2.0 HISTORY AND ETYMOLOGY FOR ESCHATOLOGY

The etymology of “eschatology” is ambiguous; the Greek root may be either eschaton, “end time,” or eschata, “final things.” Eschatology is more commonly described using the former understanding and thus defined as “the study of the end time.” In practice, though, eschatology encompasses the latter sense, as well. Particularly in Catholic theology, eschatology has traditionally been defined as being concerned with the so-called four last things: death, judgment, heaven, and hell. (To these four are sometimes added Purgatory and the resurrection of the body.).[1]

Eschatology is a part of theology concerned with the final events of history, or the ultimate destiny of humanity. This concept is commonly referred to as "the end of the world" or "end times".[2]

Eschatology is an ancient branch of study in Christian theology, informed by Biblical texts such as the Olivet discourse, The Sheep and the Goats, and other discourses of end times by Jesus, with the doctrine of the Second Coming discussed by Paul the Apostle and Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35–107 AD), then given more consideration by the Christian apologist, Justin Martyr (c. 100–165). [3]

Treatment of eschatology continued in the West in the teachings of Tertullian (c. 160–225), and was given fuller reflection and speculation soon after by Origen (c. 185–254). The word was used

first by the Lutheran theologian Abraham Calovius (1612–86) but only came into general usage in the 19th century.

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[1] Bultmann, R. (1957). History and eschatology. New York: Harper & Row.
[2.] Murray, Iain Hamish (1975). The Puritan Hope: A Study in Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy. London: Banner of Truth Trust. ISBN 978-0-85151-247-1.
[3]. http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0107.htm>.

The growing modern interest in eschatology is tied to developments in Anglophone Christianity. Puritans in the 18th and 19th centuries were particularly interested in a postmillennial hope, which surrounded Christian conversion. This would be contrasted with the growing interest in premillennialism, advocated by dispensational figures such as J. N. Darby. Both of these strands would have significant influences on the growing interests in eschatology in Christian missions and in Christianity in West Africa and Asia.

However, in the 20th century, there would be a growing number of German scholars such as Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg who would likewise be interested in eschatology.

In the 1800s, a group of Christian theologians inclusive of Ellen G. White, William Miller (preacher) and Joseph Bates (Adventist) began to study eschatological implications revealed in the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation. Their interpretation of Christian eschatology resulted in the founding of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

Eschatology also provides the venue for religions to speak of their hope both for the afterlife and for the here-and-now. Increasingly, eschatology also has come to imply a theology of history, as well.

The Christian understanding of the Last Things emerged out of the faith of Judaism, and the eschatology of the New Testament reflects the already divergent traditions of Jewish eschatology. In the New Testament period Judaism both made affirmations about the hoped for future of the individual and the community, and was also an eschatological faith in a wider sense, in that it was centred on definite, saving acts of God in the past, which were the basis of faith in God's future saving activity. Israel's hope for the future could be conceived in narrowly nationalistic terms, by which God would fulfil the covenant relationship which he had established with his people by subduing their enemies, and establishing them in a position of political and material power. However, it was also possible for this eschatological hope to have a wider reference. The emphasis could fall not on what God was going to do for Israel in the future, based on what he had done for Israel in the past, but on what God would do for all men through Israel in the future, on the basis of what he had done for Israel in the past. Whilst this belief was slow to develop, it is clearly to be found in the Old Testament, and emerges as a hope for the world, which was to be realized with the coming of the Messiah.

3.0 CHRISTIAN ESCHATOLOGICAL VIEWS

The following approaches arose from the study of Christianity's most central eschatological document, the Book of Revelation, but the principles embodied in them can be applied to all prophecy in the Bible. They are by no means mutually exclusive and are often combined to form a more complete and coherent interpretation of prophetic passages. Most interpretations fit into one, or a combination, of these approaches. The alternate methods of prophetic interpretation, Futurism and Preterism which came from Jesuit writings, were brought about to oppose the Historicism interpretation which had been used from Biblical times that Reformers used in teaching that the Antichrist was the Papacy or the power of the Roman Catholic Church.

