

Explaining the Future

Warfare in the marketplace

Peter Michell

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Introduction

There is a great deal of interest in the subject of the future- in the world's terms many are interested in horoscopes and predictions of all types; within the body of Christ there is much discussion and speculation about what the future holds.

In this short booklet I seek to explain the future in so far as my understanding of scripture and depth of revelation allows.

One day as I was driving down to the West of England to go on holiday the Spirit of the Lord spoke to me and said, 'Babylon falls before the tribulation.' This simple statement resolved for me the one area of difficulty which remained in my understanding. It also meant that the first couple of days of holiday were spent deep in Revelation 17 and 18.

I hope this booklet helps you to see the marvellous and wonderful hope that belongs to the body of Christ.

It is also my hope that this outline, of what is to come, will set your heart at peace and your expectation upon the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago. (Titus 1 v 2)

1st April 1996

With updates June 2016

Chapter 1 A Special Place

Jesus knew that speculation about the future would cause anxiety among His followers after He had left them, so He had this to say to them:

'Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for 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 to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.'
John: 14 v 1 - 3

We could paraphrase this into today's language and imagine Jesus speaking to us direct:

Don't be anxious, don't be afraid, trust God, trust Me as well. I have gone ahead of you to prepare a place especially for you in God's house. I am coming back to collect you and bring to the place I have specially prepared for you.

The words of Jesus are very clear and don't need anything in the way of explanation - it is a simple question of trust. He has said a place is being prepared for you and that He will come and collect you and take you to that place.

Where will this place be?

Is this place a special place on earth or in heaven?

To understand the context of Jesus wonderful promise of a special place for us, we need to go to the beginning of chapter 13 of John's gospel. Here we find that Jesus is about to celebrate the Passover with the disciples and wash their feet. It is in the context of this very intimate time together that Jesus speaks these words of hope, comfort and wonderful promise.

'Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come and that He should depart out of this world to the Father ...'
John 13 v 1

So Jesus is about to go to the Father and it is there with the Father that He is going to prepare the place - right there in the Father's house.

Peter, eager as always, wants to follow straight away - it is recorded in chapter 13 v 36. Jesus however says to Peter you can't come now but you will follow later.

The scripture is clear - Jesus has gone ahead to the place where God the Father is, a place we cannot enter in our flesh. Commonly we would call this place heaven - a place of uninterrupted fellowship with Jesus.

How will we get there?

It is a wonderful expectation - to go to the place Jesus has prepared, but what of the journey, how will we get there?

'For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.'

1Thessalonians 4v15-18.

It will be the journey of a lifetime, unlike anything experienced so far. Jesus will come with a shout and we will rise to meet Him in the air. An exhilarating expectation!

The journey is not under our control in any way. When His call comes we will respond - but something will have happened to us as explained by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 v 51 - 52.

'Behold I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.'

Changed? Yes we can't expect to remain in the same human flesh that we now experience. Our existing bodies are subject to decay - the older we get the less physically able we are to accomplish things. We are to inherit eternity and therefore we must become imperishable.

This change is achieved by us taking on the likeness of Jesus.

'Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.' 1 John 3 v 2.

We are going to change from frail flesh to glorified beings just like Jesus. These bodies will become redundant and we will be clothed with new glorified bodies.

Our glorious hope.

So this is our future. It is a glorious hope. The thought that Jesus will come and call us to meet Him in the clouds and take us to be with Him. According to John if we have this hope within us we will purify ourselves. If we think about this it is compelling.

If we really think that at any time Jesus could appear calling us to Himself, then we would indeed seek to live in purity.

Perhaps our expectation has grown cold - it is such a long time since Jesus walked the earth, so many years have gone by. It is so easy to lose the expectation of immediacy. As we go on with our explanation of the future it will become apparent that we need to start thinking in terms of this wonderful event taking place even in our lifetime.

'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.' Acts 1 v 11.

We don't need to stand gazing into the sky, but we can be assured that when the time comes, it won't be reliant upon us, but rather as we see Him we will be changed and we will rise to meet Him in the clouds.

Chapter 2 Is there much time left?

This is the question that everybody asks, indeed we all want to know the answer. Not only believers are asking this question, there are many unbelievers who recognise that the world can't go on in the way it is going.

The scripture does not give us a specific answer and warns against trying to set dates, however it does give many clues. In the following chapters we will see more and more of that which is written for our guidance. Before we go into the detail of what is to come we must consider a mystery.

The expectant lifestyle.

The scripture is inspired by God in the person of the Holy Spirit. When the New Testament was written nearly 2,000 years ago there was an expectancy that Jesus would return imminently. That expectation has been unfulfilled since then, right up to today.

God the Father, who knows the end from the beginning, knows the exact time when Jesus will return to earth to collect those who are His. God has always known that there would be a long period of time between the death and resurrection of Jesus and catching up of the church to be with Them.

So here is a mystery, why did the Holy Spirit inspire the writers of the New testament to write with this expectancy of Jesus return at any moment?

I believe there are two particular reasons: Firstly, God so loves the world that He does not want any to perish.

'The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient towards you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.'
2 Peter 3 v 9.

We are not to think in terms of Jesus being slow about fulfilling His promise to come for us, but rather to realise His grace and mercy in wanting many to be included. He will come, the day of grace will end, we will be caught up to meet Him in the air. This has always been true. By definition, if it was true when first written, and now 1900 or more years

have gone by, then we must be much closer to its fulfilment than the first readers of the scriptures.

It is not God's slowness to fulfil His promise, it is His grace to include all those who will turn and be saved.

Secondly, God understands human nature. If He had clearly said I am coming on such and such a date, how would we respond - especially if that date was way beyond our expected life time? If we read Matthew 24 v 44 to 51 we will understand more of the problem. Even knowing that Jesus may come at any time one servant is found saying, 'My master is not coming for a long time,' and beating his fellow servants and living a life of drunkenness.

God wants us to live in the expectation that Jesus is coming for us because of its purifying power. If you think Jesus is coming tomorrow then today you will live a pure and holy life.

Aren't there many prophecies yet to be fulfilled?

There are many prophecies which as yet are unfulfilled. It is a question of knowing at which point Jesus will come for His church and understanding the outline of future events. We will go on to these matters in the coming chapters.

Meanwhile the emphasis of the writers of the New testament was upon the glorious inheritance:

Paul didn't write to any church with emphasis on this event or that event going to take place - rather he wrote about our glorious hope, our expectation of meeting Jesus in the air.

Peter wrote about our living hope, the inheritance reserved in heaven for us.

James wrote about the crown of life promised to those who love Him.

John wrote about His appearing and our being like Him.

Jude writes. *'But you beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith; praying in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God,*

waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy.' (20,21 and 23)

Our emphasis

What we are saying is that regardless of when Jesus will come, whether it actually is soon or still a long way off, we should live as if it may be today, tomorrow, this week. We are to fix our eyes upon Jesus, knowing that He is coming for us.

'Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.' Revelation 22 v 12.

The angel spoke to John the words of Jesus. We should hear Jesus speaking to us in these same words - I am coming quickly, My reward is with Me. We would indeed purify ourselves, we would indeed seek to live lives pleasing to Him, we would indeed be a bride suitable for Jesus.

