

What are we waiting for?

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Introduction

What are we waiting for? We know we are waiting for the return of Jesus, but just what is it that we are waiting for?

Are we waiting to be called away by an angel any moment now, secretly and silently as far as our neighbours and workmates are concerned, before the great tribulation spoken of by Jesus comes on the world? When Jesus comes with power and great glory, will we be with him as he comes?

Many would answer “Yes” to those questions. But what does the Bible say about these things?

The return of Jesus is such a major part of Bible teaching that it is important to examine just what we can expect to happen in the moments or hours of Jesus’ descent from heaven. More importantly, how that dramatic event will affect you personally.

This book aims to answer the question, “What are we waiting for?” by closely examining scripture about the return of Jesus.

The return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth is a major and predominant teaching of the Bible. His return will affect us all, whether we are believers or non-believers, personally and permanently. His coming will mark the end of all that we have known in this life of mortality. Jesus’ return will be the beginning of such major change to the world and its people that it is imperative that we know what the Bible has to say about it. And the Bible has a *great deal* to say about it.

Followers of Jesus have his second coming in their minds constantly. About 80% of the Bible’s message is in the form of prophecy. A great deal of this prophecy is about the return of Jesus and the events before and after his return. Bible students carefully observe world happenings in the light of Bible prophecy, especially as they affect Israel and its Arab neighbours, and we are constantly on the alert for signs that his return is approaching.

His return has major and vital implications for each of us individually:

- What are the signs of his coming?

- Will we be with him when he returns, or will we be gathered as he returns?
- What can we do to be ready for his return?
- What about our children, husbands and wives when he returns?

When he comes, he will be concerned about us as individuals. Religious affiliation will be of no consequence; whether we live in a western, eastern or third world country will not matter in the slightest; whether we have died before he comes (as millions have), or are alive at the time of his return, will not make one iota of difference.

When we, his followers, are gathered by his angels, they will come to us as individuals. We will stand before Jesus as ourselves – not as the husband or wife of someone, not as a member of this or that religious organisation, but simply as ourself. **He is concerned about us personally and individually, and not in any other respect.**

It is hoped that this publication will help readers to focus on Bible teaching about the dramatic return of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the importance of being ready for that great day.

There are several questions to ponder about his second coming. For example:

- Will we be taken away secretly by Jesus before the world is aware of his coming?
- Will his followers be taken away before the “great tribulation” said by Jesus to occur in the last days before his return?
- Will Jesus appear at the last moment to save Jerusalem from defeat by her enemies?
- Does scripture tell us just how his coming will occur?

These and other questions will be examined in the light of scripture with the objective of being clear just how this earth-shattering event will take place and how it will affect every person on earth.

Chapter 1

Events leading to the return of Jesus

Before we come to the actual return of the Lord, it is useful to view his impending return in the context of what is happening in the world today.

The rise of Islam

We now live in a world of violence and terror. The attacks in New York and Washington on 11th September, 2001, have changed the world, so that all western nations are in a state of constant alert for further acts of terrorism.

Governments in America, Britain and Australia (to name a few) have openly warned their populations that further attacks are likely and expected. The bombing in Bali in 2002 is an example of the continuing attacks against people of western nations. America continues to hunt for Osama bin Laden; terrorist attacks are almost a daily feature of life in Israel. An American-led war against Iraq is, as this is written, a strong possibility.

Running through all of these attacks of terror is a single factor – militant Islamic forces. Islam now pervades the countries of the world like no other religion. On average, across the world, one in five people are now Islamic.

We cannot consider latter-day prophecy leading up to the return of Jesus Christ without accepting that Islam is the greatest threat to both Jews and Christians today. The militant Islamic world is violent and open in its hatred of Israel, and in its determination to wipe Israel out.

One of the many biblical prophecies about the very days in which we live is found in Psalm 83:

“. . . lo, Thy enemies are in tumult; those who hate Thee have raised their heads. They lay crafty plans against Thy people; they consult together against Thy protected ones.

They say, 'Come, let us wipe them out as a nation; let the name of Israel be remembered no more!' Yea, they conspire with one accord; against Thee they make a covenant – the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, Moab and the Hagrites, Gebal and Ammon and Amelek, Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assyria has also joined them; they are the strong arm of the children of Lot." (Psalm 83:2-8)

All of these ten nations surround Israel today. All are Islamic. In 2001 and 2002, we have seen many Jews killed as well as Christians – notably in Indonesia, but also in Iran and Pakistan. Every Christian and Jew who lives in an Islamic

country today is in danger of being killed because of their beliefs. Many have already been persecuted and killed.

The world has changed. We now live in a world threatened by Islamic forces. It is no secret that the objective of Islam is to occupy and control more and more territory, and ultimately, the world.

Ramon Bennett is an Israeli citizen and has lived in Jerusalem since 1980. In his book, *Philistine, the great Deception*, he writes,

“Moslems believe that their Islamic nations form a single Islamic state, and that this ‘state’ is destined to become an ‘Islamic world republic’, encompassing every country of the world.”¹

Amongst several supporting sources for this claim, he quotes Professor Majid Khadduri, an expert on Islamic law, who wrote that the Islamic state seeks to “establish Islam as the dominant reigning ideology over the entire world.”²

Ramon Bennett also quotes from Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran:

“The governments of the world should know that Islam cannot be defeated, Islam will be victorious in all the countries of the world, and Islam and the teachings of the Koran will prevail all over the world.”³

Although it is the militant Islamic forces which are behind the increasing terrorism in the world, it is not hard to see that all Islam, in all countries, will be expected to toe the Islamic line. There are many Muslims who are peace-loving and who do not wish to be associated with the terrorist activities of their militant brothers. But as Islam gains more power, it will not be possible for part of Islam to stand aside while the militant Islamists terrorise the world. The objectives of Islam must be the objectives of all Muslims, and in the end, it will be made clear to all Muslims that they are expected (possibly in peril of their lives) to participate in the pursuit of Islamic objectives and practices.

