

## SESSION 7: DOCTRINE OF THE END TIMES—ESCHATOLOGY

### THINGS TO COME

At physical death the believer enters immediately into the eternal, conscious presence of the Lord and awaits the resurrection of his body to everlasting glory and blessing (2 Corinthians 5:6–8; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; 2 Thessalonians 2:1–14).

At physical death the unbeliever enters immediately into eternal, conscious separation from the Lord and awaits the resurrection of his body to everlasting judgment and condemnation (Mark 9:43–48; Luke 16:22–24; 2 Thessalonians 1:6, 8, 9; Revelation 20:11–15).

Jesus Christ will return in the air before the great tribulation for His church, to take His own—the living and the dead—home to be with Him forever (1 Corinthians 15:51–58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; 2 Thessalonians 2:1–10).

Jesus Christ will come again to the earth—personally, visibly, and bodily—to consummate history and the eternal plan of God (John 14:1–3; Acts 1:9–11; Matthew 24:30; 25:31–33, 41, 46).

~ *Statement of Belief* (WPBC, SALT, 2005)

One of the most controversial and combative areas of doctrine is the doctrine of the end times. This doctrine is called “Eschatology” because the Greek word *eschatos*, means “extreme last things.” Bible prophecy represents about 25% of the Bible, and about 25% of those prophecies relate to the end times. There are a number of different interpretations as to the exact nature of the end of time. One reason there are so many diverging views is that although there are 480 verses in the last book of the Bible—Revelation—there are over 500 references to the Old Testament. To interpret it accurately, you must interpret the related Old Testament prophecies. Much confusion is cleared up by interpreting Scripture with Scripture, but many do not make the effort. Instead, they read prophecy through their own imaginations and preconceptions. No one has captured this dilemma better than G. K. Chesterton who said, “There are many strange and wonderful creatures in the book of the Revelation, but none so strange as the commentators who write about them.”

Before beginning the study, briefly identify what you presently believe and why.

1. Which view do you hold regarding the millennium? (check one)

☐ Pre-millennial view    ☐ Post-millennial view    ☐ A-millennial view    ☐ Other

Upon what Biblical passages do you base your view?


2. Which view do you hold on the Rapture of the church in relation to the Tribulation? (check one)

☐ Pre-Tribulation Rapture    ☐ Mid-Tribulation Rapture    ☐ Post-Tribulation Rapture  
☐ Pre-wrath Rapture    ☐ Partial Rapture    ☐ Other

Upon what Biblical passages do you base your view?

## SESSION 7: ESCHATOLOGY (CONTINUED)

The principle Old Testament passage on the end times is **Daniel 9:24-27**—“*Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy {place.} So you are to know and discern {that} from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince {there will be} seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end {will come} with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations {will come} one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.*”

 Notice what God revealed to him, paying special attention to record the specific details of the last of the seventy weeks.

A key to understanding these “weeks” is that the Hebrew word (*sabua*) simply means “a unit of seven.” In Scripture, it can refer to a group of seven days or seven years. Being able to look backward to many of these events, we can say with certainty that the latter is meant here. One of the reasons the book of Daniel has been maligned and attacked by skeptics is the incredible detail with which it records historically proven events. We know that the decree mentioned actually occurred during the Cyrus’s reign in Persia. The first grouping of seven weeks (sevens), or 49 years, takes us from the decree up to when the wall was rebuilt in Jerusalem under the leadership of Nehemiah. Adding the seven weeks to the group of sixty-two weeks (69 out of 70), we are taken right up to Christ’s crucifixion when “*Messiah will be cut off and have nothing.*” The accompanying prophecy, “*and the people of the prince who is to come (the Anti-Christ) will destroy the city and the sanctuary,*” occurred in 70 AD when the Romans destroyed the Temple. What ought to be quickly obvious is that at the point Messiah was cut off, it is as if the ticking clock is stopped. Some have called this the “parenthesis of grace” when Israel is set aside between the 69<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> week for a period known as the “church age.” The Apostle Paul made it clear in **Romans 11:25** that “*a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.*” In other words, God paused His dealings with Israel in order to reach the Gentiles. The events of verse 27—Daniel’s seventieth week— have still yet to happen.

In this lesson we will not be able to answer all your questions about eschatology, but we can help you to understand the major differing views of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week and upon what those views are based. There are four main issues that relate to the end times: the Rapture, the tribulation, the second coming, the Millenium, and the judgments. Although there is disagreement among theologians about the exact chronology of these events, we will deal with them in the order listed above.

