

The Day of the Lord, the Return of the King

Plus

Appendix: Summary of Events of the Return of Christ

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In this study, we shall consider the subject of the fundamental time period known in the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament) as '*the Day of Yahweh.*' This is a common phrase throughout the writings of the Hebrew prophets, and in the Greek Scriptures (the New Testament) it is called '*the Day of the Lord.*' In many translations though, the name Yahweh is replaced by the word LORD in capital letters throughout the Old Testament so that most Bibles read '*the Day of the Lord*' throughout. A correct understanding of this phrase is the key that opens up the door to accurately grasping what Master Jesus, and the apostles Peter and Paul, and particularly the apostle John in the book of Revelation, prophesied and taught as recorded in the NT.

As there are so many differing interpretations out there in relation to the Return of Christ and the events of the end of this age, we shall be considering this subject in quite some detail, to give as much clarity to it all as is needed. The subject of Biblical Prophecy is extremely vast, but I will try my best to avoid unnecessary sidetracking. We will be dealing with the main prophetic texts that give us clear details of this Great Day, particularly those from the NT. For those who know this subject very well, there is an [Appendix](#) to this article which gives a simple straightforward summary of the main events associated with the Return of Christ Jesus, but I would greatly encourage the reader to consider this whole article if you wish to become firmly established in the truth, particularly those of you who are influenced by Dispensationalist or Preterist doctrines.

Literally or Figuratively?

The big question for many Christians is this: Are the events of this Day to be understood quite literally or are they to be interpreted in more of an allegorical sense? This article will answer that question for you if you have ears to hear.

Now the majority of the world doesn't even believe in Christ, let alone in the fact that Jesus said He will return one day to judge the world and to save His true people. To the carnal, worldly mind, this is all complete hogwash! Nevertheless, the world still needs to hear this message and to be warned of what's to come, but it is particularly relevant to those who call themselves Christians, to those who claim to follow Jesus as their Master and Messiah, for they are the ones who have faith in these things - or at least they should.

The Apostle Peter prophesied that during these last days, many religious Christians, as well as religious Jews looking for the Messiah, would scoffingly question the return of Christ as an actual event, discarding it as a mere myth, while at the same time choosing to ignore and disbelieve the Scriptures concerning Creation and the Flood of Noah's time.

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 that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for (stored with - CV) fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

(2 Peter 3:3-7 NIV)

Peter also makes it very clear that the present heavens and earth are literally stored with fire, and the Day of the Lord will bring about the destruction of this Old Creation, as well as bringing judgment upon the ungodly and the irreverent. This appears to be referring to some kind of atomic shift which will bring this creation to a fiery end, while causing a New Creation to emerge from the ashes. The scriptures are very clear on this. The ancient world was destroyed by a cataclysmic Deluge of water, yet the present earth is reserved for destruction by fire. This Old Creation is destined to be renewed by fire, just like the mythical phoenix, which burns in a flame of fire, only to rise again from the ashes - renewed.

Now I know that there are many Christians who teach and believe that this is all figurative, and they re-interpret it to mean something quite different, for they find it difficult to believe that this kind of destruction is going to take place during Christ's return, which will inevitably result in the death of everyone on the earth at that time who doesn't belong to the kingdom of God in Christ Jesus. Only that which cannot be shaken will remain.

For some reason, those who believe that this is all allegorical have no problem believing in the divine judgments of the past, such as Noah's Flood, and Sodom and Gomorrah, and even New Testament judgments such as the horrifying destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in the first century AD, yet when it comes to the ultimate Day of the Lord, it's a different matter!

We must remember that, when it comes to this Old Creation, there are certain things that will literally occur, in the realm of the flesh, but in New Creation terms, most of Jesus' teaching *is* to be taken allegorically and spiritually. Many Bible teachers get these things mixed up, though, so that, consequently, they are not rightly dividing the Word of truth. (I myself made this mistake for many years).

One of the reasons for this largely figurative or naturalised view of the Day of the Lord is that many believe that there is going to be a coming 1000 year reign of Christ on this present earth, therefore, the events of the Second Coming have to be re-interpreted to fit this scenario. I used to see things from this 'pre-millennial' position, but I now see that this is incorrect (more on this a little later).

Now I'm not saying that these things are easy to take on board or easy to believe in, or that it's an easy subject to dwell on, because it's not, nevertheless, I will attempt to show in this article that these things are prophesied to occur - and whether we like it or not, it shall occur as God has said. It is so clear in the NT that the Apostles and early Christians looked forward to this glorious Day, and saw it as the pinnacle of all time in relation to this Old Creation, when old things will pass away and the New will begin; a Day that will lead to the resurrection and judgment of all, and the Restoration of all things. Therefore, all who claim to be followers of Jesus should also be looking forward to this Day.

For those who wish to believe otherwise, then that Day will come on them like a trap, like a thief in the night! We shall see that the warnings throughout the NT in relation to this Day, about being prepared and watching, are not there to fill in space nor are they there just for fun! And there are a number of reasons to believe that we are very near the end of this age, so this is a subject that should be taken very seriously indeed. (A few of these reasons are given in the Appendix below).

Time is Running Out

The Day is coming when the heavens and the earth will pass away, but a New Heavens and a New Earth shall replace it instead, with a New Order and a New World, governed by the Kingdom of God and His Messiah (and that's not the religion of Christendom or Judaism, by the way, or the mergence of man-made religion). It will be the glorious Day of God, when the resurrection of all mankind shall occur and everyone will appear before the judgment seat of Christ to be judged in accordance with their acts. Those who belong to the Kingdom of God as Overcomers will be granted age-abiding Life, while the rest will be sentenced to the age-abiding chastening of the Second Death.

In the meantime, the world and the Church are being seduced and deceived into a false sense of peace and security amidst a great era of blessing and grace, being surrounded by modern science and technology, and all manner of amazing advances in the modern world - a Laodicean Church settling down in Babylon with great prosperity and earthly riches. Yet even though grace greatly abounds where sin increases, which is certainly the case today, this inevitably means that the judgment will be so much heavier in the end.

Have you ever thought why there has been such a great acceleration in recent decades, in many areas of science and technology (including manned rockets into space and satellite technology, the internet, digital technology), as well as travel and leisure (mass transportation by aeroplanes and cars, a huge leisure industry), and in music and film and all manner of entertainment to a degree never experienced before (including digital technology of CD's, DVD's and MP3's, amazing nature documentaries revealing things never seen before, etc, and even the movies are becoming more prophetic, with amazing special effects that enhance the realism, particularly in supernatural/sci-fi films).

Yet all of this is happening amidst a huge population explosion, along with a world-wide interest in the earth and its environment due to mass pollution and environmental problems? How much further can humanity go with all this stuff - the good and the bad?

Along with all of this, there has been a continuing increase in evil. Why has some of history's bloodiest conflicts taken place in the past century or so, staining the earth with its wickedness? This earth has never had such a weight of sin and uncleanness and evil upon it as there is now, on such a massive scale. The earth is soaked in the blood of lawlessness. Some of the most sad and sickening perversions of humanity's wickedness against God and it's inhumanity to man are occurring daily, worldwide - and it's increasing! I am constantly amazed that this world is still here! So, why is it that all these things are happening now, all together?

The answer? Because we're nearing the end of this age and this Old Creation! So, those 'weirdo's' who go around with notice boards saying "The End is Nigh" are not far wrong after all! When this Day comes, it may be the end of things as we know it now, but it will also herald a New Beginning for all. And to think that powerful businessmen are now selling 'moon acres' to people! Believe me, there isn't any moon or planet (if it were possible to live there) that will escape what's coming very soon to this Old Creation!

So, if you're severely lacking the fear of God right now, then I would suggest that you get some Holy Fear upon you to humble you under His mighty hand, and believe the Gospel of His Son, because only then will you be able to escape the hour of trial that is going to come

upon the whole inhabited earth in the near future! Do you really think that you or I have a right to live on this earth if it wasn't for the grace and mercy of our Creator? Even the very breath you breathe is not really your own!

Now if you're feeling a little uncomfortable with this subject of the Great Day of the Lord, then you can be rest assured that you are probably a little too comfortable in this world, or you are hanging on to certain dreams and doctrines and ideas that are too worldly and fleshly, and therefore you do not want God interfering with your life or this world, in that way - because you don't want Him taking away that which you think belongs to you, your very spirit and soul! You don't want Him taking it from you - like a thief in the night! You don't want to see this world destroyed or cleansed! It's natural to think like that, but the spiritual mind will see the necessity for this world to undergo a renewal and a cleansing by fire.

So, I've got news for you - the world and everything in it belongs to the One Who purchased it all with His own blood, the Lord Jesus Christ, and He will soon return to claim that which is rightly His! He who wishes to keep his soul will lose it, while he who loses his soul for the sake of Christ will keep it for the ages to come, in glory! It's almost as though Time itself is speeding up - and running out! Perhaps that's why everyone is busily running around like headless chickens! But there's a Day coming which will stop everyone in their tracks!

Everything in this Old Creation comes to an end eventually. Everything decays, everything leads to corruption, all are dying and all will be destroyed. Nothing here lasts forever! (Boy, I'm a really happy bunny aren't I!) And that's the hard sober truth of the matter! No wonder Solomon came to the conclusion, in the book of Ecclesiastes, that 'all is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.' Everything seems to go round and round in circles and leads nowhere in the end - except to death and destruction! And the Day of the Lord will bring it all to an end very quickly, rather than as a slow process.

Yet there is Good News! If it wasn't for the Gospel of God's Son, there wouldn't be any hope at all! There's a New Creation coming - and the Return of Jesus Christ in the Day of the Lord is the awesome event that will bring it about!

So, let us now begin to look closely at what the Hebrew prophets and apostles revealed concerning this Day, beginning with the Old Testament and then continuing with the New Testament.

The Second Coming

Firstly, there are a few key words that are used in the NT to describe the Return of Christ in the Day of the Lord, so it would be good to clarify these at this point.

1. The first is the Greek word **epiphaneia**. This is usually translated as **Advent** or **Appearance**. In virtually every instance in the NT where this word is used, it is in the context of Christ's Second Advent. There is at least one instance where it is referring to His First Advent (2 Timothy 1:10). This word essentially means 'a visible appearance due to the shining of light' and apparently it was sometimes used in a special sense to describe the appearances of the Greek Gods. This is where the English word Epiphany has its roots.

2. The Greek word **erchomai** is the common word for **come** or **coming**, meaning 'to move nearer from another location.' It is used a number of times in the context of Christ's Coming at the end of this age, but it is also used of other 'comings of Christ' that were in spirit or in vision. There are three examples of this that stand out in the NT:

a) The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was a 'coming of Christ' because He promised the disciples that He and the Father would come to them and make their home in them (John 14:23).

b) Christ appeared to Paul a number of times, and the first appearance was in great glory that blinded him. These were personal 'comings of Christ.'

c) The Apostle John saw the Day of the Lord and the Coming of Christ in a spiritual vision recorded in the book of Revelation. Jesus had previously indicated that, in some form or another, John would remain alive to see His coming, though He never said that John wouldn't die or that he would actually witness it all at the end of the age (John 21:21-24). Be that as it may, John is a type of the final generation of believers who will not actually die, but will inherit immortality at Christ's Coming.

Therefore, even though there are other 'comings of Christ,' the NT clearly teaches that there is to be a Second Coming (or Advent or Appearance) of Christ at the end of this age. There are some who teach that the NT doesn't actually say anything about a Second Advent or Coming of Christ - but I would beg to differ on that one. Here's one.

But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; **and he will appear a second time**, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

(Hebrews 9:26-28 NIV)

The writer of Hebrews is saying that Jesus the Messiah is the ultimate Chief Priest who has made atonement for the people by sacrificing Himself, and thereafter He has entered heaven itself, the Holy of Holies, to appear in the very presence of God. He will yet publicly appear a second time, by coming out of the Holy of Holies, to bring salvation to those who are faithfully waiting for Him. This text is clearly talking about Christ's First Advent and His Second Advent - as public appearances to the whole world, not just to a few select individuals or groups.

3. The Greek word **parousia** is used almost exclusively in the NT to refer to the Coming or **Presence** of Christ at the end of this age. The word essentially means 'to be beside' or 'presence,' that is, it is the opposite of absence. This word is used in this way in Philippians 1:26-27. The word **parousia** is used of Paul's bodily presence with the believers, because he was planning on visiting them, and it is contrasted with the word **apousia** which was describing his bodily absence from them at that time. In his body, he was either absent from, or present with, the Philippians.

The Presence of Christ is referring to His visible, bodily return in the Day of the Lord, His Second Coming. At present He is absent from this earth, and invisible to the world, ruling the universe from the throne of Heaven. But the Day is soon coming when He will descend from heaven to be present on this earth, and He will become visible to the whole world.

4. The Greek word **apokalupsis** is used a number of times to describe the **Unveiling** or **Revelation** of Christ in the Day of the Lord. It is often rendered as revelation or manifestation. It essentially means 'that which is uncovered or made known, having been previously hidden.' The English word Apocalypse comes from this word. It is used of things and people, and particularly the uncovering (or revelation) of spiritual things. It is ultimately used of Christ's unveiling or revealing or manifestation to the whole world at the end of this age.

It is also used in Romans 8:19 to describe 'the unveiling of the sons of God' which shall also occur at the time of Christ's Unveiling. The book of Revelation is just that - the revealing or uncovering or unveiling of Jesus Christ.

All of these words mentioned above are used to describe the ultimate Coming of Christ Jesus to this earth in the Day of the Lord (also known as the Day of God) - Christ's Second Advent, His Revelation, His Coming in power and great glory at the end of this age to judge the world and to establish a New Creation.

The Millennium Issue

Now for those of you who are really familiar with the Scriptures, you may be asking at this point, "What about the 1000 years of Revelation 20?" So before we continue, let me say a few things about the Millennium.

One of the most prevalent prophetic viewpoints is that of Premillennialism, which believes that the 1000 years will commence quite literally when Christ returns at the end of this age. Therefore, it is believed Christ comes before (pre) the 1000 years (millennium). There are many differing interpretations as to what form the kingdom will take during the 1000 years. Some believe it will be a kingdom ruled from Jerusalem in Judah with Israel as the head nation, while others believe it will be the Church Overcomers who will reign over this earth, changing the world system in the process.

For many years, I was blinded by this belief of a literal 1000 years to come due to the teaching of Dispensationalism. I say blinded because I strongly believe that all of the Biblical and historical evidence leads me to the conclusion that Premillennialism is incorrect. Think about this for awhile.

The apostles and the early church knew nothing about a coming 1000 years from a biblical perspective. It is not clearly found anywhere in the Bible - only in Revelation 20. The best historical evidence that we have tells us that the vision of Revelation was given to John in the early to mid 90's AD - and this was long after Peter, Paul, James and some of the other apostles had died! Peter and Paul didn't write anything about a coming 1000 year Reign that is said to occur in the age to come. Even John was only recording what he saw and heard in the vision. We are not given any biblical record of how he interpreted it.

The truth of the matter is this. If we piece together all of the prophetic details concerning the Return of Christ at the end of this age in the ultimate Day of the Lord, we will find that the

resurrection and judgment of all mankind will take place at this time, and that the present heavens and earth will be destroyed by fire. This Old Creation will pass away and a New Creation will arise in its place. Therefore to talk of a literal 1000 year Reign on this present earth *after* Christ returns, *before* there's a New Creation, is totally incorrect, and just doesn't make any clear biblical sense.