3.1 PRETERISM

Preterism is a Christian eschatological view that interprets some (partial preterism) or all (full preterism) prophecies of the Bible as events which have already happened. This school of thought interprets the Book of Daniel as referring to events that happened from the 7th century BC until the first century AD, while seeing the prophecies of Revelation as events that happened in the first

century AD. Preterism holds that Ancient Israel finds its continuation or fulfillment in the Christian church at the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

Historically, preterists and non-preterists have generally agreed that the Jesuit Luis de Alcasar (1554–1613) wrote the first systematic preterist exposition of prophecy—Vestigatio arcani sensus in Apocalypsi (published in 1614)—during the Counter-Reformation.

3.2 HISTORICISM

Historicism, a method of interpretation of Biblical prophecies, associates symbols with historical persons, nations or events. It can result in a view of progressive and continuous fulfillment of prophecy covering the period from Biblical times to the Second Coming. Almost all Protestant Reformers from the Reformation into the 19th century held historicist views.

3.3 FUTURISM

In Futurism, parallels may be drawn with historical events, but most eschatological prophecies are chiefly referring to events which have not yet been fulfilled, but will take place at the end of the age and the end of the world. Most prophecies will be fulfilled during a global time of chaos known as the Great Tribulation and afterwards. Futurist beliefs usually have a close association with

Premillennialism and Dispensationalism. Futurist beliefs were presented in the Left Behind series.

3.4 IDEALISM

Idealism (also called the spiritual approach, the allegorical approach, the nonliteral approach, and many other names) in Christian eschatology is an interpretation of the Book of Revelation that sees all of the imagery of the book as symbols.

Jacob Taubes writes that idealist eschatology came about as Renaissance thinkers began to doubt that the Kingdom of Heaven had been established on earth, or would be established, but still believed in its establishment. Rather than the Kingdom of Heaven being present in society, it is established subjectively for the individual.

F. D. Maurice interpreted the Kingdom of Heaven idealistically as a symbol representing society's general improvement, instead of a physical and political kingdom. Karl Barth interprets eschatology as representing existential truths that bring the individual hope, rather than history or future-history. Barth's ideas provided fuel for the Social Gospel philosophy in America, which saw social change not as performing "required" good works, but because the individuals involved felt that Christians could not simply ignore society's problems with future dreams.

Different authors have suggested that the Beast represents various social injustices, such as exploitation of workers, wealth, the elite, commerce, materialism, and imperialism. Various Christian anarchists, such as Jacques Ellul, have identified the State and political power as the Beast. Other scholars identify the Beast with the Roman empire of the first century AD, but recognize that the Beast has significance beyond its identification with Rome. For example, Craig R. Koester says "the vision [of the beast] speaks to the imperial context in which Revelation was composed, but it does so with images that go beyond that context, depicting the powers at work in the world in ways that continue to engage readers of subsequent generations." And his comments on the whore of Babylon are more to the point: "The whore [of Babylon] is Rome, yet more than Rome." It "is the Roman imperial world, which in turn represents the world alienated from God." As Stephen Smalley puts it, the beast represents "the powers of evil which lie behind the kingdoms of this world, and which encourage in society, at any moment in history, compromise with the truth and opposition to the justice and mercy of God."

It is distinct from Preterism, Futurism and Historicism in that it does not see any of the prophecies (except in some cases the Second Coming, and Final Judgment) as being fulfilled in a literal, physical, earthly sense either in the past, present or future, and that to interpret the eschatological portions of the Bible in a

historical or future-historical fashion is an erroneous understanding.

