

The Day Of The Lord, The Royal Appearing: Part 3

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The Renewal of all Things

In the concluding portion of part two of this series we began to consider the theme of the New Creation and the Renewal or Restoration of all things. We will now continue with this New Testament (NT) theme and it will be shown that this renewal was intimately related to the promised resurrection & judgment of humanity – an event that would include both the righteous and the unrighteous – as well as the full establishment of the kingdom of the Son of Man in a New Creation.

Let us begin with an often-puzzling text for some in Matthew 19. (*All emphasis within the following scripture quotes is usually mine, along with some bracketed insertions*).

Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, **at the renewal (*Gk. palingenesia*) of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne**, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life."

(Matthew 19:28-29 NIV; also Luke 22:28-30)

The important thing to notice here firstly is that, in his reply to his twelve disciples, Jesus connected the renewal of all things with the coming of his kingdom, the time when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne (or the throne of his glory). What is also implied here is that the apostles would be resurrected & judged (along with all of the true Israel of God) and then given their reward of sharing in Christ's reign by sitting on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. It is this privileged position of rulership that is being promised to the 'overcomers' or 'victors' in Revelation chapters 2 & 3.

"To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations— that one 'will rule them with an iron scepter and will dash them to pieces like pottery'—just as I have received authority from my Father..."

"I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars—I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you..."

"To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne."

(Revelation 2:26-27; 3:9, 21 NIV)

The Greek word translated as *renewal* or *regeneration* in Matthew 19 is *palingenesia*. This word essentially means 'a birthing again'; and it carries the same meaning as 'born again' or 'rebirth'. Jesus was speaking of this spiritual renewal in his little discourse with Nicodemus.

Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."

"How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!"

Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. **Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.** You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

"How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

"You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. **I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?**"

(John 3:3-12 NIV)

The rebirth that Jesus was talking about was a spiritual one that would receive its fullness or perfection at the resurrection, because flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:50). The apostle Paul also spoke of this spiritual renewal and rebirthing, which is brought about solely by the power of God's Holy Spirit; a spiritual process that begins in this life for those who follow Christ.

But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. **He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit**, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

(Titus 3:4-7 NIV)

This *regeneration* or *renewal* is also called 'the *restoration* of all things,' as we saw in part two of this series. Let us remind ourselves of this text.

"Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.'

(Acts 3:17-23 NIV)

And Paul often referred to this same *regeneration* or *renewal* or *restoration* as a *new creation*.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, **the new creation has come**: The old has gone, **the new is here!**

(2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV)

Paul was saying that the spiritual process of regeneration within believers begins in this life; and for those in the 1st century, who were about to experience the perfection of this spiritual renewing process in the soon-coming Day of the Lord, the new creation was (and is) already here, yet its fullness or completion awaited the near future at the passing away of the old creation (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:29-31). The image of *rejuvenation* is also present in Colossians 3:10 as another description of the new humanity, where the Greek word *neon* is used, which describes someone as being 'young' in years or something being 'fresh'.

The Liberation of the Creation – Romans 8

In the classic passage of Romans 8:18-23, Paul appears to take this whole theme to another level by revealing that the whole creation will be liberated from its bondage to corruption and brought into the freedom of the sons (or children) of God. This would occur at the time when the sons of God were manifested (or revealed or unveiled) in glory, that is, at the resurrection, at the appearing or revelation of Christ himself in glory and power (cf. Colossians 3:4). Let me highlight a few important points here. Firstly, here's the text.

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with **the glory that will be** ('is about to be' - Gk. *mello*) revealed in us. For **the creation** waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For **the creation** was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, **in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.**

We know that **the whole creation** has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.

(Romans 8:18-23 NIV)

It is commonly assumed, even by many renowned NT scholars such as N. T. Wright, that when Paul speaks of 'the creation' in this passage he is referring to the whole universe or cosmos, inclusive of all creatures on earth. In fact, some versions read '*the created universe*' instead of 'the creation' or 'creature' (e.g. New English Bible). The only way that this interpretation works, though, is if the inanimate creation is understood as being figuratively personified in the text, for how else could the creation 'eagerly expect' the revealing of God's children in the resurrection, or 'groan' due to being 'subjected to frustration' apart from 'its own choice', in the hope that it will also experience the resurrection glory of the children of God. These things can only truly apply to humans.

Therefore, I believe there is good reason to question this 'personification' view. The Greek word in this text, which is usually translated 'creation' or 'creature' in most bibles, is the noun *ktisis*. This word primarily refers to the act of creating or the

creative act in process. It can also refer to the product of the created act, the creature itself.¹

The underlying question here is: was Paul talking about the whole created universe, which would include inanimate objects as well as all animals; or was he primarily referring to humankind? It is the context rather than the word *ktisis* itself that determines the interpretation. I believe there is good reason to accept the interpretation that Paul was primarily referring to humanity as the 'creation' or 'creature' that is subject to frustration and in bondage to corruption (or decay); and even more precisely, to the nation of Israel as God's covenant nation. And here's why.

Firstly, Paul used the very same expression '*the whole creation*' (that is, literally '*all the creation*', Romans 8:22) in Colossians 1:23. In the Colossians text it is very evident that he was talking about all humanity, because the subject of this passage was the preaching of the gospel to the whole world. Now as far as I'm aware, the apostles didn't proclaim the gospel to horses and bears, etc, or to the mountains! The gospel is primarily for humans (although it is possible that 'angels' or spirit beings could also be included in this, cf. 1 Peter 1:12; 3:18-19).

Secondly, in Romans 8:20 Paul talks about the 'frustration' or 'vanity' or 'futility' that the creation has been subjected to by the will of the Creator. The Greek word usually translated as either 'vanity' or 'frustration' is *mataiotes*. This word essentially means 'something leading to emptiness;' that is, life appears to be leading nowhere, without any real purpose, ending in death. Now as far as I'm aware, animals do not have any sense of purpose beyond death, apart from their daily instincts to survive. Surely Paul's whole point here has to do with humanity, and it's innate spiritual longing for meaning and purpose, particularly of resurrection beyond death.

Also, he goes on in verses 22 to 23 to compare the groaning and the travailing of the whole creation, as in the pains of childbirth (a common Jewish metaphor for the birthing of the new age), with the groaning of Christian believers who are awaiting the adoption as sons, which is the salvation of the body through resurrection, the gift of eternal life. Paul also refers to this redemption as the time when the glory would be revealed in God's people; and by using the Greek word *mello* he was declaring that this glory *was about to be revealed*, soon (cf. 1 Peter 5:1).

I think that these reasons alone point heavily in the direction of the view that Paul was primarily talking about humanity in Romans 8. (Nevertheless, this doesn't rule out the possibility that the words 'the whole creation' could be extended to include the whole material universe being made new, but I don't think that this was Paul's initial thinking). It is also possible that spirit beings in the heavens are included here, but it could be argued that they have not been subjected to decay and death. Nevertheless, it is also evident that Paul primarily had humans *and* spirit beings in view when he spoke of the creation of all things in Colossians 1:15-20. Anyhow, the focus is clearly on sentient beings that can become sons of God.²

Be that as it may, I think it is very evident that this 'restoration' has to do primarily with the renewing of humanity into the image of God, bringing reconciliation and salvation from Sin and Death. This was the core of Paul's teaching (cf. Romans 8:23,29-30; Colossians 3:10-11; 1 Corinthians 15:49). Some believe

that a biblical case can be made for viewing this 'renewal' and 'reconciliation of all' as having universal consequences (I also accepted this view for many years).

This very text in Romans 8 could be understood this way, that is, that 'the whole creation being set free' could be viewed as applying ultimately to all humanity, though this view is debatable and highly controversial. Therefore, I would say that it is *possible* that this restoration may have far reaching implications for the future of humanity beyond this world, but I could no longer be dogmatic about it as I have been in the past (cf. Colossians 1:15-23; 1 Timothy 4:9-10).

The Arrival of the Kingdom in Power

Returning to the text we began with in Matthew 19, there is a similar passage in Luke 22:28-30 where the twelve apostles were again being promised rulership in Christ's kingdom.