Islam’s hatred of Israel relates to both land and religion. The Islamic Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) does not merely want to have a Palestinian state within Israel. It wants all of Israel, with Jerusalem as its capital. News broadcasts quoting the numerous speeches and statements of the PLO Chairman,

¹ Ramon Bennett, *Philistine, the Great Deception*, Shekinah books, Oregon, USA, 1997, p51

² Majid Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, quoted by Ramon Bennett, *Ibid*, p53

³ Ayatollah Khomeini, quoted in Grant, *The Blood of the Moon*, Brentwood: Wolgemuth and Hyaett, 1991, p72

What are we waiting for?

Yasser Arafat, make that point crystal clear. A Palestinian state is but one step in the process of a wider objective.

Jerusalem to be attacked

God has made it quite clear that Jerusalem is His city and any who meddle with it will suffer:

“On that day (still future) I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all peoples; all who lift it shall grievously hurt themselves.”
(Zechariah 12:3)

Although there is a huge emphasis on attacking Iraq at the moment, this also places Israel at peril. Iraq has repeatedly stated, and is still doing so, that if she is attacked, Israel will be attacked.

Israel is at the centre of Bible prophecy. Whatever happens in the Middle-East affects Israel. Zechariah prophesied about this:

“I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken.” (Zechariah 14:2)

The future of Israel is a vital issue in the signs which point to the return of Jesus. Remember, Israel is God’s special land, and Jesus was a Jew.

Bible prophecy states unequivocally that at some time in the future, Jerusalem will be attacked and defeated. Here are three passages of several testifying to this:

“I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, ***and the city shall be taken*** . . .” (Zechariah 14:2)

“O God, the heathen have come into Thy inheritance; they have defiled Thy holy temple; ***They have laid Jerusalem in ruins.***”
(Psalm 79:1)

“Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told: ‘Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, ***and they will trample over the holy city for forty-two months.***”
(Revelation 11:1-2)

(Emphasis and italics mine)

No one on earth knows how long it will be before this attack against Jerusalem takes place. In the light of developments in Israel and the Middle East, it may be soon. On the other hand, there are also scriptural indications that there may be sometime to go, maybe many years, before this attack takes place. Time will tell,

for it is all in God's hands. But there is no doubt that Jerusalem *will* be attacked, and when that happens, prophecy tells us that the Jews will be taken into exile once more for a period of time.

The verse quoted above from Zechariah 14:2 goes on to say:

“. . . The city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women ravished; half of the city shall go into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city.” (Zechariah 14:2)

Thus we are told that the whole of the city of Jerusalem will be taken by its enemies, and half of its population will go into exile.

This whole subject of the expected defeat of Jerusalem and the consequent exile of at least some of its population is dealt with in detail in the book, *Revelation, A Message from Jesus about the Last Days*.⁴

⁴ By Ian Hyndman, published by Bethel Publications, Beechworth, in 2000

Chapter 2

“They will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” *(Matthew 24:30)*

A gathering storm

As I sit writing this chapter at my home at Beechworth, in the foothills of the Victorian Alps, I am watching a thunderstorm brewing, away over the western blue hills. By the look of the threatening sky, there is no doubt that we are in for a storm. But it is approaching very slowly.

We often have thunderstorms in these hills, and many of them develop quite quickly. But this one is slow in coming. The sky is growing darker, and soon we will see the grey blanket of rain as it slowly approaches our little town.

Suddenly, it is upon us! First, a few heavy drops of rain pattering on the roof, then a mighty clap of thunder and flash of lightning. The rain is thundering down now with a roar which makes it difficult to make ourselves heard.

This storm epitomises the growing political storm which is slowly but surely approaching as the time for the return of Jesus approaches. Its development is slow but sure. Slowly, events are developing which will culminate in the dramatic and stunning return of Jesus. **For his return will be dramatic and stunning. It has no precedent in the history of mankind. His coming will take the world completely by surprise, as the Lord Jesus Christ, God’s Son, descends from heaven with power and a brilliance of glory never before seen by human eyes.**

It is important to realize that a number of events will develop over this time, as the awe-inspiring return of Jesus approaches. Principally, Jesus himself tells us, the gathering storm will be characterised by a period of great tribulation against the people of God – Jews and Christians. This will involve persecution and the death of many of Jesus’ followers by an evil Godless ruling power which will have world-wide influence. This power will be Islam.

Let’s have a look at the scriptural evidence for this gathering storm.

The Olivet prophecy

The heading of this chapter is taken from Matthew 24:30. As in all scriptural study, particularly in the study of prophecy, it is vital to establish the context in which scriptural passages appear. The context of Matthew 24 (and Luke 21 and Mark 13) is about the return of Jesus, and centres on the last days before he returns. How do we know that?

This prophecy is known as the Olivet prophecy because it was given to the disciples on the Mount of Olives. It was the day before the arrest of Jesus, and Jesus is answering a question asked by his disciples, **“Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?”**

Whilst there may be a reference in Jesus’ answer to the destruction of the Temple in AD70, the prophecy is substantially about his second coming and the events to be expected just before he comes (the close of the age).

The two primary passages in Matthew 24 concerning the return of Jesus are these:

1. “Then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.” (Matthew 24:21)
2. ***“Immediately after the tribulation of those days***, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens will be shaken; then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; and he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to another.” (Matthew 24:29-31). (Italics mine)

From these passages it is important to note that Jesus said:

- The tribulation (yet to come) will be the worst tribulation the world has ever known.
- It will be immediately ***after*** that time of tribulation that Jesus will return.
- He will come with power and great glory on the clouds.
- He will send out his angels to gather the elect. If there is any doubt as to who are the “elect”, Paul makes it clear in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. They are those who have died in Christ and those in Christ who are alive at his coming. The elect are the followers of Jesus.

Much has been written about the meaning of the above verses, and many believe that the astronomical signs mentioned refer to the political powers of the nations. Be that as it may, **Jesus makes it absolutely clear that he will return after**

the tribulation, and not before, that he will come with power and great glory (not secretly) and that he will gather his elect as he comes (not secretly beforehand).

The great tribulation

It is worth thinking about this time of “great tribulation” Jesus warned about. If it is to be worse than anything ever known before, and worse than anything which will occur in the future, there must be other references to it in the scripture. And there are! There are many references in both Old and New Testament to this time of great tribulation. We find them in Revelation, 2 Thessalonians, the gospels, Daniel, Isaiah, Zechariah. We find them in Malachi in relation to the appearing of Elijah in the last days and in several of the minor prophets.