Preterism v. Historicism

Expositors of the traditional Protestant interpretation of Revelation known as Historicism have often maintained that Revelation was written in AD 96 and not AD 70. Edward Bishop Elliott, in the Horae Apocalypticae (1862), argues that John wrote the book in exile on Patmos "at the close of the reign of Domitian; that is near the end of the year 95 or beginning of 96". He notes that Domitian was assassinated in September 96. Elliot begins his lengthy review of historical evidence by quoting Irenaeus, a disciple of Polycarp. Polycarp was a disciple of the Apostle John. Irenaeus mentions that the Apocalypse was seen "no very long time ago [but] almost in our own age, toward the end of the reign of Domitian".

Other historicists have seen no significance in the date that Revelation was written, and have even held to an early date while Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., makes an exegetical and historical argument for the pre-AD 70 composition of Revelation.

Historicism v. Futurism

The division between these interpretations can be somewhat blurred. Most futurists are expecting a rapture of the Church, an antichrist, a Great Tribulation and a second coming of Christ in the near future. But they also accept certain past events, such as the

rebirth of the State of Israel and the reunification of Jerusalem as prerequisites to them, in a manner which the earlier historicists have done with other dates. Futurists, who do not normally use the day-year principle, interpret the Prophecy of Seventy Weeks in Daniel 9:24 as years, just as historicists do. Most historicists have chosen timelines, from beginning to end, entirely in the past, but some, such as Adam Clarke, have timelines which also commenced with specific past events, but require a future fulfilment. In his commentary on Daniel 8:14 published in 1831, he stated that the 2,300-year period should be calculated from 334 BC, the year Alexander the Great began his conquest of the Persian Empire. His calculation resulted in the year 1966. He seems to have overlooked the fact that there is no "year zero" between BC and AD dates. For example, the year following 1 BC is 1 AD. Thus his calculations should have required an additional year, ending in 1967. He was not anticipating a literal regathering of the Jewish people prior to the second coming of Christ. But the date is of special significance to futurists since it is the year of Jerusalem's capture by Israeli forces during the Six-Day War. His commentary on Daniel 7:25 contains a 1260-year period commencing in 755 AD and ending in 2015.

4.0 OTHER VIEWS OF ESCHATOLOGICAL

4.1 RELIGIONS OF ASIA

Most of the religions of south Asia have both personal and universal eschatologist.

The universal eschatology in Hinduisms best described as a mythical or “relative” eschatology. This involves the Hindu creation myth and myth of eternal recurrence of the universe, a cosmic drama that, it believed, can be re-enacted or influenced by religious rituals. Their eschatological tradition does not involve any final consummation. It is characterized by great cycles (kalpas) of rise and decline, correlation and distortion. Eschatological teaching concern the cycle itself and the attainment of moksha, or release from the cycle. The process is guided by Karma (the doctrine that actions have consequences in this life and the next), which determine the fate of individual souls. After death, souls can be assigned to any of the several heavens or hells, depending upon their accumulation of virtues and vices, before transmigration unto a new human, animal, insect or plant body.

Some souls, however maybe so irredeemably evil that they are assigned to eternal damnation; others may be assigned to redemption. Redemption is popularly viewed as entrance into the highest heaven of god worshipped.

4.2 BUDDHISM

Buddhism, which emerged first in India but had greater impact outside the subcontinent is in many ways an ethical philosophy and a “Salvationist” eschatology.

The teachings of Buddha are rooted in the notion that all is suffering and impermanence. The material world is nothing but illusion, and the pursuit of worldly gain will bring only suffering. These notions form the core of the four Noble Truth of Buddhism, which include the truth of liberation from suffering of the world.

To overcome suffering and transitory nature of existence and gain liberation from it, the Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, devised eight fold path of ethical and purifying behaviours.

The purpose of these teachings is to lead the adherent to the state of Nirvana (Sanskrit: “extinction” or “blowing out”), the release from the suffering of the world and especially, release from the cycle of birth and rebirth.

The Buddhist goal is, therefore, eschatological in the sense that it concerns the final destiny or salvation of the individual.