Also, one of the hardest things to accept from Revelation 20 is the mention of Satan being set free to deceive the nations again at the end of the 1000 year kingdom! Every other passage that talks of the coming of the Kingdom of Christ in power and glory views Christ as being victorious over Satan and the world system, and beginning a full restoration of all things. So how could Satan be allowed to cause a mass rebellion, yet again, *after* Jesus has been reigning for 1000 years - which then results in His enemies being destroyed by fire from above, again? It just doesn't make sense.

In fact, it is only when we add Revelation 20 into the picture that things seem to get contradictory, but if we bear in mind that Revelation is a supernatural vision containing a number of smaller visions wrapped into one, that are full of signs, symbols and figures of speech, which are primarily revealing things that have happened or are happening during this present Church Era, and a few things that are still to come - then all becomes clear.

I strongly believe that we are already in the era of Satan's release, after the symbolical 1000 years, in which he is luring the world back to its roots of Babylonian paganism and outright lawlessness, in what some would call a post-Christian era. It is also not a coincidence that the false, worldly Church of Rome ruled for a round period of 1000 years, seeking to counterfeit the true rule of Christ from above.

The truth of the matter is that the early church was Amillennial in their beliefs. So if you are presently influenced by Premillennialism, then I strongly urge you to lay that belief aside for now, as well as putting Revelation 20 to one side for now, and then read the following with an open mind, diligently searching the Scriptures to see if what I say is true. Seek the Lord for truth and you will find it. If you wish to look into these things further, then check out the section [The Great Prophetic Plan Revealed](#), particularly the [Introduction to Prophetic Studies](#).

Now let us consider the Day of the Lord.

A Period of Judgment and Wrath

The phrase 'the Day of Yahweh' is essentially describing the period of time when the Creator, revealed as Yahweh, the God of Israel, severely disciplines and judges His people Israel, and also the surrounding nations, with great wrath and power. Biblical prophecy is full of succeeding patterns and cycles that are leading to an ultimate fulfillment, and this applies particularly to the Day of Yahweh.

There have actually been many Day's of Yahweh in the past history of the nation of Israel and the nations of the world, notably during the Assyrian invasion and captivity in the 8th Century BC; the Babylonian invasion and captivity in the 6th Century BC; and in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans during the Jewish War of 66-70 AD.

It is the Day or Era when God judges certain kingdoms, nations and empires of the world through war, plague and calamity, usually by using other nations to accomplish this, as well as

using forces of nature. It is essentially God's control of, and judgment upon, the nations and empires of man, causing either their rise or their fall. It is also a time when His people are judged, whether it be ancient Israel or the Christian Church.

This Day usually involves destruction of people and cities, and the history of the empire of Babylon is the foremost example in Scripture of this Day of wrath, vengeance and destruction, and God's ultimate sovereignty over all nations. The vision of Revelation in the NT speaks of a Secret (or Mystery) Babylon which shall ultimately fall at the end of this age. For further study, see [Who is Secret Babylon the Great?](#)

There have also been many incidents of God's judgments upon His own people through various plagues and divine signs. Whether the instrument of divine judgment is human or otherwise, God is the ultimate source of these displays of power, often using His angelic forces as tools of judgment. A basic reading of portions of the OT will make this evident. It has to be admitted that many of these 'historical' judgments on the surface of things appear to be natural occurrences brought about by man or nature. The issue is whether one truly believes that these things are really divine or not. The predictions of the Hebrew prophets make it evident that these things were truly heaven-sent, but unbelief can still reign supreme in some people's hearts even in the face of such divine evidence.

Nevertheless, on closer examination of many of the prophecies concerning the Day of Yahweh, it is evident that there is still to be a future *ultimate* Day of the Lord - and that Day will be unmistakably full of supernatural occurrences that no one will deny! In that Day, which shall be brief, God will deal with humanity in His wrath and righteous anger, and during this time Israel and Christendom will receive their final judgment, and all of the nations will be directly judged by God in His indignation for their lawlessness and injustice. This judgment will ultimately occur through the Messiah returning to the atmosphere of this earth to reclaim His creation, for Him to begin restoring it all once it has been cleansed by fire.

This will be the era when God will severely judge the whole world in His indignation to show humanity His power and righteousness, and to crush the ripened wickedness and rebellion of mankind. Yet even the wrath of God is rooted in His love and mercy for us all, and ultimately He will fight for the oppressed, the weak, the sick, the afflicted, and the victims of all injustice who will look to Him as their King. He will emerge as the world's true Hero and Champion - although for the majority of the world, He will cause them much grief and anger, wailing and gnashing of teeth, because the chastening of their age-abiding judgment will begin. Yet even this will be for the ultimate benefit of mankind eventually.

The New Testament reveals that this Day of the Lord is the 'Day of the Lord Jesus Christ,' the Day when He returns in power and great glory, also known as His Second Advent. This Day will usher in a New Creation through the fire of God's wrath. It will also be the time when the Body of Christ Ecclesia (or true Church), the sons of God, will be delivered and glorified, assembled with their Head to receive their spiritual allotment as rulers of the heavens and the earth. These truths or secrets concerning the Bride/Body of Christ, and the present administration of Grace, were primarily revealed through Jesus and Paul.

It must be noted, though, that the Day of the Lord, the Return of Christ, will include a number of events that are associated with it, such as the Resurrection and the great Judgment Day. These things, and those of the New Creation that will follow, are considered in greater detail in other articles, so in this article I'll try and stick with those details that are concerned

with the actual end of this age and of this Old Creation, rather than that which follows - even though it *all* belongs to the ultimate Day of the Lord.

The Latter Days

There is also another common term that keeps popping up throughout the prophets and that is '*the latter days*' (or '*the last days*'). This is essentially describing the era of the promised Messiah, particularly in relation to Christ's First Coming, and the ending of the Old Covenant system of the Law, along with the end of ancient Israel's position as God's chosen nation according to the flesh. This period was also called '**the era of the end**' or '**the time of the end**' (and this is very much used in Daniel).

This term 'the last days' can also be applied to the whole of this present age, between the First and Second Comings of Christ, of which the exact duration is unknown. It is true to say that the believers of Christ in the First Century were in the beginning of the last days, and there wasn't any indication as to how long it would be before the conclusion of the age, when Christ shall return. So, in effect, there are two 'time of the ends,' one relating to Christ's First Advent, and the other relating to His Second Advent.

Many of the first century Christians believed that Jesus would return in their lifetime, even though the prophetic details made it obvious that that wouldn't happen, as there were certain things that needed to occur first - and little did they know that the last days would be extended about twenty centuries! This was due to a new shift in the plan of God, which He later revealed in fullness through the apostle Paul. Yet over the centuries, many students of prophecy have observed that certain things needed to be in place before the conclusion of the age can occur. Most of these things are now past, yet over the past century in particular, the 'props' have been moving quite rapidly into place for the final showdown on the stage of the universe. We are most certainly in the final years of the last days!

Jesus said to the unbelieving generation of His day,

'You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky (*concerning the weather*), yet you cannot interpret the signs of the present time.'

(Luke 12:56 & Matthew 16:3b NIV)

It is the same today. There are many within Christendom who cannot see the spiritual 'signs' of the present time. But the hour is very near!

So let us now take a closer look at some of these prophecies and see what has been revealed concerning this time period. **But be warned!** This is not the most pleasant of subjects. There is a lot of destruction described in these prophecies that is directly attributed to God Himself. Now this appears to be contrary to the acts of a Father of Love, and it is very hard for us to understand why God has to use such severe methods, both in the past, and often in the present, and also in the future. Yet these methods are only related to this Old Creation.

God knows the heart of humanity and the seeds of corruption within it, and He deals with us accordingly. Ultimately, He has a grand plan for ALL of His creatures, which will eventuate in their blessing, yet His wrath and His judgments are a strange part of that plan. **But**

contrary to what is commonly taught and believed by many, these judgments are *not* the end result. This *must* be borne in mind when studying this subject if we are to arrive at an accurate understanding of the heart of God.

There is a battle raging between righteousness and wickedness, truth and error, love and hate, light and darkness, that goes beyond this planet alone - and the Father of all will eventually have the victory. So the Day of the Lord is an essential part of Scripture that shouldn't be ignored. It definitely has its place in the plan, and it *will* occur in the very near future. It's where everything is heading!

So let us begin by stepping back in time, to around the 8th century BC, to the writings of some of the Hebrew prophets.

The Prophet Joel

The prophet **Isaiah** was given the most details on the Day of Yahweh, but **Joel** and **Amos** were most probably the first to mention this era. They ministered around 780-750 BC, and Isaiah ministered sometime during the period of 767-687 BC. Firstly, let us look through Joel 2:1- 3:21, which contains some of the key characteristics and facts concerning this unique time period.

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, **for the day of the LORD is coming**. It is close at hand- a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and mighty army comes, such as never was of old nor ever will be in ages to come (*And after it, it shall not be again, unto years of generation after generation - CV*).

(2:1-2 NIV)

Before them the earth shakes, the sky trembles, the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars no longer shine...**The day of the LORD is great**; it is dreadful. Who can endure it?

(2:10-11 NIV)

'Then Yahweh will be jealous for His land, and He will spare His people...I will not make you a reproach among the nations any more. The northerner (*the invaders from the north*) I will put far off from you, and I will expel him to an arid land and a desolation...

And it comes afterward, I shall pour out My Spirit on all flesh...In those days I shall pour out My Spirit. And I will give miracles in the heavens above, and signs on the earth, blood and fire and pillars of smoke. **The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Day of Yahweh, the great and fearful day. And it comes that everyone who calls on the name of Yahweh shall escape**. For in mount

Zion and in Jerusalem, deliverance shall come to be, just as Yahweh says; and among the survivors are those whom Yahweh is calling.

(2:18-20, 28-32 CV)

These texts, which contain a lot of hyperbole (that is, exaggerated figures of speech), were essentially prophesying the then future invasions of the Assyrians and the Babylonians, and even the Seleucids under Antiochus IV Epiphanes. All of these armies successively invaded Israel from the North, causing immense destruction in the process. Not only were these Days of Judgment for Israel and Jerusalem, but they were also days of judgment for the nations in general. The rise of the Babylonian Empire under Nebuchadnezzar in the late 7th century BC was unlike anything that had occurred before in the history of the world. It became the greatest and most powerful Empire of the ancient world. It's no wonder that God refers to this empire as a 'head of gold' in Daniel 2.

It wasn't until the days of the Roman Empire that such a mighty force ruled the whole world again. (Even though Babylon was succeeded by the Medo-Persian and Greek Empires respectively, Rome exceeded them all in power and extent). A number of these empires, and their subsequent rise to power to dominate the Middle East, are being referred to in these prophecies of the Day of the Lord.

Nevertheless, a close examination of these passages will reveal that some of these details, if taken more literally, have not as yet been fulfilled, as they have to do with the end of this age and the return of the Messiah to fully manifest the kingdom of God. The *ultimate* Day of Yahweh has to occur at the end of this present age with the return of the Messiah. This becomes very evident when all of the relevant Hebrew texts pertaining to the Day of the Lord are read. Then we find that it is further confirmed in the New Testament. Jesus Himself alluded to some of these Hebrew texts in His teaching about His glorious Advent and Presence and Unveiling (that is, His Coming or Second Advent), which shall occur at the end of this age.

Although we shall be looking at the Day of the Lord in the NT a little later, it would be appropriate for us now to briefly examine some passages in the book of Acts where a quote from the Prophet Joel is given. Due to the fact that the apostle **Peter** quoted Joel 2:28-32 on that renowned Day of Pentecost in 33 AD (Acts 2:16-21), let us see what Peter had to say about it.

The Promised Holy Spirit

Some of the Hebrew prophets had prophesied the pouring out of the Spirit of God upon the people, and this was also a promised blessing contained in the New Covenant (see Joel 2:28-29; Ezekiel 39:29; Isaiah 32:15; 44:3-4; 59:21). The apostles had also been given the promise by **Jesus** that after His departure the Holy Spirit would come on them for power, so that, as His deputies, they could proclaim the message of the New Covenant with signs and miracles. This evangelistic work was to be done during the time of Israel's probation, and it would eventually go out to all nations (John 7:37-39; 14:25-26; 15:5-15; Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:4-5).

This coming of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled in a powerful way at the feast of Pentecost while the small group of about 120 disciples were sitting in the temple courts. It caused quite a

stir amongst the many Jews and proselytes from around the world who were in Jerusalem for the feast (Acts 2:1-41). Here is what Peter quoted on that day.

"No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

" In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' "

(Acts 2:16-21 NIV)

By quoting from Joel, Peter was declaring to the people in Jerusalem that the coming of the Holy Spirit on the small group of apostles and disciples of Jesus, to empower them as Christ's kingdom administrators, was the fulfillment of the pouring out of the Spirit on all flesh, prophesied by Joel. Up to that point in time, only chosen individuals, particularly prophets, priests and kings, were blessed with an anointing of the Holy Spirit. But through the promise of the New Covenant, the blessing was for all Israel and also for the believers of the nations, both male and female.

Peter was also reminding them that the coming of the Day of Yahweh would involve judgment for them as a nation (in blood, fire and billows of smoke), *before* the blessing of the Spirit could remain with them in the fullness of the kingdom (at the coming of the Day of the Lord), because judgment begins from the house of God and moves outward (1 Peter 4:17; Acts 2:40). Yet incredibly, all these things were fulfilled in the First Century AD, *before* the great Day of the Lord comes, as Joel had prophesied.

A number of miracles or wonders had occurred in the sky and on the earth in connection with Christ's birth, death and resurrection, and most of these are recorded in the Gospel accounts. Even the sun was darkened, and the moon was turned blood red, on the day of Jesus' crucifixion, on 3rd April 33 AD. This was due to a supernatural darkness in the afternoon, and a lunar eclipse later. (This lunar eclipse is recorded in the book **Solar and Lunar Eclipses of the Ancient Near East from 3000 BC to 0** by Manfred Kudlek and Erich H. Mickler. I'm indebted to Stephen Jones for this information). These things were accompanied by earthquakes as well.

Then during the era of the Roman/Jewish War in 66-70 AD, there were many great signs from heaven and fearful events, just as Jesus had predicted in Luke 21:11, along with the 'blood, fire and pillars of smoke' of Jerusalem's destruction. The fulfillment of all of these things are recorded in the writings of Josephus and others.

On another day, Peter said to those in Jerusalem

'Repent, then, and turn about for the erasure of your sins, so that **seasons of refreshing** should be coming from the face of the Lord, and He should dispatch the One fixed upon before for you, Christ Jesus, **Whom heaven must indeed receive until the restoration of all which God speaks through the mouth of His holy prophets** who are from the eon.'

(Acts 3:19-21 CV).

So we can see here that Peter and the other apostles believed that seasons of spiritual refreshment would come to the spiritual Israel of God before Christ's return, manifesting as former and latter rains, as the gospel goes out to all nations. The full manifestation of the Messianic kingdom and the spiritual blessings that will flow throughout the whole earth is called '*the restoration of all things*,' because the whole of creation shall be restored to its former beauty, and much more beyond that, in a New Creation.