"You are those who have stood by me in my trials. **And I confer on you a kingdom**, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (NIV)

Jesus told the apostles that they would be given a kingdom with Christ, sharing in his spiritual authority, with the blessing of being able to eat and drink at his table and be seated on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Whether the 'eating and drinking' is to be taken literally or not is beside the point;³ and the same could be said about the thrones.⁴ The main emphasis and essential meaning here is that the apostles would be resurrected to share in Christ's kingdom rule as sons of God, with the God-given authority to judge – particularly to judge the twelve tribes of Israel (whether viewed as the old covenant people or the new covenant people. In fact, both are probably in view).⁵

Now it is also evident, as we have seen in this series so far, that the kingdom of the Son of Man, the kingdom of God (also known as the kingdom of the heavens or kingdom of heaven) would be fully established in the Day of the Lord, also known as the royal Presence (Gk. Parousia) of Christ; his Second Appearing or Advent; his Return; his Revelation (or unveiling or manifestation); the coming of the Son of Man. And this much-prophesied final Day of the Lord was clearly said to be in the near future or soon, within the generation of the apostles themselves.

Let us take another look at a key passage taken from the gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke.

"For the Son of Man is *going to* (Gk. *mello* – 'about to') come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done. **Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.**"

(Matthew 16:27-28 NIV; also Mark 8:38-9:1 & Luke 9:26-27)

We considered this text in part one of this series, but it is such an important passage that reveals so much, let me reiterate. The first sentence here is clearly referring to the Second Advent of Christ and the judgment associated with that Day

due to the rewards being given according to what one has done; yet Jesus goes on to emphasise to his disciples that *some* of them would not experience death before they would see *the coming of the Son of Man in his kingdom!* The parallel passage in Mark 9:1 says that they would see '*...the kingdom of God come with power.*'

That means that the coming of the Son of Man (i.e. the Second Advent of Christ and the judgment) is one and the same event as the full establishment of God's kingdom in power; and this was clearly said to occur within the lifetime of the apostles in the 1st century AD! This is one of the strongest passages in the NT that forces the interpreter to this conclusion, especially in light of Daniel chapter 7, which we will consider shortly.

Therefore, Jesus was clearly telling his disciples that some of them (at least two), but not all of them, would witness the coming of the Son of Man and his kingdom in power and glory in their generation! That is, this 'Coming' was to occur in the 1st century AD within the lifetime of the apostles. This was a clear allusion to the vision of Daniel – and the fulfilment must've occurred in 70 AD when the old covenant officially ended. There isn't any other event in the 1st century that satisfies the fulfilment of these words of Jesus in line with Daniel 7.

Jesus was also alluding to Isaiah 40:10, which speaks of the Lord coming with power to rule and to judge, bringing his reward with him to repay his covenant people for what they had done, whether those deeds be good or evil (cf. Isaiah 62:11; Revelation 22:12). Now if this coming of the Son of Man and his kingdom, spoken above, was one and the same as the arrival of the kingdom of God with power, then it follows that this is one and the same event as the Son of Man coming in his Father's glory with his angels, and then rewarding each person for their deeds. That is to say, this *is* describing the Second Appearing of Christ, followed by the resurrection and judgment of Israel and the nations. And some of the disciples of that generation were told that they would remain alive until that day came!

In the quote from Matthew 16 (as well as in Romans 8 quoted above), the Greek word *mello* is used in verse 27. The word *mello* refers to an action or event that is 'about to be;' that is, something 'on the verge of' occurring. Even though the word is essentially describing an intention or purpose, in virtually every place in the NT it is referring to something on the verge of happening; and these things generally did occur at some point in time, whether almost immediately or sometime later (I've personally checked all these occurrences). There are many places in the NT where *mello* is used, but some translations have obscured its true meaning in certain instances.

Matthew 16 is a perfect example. The NIV, quoted above, reads '*going to*' come, which doesn't signify a time limit, whereas the Interlinear Greek-English New Testament by George Ricker Berry reads correctly '*about to come*' (as do some literal versions). This indicates that this event was on the verge of happening, though no one knew the day or the hour. This translation & interpretation is confirmed by what follows when Jesus indicated that some of the disciples would remain alive to witness the event. (There are other similar instances to this in the NT, and I will try and point these out as we progress).

I am therefore convinced that we are to understand these things as events that occurred in the 1st century AD. I believe that this is the only way of being

intellectually honest when studying the NT, especially if one wishes to be consistent with one's interpretation and understanding.

The Kingdom & the Judgment

We have a similar instance of this word *mello* in 2 Timothy 4:1, and again it is in the context of the appearing of Christ and the coming of his kingdom. It is also evident that the Day of Judgment is also associated with this Day of the Lord.

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who *will* (Gk. *mello* – '**is about to**') **judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom**, I give you this charge... Now there is in store 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 longed for his appearing.

(2 Timothy 4:1 & 8 NIV)

Here is verse 1 as it reads in Young's Literal Version.

I do fully testify, then, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, **who is about to judge living and dead at his manifestation and his reign** --

The thing that is very evident from this text is that Paul was declaring to Timothy that the appearing (or advent, Gk. *epiphaneia*) of Christ to fully establish his kingdom was on the verge of happening; and this event would include Christ's judgment of the living and the dead, which presupposes the resurrection of the dead as well as the transformation of the living believers (something Paul talked about elsewhere; e.g. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54).

It seems more likely that 'the living' was referring to Christian believers, while 'the dead' was referring to unbelievers; that is, the focus was on their spiritual state. Therefore, the phrase '*the living and the dead*' would be equivalent to '*the righteous and the unrighteous*' (cf. Acts 24:15); or in the words of Jesus' parables, '*the sheep and the goats*' (cf. Matthew 25:31-46), or '*the wheat and the weeds*' (Gr. *darnel* – cf. Matthew 13:36-43), or '*the good fish and the bad fish*' (cf. Matthew 13:47-50). As we shall see later, Revelation 20 defines these two groups as *those of the First Resurrection*, and *the dead*.

Either way, Paul was talking about the coming judgment that would follow the resurrection in the soon-coming Day of the Lord. This judgment on 'that day' is also alluded to again in verse 8 in connection with the rewards⁶ promised to faithful disciples of Christ, whom Paul describes as '*those who love his appearing*.' In Revelation, these believers are called *overcomers* (or victors or conquerors; cf. Revelation 2-3).

Now in light of all of this, take careful note of the following three texts; the second and third have already been considered above, and the first is taken from the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25 (which Matthew has tagged on to the account of the Olivet Discourse).

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats."

(Matthew 25:31-32 NIV)

"For the Son of Man is going to (*Gk. about to*) come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done. Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

(Matthew 16:27-28 NIV)

Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, **when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne**, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

(Matthew 19:28 NIV)

In the first text, from Matthew 25, Jesus was describing in parabolic form the judgment of the nations of humanity that would occur at the time that his kingdom was to be fully established; that is, at his Second Appearing, when as the Son of Man he would come in glory with his angels and then sit on the throne of his glory; and all in accord with Daniel 7.

Then in the second text, as we saw earlier, Jesus told his apostles that he was about to be coming in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then he would reward each person according to what they had done (i.e. the Second Advent and the Judgment). He also revealed that this soon-coming event that would establish his kingdom in power would occur within the lifetime of the apostles.

Finally, in the third text, Jesus told his apostles that when he sits on the throne of his glory (i.e. after the Second Advent), they also would be given power and authority to rule with him, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (i.e. the judgment). This would occur at the renewal of all things, which, as we saw earlier, is the establishing of a new creation; that is, the arrival of a new created order due to the establishing of the kingdom of God.

Now even though the resurrection is not specifically mentioned in these texts, it is clearly implied, for, as we shall see, the resurrection is intimately related to the judgment because the dead have to rise first before they are judged. (It is also worth noting here that nowhere in these texts is there any mention of Christ's throne being on earth).