There are other manifestations of eschatological even millennial thoughts in Buddhism. The bodhisattvas (who vow to follow the path to become a Buddha) in Mahayana Buddhism are saviour figures who postpone entrance to nirvana and return to help others attain the state. The Maitraya Buddha, the final Buddha, also is the focus of eschatological and millenarian thoughts. It is said that Maitraya will eventually descend from his place in heaven to realize his full potential as a Buddha and preside over the kingdom of peace and enlightenment.

4.3 ISLAM

According to traditional historiography, Islam is not a messianic religion. Some scholars, however have suggested that, like Christianity, Islam was intensely apocalyptic at its origin and that Mohammed was the herald of the "day of the Lord". Certainly apocalyptic themes – the day of judgement (Yawm-al-bin), the day of resurrection (Yawm al –Qiyama), the return of Jesus and his fight against al-Dajjal (the anti-Christ) and the wars of Gog and Magog – appearing throughout the Qur'an. Although they are only now drawing scholarly attention, numerous apocalyptic hadith (major sources of Islamic law, based on the sayings or traditions of the prophet Mohammed) have appeared throughout the history of Islam.

Furthermore, Shiite teaching openly embraces an eschatology that is "this worldly" (i.e millennial and messianic), and although Sunnite theology tends to down play millennialism, it does promote the notion of a line of messianic emperor.

Fairly earlier on, probably under Christian influence, the notion emerged of an eschatological restorer of the faith; identified as a descendant of the prophet or as the returning Isa (Jesus), He is usually referred to as the Mahdi (the "divinely guided one")

Muslim believe that after the appearance of Isa, the last judgement will occur; the good will enter paradise and the evil will fall into hell.

5.0 RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

According to I.O. Daramola in this unpublished Lecture note, "Rapture is Jesus promise made to the disciples of His return (John 14:3)"[1]. Paul spoke about it in I Thess.4:16-17 it will come before the revelation of the Antichrist (Thess. 4:16-17). Paul also spoke again of the rapture of the church together with the bodily resurrection of deceased believers. (1 Cor.15:51-52). When the Lord comes for his church, not only will the living saints be raptured, their bodies will be changed into the glorified imperishable bodies like Jesus.

A number of events are associated with the end of age (rapture). Jesus promised His disciples "I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also (John 14:3). … the dead in Christ will rise first; then we which are alive and remained shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air…" (I Thess. 4:16-17).[2]

There are three schools of thought concerning the end time:

5.1 **Pre-tribulation Rapture theory**:

These are people who believe that the Rapture will occur before a period of tribulation on earth mentioned in Daniel (12:1) and Matthew (24:21).[3] The rapture is an event where Jesus Christ

[1]Daramola I.O., Unpublished Lecture Note on Systematic Theology II, pg.36

[2] Guy P. Duffield/N.M. Van Cleave, Foundation of Pentecost Theology, LIFE, Bible College, Los Angeles, California, © 1987, Pg.529.

[3] Matt Stefon, editor at Encyclopaedia Britannica

will appear in the air, the trumpet will sound, and all believers in Christ will leave this planet. Those who have died since the resurrection of Christ receive their resurrected bodies. Those that are alive will also be changed in the twinkling of an eye and depart this world. The most vivid description of this event is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” see also 1 Corinthians 15:50-58 If some doubt is the above verse is specific to the wrath of the Tribulation Period, then Revelation 3:10 should remove any doubt, “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”[4]

5.2 Mid-tribulation Rapture theory:

As the term implies “mid-tribulation” reveals, it describes the position of those who teach that the Church will be raptured after the first half of Daniel’s seventieth (70^{th}) week (Dan.9:27). Most of those who hold this view, however, claim to be pre-tribulation

[4] Timothy Johnson , The Daily Advocate, 410 S. Jefferson St. Rockville IN 47872; 2020

rapturists, because they do not interpret the first half of the seven-year period as being a time of great tribulation or wrath[5].

