antichrist comes to purify the seeker-seeking, mega, market-driven, Laodicean church by forcing every person in it to individually make a decision and a commitment to Christ. Usually, this kind of intentional growth is a life-long process, engaged as experience, age, situations, etc. force the confessing believer to either fall away or grow in his faith. This final "rapture generation", however, will have to be moved quickly to a point of decision and the production of fruit before the Lord's return. The Antichrist will cause significant growth *toward* the Son of God, or repulsion *away from* the True Son of God, Jesus the Christ. There will be no middle ground.

Signs are not given so the idle or curious can predict dates and speculate on personalities, but so believers can prepare to do battle against evil.

-Dennis Engleman, *Ultimate Things*, page 28

Christians must guard against assigning interpretations based on fallen human reason, or confidently assuming that 'Y' is impossible because 'X' has not happened yet.

-Dennis Engleman, *Ultimate Things*, page 45



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Section Seven

ISLAM: THE RELIGION OF THE ANTICHRIST AND HIS KINGDOM

Once Islamic eschatology and apocryphal literature are unraveled and systematically arranged in a chronological model there are a couple things that become very apparent. First, Islamic eschatology is similar to Judeo-Christian eschatology. Second, the major characters and main events in Islamic eschatology are most often the antithesis of those in Christian eschatology.

For example, Jesus returns in both the Christian and Muslim eschatological traditions. Both understand that Jesus returns to the earth to provide victory and deliverance from the antichrist figure. But, it does not take long to realize that the two are very different: the Christian Jesus returns to deliver the Christians and defend Jerusalem for the Jews, while the Islamic Jesus returns as a Muslim to deliver the Muslims, convert the Christians, and slaughter the Jews.

Why is this important? Why does it matter? Why would a Christian even consider taking Islamic eschatology seriously? To understand the situation, these are some questions a Christian should be asking:

- If Islamic eschatology is ultimately a contradiction of Christian doctrine, how can Islamic eschatology be taken serious by a Christian?
- If a Christian's understanding of end time events is based on the Scriptures, which are understood to be divine revelation, how can contradictory Islamic passages from the Qur'an and traditions from Hadith be considered worthy of a place in the same eschatological model as the Christian's?
- If, as Christians we accept the Scriptural portrayal of end times to be true, why would we even be interested in the Islamic version?

For me as a Christian, the answer to all these questions begins like this:

First

The Bible is prophetically accurate.

I know there are many out there who would dispute that statement. But I am not concerned. To the skeptic, the atheist, the non-believer, I say this: *"Go your way. You've had enough time and attention. God gave you freedom to think or not to think; to be wise or to be foolish. You've stated your case and made your choice. The time for apologetics is over because in your deteriorated philosophic condition of "postmodern logicalism" you do not even know if you can accept as truth what you once accepted as science and fact. Now where are you? You have gone beyond*

even the basic acknowledgement of fact. You have left reality! There is nothing left.

As Isaiah said:

Therefore hear the word of the Lord, you scoffers,...

Astonish yourselves and be astonished;

blind yourselves and be blind!

Be drunk, but not with wine;

stagger, but not with strong drink!

For the Lord has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep,

and has closed your eyes and covered your heads. (Isaiah 28:14; 29:9-10)

To the rest I say this: The world has seen the ancient prophecies concerning the Babylonian captivity, the Jewish return from exile, the rise of the four empires, the first coming of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus, the formation of the Church, and Israel's return as a nation. In my understanding of Scripture and history, the authenticity of these prophecies is perfectly defensible and their literal fulfillment is objectively provable.

Second

The faithful Muslim also believes the Qur'an and the traditions of the Hadiths are accurate. This means that a massive number of Muslims who believe their Islamic prophecy is true, will likely become very aggressive when they see their eschatological model being fulfilled. In other words, Muslims themselves will trigger their own eschatological events when the majority of a massive Muslim population come to believe they are living in the end times. In a clear example of self-fulfilling prophecy, Islam will cause its own end time scenario to begin.

The eschatology of this false religion, created in 622 AD and designed by anti-Christians, seems to have been motivated by and designed with the intentional preparation of a fuse which could be used at some point in the future to ignite the unfolding of the events of biblical prophecy.

Third

If someday these Muslim self-fulfilled prophecies do trigger the unleashing of the true ancient biblical prophecies, it will not mean that Christians are likewise causing the self-fulfillment of their own eschatological models.

Muslim eschatology mimics Christian eschatology - not the other way around. Christianity did not create these antagonistic prophecies of Islam. Christians were not involved in the development of Islam. In the beginning of Islam, like now, Christians were rejected for their testimony to the deity of Jesus Christ, the Trinity, and the authenticity of the Scriptural text. Christians, like the

Jews, were considered by the early Muslims to be infidels. And even worse, Christians were seen as polytheists requiring either conversion or elimination.

The Christian's role in the biblical model of eschatology is not to respond to Islam's attempt to bring about the end of the world by mounting a counter military campaign, but instead, to faithfully maintain a testimony for Jesus Christ and the Word of God - even to the point of death (Rev. 2:10; 6:9-11; 20:4). Our responsibility is simply to be faithful. God himself will bring the victory and overthrow wickedness - in his time. Here are God's words to his church:

Do not fear what you are about to suffer... be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. (Revelation 2:10, ESV)

I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. They cried out with a loud voice, 'O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?' Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been. (Revelation 6:9-11, ESV)

I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. (Revelation 1:9, ESV)

Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' (Revelation 14:12-13, ESV)

Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. (Revelation 20:4, ESV)

In truth, all fulfilled prophetic activity will be done by the Lord himself. And since it is actually the fulfillment of a divine promise by God, it is hardly the same thing as self-fulfilled prophecy worked by deceitful men. Do not confuse "prophecy" that is worked out by the human will of those who desire it with

the supernatural fulfillment of the promises of God recorded in the Scriptures. What we as Christians do is watch and wait. We respond in faith, not with manipulation or deception.