In fact, in his second letter to the Jewish believers, Peter confirms the truth revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures, that the Day of the Lord begins with the wrath of God coming suddenly upon the world like a thief during the return of the Messiah. (We shall look at this in more detail later).

'Yet the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word (*of God*), are **stored with fire**, being kept for the day of the judging and destruction of irreverent men...the Lord is not tardy as to the promise...**Now the Day of the Lord will be arriving as a thief, in which the heavens shall be passing by** with a booming noise, yet the elements shall be dissolved by combustion, and the earth and the works in it shall be found.'

(2 Peter 3:7, 9-10 CV)

At present, this is 'Man's day' where humanity gets the opportunity to show its complete inadequacy in governing itself! During this era, God is calling out a people to become His sons to rule in the age to come as a heavenly, spiritual Israel. **But the 'Lord's Day' is coming soon (and in some respects, it is already here, in spirit), when God will show forth His power and justice through His Son, Christ Jesus.**

The Secret Interval

It is also worth mentioning at this point that in the Hebrew prophets, details of the two portraits or 'comings' of the Messiah were sometimes revealed within the same passage, without any indication in the text itself that there would be a gap of numerous centuries intervening between the two appearances.

One such example is Isaiah 61:1-2, which says,

'The Spirit of My Lord Yahweh is on Me, because Yahweh anoints Me to bear tidings to the humble. He sends Me to bind up the broken hearted, to herald to captives, liberty, and, to the blind, the unclosing of the eyes, and, to the bound, to take the jubilee, **to herald an acceptable year for Yahweh, and a day of vengeance for our Elohim (God).**' (CV)

Now Jesus quoted this prophecy in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:16-21), **but He left out the last part of the sentence concerning the 'day of vengeance'!** He then said to the people, *'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'* He could not have said this if He had read out the part on *'the day of vengeance,'* which is the Day of the Lord! This prophecy, particularly the *'day of vengeance,'* will be completely fulfilled at His return, often referred to as the Second Coming, although it did have a fulfillment in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

But take note: there is a gap of indefinite duration between these two appearances of the Messiah. The NT makes this abundantly clear. This *must* be borne in mind when piecing together the various details of prophecy. Although there are many Bible teachers today who deny these plain facts, it is clear that there *are* invisible gaps in the prophecies, and there *is* a 'parenthesis' between the two comings of the Messiah Jesus.

It is true that there can be spiritual comings of Christ, as we learned earlier, and Pentecost in 33 AD was one of them, when the Spirit of Christ and of God came to dwell in the figurative Temple that is His people, but this was not the prophesied return of Christ in power and great glory in the ultimate Day of the Lord. Right now, Christ Himself is absent from the earth after having ascended into heaven, and He is now dwelling in the heavens, in the spirit realm, but one day soon He will descend from heaven and be present for all to see.

It had been intimated in the Hebrew prophets that the Messiah would return to the celestial world for a time (i.e. go to heaven), and then He would later return to the earth to appear a *second* time (Psalm 110:1; Acts 2:33-36; Matthew 22:41-45; Hebrews 9:28). This is what Peter was confirming above when he said,

'...Whom heaven must indeed receive until the restoration of all which God speaks through the mouth of His holy prophets...'

The time is quickly approaching when this restoration shall finally occur.

The Valley of Judgment

Now let us briefly return to the prophet Joel, continuing in Joel Chapter 3.

"In those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will enter into judgment against them concerning my inheritance, my people Israel, for they scattered my people among the nations and divided up my land. They cast lots for my people and traded boys for prostitutes; they sold girls for wine that they might drink.

(3:1-3 NIV)

"Let the nations be roused; let them advance into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the nations on every side. Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, trample the grapes, for the winepress is full and the vats overflow—so great is their wickedness!" Multitudes, multitudes

in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.

The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine. The LORD will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem; **the earth and the sky will tremble.** But the LORD will be a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel.

(3:12-16 NIV)

So here we are given details of the judgment of the nations, which was to occur in a war over Israel and its land, accompanied by huge disruptions in the earth and in the heavens. Notice that the reason for this judgment was due to the evil of the nations, and its arrogant treatment of God's people and His land - taking them captive and mistreating them.

Jehoshaphat was a famous king of Judah and in 2 Chronicles 20 we have the record of a famous battle that Yahweh won for him. There was a valley near to Jerusalem called the Valley of Beracah where Jehoshaphat assembled the people to praise Yahweh for His victory. It is probable that the '*valley of Jehoshaphat*' spoken of in the above prophecy is referring to this valley somewhere outside Jerusalem.

This text is essentially describing the judgment of all the nations in the Middle East, particularly Babylon, for their mistreatment of God's people, Israel, and His land. The judgment is pictured graphically as divine wrath trampling the grapes in a winepress. Even the sun, moon and stars are said to be darkened by this judgment of God. This could be taken figuratively as a period of darkness, or more literally as describing the darkness caused by clouds of smoke from the destruction of war. This Day will cause the earth and the heavens (or sky) to shake due to God's wrath. This can be understood as literal earthquakes or the ground shaking due to the immense armies marching (and riding) to battle.

Now these things were to occur, or at least they were to begin to occur, after the restoration of Israel from the Babylonian Captivity (3:1). These things were also prophesied in Zechariah 14 and Ezekiel 38-39, and virtually all of the prophets spoke of judgment coming upon the various nations and kingdoms of the world, particularly in relation to Israel and Jerusalem.

History has proven the accuracy of their words, as all the nations of the East, beginning with Babylon, as well as those of the West, received the wrath of God. They received it as one kingdom conquered another; beginning with Babylon, then the subsequent Medo-Persian Empire, then the Greek Empire, and then the Seleucid Empire (particularly under Antiochus IV Epiphanes), and then the Roman Empire, when many battles took place around Jerusalem and the valley of Jehoshaphat.

All of these Empires, and the nations that composed their armies, were ultimately judged and destroyed by the divine hand of the King of all kings. And this has continued to be the case since the time of the breakup of the ancient Roman Empire in the 5th century AD. The fall and rise of all nations and kingdoms are in the hands of the true Sovereign of the world - Jesus Christ, though this is hidden from the majority. Yet the time is coming when He will truly reveal Himself as such.

Be that as it may, these texts are ultimately describing the wrath and judgment of the ultimate Day of the Lord. The name **Jehoshaphat** means 'Jehovah judges,' and 'the valley of decision' is the valley of judgment. It is ultimately speaking of the time when God will judge all nations (the whole world), who are symbolised as Secret Babylon the Great, in the great Day of the Lord. These figures of grapes being trampled in the winepress of the wrath of God, which are also used by the prophet Isaiah, are also mentioned in the vision of Revelation (Revelation 14:17-20; 19:15).

They are ultimately metaphors for the process of judgment that will be experienced by those in the Second Death in the New Creation - being crushed by the rod (or feet) of divine chastening outside the New Jerusalem (the inheritance of the kingdom of God). Yet in relation to this Old Creation, they can also be describing the very real bloody destruction of armies that have dared to make a stand against the true King of kings - including the massacres that were brought upon the blasphemous armies of Christendom over the centuries. When one reads about the Crusades of the Middle Ages, particularly the battles around Jerusalem, the words of these prophecies take on another level of fulfillment in relation to the spiritual Israel of God.

The Prophet Isaiah and the Day of Fire

Now let us briefly turn to a few key passages on the Day of Yahweh from the writings of the prophet **Isaiah**. He is the one who wrote the most about this awesome Day, and his writings contain some of the greatest details about the Messiah. **Take careful note of these texts, because it was primarily from these words of Isaiah that Jesus gave details about His return at the end of the age.**

Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty. Because of this, all hands will go limp, every man's heart will melt. Terror will seize them, pain and anguish will grip them; they will writhe like a woman in labor. They will look aghast at each other, their faces aflame.

See, the day of the LORD is coming—a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger—to make the land (*or earth*) desolate and destroy the sinners within it.

The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless.

I will make man scarcer than pure gold, more rare than the gold of Ophir. Therefore I will make the heavens tremble; and the earth will shake from its place at the wrath of the LORD Almighty, in the day of his burning anger.

(Isaiah 13:6-13 NIV)

The Day of the Lord, The Return of the King

Come near, you nations, and listen; pay attention, you peoples! Let the earth hear, and all that is in it, the world, and all that comes out of it! The LORD is angry with all nations; his wrath is upon all their armies. He will totally destroy them, he will give them over to slaughter. Their slain will be thrown out, their dead bodies will send up a stench; the mountains will be soaked with their blood.

All the stars of the heavens will be dissolved and the sky rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shriveled figs from the fig tree...

...For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah
and a great slaughter in Edom...

...For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of retribution, to uphold Zion's cause...

...there also the falcons (*vultures*) will gather...

(Isaiah 34:1-4, 6, 8, 15 NIV)

"I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing. **For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redemption has come.**"

(Isaiah 63:3-4 NIV)

See, the LORD is coming with fire, and his chariots are like a whirlwind; he will bring down his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. **For with fire and with his sword the LORD will execute judgment upon all men, and many will be those slain by the LORD...**

"As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me," declares the LORD, "so will your name and descendants endure. From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me," says the LORD. "And they will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind."

(Isaiah 66:15-16, 22-24 NIV)

There are many similarities here to that which we have considered in the writings of Joel. Some of these things have been fulfilled a number of times in history, as explained earlier. In Old Testament terms, a number of these things have happened in a very literal manner in relation to Israel and the surrounding nations. Isaiah chapters 34 and 63, in their original OT context, had to do with the judgment that would befall the land and nation of Edom (that is, Esau's descendants) in the subsequent centuries.

Yet the ultimate NT meaning concerns the judgment that is coming upon all nations in the Day of the Lord Jesus Christ. The name **Edom** comes from the Hebrew root for **Adam** meaning *red* or *ruddy*, and this is a figure for ALL mankind. Esau, as opposed to his brother Jacob/Israel, is also a type of the wicked, unbelieving world, including the religious hypocrites.

As we shall see shortly, Jesus used certain words and phrases from these texts, especially Isaiah 34, when teaching about His return in power and glory. Any good Jew who studied the Scriptures and virtually knew them off by heart would've made the connection with these ancient prophecies. The same should apply to any good student of the Scriptures who follows the Messiah.

The main points of these texts are prophesying a Day when God will judge the whole earth, the whole of humanity, in His righteous wrath and fury and vengeance, because of the evil and injustice and wickedness of the nations, yet He will save His true people, the heavenly Israel of God, as He contends for His heavenly Zion, the New Jerusalem.

The majority of humanity will be destroyed, and the heavens and the earth will be shaken like never before, while the sun is darkened and the moon in turn goes dark, and the stars will dissolve and fall like leaves from a tree. All of this will occur by heavenly fire. Yet following this era of Judgment, there will arise a New Heavens and a New Earth, a Restoration of all things, which is the full manifestation of the Kingdom of God upon the earth.

The prophet **Jeremiah** also had something to say about this ultimate Day of the Lord.

"Now prophesy all these words against them and say to them: "The LORD will roar from on high; he will thunder from his holy dwelling and roar mightily against his land. He will shout like those who tread the grapes, shout against all who live on the earth.

The tumult will resound to the ends of the earth, for the LORD will bring charges against the nations; he will bring judgment on all mankind and put the wicked to the sword," declares the LORD...

...At that time those slain by the LORD will be everywhere—from one end of the earth to the other. They will not be mourned or gathered up or buried, but will be like refuse lying on the ground."

(Jeremiah 25:30-31, 33 NIV)

A Quick OT Summary

Now let us just pause for a moment and briefly summarise the overall picture that we have so far, focusing on the main points that are common to these OT prophecies.

- The ultimate Day of the Lord will be a time of wrath, vengeance and judgment upon the whole world
- There will be supernatural signs in the sky, and the sun will be darkened, and subsequently the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be blotted out
- It will include huge convulsions on the earth and the sea, the earth being moved off its axis, causing great turmoil on the land and sea. And the sun, moon and stars of the heavens will be shaken and will dissolve, resulting in utter desolation
- All of this will be accompanied by fire from heaven, which will cause disintegration of the earth, as well as the sky or heavens, and the earth will be full of the bodies of those slain by God's wrath
- It is the awesome event of the Return of the Messiah (as Yahweh Himself) to rescue His people and to fully manifest the kingdom of God in a New Creation. From the ashes will emerge a New Heaven and a New Earth, and (the New) Jerusalem shall be created as a delight to God

Now we must take careful note of these things because we will come back to them in a little while when we consider the NT prophecies of this Great Day, the Day of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Day of Yahweh will be the brief era of God's wrath against all the wickedness and rebellion of humanity, and it will also be the era of Redemption for the Overcomers who are the Body of Christ, the heavenly Israel, who will finally inherit the kingdom of God promised in the covenants, that of being the immortal sons of God. The righteous kingdom of the heavens will then be fully manifested on the New Earth.

This Day will have similar characteristics to the Flood of Noah's day, being a universal judgment of humanity, as well as the judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah, which were completely destroyed by fire and sulphur from the heavens.

John the Baptist: The New Testament Prophet

These details of the Day of the Lord are further confirmed and expounded in the New Testament, which is actually a continuation of the Hebrew Scriptures. The Greek Scriptures, and particularly our present subject, cannot therefore be understood correctly without this in mind. The NT writers refer to this Day as the Day of the Lord, the Lord's Day, the Day of Christ, the Day of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Presence or Coming of Christ, His glorious Advent and Appearing and Unveiling or Revelation, the Day of Judging, the Day of Vengeance, the Day of Indignation or Wrath, and the Day of Deliverance (for believers). This

is the one and only visible Second Coming of Christ Jesus to this earth in power and glory. Any other 'Comings' are spiritual.

At the beginning of the NT we are introduced to a prophet called **John the Baptist**. The main thrust of his message, which he addressed to the religious leaders and people of Israel, was concerning '*the coming indignation*' and the call to '*Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens is near*' (Matthew 3:1-12). This message, in relation to the coming kingdom, was in full accord with the messages of the Hebrew prophets that came before John.

John himself fulfilled the role of the great prophet who was to be sent in front of the Messiah to prepare the people of Israel for His arrival, spoken of by **Isaiah** (Isaiah 40:3-5) and **Malachi**.

'Behold Me sending My messenger, and he surfaces the way before Me. And suddenly, the Lord Whom you are seeking is coming to His temple, and the Messenger of the covenant, in Whom you are delighting. Behold! He comes! Says Yahweh of hosts. Yet who will endure the day of His coming? And who will stand when He appears? For He is coming as a refiner's fire, and as launderers' soap.'

(Malachi 3:1-2 CV)

It is clear from the above prophecy in Malachi that this 'messenger' would also appear *before* the Day of the Lord so as to *prepare* the way for Him. This messenger was also equated with the prophecy of Malachi concerning the coming of the prophet **Elijah** before the Day of Yahweh.

'Behold! I will send to you Elijah, the prophet, before the coming of the great and fearful Day of Yahweh. And he shall restore the heart of the fathers to the sons and the heart of the sons to their fathers, lest I shall come and smite the earth to its doom.'