Be that as it may, *all these texts are clearly referring to the same event or events*; that is, the Second Appearing of Christ (also called his Revelation, his royal Presence, and the Coming of the Son of Man), which would include the resurrection and the judgment of both Israel and the nations who had lived and died up to that point in history, along with the full establishment of the Messianic kingdom of God in power and glory (when Christ would sit on the throne of his glory).

As has been shown in parts 1 and 2 of this series, the Day of the Lord would occur after a great tribulation would come upon the land of Judea culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem and the desolation of the temple. This is particularly evident in Jesus' Olivet Discourse. This theme was also the ultimate end-point of the visions of Daniel.

This very same scenario is being portrayed in certain portions of the vision of Revelation. Take for example the account of the seventh trumpet in Revelation 11.

The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said:

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever."

And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying:

"We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign.
The nations were angry, **and your wrath has come.**
The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your people who revere your name, both great and small—
and for destroying those who destroy the earth."

(Revelation 11:15-18 NIV)

Here we have a description of the establishing of Christ's spiritual kingdom over the kingdom of the world. The Almighty God is pictured as having taken his great power and has begun to reign. The beginning of this reign is also described as a time of wrath, the time for judging the dead and for rewarding his servants the prophets and all his chosen holy ones; as well as a time for destroying those who were destroying (or corrupting) the land (or earth).⁷

Then in Revelation chapters 17 to 21 we have the following events: a description of the harlot city, mystery Babylon, and her destruction; the wedding supper of the lamb and the second appearing of Christ as he makes war on the demonic beasts and defeats them; then the establishing of a '1000 year' kingdom involving a first resurrection for those who are to rule with Christ as royal priests (these are the living), as well as a judgment of the dead (these are the dead!).

The judgment of 'the dead' results in all being condemned to the second death, metaphorically called 'the lake of fire'; & all of this is then followed by 'a new heaven and a new earth', that is, a new creation and a new order of existence. Take note that Revelation 20:11 and 21:1, 4 state that 'the old heaven and earth' has passed away and a new order has begun. This was something that Jesus had prophesied would happen within a generation (cf. Matthew 24:33-35).

Here are the most relevant portions that speak of the resurrection and the judgment in relation to the new creation.

I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. **They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.** (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) **This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years...**

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

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

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

(Revelation 20:4-6, 11-21:5 NIV)

Of course, there is much that could be said about these verses in accordance with how one interprets them. I will be considering these texts in more detail later, but for now I just wanted to show the similarities with the earlier passages. The one thing that should be carefully noted when seeking to understand these things in Revelation is the time statements mentioned throughout the book. These things were near!

The Nearness of the Day

In the first and last chapter of Revelation, the apostle John was indicating very clearly that the prophecies contained within the vision of Revelation were about to be fulfilled, shortly after it was given to him. He also recorded many similar words that were spoken to him by Christ himself showing that the Parousia (or coming) of the Lord was soon to occur. Not only that, but the Greek word *mello* and its variations

(see p. 7 above) are used a number of times throughout Revelation indicating that these things were on the verge of happening (cf. 1:19; 2:10; 3:10; 6:11; 17:8). A sound interpretation of Revelation has to fit these criteria.⁸

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants **what must soon take place**. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, **because the time is near...**"

The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God who inspires the prophets, sent his angel **to show his servants the things that must soon take place**."

"Look, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll..."

Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this scroll, **because the time is near...**"

"Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done... He who testifies to these things says, **Yes, I am coming soon.**"

(Revelation 1:1-3; 22:6-7, 10, 12 & 20 NIV)

It is interesting to note that in complete contrast to what the prophet Daniel was told, John is told 'do not seal up... the prophecy... because the time is near', whereas Daniel was told to go his way and not try to figure it all out because the visions he had seen were going to be closed up and sealed until the time of the end (cf. Daniel 12:9, 13); and this 'end' was a good five centuries in the future from the time of Daniel.⁹ In fact, it is the vision of Revelation, along with the rest of the NT apostolic writings, which *unseals* the book of Daniel! And this unsealing occurred because the time of its complete fulfilment was now at hand in the mid-60's AD!

When Paul was declaring the gospel to the Athenians in the Areopagus, he said the following,

"In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will (Gk. *mello* -'is about to') judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead."

(Acts 17:30-31 NIV)

Here is how verse 31 reads in Young's Literal Translation.

'...because **He did set a day in which He is about to judge the world in righteousness**, by a man whom He did ordain, having given assurance to all, having raised him out of the dead.'

Whether Paul was referring to the initial Day of Judgment or the on-going process of judgment due to Christ's soon-coming reign, it is evident that he believed that that Day was near.

Peter also wrote something similar in regard to the judgment of the living and the dead.

But they will have to give account **to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead...**

The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray.

(1 Peter 4:5 & 7 NIV)

The Greek word translated 'ready' in verse 5 is the adverb *hetoimos*, which actually means something a little more than just being ready or prepared. It literally means 'to be in readiness, to hold in readiness'. It is describing someone being actively ready to do something, that is, being prepared for something that is soon to occur. Hence, Peter was saying here that the judgment of the living and the dead was near, and Christ was standing in readiness for his appearing; and this included the full establishment of the Messianic kingdom of God. Not only that, but Peter also went on to say that '*the end of all things has drawn near*' (lit. Gk.); and he meant right then, in the 1st century.

It seems ludicrous to me if Peter's words are viewed in such a way that we should then conclude that Jesus is *still* waiting in readiness to judge the living and the dead, even now, nearly 2000 years later! No, I don't think so. This was something that was soon to occur in the 1st century AD, and there is nothing in the whole NT that says anything about a postponement of this judgment or of the coming of Christ's kingdom.

James also wrote something very similar to this.

Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming... the Lord's coming is near... **The Judge is standing at the door!**

(James 5:7-9 NIV)

James obviously got this picture of Christ as the Judge standing at the door in readiness from Jesus' Olivet discourse.

"Even so, when you see all these things, **you know that it (or He) is near, right at the door.** Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened."

(Matthew 24:33-34 NIV)

The door(s) here are probably referring figuratively to the 'door' of heaven; that is to say, the entrance into the spirit realm (or dimension) and the kingdom of heaven (cf. Matthew 16:19; Revelation 4:1). So here we have the testimony of three witnesses (one being the recorded words of Christ himself), which were saying that

that 1st century generation would witness all the events of the Olivet Discourse; that is, the Second Appearing of Christ, the establishing of his kingdom, and the resurrection and judgment. When Peter and James wrote their letters (and this would've been well before 70 AD), the Judge was seen as being at the door, holding himself in readiness to judge the living and the dead in regard to his appearing and kingdom. Christ's Presence (or Parousia) was near; He was coming soon.

Daniel 7 & the Timing of the Arrival

Before we begin considering the key passages that refer to the resurrection and judgment associated with Christ's Parousia, let us take a look at the order of events as prophesied by Daniel in the vision of the Beasts.

In this vision in Daniel 7, four kingdoms were prophesied to arise, followed by the kingdom of heaven. Virtually all bible commentators agree that the four kingdoms/empires were Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece and *Rome*. The ten horns on the fourth beast (Rome) were said to be *ten kings* or rulers who would come from this kingdom. This was also being shown in the vision of the Great Image in Daniel 2, where the ten toes were evidently these ten kings. It was to be '*in the days of those kings*' that the kingdom of God (a.k.a. the kingdom of the heavens) would be set up (cf. Daniel 2:40-41, 44).

Then another horn, a little (eleventh) one, is said to rise up after three of the previous rulers had been subdued. This little horn/ruler was to wage war against the holy people of God for a period of three and a half years (expressed as 'a time, times and half a time') and he would seemingly defeat them.

Nevertheless, at the end of this period of war, the Ancient of Days would come and pronounce judgment in favour of his holy people, the true Israel; that is, there would be a coming of God in righteous judgment to rescue his chosen ones. Then the heavenly court would give the authority of the kingdoms of the world to the people of God (the focus here ultimately being on the *spiritual* powers and authorities rather than just merely the human kingdoms). This universal kingdom was to be given to the Son of Man at the time of a great judgment of God in heaven where multitudes stood before the fiery throne. Here is the interpretation that was given to Daniel.