Fulfilled prophecy

However we do have a great deal of evidence to think that our expectations might be fulfilled in this generation. We will go on to consider the signs of the times.

Chapter 3 Before our very eyes

We are living in times of tremendous change. The world scene is changing quickly, the structure is being aligned with the expectations of bible scholars. Right in front of us prophecy hundreds and thousands of years old is being fulfilled.

'Then it will happen on that day that the Lord will again recover the second time with His hand the remnant of His people , who will remain, from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And He will lift up a standard for the nations, and will assemble the banished ones of Israel, and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.' Isaiah 11 v 11-12.

As we write in 1996 we have seen over half a million Jews leave the lands in which they were dwelling and return to Israel. What we are seeing is the fulfilment of prophecy given thousands of years ago.

.....and still happening in 2016. As I write now Britain has just voted to leave the EU – the effects are unknown.

The expectations of the Jews

In order to perceive what is happening we need to understand the promises of God to Israel and the expectations of the Jewish race.

When the risen Jesus met with the disciples, recorded in Acts 1 v 4 - 9, Peter asked Him, *'Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel.'*

It was Peter's expectation that there would be a literal, physical Israel as the chief amongst nations on this earth. In deed this has always been, and still is, the expectation of the Jewish race.

Jesus didn't stop Peter and correct his theology, He replied, *'It is not for you to know the times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority.'*

The scriptural basis for their expectation of an earthly kingdom is very well supported, for example:

'Thus says the Lord God, "When I gather the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and shall manifest My holiness in them in the sight of the nations, then they will live in their land which I gave to My servant Jacob."'
Ezekiel 28 v 25-6.

Regathered even though unfaithful

The Jews are being regathered even though Israel as a nation is less than holy in its ways:

'Go, and proclaim these words towards the north and say, "Return, faithless Israel," declares the Lord; "I will not look upon you in anger. For I am gracious," declares the Lord.'
Jeremiah 3 v 12.

The scripture prophecies that the Jews would be regathered, not in a movement of religious fervour, but in faithlessness. We have seen a miraculous release from the USSR before it disintegrated. If one looks at the record for many years the Jews were not permitted to leave other than in very small numbers, then there was a sudden change and the numbers increased such that more Jews left in one month than in the previous ten years added together.

A sign to us

In Luke 21 the scripture is telling us about the things to come and Jesus draws our attention to the fig tree:

'And He told them a parable; "Behold the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they put forth leaves, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near. Even so you, too, when you see these things happening, recognise that the kingdom of God is near."' v 29 - 31.

The disciples had asked Jesus three questions, recorded for us in Matthew 24 v 3:

'Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age.'

So let's see how Jesus answered these three questions: (We need to bear in mind that Jesus was speaking about the expectations of the Jews - the

church was not in existence at this point. We will discuss the significance of this in more detail.)

Question 1 - when will these things be?

Answer verse 15 - 'When you see the Abomination of Desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place.'

Question 2 - what will be the sign of your coming?

Answer verse v 29. 'The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.'

Question 3 - and of the end of the age?

Answer verse 32 - 'Now learn from the parable of the fig tree'

What do we learn from the parable of the fig tree?

The fig is used as a symbol of Israel. Luke 13 v 6 - 9 tells of the parable of the man who had a fig tree in his vineyard. He came for three years looking for fruit and found none. It was Jesus who came looking for fruit amongst the chosen people. It was ordered that the tree be cut down and indeed the nation of Israel was cut down and eliminated from the world scene for nearly 2,000 years.

But Jesus said, *Behold the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they put forth leaves, you see it and know*

The fig tree is again established in its land, not only that there has been a proliferation of other trees also being established in their lands. History since 1948 (when Israel was re-established) shows that many many new nations have been borne. '*Behold the fig tree and all the trees....*'

This is the sign that the ending of the age is near.

The different expectations

So we can see that the expectations of the church and the expectations of Israel vary considerably:

Church	Israel
Looking to be caught up in the clouds and taken to be in Heaven with Jesus.	Looking for the Messiah to come and establish Israel as the chief of nations.
Expecting Jesus as bridegroom.	Expecting Jesus as King.
Expecting to rule with Him on His throne.	Expecting to be ruled by Him on earth.

The re-establishment of Israel as a nation and the miraculous way in which it has survived since 1948, against overwhelming odds, is a sign to us that the establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth is very near.

In order to understand the times we will go on to examine the purpose of God in restoring Israel.

Chapter 4 To demonstrate God's holiness

In the last chapter we read in Ezekiel 28 v 25-6 that the purpose of God in restoring Israel was to '*manifest My holiness in them in the sight of the nations,*' after which, '*then they will live in their land which I gave to My servant Jacob.*'

(See also Ezekiel 39 v 25-29)

The manifestation of God's holiness in Israel.

It is quite clear that as I write the holiness of God is not yet manifest in Israel - indeed Israel is a nation just as 'secular' as any other.

We have already seen from Jeremiah 3 v 12 that Israel would be regathered whilst faithless so it should be no surprise that Israel is 'secular' at this time. The question is, 'What is to come?'

- According to Malachi, recorded in verses one to five of chapter 3, God is drawing Israel near for judgement and refining, for '*He is like a refiner's fire.*'
- More detail given in Zechariah, chapter 13 and verse 9, makes it clear that only one third part of the re-gathered Israel will come through the experience.
- Jeremiah describes the restoration of Israel as a time of great distress for the people in chapter 30, verses 1 to 7. The period is known as, '*the day of Jacob's trouble.*'

God promises Israel that His chastening is just and that they won't be left unpunished. (Jeremiah 30 v 11) [But goes on to express His love for Israel and promises future blessing.]

God's purpose

So we can see that God's purpose - the restoration of Israel in holiness before the nations - involves a time of purification so dramatic that only one third of them survive.

God is unable to lie, unable to break His word, He is absolutely faithful. His promises to Israel cannot be broken, neither can they be transferred to anyone else, for His promises given in the covenant with Abraham were not conditional promises but absolute promises. Abraham was in a deep sleep when the covenant was cut, all the obligations are on God's side and none on Abraham's.

God makes this very very clear in Jeremiah 31: 35-38

'Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; the Lord of Hosts is His name;

"If this fixed order departs from before Me," declares the Lord, "Then the offspring of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me forever." Thus says the Lord, "If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out below, then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done," declares the Lord. "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when the city shall be rebuilt for the Lord from the Tower of Hananel to the corner gate."

When is Jacob's trouble?

Is there anywhere in scripture when we read of a period of time when there is a great refining process, a time which is so extreme that only one third survive?

If we turn to the book of Revelation we will find from chapters 6 to 18 that there is a time of tremendous judgement. In chapter 6 alone, one quarter of mankind is killed and in chapter 9 another third of those that remain.

Yes, indeed, the Book of Revelation is about just such a time.

Chapter 5 Reconciliation of God's promises to Israel and to the church.

To understand what the future holds we need to perceive that God is dealing in two different ways.

To the church His great promise is the coming of Jesus as Bridegroom, for the church to meet Him in the air and then to be with and like Him forever.

To Israel God's promise is to come as King, as Messiah to rule over them in Jerusalem until the fixed order of the sun for light by day and the moon and stars at night passes away.

These two promises are quite different.