(Malachi 4:5 CV)

Jesus Himself stated that John the Baptist fulfilled the role of this prophesied 'messenger and prophet,' yet He also said that John was the Elijah that was to come! (Matthew 11:7-15 and 17:10-13). So what are we to make of this? Here is what He said,

"Elijah is indeed coming, and will be restoring all. Yet I am saying to you that Elijah came already, and they did not recognise him, but they do to him whatever they will" ...He spoke to them concerning John the Baptist'

(Matthew 17:11-13 CV)

In this instance, we have confirmation from Christ Himself that Biblical prophecy is full of succeeding patterns leading to an ultimate fulfillment. Jesus is here confirming the fact that many historical individuals can be types and shadows of others in the future. When the kingdom is fully manifested at the return of Christ, Elijah himself will be resurrected to receive his portion in the kingdom, at the restoration of all. *But the actual fulfillment of the*

prophecy in Malachi doesn't require that it be Elijah himself, but someone who prophesies in the spirit and power of Elijah.

Now John the Baptist clearly fulfilled this role even though his *name* was not Elijah and he was not *literally* resurrected Elijah of old - He was obviously a *symbolic* Elijah, if you will, yet nevertheless, he was a *real* prophet and messenger who fulfilled the prophecy (Luke 1:16-17).

In relation to this, in Revelation chapter 11, we are given details of Two Witnesses or Prophets who shall prophesy in the spirit and power of Elijah *before* the Day of the Lord begins. They are symbolic of the Body of Christ Ecclesia, the overcoming remnant of grace who are the true servants and sons of God. (For further study of this, see [The True Revival versus the Apostasy](#)).

These will also fulfill the role of preparing the way for the Messiah, warning of His sudden return to His earth and His spiritual temple. Note that it says '*temple*' in the prophecy of Malachi! The temple known as 'King Herod's Temple' was the sanctuary that was standing in Jerusalem when Jesus came the first time - but when He comes the second time, He will return to His spiritual temple to fill it with His glory - which is the Ecclesia of God.

Much of the teaching of John the Baptist, as well as Jesus Himself, spoke of the spiritual, figurative aspect of the Kingdom of God, and this included the teaching of the fiery judgment of Gehenna (mistranslated as 'hell' in many versions). This was ultimately referring to the Great Judgment Day and what the book of Revelation calls 'the Second Death, the Lake of Fire.' In New Creation terms, this is referring to the figurative fire of God's righteous judgments being worked out for the age to come. It is describing the fire of Divine Justice for those who have not accepted and obeyed the Gospel of His Son. (For further study of this Lake of Fire, see [Is There Really a Hell?](#)).

In relation to this Old Creation and the Return of Jesus Christ, it is describing the heavenly raging fire that will bathe this whole world in the fire of God's wrath. As the world of Noah's time was destroyed by water, so the final generation of this age will be destroyed by fire.

The Prophecies of Jesus

Some of the clearest prophecies of the events of the Day of the Lord were, understandably, spoken by Jesus Himself. These details were later repeated, and expounded further, by the apostles, especially in the writings of Paul and Peter and John.

So let us now take a look at some of the key passages that record these prophecies, beginning with Jesus' own teaching in what has been called 'the Olivet Discourse,' because He spoke these things to His disciples on the Mount of Olives, overlooking the Temple in Jerusalem, only days before He was to die.

There are three accounts of this actual Discourse, in Matthew 24-25, Mark 13 and Luke 21, though Luke also records some similar teaching on the subject at other times in Luke 17 & 19. We need to consider all of these accounts together to understand exactly what Jesus was saying.

There are many 'dispensational' interpretations out there that teach that virtually all of the details of this Discourse are still to be fulfilled in the future as part of 'a great seven-year (or

3.5 year) Tribulation' involving a coming Antichrist. I was blinded by this false interpretation for many years, but the actual truth of the matter is a lot plainer than most people think. If you are presently influenced by this kind of 'dispensational thinking' then you will need to try and lay that aside for now and be open to what I'm going to say, if you wish to learn the truth in this matter.

I will say quite boldly here that I do not believe any longer in the common theory that there is going to be a Pre-Tribulation Rapture followed by a seven (or three and a half) year Tribulation period involving a specific Antichrist in Jerusalem. In fact, I would not be surprised at all if the temple in Jerusalem is never allowed to be rebuilt - because every attempt so far has failed by divine decree! The re-institution of the animal sacrifices by the Jews would be an abomination and a blasphemy to God and His precious Messiah, the true Lamb of God, so I very much doubt that He will allow this to occur. Be that as it may, contrary to popular interpretation, a rebuilding of the literal temple is not necessary to fulfill all prophecy before Christ returns.

I plan to be doing a study on this Olivet Discourse, among other things, in the near future, God willing, that will appear in the section **The Great Prophetic Plan Revealed**, but for now we shall just focus on the parts that have to do with Christ's Return. I shall quote the appropriate verses from each Gospel account as we progress, using Matthew 24 as the main text.

The Jewish War and the Temple's Destruction

The majority of Matthew 24 (and Mark 13 and Luke 21) concerns things that were fulfilled in the 1st century AD, in relation to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, and the end of the Old Covenant system, and of Israel's place as God's nation in the flesh. (This is not saying that a Gentile Church has replaced Israel, but it means that the true Israel of God is made up of spiritual Jews and Gentiles in Jesus the Messiah, which is the true Church or Ecclesia of God).

During His final week of teaching in Jerusalem, Jesus had already prophesied that the temple in Jerusalem would be totally destroyed, along with the city itself, and that this destruction would be witnessed by the generation living at that time (i.e. within about 40 years). This was to be a pivotal event in the history of the Jewish people.

As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

(Luke 19:41-44 NIV)

"The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city."

(Matthew 22:7 NIV)

"And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. **I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation.**"

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. **Look, your house is left to you desolate.**"

(Matthew 23:35-38 NIV)

It was for this reason that the disciples drew Jesus' attention to the temple buildings, because they just couldn't believe that this magnificent holy structure was going to be completely destroyed in the very near future. Yet Jesus tells them clearly that every stone was going to be thrown down.

Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."

Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, "As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down."

(Matthew 24:1-2; Luke 21:5-6 NIV)

Now listen carefully, because this is the key to correctly understanding this Discourse of Jesus. It was in this context of Jesus' words about the destruction of the temple and the city that the disciples Peter, James, John and Andrew came to Jesus privately, while He was sitting on the Mount of Olives overlooking the city, to ask Him some questions.

They actually asked Him three questions:

1. When will these things happen?
2. What will be the sign that they are about to happen? and
3. What will be the sign of your coming (or Presence) and the end of the age?

All three Gospel accounts mention the first two questions, but only Matthew records the 3rd question.

"Teacher," they asked, "when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?"

As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?"

As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

(Luke 21:7; Mark 13:3-4 and Matthew 24:3 NIV)

The disciples' questions were essentially about the destruction of the temple and the city, **but they also assumed that all of this was part of Christ's Return at the end of the age** - that is, the Day of the Lord. They were right in thinking that this was a Day of the Lord for Israel and Jerusalem, but they were mistaken for thinking that this judgment on Jerusalem was to be connected to the ultimate Day of Christ's Return in power and glory. They did not understand at that time that there was to be an indefinite period of time during Christ's absence in which God would be calling out His people from all nations in an Administration of Grace. This was more fully revealed to Paul some years later.

Now Jesus answered them by giving them details of *both* events, beginning with the then-future events of the 1st century, giving them details of what was to come during the next 40 years, particularly as it applied to Jews and Christians in the land of Palestine, by the end of which time Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed in the Jewish/Roman War of 66-70 AD. These things are recorded in Matthew 24:4-25, Mark 13:5-23 and Luke 21:8-24.

Two Signs and the Great Affliction

Jesus essentially gave them two signs that would herald the coming desolation of the city and the temple. They were,

1. 'An abomination of desolation' would be seen standing in the Holy Place of the temple. From my own research, I believe without a doubt that this was referring to the murderous Jewish Zealot groups who took over the temple and used it as their unholy base.

(Many believe that this was referring to the Roman armies, but the armies didn't reach the temple until the war was virtually over. That wouldn't have been much of a warning sign, would it! Others believe it was (and is) referring to an idolatrous image, but there isn't any record of such an image being placed in the temple before the war. The phrase 'abomination of desolation,' which Jesus took from the book of Daniel, does not have to refer solely to an idolatrous image being set up in the temple in exactly the same way as that which occurred in the events of Antiochus Epiphanies in the 2nd Century BC. It's meaning has much more scope.)

2. Jerusalem would become surrounded by army encampments. This was, of course, referring to the Roman armies under General Titus who set up camp around Jerusalem before they laid siege to it.

The Great Tribulation or Great Affliction (or Distress) mentioned in these texts is referring to the horrific days of the siege of Jerusalem, which was unlike anything that had previously happened in that city. It was an horrific bloodbath - and most of the suffering and carnage was caused by the Jewish warring factions within the city, not by the Romans! If these days had not been shortened, no flesh would've survived at all. The writings of Josephus in his **Jewish War** make it very plain how bad things actually were in those days. All of Jesus' words were fulfilled exactly as He had said.

Eventually, all the stones of the temple were taken apart and demolished by the Romans, who were trying to get the melted gold out of the cracks. This fulfilled the words of Jesus to the letter concerning the stones of the temple. Many of the Jews and Christians escaped into the mountains but the remainder were slaughtered or taken into captivity and scattered throughout the Roman Empire.

The divine timing of these events was remarkable in their accuracy. On the day of Passover, in the Spring of 70 AD, the Roman armies began to encamp around Jerusalem in preparation for the coming siege. This was 40 years from when Jesus began His ministry. After 5 months, the Temple was burned and the city destroyed. The temple was destroyed on the 10th of the Jewish month Ab. This was the very same day that the temple of Solomon had been burned in 587/586 BC. Certainly not a coincidence! Both the First and Second Temples were divinely judged and destroyed on the same day! (Herod's Temple was essentially the Second Temple that was built after the Babylonian captivity, only enlarged and beautified.)

Then on the Passover of 73 AD, the last group of Jewish Zealots were defeated by the Romans as they made their final stand in the fortress of Masada. They committed mass suicide rather than allow the Romans to kill them. This officially ended the Jewish/Roman War of that period. It occurred exactly 40 years from the crucifixion of Jesus (33-73 AD) - **to the very day!** Again, certainly not a coincidence! These prophetic fulfillments heralded something of great magnitude - the end of an official divine transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant; from Israel after the flesh to the spiritual Israel of God.

Be that as it may, Luke's account makes it even clearer that this Great Affliction for the Jews would then go on to last the whole of this present age, which Jesus calls 'the Times of the Nations' (or Times of the Gentiles), as opposed to the previous Times of the Hebrews. Take careful note of the words in this text.

"Now whenever you may be perceiving Jerusalem surrounded by encampments, then know that her desolation is near. Then let those in Judea flee into the mountains, and let those in her midst be coming out into the country, and let not those in the country be entering into her, **for days of vengeance are these, to fulfill all that is written.** Yet woe to those who are pregnant, and to those suckling in those days; for there will be great necessity in the land **and indignation on this people.** And they shall be falling by the edge of the sword and shall be led into captivity into all nations. And Jerusalem shall be trodden by the nations,

until the eras of the nations (or times of the nations) may be fulfilled."

(Luke 21:20-24 CV)

This was truly a pivotal, and a hugely significant, event in Jewish and Biblical history. Jesus made it clear that it would be unparalleled, because these 'days of vengeance' would fulfill **all** that is written concerning Israel and Jerusalem.

The Coming of the Son of Man - Like Lightning

It is at this point in the accounts that Jesus starts to talk about His Coming or Presence at the end of the age, to answer the disciples' 3rd question. Yet He doesn't give any clue whatsoever here of the duration of this present age. He just tells us about the things that will occur on the Day of His glorious return.

"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. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

(Matthew 24:26-27; see also Luke 17:24 NIV)

Firstly, He begins by declaring loud and clear that His Presence (Greek *parousia*) or Coming will not be secret and invisible, but it will be just like the lightning flashing across the whole sky. That is, it will be visible in the sky to ALL on the earth as a glorious light in the darkness! There will be no mistaking it! Many false prophets and false messiahs will come (including those teaching about false comings of Christ), but they are not the true Messiah unless they fulfill this criteria for the Day of the Lord. Even Jesus Himself has to fulfill this prophecy eventually, otherwise He will prove to be a false prophet and a false Messiah!

Then Jesus begins quoting portions of Isaiah about the Day of the Lord, particularly from chapters 13 & 34, which we considered earlier.

"Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.

Immediately after the distress of those days
'the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light;
the stars will fall from the sky,
and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.' "

(Matthew 24:28-29 NIV)

"But in those days, following that distress,
'the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light;
the stars will fall from the sky,
and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.' "

(Mark 13:24-25 NIV)

And there shall be signs in the sun and the moon and the constellations, and on the earth pressure of nations in perplexity, at the resounding of the sea and the shaking, at the chilling of men from fear and apprehensiveness of that which is coming on the inhabited earth, for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.

(Luke 21:25-26 CV)

There isn't any hint whatsoever here of these things being taken figuratively as the primary interpretation, as many believe and teach, though, of course, these are spiritual and heavenly events, because God is the Source of these judgments. These are not just mere natural occurrences, they are supernatural occurrences that will affect the whole of this creation!

Even on a figurative level, where the sun, moon and stars are symbols of heavenly powers, and the mountains, hills, islands and seas are symbols of earthly powers and nations, this is still describing something so cataclysmic that nothing like it has occurred since the beginning of creation, or at least since the time of the Great Flood of Noah's time.

The Shaking of the Universe and the Glory Cloud

These are the signs in the sky and on the earth that will herald the beginning of the Day of the Lord Jesus Christ. And men will be frozen with fear and apprehensiveness and great terror, wondering what the heck is coming upon the whole earth, for the earth will be shaking and the sea will be roaring, and the whole heavens will be combusting and dissolving with fire! But first, the sun and moon and stars will go dark!

Not only are these things spoken of in the OT prophecies that we've already considered, but they are also referred to elsewhere in the NT. We've already seen what Peter had to say about this shaking and dissolving of the universe when he wrote about the Day of the Lord in his second letter (and we'll take a look at it again later). The writer to the Hebrews was also referring to this awesome Day when he wrote the following.

See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." **The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain.** Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire."

(Hebrews 12:25-29 NIV)

Returning to the Olivet Discourse, Jesus continues with the events of that Day.

"At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

(Luke 21:27-28 NIV)

"At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens."

(Mark 13:26-27 NIV)

"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. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other."

(Matthew 24:30-31 NIV)

'The sign of the Son of Man' that is mentioned by Matthew, I believe, is the great Glory cloud of God, shining in all its brilliance. One of the common themes of some of the prophetic passages concerning Christ's return is that of clouds, that is, the glory clouds of God's presence. He will be in clouds, on clouds and with clouds! This sign will appear in the sky as a supernatural light, after the darkening of the sun and the moon, which will cause all the nations of the earth to mourn (or grieve or lament).

All the peoples of the earth will see Christ Jesus descending from the heavens with power and great glory, and He will remain in the atmosphere of the earth (that is, in the sky or air) surrounded by clouds of glory, clouds of angels - and clouds of believers - while He judges those who remain on the earth! He will then send out His angels (heavenly messengers) with a shout of command that will sound like a trumpet, and they will gather and assemble His elect (or chosen ones) from the whole earth - and the heavens!