"So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things: 'The four great beasts are four kings (*or kingdoms*) that will rise from the earth. But the holy people of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever.'

"Then I wanted to know the meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others and most terrifying, with its iron teeth and bronze claws—the beast that crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell—the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. As I watched, this horn was waging war against the holy people and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the holy people of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.

“He gave me this explanation: ‘The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people and try to change the set times and the laws. **The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time.**

“But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. **Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High.** His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.’

(Daniel 7:16-27 NIV)

As shown in part one of this series, I believe the historical and biblical evidence is strong enough to accept the interpretation that ‘*the great tribulation*’ upon Israel, which would last for three and a half years, was fulfilled in the Roman/Jewish war of February/March 67 to August/September 70 AD – a period of three and a half years. At the end of this war, the city of Jerusalem and the temple were completely destroyed, officially ending the Old Covenant era.

Amazingly, this ‘end of the age’ event occurred when the *tenth* ruler of Rome, Vespasian, was the new emperor (beginning the count with Julius Caesar).¹⁰ That would then make his son Titus the ‘little horn’ eleventh ruler; and he was the one who actually destroyed the temple after laying siege to the city of Jerusalem; and he was the only Roman ruler who was directly involved with the whole war. The three of the ten horns/rulers who were previously subdued were Galba, Otho and Vitellius, with Vespasian and Titus coming out as victors after the infamous ‘Year of the Four Emperors.’

If this is the case, and I believe there is good reason to accept that it is, then the coming of the Son of Man, the Day of the Lord – in fact, all of the events prophesied in Daniel’s visions - must’ve occurred at this time as well; and that would include the resurrection and judgment.

In verses 9-12 of chapter 7, Daniel describes a heavenly court scene where thrones are set in place alongside the fiery chariot-throne of God himself, and a river of fire is seen flowing out from before him. Many thousands are seen attending him and tens of thousands stand before him, as the court is seated and books are opened. This ‘judgment scene’ account follows with the little horn/beast being destroyed and thrown into the river of fire – with the added words that the other beasts had been stripped of their authority but were allowed to live for a time. Here’s the passage in question.

“As I looked,

“thrones were set in place,
and **the Ancient of Days** took his seat.
His clothing was as white as snow;
the hair of his head was white like wool.

His throne was flaming with fire,
and its wheels were all ablaze.
A river of fire was flowing,
coming out from before him.
Thousands upon thousands attended him;
ten thousand times ten thousand **stood before him.**
The court was seated,
and the **books** were opened.

"Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until **the beast** was slain and its body destroyed and **thrown into the blazing fire.** (The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.)

(Daniel 7:9-12 NIV)

Now it is very evident that this is describing the Day of Judgment associated with the establishing of the kingdom of God. When you take all the elements here and carefully compare them with the details in Revelation 20 concerning the First Resurrection (verses 4-6) and the judgment of the dead at the Great White Throne (verses 11-15), they are essentially the same.¹¹ Not only that, but the destruction of the spiritual 'beast/little horn' power into 'the fire' is also being described in the previous chapter (Revelation 19:11-21); and this is the result of the Second Appearing of Christ as 'the Rider on the white horse' coming in judgment to establish his kingdom (equivalent to the coming of God in Daniel 7:21-22). (I plan to deal with Revelation 20 a little more later on, so I won't take up too much time with it here).

Now staying with Daniel for a minute, chapter 12 also speaks of these very things – including the resurrection.

"At that time **Michael**, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found **written in the book**—will be delivered.² **Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.**³ Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.⁴ But you, Daniel, roll up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge."

⁵ Then I, Daniel, looked, and there before me stood two others, one on this bank of the river and one on the opposite bank. ⁶ One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, "How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?"

⁷ The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, "**It will be for a time, times and half a time.** When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, **all these things will be completed.**"

⁸ I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, "My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?"

⁹ He replied, "Go your way, Daniel, because the words are rolled up and sealed until the time of the end..

¹³ "As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then **at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance.**"

(Daniel 12:1-9, 13 NIV)

Now take careful note of these parallels between Daniel 12 above, Jesus' Olivet Discourse, and the vision of Revelation. At the time of the end (i.e. the end of the age) the chief messenger (or archangel) *Michael* would arise to do battle (cf. Revelation 12:7-10); there would be a *great tribulation* or time of distress for Israel lasting *three and a half years* (i.e. time, times and half a time), unequalled before that time (cf. Daniel 7:25; Matthew 24:21-22; Revelation 7:14; 11:2-3; 12:13-14; 13:5-10). At the end of this period, *all these things would be completed*, resulting in the people of Israel being finally broken, while the true holy people of God, Daniel's people (i.e. the faithful remnant), who are written in the book (of life), would be saved (cf. Luke 21:20-23, 28; Revelation 11:17-18).

At this time there would also be a resurrection of multitudes sleeping in the earth – both of the righteous (who are given age-abiding life) and the unrighteous (who are given age-abiding shame and contempt). Daniel himself was told that at the end of the days (that is, *on the last day*; cf. John 11:24; 6:39-40, 44 & 54) he also would rise to receive his inheritance. And Daniel was then told to *seal up* the words of the prophecy because the time of the end was a long way off (contrary to what John was later told when the time of the end had finally arrived; for he was told *don't seal up the prophecy because the time is near!*)

The Resurrection: the Righteous & Unrighteous Together

When it comes to Daniel 12:2, most biblical commentators and scholars take the view that this verse is referring to actual, concrete resurrection, as opposed to being purely symbolic or figurative. (A clear symbolic case of resurrection in the OT is Ezekiel 37:1-14; cf. Hosea 6:2; although the ultimate NT fulfilment of these texts would involve actual resurrection). This verse in Daniel is one of the few OT texts that explicitly describes the resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous. It also uses the common metaphor of 'sleep' for the state of death.

Renowned biblical scholar N. T. Wright says the following about Daniel 12:2-3 in his mammoth work *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (2003, SPCK).

"There is little doubt that this refers to concrete, bodily resurrection." (p. 109)

And in a footnote Wright quotes Collins (1993, 391f.),

There is "virtually unanimous agreement among modern scholars that Daniel is referring to the actual resurrection of individuals from the dead." (p. 109)

Let's remind ourselves of these verses in Daniel 12.

² **Multitudes** who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to **everlasting life**, others to **shame and everlasting contempt**.³ Those who

are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. (NIV)

In its original context, the 'multitudes' (or the 'many' as some versions render it) was most probably referring initially to the covenant people of God, i.e. Israel, which included both the righteous faithful ones, and the unrighteous unfaithful ones. Yet as we shall see shortly, the NT expands this to include all nations.

N. T. Wright said the following about the 'many' in this passage.

Those who awake are 'many', but not, it appears, all. The passage is not attempting to offer a global theory of the ultimate destination of the whole human race, but simply to affirm that, in a renewed bodily life, God will give everlasting life to some and everlasting contempt to others...The rest – the great majority of humans, and indeed of Israelites – are simply not mentioned.¹²

This may be the case, due to its ancient Hebrew context (although I am not convinced that '*the great majority of... Israelites... are simply not mentioned*' is the best way of understanding this text); yet I think the most that can be said here is that this resurrection would involve all the covenant people of God, whether the good or the bad.

Duncan W. McKenzie quotes Joyce Baldwin referring to the 'many' as follows.