5.3 The Post-tribulation Rapture Theories:

These are those who believe that the believers will go through the Tribulation and that the Rapture will occur simultaneously with, or immediately before, the Lord is coming for Judgment. They hold that the Rapture of the Church and Christ's Return to rule are simply different aspects of a single event, which will happen at the end of Great tribulation, and just before the defeat of the beast and his followers and the beginning of the millennium.[6] William Frederick in his write-up titled 'The Rapture Theorem: Proving The Correct' wrote the same thing that: Some are of the church will go through the tribulation rather than being raptured out before or in the middle of the tribulation. Thus, the rapture of the church and the resurrection of all dead saints occur at the same time at the end of the 7 year tribulation. This unitary event is distinguished by 1st a coming for the saints (1 Thess. 4:16) and the immediately a coming with the saints (Rev 19:11ff). Generally, post-tribulation see the church as having replaced national Israel as the covenant people of God.[7]

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[5] Guy P. Duffield/N.M. Van Cleave, Foundation of Pentecost Theology, LIFE, Bible College, Los Angeles, California, © 1987, Pg. 529.

[6] Ibid., Pg. 529/530

[7] Bruce A. Ware, Professor of Christian Theology, Southern Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

Before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham asks the Lord the question, “Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?” (Genesis 18:23). The answer then was no, as God removed Lot and two of his daughters from the fiery end of those cities. We also see this principle applied with Enoch’s rapture before the flood. Noah’s family safely within the ark a week before the rain starts to fall (Genesis 5:21-24; 7:9-10, 16).

The Rapture is coming! One day Jesus will appear in the sky for the entire world to see and all Christians will be instantly changed and caught up to meet the Lord in the clouds. As a Christian, even though we cannot know the day or hour of the Lord’s return, God does not want us to know when, in the sequence of end times events, that The Rapture will occur. Will it be pre tribulation, mid tribulation, pre wrath or post tribulation? It is vitally important for us to know what is going to happen. There are many end times theories and ideas being promoted in the world today. How do you know what to believe? God’s word is truth and gives us the answers that we are looking for. “The Rapture Theorem presents a Biblical proof that shows which Rapture theory is correct—a proof you cannot deny.[8]

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8 William Frederick, The Rapture Theorem: Proving The Correct, Published in 1917, Pg. 123,

6.0 THE SECOND COMING

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13; 5:11

The return of Jesus is mentioned more than three hundred times in the 260 chapters of the New Testament, an average of one verse in every twenty-five,

In the Bible, there are eight times as many references to the second coming of Jesus as to the first. Patriarchs, in the Old Testament, looked forward to it (Jude 14; Job 19:25-27); and it has been the blessed hope of the church in the New Testament (Titus 2:13; Acts 3:19-21). Prominent Christian leaders throughout recent centuries have embraced this great truth, and many have given voice to their belief in the Second Advent.

The First and Second Comings of Christ are separated by this Dispensation they are nevertheless not complete in themselves, the Second necessitated the First, and the First demands the Second. They are both necessary to complete the Plan of Salvation. The First Coming was for the salvation of my “SOUL;” the Second is for the salvation of my “BODY,” for there can be no resurrection of the body until Christ comes back.

Occur in the “twinkling of an eye” and all over the earth at the same time, that part of the world that is not asleep will witness the event. As to the “Shout of the Lord,” the “Voice of the Archangel,” and the “Trump of God” we do not know whether their sound will

be heard and distinguished by others than the “dead in Christ” and the “living saints.” We know that one-day the Father spoke to Christ in a voice that He understood, but the people who stood by mistook it for “thunder.” John 12: 28, 29. When the Lord appeared to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus and spoke to him, the men that journeyed with him stood speechless, “hearing a voice,” but seeing no man, and not understanding what was said. Acts 9:3-7. We know however that the “dead in Christ” will hear the sound, for it will be “intensely penetrating.” There will be no graves so deep, no catacombs so rock covered, no pyramids or mausoleums so thick, but what the sound shall reach their depths and the “dead in Christ” shall hear the cry-“awake ye sleeping saints and arise from the dead, it is MORNING, the morning of the FIRST RESURRECTION.