Probably the most graphic descriptions of this terrible time to come are found in Revelation and Daniel. Both of these prophecies tell of a time to come in the last days before Jesus returns of the rise of an evil, Godless ruling power which will have world-wide influence. This power will be anti-Christian and anti-Jewish. It will also blaspheme the Lord God Almighty and proclaim itself as a God.

This power will be represented in a single person, known in Revelation as “the beast”, and in Daniel as the “little horn”. Here are a couple of descriptions of the power and attitudes of this despot:

“The beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming His Name and His dwelling . . . Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and tongue and nation, and all who dwell on earth will worship it, every one whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain.” (Revelation 13:5-8)

The beast will be supported by a second beast, with all the authority of the first beast. It will make “the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast.” (Revelation 13:11-12)

This second beast, also known as the “false prophet”, will control religion and the world economy, for it will allow no-one to buy or sell unless that person worships the first beast. (Revelation 13:13-17)

Daniel also writes of this terrible ruler of the last days:

“As I looked, this horn made war with the saints, and prevailed over them, until the Ancient of Days came, and judgement was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints received the kingdom . . . He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law . . .” (Daniel 7:21-22, 25)

This time of great tribulation will commence when Jerusalem is attacked and defeated. Readers are reminded that:

- **Jerusalem will be trampled over for forty-two months (3½ years)**
(Revelation 11:2; Psalm 79:1; Daniel 12:7; Jeremiah 10:25; Isaiah 63:17-19)
- **The beast will be in power for 42 months (3½ years)**
(Revelation 13:5; Daniel 7:25; Revelation 12:14)
- **During this period of tribulation, the beast will persecute and kill any of God’s people (Jews and Christians) who will not worship it.**
(Revelation 13:7,15; Daniel 7:21,25)

It appears that something will happen to bring this tribulation to an end. “Immediately after the tribulation of those days . . .”, wrote Matthew, quoting Jesus.

The word “immediately” is important for it means that the return of Jesus will follow very quickly the end of the tribulation. Three events will occur in quick succession at the end of the tribulation:

1. **Matthew 24: 29:** Great signs will appear in the sun, moon and stars. This is interpreted by some as being changes in the political affairs of the nations. However, there is no reason why we should not accept a literal interpretation of these words.. There is no reason why there could not be great literal changes in the sun, moon and stars heralding the return of Jesus. A star was used 2,000 years ago to mark the place of his birth, and this was seen and followed literally by the wise men of the east.
2. **Matthew 24:30:** The sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven and all the tribes of the earth will mourn. There has been much conjecture as to what this sign of the Son of man will be. It is most likely to be Jesus himself. as he descends from heaven.
3. **Matthew 24:31:** People all over the world will see Jesus descending from heaven on clouds, with power and great glory. As he comes, he sends out his angels with a loud trumpet call to gather the elect.

It is important to reiterate that Jesus' coming will be immediately *after* the period of tribulation, and that as he comes, he sends out his angels to gather his elect. This means that the followers of Jesus have lived, suffered and, in some cases, died, during this dreadful time of persecution by the beast. It also means they will not be taken away secretly and will not be with Jesus as he comes. He gathers them as he descends from heaven.

It is worth comparing this important sequence of events with Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. There we find confirmation that:

The Lord will descend from heaven in greatness and power. We are told that Jesus will give a cry of command, and that the archangel will also call (no doubt to the angels who are to gather the elect), and that there will be a mighty blast of the trumpet of God. Those raised from the dead and those alive at his coming will be caught up into the air to meet Jesus as he comes. All of this is exactly in agreement with Jesus' words in Matthew 24.

Paul also confirms that Jesus will come after the period of tribulation:

“Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling to meet him, we beg you, brethren, not to be quickly shaken in mind, or excited . . . to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition.” (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3)

Once again, we see that Jesus will not return until after “the rebellion” (which Jesus calls the “great tribulation”) and a person called “the man of lawlessness” is revealed.

It is strongly suggested that Paul is referring to the same beast as was later prophesied by Jesus himself, and written of by John in Revelation. Paul goes on to say that “the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by his appearing and his coming” (verse 8). Compare these words with those of Revelation 17:14::

“These (the beast and ten kings) will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them.”

Paul gives us even more information about this man of lawlessness – the beast:

“(He) opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God . . .

. . . The coming of the lawless one by the activity of Satan will be with all power and with pretended signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are to perish.” (2 Thessalonians 2:4, 9-10)

Compare these words of Paul’s with those of Revelation about the beast and the false prophet who represents the beast:

It (the beast) opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming His Name and His dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven.” (Revelation 13:6)

And the false prophet who acts on behalf of the beast:

“It (the second beast or false prophet) works great signs . . . and by the signs which it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast, it deceives those who dwell on the earth.” (Revelation 13:13-14)

The similarity of description of the beast’s work by both Paul and Jesus (in Revelation) is strongly suggestive that the same beast, the same man of lawlessness, is being spoken of by both Paul and Jesus.

A few pages back, we pointed out that Daniel also prophecies of this cruel latter day power, the beast, calling it the “little horn”. We recall that Daniel said that “this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them”. Jesus, in Revelation 13:7, warned that the beast will be “allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them”.

Let’s summarise the main points we have considered so far::

- Jesus will return after the tribulation.
- The beast will have ruled the earth during the tribulation.
- The beast will persecute and kill many of the saints.

The gathering of the elect after the tribulation

Why are the followers of Jesus not to be taken away before the tribulation? The short answer is because Jesus has said (in Matthew 24) that he will gather the elect after the time of tribulation. But there is strong scriptural precedent showing that God’s people have been expected in the past to live through times of

What are we waiting for?

tribulation, hardship and persecution before being taken out of that situation by God.

God's dealings with men follow a well-established pattern. We see this, for example, in the account of the flood and also in the rescue of Lot and his family from Sodom.

Noah lived through a time of tribulation before the flood. He lived at a time of unprecedented violence, wickedness and Godlessness, yet Noah and his family remained faithful to God throughout it.

At the appointed time, Noah and his family entered the ark and were saved. God then destroyed every living thing in judgement against the wickedness which filled the earth.