What we will see in the Islamic scenario will merely be deceived men acting out lies against the Truth. But behind the scenes it will be the Eternal God fulfilling his promise of salvation and deliverance from a world of sin and death as he promised in his Word. There is really no comparison between the two. One is the lies and deception of Satan; the other is the truth and promises of Jesus Christ, Son of God.

Identifying and Paralleling the Main Players in Islamic and Christian Eschatology

The list of key players can be reduced to two similar groups of three persons:

- Islamic
 - Mahdi
 - Jesus, the son of Mary
 - Dajjal
- Christian
 - Antichrist
 - False Prophet
 - Jesus, Son of God

The Mahdi

The Mahdi is the Islamic savior. He is known as the twelfth Imam. According to the Qur'an and the traditions taught in the Islamic Hadith, the Mahdi will appear and accomplish a variety of world-changing events. The list below is collected from the Qur'an and the Hadiths of Islam. These are Islamic points of teaching concerning the Mahdi. The order they are listed in here may not necessarily be the sequential order of the Mahdi's career:

- Mahdi will slaughter those who do not worship Allah
- Mahdi will lead a holy war against the world where everyone will either convert to Islam or die
- Mahdi will make a 7-year peace treaty with Rome and Israel
- Mahdi will lead a massive army
- Mahdi's army will carry black flags
- Mahdi will establish Islam as the world-dominating religion
- Mahdi will be the savior of the Muslims
- Mahdi's army will eventually go to Jerusalem to slaughter the Jews
- Mahdi will go to Jerusalem to establish his rule on the Jewish Temple Mount
- Mahdi will ride a white horse
- Mahdi will discover hidden ancient and "authentic" manuscripts of the

Christian and Jewish scriptures near the Sea of Galilee which will prove that Christianity is wrong; the current Jewish text of Scripture and the New Testament of the Church will become obsolete with this astounding archaeological find

- The Ark of the Covenant will also be found at this time near the Sea of Galilee
- Mahdi will have power over the rain, the wind and the growth of crops
- Since the Muslim calendar is mandatory for all Muslims to observe (because it is considered a divine command to use the hijra calendar with its twelve pure lunar months according to the Qur'an), the Mahdi will change the world's calendar system to universally match the Islamic hijra calendar

Jesus, the son of Mary

This is where things become most difficult, because both Christians and Muslims honor Jesus. Muslims consider Jesus a prophet sent by God and delivered by God. In the Qur'an and Hadiths Jesus is honored by God, Muhammad, and all Muslims. In fact, in the Muslim version of end times, Jesus returns to earth after the Mahdi appears. The difficulty becomes especially great when Jesus returns as a Muslim, joins the Mahdi, and converts Christians to Islam.

I hope by this time you are able to see very clearly the problems we will have in the Western Church concerning this particular manifestation of Jesus. Westerners drop the name of "Jesus" into their conversations to get the green light of approval from the Christian world. Western Christians use the name "Jesus" like a politician uses talking points, the media uses buzzwords, and a sorcerer uses incantations. Paul told us there were many "Jesuses", but Paul did not accept everybody's definition or characterization of Jesuses, the Son of God. The Western Church **must** mature biblically and learn unshakably who the true biblical Jesus really is - in contrast to the many Jesus's of pop culture who change from social crisis to social crisis, and from one cross-wearing-celebrity to the next Jesus-confessing-superstar.

The simple distinction between the Islamic "Jesus, son of Mary" and the Christian's "Jesus, Son of God" is exactly that. In Islam Jesus was merely a man, the son of Mary, who was used by God as a prophet. But in Christianity Jesus was (and is!) the eternal God, the second member of the Trinity, the Son of God who took on human flesh to die for the sins of mankind. In Islam Jesus, son of Mary, was delivered into heaven by God before the wicked Jews could kill him. But in Christianity Jesus, Son of God, was physically resurrected by God after the Jews, with the help of the Romans, fully crucified him. In Islam Jesus the man never died, but has been waiting in heaven to return to finish his ministry and life on earth as a man serving the Mahdi. In Christianity Jesus, the

Son of God who became a man, ascended into heaven after his crucifixion and resurrection to be seated at the right hand of God until he returns to earth to destroy wickedness and establish his kingdom.

Again, the most basic, simple difference is this:

Islam – Jesus, son of Mary

Christianity – Jesus, Son of God

The eschatological chart below can be confusing even for the serious Christian who understands this concept. Imagine how confusing it will be for the modern seeker whose ignorance has been reinforced by 160 years of the institutionalized theological ignorance advanced by the Western Church. For those who have been “Christianized” by the theology expressed on refrigerator magnets and bumper stickers, the leap from “Jesus is Love” and “Jesus is Tolerance” to “Jesus is a Muslim” is not all that great. To those unprepared, who are just looking to hook up and have their best life now, it will all make sense. After all, the concept that “Jesus is a Muslim” has been historically documented by 1400 years of Islamic text!

If you just took a moment to really think about how many of the world’s problems would simply become irrelevant and disappear if Jesus, the Jewish Messiah and Christian Savior, were a Muslim! Just imagine...it’s easy if you try... (Does that sound blasphemous but pop-culturally familiar?)

