

Apologetics Applications

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Reader's Response

A Message From The Editor

Dear Reader,

Since this is the first issue of *Apologetics Applications*, and you may not have heard of A.A.R.M. before, I would like to introduce myself and the organization I represent. My name is Jonathan Wienke, and I am a sinner saved by grace. I am a member of Applied Apologetics Resource Ministries, (A.A.R.M.) which is a group of believers joined together to defend Christianity and the Bible from those who attack them, and to teach other believers how to do the same. One of the means used to accomplish this goal is *Apologetics Applications*.

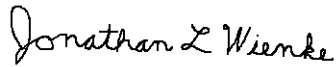
The primary goals of *Apologetics Applications* are to educate believers in the fundamentals of the faith, defend the faith from those who would attack or discredit it, challenge readers to "search the Scripture" to see if what is said here is true, and to warn believers about current

events that directly affect them. I do not expect anyone to accept anything said here as truth without thoroughly investigating it. I and my associates in A.A.R.M. are all human, fallible, and prone to error at times. If we publish something you believe is contrary to Scripture, we hope you will contact us, so that we can have an opportunity to correct it.

Many of the topics addressed in this publication are controversial, but my goal is to speak the truth in love. When challenging doctrine contrary to Scripture, I intend to attack the view, not insult those who hold it. When information is published here about individuals or groups promoting heretical doctrines, the intent is not to attack the person or group, but the doctrine they proclaim. The cause of Christ is not helped when those who claim His name are rude and condescending.

Yours in Christ,

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Jonathan L. Wienke

Editor, *Apologetics Applications*

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Answers To Your Questions

A.A.R.M. is dedicated to answering questions about the Bible, Christianity, science and origins, history, current events, prophecy, and aberrant religious groups. We solicit your questions on these topics and comments about our ministry. All questions received will be answered by mail, and may be addressed in this publication, unless the questioner requests otherwise. Please send your question(s) to:

A.A.R.M. Reader's Response

1989-7 Peabody Rd. Suite 201

Vacaville, CA 95687

A.A.R.M. reserves the right to edit or reject material submitted for inclusion in this column.

The people answering your questions are:

- **Winston E. Jones**, a minister and the executive director of A.A.R.M.
- **Dr. James A. Kuhle**, a professor of economics at Sacramento State University, and head of curriculum development for A.A.R.M.
- **Allen Hollaway**, A.A.R.M.'s director of education.

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- **Daryl Thomas**, head of A.A.R.M.'s outreach ministries, and an announcer on KFIA 710 AM, a Christian radio station in Sacramento, California.
- **Randy Berg**, a creation science researcher.
- **Jonathan Wienke**, editor of this newsletter, and head of media and computer technology for A.A.R.M.

News And Notices

"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore be as shrewd as serpents, and as innocent as doves." Matthew 10:16

Subscription Information

Apologetics Applications is a quarterly newsletter available in printed form and as a Microsoft Word 6.0 document file on DOS formatted 3¹/₂ or 5¹/₄ inch high density floppy disks. For printed copies, a donation of \$2.00 per copy (\$7.00 per 1 year subscription) is requested, plus postage, if applicable. For a copy on disk, a donation of \$1.00 per issue (\$3.50 per 1 year subscription) is requested, plus postage and/or the cost of the disk, if applicable. If anyone wishes to obtain a copy of or subscription to *Apologetics Applications*, please contact the editor at the following address or telephone number:

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If you are unable to send the requested donation, please send whatever you can, and we will work with you to get you as many copies as you need. The purpose of *Apologetics Applications* is to disseminate the truth of God's word, not to make us rich.

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Reprint Policy

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A.A.R.M.'s Statement Of Faith

4. The Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is the divinely inspired Word of God, and inerrant in the original writings.
5. There is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
6. Jesus is the Christ, was begotten of the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, and is true God and true man.
7. Man was created in the image of God; he sinned and died, both physically and spiritually, which is separation from God.
8. The Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures as the vicarious sacrifice, and all who trust in Him as personal Savior are justified on the basis of His shed blood.
9. Jesus Christ was bodily resurrected from the dead, ascended into heaven, and is our High Priest and Advocate.
10. All who receive the Lord Jesus Christ by faith are born of the Holy Spirit and immediately become children of God, a relationship in which the believer is eternally secure.
11. The return of Jesus will be physical and is imminent.
12. There will be a bodily resurrection of the saved and of the unsaved; the saved unto the resurrection of life, and the unsaved unto the resurrection of damnation, which is everlasting punishment in the lake of fire.

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A.A.R.M. News

- Our radio broadcast, *A.A.R.M. Profiles*, has begun airing on KFIA AM 710 on Sundays at 11:45 AM. (Tapes of this program are available.) This program highlights the most current information in the areas of science and origins, exposes the belief systems of various cults and religions, as well as the truth about America's Christian heritage.
- We are in the early planning stage of producing a series of science and origins videos geared for children grades 7-12. The first video should be available sometime late this fall. We are acquiring the equipment and software, and writing the scripts at this time.
- Our preparatory apologetics class is already under way, and will continue until May 23. This 16 week

college level class is designed to prepare the student for active witnessing, including instruction in the rules of interpretation, basic Christian doctrines, history, comparative religions, and other essential witnessing tools. Class is being held at Valley Evangelical Free Church in Vacaville, CA on Mondays at 7:30 A.M, and First Baptist Church in Vacaville, CA on Mondays at 7:30 P.M.

Prayer Requests

- Pray for the unity of the various team members of A.A.R.M.
- Continued prayer for and financial support of the ministry.
- We need to acquire some computer equipment and software for producing the videos.

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Praises

- The radio program has support for the first month.
- The preparatory apologetics class has been going well.
- This newsletter is finally in print!

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Current Events Of Concern

“...If I bring a sword upon the land, and the people of the land take one man from among them and make him their watchman; and he sees the sword coming upon the land, and he blows on the trumpet and warns the people, then he who hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, and a sword comes and takes him away, his blood will be on his own head. ...But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and a sword comes and takes a person from them, he is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require from the watchman's hand.” Ezekiel 33:2b–4,6

The U.N. Convention On The Rights Of The Child

By Doug Phillips¹

America Prepares For The Parental Rights Battle Of The Decade

After years of debate within the international community between politicians and child's rights activists, an agreement was finally reached in 1988, which for the first time created a comprehensive charter advancing the agenda of the children's "liberation" movement. What the child's rights advocates have for over two decades been unable to accomplish through the normal legislative process may now be realized in one sweeping blow should the Clinton administration push the Senate to ratify the *United Nations Convention On The Rights Of The Child*. Under the guise of a "child's rights" measure, this wolf in sheep's clothing could, if passed, substantially undermine the authority of parents to exercise vitally important responsibilities toward their children if these responsibilities infringe on the child's "right" to autonomy and self-expression as defined by a panel of "experts" appointed by the United Nations.

If ratified, this treaty could undermine the family by granting to children a list of radical "rights", which would be primarily enforced against parents. These new "fundamental" rights would include the "right to privacy", the "right to freedom of thought and association", and the "right to freedom of expression". A fundamental presumption of this treaty is that parental responsibility exists only in so far as parents are willing to further the independent choices of the child.

The Convention Would Redefine Family Law In America

The impact of the Convention is particularly ominous in light of the fact that the United States Constitution declares treaties to be the law of the land. Under the supremacy clause in Article VI "all Treaties made, or which shall be made under the Authority of the United States, shall be supreme Law of the Land; and the Judges in every State shall be bound thereby, any Thing in the Constitution of Laws of any State to the contrary notwithstanding."²

¹ ? Doug Phillips is the director of the **National Center For Home Education's** Congressional Action Program.

² ? Although a treaty may override state constitutions, state laws, and federal statutes, it may not override the U.S. Constitution. However, provisions of the treaty in conflict with the U.S. Constitution could still be enforced as if they did supersede the U.S. Constitution. Ed.

In *Missouri v. Holland*, the Supreme Court held that a treaty made by the President with the required concurrence of two-thirds of the Senate is, under the supremacy clause of Article VI, section 2, part of the supreme law that takes precedence over contrary state laws. Thus the U.N. Convention would constitute legally binding law in all 50 states. Otherwise valid state laws pertaining to education, the family, etc., which conflict with provisions of the treaty will be subject to invalidation.

Were this convention to be enforced, the United States would be required to alter large portions of long established law to cater to the demands of the United Nations and the panel of experts they select to define international standards for child's rights.

The Convention Would Give Children The "Right" To Disregard Parental Authority

Although several of the treaty's provisions offer generally positive, nonoffensive platitudes, a substantial portion of this charter undermines parental rights. The U.N. Convention would:

13. Transfer parental rights and responsibilities to the State.
14. Undermine the family by vesting children with various fundamental rights which advance notions of the child's autonomy and freedom from parental guidance.
15. Establish bureaucracies and institutions of a national and international nature designed to promote "the ideas proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations" and to investigate and prosecute parents who violate their children's rights.

Some of the more relevant provisions of the *U.N. Convention On The Rights Of The Child* are summarized below:

The State Will Determine "The Child's Best Interest"
Article 3: "In all actions concerning children," the courts, social service workers, and bureaucrats are empowered to regulate families based on their subjective determination of "the best interest of the child." This article shifts the responsibility of parental judgment and decision making from the family to the State (and ultimately to the United Nations).

The Provisions Of The Treaty Must Be Enforced
Article 4: This provision makes clear that the treaty is not just a positive affirmation. Signatory nations are bound to "undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of

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the rights” articulated in the Convention. In fact, the United States would be required to “undertake measures to the maximum extent of available resources...within the framework of international co-operation” in order to restructure society in accordance with the implementation of these rights.

All Children Must Be Registered

Article 7: In order to insure State and U.N. control over their development, all children must be immediately registered after birth.

