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Magazine

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**Solomon's Temple to Christ's
death and resurrection**

968 /967 BC to 33 AD

2025 Summer Issue

**Between the Jewish-Roman
War and the Crusades**

**The First Thousand Years of the
New Covenant**

2025 Fall Issue

The Transition Generation

ca. AD 30-70

This Issue

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AD 73-132

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The Millennium — When Was It?



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General Editor
Adam Maarschalk

Copy Editor
Kayla F. Martin

Design & Layout
Brian L. Martin
Kayla F. Martin

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How to contact us:
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Editor's Note...

AT THE TIME OF this issue's publication, it's just about the shortest day of the year in terms of daylight. Although it's good "to be content in whatever circumstances" (Philippians 4:11), I do prefer the longer daylight hours that we enjoy during the middle of the year. In my work as an editor, I have clients who live in various locations around the United States (and beyond). Recently, I was surprised to hear from one person during our online meeting that it was already nearly dark around 4:45 pm where he was in California. That was about two weeks before Thanksgiving. That is simply too early! At the time, where I live in Spartanburg, South Carolina, the sun was setting closer to 6 pm (which is early enough). Someone might push back and say, "Who wants it to still be light outside at 8:30 pm on Christmas Eve?" Well, I won't speak for everyone, but I wouldn't mind that at all.

Of course, sunset times depend on a person's location within their time zone. My brother and his family live in coastal North Carolina, and they experience an earlier sunset than we do here in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. This is because they're about 275 miles east of us in the same time zone. In any case, despite the "restricted hours" at this time of the year, I'm glad that the sun shines a lot here in the Carolinas.

Thankfully, there are no dark hours or night in the city of God, New Jerusalem. God's light constantly illuminates this city (Revelation 22:5). This is the topic covered by first-time contributor Rebekah Patel. Rebekah is a worship leader and elder at Sound of Heaven (SOH) Church in Deer Park, New York (Long Island). SOH Church is pastored by Johnny Ova, who contributed an article a year ago about Church Fathers and other leaders who held and taught preterist beliefs. In her article for this issue, Rebekah writes about what the book of Revelation, chapter 21 in particular, reveals about how powerful we are in Christ, equipped with His living water, light, glory, promises, and more.

In the Summer 2025 issue, Patricia Watkins shared her view that the 1000 years (Millennium) of Revelation 20 covered a literal 1000-year time period from 968/967 BC to AD 33. In the Fall 2025 issue, Daniel Morais shared his view that the Millennium covered a different literal 1000-year time period, from AD 71 to AD 1071. In this issue, Robert Cruickshank, Jr. shares his view that the Millennium covered the time period from AD 26 to AD 66. Readers will likely be familiar with Robert's writings, and, as is often the case, this article draws from and cites plenty of scholarly sources. We trust that our readers are finding this to be a thought-provoking series on a passage that has been the basis of major eschatological systems (e.g., Classical Premillennialism, Dispensational Premillennialism, Amillennialism, Postmillennialism) for centuries. In the next issue, I plan to present a fourth distinct preterist view on the Millennium.

Also in this issue, Ed Stevens shares his view on how the Rapture took place in the first century without anyone noticing or reporting on it. Closing out this issue, T. J. Smith continues his series on the parables of Jesus with an article about the Parable of the Strong Man in Mark 3. Among other things, T. J. relates this parable to the Kingdom that was being established by Jesus.

Blessings in Christ,

Adam Maarschalk

Breaking Down the Dividing Wall

by Brian L. Martin

For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. (Eph 2:14-16)

I've never been one to follow politics very closely, not having much of a stomach for the infighting and bickering, and having developed a rather jaundiced perspective that they are all corrupt. I do my civic and Christian duty to vote but usually feel that I am merely voting for the lesser of two evils.

Even with this confessed ignorance of much of what transpires in the political world, I can't help but feel that despite terms like "landslide" and "mandate" being applied to the 2024 election, the country seems more divided than ever. Gone is any semblance of "working across the aisle." Conservatives and Liberals hold their individual press conferences to rail against each other and only sit across the aisle from one another if they must.

Lest you begin to think that this article is a political op-ed, I assure you that it is not. Rather, I see parallels between our present political climate and that of Jesus' day, and I believe there is a lesson to be learned.

During the first century, when Israel was subjugated to Rome, there were at least two schools of thought as to how to best preserve the nation and Mosaic Law; try to get along with Rome and avoid rocking the boat or completely overthrow Roman rule and re-establish Israel as a sovereign nation.

The first group is exemplified in the following passage:

So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish." (John 11:47-50)

The second group consisted of what was loosely referred to as the zealots, of whom Josephus laid most of the blame for the Jewish / Roman War.

Each of these groups felt that they were the true defenders of Israel and the Law of Moses, just as today both liberals and conservatives claim to be lovers America and defenders of the constitution (I'll leave it to the reader to associate the liberals or conservatives with either the "let's get along" rulers or the zealots).

The unrest and turmoil that was rampant during Christ's lifetime and the subsequent decades would not have been resolved by the appointment of either a Zealot or a Roman-sympathizing High Priest (or King). Likewise, the division in our nation will not be resolved by the election of a conservative or liberal administration.

During the early first century the political corruption was deemed to be so bad that one group of Israelites, the Essenes, packed their bags and headed for the hills. Yet there was at least one instance in Scripture in which a Roman sympathizer and zealot came together for a common cause.

Matthew, the disciple of Jesus, was a tax collector (Matt 9:9-13), and as such was viewed by those who viewed themselves as more loyal to Israel as having "sold out" to the Romans. He was a Jew gathering taxes from his fellow countrymen for the Romans. Even the term "tax collector" was used in a pejorative manner ("why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?").

On the other end of the spectrum was Simon the Zealot. We don't know much about this Simon, but being called "the Zealot" surely seems to associate him with those Israelites advocating overthrowing Roman rule.