The bride of Christ

There is no doubt that God 'intended' for the Jews to inherit all His blessings. Jesus came as their Messiah. He is Jewish in His humanity.

But God knows the end from the beginning and He knew that Jesus would be rejected by the Jews when He came. God therefore had to have another plan to prepare a bride for His Son.

So the church, a mystery, until revealed by the Holy Spirit through Paul, came into being. The church inherited this wonderful role of bride. The bride will 'marry' her bridegroom at the wedding in heaven to come in due course.

Ruling and reigning with Christ

The bride has this tremendous promise for the future, that we will reign with Christ. We will share His throne and His rulership. Like Him we will be exalted above every other name, this ascendancy is not of our making, but comes as we are one with Him.

At this time Israel will become the chief among the nations which we rule over with Jesus. The nation of Israel will be exalted and all other nations will come to Jerusalem to worship the King.

So we read in Zechariah 14:16-17:

'Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to celebrate the feast of booths. And it will be that whichever of the families of the earth does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain on them.'

The nations go against Jerusalem.

In the first sentence we read of nations going against Jerusalem. This is a reference to part of what is called the battle of Armageddon which we will deal with later on. For the moment we are illustrating the different future expectations of Israel and the church.

Three kinds of people.

We must remember there are three kinds of people. There are Jews, there are Gentiles and there are Born-again Believers.

A converted Jew becomes a Born-again Believer, a member of the church and from that point on inherits the same expectation as every other Born-again Believer - that is he looks for the glorious appearing of Jesus and rises to meet Him in the air at that time. According to Paul in the spiritual sense he is no longer a Jew, just as I am no longer a Gentile. We are both one in Christ, new creatures, part of the body of Christ.

Many left behind

When Jesus comes to shout for His bride to come and meet Him in the air there will be countless millions of people left behind. There will be many, many Jews and Gentiles who have not placed their trust in Jesus for personal salvation. They have not recognised their own sinful state and the need for a Saviour. Neither have they recognised that Jesus is the Son of God who paid for the penalty of their sin and who rose triumphantly from the dead.

This multitude of people will be too late to become members of the bride of Christ. The bride will be in heaven with Jesus preparing herself for the marriage to the Lamb.

The principal expectation of the church fulfilled

At this point in time the principal expectation of the church is fulfilled. It could happen at any time, even tomorrow. One day, soon I believe, it will come to pass - Jesus will appear in the air, and call for us to rise and meet Him.

Since writing this booklet I have a more complete understanding of biblical chronology which is found in 'Ostrich Christianity' – free download at www.freebibleboolets.com or in printed booklet form from Amazon - type Peter Michell in the search box.

The scriptural injunction to look for the appearing of Jesus is found in Titus 2:11-13.

'For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Christ Jesus.'

And the benefits of so doing in 2 Timothy 4:8

'And in the future is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.'

Then the fulfilment of the promise to Israel

When the church has risen to meet Jesus in the air the way is open for God to fulfil His promise to Israel - that Israel will become the chief of nations on the earth.

As we have already seen, Israel is being regathered now, regathered in unfaithfulness, regathered to be refined, regathered in God's purposes, to fulfil His promises which are for ever and are unbreakable.

There is no doubt that God would have preferred the Jews to receive Jesus when He came for them the first time, there is no doubt that God would

prefer that everybody was saved before the rapture of the church. God is love and His desire is that none should be lost, that none should have to endure His wrath.

But God does not over-rule man's own will and the majority refuse - it is their own choice - to believe in Jesus unto salvation or not.

Therefore the wrath of God will fall, His wrath against the vast sinfulness of mankind. Jesus took that wrath, the punishment for every believer. For unbelievers there is no other way for the effect of their sin to be dealt with, it is either forgiveness or judgement.

Chapter 6 The rise of ten kings

What can we expect to happen before we are taken to meet Jesus in the air?

Does the scripture give us any indication of either the length of time involved or of the things which are to come to pass during this period of expectancy?

We will refer to our expectation of evil men becoming worse and worse in the chapter called, 'Peace, peace where there is no peace.'

The rise of 10 kings.

There are references in the scripture which cause us to expect that there will be 10 kings ruling the earth in the last times.

For example, in Daniel 2 we are told of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. He sees a great statue and Daniel gives the meaning. The interpretation of the statue moves through the following sequence:

Head of gold	- Nebuchadnezzar - the Babylonians
Breast and arms of silver	- Medo-Persia
Belly and thighs of bronze	- Greece
Legs of iron	- Rome
Feet and toes, part iron part clay.	

It is in the last part of the picture that we expect to see the rise of 10 kings. The statue has been showing the gentile ruling kingdoms - it would be illogical to think that the ten toes do not signify rulership as well. Indeed this is repeated and confirmed in Revelation 17.

It is in Revelation 17 that we see that these 10 are given to reign for 1 hour and that at some time during that 'hour' they give their power and authority to Antichrist.

The reference in Revelation 17 leads us to believe that the 'Kings' will rule economic regions which then turn political. This could also explain the fact they are mixed iron and clay. Indeed we can already see that this pattern is beginning to form in the world - Europe is rapidly forming one economic region, North America has done so and so on.

A map of the world, split into 10 regions, has already been drawn up by the 'New Age' movement. This is current world history. There will come a point when this process is complete - antichrist will follow not long after.

One has to allow that when looking to the future 'we do not know what we do not know.' So we give possible interpretations. In that vein it is possible to consider that somehow the Roman Empire is brought back into existence [The Treaty of Rome birthing the EU?] and that from it the ten kings emerge.

Writing on the day after the UK voted in a referendum whether to remain or leave the EU it is now apparent that significant re-alignment is likely to occur, the outcome of which is unknown.

The Babylonian year.

Nebuchadnezzar typifies the reign of the gentiles, and we are told in Daniel 4 that seven periods of time must 'pass over him.' A Babylonian year was 360 days so 7 times can be likened to 2520.

Using the biblical principle of a 'type,' Grattan Guinness was able to forecast four significant dates earlier this century by dating 2520 years forward from the establishment of Nebuchadnezzar's rule over the Jews. He thought that as it took four stages to establish that rule, then there would be four stages to the re-establishment of Israel.

This is now history which confirms the use of the type - that is one day being likened to one year. With this established we can see from the example above that one hour, i.e. one twenty fourth, would liken to 15 years. (i.e. one twenty fourth of 360)

10 kings to rule for 15 years

So it is that we expect 10 kings to rule for 15 years.

Therefore we expect to see these 10 kingdoms come into place sometime in the near future. Indeed the current coming together of Europe is relevant as Europe is likely to form one of the 10 kingdoms.

The sequence of events could look like this:

- 10 kingdoms established.
- Church removed
- Antichrist revealed
- Peace deal between Antichrist and Israel
- Tribulation for 7 years.

Assisting the Jews.

The 10 kingdoms are very likely to be both anti Christian and anti-Semitic and this means that two things become of vital importance:

1) The development of the Christian alternative to the worlds trade patterns. Learning to act by faith rather than by the world's methods.

2) That we support the Jews during this time. When Antichrist appears he will offer them a peace deal. They will again choose wrongly, preferring Antichrist to the true Messiah. God's wrath and His mercy will then come forth - wrath in judging the world, mercy in saving some through the tribulation period. In the time up to the rapture of the church the only friends of the Jews will be those who are born again Christians and who understand the times.