The use of the word 'many' in Hebrew is not quite parallel with its use in English. Hebrew *rabbîm* 'many', tends to mean 'all', as in Deuteronomy 7:1; Isaiah 2:2, where 'all nations' becomes 'many peoples' in the parallel verse 3; and in Isaiah 52:14, 15; 53:11, 12, where this key-word occurs no less than five times, with an inclusive significance. As Jeremias... points out, the Hebrew word *kol*, 'all', means either 'totality' or 'sum'; there is no word for 'all' as a plural. For this *rabbîm* does duty, and so comes to mean 'the great multitude', 'all'; cf. 'Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth...' (NIV). The emphasis is not upon many as opposed to all, but rather on the numbers involved.¹³

I would certainly accept the overall point being made here. Either way, this verse is clearly stating that a huge number of people would be resurrected at this time, and some would receive Life (who are afterwards referred to as '*the wise*' and '*those who lead many to righteousness*') while others would receive rejection and shame. This was evidently revealing that when the resurrection would occur, it would include the righteous and the unrighteous being resurrected and judged *at the same time*, via a process of separation. And this is exactly what the NT reveals also.

For example, in John 5:25-29, we have the following words of Jesus.

Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. **And he has given him authority to judge** because he is the Son of Man.

"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming **when all who are in their graves** will hear his voice and come out—**those who have done what is**

good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned. (NIV)

Initially, in verse 25, Jesus was declaring that a time of spiritual regeneration was coming, and yet was already present, when certain ones among the (spiritually) dead would hear the voice of the Son of God and live. Then in the context of Christ being given the authority to judge humanity as the Son of Man, Jesus reveals that a time was coming (which was *not* already present) when all who were physically dead (in the tombs or graves) would hear his voice and be resurrected – the good (or righteous) in a resurrection to life, and the ‘evil’ (or unrighteous) in a resurrection to condemnation.

Jesus was reaffirming the text of Daniel 12:2-3; and at the same time declaring that *all* who were dead would be resurrected – righteous and unrighteous together. It was revealed later that this ‘rising’ would occur on ‘*the last day,*’ that is, at the royal Appearing or Parousia of Christ in the Day of the Lord (cf. John 11:24; 6:39-40, 44 & 54).

The apostle Paul also confirmed this belief in the resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous occurring at the same time – and the emphasis was laid on the fact that it was *about to occur* (Gk. *mello*).

‘And I confess this to thee, that, according to the way that they call a sect, so serve I the God of the fathers, believing all things that in the law and the prophets have been written, having hope toward God, which they themselves also wait for, **[that] there is about to be a rising again of the dead, both of righteous and unrighteous’**

(Acts 24:14-15 YLT)

The resurrection *and* the judgment are inseparable themes, the resurrection leading to the judgment. Here is a case in point.

“The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here. **The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation** and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, and now something greater than Solomon is here.”

(Matthew 12:41-42 NIV)

It is very evident from these verses that Jesus was declaring that the resurrection and judgment was soon to occur, for ‘*this generation*’, that is, the Jews of that era, would rise along with ‘gentile’ believers from previous centuries (represented in the Assyrian men of Nineveh, and the queen of Sheba). Then these ‘gentile’ believers, who had shown evidence of faith in the true God through their acts of repentance, would actually condemn those of Jesus’ day who were showing evidence of their *unbelief* in Jesus as the Messiah – even in the face of such great signs and miracles, which were the evidence that Jesus was the promised Messiah (cf. Matthew 11:20-24; 8:10-12).

As noted earlier, the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25:31-46 revealed that *all the nations* (not just the nation of Israel as God's covenant people) would be raised to stand before Christ to be judged at the establishing of his kingdom. Now let's take a look at this text alongside some other key texts from the NT concerning the Second Advent and the kingdom of the Son of Man.

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats."

(Matthew 25:31-32 NIV)

"For the Son of Man is going to (*Gk. about to*) come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done. Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

(Matthew 16:27-28 NIV)

Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, **when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne**, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

(Matthew 19:28 NIV)

God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. **This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels.** He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.

(2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 NIV)

He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. **The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.**"

"As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be **at the end of the age**. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. **Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.** Whoever has ears, let them hear.

(Matthew 13:37-43 NIV; see also 49-50)

In this last text, taken from the parable of the weeds (or darnel), there is an interesting connection to Daniel 12:3. As quoted above, Daniel was told that the wise, who would lead many to *righteousness*, would *shine like the brightness of the heavens and the stars*, for the ages and beyond. This was to occur 'at the end of the days'; or put another way, *at the end of the age* (or on *the last day*). This was describing the glory that would be given to the true people of God at the resurrection & judgment, at the full establishment of the messianic kingdom of God. And this is exactly what Jesus was referring to as *the harvest-time at the end of the age*, when 'the righteous would shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.'

This period called '*the end (or conclusion) of the age*' was clearly referring to the awesome events associated with the end of the old covenant kingdom and the full establishment of the New Covenant messianic kingdom that would occur at the Second Appearing of Christ Jesus. The disciples asked Jesus about this 'end of the age' after he had prophesied about the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, which became the impetus for the Olivet Discourse (cf. Matthew 24:1-3).

Not only that, but some years later the apostle Paul went on to reveal that '*the end of the ages*' had already arrived upon that generation because the first stage of the Messiah's coming had already occurred, and the second stage was nearing its completion.

These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, **on whom the culmination of the ages has come.**

(1 Corinthians 10:11 NIV)

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

(Hebrews 9:26-28 NIV)

This last text, from the writer of Hebrews (probably Paul), is clearly talking about Christ's First Appearing *and* His Second Appearing; and it is evident from other NT texts we have considered that these 'end of the age' events were to be witnessed by that 1st century generation.¹⁴ The Greek word *phaneroo* translated 'appeared' in this text carries the meaning of 'manifestation,' while the Greek *opsomai* refers to 'a seeing with the eyes.' Both terms here are describing the spiritual manifestation of Christ as the resurrected Son of God – both in his first advent and his second advent.

Descending, Appearing & Clouds: 1 Thessalonians 4

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, we have probably one of the earliest accounts of the description of the events of Christ's Parousia & Appearing written by the apostle Paul. Here is what he said.

¹³ Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those **who sleep in death**, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. ¹⁴ For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus **those who have fallen asleep in him**. ¹⁵ According to the Lord's word, we tell you that **we who are still alive, who are left until the coming (Gk. Parousia) of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.** ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, **and the dead in Christ will rise first**. ¹⁷ After that, **we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air**. And so we will be with the Lord forever. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words. (NIV)

Firstly, I want to consider the main points here concerning the resurrection & transformation of the followers of Christ at his Parousia or Presence, comparing these details with other key texts.

Paul begins by reassuring the Thessalonian Christians that those believers who had died (that is, those who had fallen asleep in Christ) would not miss out on the events of Christ's Parousia. He then says that, *according to the Lord's word*, those who were still living when the Day of the Lord arrived would certainly not have precedence over those who had died.

Now before we go any further, where do we find Jesus saying anything about his followers remaining alive till his return (i.e. till the coming of the Son of Man; his Parousia or Presence; his Second Appearing & Revelation)? Let us remind ourselves, for we looked at some of these texts earlier in this series.

"You will be hated by everyone because of me, **but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.** When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. **Truly I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.**"

(Matthew 10:22-23 NIV)

Firstly, Jesus tells his disciples that they must stand firm *to the end* because they would be persecuted while they proclaimed the gospel to Israel. He then tells them that they would not finish their evangelistic mission to the towns of Israel (which could've included the Jewish cities in the Diaspora) before the coming of the Son of Man. Therefore; this coming of Christ was to occur within their generation.

"For the Son of Man is going to (*Lit. Gk. 'about to'*) come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done. **Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.**"

(Matthew 16:27-28 NIV)

In this text, as we saw earlier, Jesus tells his disciples that the Son of Man was about to come in the glory of his Father with his angels and then he would reward them at the judgment. He then tells them, with emphasis (truly, truly), that some of them standing there would not taste death before they would see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. Therefore, Jesus was stating very clearly that his Parousia

and kingdom would occur within the lifetime of some of his apostles, i.e. in their generation.

³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am...**

²⁰ Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is going to betray you?") ²¹ When Peter saw him, he asked, "Lord, what about him?"

²² Jesus answered, "**If I want him to remain alive until I return**, what is that to you? You must follow me." ²³ Because of this, the rumor spread among the believers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?"

²⁴ This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.