Here is a list of the things that will characterize the Islamic Jesus, son of Mary, when he returns:

- This Jesus will return as a Muslim
- This Jesus will lead Christians to worship Allah
- This Jesus will deny that he is the Son of God
- This Jesus will explain that he is only a man who was chosen by Allah to be a prophet - and that Muhammad is the last and greatest prophet
- This Jesus will submit to the Mahdi
- This Jesus will establish worldwide Sharia Law
- This Jesus will evangelize the world to Islam for the Mahdi
- This Jesus will correct all Christian misunderstandings and lead Christians to confess that:
 - The New Testament is wrong
 - Jesus did not die
 - Jesus is not God
 - Jesus did not rise from the dead
- This Jesus will shatter all crosses which symbolically identify places as



churches or Christian holy sites, thus converting all churches into mosques and Christian community centers into Islamic Centers

- This Jesus will kill the Dajjal (who is the Islamic version of the antichrist, but is actually the returning savior of the Christians, Jesus, the Son of God)
- This Jesus will be the Mahdi’s chief enforcer
- This Jesus will be in charge of the execution of non-Muslims (For example, when the jizya tax is abolished - a tax that allowed non-Muslims to live in Muslim lands - this Jesus will require all people to embrace Islam or die)
- This Jesus will slaughter the Jews after destroying the Dajjal

Dajjal / Al-Maseeh (*the-messiah*) / Ad-Dajjal (*the-deceiver*)

The Dajjal will appear as the deceiver of the Muslims, and is the Islamic version of the Antichrist. The Dajjal attempts to undermine Islam and lead Muslims away from the truth. Here are some concepts taken directly from the Hadiths (and some indirectly from the Qur’an) concerning Dajjal when he appears in the final days:

- Dajjal is the great deceiver
- Dajjal will be Jewish
- Dajjal will be followed by many Jews
- Dajjal will have an army of Jews
- Dajjal will ride on a magic mule which can travel very fast around the earth
- Dajjal is blind in one eye
- Dajjal will claim to be Jesus, the Son of God
- Dajjal will claim to be Deity
- Dajjal will try to stop Mahdi and Jesus, son of Mary
- Dajjal will deceive all humanity
- Dajjal will work false miracles
- Dajjal will be destroyed by Jesus, son of Mary

Islamic eschatology predicts a “Trinitarian” (but, not a divine Trinity) type of leadership that parallels the biblical prophecies of the leadership for the kingdom of the beast in Revelation.

- Islamic leadership of the kingdom of Islam set in place by the Mahdi:
 - Allah
 - Mahdi
 - Jesus
- Christian view of the leadership of the kingdom of the beast:
 - Satan
 - Antichrist (First Beast)
 - False Prophet (Second Beast)



THE ESCHATOLOGY SUPERSTARS			
ISLAMIC view		CHRISTIAN view	
the...	MAHDI (Twelfth Imam)	is the...	ANTICHRIST (First Beast, Little Horn)
	JESUS, son of Mary	is the...	FALSE PROPHET (Second Beast)
the...	DAJJAL	is...	JESUS, Son of God (Messiah)

An Islamic Antichrist

I wish to reiterate here again, that I am teaching and making possible connections with biblical references, historical events and current situations. I believe this is what Jesus and the apostles urged us to do, even commanded us to do, when they told us to be watching, to be alert and awake, to be sober, and to be not drunk. We are to be watching for the Lord’s return and comparing it to our world situation. Please understand that there is room for improvement in the model I am setting forth. In fact, there is reason enough to reject the model and the connections I am presenting since every generation and every believer is told to be watching and alert. Do not get drunk on the world system of thinking, but neither get drunk on anyone’s eschatological model. Be alert! Be watching! You need to be thinking and you need to possess enough knowledge, wisdom and insight to discern. Jesus and Paul both tell you, “Do not be deceived” and “Do not let anyone deceive you!”

That being said, I want to point out that, ever since the first appearance of Islam in 622, there have been Christians who considered Islam to be the religion of the antichrist. There have been those who watched history and studied Scripture before us that have made the same connection between the antichrist’s militant Kingdom of the Beast described in the Bible, and Islam. This view has definite historical roots in Christian interpretation of biblical eschatology.

In his book, *A Second Look at the Second Coming*, T. L. Frazier speaks of a Christian who wrote 30-40 years after the death of Muhammad. The text we are considering comes from the years 660-680 AD and was taken from a Christian document known as *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, which was written by a virtual contemporary of Muhammad (570-632).

According to Frazier, the author of *Pseudo-Methodius* considers the origin and rise of Islam to be the rise of antichrist. *Pseudo-Methodius* identifies these invaders (Muslims) as “*Ishmaelites*” and writes that they are persecuting the Church, killing priests, destroying church buildings, pillaging holy relics,

and causing many Christians to forsake the faith. For the author of *Pseudo-Methodius* in 660-680 AD, this was the rise of the antichrist, and the time was only 30 years after Muhammad had died:

The account then leaps to the seventh century, when Islam has broken out of the deserts of Arabia to conquer everything from India to Egypt and beyond. The Muslims, called ‘Ishmaelites’, persecute the Church because of the sins of the Christian people. The Ishmaelites kill priests, destroy churches, pillage holy relics, and cause many to apostatize. For Pseudo-Methodius, this time of tribulation is undoubtedly the fulfillment of 2 Thessalonians 2:3, the falling away that will eventually reveal the Antichrist, the Son of Perdition. The Ishmaelite oppressors then speak blasphemously: There is no savior for the Christians. ‘Then suddenly there will be awakened perdition and calamity.’

(Quote from *A Second Look at the Second Coming*, 54, in his comments about Pseudo-Methodius.)

John of Damascus classified Islam as merely a recent Christian heresy when he wrote in 750 AD and casually dismissed Islam in its early days as “the still prevailing superstition of the Ishmaelites, the forerunner of the antichrist” (*Encyclopedia of Christianity, Islam and Christianity*, 2.2).

During the Crusades, after Islam had reconquered Jerusalem in 1187 under the leadership of Saladin, Joachin of Fiore identified the fourth head of the Dragon in Revelation as Muhammad and the sixth head as Saladin himself. Then, in the 1190’s AD Joachin also identified the Beast that came out of the sea in Revelation 13:1. Since this beast was fatally wounded in the head, but yet lived, he believed it had to refer to Islam, which had recovered from the Crusaders’ conquering of Jerusalem and risen to retake the city from the Christians.