This question of blessing the Jews is double edged:

We bless them for their benefit - they need all the help that we can give.

We bless them for our own benefit - it releases God's blessing to us.
(Genesis 12:3)

(In terms of our evangelistic efforts, before the church is raptured, we need to remember that it is better by far for a Jew to become a Christian and be included in the great catching away of the church, than it is for him/her to have to live through the Tribulation.)

When we see the 10 kingdoms

When we see these 10 kingdoms coming into power we can know that the time left is very short, for the church must be removed before Antichrist is revealed and the subsequent start of the Tribulation period. The powers of darkness already have their plans laid and the events of the world are moving swiftly to fulfilment.

There may be the collapse of currency - if this happens it will most certainly assist in the establishment of the 10 regions - and the world will be ripe for looking for a Messiah figure. However the world will choose Antichrist and the consequences will follow.

Our reaction

Our reaction to all of this is not one of fear, rather one of excitement and joy as we see our redemption drawing very near. We are to be a people who trust our God, not people who fear circumstances. Who knows how difficult it may be in the world - that does not invalidate the word of God - *seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you.* (referring to food and clothing and the things the Gentiles seek after - from Matthew 6:33)

Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow - rather expect the return of Jesus - hasten yourself towards it.

This is very pertinent in view of the vote by Britain to leave the EU. Prophetically the Lord God urged a leave vote with the promise of His blessing if the UK leaves. He also warned that His judgement over the EU had already begun and said that it would not affect the UK.

Chapter 7 Warfare in the marketplace.

For those of us called to work in business it is important to understand the forces that are going to be at work in the marketplace.

In Revelation 17 we see a seven headed beast arising - then an eighth head. The scripture tells us about this beast - look:

The seven heads are seven kings, five have fallen, one is and one is to come. When John wrote Revelation Rome was the power in authority - Rome was the head of the beast described as 'one is'.

The five who have fallen are easy to identify. We know from the previous chapter that Greece preceded Rome who were in turn preceded by the Medes and Persians and before them the Babylonians. That accounts for three of the five who have fallen.

Preceding Babylon the Kingdoms that particularly affected the Jews were the Assyrians and the Egyptians - so they are probably the other two kingdoms represented by the heads.

The woman who rides the beast.

The early part of chapter 17 tells us that this beast is ridden by a woman clothed in scarlet - by the great harlot. This woman is described as 'MYSTERY BABYLON the great the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth.'

The kings (political rulers) have fornicated with this harlot. In Revelation 18 it becomes clear that 'mystery Babylon' represents the world system and particularly trade and commerce.

I don't think any of us in business would doubt that in the world the marketplace is absolutely full of corruption.

War in the marketplace threatens

As we go on through Revelation 17 we are told that there is a seventh head of the beast - that is the power that rules after Rome. This head has ten horns (mentioned in verse 7 and 12 but not seen in the first six heads).

We are told the ten horns are ten kings who receive power for one hour. In verse 16 we are told that the ten kings hate the harlot and destroy her.

Here is a picture of warfare in the marketplace. The harlot has dominated the marketplace for countless generations and 'ridden' all the powers down the ages until now the ten kings destroy her.

Soon after that we are told that the ten hand their power to antichrist.

A kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation

When Jesus was accused of casting out demons by Beelzebub He made this prophetic statement. *A kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation.* (Matthew 12:24-25)

The harlot has always been a major part of the satanic hierarchy. The ten kings who arise are also part of that dark kingdom. As they fight and the ten kings destroy the harlot the seal is being set. The satanic kingdom will be brought to desolation.

Will the warfare affect us

Most certainly. There is a mighty storm coming. The only way to ride out the storm will be to travel in the very eye of the storm - that place of peace and tranquillity. Everything about us may and will shake terribly as this warfare hits the commercial world - but in the eye of the storm we will be safe.

In the eye of the storm

In the very place that Jesus has prepared for us to be – that special 'good work' that God has prepared for those who love Him (see Ephesians 2:10)

In the eye of the storm walking by faith.

We will no longer survive on our wits or on our training, our experience, our skill, or our professional excellence - we will need to be directed by the Captain of the armies of the Lord of hosts, and as obedient 'faith filled' sons follow His specific instructions and seek more and more to be filled with all righteousness.

The International Christian Chamber of Commerce

The Lord has raised up this body as part of His end time planning for the people of God. The board of ICCC has made this statement:

'There is an anointing available for those with eyes to see and ears to hear the call of the times. For that purpose ICCC has been formed it is an aiding instrument for instruction and inspiration, to experience release into a new dimension in which corporate goals, strategies and plans become the outward manifestation of an inward walk of faith. ICCC sounds a call to fall in line with Gods plan for these times as the key to blessing and development and in order to rise victoriously above the encroaching tide.'

Now is the time

Now is the time for Christian businessmen everywhere to become firmly established upon the rock of Jesus Christ, to know how to hear His voice, to know how to stand in faith and not in presumption. We are entering into a most exciting chapter of history. We need to be fully prepared.

Things get worse

The result of the warfare between the ten kings and the harlot is economic disaster for the world which will look eagerly for a man to save them from the extensive worldwide troubles. The world will indeed look for a messiah but it will not be Jesus – rather it will be someone instead of Him it will be (anti) Christ.

So here we have it. *'For God has put it into their hearts (the 10 kings) to fulfil His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.'* Revelation 17:17

In verse 16 we read the ten kings destroy the harlot 'Mystery Babylon' – now they hand over to antichrist. The tribulation will follow – it is antichrist's short reign on earth.

Babylon falls before the tribulation.

Chapter 8 The man instead of Jesus

The scripture talks about a man who will rise up instead of Jesus, a man who will come with the promise of peace but in the end bring only war.

According to scripture there are many antichrists and there is the Antichrist to come.

'Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen.' 1 John 2:18.

We will focus for a moment on the Antichrist to come as mentioned by Paul to the Thessalonians in his second letter, second chapter, verses 1-11.

'Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him, that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so called God or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed.

For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who restrains him now will do so until he is taken out of the way. And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false.'

He can't come yet

Antichrist, or the man of lawlessness as he is referred to here, cannot take up his position while the church is still around. He can't rule whilst the body of Christ is still functioning on the earth. The reason for saying this is in the fact that Antichrist receives his power from Satan, whilst the church receives power from God.

According to Luke:

'Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall injure you.' 10:19.

According to Paul:

'To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.'
Ephesians 3:8-10

Part of God's purpose is the His church rule over the principalities and powers which, of course, get their power from Satan.

If Antichrist appeared whilst the church was still around he would not be able to function, the church has more power.

God cannot hand the church over to Antichrist, He cannot give Antichrist power over the church because, *'the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.'* Romans 11:29.

Therefore He must remove the church before Antichrist can appear. (The reference in Revelation 13:7 saying that the beast [Antichrist] was given power over the saints does not refer to the church but to those who become believers after the church has gone. This must be so otherwise God would not be true to His word to the church, and God is always true and faithful.)

Antichrist revealed

So with the church gone to meet Jesus in the air the way is open for Antichrist to make his appearance.

