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Messianic Perspectives®

God has not forgotten the Jewish people, and neither have we.

THE EIGHT JUDGMENTS OF THE LAST DAYS

PART ONE

BY GARY HEDRICK

In this study, we will be focusing on the “last days” judgments—that is, the eschatological judgments. There are at least eight of these events, including one that occurred two thousand years ago and seven others that are yet in the future. These judgments often get overlooked when believers study prophecy—and that’s unfortunate because they are an integral part of God’s plan for the end times. In fact, virtually every future, prophetic event is associated, either directly or indirectly, with one or more of these divine judgments.

The Purpose of Judgment

The Hebrew and Greek words for “judgment” are *shaphat* (שָׁפַט) and *krima* (κρίμα), respectively. Both terms convey the idea of people being held accountable for their actions. Judgment is an ancient concept that has carried over into modern jurisprudence, where a judge hears arguments in a case, examines the evidence, and renders a fair and just verdict. If someone has been wronged, it’s made right. The offender is punished.

Judgment, then, is the process of dispensing justice. The term “justice” appears 130 times in the English text of the Bible. The interpretive “Law of First Mention,” in this case, takes us all the way back to Genesis 18:19: “*For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, **that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him***” (emphasis added).



And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.
Genesis 5:24



Keeping “the way of the LORD,” then, can be summed up as doing “righteousness and justice.” That’s how important justice is to God. It’s part of Who He is! In fact, the Bible associates His return to Planet Earth with His judgment and justice. To bring judgment and justice—that’s one of the main reasons He’s coming back!

So, the Lord isn’t returning just so we can enjoy being reunited with our departed loved ones—as wonderful as that will be. Much more than that, He’s returning to put evil in its place, and to set things right! He has seen the agonized tears and heard the desperate cries of the oppressed and the heartbroken—and He is putting Satan and the forces of evil on notice that He’s returning to this sin-ravaged planet to hold them accountable for the mess they’ve made of it. And when He arrives, He will execute swift judgment and vengeance on every form of ungodliness. Enoch, the seventh generation from Adam, shared this vision of God’s coming judgment:

Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men [i.e., apostates] also, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him” (Jude 14–15).

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The Necessity of Judgment

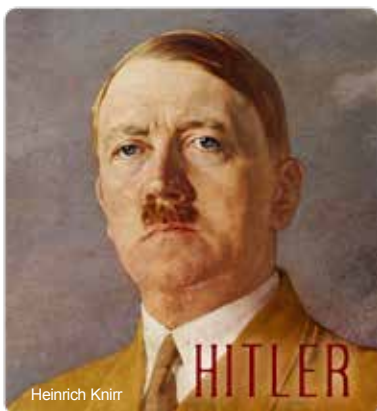
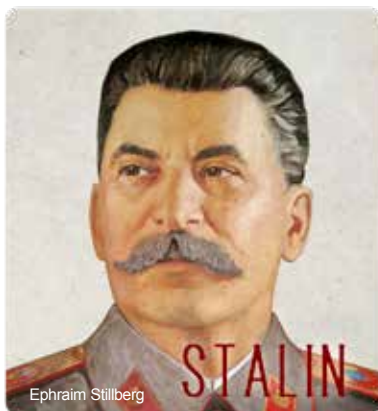
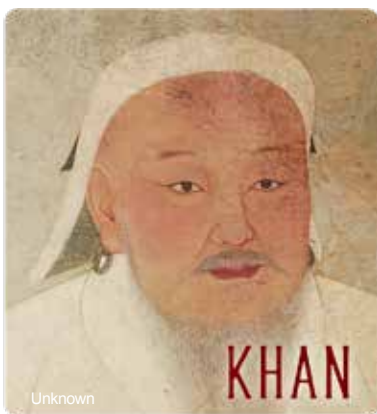
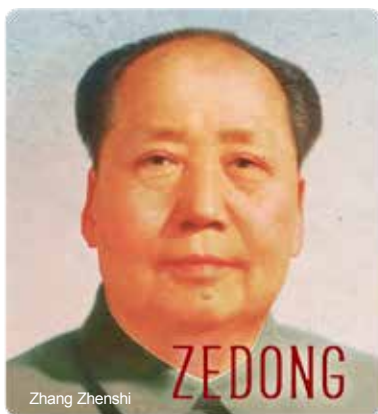
Divine judgment is not only biblical, but it's also *necessary*. In Scripture, the Lord portrays Himself as the Defender of the weak and powerless. The mission He assigns to His people is this: *Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy; free them from the hand of the wicked* (Psalm 82:3–4).

God's future judgment is necessary because it protects His righteous nature and reputation. If He allowed evil to run rampant in His universe with no ultimate liability or accountability, He wouldn't be a benevolent God. He would be a poor steward of His own creation.

Future judgment is about accountability. If there is no accountability, then evildoers get away scot-free—without having to answer for their diabolical mischief. But God won't allow that to happen. He is a good God, a God of justice, and He assures us that the wicked will answer for what they have done. Even those who may have thought they got away with something will find that they were sadly mistaken.

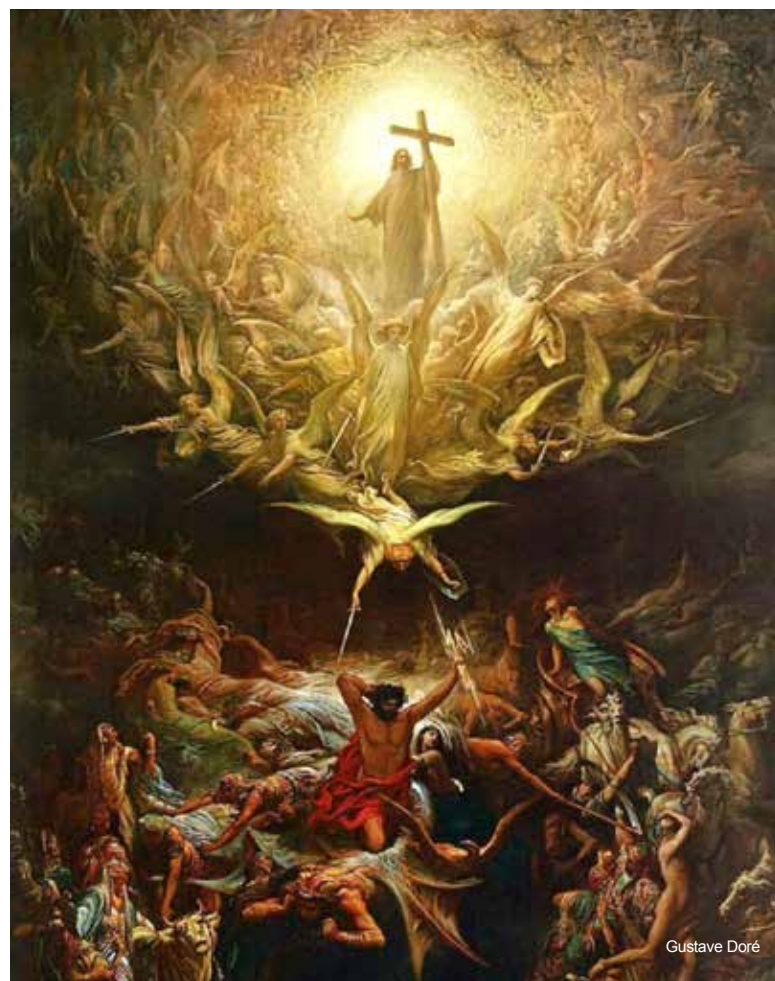
For example, consider the following. History's list of blood-thirsty dictators who reigned with terror while slaughtering millions is quite extensive. Here's a suggested list of the top four:¹