Both disciples were members of The Twelve. They weren't fringe members of the crowd who followed Jesus for a show of miracles and a free lunch. Jesus chose them to be among His Twelve!

The person of Jesus and the gospel of the Kingdom united these two individuals from opposite ends of the political spectrum. And herein, I believe, is the only credible and lasting resolution to the present-day division in our country and our world. It's not the next administration or charismatic leader; it's the person of Jesus Christ and the uniting message of his Kingdom.

Given the severity of the division in our nation and world, the task seems daunting. Yet we are not individually called to take on the entire task, but to simply do what we can. No individual can elect a politician, yet we all know that "Your Vote Counts." Likewise, no individual or church can heal all the division in the world, but your participation counts.

Yes, we should prayerfully exercise our civic rights to vote for the godliest leadership available. But the Great Commission is not to go into all the world and make conservatives (or liberals) of all nations, but disciples of Jesus. Our primary focus is not on transferring Democrats to the Republican Party (or vice versa), but to transfer people from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light (Col 1:12-13). †

“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand” (Rev 20:1)

REVELATION 20 OPENS WITH an angel coming down (*katabainō*) from heaven (*Ouranos*). In his commentary on Revelation, David Chilton identifies the angel as Jesus,¹ and rightly so. In John’s Gospel, this same language is used—as Jesus describes Himself as the one “who descended (*katabainō*) from heaven (*Ouranos*)” (John 3:13). The reason Jesus descended from heaven and came down into this world was to “destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). With **the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand**, He prepares to do just that. Through vivid imagery and apocalyptic symbolism, Revelation 20:1-10 tells the story of how this was accomplished.

“And he took hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years” (Rev 20:2).

The *angel* (Jesus) takes **hold of the dragon**, who is identified as **the serpent of old, the devil and Satan**. John’s clarity here leaves no doubt as to who and what this **dragon** is. He is none other than the original divine rebel from the garden (Gen 3:1, 14-15). The *angel* (Jesus) puts the **key** and **chain** that He is holding to good use, as this ancient dragon is then **bound** (*deō*) by Him. This is the same root word used for Jesus *binding* the strongman in Matthew 12:29 and Mark 3:27.

Luke tells the same story, only he doesn’t use the word *bound*. Instead, he speaks of the strongman being *attacked* and *overpowered* (Luke 21:22). Nonetheless, this comports well with John’s imagery of Jesus *seizing* and *taking hold* of the dragon. John, however, leaves this account out of his Gospel completely. Instead, he saves his version of Satan being *overpowered* and *bound* for the book of Revelation. Specifically, he saves it for chapter 20.

The duration of the dragon’s binding is said to be **a thousand years**. The period of *a thousand years*, therefore, begins with Satan’s binding. And as we will see, it ends with his release to initiate “the war” (Rev 20:8). This would be the same “war” as referenced in Revelation 16:14 and 19:9, which is the Roman-Jewish War (AD 66-73).² The *thousand years*, consequently, is *hyperbole* for the 40-year period between Jesus binding the strongman (AD 26) and the outbreak of the Roman-Jewish War (AD 66).

Using numbers in a hyperbolic fashion like this is nothing unusual for John. After all, he speaks of 200 million horsemen in Revelation 9:16, yet there are only 58 million horses in the

world. In Revelation 20 itself, we’re told of an army whose “number” is “like the sand of the seashore” (Rev 20:8). Taken literally, that would be 10.8 trillion—the number of grains of sand on a typical beach. There has never been, nor will there ever be, an army this large.

In each of these cases, the numbers are exaggerated for emphasis. In reality, the numbers are necessarily smaller. In this sense, John is merely following a long biblical tradition of employing hyperbolic numbers for rhetorical effect.

The Old Testament is filled with examples of this literary device. In Chronicles 28:6, Pekah kills 120,000 in one day for following Ahaz in forsaking the Lord. To get some perspective on this, it took an atomic bomb to kill 80,000 people in one day in Nagasaki. During the temple’s dedication, Solomon sacrificed 142,000 animals in a single day (1 Kgs 8:62-63; 2 Chr 7:5). The space needed to contain these animals would equal over 100 football fields.³ 1 Kings 20:29 mentions a wall long enough to fall on 27,000 enemies of Israel at once. Those who’ve done the math here point out that we’re looking at a structure comparable to The Great Wall of China.⁴ And by doing the math, it’s evident that we’re looking at hyperbolic numbers.

Clearly, the biblical writers did not intend their audience to understand any of these numbers literally, and literate readers of the time would have understood this. In fact, they would have expected it.⁵ The scriptural authors are simply employing a common rhetorical device of the time, which was widely attested to in the surrounding literature. In these writings, hyperbolic numbers magnify the king, the people, and the deity of the culture in view. Hence, it is “no heresy or leap of logic,” writes Brian Godawa, “to conclude that Hebrew scribes would write in a similar genre as those around them when they wanted to glorify their God and their king in comparison.”⁶

It is also no heresy or leap of logic to conclude that John is doing the same thing in the book of Revelation. In fact, John seems to make full use of this literary tool as Christ’s “thousand years” (Rev 20:4) is contrasted with Satan’s “short time” (Rev 20:3). The “thousand years” is simply a hyperbolic number meant to accentuate the magnitude of all that was accomplished during the 40-year period in which Satan was bound (AD 26-66).

“And he threw him into the abyss and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time” (Rev 20:3).

Robert E. Cruickshank, Jr.

Robert is a member of the extended family of Berean Bible Church (VA) and a conference speaker and blogger at: <https://burrosofBerea.com/>

Recjr2777@gmail.com



" (Rev 20:1 NASB).