Severe Limitations Are Placed On The Parent's Right To Direct And Train Their Children

Article 13: Under this provision, parents could be subject to prosecution for any attempt to prevent their children from interaction with material they deem unacceptable. Children are vested with a “freedom of expression” right that is virtually absolute. No allowance is made for parental guidance. Section 1 declares a child’s right to “seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child’s choice.”

Article 14: Children are guaranteed “freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.” Children have a legal right to object to all religious training. Alternatively, children may assert their right against parental objection to participate in occult, Muslim, or Buddhist worship services.

Article 15: This article declares “the right of the child to freedom of association.” If this measure was taken seriously, parents could be prevented from forbidding their child to associate with people deemed to be objectionable companions. Under Article 15, children could claim a “fundamental” right to join gangs, cults, and racist organizations over parental objection. Parental rights and responsibilities are unmentioned.

The Convention Would Further Entrench The Rights Of Teenagers To Abort Their Babies

Article 6: The Convention is not only vague but contradictory when it comes to the critical issue of the right to life of an unborn child. Although some might argue that the language of Article 6 would favor the rights of unborn children, neither abortion nor unborn children are specifically mentioned. That provision reads: “Stated Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life.” The fact that several of the signatory nations not only permit but as a matter of state policy actively encourage abortions among their citizenry lends further credibility to the view that this is not a pro-life measure.

Article 16: Any positive benefits resulting from the language of Article 6 are clearly undermined by the “right to privacy” purportedly granted to children under Article 16. Although the United States Constitution nowhere grants a woman the right to abort her baby, “privacy”

was the operative word used by the Court in *Roe v. Wade* to create the right to abortion. This United Nations sanctioned “privacy” would seemingly establish as “the law of the land” the child’s right to obtain an abortion without parental notice, the right to purchase and obtain contraceptives, the right to homosexual and heterosexual promiscuity, and the right to pornography in the home.

The State Must Assist Parents In The Raising Of Children

Article 18: This provision not only encourages two income families by granting children a fundamental right to state-subsidised, state-run child care facilities, but it calls on the State to be co-parent by rendering “appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-raising responsibilities and shall ensure the development of institutions, facilities, and services for the care of children.”

Parents Who Don't Comply May Be Prosecuted

Article 19: This provision mandates the creation of an intensive bureaucracy for the purpose of “identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment, and follow-up” of parents who, in violation of their children’s “rights”, treat their children negligently.

A Prohibition On Corporal Punishment?

Article 28: Education is declared a “right” that is not only to be universally free, but compulsory. This section would require that the United States pass laws and develop an infrastructure geared toward “encouraging” all school-age Americans to be part of the school system. The nations of the world are challenged to unite in the creation of an internationalist approach to education. Finally, parties to the Convention must ensure that school discipline “is administered in a manner consistent with the child’s human dignity” as defined by the United Nations. Presumably this would prohibit corporal punishment.

Education For The New World Order

Article 29: It is the goal of the State to direct the education of the people it governs toward the philosophy of the New World Order as “enshrined in the charter of the United Nations.” Each child must be prepared to be a responsible citizen by having “the spirit of understanding, peace, toleration, equity of sexes, and friendship [for] all peoples, ethnic, national, and religious groups indigenous origin,” including, presumably, cultic, anti-Christian religions, and those regimes which embody authoritarianism and intolerance.

International Experts Will Parent Our Children

Article 43: An international committee of 10 “experts” is to be established to oversee the progress of the implementation of the Treaty.

A Call To Action

Both the U.S. House and Senate have introduced resolutions requesting that the President sign the U.N. Convention. Once a treaty is signed by the President, it must be ratified by the U.S. Senate. Because the U.N. Convention is being promoted under the deceptive guise of a child's rights measure, it is likely that proponents will portray it as "noncontroversial" and attempt to rush it through the Senate approval process, in order to eliminate a long and protracted debate on its merits. Although the Clinton administration has yet to formally announce plans to sign the U.N. Convention and send it to the Senate for ratification, President and Mrs. Clinton have indicated their strong support of the child's rights agenda advanced by this treaty. Mrs. Clinton formerly chaired the Children's Defense Fund, a leading child's rights

lobbying organization that has been a primary proponent of the U.N. Convention.

Currently, there are over 100 co-sponsors for House Concurrent Resolution 15 and over 30 co-sponsors for Senate Resolution 70. Voice your opposition to the *U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child* by contacting your U.S. Representative and Senators. The Capitol Switchboard number is (202) 224-3121.

[Editor's Note: A.A.R.M. included this article because we believe that this treaty, if implemented, would make it impossible to "train up a child in the way he should go" (Proverbs 22:6) without breaking the law. Although we believe that "we ought to obey God rather than men," (Acts 5:29) we believe that it is even better to prevent ungodly laws from being implemented in the first place if we can.]

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Solid Food From The Solid Rock

"For every one who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness...but solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil." Hebrews 5:13-14

Eight Rules Of Interpretation

By Winston E. Jones & Allen Hollaway

Rule #1: Logic

Logic may be defined as the science that evaluates arguments. Logic, as it pertains to Scripture, has to do with the way we understand statements and events in the context of the will of God. God has revealed his plans to man using the medium of reason and the written word. In fact, it was God who said, "come let us reason together" (Isa. 1:18). One of the applications of logic is the observation of God's consistency in His written word. An example is fulfillment of prophecy. God's prophecies always come to pass and always come to pass literally. This premise leads to the conclusion that God keeps his promises.

"God, whom we can trust, produced the Bible, therefore, the Bible must be a trustworthy source of information." Some may say the above is circular reasoning. Circular reasoning requires that a statement is defended by the same statement without external support or proof. The Bible is also supported by history and archeology, and is not solely dependent upon internal proofs, therefore, the case for the trustworthiness of the Bible cannot be offhandedly discarded as circular reasoning.

What you just read is an exercise in logic. The conclusion is "the Bible is a trustworthy source" and the premise to support that conclusion is that many statements made in the Bible are verified by history. Then we defended our argument against one of the more common objections.

Bernard Ramm said, "What is the control we use to weed out false theological speculation? Certainly the control is logic and evidence...Interpreters who have not

had the sharpening experience of logic...may have improper notions of implication and evidence. Too frequently such a person uses a basis of appeal that is a notorious violation of the laws of logic and evidence."³

The process of interpretation is logical reasoning based on the laws of language and grammatical analysis. Edward Goodrick, professor of Greek and Bible at Multnomah School of the Bible wrote, "Presume that the author is consistent. You give any writer the benefit of the doubt as you try to construe him in a way which does not make him contradict himself...this sets the burden of proof on that interpretation which makes the author contradict himself."⁴ Remember, our goal is accurate understanding of the points being made, not confirmation of one's position. As in our legal system, one is presumed innocent until proven guilty; the burden of proof is on the accuser, not the accused.

The basic concept of logic is the argument, which is comprised of premises and conclusions. An argument, as it occurs in logic, is a group of two or more statements, one or more of which (the premises) claims to provide support for, or reasons to believe the final statement (the conclusion). All arguments may be placed in one of two basic groups: those in which the premises support the conclusion (valid), and those in which they do not (invalid). Logic as a science was developed to provide methods that allow us to distinguish valid arguments from invalid arguments.

Examples

- All violations of God's law are sin.

³ ? Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: W.A. Wilde, 1956)

⁴ ? Edward Goodrick, *Do It Yourself Hebrew And Greek*, (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1980) p. 12.3

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- Adultery is a violation of God's law.
- Therefore, adultery is sin.

The first two statements are premises; the third is the conclusion.

Recognizing Arguments

Not all Scripture passages contain arguments. A passage contains an argument if it purports to prove something; if it does not, it does not contain an argument. Two conditions must be met for a passage to purport to prove something:

16. At least one of the statements in the passage must present evidence.
17. There must be a claim that the evidence supports a conclusion.

Rule #2: Unity

The unity of the Bible is the cornerstone of all theological belief systems for Christianity. The Old and New Testaments point to specific acts of God, then they tie them all together in Christ. If the Bible is not unified in what it says about God, then, as Paul put it, "We are above all men most miserable." The Bible is unified in its examples of God's actions, such as:

- The actions of God as Creator.
- The actions of God with his people, Israel.
- The actions of God in Christ.

Without fear of contradiction, it can be said by Christians, at least, that God is the universal point of unity for all Scripture and all creation. He is the common denominator. The Bible opens with Him creating the world and universe and closes with Him ruling over all mankind. In fact, the Bible says He holds all things together by His powerful word, and in Him we live and move and have our being. The actions of God that demonstrate His role as unifier are these:

- All things are made by God.
- All Scripture comes from God.
- The only source for salvation is God.
- All judgment belongs to God.
- The new world is centered on God.
- Man is made in the image of God.
- Moral standards are set by God.
- All wisdom, power, and knowledge come from God.
- All souls/spirits return to God who made them.

The Actions Of God As Creator

The Bible emphasizes God as the Creator. When the Bible talks about creation, whether in the Old Testament or the New Testament it always attributes it to the God of Israel, never to any other deity. As far as the Bible is

concerned, only one person created the universe: Jehovah of the Old Testament. He is given credit for creating man and the nations of the world. This ability to create is the one credential that proves deity. So much so, that the New Testament uses it repeatedly to prove Jesus is God, giving Him credit for creation. This is where the cults particularly and all other religious systems differ from Christianity.

The Actions Of God With His People Israel

Another aspect of Biblical unity is God's plan for Israel. The world conditions we see today are related to God's promises to the nation of Israel. The theme of promise and fulfillment stems from this ancient relationship. Although we live in a different dispensation from the prophets, the Bible's tie to the prophets is stronger than ever. Even the 1000 year reign of Christ is predicted by both Isaiah and John.