- **Mao Zedong**—45 million dead (1958–62) in his “Great Leap Forward” (China)
- **Genghis Khan**—40 million dead (13th century) in his Mongol conquests (up to ten percent of the earth's population at that time)
- **Joseph Stalin**—An estimated 20 to 60 million killed (20th century) in the Soviet Union, including the Ukrainian genocide (1932–33)
- **Adolf Hitler**—Roughly 13 million exterminated in Europe, including 6 million Jews in the Nazi “final solution” (1933–45)



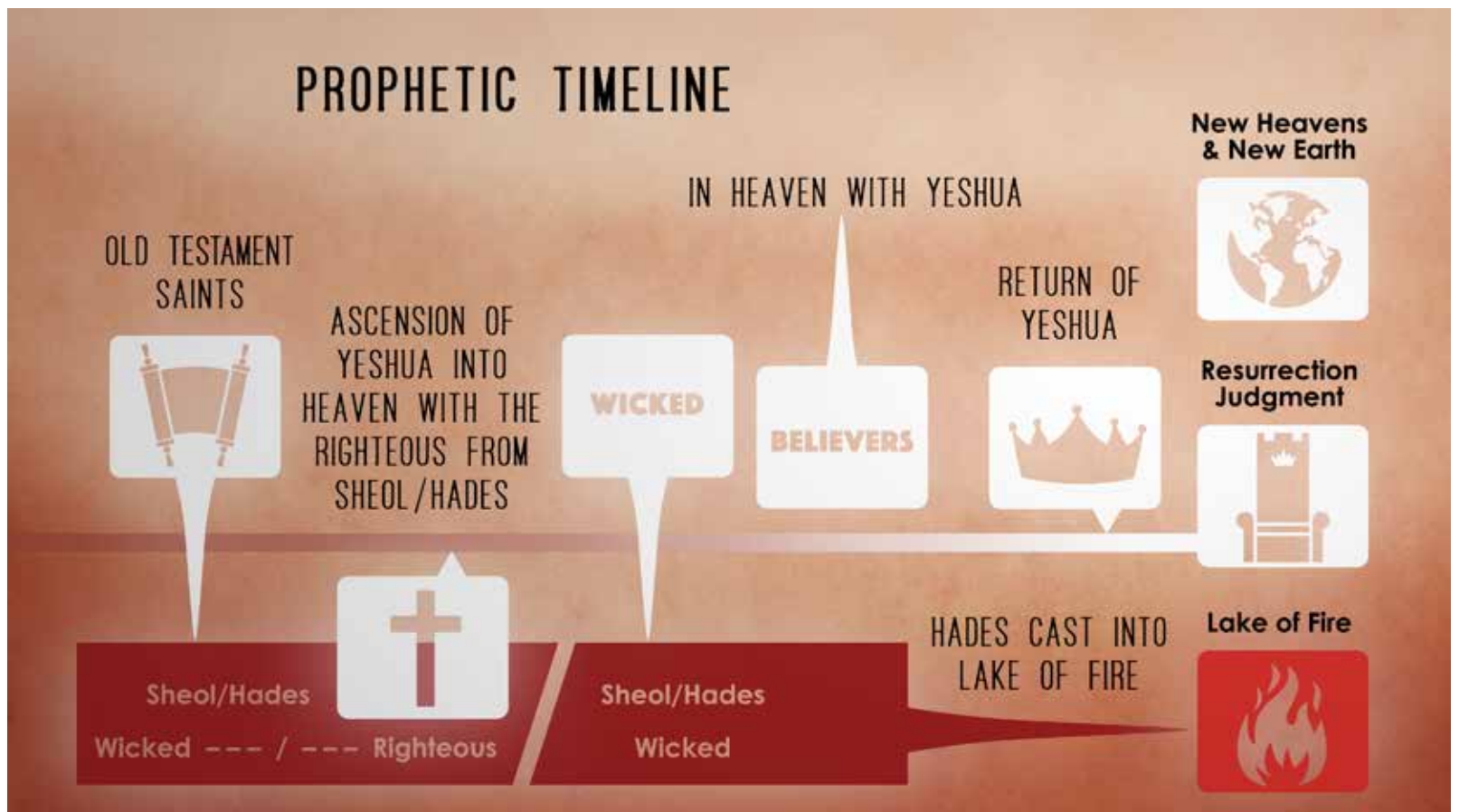
These four mass murderers, along with innumerable other evil tyrants throughout history, will answer for their wicked deeds to the great Judge of the universe. Every evil deed they ever committed has been recorded in God's “books”—and they will give an account for everything they've done. They will answer for every drop of blood they spilled, every child they orphaned, every wife they widowed, every dollar they embezzled, and every evil scheme they hatched.

At the same time, however, it's a mistake to look at that “top four” list and think that tyrants like them are our real enemies—because they're not. The Bible says our real enemies are not flesh-and-blood. Here's how the Apostle Paul describes the unseen forces that are arrayed against us: *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places* (Eph. 6:12). In other words, we face a vast hierarchy of demonic operatives, all of whom are deployed and empowered by that old Dragon, Satan (Rev. 13:2–4). They employ flesh-and-blood (human) agents of evil to do their dirty work; however, they themselves are inspired and orchestrated by evil and dark powers that are invisible to physical eyes.



Mark it down: No one gets off the hook by claiming, “The devil made me do it.” The devil uses mortals to do his bidding, true enough—but they must be willing to be used. So, the devil's human instruments will be held accountable for their actions, just like he himself will be.²

What all of this means is that the Judge is coming! His judgment may be harsh, but it's necessary. The psalmist sang out, *For He is coming to judge the earth. With righteousness He shall judge the world, and the peoples with equity* (Psalm 98:9).



Resurrection and Judgment

The topics of resurrection and judgment go hand-in-hand. All human beings who have ever lived will be resurrected someday to be compensated for what they did during their lifetime, whether good or bad.