While the term **abyss** (ἄβυσσος <abussos>) is used sparsely in the New Testament, it's used 36 times in 34 verses in the Septuagint (LXX).⁷ Although we might be tempted to assume that the *abyss* refers to the underworld, the word is never used to translate the Hebrew term "Sheol."⁸ According to Beale and McDonough, "The abyss in the LXX is always related to water, whether it be the chaotic waters—the 'primeval deep'—of the creation account (Gen 1:2; Ps 103:6 [104:6 ET]), or the waters of the sea (Isa 63:13), or the waters below the earth (Ezek 31:15)."⁹

With that said, the image of a **dragon** (Rev 20:2) being thrown into the **abyss** (Rev 20:3) is meant to telegraph the Exodus theme (a 40-year period). John introduces the dragon imagery in chapter 12, where Satan is called "the great dragon" (Rev 12:9). This exact same phrase is used by Ezekiel to describe the office of the Egyptian Pharaoh (Ezek 29:2-3). In the Exodus story, Pharaoh and his armies are thrown into the sea, the **abyss** covers them, and they go down like a stone (Exod 15:4-5).

Accordingly, in Isaiah, the Exodus is looked back upon as the time when God "pierced the **dragon**" and made a way for His people "through the waters of the **abyss**" (Isa 51:9-10). Here, we see both terms, **dragon** and **abyss**, used in conjunction with the Exodus. The echoes of the Exodus reverberate in John's words as the ultimate **dragon** (Satan) is thrown into the **abyss**. This being the case, John is expecting his readers to make the connection to a 40-year period.

Next, the imagery of Satan being bound, with the **abyss** being **shut** and **sealed** over him, echoes *The Prayer of Manasseh*, where the wording matches John's language so closely that it's impossible to miss:

"O Lord, Almighty God of our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and of their righteous seed; who hast made heaven and earth, with all the ornament thereof; who hast **bound** (κλείω) the sea by the word of thy commandment; who hast **shut** (κλείω) up the **Abyss** (ἄβυσσος),¹⁰ and **sealed** (σφραγίζω) it by thy terrible and glorious name; whom all men fear" (Pr. Man. 1-3).

"And he took hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and **bound** (κλείω) him for a thousand years; and he threw him into the **Abyss** (ἄβυσσος) and **shut** (κλείω) it and **sealed** (σφραγίζω) it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time" (Rev 20:1-3 NASB).

Both passages are related to *abyss*, and both passages employ the same threefold sequence of *binding*, *shutting*, and *sealing*. The parallels are unmistakable, and the connection John expects his readers to make is equally unmistakable.

The context of the prayer stretches all the way back to the original creation account, where God restrains the forces of chaos and speaks order, meaning, and purpose into existence.¹¹ By drawing on this earlier¹² Jewish prayer,¹³ the message John is telegraphing to his readers is that God is restraining the leader of the forces of chaos and giving His servants time to bring order back to the cosmos through the preaching of the gospel to all nations. Satan is not allowed to deceive them into initiating "the war" until this happens.

And initiating the war is precisely the reason for what Satan's binding entails. He is bound **so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed**. The Greek lemma translated "deceive" here is *planao*. As the late Dr. Michael Hieser pointed out,

"BDAG, which is the standard Greek lexicon for New Testament literature, has the lemma's primary meaning as 'leading astray in a specific way.' The specifics, in my judgment, are best defined in terms of what Satan does when permitted to do what he does. And the text is clear on this point. Do you know what he does? He leads the nations against Zion. So if that's what he does when he's permitted, then that is what he was prevented from doing. Get it? We let one passage interpret the other."¹⁴

Jon Paul Miles concurs, writing, "Whatever Satan was prevented from doing before he was loosed, he would have been anxious to do as soon as he was released. As soon as he is released, he goes out to deceive the nations and gather them for battle against God's people."¹⁵

Satan, therefore, is not bound in every respect, but only bound with respect to deceiving the nations into starting "the war" prematurely. His being **released for a short time**, consequently, would simply be the time between the start of the war (AD 66) and God's ends being achieved (AD 70). Basically, the war would in fact begin, and the temple would in fact come down, but only in God's good timing—and not Satan's.

"Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because

...continued on page 8

of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their foreheads and on their hands; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will

The Millennium

Robert Cruickshank, Jr.

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reign with Him for a thousand years" (Rev 20:4-6).

John sees the **souls** of those who've been **beheaded** for their **testimony** and for the **word of God**. Clearly, these are deceased individuals who've been martyred for their faith. Beheading was a standard form of capital punishment at the time,¹⁶ and the imagery is meant to convey martyrdom. The ones reigning on the **thrones** also include those who had **not worshiped the beast or received the mark**. This extends the group of reigning saints to include not only martyrs per se, but also those who lived lives of general resistance to the beast.

Typically, we think of the sea beast (Rev 13:1-10) in terms of Nero/Rome. While this is indeed the case, it is important to realize that Nero/Rome was merely the latest incarnation of the sea beast. The sea beast represents the tyrannical forces of evil that opposed God and His people throughout time.

In Revelation 13:1, John is using Leviathan imagery—and that imagery has a long and deep history.¹⁷ As John is told later, “The beast which you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise out of the abyss” (Rev 17:8). So, the beast wasn't currently on scene when John had his vision, but it was about to make a *reappearance—not a first appearance*. In other words, the beast that John sees rising from the abyss had a past, and that past is recorded on the pages of the past. For example, in the Septuagint version of Jeremiah 51:34, the same word for “**beast**” (*thērion*) that John uses for Nero/Rome is used for Nebuchadnezzar/Babylon: “*He has devoured me, he has torn me asunder, airy darkness has come upon me; Nabuchodonosor king of Babylon has swallowed me up, as a dragon (*thērion*) has he filled his belly with my delicacies.*”¹⁸ As A.Y. Collins says, the imagery in Revelation “would carry associations with a long line of national enemies, foreign powers often personified in a particular ruler whose deeds were perceived as especially infamous or threatening.”¹⁹ Nero/Rome was just the *latest* in this long line of enemies—the *latest “beast” on the scene*.