As Luke records, "When these things *begin* to take place....your redemption is drawing near." This is clearly saying that even true believers (that is, the Body/Bride of Christ, the Ecclesia of the sons of God, the overcomers, etc) will experience the beginning of these things just before our redemption (that is, our deliverance or full salvation) occurs. It may only be for a matter of minutes, but this becomes the test of our faith of whether we will seek to hold on to this world or not. We shall look at this shortly.

When Jesus ascended into the heavens (that is, entered the spirit realm) in 33 AD, this is what happened.

After he said this, **he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight**. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? **This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.**"

(Acts 1:9-11 NIV)

Now this is so simple that a child could understand it. The disciples were told that this same Jesus would return from the heavens in the same way as He left! It's a simple reversal of His ascension into the heavens. Now, how did He leave this earth? He ascended visibly into the sky (for gravity had no hold on Him) in a cloud (the Glory cloud of the Presence of God, not rain clouds) until He disappeared from sight.

Therefore, in the same way, He will return from the heavens, visibly descending to the atmosphere of this earth (that is, in the sky or the air) for all to see. And He will be surrounded by glory clouds (and these are not rain clouds) as He appears like lightening.

This is exactly what Jesus described in the above texts!

Deliverance and Destruction

And here are a few more scriptures from the writings of the apostles that speak of these very same things - and they need no explanation!

"...and to be waiting for His Son out of the heavens, Whom He rouses from among the dead, Jesus, our Rescuer out of the coming indignation...for God did not appoint us to indignation, but to the procuring of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for our sakes, that, whether we may be watching (*those alive*) or drowsing (*those in death*), we should be living at the same time together with Him."

(1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9-10 CV)

"...thus Christ also,...will be seen a second time, by those awaiting Him, apart from sin, for salvation, through faith."

(Hebrews 9:28 CV)

"...Henceforth you shall be seeing the Son of Mankind sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

(Matthew 26:65 CV)

"I came to be casting fire on the earth, and what will I, if it were already kindled?"

(Luke 12:49 CV)

"For the Son of Mankind is about to be coming in the glory of His Father, with His messengers, and then He will be paying each in accord with his practice."

(Matthew 16:27 CV)

"And I perceived, when It opens the sixth seal, and a great cataclysm occurred, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood, and the stars of heaven fall on the earth as a fig tree is casting its shriveled figs, quaking under a great wind. And heaven recoils as a scroll rolling up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, and the magnates, and the captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every slave and freeman, hide themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains. And they are saying to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him Who is sitting on the throne, and **from the indignation of the Lambkin, for the great day of Their indignation came, and who is able to stand?**"

(Revelation 6:12-17 CV)

"Now we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are reposing, lest you may sorrow according as the rest, also, who have no expectation. For, if we are believing that Jesus died and rose, thus also, those who are put to repose, God will, through Jesus, lead forth together with Him.

For this we are saying to you **by the word of the Lord**, that we, the living, who are surviving to the presence of the Lord, should by no means outstrip those who are put to repose, for the Lord Himself will be descending from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the Chief Messenger, and with the trumpet of God, **and the dead in Christ shall be rising first**. Thereupon we, the living who are surviving, shall **at the same time be snatched away together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air**. And thus shall we always be together with the Lord. So that, console one another with these words."

(1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 CV)

'Yet the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word (*of God*), are **stored with fire**, being kept for the day of the judging and destruction of irreverent men...the Lord is not tardy as to the promise...**Now the Day of the Lord will be arriving as a thief, in which the heavens shall be passing by** with a booming noise, yet the elements shall be dissolved by combustion, and the earth and the works in it shall be found.'

(2 Peter 3:7, 9-10 CV)

We shall be considering these last two scriptures in particular a little later, when dealing with the suddenness of that Day, which will occur 'as a thief in the night,' and the awesome event commonly called the 'Rapture,' though it should be more accurately called the Snatching and Transformation of the sons of God. These things are revealed in type and shadow in the events of Noah and the Flood, and Lot and the destruction of Sodom.

In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus continued by using the simple parable of the Fig Tree to tell us that, in the same way as fig trees begin to bud and sprout leaves in the spring, heralding the

nearness of summer, so all these signs will herald the very near arrival of the kingdom of God and it's King. There is something more to this parable, but so that we don't detract too much at this point, if you wish to look into this matter further, see **The Parable of the Fig Tree** in [The Secrets of the Parables](#) book.

Jesus then continued,

"I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. **Heaven and earth will pass away**, but my words will never pass away."

(Matthew 24:34-35 NIV)

So what did He mean by saying that 'this generation will not pass away until all these things have happened?'

This Generation

There are a number of various interpretations of what Jesus was saying here, but I believe that there are two ways we can interpret this - and both are correct. Many times throughout His ministry to Israel, Jesus spoke about "*this wicked and adulteress generation*," which generally referred to those who were alive at that time. A generation was usually understood to be 40 years, due to the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness for ancient Israel, until that 'Exodus' generation had died.

As we have already seen, a good portion of the Olivet Discourse is describing the then-future events of the first century AD concerning the judgment of Jerusalem and the temple, and the 'days of vengeance' that were about to come upon the Jewish people. Jesus said all of this to answer the disciples' questions about the temple's destruction, which included the signs that would occur that would indicate that it was about to happen. But they had also assumed that this would coincide with Christ's return at the end of the age, so they'd also asked Jesus about his Coming or Presence (which only Matthew recorded). So Jesus proceeds to answer all their questions by prophesying these events.

The first interpretation of 'this generation' would be that this refers to the generation of Jews living at that time in the first century, from 30-70 AD, who would experience all these things coming upon Judah and Jerusalem via the Jewish/ Roman war of that period. These things are covered in more detail in the section [The Great Prophetic Plan Revealed](#).

But in some passages, the context clearly demands that "*this generation*" is **referring to the whole wicked generation of unbelieving Israel, beginning many centuries before Christ and continuing right through to the end of the age** (Matthew 12:39-45). Here is one such example, which is appropriate to our present subject.

"...so that **on you** should be coming all the just blood shed on the earth, from the blood of just Abel until the blood of Zechariah, son

of Berechiah, **whom you murder** between the temple and the altar. Verily, I am saying to you: **All these things will be arriving on this generation**... Jerusalem!... Lo! **your house is left to you desolate**. For I am saying to you: You may by no means be perceiving Me henceforth, **till you should be saying**, ‘Blessed is He Who is coming in the name of the Lord!’”

(Matthew 23:35-39 CV)

In the above passage quoted from Matthew, Jesus prophesied that the judgment would come ‘*on you*,’ that is, on those who would be alive during the period from 33-70 AD, the time when the judgments actually took place. And He also said that *they* had murdered the priest and prophet Zechariah son of Berechiah - even though he had lived and died many centuries before them! These people were not hundreds of years old, yet they *were* connected to ‘this generation’ or race of Israel that Jesus was speaking about!

So the phrase ‘this generation’ can, and does, have a wider application, depending on the context. This is often overlooked by many Bible teachers who then limit this phrase to either the past or the future, but the truth is, it can apply to the past, present *and* future.

Jeremiah had prophesied that the descendents of Israel would continue as a nation until the end of this age, until the physical laws of this old creation would pass away.

This is what the LORD says,
he who appoints the sun
to shine by day,
who decrees the moon and stars
to shine by night,
who stirs up the sea
so that its waves roar—
the LORD Almighty is his name:
"Only if these decrees vanish from my sight,"
declares the LORD,
"will the descendants of Israel ever cease
to be a nation before me."

(Jeremiah 31:35-36 NIV; see also Jeremiah 33:19-26)

And God also made it clear that there would always be a spiritual remnant of Israel, a remnant of grace, who are the true Israel of God, for He would not completely reject all of the descendents of Israel because of their sins.

This is what the LORD says:
"Only if the heavens above can be measured
and the foundations of the earth below be searched out
will I reject all the descendants of Israel
because of all they have done,"
declares the LORD.

(Jeremiah 31:37 NIV)

So whichever way one looks at these prophecies, they are definitely declaring that a spiritual Israel will continue until Christ's return and the establishing of the New Creation. But for this to occur, there also needs to be a physical nation of Israel after the flesh, out of which comes the spiritual remnant. And that's exactly how it is to this day.

Therefore, in the context of Matthew 24:34 quoted earlier, '*this generation*' can also be referring to the **final generation of unbelieving Israel** who will see **all these things** unfold (that is, the various signs and events of Christ's Return), and they will not completely pass by until **all these things have occurred - which includes the visible return of Christ Himself!** Only then will the wicked generation 'pass by' and be no more, having no place in the New Jerusalem.

Jesus also states very clearly that, in relation to His glorious Return, **the present heavens and the earth shall pass away!** But the very words of the Kingdom of God and its King shall not pass away - because a New Creation shall arise in which all things will have its complete fulfillment for all to see! Only the unshakable kingdom of God will remain. This is clearly confirmed by Peter.

'Yet the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word (of God), are **stored with fire**, being kept for the day of the judging and destruction of irreverent men...the Lord is not tardy as to the promise...**Now the Day of the Lord will be arriving as a thief, in which the heavens shall be passing by** with a booming noise, yet the elements shall be dissolved by combustion, **and the earth and the works in it shall be found.**

At these all, then, dissolving, to what manner of men must you belong in holy behavior and devoutness, hoping for and hurrying the presence of God's day, because of which the heavens, **being on fire**, will be dissolved, and the elements decompose by combustion! Yet we, according to His promises, are hoping for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness is dwelling.'

(2 Peter 3:7, 9-13 CV)

In the remainder of the Olivet Discourse, Jesus goes on to give warnings of the suddenness of that Day, which will occur like a thief in the night, and He gives us some idea of how things will be in the world at the time of His Return. He also teaches us in a few parables that the Church needs to be watching for that Day, for it will arrive suddenly and judgment will follow. So let's take a look at these things in a little more detail. And if you are presently influenced by a 'dispensational mindset' you may find the following very surprising indeed!

A Thief in the Night

Firstly, here is one of the warnings that Jesus gave about that Day.

"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. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."

(Matthew 24:42-44 NIV)

"Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. For it will come (*intrude-CV*) upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. 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."

(Luke 21:34-36 NIV)

Jesus is warning His followers that if we get bogged down in life's affairs and the ways of the flesh and the world, then the Day of the Lord will close in on us unexpectedly like a trap, for it will intrude unexpectedly upon all mankind on the face of the entire earth, like a thief coming suddenly in the night to steal your belongings - and there is no escape! Only the watchful and prayerful overcomers in Christ, His true disciples, will be prepared for that Day.

Now here is what the apostle Paul had to say about the Day of the Lord, and it is evident that Paul confirms, and builds upon, much of what Jesus said.

'Now concerning the times and the eras, brethren, you have no need to be written to, for you yourselves are accurately aware that **the Day of the Lord is as a thief in the night** - thus is it coming! Now whenever they may be saying "Peace and security," then extermination is standing by them unawares, even as a pang over the pregnant, and they may by no means escape.'

(1 Thessalonians 5:1-3 CV)

Paul is saying here that the times and eras and seasons of Biblical prophecy will not reveal when the Day of the Lord will actually occur! That Day will arrive like a thief in the night, at a time when the world is going about its normal everyday business, oblivious of what's coming! It will be in a time of relative peace and safety, and NOT in the midst of some 'Armageddon Holocaust' or any specific war! This is such a different scenario to what is commonly taught and believed these days!

The destruction of the wrath of God will arrive unexpectedly as a trap for all those who dwell upon the face of the entire earth! Paul likens it to the birth process in a woman, which usually begins suddenly and unexpectedly! And the world will have no means of escape! Only the Chosen Ones of God will be able to escape the full force of these things due to the powerful saving grace of their Master and Redeemer, for we are not appointed to suffer the wrath of God and His Christ.

In ancient times (as well as modern times), bands of thieves would suddenly descend upon a town to pillage it, often causing destruction of property as well, and this would usually occur at night while everyone was sleeping, so the whole thing would happen quite unexpectedly. Yet there would also be the individual thief who would be out at night breaking and entering peoples houses unexpectedly. This is how the majority of the world, and even the Church, will view the Return of Christ - as a thief coming to intrude upon their lives, and to steal that which they think belongs to them, even their very soul!

"If ever, then, you should not be watching, **I shall be arriving on you as a thief**, and under no circumstances will you know what hour I shall be arriving on you...Lo! I am coming as a thief!"

(Revelation 3:3; 16:15)

"**Now the day of the Lord will be arriving as a thief...**"

(2 Peter 3:10)

The Days of Noah

Jesus went on to say that, at the time of His Return, the world will be just like it was in the days of Noah, just before the Flood came, when they were all oblivious of what was coming upon the earth.

"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. **As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.** For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. **That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.** Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

"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. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."

(Matthew 24:36-44 NIV; also Luke 12:38-40; 17:26-27)

He is saying that the world in general will be in a state of relative peace and safety (and Paul confirmed this, as we saw earlier), with everyone living their lives as normal, going about their daily business, eating and drinking, buying and selling - and marrying. Now a marriage is a joyful occasion, so this is emphasising the fact that the world, including the

Christian Church as a whole, will be wrapped up in their everyday affairs, on the whole, enjoying life!

That is to say, there won't be any specific sign given beforehand to indicate that this Day is about to occur. It will begin suddenly, out of the blue - and even the majority of Christians will not be ready for it - and when it starts, there isn't any going back! There will be no escape for those outside of Christ, for they will be taken away in judgment!

Now if we take note of what the world was like in the days of Noah, we will get some clues as to what it will be like in the days of the Son of Man. Genesis 6 tells us the following.

Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not contend with man forever (*for the age*), for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years."...The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. **Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence.** God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth."

(Genesis 6:3, 5, 11-13 NIV)

The Book of Jasher, an ancient scroll that is mentioned a few times in the Old Testament, confirms what the Scriptures tell us.

But in the latter days of Methuselah, the sons of men turned from the Lord, they corrupted the earth, they robbed and plundered each other, and they rebelled against God and they transgressed, and they corrupted their ways, and would not hearken to the voice of Methuselah, but rebelled against him.

(Jasher 4:4)

The world was full of everyday violence and wickedness of all kinds, including robbery and muggings, in open rebellion against the most basic tenets of God's laws. It was totally corrupt in every way. Most were living for their own selfish pleasure, in a corrupt manner, in defiance of the Creator. Yet in general they were living in abundant prosperity, surrounded by worldly pleasures.

It is later revealed that both Noah and Methuselah preached the Word of God to the world of that time for 120 years. Towards the end of that time, Noah and his family, along with Methuselah and his family, built the Ark over a period of 5 years. Then in the year of the Flood, Methuselah died.

Now this is what amazes me the most. **The only ones who believed God and obeyed His Word were 8 people out of the whole world!** After 120 years of preaching the word and warning the people about the judgment to come, only the 8 souls of Noah and his family believed God and boarded the Ark to be saved! (Others had believed previously, but they had all died before the Flood came, including Methuselah).