The Actions Of God In Christ

As we read the Old Testament we find statements by God, in Zechariah 12:10, that are actually being made by Jesus Himself. We find God saying in Genesis 1, "Let Us make man in Our image." It becomes inescapable that the second person of the Trinity is participating in the events of the Old Testament. As we turn our gaze to the New Testament we find Jesus referring to the Old Testament as proof of who He is (Luke 4:18-21). The unity does not stop there, however, because the Bible tells us that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself. In the New Testament, unity is demonstrated by the relationship between the believer and Christ. We find ourselves members of the body of Christ, sharing spiritual gifts that edify the body and minister to the world. There are no racial or class distinctions in the body. We are all one in Christ. Jesus gives meaning to all God has done in the past, and purpose for what He will do in the future.

The principle of unity must be followed to understand customs, idioms, rivalries, or any cultural background referred to in the Scripture. The study of the New Testament theology is futile if it is not linked to God's plans and revelations in the Old Testament.

Rule #3: Historical Background

Understanding the historical background of a given passage of Scripture can be very enlightening as to the intent of the author. This understanding can frequently clear up problems of interpretation before they arise. Historical background will be divided into three categories: historical context, geography, and cultural heritage.

Historical Context

The question to ask concerning historical context is "What is happening at this point in history?" The question of when is critical when looking at the relationship between governments and the general populace. This

can explain the presence of soldiers, the absence of religious leadership, and the reactions by the people. It can also give insight into the doctrines being emphasized by the apostles or prophets.

Points To Consider

- What time is it?
- Who is in power?
- How has history affected this situation?
- What are the significant recent historical events?
- What are the accepted standards of conduct?
- What is the current political environment?

Geography

For the serious Bible student, geography is a key to understanding the motives, actions, and the development of certain values of people mentioned in the Bible. Without it, one could not fully grasp why some of the Israelites wanted to possess the land east of the Jordan river, rather than own part of Palestine, or how the cities of the region played a part in the naming of Melchisedek. And of course there is no way to study history without considering the geography associated with it. A useful tool in the study of the Biblical geography is a Bible atlas. A good one will provide valuable insights into the events found in the Bible.

Points To Consider

- Where are they?
- What is the setting?
- How much of an influence is geography exerting on the context?
- Is the setting a geographically strategic area?
- Why is this location important?

Cultural Heritage

If a person were to travel overseas and visit various countries, the one thing that would make or break the trip would be how well he got along with the citizens he encountered. If, every time he tried to purchase something or get directions, people shunned him, it would not take long for him to become dissatisfied and want to leave. Knowing well and adhering to the cultural practices of your host can help you avoid unpleasant experiences and even endear you to their hearts. So it is with the Bible, that unless one has a grasp of the cultural background of those mentioned in the Scriptures, one will not be able to fully understand many of the idioms of Biblical language, or realize the motivations behind much of the behavior occurring in the passage.

Points To Consider

- What cultures are represented?
- What aspects of the culture are obvious?
- What cultural taboos are affecting behavior?

Rule #4: Precedence

Precedence, as used in law, is the application of a prior interpretation of law. It is the standard interpretation applied to a given situation, or as it might be more commonly stated, “The way we have always understood it.” As this applies to the understanding of the Bible, we can safely say that if someone interprets Scripture in a way that is radically different from the more traditional interpretations, the interpretation should be Scripturally challenged. This does not imply that the standard interpretation is always right. There is great danger in applying the traditional interpretation blindly.

Points To Consider

- Has this question been asked before?
- Has this interpretation been presented before?
- How did the apostles apply this doctrine?
- Did Jesus address this issue?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of this interpretation?

Rule #5: Inference

When an author makes an inference, he may merely mention a small portion of a text, use an idiom closely associated with a person, or even just use an expression associated with a topic, intending to bring that idea to the mind of the listener. Sometimes, only intimate associates may understand or recognize when an inference is made. Friends can share whole volumes of information with just a gesture or a simple phrase. A husband and wife can share common memories with merely a facial expression. These are inferences that we commonly experience. In the days of Christ, it was a commonly accepted practice to quote a small portion of a text and invoke the entire text.

Points To Consider

- Has the author said something that makes no sense?
- Is there a literary reference being made?
- Are there any cultural colloquialisms used?
- What is the response by those addressed?

Rule #6: Definition

Definition is the most basic of the eight rules of interpretation, yet the most frequently overlooked. Definition consists of two basic parts. First, one needs to know and understand the definitions of all the words used in the text. If one does not know the definitions of the words used, how can one even begin to try to understand what the author intended? Second, in each society or culture, words take on slightly different meanings. It is important to know if there are any culturally specific definitions to words used by the author.

Points To Consider

- Do I understand all the words used?

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- Are there any words that may have alternate meanings?
- Do any of the words have culturally specific meanings?
- Do the meanings of any of the words change based on the context?

Rule #7: Usage

Usage is very similar to definition. The question that is asked is “What do(es) the word(s) mean?”. Usage differs from definition in that the meaning changes based on how the word is used in the text, i.e., sarcasm, irony, poetic language, and stylized prose. Words can be made to convey an idea different from their literal meaning by how the words are used.

Points To Consider

- Is the language poetic?
- Is the author making rhetorical statements that obviously contradict other portions of the text?
- Does the language appear to be sarcastic?
- Has the author used literary license to convey an idea or description?

Rule #8: Context

Context is very important to understanding the passage in question. If a portion of a text is read without the

rest of the text, it may make little sense or give a misleading impression of what the complete passage means. For example, “It works, doesn’t it?” means very little without the rest of the text. What does this passage mean? What works? What would happen if it didn’t? “Why does an elephant wear green tennis shoes? To hide in the grass. It works, doesn’t it?” Frequently, the results of taking something out of context can cause much more severe consequences than the child’s joke stated above.

Points To Consider

- Is an abhorrent doctrine being supported?
- Do I have the entire text available?
- Does the phrase change meanings when taken out of context?
- Does the text help explain the text?
- Is this a deliberate attempt to mislead?

Conclusion

The eight rules of interpretation are not designed with the intent of being used singly, but in concert with each other. Each of the rules helps the others, and overlaps the others until all aspects of the text have been covered.

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Combating The Cults

“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should answer every man.” Colossians 4:6

Contradictions In The Mormon Scriptures: Total Apostasy?

By Daryl Thomas

The Mormon prophet Joseph Smith wrote in Joseph Smith 2:17–19 that God the Father appeared to him, as did Jesus Christ; and that his reason for going to the woods to pray was to ask the Lord for wisdom, according to James 1:5. Wisdom, he says, “to know which of all the sects was right, that [he] might know which to join.” Joseph goes on to say that they answered by telling him that he “must join none of them, for they were all wrong,” and, “that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt,” and that God said “they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.”

This sounds like an outright attack on Christianity to me. Having studied Christian church history, it seems to me that this would come as quite a shock to the church fathers of the first five centuries; men such as Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Polycarp (who knew the Apostle John

personally), Jerome, Clement of Rome (who knew the Apostles Paul and Peter), Chrysostom, Ignatius (who was appointed bishop at the church in Antioch by the Apostle John), Origen (pronounced like the word “origin”), John Wycliffe, Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, John Knox, John Calvin, Thomas Aquinas, John Huss, William Tyndale, John and Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, and countless others, who believed in what they thought was Jesus Christ’s gospel. The idea that they all failed where Joseph Smith was to succeed is highly questionable. In just these few verses I read one dogmatic assertion in which Joseph claims that God pronounced everybody wrong, all Christian theology an abomination, and all professing Christians corrupt.

How strange for this to be presented as “restored Christianity,” when Jesus Christ specifically promised that “the gates of hell” wouldn’t prevail against His church (Matthew 16:18)! In the verses of Joseph Smith 2 I find “God” contradicting this statement in the Gospel of Matthew some eighteen centuries later! To say there was a total apostasy would be to credit Jesus Christ with a gross lie. Joseph apparently had not read Malachi 3:6: “I am the Lord, I change not.” I have not seen a single

passage in the Bible that teaches that the Christian faith will ever disappear and be in need of restoration by anybody.

When it seemed that all of Israel had failed God and had turned to idol worship, there was always a remnant somewhere who refused to lower themselves by serving any other god but the one, true God. Even when the prophet Elijah thought he was the only one who still had faith in the true and living God, God showed him that He still had 7,000 other men who had not bowed their knees to Baal (1 Kings 19:18)! Even during the reign of the Antichrist, spoken of primarily in Revelation 4–19, God’s truth will survive. I believe that the message will continue unbroken, because for the Christian, “greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.” (1 John 4:4). God never leaves Himself without a witness (Acts 14:17). Yet according to Joseph, God not only left Himself without a witness, but did so for approximately 1,820 years!

I have talked to Mormons who use 1 Timothy 4:1 to substantiate the claim of the Christian church’s total apostasy, and prove the need for a restoration, namely, the Mormon church. But Paul tells us that only some would depart, not all: “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times *some* shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (emphasis mine). Ephesians 5:25–32 illustrates Christ’s concern for the welfare of His church. When speaking on the subject of husbands and wives, Paul uses the comparison of Christ and the church. The gist of what Paul is telling the Ephesian church in this passage is this: just as it’s wrong for a husband to neglect the welfare of his wife, so would it be if Christ was to neglect the welfare of His church. I believe Joseph Smith’s accusation that Christ let His church fall into a total apostasy, thinly disguised as a revelation, is blasphemous.

The claim of total apostasy not only contradicts the Bible, but the Book of Mormon as well. In 3 Nephi 28:1–8, Jesus supposedly tells three Nephite disciples that they would “never taste of death” but would remain alive until the Lord’s return. Three of Christ’s disciples were actually to remain alive on this earth until His Second Coming. I must ask: did they apostatize also? A total apostasy would mean they had! According to *History of the Church*, without total apostasy there would have been no need for the Mormon church. If the account of the three witnesses in the Book of Mormon was true, there is no need for the Mormon church to exist!