Those who resisted the beast **came to life and reigned with Christ** for a thousand years, and this is called **the first resurrection**. Specifically, those who come to life and reign with Christ have **a part** in this resurrection. Many

commentators recognize that *the first resurrection* can only be the resurrection of Christ, and those on the thrones in Revelation 20:6 have “a part” in His resurrection. This is certainly the case.

Typically, however, the commentators equate this idea of taking *part* in Christ's resurrection (Rev 20:3) with each believer's own spiritual resurrection. In other words, they identify it as the new birth, or regeneration—something which all believers experience (e.g., Eph 2:1-6). While this is a theologically sound doctrine in and of itself, this is a classic case of the right doctrine but the wrong text. These verses here in Revelation 20 are clearly describing the souls of deceased believers who've been martyred and/or have suffered greatly for their faith. And this is just not true of all believers.

With that said, there is a group of saints who indeed had “a part” in Christ's resurrection (*the first resurrection*) and Scripture records it for us: “*Also the tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection, they entered the holy city and appeared to many*” (Matt 27:52-53). The Old Testament had telegraphed that Jesus would not be the only one coming out of His tomb that morning: “*He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day, that we may live before Him*” (Hosea 6:2).

Putting the pieces together, those who took *part in the first resurrection* would be the Old Testament saints who resisted the beast in its past manifestations and came out of their tombs with Jesus on that first Easter morning.

“When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them” (Rev 20:7-9).

As stated above, the hyperbolic **thousand years** is completed when Satan is **released from his prison** and permitted **to gather** the nations **together for the war**. Again, this is the Roman-Jewish War, and the **number** of the armies being **like the sand of the seashore** is of course hyperbolic, like the **thousand years** themselves.

John's reference to **Gog and Magog** comes from the book of Ezekiel (Ezek 38-39). Like his references to Jezebel (Rev 2:20), Sodom and Egypt (Rev 11:8), and Babylon (Rev 18:2), this refers to something in the past that is meant to give shape and meaning to the present. Ezekiel's Gog prophecy is an oracle against Haman in the book of Esther,²⁰ and the comparison to the events of the first century is apropos.²¹

In Esther, the enemy of God's people (Haman and his cohorts) is in league with the political power of the day (Persia). Haman conspires with the Persian king

to exterminate the Jews. In the end, it backfires, and Persia turns on Haman. The deceiver is deceived. The executioner is executed. And God's people are victorious. In Revelation, the enemy of God's people (apostate Judaism) is in league with the political power of the day (Rome). The Jews and the Romans conspire together to exterminate the Christians. But what happens in the end? The beast (Rome) turns on the harlot (Jerusalem), and the true Israel of God (Jews and Gentiles alike) is victorious. As it was in Esther, so it is in Revelation.

“And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (Rev 20:10).

As stated in the opening, Jesus came “*to destroy the works of the devil*” (1 John 3:8), and this is accomplished here—as the devil who deceived them is thrown into the lake of fire, along with the beast and the false prophet to be tormented day and night forever and ever.²²

Recap

Revelation 20 casts the 40-year period between AD 26 and AD 66 in hyperbolic terms as “a thousand years.” The Exodus motif in Revelation 20 reinforces the idea of a 40-year period. By binding Satan, God restrained the forces of chaos so that the gospel seed could be planted before Satan was released to start the war. The “short time” of Satan’s release would be the period of the war from AD 66 to AD 70. The martyred saints of the past lived and reigned with Christ in heaven as His servants accomplished their task on earth during the hyperbolic “thousand years.” John recycles Ezekiel’s Gog & Magog imagery to convey the idea that the tables would soon be turned after the war starts. God’s people would be victorious in his day, just as they were in Esther’s day. †

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10. On the usage of the term “abyss” in the Prayer, see: Justin Bass, *The Battle for the Keys: Revelation 1:18 and Christ’s Descent into the Underworld* (Paternoster Biblical Monographs), Kindle Edition – 27% Location 1448
11. See: Van der Horst, Pieter W., and Judith H. Newman, *Early Jewish Prayers in Greek* (Berlin, Germany: de Gruyter, 2008), 168-169. See also: Andrew R. Angel, *Chaos and the Son of Man* (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2006), 82; as well as Andy Angel, *Playing with Dragons: Living with Suffering and God* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 15.
12. According to Michael D. Matlock, The Prayer of Manasseh was “composed sometime between 200 BCE and 50 CE” (“The Prayer of Manasseh: A Pithy Penitential Text Recasting Scripture Through a Vast Intertextual Repertoire,” in Miller, Geoffrey David, and Jeremy Corley. *Intertextual Explorations in Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature: Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies* (Berlin; Boston: de Gruyter [2019]), p. 100.
13. According to James R. Davila, “Commentators generally argue a Jewish origin to be likely or certain” due, in large part, to the “discovery of a Hebrew version of the Prayer of Manasseh from the Cairo Geniza” (“Is the Prayer of Manasseh a Jewish work?” in Lynn LiDonnici and Andrea Lieber ed., *Heavenly Tablets: Interpretation, Identity and Tradition in Ancient Judaism* [Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2007]), p. 76. While Davila himself attempts to provide evidence in the opposite direction, i.e., a Christian origin for the prayer originally written in Greek, the Jewish origin is the consensus view.
14. Naked Bible Podcast 393 – Transcript (PDF), 10. <https://bit.ly/46k5HjE>
15. Jon Paul Miles, Revelations in Grace – How Satan was destroyed <https://bit.ly/47JVGyA>
16. Gentry Jr., Kenneth L., *Navigating the Book of Revelation* (Kindle Locations 3741-3742).
17. Robert E. Cruickshank, Jr., Revelation and the Mark of the Beast. <https://bit.ly/42o8zus>
18. Jeremiah 51 Brenton’s Septuagint Translation. <https://bit.ly/4nQbapB>
19. Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 119.
20. Robert E. Cruickshank, Jr., Gog & Magog Series. <https://bit.ly/4laaREW>
21. Robert E. Cruickshank, Jr., Gog & Magog (Part 10): John’s Usage of the Phrase in Revelation 20. <https://bit.ly/47JpN9k>
22. In the narrative, the beast and the false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire in Revelation 19:20, but chapter 20 is not meant to be understood as sequential to chapter 19. Rather, it is recapitulatory as John is essentially dealing with the defeat of God’s cosmic enemies in layers. He is following a hierachal structure from the least to the greatest. Thus, he deals with the beast and the false prophet (Leviathan and Behemoth) first in chapter 19. He then moves up the ladder, so to speak, and targets their leader – Satan (the dragon). For more on this, see: Joseph Poon, *The Identities of the Beast from the Sea and the Beast from the Land in Revelation 13* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2017).