Hitler, to repeat just one notorious example, may have thought he was going to escape judgment by committing suicide in that Berlin bunker in 1945. But if that's what the Fuehrer was thinking, he knows now that he was terribly, tragically mistaken. Even as loyal aides were dousing his lifeless corpse with petroleum, and preparing to set it on fire, his spirit had already tumbled downward, in its conscious yet disembodied state, into a holding area known as Hades (i.e., the "unseen" spirit-world).³ The area of Hades where the Nazi dictator currently resides is called *Gehenna* (translated "Hell" in passages like Luke 12:5; Matt. 10:28; and 23:15, 33).⁴ Gehenna is a temporary place of torment for the spirits/souls of people who rejected God's offer of salvation during their earthly lifetime (Luke 16:22–23).⁵



Daniel 12:3 suggests that the unrighteous dead (that is, unbelievers), who are currently awaiting judgment in an intermediate, disembodied state, will someday be restored to a type of bodily existence when it's their turn to stand and be judged at the Great White Throne. The unbeliever's restored body—which we frankly don't know much about—won't be equivalent to the believer's glorified, power-infused "spiritual body" (*soma pneumatikon*; 1 Cor. 15:43–44). Nonetheless, Daniel says that the physical bodies currently "sleeping" in the "dust of the earth" will "awaken" someday and be reunited with their spirits/personalities to stand before God in judgment (Dan. 12:2).⁶ The Prophet includes both the righteous (that is, those who awaken "to everlasting life") and the unrighteous (those who awaken to "everlasting shame and contempt") among those whose bodies will be raised up out of the dust of the earth. This is how we know that even lost people will receive some type of restored physical body (from the elements of "the dust of the earth") at the judgment. Since the unbeliever's restored body won't be glorified or "incorruptible" like the believer's (1 Cor. 15:52), it may be subject to permanent corruption and decay.⁷ How heartbreaking to imagine a grotesque, Gollum-like creature that is in a state of ongoing decay and disintegration but cannot die.

Once they are in the Lake of Fire, *unbelievers may wish they could die*—but they won't be able to. Like the tormented rebels during the Tribulation who will cry out for the mountains and rocks to fall on them so they can die and escape their suffering (Rev. 6:15–16), death will elude these unbelieving dead because they are, in some bizarre sense, indestructible.

Yes, judgment is a certainty. The Lord is returning to this world as Judge of both the living and the dead: *I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom* (2 Tim. 4:1).⁸

Millennial Views and Judgment

Many Christians, when they first learn about how contentious the millennial issue has been throughout Church history, wonder what all the commotion has been about. What is so important about a millennium, anyway? Why does it matter if we take it literally or not?

The answer to those questions is that the Millennium isn't just a prophetic measurement of time. More than that, it represents a comprehensive way of looking at the Bible through a literal-historical lens. The Millennium is about future events prophesied in the Scriptures—and whether or not those events will really happen. Are they actual, future events? Or is it possible that Revelation (including the Millennium) is an allegory or extended metaphor of some sort?

The first-century apostles and the Early Church embraced a millennial view known as Chiliasm (from the Greek word for “thousand”). This was an early form of historic premillennialism that said Yeshua would return someday to rule over an earthly Kingdom from His seat of government in Jerusalem. It wasn't until the fourth century or so (the time of Augustine) that Christian theologians began to entertain the possibility that promises about the Millennium weren't meant to be taken literally.

It's important to understand that a literalist-futurist view of Revelation doesn't mean we don't recognize John's frequent use of symbols and images in this amazing book. What it *does* mean is that, even when John uses a literary device of some sort, we believe he's using it to point us to a literal reality. The “thousand years” of Revelation 20, then, is a literal period that closes out the first millennium of the eternal Kingdom of God. Heaven on earth (the “New Jerusalem”) will be a wondrous, literal reality. The end-time showdown that's portrayed in the closing chapters of Revelation (between our King-Messiah and the Serpent, the devil) will really happen. The Armageddon Campaign will be a series of earthly battles. The judgments will be real. The Tribulation will also be real—and multitudes will perish. These are all literal events, some of which are couched in symbolic terms.⁹

So, what we believe about the Millennium is important because it frames the way we view the whole Bible. Premillennialism is the view that the Second Coming happens *before* the Millennium. Postmillennialism says the Second Coming happens *after* the Millennium. Amillennialism says there is no literal Millennium—that is, it should be understood in a *spiritual* sense. In fact, according to our amillennialist friends, we are in the Millennium—that is, a spiritual Kingdom—now (during the Church Age).

THREE MILLENNIAL VIEWS

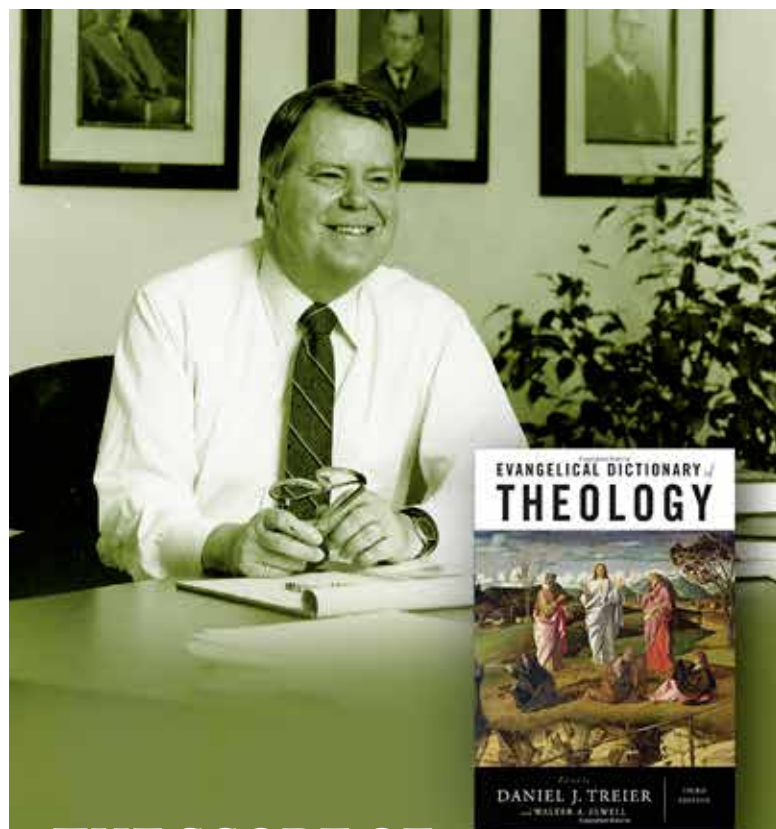
	The Millennium & the Second Coming	The Rapture	Adherents	Method of Interpretation	Israel & the Church
PREMIL (Dispensational Premillennialism or its earlier cousin, Historical Premillennialism)	Yeshua returns to Planet Earth (Jerusalem) at the end of the age before the commencement of the literal, thousand-year Millennium.	In the dispensational version, believers are raptured before the seven-year Tribulation. In the historical version, the Rapture is essentially post-Trib.	Historical Premillennialism was the position of the early church, according to historian Philip Schaff in his classic <i>History of the Christian Church</i> .	Premillennialism embraces a Literal/Grammatical-Historical hermeneutic, per Charles Ryrie (<i>Dispensational Today</i>) & Paul Lee Tan (<i>The Interpretation of Prophecy</i>).	Israel and the Church are two distinct peoples of God, on parallel tracks in God's ongoing plan of the ages. Jewish believers are “the Israel of God.”
POSTMIL (Postmillennialism)	Yeshua returns after a future, non-literal “Millennium” or church age.	The Rapture and the Second Coming are generally not distinguished from one another. They happen concurrently.	Some postmillennialists today are active as Preterists and Reconstructionists. Other notables have been B.B. Warfield and Francis Nigel Lee.	Postmillennialism utilizes a Covenant-Historical hermeneutic.	The NT Church replaces OT Israel (i.e., Supersessionism/Fulfillment Theology).
AMIL (Amillennialism)	Yeshua returns at the close of the Tribulation; both phases of the Second Coming are truncated into one; the Davidic Kingdom is now, not in the future.	Living and resurrected saints will meet the Lord “in the air” and immediately proceed to the Judgment of the Nations with Messiah Yeshua.	Augustine (AD 354–430) is considered the “father” of Amillennialism—after he abandoned Historical Premillennialism (Chiliasm) in his later years.	Amillennialism employs a Redemptive-Historical hermeneutic. Associated with Covenant Theology.	The NT Church replaces OT Israel (i.e., Supersessionism/Fulfillment Theology). Redefines “Israel” in Romans 9, 10 & 11.