Not to belabor the issue, but there are other things I find implausible with these three verses. I have a problem with Joseph’s claim that God appeared to him. For one thing, in Exodus 33:20, we find God telling Moses that he couldn’t see His face, “for there shall no man see Me, and live.” Also, John 1:18 plainly states that “no man hath seen God at any time.” You see, as finite creatures, we cannot handle anything infinite. It’s simi-

lar to having 1,000,000 volts of electricity routed into your house. All appliances would explode, all wiring would melt, and the house would burn down because it’s just not equipped for that kind of electrical capacity. The power first has to be run through step-down transformers. The same holds true for us.

Now I realize that there are those who would argue on this matter by pointing out what Exodus 24:9–11 says, and that is, that Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel ascended the mountain of God (Sinai) and “saw the God of Israel.” First, it should be noted that God invited them to see Him. Five chapters earlier, in Exodus 19:12–13, God told Moses to set boundaries around the mountain so that no one should even touch its base without the punishment of death. However, God specifically invited these people to ascend the mountain to consecrate them for the service to which they had been appointed, and to seal the covenant that had been established between God and the nation of Israel. Second, it’s clear from the description and from other passages of Scripture (namely Numbers 12:8), that what these people saw was not the glory of God, but rather a *visual representation* of the glory of God. Even when Moses asked to see God’s glory in Exodus 33:18–23, it was *only a likeness* of God which Moses saw. We know this because of the Hebrew word in Numbers 12:8 translated “similitude”: *temunah*—“form,” “likeness,” and not the very essence of God. God cannot be known directly in this life, nor can He be known completely. First Corinthians 13:12 says, “For now we see in a glass [mirror] darkly [a poor reflection] but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as I also am known.” God can be known “by the things that are made” (Romans 1:20), but He cannot be known in Himself. This summarizes the ways in which God can and cannot be known:

God Can Be Known	God Cannot Be Known
Partially	Completely
Indirectly	Directly
In His Creation (His effects)	In Himself (His essence)
As incarnate in Christ	As Spirit

While “no one has seen God [in His essence]” (John 1:18), nonetheless, His only begotten Son has revealed Him. Thus, Jesus could say, “He who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). What Moses saw was a “theophany,” the invisible God taking on a form His creation could see. Theophanies are mentioned many times throughout the Bible, such as Hebrews 11:27. So, in Exodus 33:9, the Lord talked with Moses through the cloudy pillar, the same way He talked to Moses through the burning bush. Both times Moses saw the theophany, yet never actually saw God’s person, for God is invisible. To understand this, imagine talking to someone in the dark. You can’t actually see the person

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you're talking to, but there is no doubt by the sound of the voice that you're talking to the person face-to-face.

One more thought regarding Joseph Smith 2:19. In the last half of this verse, Joseph writes that God said "they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof." Allow me to explain the unreliable nature of this quotation Joseph used from the Bible. This is a violation of Biblical hermeneutics by doing what is known as "selective citing," and "collapsing contexts."

To begin with, the first part of the quotation is a loose, somewhat distorted paraphrase of Isaiah 29:13, which, when read verbatim, says, "Wherefore the Lord said, forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men." The Lord is specifically speaking about only the Jews here. The Christian Church was *nonexistent* at that point in history. Furthermore, the last part of the quotation comes from 2 Timothy 3:5, which says word for word "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof, from such turn away." What Joseph is actually doing here is com-

binning two different verses from two different writers, with two different addressees, in two different contexts! The only thing that relates these two verses is the similarity of their wording.

The book of Isaiah is a revelation from God to the prophet Isaiah. Second Timothy is a letter from Paul the Apostle to Timothy, whom he had appointed senior pastor at the church in Ephesus, and in the third chapter he is telling the young Pastor Timothy of the kinds of conditions that will exist in the last days before the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. So, while it's an ingenious tactic, the idea Joseph had when he quoted the Bible in the last half of the 19th verse of Joseph Smith 2 falls apart when you break it down and truthfully analyze it for what it really says.

A person can make the Bible say just about anything they want it to when they ignore such key hermeneutical factors as grammatical principle, historical context, and harmony with other passages of Scripture, and carefully cull certain verses here and there to try to prove their own point. I believe it was the 19th century theologian R.A. Torrey who said it best: "When you take a text out of context, you end up with a pretext."

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Prophecy Perspectives

"But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." 2 Peter 1:20-21

When Does The Rapture Occur?

By Jonathan Wienke

Why Worry About The Time Of The Rapture?

The argument has been made that the whole idea of debating the time of the Rapture is a waste of time, and that Christians should just try to live together in love instead of arguing with each other about "minor" issues. This perspective has some merit—Christians should not spend the majority of their time arguing with each other. However, this debate does have value, for two reasons.

18. If we as Christians are to be watchful and vigilant concerning the return of Christ, we *must* be familiar with what the Scripture says about it. No one can look for something if they do not even know what they are looking for, or why they are looking for it!
19. This debate is useful to increase the Christian's knowledge of the Scripture, as long as it does not become obsessive or venomous. To fully understand the Scriptures relevant to the Rapture, we must be familiar with many aspects of the interpretation of prophecy, such as the nature of Antichrist, the various symbols used, etc. If we are not familiar with these things, then we are much more vulner-

able to cult groups that misuse prophecy, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, and "date setters" who try to predict the time of the return of Christ, and twist and misinterpret the Scriptures to do so.

What Is The Rapture?

"The Rapture" is a term coined by theologians to describe Christ's return to earth and His gathering those who believe in Him. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 describes this event:

For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, and with the voice of *the* archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus shall we ever be with the Lord.⁵

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All passages cited in this article are from the New American Standard Bible. Italics are the New American Standard Bible's, indicating the word was added by the translators to clarify the English text.

The Three Major Viewpoints

Theologians have devised three answers to the question of when the Rapture occurs: at the beginning of the Tribulation, at the middle of the Tribulation, and at the end of the Tribulation. Obviously, all three viewpoints cannot be correct. All three views agree on the following points:

20. The Rapture comes unexpectedly.
21. Jesus returns in the clouds.
22. The trumpet of God is sounded.
23. Angels are present.
24. Dead believers are resurrected.
25. The believers are gathered to Christ.

The Scriptural Evidence

To fully understand the information presented in this article, please read *all* of the passages of Scripture in the following list. To my knowledge, this is an exhaustive list of all Scripture passages that mention or describe Christ returning to earth, Christ gathering the believers, or Christ judging the wicked at the end of the Tribulation. They are listed in the order in which they appear in the Bible.

1. **Psalm 50:1–6.** This passage describes Christ returning, with fire and tempest around Him, and gathering “godly ones...who have made a covenant with” Him. This return occurs at the end of the Tribulation when God destroys the wicked people on the earth with fire.⁶
2. **Isaiah 2:5–21.** Note the similarities to Revelation 6:12–17 (the opening of the sixth seal) regarding earthquakes, the destruction of ships, the humbling of the people, and their vain attempts to hide in rocks and caves to escape the anger and judgment of God at the end of the Tribulation.
3. **Isaiah 13:1–16.** This prophecy has a dual fulfillment in the destruction of Babylon in 539 B.C. and in the return of Christ and the destruction of Rome at the end of the Tribulation.⁷ Note the similarities of verses 9–13 to Revelation 6:12–17 regarding disruptions in the heavens, earthquakes, and the humbling and destruction of the people associated with the opening of the sixth seal and the events that follow. “Mighty warriors” refers to the Medo–Persian army in the first fulfillment, and the angelic host accompanying Christ in the second.

⁶ ? See Joel 2:1–11, Matthew 13:24–50, and 2 Thessalonians 1:7–10.

⁷ ? Babylon is used as a symbol for Rome, the city of seven hills, (see Revelation 17:9), which is the headquarters of the corrupt religious and economic system in place during the Tribulation. The corrupt religious system is destroyed by Antichrist (Revelation 17:16–18; 18:1–10), probably at the midpoint of the Tribulation, when he assumes power and sets himself up as God in the Temple at Jerusalem. The city itself is destroyed by Christ shortly before the battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:19; 18:11–24).

4. **Joel 2:1–11.** This passage describes the return of Christ at the end of the Tribulation, with the emphasis on the angels who accompany Him, and the destruction they cause. Chapter 2, verse 10 again matches the events associated with the sixth seal.

5. **Joel 2:28–3:2, 3:9–21.** This passage describes the same events from the perspective of those living on the earth at the time. Chapter 2, verses 30–31 and chapter 3, verse 15 match the events of the sixth seal.

6. **Zephaniah.** This entire book describes the ending of Tribulation, the judgments accompanying it, and the effects it has on Jerusalem. The most notable sections are chapter 1, verses 14–18 and chapter 3, verse 8. The entire book is a description of the return of Christ and a promise to Israel that all who afflict her will be destroyed.

7. **Zechariah 12:1–14:15.** This passage describes the return of Jesus as Judge and Deliverer of Israel at the end of the Tribulation. Chapter 14, verses 5–7 match the earthquakes and cosmic disturbances associated with the sixth seal. A plague on those who fight against Jerusalem is also described.

8. **Matthew 24:3–44.** This passage gives an overview of the entire Tribulation period. Persecution will increase, but the Gospel will be preached to the entire world. After that, the “abomination of desolation” will be committed by Antichrist.⁸ Persecutions will increase to the point that if the time they are in effect was not limited, all believers would be killed. False Christs will arise, performing miracles and deceiving many. The sixth seal events will occur, and then Christ will send out His angels with a “great trumpet” and they will gather the believers. Notice the similarities between verse 31 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13–17 regarding clouds, the trumpet, angels, and the gathering of believers. Only one return is mentioned in this passage, and it occurs at the end of the Tribulation.

9. **Mark 13:4–37.** This passage parallels Matthew 24:3–44. The same main points are covered. Although the trumpet is not mentioned in the account, the clouds, the angels, and the gathering of believers are. Only one return is mentioned in this passage, and it occurs at the end of the Tribulation.