Life in the Kingdom

What Does Revelation Really Reveal About YOU?

The book of Revelation often gets misunderstood as a confusing collection of scary imagery about the end times. But when we look closer at the context and language, we discover something beautiful: Revelation is actually about revealing how powerful you really are in Christ. The book doesn't end with destruction or escape; it ends with a wedding.

Heaven Comes Down to Earth

In Revelation 21:1-2, John sees something remarkable: *"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth... And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."*

Notice that John doesn't see the church escaping to heaven. Instead, he sees heaven coming down to earth. The end of this story isn't about the great escape; it's **about union**. From the Garden of Eden to the tabernacle, to the temple, to Jesus, to His Spirit living in us, the entire biblical narrative points to this moment: **God dwelling with His people**.

You Are Both the Bride and the City

Here's where the imagery gets powerful. The bride and the city mentioned in Revelation are the same thing. You are the bride of Christ, and you are also part of the city – the dwelling place of God. As 1 Peter 2:5 explains, we are "living stones" that make up this spiritual city.

God's presence no longer dwells in a building made with human hands. He dwells in your heart. **You are the temple where heaven touches earth.**

Revelation presents a striking contrast between two women: the harlot in chapter 17 and the bride in chapter 21.

Two Women, Two Ways of Life

Revelation presents a striking contrast between two women: the harlot in chapter 17 and the bride in chapter 21. The harlot represents covenant unfaithfulness, people chasing after comfort, power, and idolatry. The bride represents covenant faithfulness, people clothed in purity, love, and devotion.

Here's the incredible truth: Revelation 19:7-8 tells us that *"the bride has made herself ready. It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean."* That word "given" in Greek means "to exchange."

God takes your mistakes, your past, your failures, and exchanges them for purity, righteousness, and holiness. Grace turns failure into faithfulness. You are not disqualified from being used by God because of your past. The great exchange has already taken place.

You Are the Holy of Holies

The dimensions of the holy city in Revelation form a perfect cube – the exact measurements of the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle. This means that you are the Holy of Holies, the place where God's presence dwells most intimately.

God doesn't invite you to His presence; **He fills you with His presence. You are where heaven touches earth.**

Three Powerful Elements of the City

Revelation 22:1-5 describes three key elements that flow through you as God's dwelling place:

Understanding Your True Identity in Christ

Rebekah Patel

Rebekah is the worship leader of Sound of Heaven (SOH) Church in Deer Park, New York. She is also the sister-in-law of Johnny Ova, SOH Church's lead pastor who contributed an article to *Fulfilled!* Magazine one year ago.



1. The River of Life: Just as Ezekiel saw a river flowing from the temple, and Jesus spoke of rivers of living water flowing from believers, you have the Holy Spirit flowing through you. This river brings healing, restoration, and harvest in every season.

2. The Tree of Life: What Adam lost access to through sin, you have regained through Christ. You are a tree that bears fruit in and out of season, providing life to everyone around you even in the driest circumstances.

3. The Light of God: The same light that filled creation when God said “Let there be light” is available to you 24/7. You don’t need to look to external circumstances for direction. The light of the Lord shows you where to step next.

Stop Hiding Your Light and Invite Others In

Jesus called you “a city set on a hill” and “the light of the world.” You’re not meant to hide what’s inside you. When you remove the lampshade and let your light shine, darkness flees instantly. Light doesn’t struggle with darkness; it overcomes it immediately.

The Bible ends with the Spirit and the bride saying one word to the world: “Come.” You’re not called to escape from the world but to invite it into redemption. Why? Because whatever the God inside you touches gets transformed.

Heaven isn’t waiting to come down someday; it’s already breaking through you right now. You’re the

connector between the heavenly and earthly realms. Where you pull from, there is no lack, no sin, and no struggle because you pull from the promises of God!

Life Application

This week, challenge yourself to live like the bride of Christ rather than hiding in fear. Ask yourself these questions:

- Am I living like the bride, or am I living like I’m still defined by my past mistakes?
- Am I shining like the city set on a hill, or am I hiding my light under a lampshade?
- Do I see myself as carrying heaven wherever I go, or do I feel powerless in difficult situations?

Remember: You are the dwelling place of God. The Spirit of the living God fills you. You are the bride made ready for the Lamb. You live from heaven to earth, not from earth to heaven. His glory shines through you, and you are part of the city whose gates never close. Jesus reigns, and you reign with Him.

Start living like the powerful, transformed, heaven-carrying bride that God has made you to be. The great exchange has already happened. Now walk in the fullness of who you truly are in Christ! +

You're not meant to hide what's inside you. When you remove the lampshade and let your light shine, darkness flees instantly.

This article first appeared at <https://soh.church/understanding-your-true-identity-in-christ/>.