Bible scholars expect his stronghold to be Europe. This is connected with an anticipated return to rule from Rome. It is fascinating to watch the gradual coming together of Europe under the Treaty of Rome right now. This may or may not be the final power base for Antichrist, but it is at least the basis upon which his final power base will be secured.

Much has happened since writing in 1996 – now the EU has 28 member countries with 5 applicants waiting. A statement by the 5 ruling Presidents of the EU, made in 2015, declared a target date of 2025 for Europe to become fully integrated as one state, with one government, one currency, one army etc.

Europe has already experienced a type of antichrist in the person of Hitler. He was able to sway the Germans into just the sort of 'blind' following that Antichrist will hold over the peoples.

(For the more technically minded: Paul says to the Thessalonians: 'the apostasy comes first.' We have taken that to mean. 'a falling away from faith.'

However the word apostasy is made up of two root words as follows:

apo which means 'forth from' or 'away from'
stawa which means 'to draw' or 'to pull'

The drawing away or pulling away that we are expecting is the glorious hope of the church, that we rise to meet with Jesus in the air when He appears. Therefore the meaning of this word in Paul's letter is much more likely to be connected with our expectation of the rapture than with a falling away from faith as some commentators would have it.)

Chapter 9 Peace, peace where there is no peace

In the course of our study so far we have seen that God is regathering Israel, that a power base is coming together for Antichrist in Europe and that the church is to be caught up to meet Jesus in the air before these things can come into their complete fulfilment.

What can we expect in the immediate future

At any time we can expect to experience the fulfilment of our glorious hope, to meet with Jesus in the clouds and to go to be with Him in heaven.

In the meantime we can also expect to see Europe develop closer and closer ties, probably one currency and one government. The regathering of Israel will probably continue.

The euro has to some extent fulfilled my expectation of one currency.

Certainly we can expect the world to become more and more sinful, more and more an uncomfortable place for us to live in as believers. We can expect more and more opposition as people wax worse and worse.

- Jude expects *mockers following after their own ungodly lusts*. (verse 18.)
- Peter also warns of *mockers following their own lusts* in his second letter verse 3.
- Paul warns us in his second letter to Timothy, chapter three, verses 1-13. *Evil men and imposters will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.*

The church will not rule without the head

Our expectation is not for rulership of the world without the personal presence of Jesus - we have already seen scripture that says all nations will come to Jerusalem to worship Him.

Our expectation is to meet Him in the clouds. Meanwhile before that happens things on earth will go from bad to worse.

This is not a matter of fear or worry for us. We have the Holy Spirit within us and power over all the activity of the enemy. We are in a period of time when God is moving with increasing wonders within the church to demonstrate His glory to the rulers in heavenly places. We can expect to receive increasing trust and faith as we love our Lord more and more. We can expect God to intervene on our behalf more and more as we call upon His name.

Much prayer went into the UK referendum vote and against most expectations a leave vote was recorded in accordance with the Lord's will.

The world will look for a leader

In the increasing turmoil, which will increase even more when the church has gone, the world will look for a leader. The world will look for a man who can rescue them from the troubles.

A lot of the trouble will be centred around money. Even now we see increasing uncertainty in financial markets. Currencies fluctuate wildly and will not be held in check by man's ingenious schemes.

With increasing drug abuse there will be increase in crime, indeed already we see a huge increase in crime as people mug, rob and steal to pay for their habit.

Nation will come against nation. Even today we see it happening in Yugoslavia. The world is affronted by it, yet seemingly powerless to stop the aggression. The world will look for a leader who can solve its problems.

The Middle East

The greatest 'hot spot' is of course the Middle East, where the problems of Palestinians, Arabs and Jews seem to have no solution. Indeed the situation appears to be a 'time bomb' waiting to explode. **Since writing much has happened in the Middle East - and more is to come.**

It is here particularly that Antichrist will come with his message of peace. Indeed according to the scripture he manages to arrange a peace deal with Israel.

A firm covenant for seven years is made with the Jews according to Daniel 9:27, but Antichrist goes back on the deal and exalts himself as God in the Temple. This is referred to as the 'Abomination of Desolation' and Jesus is found warning about this time in Matthew 24.

(Jesus words of warning in Matthew 24 are clearly directed to Jews not Christians because He exhorts them to pray that their flight is not on a Sabbath.)

The world searches for peace

The world is increasingly searching for peace, but not looking in the right place. Only Jesus can bring Peace, yet the world will look to anybody, even to Antichrist, instead of to The One who can supply the peace it wants.

As we read in Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians, God will give them over to a deluding influence so that they can put their trust in Antichrist because they have refused Jesus.

The rise of Antichrist

Once the church has been removed the way is clear for Antichrist to appear and come to rule. There is no point in speculating upon whom Antichrist might be because he can't be revealed until we, the body of Christ, have gone.

Antichrist will personify the saying 'a wolf in sheep's clothing.' He will come with promises of peace. He makes a peace deal in the Middle East, with Israel, but his true nature comes through when he requires that the people worship him.

Antichrist will bring in a new economic system. According to Revelation 13:16-18. No one will be able to trade without his mark. This system involves the marking in either the right hand or the forehead of every person. The technology for the implementation of this system already exists and it is reported that it has been on public display in some parts of

the world. **And has now been tested in some countries - lately Sweden.**

(The system probably involves an implant under the skin carrying a computer readable individual code number which would identify every person and link economic transactions through electronic funds transfer systems rather like existing direct debit cards.)

This system will be widely accepted - it will have a powerful effect in reducing crime - no one will carry money and credit card fraud will be eliminated.

Many will be faced with a choice

The scripture makes it clear in Revelation 14:9-10 that anyone receiving the mark will suffer eternal damnation. However God will be speaking to everyone warning them through various evangelistic efforts.

- The church will have gone before this point, but through the previous witness of the church there will be many unbelievers who have heard of these things to come. When they see it happen many will turn and become believers.
- God raises up a specific 144,000 evangelists of Jewish descent to spread the word of salvation.
- The Holy Spirit will be around to convict of sin as people read the bible and other literature. Maybe there will be intervention by angels in specific cases.

The fundamental choice will have to be made - believe in Jesus or take the mark. Those who believe at that time will suffer much persecution and martyrdom, nevertheless there will be a significant remnant who come through all the problems to re-populate the earth.

As we saw in earlier pages there will be one third of the Jews among the remnant who survive. Any who die in this period as believers will of course go to heaven, not as members of the bride of Christ but as friends of the bridegroom.

Antichrist will rule

So we see that for a short time Antichrist will rule. His power base will be based in Europe, what we know as the western world.

For his economic system to come in it is very likely that the existing world economic system will fail. In particular it is likely that the American dollar will fall. Even though the Americans are now trying to reduce the deficit many believe that it is too late to stop the rot. Already the interest payment on debt absorbs well over half the American government income and it is rising. The point of no return has been passed and collapse has an inevitable ring about it.

It is interesting that since writing in 1996 we have moved to near 0% interest rates delaying the inevitable!

Chapter 10 Armageddon

Everyone has heard of Armageddon, and everyone associates it with the end of all things as we know them. However many people don't realise that Armageddon is a physical place. Its a valley in Israel running down the centre of the country, inland from Haifa in the north, towards Jerusalem.