” On the morning of that glorious day, the air will be filled with the “spirits” of the “Dead in Christ,” come back to earth to get their bodies, raised and glorified. Whether the cemeteries and country church yards will look like ploughed fields, and monuments and grave slabs be overturned and vaults and places of sepulchre be shattered by the exodus of those who found their last resting place there, and thus testify to the fact of the literal bodily resurrection of the dead, or whether the sainted dead shall slip out of their sepulchres without disturbing them, as Christ arose and left the tomb without breaking the seal, the angel rolling away the stone

simply to show that the tomb was empty, we are not told, only the event itself will disclose the manner of the First Resurrection.

If the dead slip out of their places of sepulchre without disturbing them, the First Resurrection will be secret and probably unknown to the world, but it will not be so with the “Living Saints” who are translated. If it is night on our side of the globe when the Rapture occurs the community will wake up in the morning to find all the real Christians gone, disappeared in the night. Many may hear the sound of the “Midnight cry” – “BEHOLD THE BRIDEGROOM

There are crucial questions we need to ask ourselves concerning the second coming of Christ and these questions go thus;

What is the purpose of his Coming?

“One of the most solemn and yet most glorious truths revealed in the Bible is that of Christ’s second coming to complete the great work of redemption. To God’s pilgrim people, so long left to sojourn in ‘the region and shadow of death,’ a precious, joy-inspiring hope is given in the promise of His appearing, who is ‘the resurrection and the life,’ to ‘bring home again His banished.’

“The doctrine of the second advent is the very keynote of the Sacred Scriptures. From the day when the first pair turned their sorrowing steps from Eden, the children of faith have waited the coming of the Promised One to break the destroyer’s power and bring them again to the lost Paradise. Holy men of old looked

forward to the advent of the Messiah in glory, as the consummation of their hope. Enoch, only the seventh in descent from them that dwelt in Eden, he who for three centuries on earth walked with his God, was permitted to behold from afar the coming of the Deliverer. ‘Behold,’ he declared, ‘the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all’ (Jude 14, 15).

“The coming of Christ to usher in the reign of righteousness has inspired the most sublime and impassioned utterances of the sacred writers. The poets and prophets of the Bible have dwelt upon it in words glowing with celestial fire. The psalmist sang of the power and majesty of Israel’s King: ‘Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence. . . . He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people.’ (Psalm 50:2-4). ‘Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad . . . before the Lord: for He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth.’ (Psalm 96:11-13) . . “When the Saviour was about to be separated from His disciples, He comforted them in their sorrow with the assurance that He would come again: ‘Let not your heart be troubled . . In My Father’s house are many mansions. . I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself’ (John 14:1- 3).

‘The Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him.’ ‘Then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations’ (Matthew 25:31, 32).

“The angels who lingered upon Olivet after Christ’s ascension repeated to the disciples the promise of His return: ‘This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven’ (Acts 1:11). In addition, the apostle Paul, speaking by the Spirit of Inspiration, testified: ‘The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God’ (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Says the prophet of Patmos: ‘Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him’ (Revelation 1:7).”

6.1 WILL CHRIST COME AGAIN.

John 14:2-3—“In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” We can rely upon the word of Christ. Our eternal future is secure when it rests upon the promises of His Word. Jesus said, “I will come again,” and He surely will. Nothing in heaven or earth can be more certain than His Word and, therefore, His coming. For centuries the people of God awaited the fulfillment of the promises concerning Christ’s first coming as the Messiah. Then came the wonderful day when heavenly messengers made the announcement: “Unto you is born

this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). Just as surely as the promises of God were fulfilled in the first advent of Jesus to this world, just so surely will be those that pertain to His second advent. The day of His return will be the most wonderful day in all history. When Jesus was put under oath by the high priest at His trial, as He stood a prisoner flanked by guards at the foot of Caiaphas' throne, He said, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26:64). This promise, made under the oath, and can be depended upon—He will come again.