First Generation AFTER the End

How the Rapture Happened Without Being Noticed

IN A POST ON Facebook, a futurist wondered how the Parousia, resurrection, Rapture, and Judgment could have occurred on earth in the visible realm without anyone noticing it and reporting it.

Of course, his objection is based on the typical futurist idea that the end-time events would be a cataclysmic destruction by fire of the whole planet and universe. But there are many reasons why that concept is out of touch with biblical and historical reality.

In regard to the resurrection and Rapture, the futurists are looking for the *wrong kind of events* (physical bodies raised out of the ground, or bodies floating up into the sky), and looking in the *wrong place* (in the SEEN realm on earth, instead of in the UNSEEN realm).

It also shows that they are unaware of the amazing supernatural events that *Josephus*, *Yosippon*, and *Hegesippus* recorded, which included the coming of the Son of Man with His angels, and the resurrection of the dead out of Hades.

Consequently, futurists who are skeptical about the first-century fulfillments have misunderstood the manner in which those events happened. So, it is the NATURE of fulfillment that is under examination here, not just the TIME of those events. And we need to explain HOW those events happened without anyone noticing them and reporting them.

How the Events Happened

Revelation 20:13-15 teaches that at the Parousia the dead (plural) in Christ were raised out of Hades in the UNSEEN realm to receive their new immortal bodies that were reserved in heaven for them (1 Cor 15:37-38; 2 Cor 5:1). Then the living saints had their mortal bodies changed into immortal bodies (1 Cor 15:51-52; 2 Cor 5:2-4; Phil 3:21), which put them into the UNSEEN realm with the resurrected saints. Then both groups of saints (now together in the UNSEEN realm) were “caught up together” to meet Christ and remain with Him forever afterward in the UNSEEN realm (1 Thess 4:17; Matt 24:31; John 14:3).

So, we see that our preterist concept of the resurrection, bodily change, and Rapture is NOT the same as the futurist “Left Behind” idea which thinks that human bodies will visibly float up into the sky. It is perfectly legitimate to reject that kind of a rapture because it is obviously NOT what happened at the Parousia in AD 70. So, let’s look at a different NATURE of fulfillment.

Living Changed First Before Raptured

Some futurists and even many preterists fail to grasp the concept of the *bodily change* of the living saints, and how that

change from mortal to immortal instantly *translated* those living saints into the UNSEEN realm without them having to die first. Thus, their physical bodies did not float up into the sky, but instead were *changed* from mortal to immortal, which instantly put them in the UNSEEN realm (1 Cor 15:51-52; Phil 3:21). They disappeared just like Enoch did (Gen 5:22-24).

And once they were in the unseen realm and no longer visible on earth, they were together with the resurrected saints and then *caught up together* with them to *meet* Christ in the “air” (mid-heaven) in the UNSEEN realm above (1 Thess 4:16-17).

It was at that “meeting” with Christ in the UNSEEN realm above where all those saints “glorified Him on that day and marveled at him in the presence of all who had believed” (2 Thess 1:10). Think about that. How were “ALL who had believed” (both the resurrected saints and the changed living saints) gathered into His presence to *marvel at him*? It necessarily implies that those living saints were *changed and translated* into the unseen realm where they *rejoiced with exultation* (1 Pet 4:13) when they *stood before the Son of Man* in His glorious presence at the Parousia (Luke 21:36; Jude 24; 1 Thess 2:19).

The Rapture Was Not Visible on Earth

So, the *catching up* (rapture) and the *meeting* with Christ did not occur in the VISIBLE realm, nor were there any physical bodies caught up. Instead, their mortal bodies were first *changed* into immortal bodies, which put them in the UNSEEN realm, and then they were *caught up together* with the resurrected saints to *meet* Christ and remain with Him forever afterward.

However, we still need to explain why no unbelievers noticed their disappearance and reported it. How could they just vanish into the thin air without anyone seeing it? Here is the most likely scenario.

How Did They Disappear Without Notice?

The Neronic persecution (AD 64-66) was happening at the time of the Parousia and Rapture. The majority of Christians were killed in the Neronic persecution or fell away in the apostasy, leaving only a small minority. There were not tens of thousands of true Christians remaining alive at the Parousia. And the Neronic persecution forced them to go into hiding and *meet secretly behind closed doors* with no unbelievers allowed to be among them.

Furthermore, the unbelievers were afraid to be associated with the Christians for fear of being arrested and killed. It was like the situation in Nazi Germany during World War Two. When the Jews were arrested in the night and taken away to

Edward E. Stevens

Ed is President of the
International Preterist
Association

preterist1@preterist.org
www.poterist.org



be killed, their non-Jewish neighbors did not run down to the local Gestapo to report them missing for fear that they might be arrested also.

Warned Not to Forsake the Assembly

Hebrews 10:25 (written in AD 63 a year before the Neronic persecution began) urged the saints “*not to forsake their assembling together*” on the first day of every week, especially as they saw the signs that His coming was drawing near. As we will see below, there was a very good reason why it was extremely important for those living and remaining saints to gather together on the first day of every week, especially after they saw the signs that the Parousia and the Rapture were about to occur.

Moreover, Jesus informed them in advance that when they see the Son of Man coming in the sky, they should “*straighten up and lift up their heads, because their redemption was drawing near*” (Luke 21:28). They surely kept that in mind as they intensely watched for His coming (Matt 24:42-44; Rev 16:15; 2 Pet 3:12ff).

The Day and the Hour

Josephus gives us “the day and the hour” when *the angelic armies* appeared in the sky signaling that the extended period of the Parousia had begun:

...Besides [the other signs just mentioned], a few days after that feast [**Passover**], on the **twenty-first day of the month Artemisius** [*the day*], a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared; I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it, and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals; for, **before sunsetting** [*the hour*], *chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities ...* [Wars 6.5.3 (6.296-299)].