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| Thus: | 1st | Tribulation, during which God's people (Noah and his family) remained faithful. |
| | 2nd | The saving of God's people just before His wrath against the wickedness in the earth is unleashed. |
| | 3rd | Massive destruction of evil by God. |

We find the same pattern in the circumstances of Lot:

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| 1st | Tribulation, as he lived amongst a grossly immoral and Godless community in Sodom. <i>"If He (God) rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the licentiousness of the wicked (for by what that righteous man saw and heard as he lived among them, he was vexed in his righteous soul day after day with their lawless deeds), then the Lord knows how to rescue the Godly from trial . . . (2 Peter 2:7-9)</i> |
| 2nd | Deliverance at the hands of angels |
| 3rd | Destruction of Sodom with all its evil. |

It will be the same in these last days:

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| 1 st | Time of great tribulation |
| 2 nd | After the tribulation, Jesus will gather his saints to be with him. |

3rd A massive destructive judgment against the world's nations who have rejected God will be carried out, just as it was at the time of the flood.

This, then, sets the scene for the return of Jesus. The world will be in the grip of a Godless and evil power, which will almost certainly be Islamic power. Scripture seems to suggest that most people and nations will be prepared to submit to this power, and in doing so, will subscribe to its Godlessness.

The position of non-believers and believers as the return of Jesus approaches

It is worth giving some thought to the position of both believers and non-believers as the world approaches the dramatic moment of the return of Jesus to the earth.

Non-believers

First, the non-believers, which will include the beast and all its world-wide followers. The beast, believed to be from the Islamic world, will have dominated all nations and world governments for the previous 3½ years.

The actual build up of this power of the beast will commence long before this 3½ year period. Even now, at the writing of these words in March, 2003, the world is aware of the increasing influence of terrorism at the hands of militant Islamic extremists. Increasingly, it appears that it will be these extremists which will become more and more powerful in world terror and affairs, culminating in the appearance of an Islamic leader, referred to in Revelation as “the beast” He will be assisted by a second person (Revelation 13:7), subservient to the first, and known also as the “false prophet” (Revelation 19:20), who will exercise on behalf of the first beast world control over religion and the economy:

“It (the second beast) exercises all the authority of the first beast . . . and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast” (Revelation 13:12)

“(The second beast will) cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain” (Revelation 13:15)

“It (the second beast) causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name.” (Revelation 13:16-17)

Jesus specifically and unequivocally warns us that “if anyone worships the beast and its image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also shall drink the wine of God’s wrath.” (Revelation 14:9-10)

Revelation 15:2 speaks of those who have conquered the beast (and by implication, not worshipped it):

“I saw . . . those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands.”

One of the great warnings of Jesus to his followers is that we must not worship the beast or its image, or bear its name or number on our bodies, even if this means we are killed for not doing it. Twice, Jesus says, “Here is a call for the endurance of the saints.” (Revelation 13:10 and 14:12)

It is not surprising that we find this same call to endurance in the Olivet prophecy in Matthew 24:13 – also about this time of tribulation and persecution in the last days:

“He who endures to the end will be saved.”

It is expected that most of the people of the world will agree to worship the beast. Amongst these will be nominal Christians and others who are not prepared to withstand the power and authority of the beast. Jesus says of the beast that “authority was given to it over every tribe and people and tongue and nation, and all who dwell on earth will worship it, every one whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain.” (Revelation 13:7-9)

So, from all this, we can expect that, except for the true followers of Jesus, the whole world will worship the beast.

Those who go along with the demands of the beast will not expect the sudden and unexpected return of Jesus from heaven. This is precisely why Paul wrote what he did to the Thessalonians:

“You yourselves know well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When people say, ‘There is peace and security’, then sudden destruction will come upon them as travail comes upon a woman with child, and there will be no escape.

But you are not in darkness, brethren, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all sons of light and sons of the day; we are not of the night or darkness.” (1 Thessalonians 5:2-4)

It will be only the non-believers for whom Jesus’ coming will be like a thief in the night. For those looking and waiting for his coming, he will not come like a thief, for they will be expecting him.

For non-believers, the coming of Jesus will be a stunning and unbelievable event.

Believers

For followers of Jesus, the coming of Jesus will also be awe-inspiring, and no doubt, like the non-believers, believers will experience fear and apprehension as our mighty Lord descends from heaven in a brilliance of glory never before seen.

But we will know what is happening, whereas the non-believers will not. It must be remembered that the believers (those who have survived the persecution of the beast) will long have waited for this moment, will yearn for it and pray for it as the persecution of the beast continues.

In the symbolic words of Revelation 6:10, the cry of the believers will be:

“ ‘O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on earth?’ Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.”

The descent of Jesus from heaven

It does not take much imagination to foresee the fear and terror of non-believers as Jesus descends from heaven “in power and great glory”. Never before in the history of mankind has such a dramatic and supernatural event occurred. All eyes turned heavenward, watching in amazement and awe as the glory of God fills the heavens with a brilliance of glory as Jesus descends, seen by all on earth. The power of his descent will be terrifying in its breathtaking magnificence. Myriads of angels, clouds of glory, the mighty blast of a trumpet reverberating around the earth, and a glorified, brilliant, Jesus Christ, as the glorious centrepiece of this awe-inspiring event, will be breathtaking in its unprecedented magnificence.

As Jesus descends, and the mighty blast of the trumpet of God sounds throughout the earth, the angels of Jesus are sent out to do their great work. This will be the moment of resurrection, so long awaited by all those in Christ. Those raised to life will also see the power of their Lord’s descent, for they will be raised before he reaches the earth.

Then, after they have raised to life those who have died in Christ, the angels will go to the followers of Jesus who have not died, and invite them to come to meet Jesus. There are several scriptural passages which indicate that this call by the angel who comes to those alive, will be an invitation rather than a command. It

will be up to those so invited to respond. Further thoughts on this angelic invitation are given in the next chapter.

The work of the angels will be done quickly, even while Jesus is descending, for those resurrected and those alive at his coming are caught up in the clouds to meet him in the air as he comes. As Paul puts it:

“The dead in Christ will rise first, then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord.”
(1Thessalonians 4:16-17)

This is the great gathering of “the elect” – Christ’s chosen ones – those who have remained faithful to him during their life of mortality; those who have endured and lived through the time of “great tribulation”, and those who have died in faith, knowing that at Jesus’ return, they would be raised to life again. To be with Jesus at this great time, has been, and is, the hope and desire of the followers of Jesus throughout the ages.