10. **Luke 17:20–37.** This passage is a condensed parallel of Matthew 24:3–44. It contains several parables describing the return of Christ.

11. **Luke 21:7–36.** This is Luke’s parallel of Matthew 25 and Mark 13. It only mentions Christ’s coming “in power and great glory.” Only one return is mentioned in this passage, and it occurs at the end of the Tribulation.

⁸ ? See Daniel 7:7–11, 19–26; 8:23–25; 9:26–27; 11:36–45; 12:5–12, 1 John 2:18–22; 4:1–3, and Revelation 11:3–13; 13:1–18; 14:9–12; 15:2–3; 16:2, 13–18; 17:3–18; 19:19–21 for more information regarding Antichrist and his activities.

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12. **John 14:3.** No time is specified, only that believers will be received to Christ.

13. **Acts 2:17–21.** This passage quotes Joel 2:28–32a.

14. **Romans 2:5–11.** This passage discusses the judgments that will be heaped on the wicked, and the rewards that will be given to the good at the day of wrath.

15. **Romans 8:18–22.** This passage describes the anxious anticipation believers and all of creation have for the return of Christ.

16. **1 Corinthians 15:50–55.** This passage describes the change from mortal to immortal that believers (some living, and some dead) undergo at the “last trumpet”. This trumpet is the same one mentioned in Matthew 24:31 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

17. **1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:4.** This passage gives the most detailed account of the Rapture. This account matches Matthew 24:31 regarding Christ’s coming in the clouds, the presence of angels, the trumpet, and the gathering of believers. The return described will surprise many people. However, believers need not be taken by surprise by this event.

18. **2 Thessalonians 1:6–2:12.** This passage occurs at the end of Tribulation. Note the similarities between chapter 1, verses 8–9, and Joel 2:3–9 regarding the judgment and annihilation of those who oppose Christ. The “day of the Lord” occurs after the “man of sin” is revealed, and a restraining influence, probably from the Holy Spirit, is released.

19. **Hebrews 11:39–40.** This passage indicates that Old Testament believers (“they”) will be resurrected with New Testament believers (“us”). For a more in-depth explanation of the phrase “made perfect”, see 1 Corinthians 15:50–56, which indicates that it refers to the resurrection of the believers.

20. **1 Peter 5:4.** “And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you^u will receive the unfading crown of glory.”

21. **1 John 3:2.** This verse states that “when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is.”

22. **Jude, verses 14–15.** In this passage, Enoch describes the judgment of the unbelievers at end of the Tribulation.

23. **Revelation 1:7.** This verse describes Christ coming in the clouds, in view of everyone, and causing great anguish.

24. **Revelation 14:14–20.** This passage appears to be a symbolic description of the gathering of the saints and the judgment of the wicked at the end of the Tribulation. The earth is reaped twice: the first time by

Jesus, who sits on a white cloud, and the second time by an angel, who puts the grapes he gathers in the winepress of God’s wrath.

25. **Revelation 16:15.** The most interesting thing about this verse is its context—it is a parenthesis located just after the sixth bowl judgment and immediately before the description of the gathering of the nations to Armageddon.

26. **Revelation 19:11–20:6.** This passage definitely takes place at the end of Tribulation. Note the similarities between verses 14–15 and Isaiah 13:3–5 and Joel 2:2–9.

The Pre-Tribulation View

26. There are two advents of the second coming of Christ; one to gather the saints, and one to establish Christ’s kingdom on earth.

27. The church will be delivered from the “hour of testing” (Revelation 3:10) which is the Tribulation.

28. Therefore, the church will be removed from the earth before the Tribulation.

Two Advents?

The foremost difficulty of the pre-Tribulation view is that it rests on the assumption that the second coming of Christ is divided into two advents: one to gather the saints at the beginning of the Tribulation, and one to judge the world at the end of the Tribulation.

Will The Church Escape The Tribulation?

The pre-Tribulation view holds that Revelation 3:10, which is part of the letter to the church of Philadelphia, promises that the church will not experience the Tribulation.

Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that *hour* which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth.¹⁰

There are three flaws in this premise. First, since Revelation 3:10 is an after-the-fact conditional statement, (“Because you have kept the word of my perseverance, I will also keep you...”) it only applies to those who meet the condition—believers who have kept the “word of [His] perseverance.” In order to understand what is being said here, the “perseverance” must be defined. This definition is found in Revelation 14:9–12:

And another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or upon his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God,

which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.” *Here is the perseverance of the saints* who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.¹¹

According to this passage, the perseverance of the saints is the steadfast refusal of the believer to worship the beast or his image, or to take the mark of his name. Therefore, the conditional statement in Revelation 3:10 can only apply to those believers who defy Antichrist and remain faithful to Jesus during the last 3½ years of the Tribulation, when Antichrist is in power. This refutes the idea that this verse promises that the church will not experience the Tribulation.

Second, the concept of being “kept from” a persecution or judgment does *not* mean one will be absent while it occurs. Forms of the Greek phrase τηρεω εκ (tae-reh-o ek) are translated “will keep you from” in Revelation 3:10, and “keep them from” in Jesus’ prayer for believers in John 17:15: “I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.” According to *Thayer’s Lexicon*, this phrase is best translated “by guarding to cause one to escape in safety out of.”¹² John 17:15 refers to believers being “kept from” the power and assaults of Satan, and Revelation 3:10 refers to believers being “kept from” the “hour of testing.” In John 17:15, Jesus specifies that He is not asking for believers to be taken out of the world to escape the attacks of Satan; instead, He is asking that they be kept in the world under the Father’s protection from the attacks of Satan. The most logical interpretation of Revelation 3:10 is that the believers to whom it is addressed will experience the “hour of testing” (the Tribulation), but God will protect those who remain faithful to Him.

Third, Revelation 3:10 is addressed to the church of Philadelphia, *not* to all of the churches. If one tries to claim that the letters to the churches apply equally to all believers, then one must accept that this excerpt from the letter to the church of Thyatira applies to all believers as well:

But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and teaches my bond-servants¹³ to go astray, so that they commit *acts of immorality* and eat things sacrificed to idols.

And I gave her time to repent; and she does not want to repent of her immorality. Behold, I will cast her upon a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds.¹⁴ And I will kill her children with pestilence;¹⁵ and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give unto you each according to your deeds.¹⁶

No one can keep the word of Jesus’ perseverance and be kept from the hour of testing, and also commit acts of immorality with Jezebel (which some believers will do) and be cast into great tribulation. Being kept from the hour of testing and being cast into great tribulation are mutually exclusive. Therefore, it cannot be said that all of the contents of all of the letters to the churches apply equally to all believers.

In order to properly interpret Revelation 3:10, four questions must be answered:

29. To whom is this verse addressed?
30. What is the “perseverance”?
31. How does one keep the “word of perseverance”?
32. What exactly does being “kept from the hour of testing” mean?

To be considered correct, the interpretation derived from the answers to these questions must not conflict with any other Scripture—the Bible does not contradict itself.

Is There A Secret Return?

A second platform of support for the premise that the second coming of Christ is divided into two advents is the premise that time of the gathering of believers to Christ is secret or hidden. Since Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32 describe the time of the return of Christ as being unknown, and 1 Thessalonians 5:2 and Revelation 16:15 describe it as coming like a “thief in the night”, it is assumed that Christ’s return to gather the believers cannot be the same as His return to judge the world at the end of the Tribulation, because the time of that return can be determined accurately once the abomination of desolation (the midpoint of the Tribulation) occurs. Anyone who follows current events at that time and matches them with prophecy will be able to determine that the return of Christ will occur 3½ years later.

The “secret return” theory has two flaws. First, in Matthew 24:36, Christ said that no one *knows* the day or the hour, not that no one *will ever know* the day or the hour. No one alive during the time of Christ knew when

11 ? Italics are mine. J.L.W.

12 ? Joseph Henry Thayer, D.D., *Thayer’s Greek–English Lexicon Of The New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), p. 677, Strong’s number 5083.

13 ? This refers to believers. See Romans 1:1, Galatians 1:10, Philippians 1:1, and Revelation 1:1.

14 ? Notice that the “great tribulation” can be avoided by those committing adultery with Jezebel if they repent. Those who repent come under the protection of Revelation 3:10, and are “kept from” the “great tribulation”.

15 ? Compare this with the judgment pronounced on the whore of Babylon in Revelation 18:2–8.

16 ? Revelation 2:20–23. Italics are the New American Standard Bible’s.

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the Tribulation would start, so no one alive at that time could know when it would end, either. This situation still exists today. There is no reputable Bible scholar today that claims to know the exact time when the Tribulation will start or end, or when Christ will return, because the abomination of desolation has not yet occurred. Many spiritual quacks have proposed dates for these events, but so far all predictions have failed.

Second, the verses used to support the “secret return” theory (Matthew 24:36, Mark 13:32, 1 Thessalonians 5:2, and Revelation 16:15) all describe the return of Christ at the *end* of the Tribulation.

Matthew 24:4–31 gives a chronological sequence of events, starting from the first warning signs that the end is near, to the abomination of desolation, to the final return of Christ “coming in the clouds with power and great glory.” Verses 29–31 are specific and distinct regarding the final sequence of events, which places the time of the return at the end of the Tribulation.

*Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all of the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”*¹⁷

Jesus devotes verses 15–21 to warning believers to flee when they hear of the “abomination of desolation”—Antichrist desecrating the Temple. He goes into great detail, emphasizing His point four times. He also devotes verses 23–26 to warning believers not to be deceived by false Christs claiming to have returned. He emphasizes this point four times as well. At the same time, He makes *no mention whatsoever* of His coming at all before the end of the Tribulation. If Jesus returns at the beginning of the Tribulation, why would He go into such great detail about His return at the end of the Tribulation, and say nothing about His return at the beginning of the Tribulation?