Islam was considered by Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley and others to be the kingdom of the antichrist - either by itself or intertwining with other powers (namely the Roman Catholic Church) to produce the antichrist.

<h1>Muslim</h1>	<p>EGYPT ASSYRIA BABYLON PERSIA GREECE ROME</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>BYZANTINE KINGDOM (Christian) May 11, 330</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>OTTOMAN EMPIRE (Muslim) May 29, 1453 until WWI Oct. 13, 1918 (Caliphate ended July 24, 1923)</p> <p>1948 - Israel returns</p> <p>2000 - Islam rises</p>	<h1>Christian</h1>
632 - Muhammad		30 AD - Jesus
		<p><u>Matthew 24:4-8</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deceivers - Wars - Nations Rise - Kingdoms Fall - Famines - Earthquakes <p>(this is not the end)</p>
<p>MAHDI APPEARS</p> <p>MAHDI makes 7 year treaty with Rome (the West) and Israel</p>	<p>7 YEAR TREATY</p> <p>"Peace" and "Security" for Israel</p>	<p>ANTICHRIST APPEARS</p> <p>ANTICHRIST makes 7 year treaty with Israel</p>

<p>MAHDI APPEARS</p> <p>MAHDI makes 7 year treaty with Rome (the West) and Israel</p> <p>MAHDI LEADS HOLY WAR to convert world to Islam</p> <p>MAHDI ESTABLISHES ISLAM AS WORLD WIDE RELIGION with an massive army of Muslims</p> <p>MAHDI CHANGE WORLD WIDE CALENDAR to Islam's Hijjah calendar with twelve 30 day months</p> <p>MAHDI WILL CONTROL RAIN, wind and crops</p> <p>MAHDI SLAUGHTERS CHRISTIANS and those who do not worship Allah</p> <p>JESUS, son of Mary, RETURNS as a MUSLIM!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus descends to Damascus • Jesus is a faithful Muslim • Jesus leads the Christians to convert to Islam • Jesus submits to the Mahdi • Jesus organizes the world conquered by Mahdi under Islamic Law • Jesus breaks all crosses and converts all churches and Christian community centers into mosques and Islamic centers • Jesus enforces Islamic Law • Jesus is the chief executioner Law breakers <p>MAHDI Will DISCOVER ANCIENT BIBLICAL SCRIPTURAL TEXTS hidden near the Sea of Galilee which historically and archaeologically prove Christianity and Judaism wrong. (Also, he finds the Ark of the Covenant!)</p>	<p>7 YEAR TREATY</p> <p>"Peace" and "Security" for Israel</p> <p style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 2px;">MAHDI = Antichrist (First Beast)</p> <p>PERSECUTION OF CHURCH</p> <p>THE REBELLION</p> <p>- many fall away</p> <p style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 2px;">JESUS, the son of Mary = False Prophet, (Second Beast)</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.2em;">3 1/2 Years</p>	<p>ANTICHRIST APPEARS</p> <p>ANTICHRIST makes 7 year treaty with Israel</p> <p>SEAL #1 Rider, Bow, White Horse, Conqueror to Conquer</p> <p>SEAL #2 Rider, Red Horse, Takes Peace from Earth, Men Killed, Large Sword</p> <p>SEAL #3 Rider, Scales, Black Horse, Economic Inflation</p> <p>SEAL #4 Rider, Pale Green Horse, Kill 25% of Earth, Sword, Famine, Plague, Beast</p> <p>FIRST BEAST</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out of the Sea • Authority of History's Empires and of Earth's Contemporary Kings (Rev. 13:1-2) • Revise Muslim Ottoman Empire of Roman Empire (Rev. 13:3-4) • Conquers Church (Rev. 13:3,4,7) • Authority over nations for 42 months (Rev. 13:5-7) • Utters Blasphemies (Rev. 13:5-8; Dan. 11:36) • Change Times and Laws (Dan. 7:25) <p>THIS CALLS FOR PATIENT ENDURANCE BY THE SAINTS (Rev. 13:10)</p> <p>SECOND BEAST</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beast out of the Earth (Rev. 13:11) • Appeared as a lamb (presented as Jesus), but spoke as a Dragon (Rev. 13:11) • Used authority of the First Beast (the Mahdi, Antichrist) (Rev. 13:12) • Led world to worship the First Beast (Mahdi, Antichrist) • Performs miracles including fire from heaven (Rev. 13:13) • Deceives the World with powerful signs (Rev. 13:14) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets up an image in Temple for worship of First Beast (Rev. 3:14-15) • Enforces Universal law of 666 to buy and sell (13:16-18) <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 0.8em;"><i>"God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie" (2 Th. 2:11)</i></p>
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MAHDI WILL BRING THE ARK OF THE COVENANT HE FOUND AT SEA OF GALILEE TO JERUSALEM

MAHDI INVADE JERUSALEM, SLAUGHTER JEWS AND ESTABLISH HIS RULE ON THE TEMPLE MOUNT

DAJJAL WILL APPEAR ON HIS MAGIC MULE,

and he will travel around the entire world at great speeds

- The Dajjal is the antichrist according to Islam eschatology (Dajjal sounds a Muslim attempt to provide some bad press concerning the Jesus Christ, Jewish Messiah, before the True Jesus returns.)
- The Dajjal is a liar who deceives Muslims
 - Dajjal is a Jew
 - He gains Jewish followers
 - He claims to be God
- Dajjal claims to be Jesus, the Son of God
 - He comes from the east
- He rides a magic mule (which operates similar to the chariot/throne of the Lord seen by Ezekiel and which appears as the Sign of the Son of Man.
 - He is blind in one eye (similar to the Zech. 11:17)
 - He performs miracles to deceive
- Dajjal attacks and surrounds Jerusalem