In Scripture, the topics of judgment and resurrection are closely related. This is understandable since people who have died will be resurrected to stand before the Lord to be judged. Amillennialists and postmillennialists tend to lump all the resurrections and judgments together into one, unified resurrection/judgment event.¹⁰ In support of this streamlined approach, they point to verses like Daniel 12:2, which we considered earlier, where all the resurrections and judgments appear to be compacted into a singular event: *And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.*



However, this approach creates what Norm Geisler calls “a veritable logjam of events at Christ’s second coming, at the end of the Tribulation.”¹¹ If we’re reading the Scriptures correctly, there’s a lot of work to be done during the transition from the Tribulation to the Millennium. Here are some of the events that we believe must take place during this timeframe:

- The Judgment Seat (*Bema*) of the Messiah—In Heaven, during the Tribulation (2 Cor. 5:10)
- The Marriage of the Lamb—In Heaven, after the Rapture, when the Messiah “grants” his Bride the right “to be arrayed in fine linen,” signifying imputed righteousness and purity (Rev. 19:4–8; cp. Eph. 5:27)¹²
- The Armageddon Campaign—Winds down on earth, as the nations of the world tighten the noose on Jerusalem (16:16)
- The Marriage Supper of the Lamb—On earth, after the Marriage in Heaven and the subsequent victory at Armageddon (19:9), at the beginning of the Millennium¹³
- The Judgment of Israel—On earth, at the end of the Tribulation, to sift out rebels and recognize the nation’s new, Messianic status (Ezek. 20:37–38; Rom. 11:26)
- The Judgment of the Nations—On earth, at the end of the Tribulation, to determine which national entities get to enter the Kingdom (Matt. 25:31–46)
- The New Jerusalem—The “Father’s House” (John 14:2), a completely new City, descends through the earth’s atmosphere and touches down in the Middle East at the beginning of the Millennium (Rev. 21:2)



THE SCOPE OF DIVINE JUDGMENT

The late Old Testament scholar David Allen Hubbard suggested six aspects of eschatological judgment:

- (1) Divine judgment is the ultimate triumph of God’s will and the consummate display of His glory in history—the sign that all He intended has been accomplished;
- (2) It is the cosmic declaration that God is just—all affronts to His glory are punished and all recognition of it is rewarded;
- (3) It is the climax of Christ’s ministry, as the Apostles’ Creed affirms;
- (4) It is the reminder that human and cosmic history move toward a goal, measured by the purposes of God;
- (5) Divine judgment is the absolute seal of human accountability—all believers are held responsible for their works, all unbelievers for their rebellion;
- (6) It is the most serious motive for Christian mission—in the face of such judgment the world’s only hope is Messiah’s salvation (Acts 4:12).

—D.A. Hubbard, “Last Judgment” in *The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 672.

In this three-part article, then, we will present the dispensational, premillennial view of the eschatological judgments. The first of the eight judgments took place in the past—two thousand years ago. The other seven are in the future.

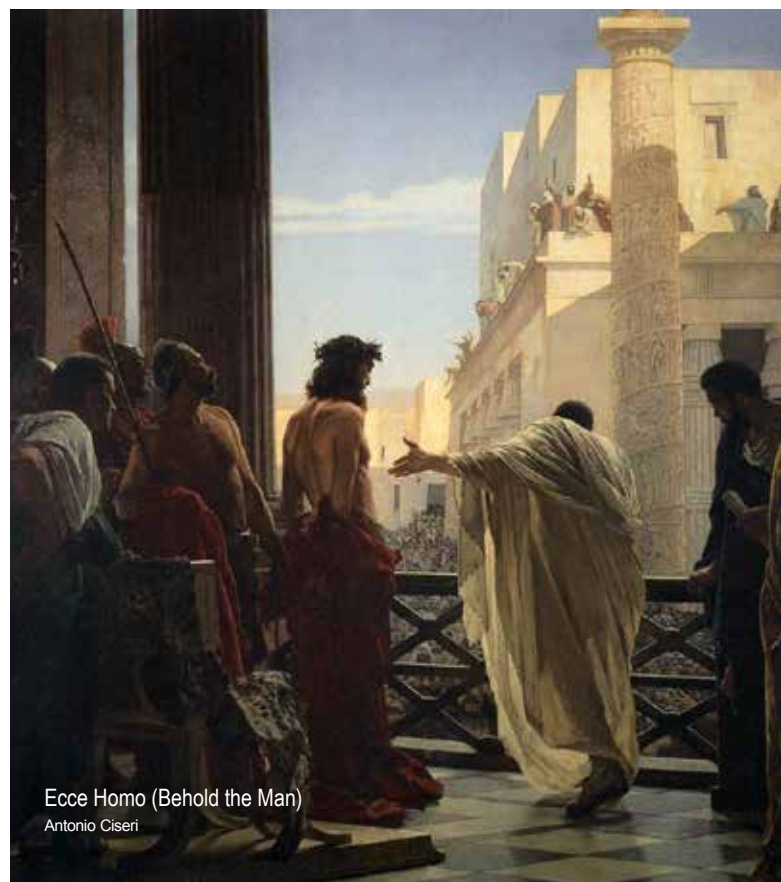
1. THE JUDGMENT OF OUR SINS AT CALVARY

This first judgment took place two thousand years ago and has to do with our legal standing before a holy and righteous God. Here's how the Apostle Paul explained it to the Colossian believers:

*And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, **having nailed it to the cross**. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it (Col. 2:13–15, emphasis added).*

In Greek, a participle is a verb that acts like an adjective—that is, it modifies a noun or pronoun. Notice how the actions in this passage are built around a series of four, consecutive Greek participles. These four participles modify the pronouns “He” or “Him” (both referring to Yeshua) and describe what He has done for us:

- “Having forgiven (*charisamenos*) you all trespasses” (v. 13)
- “Having wiped out (*exaleipsas*) the handwriting of requirements that was against us” (v. 14)
- “Having nailed (*proseilosas*) it [i.e., the list of incriminating violations] to the cross” (v. 14)
- “Having disarmed (*apekdusamenos*) principalities and powers” (v. 15).