Some would answer that since Jesus had not been formally rejected by the Jews at this point in time, that Israel theoretically could have accepted Him as king. As a result, the church age and the Tribulation would have been skipped and the millennial kingdom would have started. However, no mention is made of a pre- or mid-Tribulation gathering of believers in 2 Thessalonians or Revelation. Both of these books describe the return of

Christ, the gathering of the believers, and the judgment of the wicked in detail. This explanation cannot apply to them, because both were written after Jesus’ rejection by Israel. Furthermore, this explanation contradicts Scripture.

Then after the sixty-two weeks Messiah the prince will be *cut off* and have *nothing*...¹⁸

But [Jesus] answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth...”¹⁹

And [Jesus] began to teach them that the Son of Man *must suffer many things and be rejected* by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.²⁰

“The Son of Man *must suffer many things, and be rejected* by the elders and the chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.”²¹

If Israel theoretically could have accepted Jesus as their king, then Daniel theoretically could have made a false prophecy, and Jesus made statements to His disciples that theoretically could have turned out to be lies. This is impossible. In addition, all of the Old Testament prophecies regarding the death of Jesus, the Tribulation, and the reign of Antichrist²² would be invalidated.

Matthew 24 continues Jesus’ discourse with the parable of the fig tree in verses 32–33, statements regarding the secrecy of the time of His return in verses 35, 42, and 44, and an analogy relating His return to the flood of Noah in verses 37–39. Notice that there is nothing in the context to indicate that Jesus has changed the subject from one return or advent to another.

Now learn the parable of the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; even so you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, *right* at the door. ... But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. For the coming²³ of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For in those days

18 ? Daniel 9:26a. Italics are mine. J.L.W.

19 ? Matthew 12:39–40.

20 ? Mark 8:31. Italics are mine. J.L.W.

21 ? Luke 9:22. Italics are mine. J.L.W.

22 ? Genesis 3:15, Psalm 50:1–6, Isaiah 2:5–21, Isaiah 13:1–16, Daniel 7:7–8, 19–20, 23–26, Daniel 9:26–27, Joel 2:1–11, Joel 2:28–3:21, Zephaniah, Zechariah 12–14, and many other passages.

which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. ...Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. ...For this reason you be ready too, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.²³

According to verses 37–39, in the same way the flood of Noah's time took the people of the earth by surprise, except for Noah and his family, the return of Christ will take the people of the world by surprise, except for believers. 2 Peter 2:5 calls Noah a "preacher of righteousness." If Noah preached righteousness while he was building the ark, and only he and his family were saved in the flood, then the people around him were warned that the flood was coming, but in their unbelief chose to ignore the warning. According to Jesus, the same situation will exist in the Tribulation. This is a result of the deluding influence discussed later.

1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:6 also clearly indicates that the return of Christ will surprise unbelievers, but not believers.

But we do not want you to be uninformed, bretheren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus shall we ever be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words. Now as to the times and the epochs, bretheren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But you, bretheren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you as a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night or of darkness;

so let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.²⁵

This passage indicates the return described occurs at the end of the Tribulation for three reasons. First, the destruction that the unbelievers "shall not escape" occurs at the end of the Tribulation. Second, the "day of the Lord" occurs at the end of the Tribulation. According to 2 Thessalonians 2:1–2, it occurs *after* the "man of lawlessness" (Antichrist) is revealed, which occurs at the middle of the Tribulation. Third, note the similarities between this account of the coming of Christ and the account in Matthew 24:29–31: Christ returns in the clouds, angels are present, the trumpet is sounded, and the saints are gathered to Christ. There is nothing in these passages to indicate that they do not describe the *same event*.

In addition, consider Revelation 16:15:

Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his garments, lest he walk about naked and men see his shame.

This verse indicates that those who stay awake will not be caught unaware by the coming. The context of this verse indicates that the coming described occurs at the end of the Tribulation, or at least after the sixth bowl judgment. Verses 12–16 and chapter 19, verses 17–21 depict the sequence of events leading up to the battle of Armageddon.²⁶ The verb phrase "I am coming" indicates that the return described has not yet happened at that time.

Matthew 24:36, Mark 13:32, 1 Thessalonians 5:2, and Revelation 16:15 pose a dilemma to the pre-Tribulation view. On one hand, if one claims that they apply to the return at the end of the Tribulation, then the pre-Tribulation view falls into self-contradiction. If the foundation for the belief in two separate advents is the assumption that one advent is secret and the other advent is open, then the secret advent cannot be at the end of the Tribulation, but must be at the beginning! On the other hand, if one claims that the events of these passages occur at the beginning of the Tribulation, then the pre-Tribulation view contradicts the passages cited earlier from Psalms, Isaiah, Joel, Zephaniah, Zechariah, Matthew, Mark, Luke, Acts, 2 Thessalonians, and Revelation. These "secret return" passages strengthen the argument that there is only one return at the end of the Tribulation, not that there are two returns, or one return divided into two advents.

Conclusion

To summarize, the pre-Tribulation view is badly flawed. The basis of the belief that believers will not experience the Tribulation is a highly questionable inter-

23 ? Notice that Jesus uses a singular word, "coming", not a plural word, such as "comings".

24 ? Italics are the New American Standard Bible's.

25 ? Italics are the New American Standard Bible's.

26 ? The intervening verses describe in detail the judgment of Babylon and the preparations being made for the marriage supper of the Lamb.

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pretation of Revelation 3:10. The passages that are used to support the idea that there are two advents of the return of Christ, one secret, and one open, suggest exactly the opposite when more closely examined. No Scripture ties any return of Christ to events occurring at any time other than the end of the Tribulation. No Scripture specifies or requires two returns, two advents, or one return spread out over a period of years. No Scripture uses a plural form of “return”, “coming”, “resurrection”, or “gathering” in reference to any return of Christ. Therefore, the entire pre-Tribulation argument fails for lack of evidence.

The Mid-Tribulation View

33. There are two advents of the second coming of Christ; one to gather the saints, and one to establish Christ’s kingdom on earth.
34. The Holy Spirit is the one exerting the restraining influence mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:7, which holds the Antichrist in check.
35. The removal of believers by way of the Rapture is the mechanism by which the Holy Spirit’s restraining influence is removed.
36. The Antichrist assumes power and commits the abomination of desolation at the midpoint of the Tribulation, according to Daniel 9:27.
37. Therefore, the Rapture takes place at the midpoint of the Tribulation.

The mid-Tribulation view primarily rests on the premise that Christ’s second coming is divided into two advents, and 2 Thessalonians 2:6–8:

And you know what restrains him [Antichrist] now, so that in his time he may be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way. And then that lawless one [Antichrist] will be revealed, whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming...²⁷

This view holds that “he who now restrains” is the Holy Spirit, and when the believers (whom the Holy Spirit indwells) are removed from the world, that the restraining influence will be removed and Antichrist will be revealed. Since Daniel 9:27 specifies that the Antichrist assumes power at the middle of the Tribulation, this would indicate that the believers are removed immediately before the middle of the Tribulation.

As discussed previously, the case for two advents of the return of Christ rests on very shaky ground. The premises that the Holy Spirit is “he who now restrains,” that the removal of believers requires the removal of the

restraining influence, and that the removal of the believers is the mechanism by which the restraining influence is removed are all speculation supported nowhere in Scripture. Furthermore, if Antichrist is “brought to an end *by the appearance of His coming*” (not comings—this is a singular word indicating *one* coming), then Jesus cannot come before the end of the Tribulation. Otherwise, Antichrist would be judged by God before he fulfilled the prophecies²⁸ concerning himself and his 3½ year reign.

The Deluding Influence

In 2 Thessalonians 2:10–12, Paul states that “because they [unbelievers] did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved,” that God sends a “deluding influence” to all the followers of Antichrist, so that “*all* may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.”²⁹ This influence is also mentioned in Matthew 24:23–24 and Mark 13:21–22, which say that false Christs will appear and perform miracles that would, if it was possible, deceive even the believers. It is further described in Revelation 13:3–4, 8:

And I saw one of his [Antichrist’s] heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And *the whole world* was amazed and followed after the beast; and they worshipped the dragon [Satan], because he gave his authority to the beast [Antichrist]; and they worshipped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?”...*And all who dwell on the earth will worship him*, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.³⁰

This deluding influence will prevent people from being saved during Antichrist’s reign, which begins at the midpoint of the Tribulation. However, Matthew 24:15–31, Mark 13:14–27, Luke 21:20–28, and Revelation 20:4–6 indicate that believers will be persecuted and killed after Antichrist assumes power, during the last half of the Tribulation. If all believers are removed at the middle of the Tribulation, and from then on no one is saved, there cannot be any believers alive during the last half of the Tribulation.

The “Rescue”

Another passage sometimes used to support the mid-Tribulation view is Daniel 12:1–2.

Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands *guard* over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress

27 ?

Italics are the New American Standard Bible’s.

28 ?

See Daniel 7–8 and Revelation 13.

29 ?

Italics are mine. J.L.W.

30 ?

Italics are mine. J.L.W.

such as has never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.³¹

Compare this account of the rescue of Israel to the events described in Revelation 12. The highlights are found in verses 6–9, and verses 13–14:

And she gave birth to a son, a male *child*, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and His throne.³² And the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she might be nourished for one thousand two hundred sixty days.³³

And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. And the dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place for them in heaven.

...And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who had given birth to the male *child*. And the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, in order that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for time, times, and half a time,³⁴ from the presence of the serpent. And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth. And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.³⁵

Chapter 13 continues this narrative with a description of the advent of Antichrist and his lieutenant, the false prophet.³⁶

A strong case can be made that Daniel 12:1–2 describes the same events as Revelation 12. First, in all the passages cited at the beginning of this article, the return of Christ is called a coming, return, or resurrection, but never a rescue. Second, the “rescue” is described as oc-

curing at the “time of distress,”³⁷ which, if the rescue is assumed to be a gathering of believers, conflicts with Psalm 50:1–6, which states the gathering occurs when Christ returns with fire devouring before Him and tempest around Him, which only happens at the end of the Tribulation. However, if the rescue is interpreted to be the deliverance of Revelation 12, there is no conflict.