6.2 HOW WILL HE COME?

1. So we can see Him. Revelation 1:7—"Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him." Matthew 24:30—"Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Acts 1:9-11; Matthew 24:23-27).

2. So we can hear Him. Matthew 24:31—"He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." 1 Thessalonians 4:16—"The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God."

3. He will come in glory. Matthew 25:31—“When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory.” The effect of this glory upon the inhabitants of earth we can only faintly imagine. If, at the time of Christ’s resurrection, the appearance of one

4. He will come unexpectedly. Matthew 24:44—“Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.” Matthew 24:36—“Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only.” In the clearest language, Jesus Christ taught that His coming would be open, announced, personal, literal, visible, and that good and bad alike would see Him come. He was to come as a “thief in the night” only in the sense that none would know the “day and hour,” and multitudes would be unprepared. Sometimes we find, in certain commentaries or in Bible footnotes, references to a secret coming of our Lord. These are only expressions of man; and, although well-meaning, they are not the inspired Word of God. If we are led into delusions about secret comings of Christ, we shall be open to other deceptions. Eve was “deceived,” but God held her responsible. Before she could believe the deceiver she had to disbelieve God. Jesus warned, “Take heed that no man deceive you” (Matthew 24:4). A woman came up to a preacher and asked, “Are you the man who talks over the radio?” “Yes,” he said, “I am one such man.” “Do you believe Christ is coming literally?” she queried. “Yes,” answered the man. Said she, “I wish you would come over to

my town. My minister has a private seance. I will get you in for nothing. A mighty power comes. A glorious being appears. This is Jesus Christ." "Well," said the preacher, "I will not be there." Said he, "I have an old Book that explains all that." He took out his Bible and read Matthew 24:26-27: "Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Then he said, "Madam, I don't deny that somebody comes there to that private seance, but it is not my Saviour, and it is not my Lord, and I will not be there to meet the one who comes there." Friend, if some glorious being, or any other kind of being, should appear to you and even perform some miracles of healing or work a thousand wonders, it is not Jesus Christ. He is not coming that way. Fantastic delusive teachings are sweeping millions into a river of deception. When Christ comes back, He will be "this same Jesus" who went away (Acts 1:9-11). "This same Jesus" who rose from the dead had flesh and bones (Luke 24:39-43). He ascended to heaven as the Son of man to be our Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5). He is coming back literally and physically as the Son of man (Matthew 26:64). There will be nothing secretive or ghostly about it.

6.3 WHY WILL HE COME?

1. To raise the righteous dead. 1 Thessalonians 4:16—“The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.”

2. To catch up the righteous living with the resurrected dead. 1 Thessalonians 4:17—“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

3. To change their vile bodies. Philippians 3:20-21—“Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.”

4. To take the righteous to heaven. John 14:2-3—“I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” He comes for His people. With intense longing has He desired that “they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am (John 17:24).” The One who was rejected, crucified, exalted, and glorified is “coming again in like manner as He ascended; to raise the dead, to judge the world, to save His people, to be glorified in His saints, to crush the usurper, to destroy His foes, and to reign forever as the Lord of all” (H. L. Hastings).

5. To destroy the living wicked. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9—“The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 2:8, about those whom He will “destroy with the brightness of His coming”).

7.0 THE GREAT TRIBULATION

The oppression of God’s people has flowed for centuries following Jesus’ death. And the Bible explains that there will also be a future period of tribulation before Christ’s return (Matthew 24:29-30).

Speaking of this time before His return to earth, Jesus in the Olivet discourse said “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened” (verses 21-22).

This time of suffering and death is called the Great Tribulation because its severity will surpass all previous periods of suffering experienced throughout human history (verse 21).

Other scriptures on this subjects are, Jeremiah 30: 7, Daniel 9: 27, 12: 1, Revelation 6 – 19, II Thessalonian 2: 3-4.