Ecce Homo (Behold the Man)
Antonio Ciseri

In biblical times, the most common Roman method of capital punishment was crucifixion. The executioner would nail a list of crimes over the offender's head so passers-by could see who he was and why he was being executed. Accordingly, Pilate had this inscription nailed to the Cross: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS (John 19:19). That was the Lord's “crime.” He had claimed to be a king, so he was supposedly a rival to Caesar (18:33–37).

The Apostle Paul built on this imagery of a criminal's name and list of crimes being nailed to his cross. In Paul's powerful metaphor, a certificate of our indebtedness (itemizing all the ways we stand condemned by God's Law) was nailed to Yeshua's Cross two thousand years ago. He paid the price to satisfy our sin-debt. In this way, we are forgiven of “all trespasses” (Col. 2:13). The Lord took our judgment and condemnation upon Himself. It was an amazing act of love—and an unfathomable blessing!

This is considered an eschatological judgment because the “last days” began two thousand years ago, when Messiah Yeshua came the first time (Heb. 1:2). The period of the “last days” encompasses everything between His first and second comings.



Christ Crucified
Alonso Cano

2. THE JUDGMENT OF END-TIME “BABYLON”

After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury” (Rev. 18:1–3).

Many evangelical scholars, particularly those who are premillennial, see “Babylon” in Revelation 14–18 as a code word for the vast, global system that will engulf the world during the period leading up to the Lord's return to establish His earthly Kingdom.¹⁴ This global system will have political and religious aspects.



The Nazis conducted massive, white nationalist rallies in 1930s Germany to galvanize and extend their influence over the masses. They promised to restore the German Fatherland (*des Deutschen Vaterland*) to its former, pre-World War One greatness.

The Political Aspect

Politically, the head of this end-time system will be someone John refers to elsewhere as “the Antichrist,” or “the anti-Messiah” (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3).¹⁵ In Revelation 13, this Antichrist is the first of two “beasts” who emerge in connection with end-time Babylon—the Beast “out of the sea” (v. 1). He’s portrayed as a satanically inspired political leader who will gain influence until he is essentially acclaimed as a global dictator (v. 7).

Note that the text doesn’t say he will usurp authority, or that he will seize power. Instead, it says, “*Authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation*” (v. 7). During the Tribulation, the people of earth will voluntarily submit to him. In fact, John adds, “*All who dwell on the earth will worship him*” (v. 8). He will be universally revered and adored, democratically chosen and acclaimed as ruler of Planet Earth.

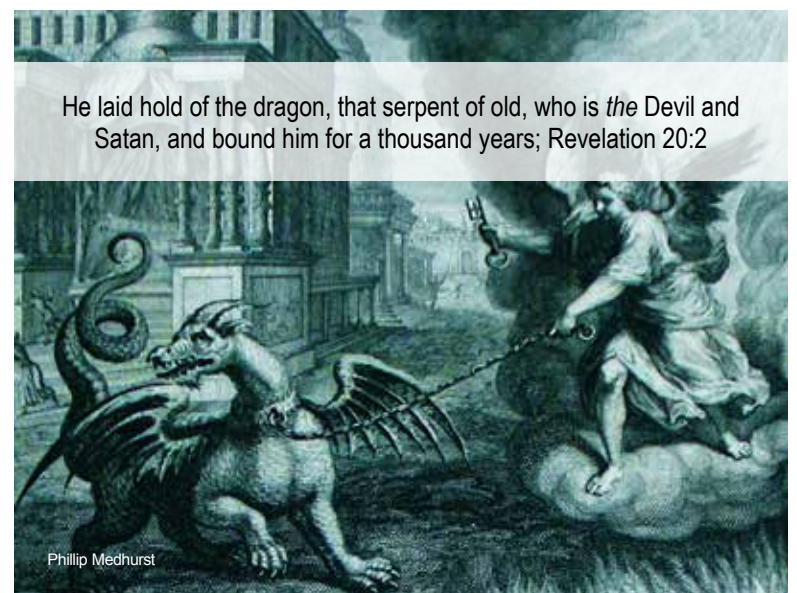
This is the fatal flaw of democracy: Namely, it only works if “we the people” are right. When we’re wrong, it’s a mess. When the masses lack the moral virtue, critical thinking skills, or courage to make good and godly choices, democratic rule can be an unmitigated disaster. This is one reason the American founding fathers set up a Republic (rule by elected officials) rather than a direct democracy (rule by the populace). However, Europe will be low-hanging fruit for a future demagogue who will tell them everything they want to hear. He will be catapulted to fame in his home country somewhere in the Mediterranean region (roughly the same area as the ancient Roman Empire); and from there, his magnetic appeal will spread to the rest of the world.¹⁶

The future political system of the Antichrist will unite the global economy to the extent that it will be virtually impossible for anyone in the world to do business (that is, buy or sell) without being joined to the system. The Bible indicates that participation in the system will require a special “mark” of some kind—the “mark of the beast” (13:17), representing “the number of his name”—“666” (v. 18).¹⁷ There have been innumerable theories, many of them superstitious nonsense, about the nature of that mark. All we can say with certainty is that the mark, whatever it is, will require an allegiance to the Antichrist that is tantamount to worship, making it impossible for true believers to accept it (20:4).

The Religious Aspect

The second “beast” is said to come “up out of the earth” (v. 11) in John’s vision. He calls this second Beast “the False Prophet,” a religious leader who will serve the first Beast (i.e., the Antichrist) as the head of a global, ecumenical religious network (vv. 11–18; cp. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10). This will be a global alliance of religions and denominations that embrace various expressions of insipid, feel-good spirituality but reject biblical truth and authority. Indications are that this end-time religious amalgamation will also be anti-Israel and even anti-Semitic. Perhaps not coincidentally, even in our day, ecumenical institutions like the National and World Councils of Churches routinely take positions on the Middle East that are pro-Palestinian and anti-Israel—particularly during times of conflict.¹⁸

This evil prophet represents a dangerous intermingling of religion with state power in the last days, much like it was in imperial Rome, where Caesar was worshipped as a deity. In fact, the first beast (the Antichrist) will control this second Beast (the False Prophet). Each one of them, in turn, will be inspired and controlled by the “dragon” (i.e., Satan; 13:2, 11).¹⁹



He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; Revelation 20:2

Phillip Medhurst

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

UNTANGLING THE REVELATION AND ITS MYSTERIES

Genre. When we interpret the Bible, it's important to recognize that its sixty-six books include different genres (that is, types or classifications of writings)—including narrative-historical, poetic, legal, wisdom, letters, and apocalyptic-prophetic literature. If we fail to distinguish between these categories, we can end up with some very odd (and wrong) interpretations. For instance, if we don't recognize that Psalm 36:7 is poetry (in this case, the lyrics of a song), we might take it literally and conclude that God must have feathers. The psalm says: *How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings.* The imagery is beautiful, but certainly not intended to be taken literally. The Lord isn't a bird. This is why recognizing genre can be critical in biblical interpretation.