In Daniel 12:1, Michael arises. In Revelation 12:7–9, Michael and his angels battle Satan and his angels, and evict them from heaven. In Daniel 12:1, the people of Israel are rescued. In Revelation 12:13–17, the nation of Israel is rescued from a flood. In Daniel 12:1, the rescue occurs at the time of distress. In Revelation 12:17–13:2, the Antichrist is revealed, which marks the beginning of the 3½ year period of great tribulation.

Third, prophetic Scripture commonly lists a series of events without specifying the exact time interval between them. According to Revelation 20:1–7, there is a 1000 year interval between the resurrection of the believers at the end of the Tribulation and the resurrection of the unbelievers at the Great White Throne judgment. It is not impossible that there is a 3½ year interval between the rescue of Israel in Daniel 12:1 and the awakening of believers in Daniel 12:2.

Conclusion

In summary, the mid-Tribulation view has all of the weaknesses of the pre-Tribulation view, plus the additional baggage of the unsupported assumptions regarding the restraining influence and the difficulty with the deluding influence.

The Post-Tribulation View

38. There is no passage that states that the gathering of believers is split into two parts, or takes place over a period of time.
39. There are eighteen passages that describe Christ’s return at the end of the Tribulation, five of which specify that a gathering and/or resurrection of believers occurs.
40. The descriptions given of Christ’s return at the end of the Tribulation match in detail the passages universally regarded as describing the Rapture that have no time information.
41. Therefore, there is no reason to believe in any coming or return of Christ, or gathering or resurrection of believers, other than those which occur at the end of the Tribulation.

The post-Tribulation view is strongly supported by Scripture in many ways. Eighteen of the 25 passages listed earlier contain references to events or other information indicating that they occur at the end of the Tribulation. Three of the passages (Luke 17:20–37, Romans 2:5–11, and 1 Corinthians 15:50–55) have no direct time information, but match one or more of the eighteen

31 ? Italics are the New American Standard Bible’s.
 32 ? “She” is the nation of Israel, and the son is Jesus Christ.
 33 ? 3 ½ years.
 34 ? 3 ½ years.
 35 ? Italics are the New American Standard Bible’s.
 36 ? Daniel 7–8 describes this, as well as other beasts representing Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece.

37 ? See Matthew 24:15–22, especially verse 21.

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passages that do. The five remaining passages (John 14:3, Romans 8:18–22, Hebrews 11:39–40, 1 Peter 5:4, and 1 John 3:2) have no time-specific information.

One Return

Of the eighteen passages specifically referring to a post-Tribulation return, five mention a gathering or resurrection of saints from the earth: Psalm 50:5, Matthew 24:30–31, Mark 13:26–27, 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17, and 2 Thessalonians 1:10. There is nothing to indicate that these passages do not describe the same return, resurrection, and judgment mentioned in Luke 17:20–37, John 14:3, Romans 2:5–11, Romans 8:18–22, 1 Corinthians 15:50–55, Hebrews 11:39–40, 1 Peter 5:4, and 1 John 3:2. They share similar characteristics, and there are no points of conflict between them.

The argument for only one return at the end of the Tribulation is strengthened further by the contextual cues in 2 Thessalonians 1:6–2:4, which indicate that the terms “coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” and “our gathering together to Him” are synonymous with “the day of the Lord.”

For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and *to give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed. ...Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering to Him, that you may not quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy³⁸ comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god and object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. ...And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is al-

ready at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way. And then that lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; *that is*, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.³⁹

The day of the Lord, according to numerous Old and New Testament passages previously mentioned, occurs at the end of the Tribulation. Notice that the singular words “coming” and “gathering” are used instead of the plural “comings” or “gatherings”, which indicate that only one “coming” and only one “gathering” occurs. The context does not support the assertion that the “coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,” the “gathering together unto Him,” and the “day of Christ” are separate entities.

Scripture frequently uses several descriptive phrases in a passage that describe the same thing, which results in a clearer picture of what is being described. For example, in this passage references are made to “the man of lawlessness,” “the son of destruction,” “that lawless one,” and “the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan,” all of which refer to Antichrist, not separate evil persons.

All of the references to the return of Christ in this passage occur at the end of the Tribulation. No other coming is mentioned. Paul would not go out of his way to make a distinction between a pre- or mid-Tribulation “gathering together to Him” and the “day of the Lord,” and then talk only about Antichrist and the “day of the Lord” and completely ignore the pre- or mid-Tribulation “gathering together to Him”! It is therefore reasonable to believe that the “coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,” the “gathering together to Him,” and the “day of the Lord” are not separate entities, but three perspectives or aspects of one event occurring at the end of the Tribulation.

The First Resurrection

Revelation 20:4–6 clearly indicates that believers martyred during the latter half of the Tribulation by Antichrist will be included in the first resurrection.

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, *and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands*; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. ...This is the *first resurrection*. Blessed and holy is he

³⁸ ? According to *Thayer's Lexicon*, (p. 67, Strong's number 646) the Greek word ἀποστασία (a-po-sta-see-uh) can be translated “apostasy”, “defection”, or “a falling away”. A “defection” cannot be construed to be a reference to the Rapture.

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Italics are the New American Standard Bible's.

that hath part in the *first resurrection*: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.⁴⁰

There are two possible interpretations of the word “first”, first in chronological order, or first in greatness, importance or prestige. If the pre-Tribulation view is correct, then all the believers who have died in the thousands of years before the Rapture will be resurrected at the beginning of the Tribulation. Therefore, the Tribulation-era martyrs would have to have their resurrection at the end of the Tribulation. This contradicts the chronological interpretation of “first”, because it would be the second resurrection of believers.

Also, the resurrection described in this passage would be minuscule in size compared to the one at the beginning or middle of the Tribulation, since it would only resurrect 7 or 3½ years worth of dead believers compared to perhaps 7,000 years worth of dead believers in the pre-Tribulation resurrection. The idea that this resurrection of believers is the greatest or most prestigious, in the total absence of Scripture comparing the greatness, glory, or prestige of this resurrection to other resurrections involving believers contradicts the second interpretation of “first”.

Unbelievers experience two deaths—physical “first” death, and spiritual “second” death after the Great White Throne judgment.⁴¹ The pre-Tribulation and mid-Tribulation views propose that like physical death, believers can experience the “first resurrection” at different times. However, since there is no Scripture that supports this premise, it cannot be considered a basis of proof for anything.

“Made Perfect” Together

According to Psalm 50:3–5, the Old Testament believers will be gathered at the end of the Tribulation.

May our God come and not keep silence; fire devours before Him, and it is very tempestuous around Him. He summons the heavens above, and the earth, to judge His people: “Gather My godly ones to Me, those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.”

The fire and tumult mentioned here is described in greater detail in Joel 2:1–11 and 2 Thessalonians 1:6–10, which definitely places the time of the events recorded here at the end of the Tribulation. The “godly ones” are definitely Old Testament believers, and possibly New Testament believers as well. Now consider Hebrews 11:39–40:

And all these,⁴² having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was

promised, because God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

We see here that the Old Testament believers will not be “made perfect” separately from the New Testament believers. 1 Corinthians 15:50–52 describes the process of being made perfect:

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

This passage refers to the process of being resurrected, and exchanging the mortal, imperfect bodies we now possess for immortal and perfect bodies. If the Old Testament believers are “made perfect” at the end of the Tribulation, and the New Testament believers are “made perfect” with them, then the New Testament believers must be “made perfect” at the end of the Tribulation as well.

The “Last Trumpet”

In addition, 1 Corinthians 15:50–52 states that the Rapture occurs at the “last trumpet.” According to Matthew 24:31, the return of Christ at the end of the Tribulation is accompanied by a “great trumpet.” If the Rapture occurs at any time other than the end of the Tribulation, its trumpet cannot be the “last trumpet,” because there is still one more trumpet to come! Accounting for this presents a formidable challenge for the pre- and mid-Tribulation views.

The Millennial Kingdom

A question the post-Tribulation view must answer is the origin of the inhabitants of the millennial kingdom. If all the unbelievers are destroyed, and all the believers are raptured at the same time, then the earth would have no inhabitants. Part of the answer can be found in Joel 2:30–32:

And I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, blood, fire, and columns of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be delivered; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem will be those who escape, as the Lord has said, even among the survivors whom the Lord calls.

⁴⁰ ? Italics are mine. J.L.W.

⁴¹ ? This judgment is described in Revelation 20:11–15.

⁴² ? Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the other Old Testament saints mentioned earlier in this chapter.

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Notice that the “survivors” are “on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem,” not “caught up together with them in the clouds.” These people have not been raptured. Zechariah 14:16–19 accounts for the presence of Gentiles:

Then it will come about that any who are left of the nations that went up against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths. And it will be that whichever of the families of the earth does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain on them. And if the family of Egypt does not go up or enter, then no *rain will fall* on them; it will be the plague with which the Lord smites the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths. This will be the punishment of Egypt, and of all the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths.⁴³

The Jews are accounted for in Zechariah 13:8:

“And it will come about in all the land,” declares the Lord, “That two parts in it will be cut off *and* perish; but the third part will be left in it. And I will bring the third part through the fire, refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on my name, and I will answer them; I will say, ‘They are my people,’ and they will say, ‘The Lord is my God.’”⁴⁴

These passages indicate that there will be Jews and Gentiles who physically survive the judgments accompanying Christ’s return at the end of the Tribulation and who are allowed to enter the millennial kingdom. The reason why the people survive may not be clear, but the fact that they survive is. Children who reach the age of accountability during the reign of Antichrist while the deluding influence is in effect will probably make up the majority of the Gentiles surviving the Tribulation.