This small remnant symbolises the remnant of Overcomers who will be saved at Christ's Return to be spared the Wrath of fire. The number eight symbolises New Creation or New Beginnings, and in the same way as Noah and his family rose above the waters of judgment in the Ark to be kept alive, and to eventually remain on the New Earth after the waters had subsided, so the true followers of Christ will be saved by the Ark of Christ Jesus Himself, rising above the judgment, to eventually descend upon the New Earth as the Firstfruits of a New Humanity to begin ruling over a New Creation.

Noah essentially means 'rest' and he prefigures the Rest of God, which is the inheritance of salvation in, and through, Christ - the entering into the true Promised Land, the Kingdom of God. God always uses the minority as His servants, those who belong to the remnant of grace. It has always been this way - whether it be Noah and his family, Lot and his family, Joshua and Caleb, Gideon's 300 men, etc, etc.

Jesus also makes it clear in the text above that there will be a judgment of separation at this time, so whether one is asleep or at home or out working or whatever one is doing on that Day, one will be taken away in judgment, while another will be saved and will be left behind to inherit the earth. The whole pattern is in the account of Noah and the Flood.

Yet even though the majority of the world will have heard something about the Gospel and the coming judgment, like the people of Noah's time had, they will not really believe it, and they will therefore know nothing about what is coming until it is too late - and then there will be no escape! And in the same way as the Flood was worldwide, so the judgment of the Day of the Lord will be universal.

The Book of Jasher also gives us some extremely interesting information about the events that began the Great Flood, which ties in perfectly with what Jesus was revealing about the Day of His Return and the similarities with the days of Noah.

And on that day, the Lord caused the whole earth to shake, and the sun darkened, and the foundations of the world raged, and the whole earth was moved violently, and the lightning flashed, and the thunder roared, and all the fountains in the earth were broken up, such as was not known to the inhabitants before; and God did this mighty act, in order to terrify the sons of men, that there might be no more evil upon earth...

...And all the sons of men that were left upon the earth, became exhausted through evil on account of the rain, for the waters were coming more violently upon the earth, and the animals and beasts were still surrounding the ark. And the sons of men

The Day of the Lord, The Return of the King

assembled together, about seven hundred thousand men and women, and they came unto Noah to the ark.

And they called to Noah, saying, Open for us that we may come to thee in the ark--and wherefore shall we die? And Noah, with a loud voice, answered them from the ark, saying, Have you not all rebelled against the Lord, and said that he does not exist? and therefore the Lord brought upon you this evil, to destroy and cut you off from the face of the earth.

Is not this the thing that I spoke to you of one hundred and twenty years back, and you would not hearken to the voice of the Lord, and now do you desire to live upon earth?...

...And the sons of men approached in order to break into the ark, to come in on account of the rain, for they could not bear the rain upon them. And the Lord sent all the beasts and animals that stood round the ark. And the beasts overpowered them and drove them from that place, and every man went his way and they again scattered themselves upon the face of the earth.

And the rain was still descending upon the earth, and it descended forty days and forty nights, and the waters prevailed greatly upon the earth; and all flesh that was upon the earth or in the waters died, whether men, animals, beasts, creeping things or birds of the air, and there only remained Noah and those that were with him in the ark.

(Jasher 6:11, 16-20, 24-26)

The Days of Lot

Jesus also went on to reveal further similar parallels with the days of His Return, by mentioning the days of Lot and the judgment that fell upon Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities of the Plain. This time the judgment was by heavenly fire, and although it wasn't universal, it nevertheless destroyed all within that vicinity.

"It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed."

(Luke 17:28-30 NIV)

Let us repeat that last line.

It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed.

Now it doesn't come much clearer than this! In the same way as fire and sulphur rained down from heaven in divine judgment on the day Lot and his family left Sodom, and destroyed all who remained, so the fire of God will fall at Christ's Return and destroy this Old Creation - after the sons of God have been rescued and delivered from this earth.

The people of Sodom and that whole area (in what is now the Dead Sea) were also full of barbaric violence and corruption and all wickedness, mistreating the poor and needy, robbing and mugging, and they practiced all manner of sexual lusts and perversions (see Genesis 18-19 and Jasher 19). Yet even though they had been given time to repent, no one believed God and obeyed. So on the very day Lot left Sodom, to go up to higher ground for safety, the divine fire fell! Yet even Lot had to be virtually dragged out of there by heavenly messengers!

On that very day, every one in Sodom and the other cities were carrying on as normal, living life as usual, some sleeping, some working, buying and selling, building and planting, eating and drinking, etc. But as soon as God's chosen ones of the family of Abraham had left Sodom, the fire fell and destroyed them all!

This is a secondary pattern that establishes the truth of the matter. The parallels are as clear as day (if you have not been indoctrinated by other scenarios) between Noah's day and Lot's time, and the days of Christ's Return at the end of this age. The divine type and pattern is unmistakable. One simple look at the world today will confirm to anyone who has some knowledge and understanding that the conditions are truly ripe for judgment!

Jesus also went on to say something else in relation to Sodom and His Return.

"On that day no one who is on the roof of his house, with his goods inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. Remember Lot's wife! Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left."

"Where, Lord?" they asked. He replied, "Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather."

(Luke 17:31-37 NIV)

Jesus is saying here that when the events of that Day begin, His followers are NOT to try and save their own lives or their material things, because it will be fruitless to try and do so! Whether one is at home, resting or eating (which many in the East used to do on the flat roofs of their houses) or whether one is out working (figured by those out in the fields), Jesus warns us not to think about saving ourselves or our material goods. He then gives the warning of what happened to Lot's wife. She had been previously warned that she should not stop and look back, or think about returning, but that they should keep moving, but she disobeyed and stopped and looked back. She then died by turning to a pillar of salt, due to the falling fire and sulphur.

Now Jesus uses this example to warn us not to try and cling to earthly things, particularly when the judgments of that Day begin, because he who tries to save his soul will lose it (literally *destroy it*), but he who loses his soul (literally *destroys his soul*, through walking the path of humble obedience to God) will save it. And when the disciples asked Jesus "Where?" presumably wondering where these people would be taken, He replied by quoting a line from Isaiah 34, which we considered earlier, concerning the destruction of the generation of that Day.

"Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather."

It's no wonder, then, that there are many warnings in the NT about not loving the world and that which is in it - for this world system, and everything in it, is destined for the fire of God! This doesn't mean that it's wrong to have riches and material blessings, and to enjoy the good things that God graciously gives us, but it means that we need to have the proper perspective - these things will not last! We must be good and wise stewards, but we must hold it all loosely. The real treasures are in the heavens, that is, in the spirit realm.

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever (for the age).

(1 John 2:15-17 NIV)

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? But he gives us more grace.

That is why Scripture says:

"God opposes the proud
but gives grace to the humble."

(James 4:4-6 NIV)

Both Peter and Jude also used these early examples of divine judgment that Jesus used (i.e. Noah and the Flood, and Lot and Sodom, recorded in Genesis) to warn false believers about the judgment to come at Christ's Return, as well as giving encouragement to those who are true disciples of Jesus, that God rescues His righteous ones out of trial and wrath. Here is what they wrote.

For if God...did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued Lot, a

righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)— if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for punishment until (*more accurately 'in'*) the day of judgment.

(2 Peter 2:4-9 NIV)

Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe...In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. **They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment (chastening - CV) of eternal (age-abiding) fire.**

(Jude 5, 7 NIV)

Flaming Fire

So what are we to make of all this talk about fire in relation to the Day of the Lord and the judgment that will follow? Here is what Paul, the great messenger of the Gospel of Grace to the nations, had to say about the Unveiling of Christ in the Day of the Lord, in 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10.

'...it is just of God to repay affliction to those afflicting you, and to you who are being afflicted, ease, with us, **at the unveiling of the Lord Jesus from heaven with His powerful messengers (angels), in flaming fire, dealing out vengeance to those who are not acquainted with God and those who are not obeying the evangel of our Lord Jesus Christ** - who shall incur the justice of eonian extermination from the face of the Lord, and from the glory of His strength - **whenever He may be coming to be glorified in His saints** and to be marvelled at **in all who believe in that day** (seeing that our testimony to you was believed). (CV)

Essentially, Paul is describing not only the events of Christ's Unveiling (or Revelation or Manifestation) and the judgment upon this Old Creation in flaming fire, but he is also talking about the Great Judgment that will follow when Christ will judge the living and the dead. Jude was also alluding to this in the above text when he said "**They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment (chastening - CV) of eternal (age-abiding) fire.**"

Only true followers of God and His Son will be given ease and abundant blessing for the ages to come, by inheriting the age-abiding life of the First Resurrection, which is immortality and incorruption - the Glory of the Kingdom of God in a New Creation. The rest will experience the wrath and vengeance of God in the *figurative* fire of the Second Death, which

will involve punishment and chastening, and the destruction of the flesh, away from the glorious presence of the face of the Lord. These New Creation terms are talking of a **state of being** rather than a location or physical place.

It must be remembered though that even this state of age-abiding death for the majority of humanity shall not be their *final* end 'forever.' They will all have a place on the New Earth, even though they will be experiencing the Second Death, metaphorically called the Lake of Fire. For further information on these things, see [Is There Really a Hell?](#) and [The First and Second Resurrections and the Judgment Day](#).

The flaming fire of God that shall be evident during the Day of the Lord is ultimately His righteousness, holiness and justice being meted out, but there will also be manifestations of heavenly and earthly fire, for God is a consuming fire, and the present heavens and earth are stored with fire. This, no doubt, is referring to the atomic force that pervades the universe, as well as hydrogen itself. This is made very clear by Peter in his second letter.

'Yet the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word (*of God*), are stored with fire, being kept for the day of the judging and destruction of irreverent men...the Lord is not tardy as to the promise...**Now the Day of the Lord will be arriving as a thief, in which the heavens shall be passing by** with a booming noise, yet the elements shall be dissolved by combustion, and the earth and the works in it shall be found.'

'At these all, then, dissolving, to what manner of men must you belong in holy behavior and devoutness, hoping for and hurrying the presence of God's day, because of which the heavens, **being on fire**, will be dissolved, and the elements decompose by combustion! Yet we, according to His promises, are hoping for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness is dwelling.'

(2 Peter 3:7, 9-13 CV)

Salvation for the Overcomers

Yet having said all that, what will happen to the true followers of Christ on this awesome Day? Well, Jesus Himself, as well as the Apostle Paul, revealed that those who truly belong to the Body of Christ, who are watching for Christ's return, being aware of the truth of the Scriptures, will not be surprised by Christ's coming as a thief. The true disciples of Christ, called Overcomers or Conquerors, are promised salvation and deliverance from the wrath and vengeance of God. This is the sure Hope or Expectation of our salvation.

Many today are throwing out the proverbial baby with the bath water as a counter reaction to the more modern Pre-Tribulation Rapture Theory, which is often mockingly called 'The Great Escape' Theory, by saying that there isn't any Rapture or snatching away at all! Instead, they are choosing to re-interpret Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians 4 in a very different sense altogether (we shall consider this shortly). Yet it is clear that both the Pre-Trib Rapture Theory, and the extreme 'no rapture' theory, are both incorrect.

The truth of the matter is that there *is* a promise of escape from the Hour of Trial that will come upon the whole world in the Day of the Lord, a promise of deliverance from the wrath of God (not an escape from affliction or tribulation in general, I might add), which was promised out of the mouth of Jesus, and confirmed by Paul. Here is what Paul had to say about this.

"Now you, brethren, are not in darkness, **that the day may be overtaking you as a thief**, for you are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of the darkness. Consequently, then, we may not be drowsing, even as the rest, but we may be watching and be sober. For those who are drowsing are drowsing at night, and those who are drunk are drunk at night.

Yet we, being of the day, may be sober, putting on the cuirass (*breastplate*) of faith and love, and the helmet, **the expectation of salvation, for God did not appoint us to indignation, but to the procuring of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ**, Who died for our sakes, that, whether we may be watching or drowsing (*in the sleep of death*), we should be living at the same time together with Him."

(1 Thessalonians 5:4-10 CV)

"...and to be waiting for His Son out of the heavens, Whom He rouses from among the dead, Jesus, our Rescuer out of the coming indignation."

(1 Thessalonians 1:10 CV)

But this is only promised to those who endure and overcome, to those who are truly serving Christ, those who endure to the end. These are the true sons of God, who will be manifested with Christ in glory when He returns. Here are some further words of Jesus and Paul that confirm these things.

"Seeing that you keep the word of My endurance, I, also, **will be keeping you out of the hour of trial which is about to be coming on the whole inhabited earth to try those dwelling on the earth**. I am coming swiftly! Hold what you have, that no one may be taking your wreath."

(Revelation 3:10-11 CV)

"Now take heed to yourselves, lest at some time your hearts shall be burdened with crapulence and drunkenness and the worries of life's affairs, and **that day may be standing by you unawares, as a trap, for it will intrude on all those sitting on the surface of the entire earth**. Now be vigilant, on every occasion beseeching that you may be prevailing to escape all these things which are about to occur, and to stand in front of the Son of Mankind."

(Luke 21:34-36 CV)

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed...

...We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly **as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies**. For in this hope (expectation) we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently (with endurance).

(Romans 8:18-19, 22-25 NIV)

This establishes the truth that true followers of Christ *are* promised a way of escape and deliverance from the wrath of the Day of the Lord, a way of rescue, just as Noah and Lot were divinely rescued from the judgments of their day. Now the question needs to be asked, 'How will these Overcomers (the Bride/Body of Christ Ecclesia) be able to escape these judgments of God if this is going to come upon the whole earth in that Day - especially as the creation itself will be cleansed by fire?'

The answer lies in the truth which Jesus revealed in His Olivet Discourse - and that is, that there will be a supernatural gathering (or assembling) of His chosen ones from throughout the heavens and the earth - which will also include a transformation of the body!

The Great Snatching, Transformation and Gathering

As we have seen earlier, Jesus revealed the following when He was describing the events of His Return.

"And He shall be dispatching His messengers with a loud sounding trumpet, and they shall be assembling His chosen from the four winds, from the extremities of the heavens to their extremities."

(Matthew 24:31 CV; also Mark 13:27)

Then Paul was given the following revelation to add to this,

"Now we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are reposing (*sleeping*), lest you may sorrow according as the rest, also, who have no expectation. For, if we are believing that Jesus died and rose, thus also, those who are put to repose, God will, through Jesus, lead forth together with Him.

For this we are saying to you **by the word of the Lord**, that we, the living, who are surviving to the presence of the Lord, should

by no means outstrip those who are put to repose, for the Lord Himself will be descending from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the Chief Messenger, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall be rising first. Thereupon we, the living who are surviving, shall **at the same time be snatched away together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.** And thus shall we always be together with the Lord. So that, console one another with these words."

(1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 CV)

This is the great 'Rapture' text that is often used to 'prove' the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory, that is, that Jesus will come secretly for His Church *before* a supposed 7-year (or 3.5 year for some) Tribulation occurs. I was unwittingly blinded by this false doctrine for many years and I was a staunch defender of it! Thankfully, I have come to see it for what it is - a theory of man based on a total misunderstanding of certain prophetic texts. Due to the very influential system of Dispensationalism, this Rapture Theory has become very popular over the past century or so.