Discovering the unknown. The Book of Revelation is a classic example of apocalyptic literature. In fact, in the Greek manuscripts, the title of Revelation is *The Apocalypse*. The Greek word *apokalypsis* (ἀποκάλυψις) carries with it the idea of “unveiling” something that wasn't previously known or understood. That's precisely what we have here in the Book of Revelation, where John recounts his amazing vision of the resurrected and glorified Messiah (1:1). One characteristic of apocalyptic literature is that it abounds in mysterious elements like symbols, images, and code words. (A code word—like “Babylon”—is a term that normally means one thing but is employed cryptically by the writer to represent something else.)

Literal or symbolic? Reading Revelation apocalyptically doesn't mean every detail must be taken as symbolic. Some elements can still be viewed as literal. Although it's not unusual to find more than one genre in a single work, people tend to go to one extreme or the other. That is, they either take everything literally or they make the book wholly symbolic. Therefore, we need wisdom and discernment to know what's symbolic and what's not—especially in an apocalyptic work like the Book of Revelation.

A supernatural worldview. The Bible is a supernatural book. In its main storyline, the featured Protagonist is God himself—the preeminent representation of supernaturalism. The problem is that liberal-critical scholars tend to suffer from an overriding, anti-supernatural bias. That's why some of them fail to see that this mysterious Book of Revelation “unveils” a warfare in Heaven (the supernatural realm) that spills over into the earthly realm (literal history). For a scholarly response to secular, anti-supernatural bias, see Michael Heisler, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015).

Code Word “Babylon”


Commentator Alan F. Johnson expands the meaning of the code word “Babylon” here in Revelation to include the anti-god world powers of *all the ages*. So, the earthly rebellion that will reach its zenith at the end of the age with prophetic “Babylon” started thousands of years ago, with Adam and Eve rebelling in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1–19). There is continuity through the ages, then, as the powers of darkness have always colluded with the devil against God and His Messiah.

In his comments on Revelation 17:18, Johnson writes:

The “woman” and “the great city” [“Babylon”] are one. Yet this city is not just a historical one; it is the *great city*, the *mother city*, the archetype of every evil system opposed to God in history—a billing that Rome cannot fit. . . . Her kingdom holds sway over the powers of the earth. John's concept of the city in Revelation entails much more than a specific historical city, even in its political and sociological aspects. The cities in Revelation are communities; they are twofold: the city of God, the new Jerusalem (3:12; 21:2, 10; 22:2–5), and the city of Satan, Babylon the Great (11:8; 14:8; 16:19; 18:4, 20). The meaning cannot be confined to Sodom or Egypt or Jerusalem or Rome or any future city. Instead, John describes the real transhistorical system of satanic evil that infuses them all.²⁰

The destruction of this end-time “Babylon the Great” is graphically depicted in Revelation 18, where John writes: *Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her* (v. 8).

In our day, we can already see how the world system is increasingly antagonistic toward God-ordained authority and biblical morality. Sins and perversions that would have been unthinkable just a few years ago are now being normalized here in North America and around the world. God-ordained boundaries are crumbling all around us. God's enemies are emboldened by the support they receive from every corner of our corrupt and ungodly culture.

If we are as close to the end as some of us think, this downward spiral will continue until it bottoms out near the end of the coming Tribulation Period. That's when God will bring “Babylon” crashing down in a spectacular demonstration of His power. Even the wealthy merchants and others who benefitted from their illicit relationship with Babylon the Great will acknowledge that her demise was God's doing. A voice from Heaven will declare that justice has been done: *“Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!”* (v. 20). 



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¹ The statistics in this “top four” list were derived from Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia (wikipedia.com).

² We will talk later in this study about the future judgment of the devil and his angels.

³ The Bible consistently situates Hades/Sheol (i.e., the “unseen” realm of the spirits of the dead, which in the OT included both the righteous and unrighteous) *downward*, perhaps in a subterranean region (note 2:10, where spirits “under the earth” are said to be subject to the lordship of Yeshua the Messiah; also cp. 1 Sam. 28:3–19). Heaven (the New Jerusalem, the “third heaven”), on the other hand, is always said to be *up*, beyond the earth’s atmosphere, somewhere in the heavenlies or possibly in another dimension of reality (Acts 1:9–11). This “up/down” spatial orientation doesn’t change until the future Millennium, when the New Jerusalem emerges from wherever it has been all this time and descends through the earth’s atmosphere, finally settling on its foundation in the Middle East (Rev. 21:1–2). Then we will have, literally, “Heaven on earth.”

⁴ The Greek word *Hades* (ᾍδης) derives from the *alpha-* prefix (lit., “not”) combined with the verb *eido* (“seen” or “perceived”). So, *a + eido* = the “unseen” or “unperceived” realm of the dead. The inspired writers of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures employed terms from Greek culture (and yes, even mythology) when it helped their readers understand truth. In this instance, that truth was the reality of a spiritual underworld with its subdivisions for different classifications of people—(1) Paradise (or Abraham’s Bosom), for the spirits of departed believers, (2) Gehenna, for the spirits of the wicked dead, and (3) Tartarus, the holding area for fallen angels. The inhabitants of Paradise appear to have been evacuated from Hades and transferred upward, directly to the New Jerusalem, at the Ascension (Eph. 4:8–10). The Hebrew equivalent for Hades is *Sheol*.

⁵ Gehenna (in Hades) is a temporary abode for the unbelieving dead of all the ages. Its occupants will be transferred to the Lake of Fire following the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11–15).

⁶ When the Bible talks about the dead being “asleep,” it’s referring to their material bodies. Those bodies “sleep” in a grave or tomb where they decompose over time and return to the dust of the earth from which they came (Gen. 3:19). Their spirit/soul, however, is either with the Lord or (in the case of unbelievers) languishing in Gehenna. At the future resurrection, God will see that those “sleeping” bodies “awaken.” Even if they no longer exist, bodies will be reconstituted and reunited with the spirits that have been waiting in Hades (or in Heaven) for final adjudication. We don’t know precisely how God will regather those atoms and molecules and restore those dead bodies, many of which have literally turned to dust, blown away in the wind, and no longer exist in any material sense. What we *do* know, however, is that cloning in the twenty-first century is a real thing—and God’s technology is without a doubt far superior to ours! It’s not hard to imagine Him employing a unique, molecular DNA blueprint to clone an individual whose body disintegrated to dust centuries or even millennia ago.