3 1/2 Years

ABOMINATION of DESOLATION

Covenant with Israel Broken
(Daniel 9:27)

Mahdi (Antichrist) begins major Persecution of Jews

DAJJAL = Jesus, the Son of God

"Sets himself up in the holy place"

(2 Thes. 2:5)

"Standing in the holy place the abomination that causes desolation"
(Matt. 24:15)

"In the middle of the seven he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end."
(Dan. 9:27)

SEAL #5

- Souls slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained (Rev. 6:9)
- souls beheaded by sword for their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God (Rev. 20:4)

Antichrist invades Israel (Dan. 11:41)
Antichrist pitches his tent in Jerusalem on Mount Monah, Temple Mount (Dan. 11:45)

Jews Flee Judea from Worst Persecution Ever (Matt. 24:16-26)

Jews protected in wilderness for 1,260 days (Rev. 12:1-17)

Jews protected in mountains of Ammon, Moab, Edom (or, modern Jordan and Saudi Arabia) (Dan. 11:41; Mt. 24:16; Rev. 12:6)

SEAL #6

- sun black, moon, red, stars and sky gone (Rev. 6:12-14; Matt. 24:29)

SIGN OF THE SON OF MAN

- The sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky (Mt. 24:30)
- All the nations will mourn saying, "hide us from the wrath." Every one will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, even the Jews, those who had pierced him (Mt. 24:30; Rev. 1:7; Zech 12:10,11; Rev. 6:15-17)

RAPTURE OF CHURCH

- gather the elect from four winds, from one end of heavens to the other with angels and trumpet (Matt. 24:31)
- The Lord will come down with angel and trumpet, the dead will rise and those in the church that are still alive will be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. (1 Thes. 4:15-18)
- Great multitude from out of Tribulation stood before Lord on Throne (Rev. 7:10)

JEWS ENVOIOUS OF CHURCH

a people who are not even a nation

DAJJAL WILL APPEAR ON HIS MAGIC MULE,
and he will travel around the entire world at great speeds

- The Dajjal is the antichrist according to Islam eschatology (Dajjal sounds a Muslim attempt to provide some bad press concerning the Jesus Christ, Jewish Messiah, before the True Jesus returns.)
- The Dajjal is a liar who deceives Muslims
 - Dajjal is a Jew
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- Dajjal claims to be Jesus, the Son of God
 - He comes from the east
- He rides a magic mule (which operates similar to the chariot/throne of the Lord seen by Ezekiel and which appears as the Sign of the Son of Man.
 - He is blind in one eye (similar to the Zech. 11:17)
 - He performs miracles to deceive
- Dajjal attacks and surrounds Jerusalem with his Jewish troops, but Jesus descends on the Temple Mount at the time of Muslim morning prayer, enters the mosque on the Temple Mount. After prayer Jesus leads the Muslims out of the mosque to kill Dajjal and slaughter all the Jews in Dajjal's army that surrounded Jerusalem.

MUSLIM ENDING:

JESUS, the son of Mary, descends to destroy DAJJAL (Jesus, son of God) and slaughter the Jews

SEAL #6

- sun black, moon, red, stars and sky gone (Rev. 6:12-14; Matt. 24:29)

SIGN OF THE SON OF MAN

- The sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky (Mt. 24:30)
- All the nations will mourn saying, "hide us from the wrath." Every one will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, even the Jews, those who had pierced him (Mt. 24:30; Rev. 1:7; Zech 12:10,11; Rev. 6:15-17)

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- Great multitude from out of Tribulation stood before Lord on Throne (Rev. 7:10)

JEWS ENVOIOUS OF CHURCH

a people who are not even a nation (Rm. 11:13-15; Deut. 32:21)

JEWS REPENT

a people who are not even a nation (Rm. 11:13-15; Deut. 32:21)

JEWS SEALED

a people who are not even a nation (Rev. 7:1-8)

SEVEN TRUMPETS

Burn earth, Destroy Sea and Fresh Water, Block third of light with Throne of God in Sky, Demons from Abyss, Release four angels for war, and Kingdoms of the World become Kingdoms of our Lord (Rev. 8)

JEWS MEET JESUS

on earth (Rev. 14:6-9)

SEVEN BOWLS (Rev. 15-16)

CHRISTIAN ENDING:

JESUS, the son of God, descends to destroy ANTICHRIST (MAHDI) and FALSE PROPHET (JESUS, son of Mary)

The Revived Roman Empire is Not the European Union, but a Revised Ottoman Empire

For those of us watching in the 1970's through the 1990's the eschatology battle cry was, "The European Common Market is the revived Roman Empire and the soon coming Kingdom of the Antichrist." This sentiment held to the text of scripture, lined up with current events, and preached very well. But, time has moved on and unimaginable things have occurred (and, I say, are yet to occur). So now I would like to present a possible correction that seems to me more legitimate. And, of course, this correction itself will be subject to correction as history moves forward.

Daniel's fourth beast (Daniel 2:40-44; 7:7-28) with its ten toes or ten horns appears to be the same beast who recovers from a fatal wound to the head. This passage seems to be talking about a kingdom (Revelation 13:3, 14) and includes an earthly king referred to as the little horn in Daniel (7:8, 20) and as the first beast in Revelation (13:1-10). The consistent opinion throughout Church history has been that this kingdom is the Roman Empire. This interpretation was even discussed by some Church writers before the Roman Empire had reached its demise.