The word **rapture** comes from the Latin words *raptus* and *rapere*. They essentially mean 'to seize or snatch away violently' and they form the basis for many English words such as *rape*, *rapid* and *raptor*. It is not really the most suitable word to use to describe the 'snatching away' that Paul is referring to here, but I often use it due to its familiarity and common use.

The Greek word translated **snatched** (away) in the above text is **harpazo** and it means 'to snatch, seize or grab with force.' It can be used in a negative manner, such as a wolf snatching a sheep, or in a more positive manner, such as snatching someone away from harm. There are 3 key passages in the NT that help us to see how Paul is using this word in the above text. He is describing a physical and spiritual snatching away with force from one location to another, and from one state of being to another.

'Now when they stepped up out of the water, **the spirit of the Lord snatches away Philip,** and the eunuch did not perceive him any longer, for he went his way rejoicing. Now Philip was found in Azotus...'

(Acts 8:39-40 CV)

In this instance, Philip was supernaturally snatched away, both bodily and spiritually, and placed in another location, quite a few miles from where he had previously been, that is, he was transported by the Spirit.

"I am acquainted with a man in Christ, fourteen years before this, (whether in a body I am not aware, or outside of the body, I am not aware -- God is aware) such a one **was snatched away to the third heaven.** And I am acquainted with such a man (whether in a body or outside of the body I am not aware -- God is aware) that he **was snatched away into paradise** and hears ineffable declarations, which it is not allowed a man to speak."

(2 Corinthians 12:2-4 CV)

In this next instance, Paul is talking about his own incredible experience of being snatched away in spirit to the very dwelling place of God and His Christ, the Third Heaven or Paradise. He wasn't even aware of whether this occurred in the body or out of the body (which could lead us into a very interesting debate as to what he actually experienced). In other words, he could've been temporarily taken there while in his body, or it was purely a spiritual experience which occurred out of his body. Nevertheless, he was spiritually snatched away from one location to another, from earth to heaven.

And she brought forth a son, a male, who is about to be shepherding all the nations with an iron club. **And her child is snatched away to God and to His throne.**

(Revelation 12:5 CV)

This is describing the bodily, yet spiritual, ascension of Jesus, the male Son, Who was snatched away to God and His throne, that is, to the right hand of God. The day is soon coming when the remaining sons of God will also be snatched away, both bodily and spiritually, to meet with Christ and to inherit the kingdom - that is, to be changed into spiritual bodies of immortality and incorruption.

Now let us return to the text in 1 Thessalonians 4 to see how, and when, this awesome event will occur in a little more detail.

The Sleeping and the Living

"Now we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are reposing (*sleeping*), lest you may sorrow according as the rest, also, who have no expectation. For, if we are believing that Jesus died and rose, thus also, those who are put to repose, God will, through Jesus, lead forth together with Him."

Paul and his companions wanted the Thessalonian Christians to know that those believers who had died (those sleeping in the sleep of death) would not miss out on the events of Christ's Return, because all true followers of Christ have the expectation of salvation - unlike the rest of humanity, who have no sure hope of life after death. Therefore, believers shouldn't grieve in the same way as the world does, because we have the expectation of age-abiding life. These things are to occur in the Day of the Lord, and at that time, all those believers who are sleeping in death will be raised to be with Jesus at His coming.

For this we are saying to you **by the word of the Lord**, that we, the living, who are surviving to the presence of the Lord, should by no means outstrip those who are put to repose, for the Lord Himself will be descending from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the Chief Messenger, and with the trumpet of God, **and the dead in Christ shall be rising first.**

Paul is now reiterating the very words of Jesus Himself concerning His Coming, that those believers who are living at the time that Day begins will not enter into their inheritance ahead of those who have fallen asleep in death from previous generations. For on that Day, the Lord Himself will descend from heaven and will appear in the atmosphere of this earth for all to see, and He will give the shout of command, as the voice of the Son of God, as the voice of the Chief Messenger of the heavenly hosts, figuratively described as the trumpet of God - and the dead in Christ shall be rising first.

This is the fullness of the First Resurrection mentioned in Revelation 20:5-6, and the raising of believers in the last day.

Thereupon we, the living who are surviving, shall **at the same time be snatched away together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air**. And thus shall we always be together with the Lord. So that, console one another with these words.

Now Paul states as clear as day here that the living generation of believing overcomers, who are surviving to that Day, shall be snatched away together with the resurrected ones, in clouds (that is, resembling clouds) to meet the Lord in the air or atmosphere *before* the wrath of God is poured out on the earth in all its fullness. And take note that these words should be used to encourage and comfort one another in our faith.

The Greek word **aer** is used here and it is the usual word for **air** or **atmosphere**, that is, the oxygen-filled space all around us, whether a few feet above the ground or many thousands of feet up in the air. It can be used figuratively, but in virtually every instance in which this word is used in the NT, it is used in its normal literal sense. This is how it should be understood in the above text. In fact, the only figurative expression in this passage is 'the trumpet of God,' although the expression 'clouds' of believers is also somewhat figurative.

This snatching away will occur both bodily and spiritually, being transported from one location to another, and being transformed from one state of being (mortal flesh) to another state of being (spiritual flesh).

These details are identical with what Jesus revealed in His Olivet Discourse. Here's a reminder.

"And He shall be dispatching His messengers with a loud sounding trumpet, and they shall be assembling His chosen from the four winds, from the extremities of the heavens to their extremities."

(Matthew 24:31 CV; also Mark 13:27)

The first thing that will happen, once the shaking of the earth and the heavens are under way, is that Christ will descend to the atmosphere around the earth, and, as the Chief Messenger of the heavenly army of His chosen messengers or angels, He will shout out the command for the dead believers to be raised first, and then the living ones in the Body of Christ will be snatched away together with the resurrected ones (after undergoing a divine transformation), and then the messengers will be sent out at Christ's command to gather and

assemble these chosen ones from throughout the earth and the heavens to meet with Him in the air.

This will be accompanied by the trumpet blasts of the sound of Christ's shout of command (cp. Revelation 1:10). The whole company of heavenly messengers and the sons of God will partially form the clouds in the air, to shine forth the huge glory cloud of God.

Now you may be asking, "But how can living believers be snatched away into the sky with resurrected ones while they still have their mortal bodies?" Ah! This is where Paul reveals a little secret about a spiritual transformation!

The Last Trump

'Now this I am averring, brethren, that **flesh and blood is not able to enjoy an allotment in the kingdom of God**, neither is corruption enjoying the allotment of incorruption. Lo! **A secret to you am I telling!** We all, indeed, shall not be put to repose (*the sleep of death*), yet we all shall be changed, in an instant, in the twinkle of an eye, at the last trump. For He will be trumpeting, and the dead will be roused incorruptible, and we shall be changed. **For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality.'**

(1 Corinthians 15:50-53 CV)

There are many uses for the blowing of trumpets in the Hebrew Scriptures. I believe that it is evident here that Paul is using the figure of the Two Silver Trumpets that were used for signalling the community of Israel to assemble together and to move camp when they were travelling in the deserts en route to the Promised Land (Numbers 10:1-7). Even the moving of the camps occurred in 4 Stages (East, South, West and North - though some translations omit the last two stages). This is what Paul appears to be describing here.

The Body of Christ will be called to assemble together, and this shall occur in two main stages, though the gathering will be from E, S, W and N. The dead will be raised and changed first, and then the living shall be changed into immortality at the last trump. Then the whole assembly or army of God, the great cloud of Glory, **will move out together**, with Christ at the Head, to fully enter into our inheritance. This will fulfill the spiritual meaning of the Feast of Trumpets, as well as fulfilling the typology of the Day of Atonement, as Christ, the great High Priest, comes forth from heaven a second time to bring salvation and cleansing to His people.

These things have a relation to the Seventh Trumpet of Revelation 11:15-19, but Paul was not directly referring to that trumpet, because the vision of Revelation was given after Paul had died. It can be seen that the above details fit perfectly into that which Paul revealed in 1 Thessalonians 4 about the snatching away at the coming of Christ.

The secret (often rendered *mystery*) that Paul revealed in relation to this event was **the Secret of the Resurrection, the transformation of the believer's body into immortality and incorruption**, so that we will enter into the heavenly allotment of the New Humanity immediately in that Day, instantly, in the twinkle of an eye.

This is the full inheritance of our salvation, the full adoption as sons, and it is the only way of escape from suffering the vengeance and wrath of God. We shall then enter Christ's Presence and meet Him in the air, while this Old Creation is destroyed, after which, we shall return with Him as His Bride amongst the armies of heaven to be unveiled to the world as the Sons of God and to remain together with Him in ruling the earth and the heavens - that where He is, we shall be also.

This is the fullness of the First Resurrection, the special out-resurrection from among the dead. Only true disciples of Christ, those who are Overcomers and Firstborn Sons, will have part in this special salvation. They are Firstfruits of a greater Harvest. For further study, see [The First and Second Resurrections and the Judgment Day](#) and [The Promise and Christ's Inheritance](#).

Enoch and Elijah

The following scriptures are also referring to this glorious change or transformation into immortality for the true Body/Bride of Christ at Christ's Return. This body will be a spiritual body, nevertheless it will be a human body, but one that belongs to a New Humanity patterned after Christ Himself.

'...to know Him (*Christ*), and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, conforming to His death, **if somehow I should be attaining to the out-resurrection that is out from among the dead. Not that I already obtained**, or am already perfected. Yet I am pursuing, if I may be grasping also that for which I was grasped also by Christ Jesus.'

(Philippians 3:10-12 CV)

'...that the **mortal** may be swallowed up by **life**.'

(2 Corinthians 5:4 CV)

'For I am reckoning that the sufferings of the current era do not deserve the glory about to be revealed for us. For the premonition of the creation **is awaiting the unveiling of the sons of God**.'

(Romans 8:18-19 CV)

'Whenever Christ, our Life, should be manifested, **then** you also shall be manifested **together with Him** in glory.'

(Colossians 3:4 CV)

For our realm is inherent in the heavens, out of which we are awaiting a Saviour also, the Lord, Jesus Christ, **Who will transfigure the body of our humiliation, to conform it to**

the body of His glory, in accord with the operation which enables Him even to subject all to Himself.

(Philippians 3:20-21 CV)

Beloved, now are we children of God, and it was not as yet manifested what we shall be. **We are aware that, if He should be manifested, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him according as He is.** And everyone who has this expectation in Him is purifying himself, according as He is pure.

(1 John 3:2-3 CV)

There are two prophets of God in the OT who are types and shadows of the Body of Christ undergoing this transformation in the Day of the Lord - **Enoch** and **Elijah**. Both of these men were supernaturally taken away and whisked into the presence of God without any sign of having died (see Genesis 5:21-24 and 2 Kings 2:1-18). That is not to say that they didn't actually die, it's just that we have no record of it in Scripture. This is intentional, because they are types of the sons of God at Christ's Unveiling.

We are told that no man has gone into heaven except Christ (John 3:13), and that only Jesus Christ has immortality now (1 Timothy 6:14-16), and Hebrews 11 includes Enoch and Elijah in the list of those who had died in the faith without having received the promises.

It is probable that Enoch was spared the experience of seeing the death and destruction of the Flood because God took him to the place of His Presence on earth at that time - the Garden of Eden. Elijah was taken up into heaven (that is, the sky) in a whirlwind and was seen no more, but he no doubt died peacefully at a secret remote location. It appears as though Elisha knew this, which is why he tried to discourage the company of the prophets from going to search for Elijah.

Enoch can mean 'Initiated through discipline and teaching' which describes the true disciple (literally 'a disciplined learner') of Christ who has been initiated into the secret things of God. Elijah can mean 'God of Yah' or 'subject to Yahweh' or 'God is Yah' and this describes the Overcomer who is subject to God and His Son, Who is Yahweh.

Both Enoch and Elijah typify the Overcomers who will inherit the Transformation into immortality and incorruption at the Return of Christ, when they are snatched away into the heavens to be with Christ for the ages to come.

The Manifest Sons of God

There is a growing belief in these days that a certain portion of 'the Church' shall soon 'manifest the Son' in their flesh, becoming immortal humans on earth who will then help to establish the kingdom before Christ returns. This belief tends to be based on some form of Pre-millennialism, which then views these things as happening on this present earth in a literal 1000 year reign of Christ.

Of course, this means that many of the details in the prophetic texts relating to the Day of the Lord, which we have considered in this article, have to be re-interpreted to mean something quite different from their original intended meaning. It is true to say that there is a spiritual transformation coming for the sons of God, as we've seen above, and that these sons or overcomers are only a remnant of the Church in general, but it will occur as our Master Jesus, and the apostle Paul, clearly said it would, and not in accordance with the new theories of men.

But as appealing as this 'new theory' may be, this 'pre-millennial version' of this Transformation is contrary to the clear teaching of the Scriptures, as has been shown above. Firstly, the future manifestation of the kingdom in a New Creation shall only arrive when the King is literally present in the Day of the Lord. It is true that the kingdom of the heavens is present now, but this is only in spirit, being invisible, while Christ is absent from the earth and ruling in the heavens, but the full manifestation of it is still yet future. It is still an expectation, not an observed reality! Christ will one day be present in a visible, bodily sense, at which time both the Resurrection and the Great Judgment will take place.

And the second reason has to do with Paul's spiritual walk. In Philippians 3:10-12, quoted earlier, Paul states that he eagerly pursued the spiritual walk so that he could experience the power of Christ's resurrection in this life, as well as experiencing the fellowship of His sufferings. Now we would all like to experience the power of resurrection life, but how many of us would wish to experience the suffering part. The truth of the matter is, that we can't have the glory without experiencing the cross first; and we can't have the power without experiencing something of the weakness of the flesh first. Paul knew this, and he sought to experience both: the cross in his flesh, and the glory in his spirit.

But he also states emphatically that he had *not* reached a state of perfection in his walk and he had *not* already obtained the prize of immortality. But he longed to reach a place where he was living as though he was already in the New Humanity, in the power of the resurrection! But this also involved regularly dying to the flesh, conforming to Christ's death. He still had to endure to the end to gain the prize!

So if Paul himself never attained perfection (and he also never taught that a portion of the Body shall fully attain to it before Christ's return either), then on what basis are we to believe that this will occur soon, as some teach? This transformation to immortality will only occur at the Presence of Christ and it will include the *whole* Body, for there is only **one Body** (Ephesians 4:4). These are the Sons of God, the Overcomers in Christ. Nevertheless, this One Body does not equal the whole of Christendom or the Church!

The amazing fact is that the whole of creation senses that, one day, things will change at the Return of it's King, Christ Jesus. And at the time that this unveiling or manifestation of Christ occurs, the Body of Christ ecclesia will also be unveiled or manifested as the Sons of God! **This unveiling of the Sons of God cannot occur until Christ Himself, as The Son of God, is unveiled to the whole of creation.** When The Son is unveiled, the sons will be unveiled with Him, and not before.

'I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.'

(Romans 8:18-19 NIV)

'Whenever Christ, our Life, should be manifested, **then** you also shall be manifested **together with Him** in glory.'

(Colossians 3:4 CV)

Closing Words

The Return of the King, the Son of God, on the Day of the Lord Jesus Christ, is very near. This unique and momentous Day has a positive side and a negative side, depending on whether you are truly in Christ or not. Nevertheless, this Day will end the present wicked age and it will usher in a new age, the age of the New Creation! Justice will be done, and the kingdom will fully come, there will be true peace on earth, and God's will will be done on earth as it is in heaven. May we truly long for His Appearing.