Chapter 3 **“BEHOLD THE BRIDEGROOM! COME OUT TO MEET HIM”**

(Matthew 25:6)

Are we ready?

The greatest of our expectations is the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is uppermost in our minds. We constantly refer to it. “If the Lord remains away, we will do this or that.” Our prayers reflect our desire for his return. We are constantly on the watch for signs of his return.

The question for each of us is, **“Are we ready?”**

Considering that the return of Jesus *is* so very much in our thinking in these last days, that may appear to be an absurd question. “Of course we are ready!”, many will expostulate. “It is our greatest hope and expectation. We long for the day of his appearing”.

But this nagging question persists: **“Are we ready?”**.

What must we be ready for? Matthew, Luke, Mark and Paul, and even Moses in Genesis, all tell us that *the decisive moment for which we must be ready is when the angel of Jesus is sent to us to invite us to come to meet Jesus*.

Jesus himself told his apostles, and, through the pen of Matthew, let us remind ourselves again of the dramatic words:

“. . . they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; and he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” (Matthew 24:30-31)

Our choice

What will happen when the angel of Jesus appears to us, his elect, to gather us to meet Jesus? There are several passages of scripture which indicate that we will have a choice as to whether we will go with the angel. It seems that it will not simply be a matter of the angel appearing, and without further ado escorting us to meet Jesus. There will be an element of choice for us. How we respond to that choice will be determined by a decision we make now, before the angel comes.

There are at least three passages which give us this message – two from Jesus himself and one from Abraham. Consider, for example, the parable of the ten virgins:

In this parable, we have a scenario of the process to be used as Jesus returns:

1. We are represented by the ten virgins. All “slumber and sleep”, meaning, it is suggested, that all of us in Christ are waiting for him to come.
2. Then comes the cry, “Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.” Note that it is not Jesus himself who calls us. The invitation to “come out to meet him” represents the angel’s invitation to us.
3. Next comes the vital choice. All of the virgins arose, but only five were ready. The five foolish virgins had not prepared their minds (lack of oil) and rushed off in another direction (to buy oil).

The messenger did not merely come and escort the ten virgins to the bridegroom. He invited all of them to come out to meet Jesus. Five accepted the invitation and went immediately. But five did not go immediately, and instead, went to “do” something else (buy oil), thinking that once they had done that, they would be ready. But it was too late. The invitation came but once.

Lest we should think that this is the only reference to this question of choice when the angel appears, consider Jesus’ words in Luke 17. Here, he warns again that there will be some who will want to “do” something else when confronted with the angel’s invitation. Jesus reminds his hearers (and us his readers) about Lot’s wife, who was not ready to obey the call to leave Sodom, and looked back instead of going with the angel.

Specifically, he refers to a man who, when the invitation comes, wants to “do” something else – go down into his house to retrieve his goods so he can take them with him. Similarly, Jesus refers to another man working in the field who will want to turn back. He mentions in the same context that of two people in a bed, “one will be taken and the other left” (one will be ready and the other will not); two women grinding together – one will be ready to go, but the other will not:

“On that day, let him who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away; and likewise, let him who is in the field not turn back . . . I tell you, in that night, there will be two in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. There will be two women grinding together; one will be taken and the other left” (Luke 17:31-36)

This illustration of Jesus contains precisely the same message of choice (when the angel comes to us) as we saw in the parable of the ten virgins. Some will be ready to go to Jesus when the angel comes, but some will not.

What is it that caused these people of Jesus’ teaching not to be ready? They had not prepared their minds for the moment of the angel’s appearing and invitation. Jesus does not want his angels to simply collect us and escort us to Jesus. He wants to know if we really want to go to him. This is in keeping with the divine principal that God always gives us a choice – His way or our way. It will surely be the final test of our readiness for his return; our acceptance that, although we are utterly unworthy of this great invitation, we accept it, knowing that Jesus is our righteousness and that in him, our sins have been forgiven; our final act of faith exemplified in our willingness to drop everything *immediately* and go with the angel.

We are all busy with all sorts of things in our spiritual and personal lives in service to our God and Master, and it is entirely right that we should spend our

time in doing these things. But in the end, none of these things will have anything to do with whether or not we are ready for the moment of the angel's invitation.

Being ready involves an attitude of mind – **now**. We must not wait until the angel appears before making that decision. It is a decision which must be made **now**. Today, we must resolve to have an attitude of mind which says, in effect,

“Whatever my circumstances at that moment, wherever I am, wherever my children or my wife (or husband) are, **I will go** with the angel of Jesus. I will drop everything and go **immediately**.”

It will be a natural reaction for many at that moment to want to go and “do” something – get the children, turn off the stove, ring home, lock the car, change our clothes. Some may feel spiritually unready, and wish to have time to put their spiritual lives in order. But these sorts of things are merely symptoms of not being ready. If our lives are lived in total commitment to our Lord, we will have thought about these things already, and will be ready to respond to the call of the angel immediately. It is absolutely vital that we are ready to respond **immediately**, and that the decision to respond is made **now**. There will be no time to think about our response when confronted by the angel of Jesus. If we have not set our minds mentally in gear to say “Yes, I will go”, at that moment, we are in danger of not being ready to go with the angel.

Isaac's bride-to-be makes her choice

There is a wonderful Old Testament event which captures and underscores the importance of being ready to go immediately with the angel of Jesus. We find it in the story of Abraham sending his servant to find a wife for Isaac.

Abraham tells his servant, “Go to my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son, Isaac.” (Genesis 24:4)

Here we have the remarkable picture of the servant (messenger, angel) being sent to take a wife (bride) for the son of promise, a bride who knew of, but had never seen, her intended bridegroom.

The servant said to Abraham, “Perhaps the woman may not be willing to follow me to this land . . .” (24:5). Abraham's reply was unequivocal:

“If the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be free from this oath of mine . . .” (24:8)

Again, we see an element of choice in the response of the woman who is to be the bride. There is to be no compunction in bringing her back. **She must make the decision.**

We know that the servant found Rebekah, and he knew she was the one. But her family were reluctant to let her go straight away. “Let the maiden remain with us a while, at least ten days; after that she may go.” (24:55).