For example, Irenaeus, who was a student of the disciples of the Apostle John, wrote around 175 AD the following:

For that the kingdom must be divided, and thus come to ruin, the Lord [declares when He] says: 'Every kingdom divided against itself... shall not stand.' It must be, therefore, that the kingdom, the city, and the house be divided into ten; and for this reason He has already foreshadowed the partition and divisions ... The ten toes, therefore, are these ten kings, among whom the kingdom shall be partitioned, of whom some indeed shall be strong and active, or energetic; others, again, shall be sluggish and useless, and shall not agree; as also Daniel says: 'Some part of the kingdom shall be strong, and part shall be broken from it. (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book V, chapter XXVI, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. I, page 555)

Writing in approximately 410, Augustine was concerned not only with those who were speculating concerning who the ten kings of Daniel 7 were, but also with those who were on the other extreme of disregarding biblical prophecy entirely. In response, Augustine said that both extreme groups could be deceived and misled, but Augustine himself was convinced that the prophecies regarding the ten kings related to Roman lands. He wrote:

As for the ten kings who, 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 Ramona world. (*City of God*, Book XX, ch. 23)

Instead of looking to the west into Europe for a rebuilt Rome, we should consider the historical fact that Rome originated in Italy, but later moved into the East to take Greece and the old empires of Persia and Babylon. Basically, Rome was the continuation of the Gentile dominance prophesied by Daniel and confirmed by Jesus in Luke 21:24: "They (the Jews) will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."







So, if the fourth beast is to be revived, it would be logical to expect it to be rebuilt in the area consistently dominated and ruled by the four beast kingdoms (Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome). And, this geographical area would have to include Jerusalem.

If we consider the possibility that the Roman Empire continued to exist through this extended period of time called "the age of the Gentiles" then we must accept the possibility that the fourth beast morphed from the pagan Roman Empire into the Christian Byzantine Empire (i.e., the Eastern half of the old Roman Empire), which later transitioned into a Muslim-dominated empire after the Islamic conquest of the Byzantine Empire's capital, Constantinople, in 1453 AD. This major event would have, in effect, transferred the fourth beast into the hands of Islam.


With this scenario we have identified a consistent geographical area for the return of an Empire that would be in agreement with Daniel's four kingdoms and align with Jesus' words. So here again I present the theory that Islam will revive the fourth beast. Today the stage is set for the fourth beast to recover from the fatal wound and rise as a kingdom once again. If this scenario is correct and we were to continue to witness the rising of the fourth beast, we would expect to see some form of an Islamic state rising to replace the demised Ottoman Empire which was defeated during World War I. The partitioning of the Ottoman Empire into smaller nations occurred between October 30, 1918 and November 1, 1922. This also set the stage for the formation of the modern nation of Israel.

The rising again of the fourth beast as a revived Islamic State, a wanna-be-Empire, may be detailed in Ezekiel 38-39, where God calls out from 580 BC through Ezekiel across the centuries to Gog to warn the leader of this reviving empire:

Times of the Gentiles

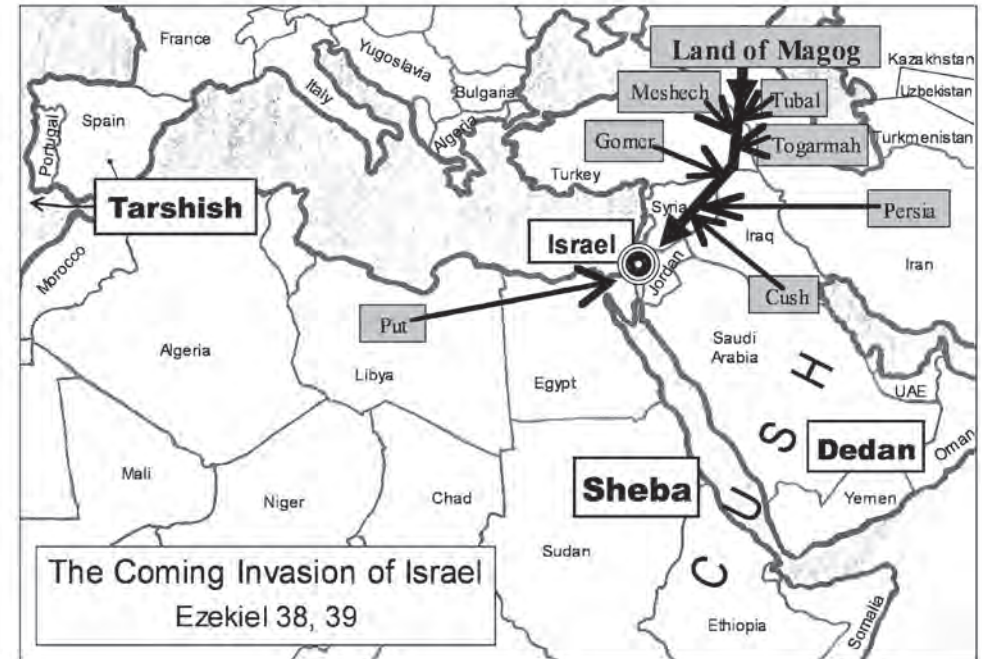
<p>Babylonian Empire</p>  <p>612 - 539 BC</p>	<p>Persian Empire</p>  <p>539 - 330 BC</p>
<p>Greece Empire</p>  <p>330 - 146 BC</p>	<p>Rome Empire</p>  <p>63 BC - 330 AD</p>
<p>Byzantine Empire</p>  <p>330 - 1453 AD</p>	<p>Ottoman Empire</p>  <p>1453 - 1922 AD</p>

Gog and Magog (Ez. 38-39)



"They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." - Lk.21:24

Be ready and keep ready, you and all your hosts that are assembled about you, and be a guard for them. After many days you will be mustered. In the latter years you will go against the land that is restored from war, the land whose people were gathered from many peoples upon the mountains of Israel, which had been a continual waste. Its people were brought out from the peoples and now dwell securely, all of them. You will advance, coming on like a storm. You will be like a cloud covering the land, you and all your hordes, and many peoples with you. (Ezekiel 38:7-9, ESV)