The angels appeared in the sky above Judea precisely two weeks before Pentecost (AD 66), which was a first day of the week. Josephus tells us that the angelic armies were seen just before sunset at the very hour when the saints were on their way to their first-day assemblies. Can you imagine how ecstatic and electrified they must have been when they gathered behind closed doors? This was the sign that they had been waiting for. They now knew for certain that *their redemption* (the Rapture) had drawn near (Luke 21:28).

Josephus also gives us “the day and the hour” when the *resurrection of the dead saints* took place:

Moreover at that feast which we call **Pentecost** [*the day*], as the priests were **going by night** [*the hour*] into the inner

[court of the] temple, as their custom was, to perform their sacred ministrations, they said that, in the first place, they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, and after that they heard a sound as of a *great multitude*, saying, “*Let us remove hence*” [Wars 6.5.3 (6.299-300)].

He says that the priests after dark on the evening of Pentecost (the first day of the week), as they were entering into the temple, heard a great multitude *in the unseen realm* saying that they were leaving one place in the unseen realm (Hades) and going to another place in the unseen realm (Heaven). That was the resurrection of the dead saints out of Hades, and it happened in the unseen realm. The priests did not see it, but they heard it and felt it.

Bodily Change and Rapture

The apostle Paul tells us that the *bodily change* of the living saints would occur at the very same moment “*in the blink of an eye*” when the dead saints were RAISED out of Hades (1 Cor 15:51-52; 1 Thess 4:16). We noted above that this occurred after dark on the first day of the week while the saints were gathered behind closed doors. After seeing the angelic armies appear in the sky two weeks before, we can only imagine how anxious and expectant those saints must have been as they assembled together on that first day of the week!

And while they were assembled in secret behind closed doors after dark, *their bodies were changed and translated into the unseen realm* where they were *caught up together* with the resurrected saints to meet Christ in the unseen realm above and then remain with Him forever afterward (1 Thess 4:16-17).

No Unbelievers Saw It

Thus, since unbelievers avoided any association with Christians for fear of being arrested and killed, and since they were not allowed in those secret assemblies anyway, they never saw the saints disappear. It happened in secret at night behind closed doors while the saints were assembled on the first day of the week (Pentecost in AD 66).

Moreover, since the unbelievers did not know that there was supposed to be a Rapture, if any of them noticed that the Christians were gone, they would only have thought that they were *arrested in the night* and taken away to be killed or that they *fled in the night* to escape the persecution.

So, this is how the Rapture most likely occurred without any non-Christians noticing it and reporting it. Hope that helps. If this raised any questions for you, feel free to email me. 

Parting Thoughts

WELCOME BACK, FRIEND! We are continuing a journey into the parables of the Kingdom as taught by Yeshua found in the Gospel of Mark. I chose Mark because it is the shortest gospel account, and I'm kind of lazy like that. You know, I don't want to get too ambitious . . .

"Then the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. When His friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold of Him: for they said, 'He is out of His mind.' And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, 'He has Beelzebub, and, by the prince of the demons He casts out demons.' Then He called them to Him, and said to them in Parables, 'How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand, and if Satan rise up against himself and be divided, he cannot stand but has an end. No man can enter into a strong man's house, and plunder his goods, unless he will first bind the strong man; and then he will plunder his house. Truthfully, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may speak, but he that blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation," because they said He has an unclean spirit'" (Mark 3:20-29, Fulfilled Covenant Bible translation).

This is the first recorded parable by Jesus, but let's get a quick rundown of the events that led up to this encounter with the Pharisees:

1. Yeshua began His ministry.
2. He chose His disciples.
3. He healed a man with an unclean spirit.
4. He healed Simon's wife.
5. He healed those with disease and demons.
6. He forgave sins.
7. He performed miracles...and they say men can't multi-task!

(These were the things that Jesus later instructed His disciples to do, and it's interesting that Mark 3:14 is the first instance of Yeshua transferring His Kingdom to believers.)

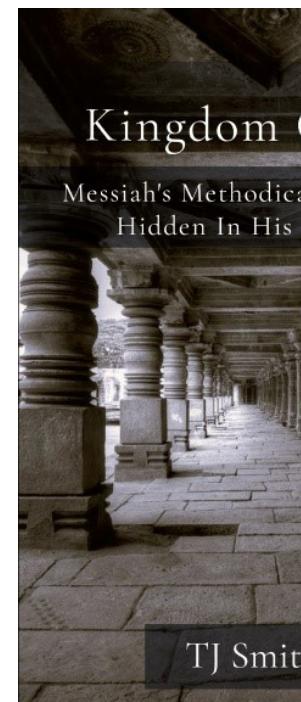
Yeshua would also be accused of breaking three laws from Torah, with confrontations following with the Scribes and

Pharisees. No specific time frame was given, indicating that words were used to describe a short period of time in which the Messiah performed all these actions: "Immediately," "now in the morning," "so he came," "as soon as . . .," and others. The point being, Jesus started His ministry and hit it hard! He started by Himself and never asked His disciples to do anything He wasn't already doing. No board certified Him, prayed over Him, authorized Him, endorsed Him, handed Him a piece of paper, or shook His hand. He didn't wait around and build His "team" first and then train them. Jesus was busy sowing seeds (Mark 2:18, 24; 3:2, 14-15, 21).

The Jewish leadership confrontations began immediately . . . and so did His parables. This "Strong Man" parable is the first felt board picture we get that Christ was setting up and bringing His kingdom to earth. It had relevance only in the first century. WHOA! What? Let me explain. The parable was fulfilled then, and the "strong man" was bound then, so obviously it doesn't apply to us now as being something that we should look forward to as a future event. Jesus bound Satan 2000 years ago. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for ascribing His power to the work of Beelzebub. He told them that He had already bound the "strong man" and that the works He was performing were solely because of the binding. Yeshua then turned His attention to the allegation they made and defined it as blasphemy. Mark 3:30 reads: ". . . because they had said, 'He has an unclean spirit.'" This was why they would not be forgiven. They were saying that the Spirit of God was evil.