(John 14:3; 21:20-24 NIV)

In the first verse quoted, from John 14, Jesus had promised his apostles on the night before his death that he was going away to the Father to prepare a place for them; and that he would come back for them and take them to be with him in the Father's presence. This promise would be a little redundant if he was talking about returning for them hundreds or thousands of years later after they'd all died. He was clearly indicating that his return would be soon, in their generation. Some of them would still be alive to witness his return.

In the last chapter of John's gospel, chapter 21 (quoted above), the resurrected Jesus tells Peter to essentially mind his own business about John's earthly fate, for if Jesus wanted John to remain alive until his return, what was that to Peter? Peter was to follow his own path within God's will. Now again this statement of Jesus would be rather meaningless if there wasn't a strong possibility that John could in fact remain alive until Jesus returned for them.

It is true, as stated in verse 23, that this caused a rumour to spread that John wouldn't die. But the text emphasises the fact that Jesus didn't actually say that John wouldn't die, only that he was expressing the possibility that John would remain alive until his return if he wanted him to. In other words, he had not actually promised that John would definitely remain alive until Christ's return – but it was still possible. Therefore, this was indicating that Christ's return for them would occur within their generation.

In another place, Jesus also promised his disciples that in relation to the great persecution that was soon to come upon them, those who endured to the end would save themselves so that not a hair of their head would perish (cf. Luke 21:17-19). This was evidently something much more than just a promise of resurrection after their deaths. This was an encouragement to endure to the end of the age so that if they were to remain alive till the coming of the Son of Man, not a hair of their heads would perish, for they would be transformed at the Parousia.

The Olivet Discourse

And what about the Olivet discourse?

³⁰ “Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth (*or tribes of the land*) will mourn **when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.** ³¹ **And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.**

³² “Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. ³³ Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. ³⁴ **Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.**

(Matthew 24:30-34 NIV)

In this portion of the Olivet discourse, Jesus was describing the key elements of his Second Advent – and he declared that it would occur within that first century generation. This Appearing was to take the form of a special theophany¹⁵ not unlike the similar appearances of God in the OT era. These appearances or manifestations of Yahweh, the God of Israel, were usually accompanied by the Shekinah glory-cloud. These kinds of theophanies were often described in terms of God ‘coming down’ or ‘descending’ to a particular vicinity, surrounded by the glory-cloud, which involved the *Presence* of God himself. These were heavenly, spiritual manifestations that not all humans present at the time could see (cf. Exodus 14:19, 24; 16:10; 33:9-11, 14).

The greatest theophany in the OT was at Mount Sinai when the law was given (Exodus 19:16-25). At that time God *descended* in fire in the *glory-cloud* upon the mountain in the sight of the whole community of Israel, which was also accompanied by the sound of a *trumpet blast* that grew louder and louder.

In his Olivet discourse, Jesus was declaring that his Appearing and Presence (Gk. *Parousia*) at the establishing of his kingdom in power at the end of the old covenant age would be similar to the theophany at Mount Sinai when the old covenant was established. He used many of these key words & themes, such as descending from heaven, with (or in) clouds of glory, with fire, with his angels (i.e. his spiritual army), accompanied by a trumpet blast. This was describing the *Presence* or *Parousia* of Christ at his Second Appearing; and Paul uses the same terminology in some of his descriptions of the Second Advent, especially in the 1 Thessalonians 4 text that we’re presently considering.

There is also a strong connection here with the event of Christ’s Ascension in Acts 1:9-12.

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

the same way you have seen him go into heaven.” Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day’s walk from the city.

(Acts 1:9-12 NIV)

This text is often used to validate the teaching that Jesus will come back visibly in the sky for the whole world to see, because, as the text states clearly, Christ will come back in the same way he left; and that was visible to all (as the reasoning goes). Yet the question should be asked, “visible to whom?”

Recently I’ve come to realise that most Christians assume that the ascension event described above was visible to the general public, that is, visible to everyone in the vicinity. But was it? Was it really visible to all? Apart from the biblical accounts in the NT, there isn’t any hard evidence that anyone in the local area of Jerusalem or the surrounding villages near the Mount of Olives saw the figure of a man rising into the sky in a cloud on that day! The only witnesses were the chosen apostles. It is possible that others witnessed it, but it seems unlikely.

This was evidently a spiritual ‘heavenly’ sight only observable to those whose eyes had been opened to witness it. This wasn’t a natural sight for all to see. Yes, it was visible; and yes, people saw it happen; but it was not a public, worldly event in the sense of, using a modern example, seeing a balloon rising into the sky (cf. Luke 17:20-21)! In fact, the only ones who saw all of Christ’s post-resurrection appearances recorded in the NT were evidently his chosen followers (and there were over 500 of these witnesses; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:3-8). The world at large did not see Jesus again (cf. John 14:19; 16:16-22; 1 Corinthians 15:5-8)!

Hence, at His return, a similar thing to the ascension would occur, as the angels had prophesied. Jesus would come back for His disciples, so that at His Presence, He would descend from heaven to the vicinity of the earth (as a theophany) to gather His followers and take them to be where He is (cf. John 13:36; 14:1-4; Hebrews 9:28). The main focus of this account of the ascension of Jesus is that he returned to the spiritual dimension or heaven surrounded within the glory-cloud, which is the divine sign of a theophany.

The apostles did not see Jesus slowly ascend higher and higher into the earth’s atmosphere like a balloon till he gradually disappeared out of sight! Instead, this was a deliberate enactment of a theophany in reverse if you will. It was a visible manifestation of something very similar to Daniel 7:13-14 where the Son of Man is pictured as coming with the clouds of heaven (i.e. the glory-cloud) to approach the Ancient of Days in the heavenly throne room to receive his kingdom (Mark 14:62). And the return (or descent) of Christ would occur in a similar manner to his ascension (‘going up’ or departure). And the sign of this coming was the Divine glory-cloud.¹⁶

Here is another text that is referring to the same event.

“Look, he is coming with the clouds,”
and “every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him”;

and all peoples on earth "will mourn because of him."
So shall it be! Amen.

(Revelation 1:7 NIV)

This verse from the vision of Revelation was based not only on the Olivet discourse (as shown above), but it was also a fusion of echo's from OT prophecies such as Daniel 7:13 and Zechariah 12:10-14. Literal translations, such as Young's, render Revelation 1:7 and Matthew 24:30 as '*the tribes of the land*' will wail or mourn instead of '*the nations of the earth*.' This translation has greater relevance in light of the 1st century judgment upon Israel and the connection to the '*seeing*' or '*looking*' & '*mourning*' of Zechariah 12.¹⁷ (For further study of this, see my article *The Olivet Discourse and the Second Advent*).

Returning to the theme of the theophany at Sinai, the writer to the Hebrews was making the very same connection in relation to Sinai & the old covenant, contrasting it with the soon-coming Appearing of Christ to fully establish the New Covenant at the heavenly Mount Zion.

¹⁸ You have not come to **a mountain** that can be touched and that is burning with fire (*i.e. Sinai*); to darkness, gloom and storm; ¹⁹ **to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words** that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, ²⁰ because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death." ²¹ The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear."

²² **But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.** You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, ²³ to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ²⁴ to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

²⁵ See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? ²⁶ At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." ²⁷ **The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain.**

²⁸ Therefore, **since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken**, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, ²⁹ for our "God is a consuming fire."

(Hebrews 12:18-29 NIV)

The 'created things' of the old covenant order, particularly manifested in the temple and its services, were about to be destroyed, giving rise to a new order, the spiritual kingdom of God and his Messiah, in a new creation. This 'shaking' event was to bring about a new state of affairs in both the heavens and the earth. And this heavenly kingdom cannot be shaken or destroyed (cf. Daniel 7:14).