Nazareth, where Jesus was brought up sits on the hills to the east overlooking the fertile valley which will host to the great climax of the period we know as 'The Tribulation.'

Antichrist brings war after all

After coming to power on promises of peace, and making a peace treaty with Israel it all turns to war again.

The turning point is when Antichrist puts his own image in the Temple and expects the Jews to worship him. This is the point that Jesus warned about in Matthew 24:15-16

'Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through the prophet Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.' The verses go on to give warnings that escape is very urgent.

This passage is addressed to the Jews and not to us, for we have already been taken to be with Jesus. It is clear that it refers to Jews by the reference in verse 20 to praying that their flight is not on a Sabbath. (The church does not have a Sabbath - see Galatians 4:10 and Colossians 2:16)

Massive military campaigns

The Jews refusing to worship is the trigger that breaks the peace treaty between Israel and Antichrist. This is forecast in Daniel 9:27. Antichrist sweeps in to take control, fighting with many surrounding countries at the same time.

However other power blocks react and the stage is set for Armageddon.

The battle of Armageddon is made up of a number of military campaigns and there are differing views about the details. For our purposes it is enough to know that Antichrist and his forces are established in the area and that the countries of the north and east come against Antichrist at Armageddon.

The result is the biggest build up of military power ever seen on earth. (The scripture speaks of an army of 200 million soldiers on horseback - Revelation 9:16.) [When I sought the Lord about an army of 200 million, as I could not conceive it, He replied by means of a small announcement in the Daily Telegraph – ‘today China has announced it can put 200 million men under arms.’]

It is into this situation that Jesus Christ will return.

In the heavenly places

We have been following activity on earth but in Revelation the scripture charts the progress in the heavenly realm. In chapters 6 to 18 we are given a step by step revelation of what is going to happen.

The revelation is given in easy stages. First there are the seals - they follow on one after the other and record what is happening in the spiritual realm. For example the first seal in Revelation 6:1-2 releases war on the earth, the second removes peace, the third causes famine and the fourth releases death and so on.

When we reach the seventh seal there are too many details so the story is broken down into smaller bits again step by step, this time with trumpets.

When we reach the seventh trumpet again there are too many details so the story is broken down again this time into seven bowls.

As the story is revealed to John step by step and in sequence it is entirely logical and correct to expect to outworking to follow in the same way.

However in amongst the sequential revelation the Scripture has some passages of back ground information. For example most of chapters 10 to 15 are not within the sequence of the seals, trumpets and bowls but rather these chapters give added information for understanding the whole story, after which the narrative goes back to sequence.

With this straight forward understanding it is quite a simple matter to decipher the book of Revelation. Don't be put off.

The outpouring of God's wrath

A study of Revelation will reveal that this period is an outpouring of God's wrath.

We learnt from Daniel that this last week of the future of the Jews is split in two. The week by the way represents a period of seven years, so each half is 42 months or three and one half years.

It is in the second of these two periods that earth reaches the outpouring of God's wrath. Indeed it is a terrible time and the majority of the earth's population is killed.

(The booklets 'Understanding Daniel' and 'Understanding Revelation' give much more.)

God's mercy

However God's mercy will also be at work during this whole period. The church has been removed so God establishes another witness for Himself on earth.

There are two witnesses in Jerusalem. Many people have sought to identify the two, and there are some outrageous claims. However the most likely explanation is that the two are Moses and Elijah. Whilst it is not conclusive, they would certainly fit the descriptions given in verse 6 of chapter 11.

It is also necessary for Elijah to come before Jesus returns. (Malachi 4:5)
It is worth noting that John the Baptist was not Elijah although he came in the same spirit.

Apart from the two witnesses God raises up 144,000 from the tribes of Israel to be witnesses and gives them special protection.

Tribulation and evangelism.

So on the one hand the earth suffers great tribulation and at the same time there are many becoming believers as they respond to the witnesses. Many of these new converts are martyred.

Into this scene Jesus will come.

So it is into a very mixed scene that Jesus will come. On the one hand there will be some believers looking for His coming and on the other hand evil men will have gone from worse to worse and finally armies are amassed in Israel for Armageddon.

Chapter 11 The return of Jesus Christ

With the armies of the world amassed in Israel and turning against Jerusalem the scene is set for Jesus to return. In fact things have become so bad that if the Father did not shorten the time there would be no human survivors at all.

Mark 13:19-20

'For those days will be a time of tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of creation which God created, until now, and never shall. And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved, but for the sake of the elect whom He chose, He shortened the days.'

The elect here are those who have believed during the tribulation period and not the church who were taken to heaven before all this started.

Picture the scene

Very near to the climax there are millions of soldiers camped in and around the area surrounding Jerusalem and in the valley of Armageddon. The situation is extremely tense, the various armies have established their positions and are joining together against Jerusalem.

Many of the believers will have already fled to the mountains heeding the warning given in Matthew 24: 15-16, those who did not are being forced back to the temple courts in Jerusalem.

Suddenly there is total darkness.

This is the great day of the Lord - Jesus is about to return, His armies with Him on white horses as described in Revelation 19:11-16

'And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war. And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself. And He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may

smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the winepress of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robes and on His thigh He has a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.'

Now it goes completely dark:

'Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, cruel, with fury and burning anger, to make the land a desolation; and He will exterminate its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not flash forth their light; the sun will be dark when it rises, and the moon will not shed its light.'

Isaiah 13:9-10

Zechariah summarises the situation very well in Chapter 14 verses 1 -9.

'Behold, a day is coming for the Lord when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you. For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, and houses plundered, the women ravished, and half the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle.

And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half the mountain will move towards the north and the other half toward the south.

And you will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the Lord, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him.

And it will come about in that day that there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle. For it will be a unique day which is known to the Lord, neither day nor night, but it will come about at evening time there will be light. And it will come about in that day that living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as winter. And the Lord will be king over all the earth; in that day the Lord will be the only one, and His name the only one.'

Jesus appears

The darkness gives way to light as Jesus appears, like lightening flashing from the east to the west (Matthew 24:27), to stand upon the Mount of Olives. It is an established geological fact that a fault line runs east/west through the Mount of Olives which is going to split into two at this time.

The believing Jews are saved from the armies of the world, ready to meet their Messiah having been refined through the tribulation period. The believers, of both Jews and gentiles will go on to repopulate the earth for the millennial rule of Jesus Christ and thus to eternal life. The unbelievers go into eternal punishment.

Two comings of Jesus?

We can see from our study so far that there are two distinct sections to the coming of Jesus, one for the church at the rapture and at least another seven years later to put an end Armageddon and to bring in His personal rule for 1,000 years.

To help understand this I set out below the differences between the expectations:

Rapture of the church

Church meets Jesus in the air.

Jesus does not set foot on the earth at this time.

The church receive new 'glorified' bodies.

Church goes with Jesus back to the place He prepared in heaven.

No judgement of sin at this time.

Before the day of God's wrath.

Second coming of Christ

Believers gathered in Israel.

Jesus stands on the Mount of Olives.

The people are separated into sheep and goats.

No return to heaven - the Kingdom is now established on earth.

Sin judged and righteousness established on earth.

After the day of God's wrath.

Rapture – contd

Imminent - it could happen at any time.

A revelation - only given in the New testament.