God will see to it that this military invasion of Israel by Gog fails, and this very event may be the incentive behind the Antichrist's seven-year peace treaty with Israel. With this seven year treaty secured with Israel, the beast would be free to leave behind the disaster of his failed invasion in the mountains of Israel with the liberty to march out against the rest of the nations to conquer the world for Islam. The Antichrist would leave Israel secure and at peace for the moment, but would still plan to return to attempt another invasion of Israel at a more convenient time. Israel will rejoice in their security and in their Temple worship, and will likely show little concern for the Islamic slaughter of the Church and other Gentiles. Israel will have overlooked Daniel's prophecy and Jesus' warning that halfway into this seven-year treaty the Antichrist will march on Jerusalem, end the sacrifices, and proclaim himself God on the Temple Mount. This is the time Jesus was referring to when he issued this prophetic warning to those in Jerusalem and Judea:

Muslim		Christian
632 - Muhammad	EGYPT ASSYRIA BABYLON PERSIA GREECE ROME BYZANTINE EMPIRE OTTOMAN EMPIRE (ends 1918) 1948 - Israel returns 2000 - Islam rises	30 AD - Jesus Matthew 24:4-8 - Deceivers - Wars - Nations Rise - Kingdoms Fall - Famines - Earthquakes (not the end)
MAHDI APPEARS MAHDI makes 7 year treaty with Rome and Israel MAHDI LEADS HOLY WAR MAHDI ESTABLISHES ISLAM AS WORLD RELIGION MAHDI CHANGES CALENDAR MAHDI CONTROLS RAIN MAHDI SLAUGHTERS CHRISTIANS JESUS son of Mary, RETURNS as a MUSLIM MAHDI DISCOVERS ANCIENT BIBLICAL TEXTS and Ark of the Covenant	7 YEAR TREATY MAHDI - Antichrist (First Beast) Peace and Security for Israel PERSECUTE CHURCH THE REBELLION - many fall away from the faith JESUS, the son of Mary = False Prophet (Second Beast) 3 1/2 Years ABOMINATION of DESOLATION Covenant with Israel Broken Mahdi (Antichrist) begins major Persecution of Jews DAJJAL = Jesus, the Son of God	ANTICHRIST APPEARS ANTICHRIST makes 7 year treaty with Israel SEAL #1 Conqueror to Conquer FIRST BEAST SEAL #2 Takes Peace Large Sword <i>THIS CALLS FOR PATIENT ENDURANCE BY THE SAINTS (Rev. 13:10)</i> SEAL #3 Economic Inflation SEAL #4 Kill 25% of Earth SECOND BEAST <i>"God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie" (2 Th. 2:11)</i> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 5px 0;">Sets himself up in the holy place Standing in the holy place. In the middle of the seven he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And... set up an abomination that causes desolation.</div> SEAL #5 Souls slain for word of God and testimony for Jesus Antichrist invades Israel and pitches his tent in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah Jews Flee Judea Jews protected in wilderness and mountains of Ammon, Moab, Edom SEAL #6 Sun black, moon red, stars and sky gone SIGN OF THE SON OF MAN RAPTURE OF CHURCH • gather the elect from four winds (Matt. 24:31) • The Lord will come down... those in the church that are still alive will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. (1 Thes. 4:15-16) • Great multitude from out of Tribulation stood before Lord on Throne (Rev. 7:10) JEWS ENVIOUS OF CHURCH JEWS REPENT JEWS SEALED SEVEN TRUMPETS JEWS MEET JESUS on earth SEVEN BOWLS
MUSLIM ENDING: JESUS, the son of Mary, descends to destroy DAJJAL (Jesus, son of God) and slaughter the Jews		CHRISTIAN ENDING: JESUS, the son of God, descends to destroy ANTICHRIST (MAHDI) and FALSE PROPHET (JESUS, son of Mary)

So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. (Matthew 24:15-21, ESV)

Section Eight

FINAL THOUGHTS

As I have stated several times, my intention in this book is not to make predictions, but to be alert to how the biblical text relates to the world around me. And in doing that, to present to the Church a possible scenario for the coming days that will hopefully act as a map through some dangerous territory.

It should come as no surprise that my biggest concern is that our Western Church is currently not sober, but is instead intoxicated by the responsibilities, worries and attractions of this temporal world. My fear is that multitudes of today's confessing Christians are going to spiritually crumble when they realize that what they thought was the Christian experience was nothing more than a cultural delusion.

The days are on the horizon when our "relevant" Western theology and the application of our "self-help" Christian faith will no longer be sufficient for our reality. When that happens I anticipate that the members of the seeker-friendly-mega-church model will flee Christianity. Multitudes will rebel against the Word of God and the Lord Jesus Christ when:

- Opposition to Christianity in our culture intensifies and an actual form of identifiable persecution breaks out
- The democracy of Western culture based in Judeo-Christian principles ultimately becomes void of its biblical influence and is no longer a government of freedom
- Islam rolls over our Western society's post-modern attitude of tolerance and our inability to identify or commit to any level of reality or truth
- The antichrist's persecution targets the Church and Christianity by forcing followers of the Word of God and Jesus Christ to renounce their faith or die as criminals of the state

In his 2005 edition of *Exploring Church History* Perry Thomas writes:

Probably the greatest of all outside challenges the [church] must face today is Muslim extremism. In many parts of the world Christians are under siege.... For many Muslims there can be no distinction between religion and politics, between private faith and public law and order... Muslims like to present themselves as peaceful in places where they are in the minority, such as America. Things are quite different in places where Islam is in the majority. Consider:
Indonesia: Muslim officials can find countless ways to block building permits for new churches.

Saudi Arabia: Foreigners cannot legally conduct Bible study or Christian worship even in their own homes.

Sudan: The air force of the Islamic regime mounts bombing raids that deliberately target Christian hospitals, schools, and even churches during worship.

Northern provinces of Nigeria: There is a determined effort to force Islamic law on everybody, Muslim or not, including penalties such as stoning, beheading, or cutting off a hand.