The servant could not wait. “Let me go that I may go to my master”, he said. “They replied, ‘We will call the maiden and ask her’. And they called Rebekah and said to her, ‘Will you go with this man?’ She said, ‘I will go.’” (24:56-58)

Not a moment’s hesitation. Her response was immediate. She was asked by the servant to go to a strange country, away from all she had ever known, to marry a man she had never seen. And she said immediately and without hesitation, “I will go.” She was a gentile bride, and she married the son of promise. She was invited to go to him by a servant who, when he heard her say she would go with him, took her to her bridegroom who was ready waiting for her. In this, we have a beautiful foreshadowing of our acceptance of the angel’s invitation to go to Jesus, our bridegroom.

What would have happened had Rebekah refused to go with the servant? Abraham’s instructions to his servant had been “If she is not willing to follow you, you are free from this oath.” She would have been left behind, just as the five foolish virgins were, and the man who went down into his house to get his goods, and the man who wanted to turn back in the field, and the one who was left behind in bed, and the woman who was left behind at the grinding stone, and Lot’s wife.

We who are not natural-born Jews will be part of Christ’s gentile bride. An angel will soon come to invite us to go to meet the bridegroom. Just as Rebekah went to marry Isaac, the son of promise, we, too, will go to marry the greater Son of promise.

Are we ready to say to the angel who will come to us, “I will go”? If we do not make our decision **now**, and prepare our minds **now** for our instant response to that great invitation to go to meet Jesus, we may in fact be left behind.

The scriptures make it clear that Jesus will not immediately take up his role as “King of kings and Lord of lords”. A lot must happen before he is accepted as King over the whole earth. The very presence of the beast and his opposition to Jesus, along with many kings of the earth, indicate that Jesus will face much opposition in the early days of his return.

What are we waiting for?

Chapter 4

EVENTS BEYOND JESUS' RETURN

In this chapter, we will consider:

- God's judgments on the nations
- Judgment of the followers of Jesus
- The bride and marriage supper of the Lamb
- The battle of the beast against Christ
- The beginning of the Kingdom of God

Caught up to meet Jesus

The number of God's people who have died in faith over the centuries, and who will be resurrected at Jesus' coming, are likely to vastly outnumber those of his followers who are still alive at his coming.

We are told very little about what will happen to his followers in the short-term, except that they will be "caught up together . . . in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

This being "caught up" into the air, equates with the cry of the messenger to the ten virgins – "Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him." The ten virgins were to go out to meet their bridegroom. In gathering the elect, it will be the work of the angels to bring those who accept their invitation to Jesus – "to meet the Lord in the air". Those who were not ready, who had not focused their minds on being ready for the angel's invitation, will be left behind, just as the five foolish virgins were.

We are simply not told what happens to the elect once they have joined Jesus in the air. We know, however, that they will accompany him as he descends to earth, for we are told we will go to "meet him". When someone goes to meet a person who is approaching, they accompany that person as they finish their journey. They do not go with him in another direction. They go out to meet him.

Jesus is coming to establish the Kingdom of God on the earth, and so his followers will accompany him in the last part of his descent to the earth.

The scriptures make it clear that Jesus will not immediately take up his role as "King of kings and Lord of lords". A lot must take place before he is accepted as King over all the earth:

- The wrath of God will be poured out in judgment of the nations and people of the earth who have rejected Him
- He will carry out the judgment of his followers and professed followers.
- The marriage supper of the Lamb with his bride (the immortalised saints).
- The battle of the beast against Christ.

God's judgments on the nations

We are now ready to consider the wrath of God in His mighty judgment on the nations. The elect have been taken to Jesus, and will be protected by him against the devastation which is about to commence in the world.

The judgment of God on the nations is discussed in greater detail in the book *Revelation – A Message from Jesus about the Last Days*⁵. Readers are urged to read that book. In this book, we will summarise what scripture has to say about this judgment on the nations.

The first thing to note is that the judgment is in two phases. The first phase (Revelation 8 and 9) involves the destruction of one third of the earth's environment by four angels and the destruction of one third of mankind, initiated by two further angels:

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| 1st angel | Hail and fire mixed with blood. A third of trees will be burnt up and all green trees. |
| 2nd angel | Something like a great mountain, burning with fire, will be thrown into the sea . |
| 3rd angel | A great star will fall from heaven, blazing like a torch. It will fall on a third of the rivers and on springs of water . The water will be poisoned and men will die because of the poisoned water. |
| 4th angel | A third of the sun, moon and stars will be struck. A third of their light will be darkened and a third of the day will be kept |

⁵ Op. cit

from shining, and the darkness of night will be reduced by a third.

5th angel Locusts come upon the earth. These are told “not to harm the environment (in contrast to the previous four events) but only those of mankind who have not the special seal upon their foreheads. (Revelation 9:4)

We thus see that the judgments progress from the environment to mankind – not to kill them but to torture them.

6th angel The first four angels had as their objective the destruction of the environment. The fifth released locusts to torture mankind. But the sixth is to unleash powers aimed at killing **a third of all men and women on earth.**

The destruction of one-third of the world’s population will mark the end of phase 1 of the judgments on the nations..

At the end of this first phase, Revelation 14 tells us that three angels will be sent to the people of the world with three messages:

1. To proclaim the gospel to “every nation and tribe and tongue and people (14:6)

Thus, the people of the earth who have not turned to God, and having experienced the devastating power of God in His mighty judgments against them and the nations, will now have an opportunity to accept Him. This is preaching of an unprecedented, world-wide, dramatic import! The earth and its people are staggering beneath the tremendous horror of environmental catastrophe and killing of enormous proportions. It will be well known that these events are the beginnings of God’s judgments on an evil world.

The message of this first angel is:

“Fear God and give Him glory, for the hour of His judgment is come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the seas and fountains of water”. (14:7)

2. The second angel will remind the people of the earth of the fall of Babylon – Europe and the Roman Catholic Church:

“Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of her impure passions.” (14:8)

By now, the beast and its supporting kings will have destroyed the harlot (Europe and the Roman Catholic Church known as Babylon):

“They (the ten kings) that you saw, they and the beast will hate the harlot; they will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire . . .” (17:16)

The effect on the nations of the earth of the destruction of Europe and the Roman Catholic Church will be shattering. As the above verse indicates, this will be achieved, not by Jesus, but by the beast. The church, which for centuries men looked to as the “mother church”, will be gone, defeated, annihilated. Will this cause men and women to look to the only true God? The angel will certainly urge them to do so.