7.1 THE DURATION AND FOR WHO

The Tribulation is a seven-year period of intense trouble, world-wide in scope but centering around the Jews and Jerusalem. We know from Daniel that the 7-year period begins when an evil world ruler known as the anti-christ gets a treaty signed involving Israel and other nations. Halfway through the 7-year tribulation the antichrist commits what is known as the “abomination of desolation.” The antichrist will go into the Temple in Jerusalem and demand to be worshipped in God’s temple as God. This event ushers in the period of time known as the “great tribulation” in the last three and half years.

It is going to be the worst time of trouble the world will ever experience. Approximately 2/3 of the world’s population will perish including 2/3 of the Jews. At the end of the Great Tribulation, those who died for their faith during the tribulation will be resurrected. (Rev 20:4) The Great Tribulation climaxes with the Battle of Armageddon and the Second Coming of Christ.

Through several prophets, God identified the peoples who would primarily be affected by this coming crisis. God explained to Jeremiah that this terrible time would come upon Israel and Judah (Jeremiah 30:4). The modern-day descendants of these people include the predominantly English-speaking Christian-professing nations and the Jewish peoples today.

And as we have already noted, Jesus Christ warned His faithful followers that this coming period of tribulation would be a

dangerous time for true Christians as well. Jesus' prophesied "then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake" (Matthew 24:9). This will be fulfilled at the end of this age in the fifth seal of the book of Revelation (Revelation 6:9-11).

But this unprecedented time of trouble will not just affect the descendants of Israel and the Church. Tribulation will threaten the existence of human life on the earth. Today, a number of weapons of mass destruction and other threats could bring human extinction.

Jesus promised to intervene to cut short the tribulation and save humanity from itself.

7.2 WHY THE GREAT TRIBULATION?

This is perhaps the most essential question of all. God is a long-suffering and merciful God. But just as a loving father corrects his wayward son, so God will bring this severe punishment if warnings are not heeded and widespread sins are not repented of, Ezekiel 5: 7-10

God will reach a point where His forbearance with wickedness will run out. He explains what will be the fate of His unrepentant people in Ezekiel 5: 11-12.

Scripture explains that God has great long-suffering with humanity before His anger reaches such a critical point (2 Peter 3:9; Romans 2:4-11). The Great Tribulation represents a time when this point will have been reached with nations that have no excuse because they have been amply warned.

7.3 WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE NATIONS THAT HARM ISRAEL?

One purpose for God allowing the Great Tribulation to occur will be to humble the physical nations that have descended from biblical Israel and lead them to repentance. At the end of this 3½-year period, indications are that God will see a change of heart among the survivors of His people Israel. He will then retaliate on those cruel nations in measure for their heartless treatment toward His people, Jeremiah 30: 16

After Israel is disciplined, God will avenge His people. This is described in numerous other prophecies in the Bible, including Deuteronomy 32:43; Isaiah 35:3-4; Isaiah 47:5-15; Joel 3:12-15; Jeremiah 25:29-33; and Ezekiel 25-28.

After this period of correction, Christ will return to earth and the survivors of these Israelite nations will undergo a complete transformation. They will become a holy people and an example to all the other nations on earth, Zephaniah 3:11-13, 13: 8-9.

7.4 THOSE WHO COME OUT OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION

There are very encouraging words in the Bible for those who desire to obey God. The Apostle John received a vision from God showing that from among these greatly oppressed people, a great multitude will be spiritually purified through the coming trial upon all lands and peoples—the nations of Israel first and then the rest of the nations.

The book of Revelation describes those who turn to God from the modern nations of Israel and from other nations as “ones who have come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:14).

7.5 HOW MIGHT THE GREAT TRIBULATION AFFECT US?

Jesus Christ gave a warning to be sure we are heeding His life-transforming message of repentance, faith and righteousness. In Luke’s Gospel, Christ told His followers, “So you also, when you see these things happening [the signs He described], know that the kingdom of God is near” (Luke 21:31-32).

Jesus also said, “Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man” (verse 36).