⁷ Thinking about a process of “corruption and decay” brings to mind God’s words in Genesis 2:17, where He told Adam that if he ate the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, he would be subjected to an ongoing cycle of corruption and decay in which he would, in effect, *die continually* (lit., “dying you shall die”). It’s the imperfect form of the verb (“you shall die”) in combination with the infinite absolute form of the same verb. So dying like this isn’t a one-time event; it goes on and on. We find a similar construction in the Hebrew text of Numbers 26:65, where it references the death of an entire generation after the Exodus—a process that took forty years in the wilderness to complete.

⁸ Notice the precision of God’s Word here. There are two timeframes for the judgment of the wicked in 2 Timothy 4:1. First, “at His appearing” refers, as closely as we can tell, to the Messiah’s coming in glory at the end of the Tribulation (Rev. 19:11–16). Second, the phrase “at His kingdom” points to the Great White Throne at the close of the Millennium, following the second battle of Gog and Magog (Rev. 20:7–15).

⁹ Sometimes a non-literalist critic will point to some element in Revelation that’s obviously symbolic—like the “sword” that comes out of Messiah’s mouth at Armageddon (Rev. 19:15)—and they’ll ask, “How do you make something like this literal? Don’t you see how ridiculous it is to interpret Revelation literally?” However, this is a bogus argument against a literal-historical hermeneutic. The argument ultimately fails because we literalists have no difficulty accepting elements that are clearly identifiable as symbols—like a “sword” coming out of someone’s mouth, “frogs” representing unclean spirits (16:13), or “the Lion of the Tribe of Judah” standing majestically for the victorious Son of the Living God (5:5). Symbols (correctly identified, of course) are gladly recognized by literalists.

¹⁰ Amillennialism says there’s no future millennial Kingdom. Rather, it says, the OT promises about a Davidic Kingdom have symbolic meaning and are fulfilled in the Church—which is a spiritual Kingdom, of sorts—rather than being fulfilled on behalf of the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Postmillennialism, on the other hand, advocates a non-literal Millennium (not necessarily a thousand years). Modern postmillennialists generally agree with the amillennial view that we are in the Millennium (such as it is) now. The Lord will return *after* the Millennium, according to Postmillennialism, once the Church has succeeded in “Christianizing” (i.e., taking dominion over) the world in anticipation of His return. “Dominionist” and “Kingdom Now” movements are modern offshoots of postmillennial theology.

¹¹ Norm Geisler, *Systematic Theology: Volume Four—Church, Last Things* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2005), 620.

¹² Ancient Hebrew thought wasn’t as abstract and systematic as we’re accustomed to in the West. It was more concrete and appealed more to the *senses*—that is, it was oriented toward what one could touch, see, hear, or feel. John doesn’t arrange these events in Revelation 19 and 20 according to a precise *chronology* as much as he does according to *priority* (for that concrete, sensory effect). Moreover, the scenery in this section of Revelation alternates between Heaven (where multitudes are singing praises to the Lamb of God; 19:1–5) and earth (where the Armageddon Campaign is unfolding north of Jerusalem; 19:21, cp. 16:16). So, putting it all together is complicated! It’s like we’re putting on a VR (virtual reality) headset and watching as the panorama (in Heaven and on earth) unfolds all around us simultaneously. As far as we can tell, however, the Marriage of the Lamb and His Bride takes place in Heaven during the Tribulation (19:7). Then the just-married Bride (i.e., glorified believers) joins up with the “armies” from Heaven who follow the “King of kings and Lord of lords” on “white horses” (vv. 14–16) as they descend into the Middle East and quickly destroy the Beast and his forces at Armageddon (vv. 19–21). As John watches this vision of future events, the angel explains that the Bride is the New Jerusalem, which has followed the white-robed saints in their journey from Heaven to earth (21:9–11). However, the Bride isn’t the city itself, but rather its redeemed inhabitants, the saints. Many dispensational premillennialists teach that the New Jerusalem doesn’t descend from Heaven until *after* the Millennium, when the “new heavens and a new earth” (the so-called “Eternal State”) appears. However, it is difficult to maintain such a view from Scripture. One reason is that corresponding millennial passages in Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22 make it clear that the term “new heavens and a new earth” *refers to the Millennium itself*. They are one and the same. Ergo, we conclude that the New Jerusalem is already situated on the earth during the Millennium.

¹³ Some notable authorities—like Pastor Tony Evans of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas, for instance—see the entire thousand years of the Millennium as the Marriage Feast.

¹⁴ Charles Dyer, a well-known Bible professor (Moody Bible Institute), respected commentator, and prolific prophecy writer, has for years advocated a literal view of prophetic “Babylon.” Dyer believed Saddam Hussein was rebuilding the ancient city in the 1990s (prior to Hussein’s demise in 2003), and he still teaches that the literal city of Babylon (in present-day Iraq) will experience a resurgence in the future. His book *The Rise of Babylon: Sign of the End Times* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2003) continues to be available on Amazon and other online outlets. Our position, however, is that “Babylon” in Revelation is a code word for the global, political/religious system of the Antichrist and his puppet, the False Prophet.

¹⁵ The Greek term *antichristos* (ἀντίχριστος) incorporates the prefix *anti-* (lit., “against” or “in place of”) with the proper noun *Christos* (“Messiah”). Etymologically, then, the term indicates either someone who opposes the Messiah or who seeks to replace Him—or perhaps (in this case) both.

¹⁶ The prophecy in Daniel 9:26 predicted that Jerusalem would be destroyed in AD 70 by “the people of the prince who is to come.” History tells us that the destruction in AD 70 came at the hands of the Romans, who ruled over the ancient Mediterranean world. Therefore, we conclude that the future “prince” (Heb., *nagid*), a pseudo-messiah who will someday desecrate the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem (Matt. 24:15), will also come from the domain of the ancient Roman Empire.

¹⁷ “The number of his (i.e., the Beast’s) name” is most likely a reference to the ancient practice of *gematria*, a system of numerology that assigns numeric values to each letter in the Hebrew or Greek alphabet. However, caution is advised here because gematria has been used to “prove” that the Antichrist was everyone from the Roman Emperor Nero, FDR, JFK, and Nixon, to Henry Kissinger, Barack Obama, and numerous Roman Catholic popes, among many others. It’s much more likely that the Beast will turn out to be someone whose name has never been on the list.

¹⁸ See “The World Council of Churches’ Anti-Israel Policies” by Manfred Gerstenfeld on the *Arutz Sheva* news site in Israel (israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/11053). The article concludes with this indictment of the WCC: “One conclusion is inescapable: The WCC’s obsession with Israel, claiming that it is the source of all the troubles in the Middle East, has made it impossible for the organization to address an ongoing campaign of religious cleansing perpetrated by Muslim extremists against Christians in Muslim-majority countries in the Middle East and elsewhere. Consequently, these Muslims can engage in a slow, grinding campaign to eliminate Christianity from the Middle East without effective challenge from the World Council of Churches.” Our friends at CAMERA (the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting and Analysis) also report routinely on anti-Israel bias in the liberal-ecumenical religious establishment (camera.org).