The writer to the Hebrews (writing most probably in the 60's AD) also spoke of the soon-approaching Second Appearing of Christ, placing it in the context of the High Priest's duties on the annual Day of Atonement (cf. Hebrews 9:26-28, cited above). As we saw earlier, this explicit reference to the second appearing of Christ is viewed in the context of Jesus' high priestly ministry in the true heavenly temple, along with his personal sacrifice for sins. The imagery that the writer appears to be alluding to is the ministry of the high priest on the Day of Atonement, which occurred only once a year to atone for the sins of the community of Israel (cf. Leviticus 16; 23:26-32)

He was declaring that Jesus' first appearing involved his sacrifice for sins followed by his resurrection and ascension as the Son of God to perform his high priestly ministry in the heavenly temple at God's right hand (cf. Hebrews 10:10-14). Thereafter he would appear a second time, emerging from the heavenly Holy of Holies to bring salvation to the true Israel of God who were waiting for him. ONLY THEN would the twofold process of redemption and restoration be completed. And all this would occur within the same generation leading to the salvation & restoration of all Israel (cf. Romans 11:25-27).

Even though the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom at the time Christ died, the full outworking of this redemption, which was purchased at the cross, would occur in the great Day of the Lord at the end of the old covenant age (cf. Matthew 27:50-54; 24:1-3, 33-35; Luke 21:20-33). This occurred in 70 AD when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed. Only then was Christ's kingdom fully established and the salvation of Israel complete. Only then had the new order of the new covenant kingdom fully arrived, after the first obsolete and 'old' covenant had disappeared (cf. Hebrews 8:13; 9:7-10).

In Part Four, we shall continue to consider 1 Thessalonians 4, dealing with the subjects of the 'rapture', the nature of the resurrection, immortality, & the consummation of 1 Corinthians 15, among other things.

Endnotes

¹ Source: *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* (1985, Thomas Nelson, Inc.) & The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.

² I plan to consider this passage in Romans 8 in more detail in an upcoming series loosely entitled *Does the NT Explicitly Teach Universal Salvation?* I believe a strong biblical case can be made to show that 'the creation' Paul was referring to here was, at the very least, all OT believers, the true people of God, while 'the whole creation' was referring either to all the nation of Israel or all the Gentiles. It was this very subject that Paul went on to talk about in Romans 9-11. The 'hope of Israel' was deliverance from the bondage of the Law (which accentuated the problem of sin and death) through resurrection (cf. Acts 24:14-16; 26:6-8; 28:20, 28; Galatians 3:22-4:11; Hebrews 2:10-16). The 1st century Christians were those who had received the firstfruits of the Holy Spirit since Pentecost, and they were the born-again children of God who were also waiting for the full adoption as sons at Christ's return for them. At the time of Christ's Revelation, the revealing of the sons of God would occur and 'the creation' would be liberated via resurrection into glory. They would be transformed from 'old creature' to 'new creature'.

³ Although this issue could fill another article in itself, here are a few thoughts. There *are* instances in Scripture of spirit beings (i.e. angels) eating and drinking. Take for example the account in Genesis 18 & 19 where the three 'men' who appeared to Abraham and Sarah, one of whom was clearly Yahweh himself as 'the angel of the Lord' (this being a pre-incarnate theophany of Christ Jesus himself as the Word and Image of God), ate and drank due to Abraham's hospitality. Later, two of these angelic visitors spent the night in Lot's home in Sodom where they also ate and drank (cf. Genesis 18:1-8; 19:1-3). It's most likely that it was these events that prompted the NT writer of Hebrews to encourage the Jewish Christians to be hospitable to travellers, '*for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it*' (Hebrews 13:2 NIV).

After his resurrection, Jesus himself also ate and drank with his disciples when he appeared to them on a number of occasions (Luke 24:36-43; John 21:1-15). This indicates that the resurrected, transformed, immortal, human spiritual body, like that of Christ, and also similar to the spiritual bodies of 'angels,' is able to eat and drink, though it is not dependant on food or water for sustenance, and evidently functions very differently to a body of flesh and blood. It is also interesting to note that the miraculous food, the manna, which was eaten by the Israelites in the desert wanderings, is called 'angel's food' & 'the bread of heaven' in Psalm 78:23-25.

Jesus often spoke of the coming kingdom of God as being like a feast, particularly the celebratory feast of a wedding (cf. Matthew 8:11-12; 22:1-14; 25:10; Luke 14:15-24; also Revelation 19:7-9). And he also told his apostles at 'the last supper' that he would not eat the Passover again until it found fulfilment in the kingdom of God; and that he would not drink the fruit of the vine again until the coming of the kingdom (cf. Luke 22:14-18). There are indications that this could've been referring to actual food and drink, but it is most likely to be understood as symbolising the joyful blessings and fellowship that would be enjoyed at the establishing of the kingdom within history. Paul wrote that '*the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*' (Romans 14:17). He also seemed to suggest in 1 Corinthians 6:13 that 'the stomach and food' would be destroyed by God, but this was spoken in the context of sexual immorality! Ultimately, sexual relations will not be needed (or desired) in the resurrection (cf. Luke 20:34-36).

⁴ Thrones are an obvious symbol of royal power and authority, much in the same way as a crown or diadem represents kingship. There are often two extremes when seeking to understand NT metaphors, signs and symbols. The first takes them too literally, so that the spiritual dimension (or 'heaven') is viewed as being a similar version of the natural world we live in now; and the other extreme is to spiritualise and etherealise them so much so that heaven is viewed as though it were just a white, bright space full of clouds with people and angels floating around as spirits, a place that contains nothing 'material' or 'solid' at all. I don't accept either of these extremes, though it is easy to fall into them. How can we mere mortals understand the glories of the spirit world?

⁵ This would be in line with the picture of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21, which incorporates OT believers (under the 12 tribes of Israel) and NT believers (under the 12 apostles of the Lamb) in the gates & foundations of the wall of the heavenly city (cf. Revelation 21:12-14).

⁶ A number of the apostles spoke of wreaths or crowns in relation to the promise of age-abiding life for believers. Paul gives us the clearest teaching on these wreaths, which he also equates with 'the Prize.' No doubt this prize of 'reigning in life' is what the vision of Revelation calls 'the First Resurrection' (cf. Revelation 20:4-6). The Greek word for 'wreath' is *stephanos* and this described the kind of wreath of leaves one would wear as a winner of the Greek Olympic games or some other similar victory. This word is often translated as crown, but the Greek word *diadema* is more correctly a monarch's crown or diadem. Christ

wore a wreath of thorns when he came the first time. This thorny wreath symbolised the curse that is upon the Old Creation, which Jesus took upon himself at the cross (cf. Genesis 3:17-19; Matthew 27:28-29; Galatians 3:13). For his Second Advent, Christ is pictured wearing many diadems, for He is truly the King of all kings (cf. Revelation 19:12).

Paul spoke about the prize of the incorruptible wreath in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (see also 2 Timothy 2:5 & Philippians 3:13-14); and he also referred to a wreath of righteousness in 2 Timothy 4:8. For other texts that speak of the wreath of life, see James 1:12 & Revelation 2:10. Peter also referred to the unfading wreath of glory in 1 Peter 5:4. These are all ways of symbolically describing the reward of eternal life; the true life of immortality, incorruption, honour and glory that is given to the children of God who have been made righteous before God in Christ.

⁷ The Greek word translated 'destroy' in this verse (used twice) is the verb *diaphtheiro*. This word essentially means 'to corrupt utterly,' and it can be used of physical decay or moral corruption. As will be shown later, the NT teaches the idea that God will judge the dead by a means of corruption in the second death (that is, reaping corruption where corruption is sown; cf. Galatians 6:7-8). The Greek word translated *earth* is the word *ge*. This word can refer to the earth in general, or the ground, or a specific piece of land (as in a country). Throughout the book of Revelation *ge* should most probably be rendered 'land,' meaning primarily the land of Israel (i.e. Palestine).

Therefore, the latter part of verse 18 could read '*and to destroy (or corrupt) those who are corrupting the land*'. It appears that the initial thought here is that on the one hand there is the judgment of believers (represented by the prophets, and the holy ones and those who reverence God's name) and on the other, the judgment of unbelievers (represented by those who were corrupting the land).