Matthew 22:32 described that same event but with an added phrase: "Whoever may speak a word against the Son of Man it shall be forgiven to him, but whoever may speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this age, nor in that which is coming" (YLT).

If you don't understand the last 10 words Jesus spoke, you will find it hard to interpret the parable. You will struggle with when this was supposed to happen, to which generation it would happen, and who would be the world



Kingdom

Messiah's Methodical
Hidden In His

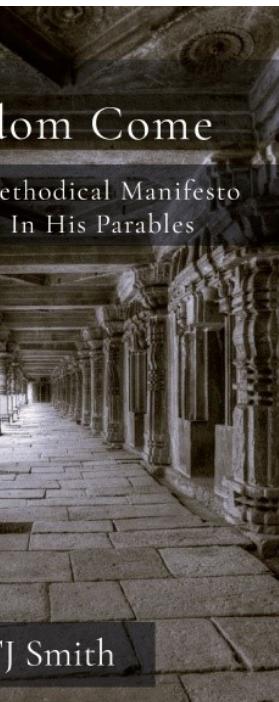
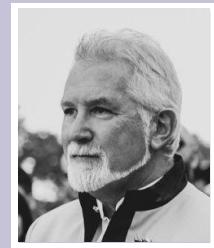
TJ Smit

The Strongman Parable

T. J. Smith

TJ Smith writes an ever growing series of books on Interpreting the Bible, and contributed commentary to the *Fulfilled Covenant Bible*.

tjsmithmusic@yahoo.com
www.tjsmithministries.com



leader at that future point in history, etc. First, let's define the word "age," these two "ages," and when would or did one end and the other begin. The word in Matthew 12:32, whether translated "world" or "age" in English, is *aion* in the Greek. "This age" and "the age to come" have their roots in the ancient Hebrew expectation of when their Mosaic era (the age when the Law of Moses ruled) would be replaced by the coming of the Messiah (a.k.a. the Messianic age). The Jews of Yeshua's day were living in the "this age" (Mosaic age), but they were looking forward to the day when the Messiah would come and transfer them into the "age to come" (the Messianic age). Sadly, many of them failed to see the "day of their visitation."

Now, let's back up to Matthew 12:32. *"Whoever may speak a word against the Son of Man it shall be forgiven to him, but whoever may speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this age, nor in that which is coming."* Sooooooooo...

1. If "this age" is our life on earth right now, and the "age which is coming" is only realized when we die and go to heaven, then why would Jesus even address the fact that blasphemy would not be forgiven in heaven? Who's going to blaspheme in Heaven? As Spock from Star Trek would say, "Illogical, Captain."
2. If the "age to come" was when Yeshua personally, physically came back and set up an earthly reign, why would anyone be blaspheming Yeshua then? His purpose was supposedly to set things right; bring heaven to earth; get rid of sin and defeat the devil; end wars, poverty, and hunger; and stop the Rolling Stones from recording another lame album. So once again, why would He say that even with heaven on literal earth, blasphemy would not be forgiven? Won't everyone be a believer? It's "Route 66" logic. After a while, you run out of highway.

The correct interpretation of this phrase is that blasphemy would not be forgiven during the closing age

of the old Mosaic covenant, nor during the Messianic new covenant age that He was establishing.

The Strong Man parable is the first clue we get for Yeshua's establishment of the Kingdom. To begin a Kingdom: 1. Bind the Strong Man. Overthrow the enemy. This is our first picture placed on the felt board; Yeshua bound Satan before His ministry even started. Exactly when this 'binding' took place is hard to pinpoint. Maybe it happened during or after His 40 days in the wilderness. Maybe it was right after Jesus rebuked Satan three times for tempting Him. But it seems apparent that the binding occurred before He started casting out demons, as the only way He could perform this act was to have first bound the strong man. The central truth here is that Jesus bound Satan and began fulfilling the characteristics of His kingdom.

In the next issue, I will talk about NT Wright and comments he has made about eschatological time statements. It was originally part of this chapter in my book, but it's way too long to include here.

If you would like to read this book in its entirety, you can purchase "Kingdom Come: Messiah's Methodical Manifesto Hidden in the Parables" at www.tjsmithministries.com—available in paperback and e-book formats.

I'm also excited to announce my new album of original music, which is now available on physical CD and via download at the website listed just above. My band is Stone Bruise, and the songs are a mix of modern and classic rock vibes, with lyrics of worship and about the journey through the eyes of finding Yahweh, serving Him, and understanding the new relationship with Him. Yeah, it sounds all hippy-dippy, but it's just nine songs that have cool grooves and some rock influences like The Beatles, Cheap Trick, Black Crowes, Switchfoot, and others. All the songs support a fulfilled prophetic view, meaning that there is no mention of a future Second Coming, which says a lot these days. So, feel free to listen with no surprises! It was recorded in my studio, and I think it competes with major label releases, but that's my opinion. All proceeds go to my charity, "Buy My Grandkids More Toys!"

If I see you at a conference in 2026, I will have books and my new CD available. †

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Fulfilled Communications Group
3784 Camanche Pkwy N.
Ione, CA 95640-9614

Preterism . . . it's about time!

It's about the time Jesus told His disciples that He would return—this (His) generation!

It's about the time the New Testament authors told their readers Jesus would return—soon, near, at hand, shortly!

It's about time for a scriptural explanation other than delay!

It's about time for a "last days" view that doesn't conjure up gaps and parenthetical ages!

Preterism
Preterism
Preterism

... maybe it's about time you looked into it!