Only deals with the saved.

We see Him coming in the Clouds.

Jesus comes alone

Second coming – contd

Can't happen for at least 7 years.

In both Old and New testaments

Deals with both saved and unsaved.

Earth in total darkness.

Jesus comes with the heavenly armies.

With all these inherent differences it is clear that there are two different expectations for what is called the 'Second Coming' of Jesus.

Chapter 12 Marriage Supper of the Lamb

In the last chapter we saw Jesus coming in great glory to end the Battle of Armageddon. We remember that the church had been raptured seven years before, Antichrist had appeared and ruled and the world had slipped into more and more wickedness culminating in the armies gathered together in Israel for the battle of Armageddon.

Separation of 'sheep' and 'goats'

It is at this point, immediately after Jesus return, that the separation between sheep and goats takes place. Sheep represent those who have become believers during the terrible period of the Tribulation and goats represent those who have refused to believe even though God has sent countless signs and warnings. (See Revelation 16:9 and 11 for example.)

Matthew 25:31-46 tells of the gathering together unto Jesus of all the peoples of the earth at His return and how He separates them into sheep and goats. The sheep inherit the kingdom whilst the goats go to eternal punishment.

This is taking place here on earth after the Tribulation. Soon after this the wedding feast of the Lamb will take place, again here on earth. This is not the wedding ceremony – that took place in heaven before Jesus and His bride returned to end Armageddon. This is the feast, the banquet.

The ten virgins

If we look at the parable of the ten virgins we will understand the picture: (Matthew 25:1-13)

The virgins, (virgin is used to mean religious ones, not believers - i.e. one with a belief but not necessarily in the one true God.) are waiting for the bridegroom. When He comes the virgins with oil in their lamps go in whilst those without oil are shut out from the wedding feast. Oil represents the Holy Spirit, so it is the ones who have received salvation, received the deposit of the Spirit as the guarantee of their salvation (Ephesians 1:13-14) that have the oil and are taken into the feast.

So it is true that there is only one way to salvation - through Jesus Christ, no other God, no other belief will do.

The virgins represent all the religious folk waiting for 'the' or 'a' Messiah at the end of the Tribulation - those who are truly born again have the oil and go in to the feast, the others are excluded.

So where is the bride? For the church is the bride of Christ. We understand this when we know the customs of Jesus day. The bridegroom collects the bride from her father's house and takes her to his own house where the feast takes place. Although the bride is not mentioned in the parable we know that she would have accompanied the bridegroom. So Jesus collects the bride from the Father's house, in heaven, and takes her to earth with Him.

Actually we can confirm this from Revelation 19. This chapter tells us of Jesus return to earth to end Armageddon. Verse 7 records that the bride has made herself ready and she is then depicted as riding on white horses accompanying Jesus on his return.

So the church has had seven years in the Fathers house getting herself ready for the wedding and the return to earth for the great feast.

The earth's population

At this point, after the separation of sheep and goats, there are on the earth:

- Jesus with His bride.
- Believers.

There is not one single unbeliever, as they have been removed, and it is now that the prophecy in Joel 2:28 can be completely fulfilled. The Spirit can be poured out on all flesh.

The earth is now ready for the millennial reign of Jesus.

Chapter 13 The personal rule of Jesus Christ

Now we come to the personal rule of Jesus Christ on earth.

The Jewish nation has been expecting the Messiah to come and rule in person for many generations. Sadly they did not recognise Him when He came as a suffering servant, to die that each one may be reconciled to God. However before He comes in His glory to reign at least one third of the Jews will recognise Him as we saw in chapter 5.

'At that time they shall call Jerusalem "The Throne of the Lord," and all the nations shall be gathered to it.' Jeremiah 3:17.

Jerusalem will become the centre of the world, the place from which the King of Kings and Lord of Lord reigns supreme. Wonderfully we, His bride, come to rule and reign with Him.

That we reign with Jesus is found in various scriptures, for example, Revelation 5:10 - *'Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.'*

This is part of the glorious future for the Bride of Christ - to rule and reign with Jesus. The future for Israel is to be chief amongst the nations. There is no conflict between the two destinies, no need to try to say that the church has replaced Israel.

Romans 11 makes it clear that Israel will be restored, *'for the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.'* God's promises to Israel have not been transferred to the church, they will be fulfilled literally for Israel. But the church has come into a higher calling - that of Bride.

This is confirmed when Jesus taught that no man born of women was greater than John the Baptist and that the least in the kingdom of heaven (i.e. born again -as you can't see the kingdom until you are born again) is greater than John. (Matthew 11)

The millennial rule

How long will Jesus reign over the nations. Revelation 20 specifies the time - it will be for 1,000 years. If we interpret this with plain language we will understand that it means 1,000 years. The danger is that we try to 'spiritualise' the interpretation by taking another scripture out of its context. I refer to 2 Peter 3:8 - *'With the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.'* Here Peter is saying there is a

correlation between one day and one thousand years. That is a day is a type representing one thousand years. Peter is referring of course to creation (verse 5).

So the clear and straight forward understanding is that Jesus will rule for one thousand years. In fact Revelation 20 repeats 1,000 years no less than 6 times in order to make the point clear.

Satan thrown into the pit

'And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he should not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.'

Revelation 20:1-3.

With Satan bound the peoples of the world are freed from his influence. The earth enters its period of perfect rule.

The big clean up

After the battle of Armageddon there is a massive clean up process needed. Ezekiel 39 tells of the situation. All the weaponry is collected and burnt - the process will take seven years to complete. All the bodies of the dead will be buried - it will take seven months before all the bodies are buried.

This is the rule of peace

Have you ever wondered how it would be possible that the wolf would lie with the lamb, how the lion would eat straw like the ox?

When Jesus rules in person Isaiah 11 will come true. It will not be like anything the earth has seen since the Garden of Eden. His rule will be perfect. His rule will bring perfect peace. There will be no more war. Isaiah 2:4 - *'And never again will they learn war.'*

This new kingdom is created as a place of joy and rejoicing, *'there will no longer be heard in her the voice of weeping and the sound of crying.'*
Isaiah 65:19.

The earth repopulated

The remnant of mankind that survives the Tribulation as believers will be fruitful and multiply and the population of the earth will increase rapidly.

The peoples will live in a 'perfect' environment with a perfect ruler -The Lord Jesus Christ. However it will again be necessary for each individual to believe that his or her sin was taken by Jesus as a substitute for them personally. This is because mankind is inherently sinful - sin is passed down from Adam.

Regretfully as the years go by many will not choose to know Jesus as their personal saviour, so by the end of the period there will again be a majority who are unbelievers.

Satan released

At the end of the thousand years Satan is released and he again deceives the nations, who gather again against the saints and the beloved city.
(Revelation 20:9)

This time God judges the rebellion with fire, and the perpetrators are thrown into the lake of fire.

The great white throne.

This is now the very end of the earth, God is about to create a new heaven and a new earth, but before that comes the judgement.

This judgement is not for members of the church. You remember they were taken to be with Jesus in heaven before the millennial rule of Christ and before the tribulation which preceded it. The works of each born again member of the true church were judged by fire, the works of the flesh burnt up and the works of the spirit retained like precious jewels. The church has been given eternal life and is ruling with Jesus.