Conclusion

In summary, the return of Christ at the end of the Tribulation meets all the criteria of the Rapture, as follows:

42. It comes unexpectedly, at least to unbelievers, and believers who are not vigilantly looking for it. (Matthew 24:44, Mark 13:36, 1 Thessalonians 5:2, Revelation 16:15)
43. Jesus returns in the clouds. (Matthew 24:30, Mark 13:26, 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17, Revelation 1:7)

44. A trumpet is sounded. (Joel 2:1, Matthew 24:31, 1 Corinthians 15:52, 1 Thessalonians 4:16)
45. Angels are present. (Joel 2:3–10, Matthew 24:31, Mark 13:27, and 2 Thessalonians 1:7–8; 2:7–10)
46. The believers are gathered to Christ. (Psalm 50:3–5, Matthew 24:31, Mark 13:27, 1 Corinthians 15:52, 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17, 2 Thessalonians 1:10)

The post-Tribulation position is the most Scripturally supported of the three views, for the following reasons:

47. The return of Christ at the end of the Tribulation satisfies all of the requirements of the Rapture.
48. No Scripture requires or specifies a return of Christ at any time other than the end of the Tribulation.
49. No Scripture requires or specifies two advents or two returns of Christ, or one return occurring over a period of time.
50. No Scripture requires or specifies two gatherings of believers or two resurrections of believers.
51. The conclusion that Christ only returns one time at the end of the Tribulation does not contradict any Scripture.

Search the Scriptures to see if what is said here is true. If Christians will experience the Tribulation, we must be vigilant and prepare ourselves for the things to come, so that we are not taken by surprise. Even if you do not come to the same conclusions I have, you will still benefit from the time spent in the Word, for “all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16–17)

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⁴³ ? Italics are the New American Standard Bible’s.
⁴⁴ ? Italics are the New American Standard Bible’s.

Science, Origins, And Scripture

“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?...On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” Job 38:4–7

Evolution Is Religion, Not Science

By Dr. Henry M. Morris, Ph.D.⁴⁵

Evolutionists often insist that evolution is a proved fact of science, providing the very framework of scientific interpretation, especially in the biological sciences. This of course, is nothing but wishful thinking. Evolution is not even a scientific hypothesis, since there is no conceivable way in which it can be tested.

The Religious Essence Of Evolutionism

As a matter of fact, many leading evolutionists have recognized the essentially religious character of evolutionism. Even though they themselves believe evolution to be true, they acknowledge the fact that they believe it! Science, however, is not supposed to be something one believes. Science is knowledge—that which can be demonstrated and observed and repeated.

Evolution cannot be proved, or even tested; it can only be believed. For example, two leading evolutionary biologists have described modern neo-Darwinism as “part of an evolutionary dogma accepted by most of us as part of our training.” A prominent British biologist, a Fellow of the Royal Society, in the Introduction to the 1971 edition of Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* said that “belief in the theory of evolution” was “exactly parallel to belief in special creation,” with evolution merely “a satisfactory faith on which to base our interpretation of nature.” G.W. Harper calls it a “metaphysical belief.” Ernst Mayr, the outstanding Harvard evolutionary biologist, calls evolution “man’s world view today.” Sir Julian Huxley, probably the outstanding evolutionist of the twentieth century saw “evolution as a universal and all-pervading process and, in fact, nothing less than “the whole of reality.”

A leading evolutionary geneticist of the present day, writing an obituary for Theodosius Dobzhansky, who himself was probably the nation’s leading evolutionist at the time of his death in 1975, says that Dobzhansky’s view of evolution followed that of the notorious Jesuit priest, de Chardin. The place of biological evolution in human thought was, according to Dobzhansky, best expressed in a passage that he often quoted from Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: “[Evolution] is a general postulate to which all theories, all hypotheses, all systems must henceforward bow and which they must satisfy in order to be thinkable and true. Evolution is a light which illuminates all facts, a trajectory which all lines of thought must follow.”

The British physicist, H.S. Lipson, has reached the following conclusion: “In fact, evolution became in a sense a scientific religion; almost all scientists have ac-

cepted it and many are prepared to ‘bend’ their observations to fit in with it.” The man whom Dobzhansky called “France’s leading zoologist,” although himself an evolutionist, said that scientists should “destroy the myth of evolution” as a simple phenomenon which is “unfolding before us.” Dr. Colin Patterson, Senior Paleontologist at the British Museum of Natural History, by any accounting one of the world’s top evolutionists today, has recently called evolution “positively anti-knowledge,” saying that “all my life I had been duped into taking evolutionism as revealed truth.” In another address he called evolution “story telling.”

All of the above-cited authorities are (or were) among the world’s foremost authorities on evolutionism. Note again the terms which they use in describing evolution.

- Evolutionary dogma
- A scientific religion
- A satisfactory faith
- The myth of evolution
- Man’s world view
- Anti-knowledge
- All-pervading process
- Revealed
- The whole of reality
- An illuminating light
- Metaphysical belief
- Story-telling

Charles Darwin himself called evolution “this grand view of life.” Now such grandiloquent terms as these are not scientific terms! One does not call the law of gravity, for example, “a satisfactory faith.” Evolution’s very comprehensiveness makes it impossible even to test scientifically. As Ehrlich and Birch have said: “Every conceivable observation can be fitted into it. No one can think of ways in which to test it.”

Religions Based On Evolution

In view of the fundamentally religious nature of evolution, it is not surprising to find that most of the world religions are themselves based on evolution. It is certainly unfitting for educators to object to teaching scientific creationism in public schools on the ground that it supports Biblical Christianity when the existing pervasive teaching of evolution is supporting a host of other religions and philosophies.

The concept of evolution did not originate with Charles Darwin. It has been the essential ingredient of all pagan religions and philosophies from time immemorial (e.g., atomism, pantheism, stoicism, gnosticism and all other humanistic and polytheistic systems). All

⁴⁵ ? Dr. Morris is one of the founders of the **Institute For Creation Research**, one of the largest organizations in the world devoted to the advancement of creation science.

beliefs which assume the ultimacy of the space/time/matter universe, presupposing that the universe has existed from eternity, are fundamentally evolutionary systems. The cosmos, with its innate laws and forces, is the only ultimate reality. Depending on the sophistication of the system, the forces of the universe may be personified as gods and goddesses who organized the eternal chaotic cosmos into its present form (as in ancient Babylonian and Egyptian religions), or else may themselves be invested with organizing capabilities (as in modern scientific evolutionism).

In all such cases, these are merely different varieties of the fundamental evolutionist world view, the essential feature of which is the denial that there is one true God and Creator of all things. In this perspective, it becomes obvious that most of the great world religions—Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Hinduism, Animism, etc. are based on evolution. Creationism is the basis of such religious systems as Orthodox Judaism, Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism, as well as most modern pseudo-Christian cults. All of this points up the absurdity of banning creationist teaching from the schools on the basis that it is religious. The schools are already saturated with the teaching of religion in the guise of evolutionary “science”.

In the modern school, of course, this teaching mostly takes the form of secular humanism, which its own proponents claim to be a “non-theistic religion”. It should also be recalled that such philosophies as communism, fascism, socialism, nazism, and anarchism have been claimed by their founders and promoters to be based on what they regard as scientific evolutionism. If creation is excluded from the schools because it is compatible with Christian “fundamentalism”, should not evolution also be banned since it is the basis of communism and nazism?

The Scientific Irrelevance Of Evolution

Some people have deplored attacks on the theory of evolution on the ground that this is attacking science itself. In a recent debate, the evolutionist whom the writer debated did not attempt to give any scientific evidences for evolution, electing instead to spend his time defending such scientific concepts as atomic theory, relativity, gravity, quantum theory and science in general, stating that attacking evolution was tantamount to attacking science! The fact is, however, that the elimination of evolutionary interpretations from science would hardly be noticed at all, in terms of real scientific understanding and accomplishment. G.W. Harper comments on this subject as follows:

“It is frequently claimed that Darwinism is central to modern biology. On the contrary, if all references to Darwinism suddenly disap-

peared, biology would remain substantially unchanged. It would merely have lost a little color. Grandiose doctrines in science are like some occupants of high office; they sound very important but have in fact been promoted to a position of ineffectuality.”

The scientific irrelevance of evolutionism has been strikingly (but, no doubt, inadvertently) illustrated in a recent issue of *Science News*. This widely read and highly regarded weekly scientific journal was commemorating its sixtieth anniversary, and this included a listing of what it called the “scientific highlights” of the past sixty years. Of the sixty important scientific discoveries and accomplishments which were chosen, only six could be regarded as related in any way to evolutionist thought. These six were as follows:

- 1927. Discovery that radiation increases mutation rates in fruit flies.
- 1943. Demonstration that nucleic acids carry genetic information.
- 1948. Enunciation of the “big bang” cosmology.
- 1953. Discovery of the “double helix” structure of DNA.
- 1961. First step taken in cracking the genetic code.
- 1973. Development of procedures for producing recombinant DNA molecules.

Four of these six highlights are related to the structure and function of DNA. Even though evolutionists have supposed that these concepts somehow correlate with evolution, the fact is that the remarkable DNA molecule provides strong evidence of original creation (since it is far too complex to have arisen by chance) and of conservation of that creation (since the genetic code acts to guarantee reproduction of the same kind, not evolution of new kinds). One of the two other highlights showed how to increase mutations, but, since all known true mutations are harmful, this contributed nothing whatever to the understanding of evolution. One, (the “big bang” concept) was indeed an evolutionary idea, but it is still an idea which has never been proved, and today is increasingly being recognized as incompatible with basic physical laws. Consequently, it is fair to conclude that no truly significant accomplishment of modern science either depends on evolution or supports evolution!

There would certainly be no detriment to real scientific learning if creation was included in school curricula. It would, on the other hand, prove a detriment to the pervasive religion of atheistic humanism which now controls our schools.