Pakistan: A Christian's testimony counts half as much as a Muslim's testimony in a court of law. If the Christian is female, divide that by half again into fourths. Thus, if a Muslim man were accused of raping a Christian woman, it would take the eyewitness testimony of four Christian women to convict him. (282)

Joel Richardson, in *The Islamic AntiChrist* writes:

Most American Muslims are concentrated in the larger metropolitan centers...85 percent of American converts to Islam are African American. White Christian America has not been as impacted by the phenomenon nearly as much as black Christian America has. Islam is absolutely sweeping through the inner cities...One Muslim authority estimates that by the year 2020 most American urban centers will be predominantly Muslim. (6)

Still, it is very clear that it is not only to the West that we should be looking. The greatest challenges to the world will originate elsewhere.

Several years ago, T. L. Frazier wrote concerning the rise of Islam and the decline of the Roman Empire. He pointed out that the real power of the Roman Empire was not Europe in the West, but the world of the East:

Obviously, the Roman Empire came and went hundreds of years ago. Rather than fracturing into ten kingdoms, the Roman Empire continuously shrank over the centuries as it lost territory to invaders. Nobody today can argue that it was the last world empire. The Turkish Empire [Muslim] that conquered New Rome (Constantinople) in 1453 was an empire no less powerful than Rome was at its height. Moreover, the only 'Antichrist' to appear at the Eastern Empire's demise was Sultan Mehmet II, who marched triumphantly into Hagia Sophia, the main church of the empire in Constantinople, and claimed it as a Turkish mosque.

Although the patristic interpretation of Daniel is similar in some respect to dispensationalists, there is a significant difference: the Fathers of the Church did not picture the ten kingdoms as a resurrected empire appearing hundreds of years after Rome's fall. Nor, we might add, did they see the Roman Empire as merely a 'unified' Western Europe. In fact, Western Europe was the backwater of the empire. The Eastern Mediterranean was where the strength of the empire actually lay, and this is why the Roman emperors allowed the Western Empire to fall to barbarian invaders while they consolidated their power in the East. The ten kingdoms of Daniel's prophecy would certainly have included the Eastern Empire in the thinking of the Fathers.

(*A Second Look at the Second Coming*, Conciliar Press, Ben Lomond, CA, 1999, 196)

This means that part of what we should be watching for as the End approaches is a re-established transnational caliphate in the Middle East. Some might say that ISIS fits the bill. It might. Time will tell.

In a March 2015 article in *The Atlantic* entitled "What Isis Really Wants" Graeme Wood wrote the following:

Bin Laden viewed his terrorism as a prologue to a caliphate he did not expect to see in his lifetime. ...The Islamic State, by contrast, requires territory to remain legitimate...The reality is that the Islamic State is Islamic. Very Islamic. ... But the religion preached by its most ardent followers derives from coherent and even learned interpretations of Islam...Virtually every major decision and law promulgated by the Islamic State adheres to what it calls... 'the Prophetic methodology,' which means following the prophecy and example of Muhammad, in punctilious detail...The Islamic State awaits the army of 'Rome,' whose defeat at Dabiq, Syria, will initiate the countdown to the apocalypse...Muslims who call the Islamic State un-Islamic are typically, as the Princeton scholar Bernard Haykel, the leading expert on the group's theology, told me, 'embarrassed and politically correct, with a cotton-candy view of their own religion' that neglects 'what their religion has historically and legally required.' Many denials of the Islamic State's religious nature, he said, are rooted in an 'interfaith-Christian-nonsense tradition'...when the Islamic State began enslaving people, even some of its supporters balked. Nonetheless, the caliphate has continued to embrace slavery and crucifixion without apology. 'We will conquer your Rome, break your crosses, and enslave your women,' Adnani, the spokesman, promised in one of his periodic valentines to the West. 'If we do not reach that time, then our children and grandchildren will reach it, and they will sell your sons as slaves at the slave market'...Social-media posts from the Islamic State suggest that executions

happen more or less continually...The Islamic State differs from nearly every other current jihadist movement in believing that it is written into God's script as a central character...Bin Laden and Zawahiri are from elite Sunni families who look down on this kind of speculation and think it's something the masses engage in,' says Will McCants of the Brookings Institution, who is writing a book about the Islamic State's apocalyptic thought...During the last years of the U.S. occupation of Iraq, the Islamic State's immediate founding fathers, by contrast, saw signs of the end times everywhere. They were anticipating, within a year, the arrival of the Mahdi—a messianic figure destined to lead the Muslims to victory before the end of the world. McCants says a prominent Islamist in Iraq approached bin Laden in 2008 to warn him that the group was being led by millenarians who were 'talking all the time about the Mahdi and making strategic decisions' based on when they thought the Mahdi was going to arrive. 'Al-Qaeda had to write to [these leaders] to say 'Cut it out.'...Muslims can say that slavery is not legitimate now, and that crucifixion is wrong at this historical juncture. Many say precisely this. But they cannot condemn slavery or crucifixion outright without contradicting the Qur'an and the example of the Prophet. "The only principled ground that the Islamic State's opponents could take is to say that certain core texts and traditional teachings of Islam are no longer valid," Bernard Haykel says. That really would be an act of apostasy. (Read the full article here: <http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2015/02/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>)

I will say it once again: The biggest threat to the weak, unfocused, compromised Western Church today is Islam. Biblical Christianity and Fundamental Islam are polar opposites, yet contend for the same turf. They use similar terminology, but have conflicting characterizations. The current world trend is the rise of Islam, and that if for no other reason than the sheer population increase of Muslims worldwide. Yet, the social trend of the Western world and its intoxicated Western Church is all about compromise and tolerance in an attempt to prolong a materialistic world of entertainment and ease.

This trend cannot be sustained. It will come to an end.

The only question is this: When that happens, will the Church be falling with the culture? Or standing firm with Christ?