⁸ A strong indication of *when* Revelation was seen by, and written down by, John (he wrote down the vision as it occurred – cf. 1:3, 19) is the fact that in Revelation 17:7-11 he was told that 'the seven-headed beast' of Revelation 13 was *about to (Gk. mello)* come up out of the Abyss to be defeated by Christ. This is evidently talking about a spiritual power rising up to empower a ruler of the Roman Empire, for in Scripture the Abyss is always associated with demonic powers. Virtually all commentators agree that the Beast Empire here is the ancient Roman Empire.

In verses 9-11, John was told that the seven heads of the beast symbolised seven kings: **five** had fallen, **one** was presently ruling, and the other was still to come. Therefore, it is very evident that the sixth king or ruler of Rome was the one ruling at the time Revelation was given/written. Some of the most renowned ancient historians, both Roman and Jewish, such as Suetonius, Dio Cassius, and Josephus, counted Julius Caesar as the first emperor of imperial Rome; hence the sixth ruler was Nero (54-68 AD). For further details, see Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr, *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating The Book of Revelation* (American Vision, Revised Edition 1998) pp. 151-158.

⁹ I accept the traditional view that the book of Daniel was written by the prophet Daniel at the time the book itself indicates, in the 6th century BC. Some scholars propose that it was written later in about the 2nd century BC, but this position discounts most of the prophetic value of the book. The NT shows that Jesus himself accepted Daniel as a prophet (cf. Matthew 24:15).

¹⁰ As noted above in relation to counting the 'kings,' even though Julius Caesar was technically not the first Roman Emperor (Augustus was the first), the vast majority of Roman historians viewed Julius as the first of the Caesars for obvious reasons; all the others were named after him, and he was the first to be deified.

Therefore, the ten kings/horns were as follows:

1. Julius Caesar (49-44 BC)
2. Augustus (31 BC-14 AD)
3. Tiberius (14-37 AD)
4. Gaius Caligula (37-41 AD)
5. Claudius (41-54 AD)
6. **Nero** (54-68 AD – the sixth king ruling when Revelation was written)
7. Galba (68-69 AD)
8. Otho (69 AD) [7, 8 & 9 = the three horns uprooted/subdued]
9. Vitellius (69 AD)
10. **Vespasian** (69-79 AD)
11. **(Titus** was the 'little horn/beast' who was the Roman general who led the invasion of Judea and Jerusalem in 70 AD as virtual co-ruler with his father Vespasian; and he was the one who was worshipped in the Jewish temple after its destruction)

In my previous studies on the visions of Daniel, I put forward the view that the ten kings were concurrent (as senatorial rulers) rather than successive (the first ten Caesars) due to Revelation 17:12-14, where the ten kings are viewed as existing at the same time. I believe that the solution lies in the fact that these powers and authorities symbolised in the beast and the horns, etc, are primarily the specific *spiritual* principalities and powers that were the real powers behind the human counterparts on earth. It is these very powers that Paul was referring to in Ephesians 6:10-18; that is, all those under the authority of the Dragon, symbolising Satan, who is head of the powers of darkness. It is very evident though from Daniel chapters 2 & 7 that the ten kings are initially seen as being the first ten rulers of the Roman Empire, followed by a 'little horn' ruler who would destroy the city and the sanctuary (cf. Daniel 9:26-27). This fits with the historical fulfilment, as well as the eschatology of the NT.

¹¹ For example: Thrones for co-rulers (Daniel 7:9; Revelation 20:4, also cp. verse 6); White associated with God's throne of judgment (Daniel 7:9; Revelation 20:11); a river and a lake of fire (Daniel 7:10; Revelation 20:14-15); tens of thousands of people standing before the throne (Daniel 7:10; Revelation 20:12-13); books are opened (Daniel 7:10; Revelation 20:12, 15); & the destruction of the (spiritual) beast in the fire (Daniel 7:11; Revelation 19:20).

As I have mentioned previously, J. Stuart Russell, in his book *The Parousia*, made a good case for connecting 'the First Resurrection' saints in Revelation 20:4-6 with the Great White Throne judgment scene in 20:11-15 (pp. 519-525). I didn't accept this view at first, but after further re-examination, I now believe Russell was correct. In his book, Russell didn't attempt to link Revelation 20 with Daniel 7 as he was focusing primarily on the NT, yet it is evident that if he had done so this would've strengthened his position.

Duncan W. McKenzie was also eventually persuaded by Russell's position on Revelation 20, and he makes a strong case for interpreting the judgment scene of Revelation 20 as being one and the same as the judgment scene in Daniel 7 (*The Antichrist and the Second Coming: A Preterist Examination – Volume II: The Book of Revelation*, pp. 362-380, Xulon Press, 2012). I tend to agree with him here. The extra detail of Satan's release at the end of the 1000 years in verses 7-10 of Revelation 20 are viewed as being parenthetical in nature, where John was shown what would take place in the distant future in relation to the losing of Satan after the '1000-year-reign.' This would be the only portion of the vision that wasn't 'near' or 'about to occur' in the 1st century AD, unlike the rest of it that was near; nevertheless, the *beginning* of this '1000-year-kingdom' was about to be fully established at Christ's revelation or manifestation in 70 AD. Hence, J. S. Russell's preterism was Premillennial. Hence, my own view is Consistent Premillennial Preterism.

¹² Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, p. 110.

¹³ McKenzie, *The Antichrist and the Second Coming: A Preterist Examination – Volume I: Daniel and 2 Thessalonians*, p. 210, Xulon Press, 2009.

¹⁴ I used to understand this text as saying that in the same way as Jesus was *manifest* in His first advent, so shall he be *seen* a second time; that is, a future public appearing in a worldly sense. I have since had to seriously re-think this common understanding of the nature of Christ's 'second advent.' In fact, this text in Hebrews is the only place in the NT that explicitly refers to a 'second appearing' of Christ, though others clearly imply a 'return'. Yet the one thing that dawned on me recently when examining this text afresh was that the only people who could see Jesus a second time were those who had seen him the first time! Only the 1st century generation that had witnessed Christ's first advent & his resurrection would truly see him a second time, as he'd promised to come back for them to rescue them and take them to be with him in the spiritual world or dimension (cf. John 14:3; 1 John 2:28; 3:2-3; Colossians 3:1-4).

¹⁵ *Theophany* comes from two Greek words (*theos* and the root *phan*) and it means the appearing of a deity, or in biblical theology, the appearing of God.

¹⁶ The whole theme of the Son of Man 'coming on, in or with clouds' is taken from Daniel 7:13-14. The core issue being described here is that of a human figure, the Messiah, being given the position of divine glory in the Shekinah glory-cloud of God, and being given a kingdom with power, dominion and glory by the Ancient of Days, God himself. This kingdom of God and of Messiah (or Christ) is universal and will never end. Jesus predicted that he was the One who would fulfil this prophecy (cf. Matthew 24:30-31; Mark 13:26-27; Luke 21:27; Matthew 26:64; Mark 14:62; Revelation 1:7; also 14:14-16). And this was soon to occur in the 1st century AD.

¹⁷ In the NT verses that talk about those who would 'see' the Second Advent, particularly in the Olivet discourse (see references in note 13 above), the emphasis of who 'they' are in 'they will see' is slightly different depending on the context. For example, in Matthew 24:30-31 the 'tribes of the land' are 'they' who will see 'the Son of Man coming on the clouds'; while in Mark 13:26-27 those who will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' has reference to 'the powers in the heavens' of verse 25; and in Luke 21:25-27 those who will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' refers both to 'the powers of the heavens' as well as humanity mentioned in verses 25-26.

Also in Revelation 1:7 it states that 'every eye will see him coming with the clouds.' I believe the only way to make sense of all these texts when they're put together is that ultimately all mankind (including the tribes of Israel and those who pierced him), as well as the spiritual angelic powers in the heavens, would witness the heavenly manifestation of Christ's kingdom through resurrection and judgment. This is ultimately a spiritual, heavenly manifestation relating to another world that is usually invisible to us now, yet eventually all will witness this spiritual reality through resurrection, to appear before God's throne. This is the clear teaching of the NT.