The great white throne is a judgement of the works of the dead. It is almost like a second consideration - they have not received eternal life through belief in Jesus, could their works be enough to 'win' eternal life?

So the end of Chapter 20 has the dead being judged according to their works, in order to pass sentence on them. The book of life is there as the master list of the eternally saved.

Anyone who is not in the book of life is assigned to the second death in the lake of fire.

Into eternity.

Revelation chapters 21 and 22 tell us all we know from the New Testament about eternity. It is beyond our capacity to imagine the glory of eternity. The scripture describes it in terms of gold and jewels and precious stones with Jesus and the Father as the centre of all things.

John ends the report of the revelation of Jesus Christ with the Spirit and the church saying:

"Come Lord Jesus" Amen.

Chapter 14 How should we react

It would be very easy to sit back and do nothing – especially if we believe that Jesus will come very soon to meet us in the air and take us to be with Him. Why bother with activity, why not just do nothing.

Another reaction is, why not run up debt, have a good time in the expectation that we will be taken to be with Him before the creditors move in.

The timing of the rapture of the saints may well be imminent, the church has believed that since its earliest days. The truth is that nobody knows. We may be able to read the signs and say with confidence the return of Jesus is near, but how near we cannot say.

In love with Jesus

In fact the calling of the bride is to be in love with her husband - we are called to be in love with Jesus. When Jesus was asked what was the most important commandment the reply was:

'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.'

Matthew 22:37

We all fall short of this command. We could all love the Lord more than we do. We all need to pray, asking the Holy Spirit to fill us with more love for Jesus.

In love with Jesus we would not think in terms of pleasing our own flesh by laziness or by running up debt, instead we would be intent upon pleasing Him.

Paul makes it clear that this is the ambition to have in 2 Corinthians 5:9
'Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.'

The Spirit, in writing to the churches in Revelation, admonished the Laodicean church for being neither hot nor cold, and the church in Ephesus for having left their first love of Jesus. To the church in Sardis He wrote, *'Wake up and strengthen the things that remain.'*

We may be the generation that sees the return of Jesus, I believe we are. We can take wisdom from what we have just read and strengthen our love for Jesus.

It starts by recognising that biblical 'agape' love is love that comes by choice. God's love for us starts in the will of God. Our love for Jesus starts in our will - we can choose to express love to Jesus based on the truth of who He is and what He has done. The feelings that we associate with love are not essential to the truth, however I do believe that we can also experience the warmth of a love relationship with Jesus as we choose to love Him.

Are you ready to meet Him?

This is probably the most challenging question one can ask. Many would answer, No. We should be ready. When we are fully taken up with love for Him we will echo the cry of the Spirit, 'Come Lord Jesus.'

We will finish our overview with my constant prayer, 'Holy Spirit please fill me with more love for Jesus,' to help us live in the expectation and the desire of His personal call to each of us –

'Come up here I have prepared a place for YOU.'

In business? In chapter 7 and read:

We will no longer survive on our wits or on our training, our experience, our skill, or our professional excellence - we will need to be directed by the Captain of the armies of the Lord of hosts, and as obedient 'faith filled' sons follow His specific instructions and seek more and more to be filled with all righteousness.

So that our working lives become an outward manifestation of an inward walk of faith.

Summary

Here is a summary of the order of events.

- The crucifixion and resurrection of Christ.
- The 'age' of the church of Jesus.
- The rise of 10 kings resulting in the destruction of Mystery Babylon
- The 'rapture' or removal of the church to meet Jesus in the air.
- The rise of Antichrist and the start of the Tribulation
- The battle of Armageddon.
- The return of Jesus and separation of sheep and goats.
- The Millennial reign of Jesus.
- The great white throne judgement.
- Heaven and earth pass away.
- A new heaven and earth for eternity.

Chart

The age of conscience	The Jewish Age	The church age	Jesus rules
2000 years	2000 years	2000 years	1000 years

Church removed and seven years of tribulation

NOTE.

God has not been measuring time in the same way that we would. Therefore the reference to 'years' above has to be properly understood. A full study on Bible Chronology is beyond the brief of this booklet.

Specifically, and for clarification, I am not saying that the end of the church age is the year 2000 AD.

The above chart is a simplified overview of time. More detailed information regarding chronology is found in 'Ostrich Christianity' and 'Last Orders.'

Appendix.

What about other views?

We have explained in this booklet a premillennial view of the future. Here is a summary of the main views.

The premillennial view

This view of the future accepts that, when Revelation 19 and 20 describe the return of Jesus followed by a 1,000 year reign on earth, it means exactly that. In other words it is a predominantly 'straightforward' view.

This view follows the scriptural injunctions:

'No prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation.'

2 Peter 1:20

'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine.'

2 Timothy 3:16

This view interprets scripture on the basis that one takes what is written and understands it in the following manner:

The literal method assumes that the words of scripture are to be understood in their plain evident meaning and are reliable; that God intended His revelation to be understood by all who believe; that the words of scripture communicate what God wants mankind to know; and that God based the communication of truth on the regular laws governing written communication, thereby intending for it to be interpreted by those same laws. 'Literal' may be defined, usual, customary, socially accepted meaning. It allows that the same word may have different meaning in different contexts and does not exclude the figurative or idiomatic.

Other views

All the 'other views' do not adhere to the literal method of biblical interpretation, rather they assume a hidden 'spiritual' meaning. Commonly they ignore the clear picture given by figurative language, preferring some interpretation of their own.

One of the problems with these views is that each interpreter 'makes up' his own interpretation of the scriptures - particularly the figurative passages.

Amillennialism

This view dictates that there is no millennial rule of Jesus. It cannot be aligned with revelation 19 and 20 so it says that 'Revelation' is all picture language and has to be interpreted and goes on to dismiss the obvious meaning of the pictures. Thus denying the 1,000 year or in some cases any personal rule of Christ on earth.

Even if one was to accept the basic premise that Revelation needs to be interpreted - the most obvious and safe interpretation would be say that the picture language talks of Jesus return and personal rule on earth.

Amillennialism is very popular among liberals.

Postmillennialism

This view sees the rule of Jesus taking place after the millennium and not before.

Revelation 19 and 20 are explained as being a picture of the church ruling. The doctrine usually goes on to say that when the church has made the world a perfect place, then Jesus will return and rule. Clearly not being seen on earth now!

This view is held by those who err in 'Dominion Now' theology and cannot be reconciled with a straightforward view of the scripture.

The rapture

All views agree that there will be a rapture; that at some future date the church will rise to meet Jesus in the air. Some say at the end of all things, or in the middle of the tribulation etc.

The author's view of scripture

The author follows the literal method of interpretation - as being the only safe method. He does not exclude the fact that God will quicken particular scriptures to His children in order to convey some special message for their private edification. However any such personal 'rhema' word cannot be taken in precedence over the common meaning of scripture in interpretation.

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Further reading relevant to future events:

Will the church be caught away - full discussion of the doctrine of the rapture of the church.

Israel and the church not in competition - the future for Israel in more detail.

Last Orders - possible timing of events to come.

Ostrich Christianity - Detailed explanation of chronology

Understanding Daniel - simplified level of understanding covers the main points.

Understanding Revelation - simplified in the same way as above.

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