3. Finally, the third angel issues a dire warning to everyone left on earth

“If anyone worships the beast and its image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also shall drink the wine of God’s wrath . . .” (14:9-10)

These will be the three messages delivered by these three angels to the people of the world to urge them to repent and turn to God. Whilst some will, many will not. Note again, that the above message is evidence that the beast is still ruling, even though Jesus is on Mt. Zion.

The time will come when God will cry, “Enough.” After giving the people of the world time to repent, He will not delay His final judgment any longer. There is a sense of urgency in Revelation 10 which warns that God’s plan to cleanse the earth will be delayed no longer. This marks the commencement of the second phase of God’s judgments on the nations.

This time, seven angels pour out seven bowls of wrath:

The first six bowls of God’s wrath

Revelation 16

1st bowl of wrath

Poured onto the earth, causing foul and evil sores to those who bare the mark of the beast and worship its image.

2nd bowl of wrath

Poured into the sea, and every living thing in the sea will die.

3rd bowl of wrath

Poured into the rivers and fountains of water, and they will become blood. (Imagine the effect of no drinking water on earth)

4th bowl of wrath

Poured onto the sun, and men will be scorched with fire. They will curse God and refuse to repent.

5th bowl of wrath

Poured onto the throne of the beast and will cause darkness in its kingdom, and pain and sores. Again, men will curse God and not repent.

6th bowl of wrath

Poured on the Euphrates river to “prepare the way for the kings from the east.” This will cause the beast and false prophet (representing sin [the dragon]) to communicate with the kings of the whole world to gather them to battle against Jesus.

7th bowl of wrath Revelation 16:17-21 (describing the seventh bowl of wrath) is a description of characteristics of the final battle against evil – the war of the beast against the Lamb. A great earthquake will occur (compare with Zechariah 14:4-5 and Ezekiel 38:20). “Flashes of lightning, voices, peals of thunder . . . great hailstones, heavy as a hundredweight, dropped on men from heaven . . .” (Compare Ezekiel 38:22).

This seventh bowl is the final outpouring of God’s wrath upon the evil of the world, for it involves the destruction of the beast.

We pause here to consider the position of the beast at this stage. All of this destructive judgment of God (both phases) on the earth’s evil will take place during the rule of the beast. The destructive force of God’s judgment will be seen by the beast as a direct challenge to its authority. This is no ordinary attack

against the beast. The first phase of God's judgment will be bad enough, but the second phase will be catastrophically devastating. And this time, the beast and its headquarters (throne) will be attacked directly.

The time for action by the beast has come. The only way to respond to what is happening is to attack God's representative in Jerusalem, God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. This attack is prophecied in Revelation 17:14:

"They will make war on the Lamb",

and in chapter 16:14-16, where we are told that the beast will enlist the support of kings from throughout the world:

"To assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty . . . and they assembled them at the place which is called in the Hebrew, 'Armageddon.' "

This will be the long-awaited battle of Armageddon:

"And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies, gathered to make war against him who sits upon the horse and against his army." (19:19)

Judgment of the followers of Jesus

Surprisingly little information is given in scripture about how the judgment will take place. But enough information is given to tell us that there will be a judgment:

"We shall all stand before the judgment seat of God . . . Every one of us shall give account of himself to God." (Romans 14:10,12)

And:

"The Lord Jesus Christ shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom." (2 Timothy 4:1)

These are just two of several passages of scripture alluding to the judgment.

Exactly how long after Jesus returns the judgment will take place is not clear. There is some evidence in Revelation 7 to suggest that it will not take place immediately. It seems that it will take place during the judgments on the nations.

The seal of God upon the saints

In Revelation 7, we get our first view of the elect after they are caught up to meet Jesus in the air. We find them standing before Jesus to receive the seal of God in their foreheads:

“After this, I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree. (Revelation 7:1)

These four angels were told:

Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God upon their foreheads” (7:3)

This instruction to the four angels takes place just before the wrath of God is poured out on the nations and people who will not worship Him. It seems that when Jesus first returns, his initial task will be to gather the elect and protect them from the terrible destruction about to be unleashed on the earth. This is entirely in accord with how God saved Noah – first the rescue, then the destruction.

As Revelation 7 progresses, the state of the elect changes. In the early verses of this chapter, the saints are to receive the seal of God on their foreheads. But the later verses of Revelation 7 speak of the saints wearing white robes, having made them “white in the blood of the Lamb.” (7:14)

Are we seeing a two-stage process for the saints? They are first sealed by the seal of God to protect them from the unleashing of God’s wrath upon the earth. The destroying locusts in chapter 9 of Revelation are told to torture only those “who have *not* the seal of God upon their foreheads.”

Then, at a later time, the saints are granted immortality. It is suggested that the time of being granted immortality will be at time of the judgment. The time when Jesus “will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world . . . “ (Matthew 25:34)

The location of the judgment

These words were spoken by Jesus at his first coming, on the Mount of Olives in the form of a parable, which is known as the parable of the sheep and the goats.

This parable gives us a clue as to *where* the judgment will take place. Jesus said:

“When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be

gathered all the nations (that is, people from all the nations), and he will separate them as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.” (Matthew 25:31-32)

This parable is a parable of the judgment. Jesus said he would “sit on his glorious throne” to carry out this task of judgment, and consequent separation of the faithful from the unfaithful.

There is only one throne on which Jesus will sit – the throne of David which was and will be at Jerusalem:

“. . . He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end.” (Luke 1:32-33)

It therefore appears that the sequence of events will be:

- Jesus returns, and the elect (resurrected and living) will be invited by the angel of Jesus to come to meet him. Those who accept the invitation will be caught up to meet him in the air as he comes.
- He will protect the elect from the terrible destruction of the nations by sealing them on their foreheads. (Note again this sequence of (a) tribulation, (b) saving of faithful ones, protection of them and then (c) an unleashing of God’s judgment on the evil of the world. We see this sequence in the lives of Noah and Lot).
- All of this will occur before the judgment foretold in the parable of the sheep and the goats takes place. It is of course possible that the judgment will be held at some point in time during the judgments on the nations. It is equally possible that it will be held at the end of the judgments on the nations. We are simply not told just when the judgment will take place. We should also note that the judgment is unlikely to be a blow by blow description of past sins committed. The scripture is quite clear that our sins are forgiven now. The judgment will therefore not be a blow by blow description of past sins committed.