In closing, here are some further scriptures from the NT that are referring to the Day of the Lord, and I encourage you to read them carefully, along with everything else that we've covered in this study, for you will benefit much by meditating on them and taking to heart what is written in them.

"For the Son of Mankind is about to be coming in the glory of His Father, with His messengers, and then He will be paying each in accord with his practice."

(Matthew 16:27 CV)

"...the lord of that slave will be arriving on a day for which he is not hoping, and in an hour which he knows not, and shall be cutting him asunder, and will be appointing his part with the hypocrites."

(Matthew 24:50-51 CV)

"...Henceforth you shall be seeing the Son of Mankind sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

(Matthew 26:65 CV)

"I came to be casting fire on the earth, and what will I, if it were already kindled?"

(Luke 12:49 CV)

"This Jesus Who is being taken up from you into heaven shall come thus, in the manner at which you gaze at Him going into heaven."

(Acts 1:11 CV)

"Indeed, then, condoning the times of ignorance, God is now charging mankind that all everywhere are to repent, forasmuch as He assigns a day in which He is about to be judging the inhabited earth in righteousness by the Man Whom He specifies, tendering faith to all, raising Him from among the dead -"

(Acts 17:30-31 CV)

"Yet, in accord with your hardness and unrepentant heart you are hoarding for yourself indignation in the day of indignation and revelation of the just judgment of God, Who will be paying each one in accord with his acts..."

(Romans 2:5-6 CV)

"So that, be not judging anything before the season, till the Lord should be coming, Who will also illuminate the hidden things of darkness and manifest the counsels of the hearts."

(1 Corinthians 4:5 CV)

"...to give up such a one to Satan for the extermination of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

(1 Corinthians 5:5 CV)

"...and to be waiting for His Son out of the heavens, Whom He rouses from among the dead, Jesus, our Rescuer out of the coming indignation... for God did not appoint us to indignation, but to the procuring of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for our sakes, that, whether we may be watching (*those alive*) or drowsing (*those in death*), we should be living at the same time together with Him."

(1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9-10 CV)

"...thus Christ also,...will be seen a second time, by those awaiting Him, apart from sin, for salvation, through faith."

(Hebrews 9:28 CV)

"...a certain fearful waiting for judging and fiery jealousy, about to be eating the hostile...Mine is vengeance! I will repay! the Lord is saying, and again, "The Lord will be judging His people." Fearful is it to be falling into the hands of the living God!"

(Hebrews 10:27, 30-31 CV)

"Remember, then, whence you have fallen, and repent, and do the former acts. Yet if not, I am coming to you, and shall be moving your lampstand from out of its place, if ever you should not be repenting."

(Revelation 2:5 CV)

"Repent then! Yet if not, I am coming to you swiftly and shall be battling with them (*false teachers*) with the blade of My mouth."

(Revelation 2:16 CV)

"Lo! I will cast her (*Jezebel, false prophetess*) into a couch, and those committing adultery with her into great affliction, if ever they will not be repenting of her acts. And her children shall I be killing with death, and all the ecclesias shall know that I am He Who is searching the kidneys and hearts. And I will be giving to each of you in accord with your acts."

(Revelation 2:22-23 CV)

"And they (*the Two Witnesses*) ascended into heaven in a cloud, and their enemies behold them. And in that hour occurred a great earthquake..."The kingdom of this world became our Lord's and His Christ's, and He shall be reigning for the eons of the eons! Amen!"...And the nations are angered, and Thy indignation came, and the era for the dead to be judged, and to give their wages to Thy slaves, the prophets, and to the saints and to those fearing Thy name, the small and the great, and to blight those who are blighting the earth."

(Revelation 11:12-13, 15, 18 CV)

"And I perceived heaven open, and lo! a white horse. **And He Who is sitting on it is called "Faithful and True," and in righteousness is He judging and battling.** Now His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems, having names written of which no one except Himself is aware, **and He is clothed in a cloak dipped in blood, and His name is called "The Word of God."** And the armies in heaven, dressed in cambric, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. **And out of His mouth a sharp blade is issuing, that with it He should be smiting the nations.** And He will be shepherding them with an iron club. And He is treading the wine trough of the fury of the indignation of God, the Almighty. And on His cloak and on His thigh He has a name written: **"King of kings and Lord of lords."**

(Revelation 19:11-16 CV)

"Lo! I am coming swiftly, and My wage is with Me, to pay each one as his work is"...And the spirit and the bride are saying, 'Come!' and let him who is hearing say, 'Come!' And let him who is thirsting come."

(Revelation 22:12, 17 CV)

Appendix: Summary of Events of the Return of Christ

It is clearly evident from the NT writings that there aren't any specific prophecies or signs that are left unfulfilled, which need to occur before Christ's Return (unless you're a Dispensationalist). The majority of the prophecies have already been fulfilled in history, particularly since the 1st century AD (that is, in these last days). The Day of the Lord is truly imminent now, for we are at the tail end of this present age. There are many Biblical reasons for believing that we are very close to the end of this Old Creation, and the full manifestation of the New Order. (These reasons are dealt with in other articles and in the prophecy section [The Great Prophetic Plan Revealed](#)).

There are those who hold to the doctrine of Imminency, which believes that Jesus could've returned at any time from the 1st Century onwards. But the truth of the matter is that the Day of the Lord was *not* always imminent, contrary to what many teach.

Paul confirmed many of Jesus' words about the coming Apostasy of the Church. For example, Paul made it very clear in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 that this 'falling away' or 'rebellion' had to occur first, and this would be followed by an antichrist kingdom led by 'the man of lawlessness' who would somehow attain to great heights of dominion and blasphemy by setting himself up as God in the figurative temple of God, the Church. (In every instance of the phrase 'Temple of God' in Paul's letters, he is referring figuratively to the Christian Church).

These things were all in line with the prophecies of Daniel 7. Paul and the early Christians knew that the Empire of Rome, as the initial 'Beast' kingdom, would eventually fall and be divided into at least ten smaller kingdoms. Then sometime after this, another kingdom would arise and would eventually dominate the whole world. This kingdom or Empire would be a religious kingdom that would persecute and trample upon the true saints of God, that is, the true followers of Jesus, for a mystical or cryptic period of time. This kingdom would eventually be overthrown, and then sometime after this, the Day of the Lord would arrive and destroy this apostate kingdom, along with the ten-fold division of the kingdoms of men that make up the whole world system.

These prophecies were enhanced, and enlarged upon, in the vision of Revelation. The fulfillment of these prophecies only goes to prove to the discerning that Jesus the Messiah is truly alive and ruling from the throne of heaven, and that the Bible is indeed the Word of the Living God. History itself tells us plainly how these things have been fulfilled in the ancient Roman Empire and the Holy Roman Empire of Christendom, and Roman Catholicism, not to mention the fulfillment of all prophecy concerning the history of the nation, and land, of Israel. We are now living in the aftermath of these things, so now, the Day of the Lord is truly imminent! We really are living on borrowed time!

It is also interesting to note the following. It is possible to accurately calculate the time period from the giving of the Covenant to Abraham to the official end of the Old Covenant system in the 1st century AD. It is 1948 years. This is **the Times of the Hebrews**.

Now Jesus spoke of **the Times of the Nations** (or Gentiles), which is describing the present Church era. Now if the Times of the Nations is going to last the same length of time as the

Times of the Hebrews (1948 years) then we are now only ten years away from its conclusion! It is also not a coincidence that the modern State of Israel was officially founded in 1948 AD!

I do not wish to go into the intricacies of these things right now because I don't want to be accused of date setting in any way whatsoever, and I don't feel led to share my findings openly at this point. But there are some extremely interesting and significant time patterns that emerge from Scripture and History that cannot be ignored. All I will say is this: the end of this age is almost upon us - and we must be spiritually watching. Of course, this doesn't take away the need for every generation to watch and be prepared, for no one knows when their hour of death will come. And once we are in the sleep of death, the next waking moment will be the resurrection in the Day of the Lord! It truly is near for all of us, no matter what the generation!

The Days of the Son of Man

The general picture that the NT gives us of the last era just before Christ returns is that of the world in a business-as-usual attitude, in a time of relative peace and safety, and having great material wealth and comfort, though at the same time, it will be full of lawlessness, wickedness and violence as part of its everyday existence, just as it was during the time of Noah before the Flood.

Even the Church in general is pictured as being asleep due to the comfort and relative peace of the world, in a state of lukewarmness (indifferent or apathetic) due to great wealth and abundant prosperity. It is also in a state of general apostasy and deception, using righteousness as a disguise for that which is really lawlessness and sin. It will be happy settling down in Babylon (the world), doing business and gaining much worldly possessions and power.

It will be an era when the spiritual Adversary is given more freedom to deceive the world to go back to its pagan-occult, Babylonian roots, seeking to surround the true people of God in a spiritual battle of faith versus sight, truth versus error, righteousness versus lawlessness, morality versus immorality, light versus darkness. (Ultimately, this is the meaning of Armageddon, and it will involve religions from the East seeking to dominate true Christianity).

Yet at the same time, God will pour forth His latter rain blessings to bring about a true spiritual revival, in which the truth of the gospel of the kingdom will go forth to the whole world again, just as it did in the 1st Century AD, preparing them for the return of Christ.

Most of these things can be understood from various parables, visions and prophetic types and shadows revealed in Scripture.

When the Day of the Lord finally begins, it will occur like a thief in the night - that is, suddenly and without warning! And only the true followers of Christ will escape the wrath to come. This Old Creation is destined to be renewed by fire, just like the mythical phoenix, which burns in a flame of fire, only to rise again from the ashes.

Here is what will happen on that Day.

1. The sun, moon and stars will go dark, and the whole of the heavens and the earth will begin shaking violently, causing the sea to create havoc on the earth. Stars will begin falling from the sky as the whole universe will begin to disintegrate by fire.

The Day of the Lord, The Return of the King

Immediately after the distress of those days
'the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light;
the stars will fall from the sky,
and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.' "

(Matthew 24:28-29 NIV)

"But in those days, following that distress,
'the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light;
the stars will fall from the sky,
and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.' "

(Mark 13:24-25 NIV)

And there shall be signs in the sun and the moon and the constellations, and on the earth pressure of nations in perplexity, at the resounding of the sea and the shaking, at the chilling of men from fear and apprehensiveness of that which is coming on the inhabited earth, for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.

(Luke 21:25-26 CV)

'Yet the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word (*of God*), are **stored with fire**, being kept for the day of the judging and destruction of irreverent men...the Lord is not tardy as to the promise...**Now the Day of the Lord will be arriving as a thief, in which the heavens shall be passing by** with a booming noise, yet the elements shall be dissolved by combustion, and the earth and the works in it shall be found.'

'At these all, then, dissolving, to what manner of men must you belong in holy behavior and devoutness, hoping for and hurrying the presence of God's day, because of which the heavens, **being on fire**, will be dissolved, and the elements decompose by combustion! Yet we, according to His promises, are hoping for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness is dwelling.'

(2 Peter 3:7, 9-13 CV)

"And I perceived, when It opens the sixth seal, and a great cataclysm occurred, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood, and the stars of heaven fall on the earth as a fig tree is casting its shriveled figs, quaking under a great wind. And heaven recoils as a scroll rolling up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, and

the magnates, and the captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every slave and freeman, hide themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains. And they are saying to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him Who is sitting on the throne, and **from the indignation of the Lambkin, for the great day of Their indignation came, and who is able to stand?**"

(Revelation 6:12-17 CV)

The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, "It is done!" Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder **and a severe earthquake**. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.

(Revelation 16:17-21 NIV)

2. Christ will appear in the sky surrounded by clouds of glory and clouds of angels, and all will see Him.

"At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

(Luke 21:27-28 NIV)

"At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens."

(Mark 13:26-27 NIV)

"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. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

(Matthew 24:30-31 NIV)

"...Henceforth you shall be seeing the Son of Mankind sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

(Matthew 26:65 CV)

3. Christ will then give a shout of command that will resurrect the dead believers and transform the living ones, and then, with the help of the angels, the whole company of the transformed chosen ones of God will be snatched away to assemble with Christ in the air.

"At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

(Luke 21:27-28 NIV)

"At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens."

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(Matthew 24:30-31 NIV)

For this we are saying to you **by the word of the Lord**, that we, the living, who are surviving to the presence of the Lord, should by no means outstrip those who are put to repose, for the Lord Himself will be descending from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the Chief Messenger, and with the trumpet of God, **and the dead in Christ shall be rising first**. Thereupon we, the living who are surviving, shall **at the same time be snatched away together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air**. And thus shall we always be together with the Lord. So that, console one another with these words."

(1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 CV)

4. The Old Creation will then be destroyed (and renewed) by fire.

'Yet the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word (*of God*), are **stored with fire**, being kept for the day of the judging and destruction of irreverent men...the Lord is not tardy as to the promise...**Now the Day of the Lord will be arriving as a thief, in which the heavens shall be passing by** with a booming noise, yet the elements shall be dissolved by combustion, and the earth and the works in it shall be found.'

'At these all, then, dissolving, to what manner of men must you belong in holy behavior and devoutness, hoping for and hurrying the presence of God's day, because of which the heavens, **being on fire**, will be dissolved, and the elements decompose by combustion! Yet we, according to His promises, are hoping for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness is dwelling.'

(2 Peter 3:7, 9-13 CV)

"It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed."

(Luke 17:28-30 NIV)

'...it is just of God to repay affliction to those afflicting you, and to you who are being afflicted, ease, with us, **at the unveiling of the Lord Jesus from heaven with His powerful messengers (*angels*), in flaming fire, dealing out vengeance to those who are not acquainted with God and those who are not obeying the evangel of our Lord Jesus Christ** - who shall incur the justice of eonian extermination from the face of the Lord, and from the glory of His strength - **whenever He may be coming to be glorified in His saints** and to be marvelled at **in all who believe in that day** (seeing that our testimony to you was believed).

(2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 CV)

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."

(Matthew 24:35 NIV)

5. A New Creation will be created and all mankind will be resurrected and judged. The sons of God will then rule and reign with Christ in glory for the ages to come, ruling in righteousness over the rest of mankind on the New Earth.

"Indeed, then, condoning the times of ignorance, God is now charging mankind that all everywhere are to repent, forasmuch as He assigns a day in which He is about to be judging the inhabited earth in righteousness by the Man Whom He specifies, tendering faith to all, raising Him from among the dead -"

(Acts 17:30-31 CV)

"Yet, in accord with your hardness and unrepentant heart you are hoarding for yourself indignation in the day of indignation and revelation of the just judgment of God, Who will be paying each one in accord with his acts..."

(Romans 2:5-6 CV)

"For the Son of Mankind is about to be coming in the glory of His Father, with His messengers, and then He will be paying each in accord with his practice."

(Matthew 16:27 CV)

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed...

(Romans 8:18-19 NIV)

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.

(Revelation 1:7 NIV)

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

(Revelation 20:11-15 NIV)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

He who was seated on the throne said, "**I am making everything new!**" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

(Revelation 21:1-5 NIV)

For further study of the Resurrections and the Judgment, see [The First and Second Resurrections and the Judgment Day](#).