¹⁹ Many prophetic teachers see a “satanic trinity” at work here during the Tribulation: Satan (i.e., the Serpent, or the Dragon; Rev. 13:2), the Antichrist (the first Beast, who arises from the “sea”; v. 1), and the False Prophet (the second Beast who comes “up out of the earth”; v. 11).

²⁰ Allen F. Johnson, “Revelation,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Vol. 13, Hebrews-Revelation*, Tremper Longman III and David Garland, eds. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2006), 745 (Kindle Edition).

Fruit from the Harvest



by Violette Berger



“It (My Word) Shall Not Return to Me Void”

Michelle Beadle, CJFM Southeast representative (New Orleans), writes that when she visited her daughter’s family in Connecticut she met with the family of a Jewish believer who had concerns about his mother (an unbeliever). Michelle shared: “You know, Yeshua (Jesus) did some tremendous miracles during His lifetime. He changed water into wine, healed the sick, lame, mute, the blind, the leper, and He raised someone from the dead. There is no one else in history who has performed such a variety of miracles. I think that is enough cause to read the Bible every day so that you could learn more about God and Jesus.” A few weeks later, the son called to share a story about stopping at a gas station and meeting a woman transporting Bibles. He asked if she had a large print Bible for his mother, and the woman gave him one. Since then, his mother had been reading that Bible every day.

Michelle then referred the family to co-worker and friend, **Diann Parkas, CJFM Northeast representative (New Jersey)**, who had also been praying for the mother’s salvation. When Diann arrived, the son shared with Diann the wonderful news that his mother had prayed for salvation with him two days prior. She joyfully encouraged the family and suggested printing out a single verse in gigantic print on their computer so they could work together memorizing and meditating on it. While there, the daughter made a comment to Diann that indicated she didn’t have a grasp on “being saved by grace,” since she was anxious that she wouldn’t make it into Heaven even though she had accepted Jesus because she was continuing to sin. Diann assured her, through the Scriptures, that Jesus died for ALL her sins: past, present, and future. Diann asks, “Please pray that the younger generation will be able to help their mother grow in her new faith, and that they will grow through this season of life and be comforted and strengthened by the Holy Spirit.”

A Messianic Jewish Funeral

Richard Hill, CJFM representative and pastor of Beth Yeshua Messianic Congregation (Las Vegas), recently had the privilege of presiding over a funeral service for a Jewish believer in Yeshua (Jesus). His daughter asked Rich if he could recite all of the Jewish prayers at his service since her father was also a Jewish believer. Rich’s heart leapt when she told him that they were expecting about 100 people to attend and that half were Jewish. Rich prayed the kaddish, which is a typical Jewish mourner’s prayer for funerals. It is a prayer that actually praises God for the hope of resurrection. He also read Psalms 90 and 23, and concluded with the Aaronic Benediction and a sermonette on the Gospel of Jesus. Prior to the call to salvation, Rich encouraged only those who believed with their hearts to pray the prayer of faith with him. Rich estimated that 15-20 people raised their hands, claiming to have put their trust in Yeshua. Rich writes: “Praise the Lord for the wonderful opportunity to preach the Good News to a very attentive Jewish and Gentile audience. Please pray for the spiritual growth of those who responded and for the seeds that were planted to come to fruition.”

Rich and his campus ministry team praise God that they have led 22 students to the Lord at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Oanh (Rich’s wife) has led most of those 22 to salvation. Rich says that they are not doing anything different in their approach on campus than they have in their previous 21 years on campus. He states, “We know that it is the Lord bringing these students to Him! We believe they are finally seeing the light in all the world events of the last two years of darkness. Please pray for their growth in the Lord.”

“Ears to Hear”

Midwest CJFM representative, Michael Campo, Jr., (Chicago), writes about a phone call he received recently. It was from a young man, a believer, who was broken in spirit because he was struggling to overcome a specific sin. When Michael asked him when and how he had been led to repentance and faith, the young man told him that his brother had come to his state to live with him for a while, and every Sunday he joined a Zoom meeting taught by Michael on the book of Revelation. At first, the young man, who was somewhere in the apartment, began to occasionally listen to the Bible study. Eventually, he joined the meeting but never showed his face; he just listened from the other side of the room. As is his practice, Michael tries to incorporate the Gospel in his teaching and always ends the session with an invitation for salvation. Learning how this young man had heard the Gospel and responded and why he was calling, blesses Michael, who says, “Praise God for the different ways His Gospel message is heard.”

Different Circles

Larry Dubin, Southeast CJFM representative (Florida), has been attending several “conversation circles” over the past two years as a way of interacting with many unsaved Jewish and Gentile individuals in the community. Larry writes: “These groups are an incredible opportunity to engage in biblical truths in a non-confrontational, non-judgmental way and they create relationships that allow me to intersect my life with others.” During these “table conversations,” 12 people sit around the table drinking coffee and eating breakfast, which inspires conversation from people of different backgrounds and professions. Relationships are built as deeper conversations ensue. It is a unique way of moving forward following the pandemic. Larry asks, “Pray as I plant Gospel seeds that the Holy Spirit will bring the increase. The Hope that I have in Jesus can be theirs too, particularly since many have not met a ‘Jew who follows Jesus.’”

CJFM representative, Deb Dubin (Florida), has been involved in the life of an unsaved Jewish woman, “Rosalie,” for several years. She and her family know of Deb’s faith, and Rosalie often engages with Deb about what’s going on in her ministry. Rosalie lives with her daughter and son-in-law who will soon be going away for a long weekend. Much to Deb’s surprise, and delight, the daughter asked Deb to look after her mom while they’re gone. Deb writes: “What a privilege I’ll have to spend the weekend at an unbeliever’s home and demonstrate the love of Jesus. Please pray for this special opportunity—that Rosalie’s heart would be open to receiving her Jewish Messiah.”

Ambassadors on Campus

Eric Chabot, CJFM representative (Columbus, OH), is thankful for a productive 2021 on the campuses of Ohio State University and Columbus State Community College. He and his team have spoken to approximately 500-600 people on the campuses about the Good News using the question, “Does God exist?” They are thankful for the opportunity to be ambassadors for our Lord. Praise God that 50 people have made first-time commitments to the Lord. Eric and his volunteers are presently promoting a return visit from speaker Dr. Frank Turek for his presentation called, “I Don’t Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist,” on March 8, 2022. This is the first event on these campuses since Covid came into the world. It is free and open to the public and is a great evangelistic outreach. Please pray for a good turnout for this event, weekly apologetics Bible studies, weekly Zoom meetings, and Eric’s own upcoming presentation, “A Case for God’s Existence for Secular Jews,” at the Lausanne Conference on Jewish Evangelism in Anaheim, CA.

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