We have already seen that those in Christ will be caught up to meet Jesus in the air. This very act will indicate that those caught up are the saints. The judgment seat of Christ will therefore be a confirmation of that, and to have immortality bestowed by the Lord. On the other hand, there will be those at the judgment seat who are not in Christ, and who will not have immortality bestowed.

So, to sum up, it appears that the judgment of Christ will not take place immediately, but until it does, the saints will be protected from God's wrath on the nations. When the judgment of Christ does take place, it seems it will be at Jerusalem, before Jesus, seated on the throne of David.

The bride and marriage supper of the Lamb

After the judgment of Christ, the marriage supper of the Lamb will be held. It must be after the judgment, for the bride is now immortal.

Revelation chapter 19 opens with great rejoicing at the destruction of the great harlot, named as Babylon in Revelation 17, and who is thought to be Europe and the Roman Catholic Church:

“ After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying, ‘Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for His judgments are true and just; He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and He has avenged on her the blood of his servants.’ ” (19:1-3)

As shown from scripture earlier, it is the beast and ten kings who destroy the harlot. This is not done by Jesus, and it is done before the battle of Armageddon – the war of the beast and kings of the earth against Jesus.

Thus we read of the great rejoicing that the harlot has been destroyed. Chapter 19 then goes on to speak of the bride who “has made herself ready”, who is “clothed with fine linen, bright and pure, for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints . . . Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” (19:7-9)

So it will be that the saints (the bride, now immortal) will join Jesus (the bridegroom) in the long awaited marriage supper of the Lamb. It will be a time of great rejoicing and thanksgiving. For long years and generations the saints have participated in the meal of remembrance of Jesus. “Do this in remembrance of me . . . for as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.” (1 Corinthians 11:24-26). But the marriage supper of the Lamb will be a celebration of the present, not the past. It will be a supper fitting for a bridegroom who has waited long to be with his bride, and for a bride who has served him faithfully as she waited for him to come. Together, they will participate in the marriage supper of the Lamb.

The actual arrangements for this supper are beyond our comprehension, for there will be millions of people involved. “A great multitude which no man could number.” (Revelation 7:9) However, nothing is impossible for our Lord who fed

many thousands in Galilee from a few loaves and fishes. Just how and where the marriage supper of the Lamb will take place we are not told.

The battle of the beast against Christ

The fifth bowl of wrath was poured onto the throne of the beast, but he and his supporters will not repent. (Revelation 16:10-11)

The scriptures have much to tell us about this final battle. Revelation 16:12-17. 17:14 and 19:17-21, are direct references to this battle (the battle of Armageddon), and there is evidence to suggest that Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39 and Zechariah chapters 12 and 14 (from verse 3 onwards) are all descriptions of the war of the beast against the Lamb.

This battle will take place as a direct result of the judgments of God against the nations. It is suggested that the beast, along with all the nations in league with it, will decide that they have had enough, and will rise up against Christ with the objective of defeating him and to put an end to the devastating events which will be unleashed as the judgments of God on the evil of the world. .

The battle is likely to be quick and decisive. We are told:

“The beast and the kings of the earth (seemingly many more kings than the ten kings of Revelation 17) with their armies (will) gather to make war against him who sits upon the horse (Jesus) and his army”. (Revelation 19:19)

In the very next verse, John records:

“And the beast was captured, and with it, the false prophet who in its presence had worked the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown into the lake of fire. . . And the rest (the kings) were slain by the sword of him who sits upon the horse. . . and all the birds were gorged with their flesh”. (Revelation 19: 20-21)

So it will be that the evil residing in the beast will be destroyed. There have been seven beasts throughout history, and all of them have oppressed and persecuted and killed God’s people. The seven beasts have been the kings of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece and the Caesars of Rome. The latter day beast has yet to arise.

Daniel, who wrote of the beast of the last days, was asked to interpret Nebuchadnezzar’s dream about a mighty image. This image, from Daniel’s day onward, included all of these oppressing kings/beasts.

The beast of our day representing Islam, will embody all of the evil and Godlessness of the seven beasts of Jewish history – for all of them were and will be anti-Israel.

The destruction of this final beast of evil will therefore mark the end of all the evil of these beasts/kings. This latter-day beast will embody a depth of evil and depravity, Godlessness and ruthlessness, much greater than all of the beasts before it. But as Daniel has prophesied, “It will come to its end by no human hand.” It will be destroyed by the hand and power of the Son of God.

The beginning of the Kingdom of God

Only after the beast has been destroyed, representing as it does the evil and Godlessness of mankind, will Jesus be accepted world-wide as King of kings and Lord of lords. He will then be worshipped and praised by everyone on earth. And all people will worship and love God, as the great Creator of heaven and earth and their loving Heavenly Father.

This will be the commencement of the new era of 1,000 years of righteousness, peace and justice prophesied in Psalm 72 and elsewhere and which the people of God have longed for and waited for. The proclamation of the seventh angel in Revelation 11 will then be made:

“Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.’ (Revelation 11:15)

Just how much time will elapse between the descent of Jesus from heaven and the beginning of the millennium we are not told. Enough time needs to be allowed for the judgments on the nation to be carried out, including a space of time between phase 1 and phase 2 of these judgments.

The actual length of time does not matter, for the elect of Jesus will be with him, and the passage of time will no longer be important.

At the end of the 1,000 years, there will be a judgment of mortal people who lived during the 1,000 years. Finally, death will be abolished. No further mortality, for all who live on earth will be immortal. We are told:

“(God) will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.” (Revelation 21:4)

What are we waiting for?

In these loving words, we have a picture of a Father's care for his beloved children. A Father who will, as fathers today will, bend down and wipe away the tears from His children's eyes. It will not only be a day of great rejoicing for the saints, but also for our Heavenly Father, for at last, His children are all with Him, without sin in the world and the resultant punishment of death. Our relationship with our Father will then be closer than it has ever been throughout all the days of men and women on the earth.