### The Rapture of the Church

The term “rapture” refers to the taking away of Christians from the earth prior to Christ’s return. Some have taken issue with this doctrine, saying that the term “rapture” appears nowhere in the New Testament. To some degree this is a nonsensical argument. The English word “rapture” is a transliteration of the Latin word used in the Vulgate (Latin Bible) to translate the Greek word *harpazo* from 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Although it is technically correct that the word rapture doesn’t appear in the English New Testament, it must be logically pointed out that neither does the Greek word *harpazo*. Both points have no bearing whatsoever on the truth of the doctrine.

## SESSION 7: ESCHATOLOGY (CONTINUED)

 To better understand the event, read the following Scriptures and write how it is described.


**John 14:1-3**—*“Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.”*

**1 Corinthians 15:51-57**—*“Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, “DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**—*“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will 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, will 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 will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.”*

### The Tribulation

In order to better understand the Rapture, it is important to put it in the larger context. In proximity to this event is a difficult period of time referred to by theologians as the “tribulation.” It is an intense time of God’s wrath being poured out upon the earth, climaxing in all the nations gathering together in the last World War called “Armageddon” (Rev. 19). This conflict is so-called because it occurs in the valley of Armageddon near Jerusalem. The primary focus of this distressing seven-year period is the nation of Israel. God warned them as early as the entry to the Promised Land, warning, “*when you are in distress...in the last days*” (Deut. 4:29-30). Jeremiah prophesied a “*time of Jacob’s (Israel’s) distress*” (Jer. 30:7-10). Daniel revealed that this tribulation was “*for your city (Jerusalem) and your people (Jews)*” (Daniel 9:24, 27).

 Read the posted verses and record what you discover about what Israel will experience during this time.

**Zephaniah 1:18**—*“Neither their silver nor their gold Will be able to deliver them On the day of the LORD'S wrath; And all the earth will be devoured In the fire of His jealousy, For He will make a complete end, Indeed a terrifying one, Of all the inhabitants of the earth.”*

## SESSION 7: ESCHATOLOGY (CONTINUED)


**Revelation 6:15-17**—*“And the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?’”*

**Revelation 14:10 & 19**—*“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.” V.19—“So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God.”*

Daniel 9, as well as several other passages, makes it clear that this seven year period has two distinct halves (see Revelation 11:2-3). The first of these will be characterized by a sort of “cease fire” kind of peace. This doesn’t mean it will be easy though. The Anti-Christ makes a “*firm covenant*” of peace with Israel. At the mid-point Daniel’s last week, Anti-Christ breaks the peace treaty and desecrates the Jewish Temple. From then on, it is all out war the likes of which the world has never seen. One fundamental certainty is that this is not something we want to experience!

### The Second Coming

The seventieth week of Daniel will be brought to a close with Christ returning to earth. As we saw in John 14:3, Jesus promised, *“I will come again and receive you to myself.”* That was not the first time this idea was mentioned in Scripture.

 Look at these verses and make note of what you learn about Christ’s return.

**Zechariah 14:4**—*“In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south.”*

**Revelation 19:11-20**—*“And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, ‘KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.’ Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, ‘Come, assemble for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great.’ And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone.”*

## SESSION 7: ESCHATOLOGY (CONTINUED)

### The Timing of the Rapture

The central question regarding the rapture is “When?” There is no consensus among theologians as to exactly when the Rapture of the church will occur. We know that it is in direct proximity to the time of the Tribulation, but exactly when is debated. Some believe in a “Pre-Tribulation” Rapture—that the church is raptured just prior to the seven-year period. Some hold to a “Mid-Tribulation” Rapture—that this event occurs somewhere around the breaking of the peace treaty. A handful of people ascribe to a position called a “Pre-Wrath Tribulation.” This asserts that Christians are only preserved from the wrath of God, and define this as occurring near the end of the seventh year. The “Post-Tribulation” view asserts that the Rapture and the Second Coming are simultaneous events. Some also ascribe to what is known as a “Partial Rapture”—that only worthy saints are preserved from the difficulties of the Tribulation. Charles Ryrie does an excellent job of sorting through what theological camps ascribe to which view and why they believe as they do:

**The Time of the Rapture.** Postmillennialists and amillennialists both see the rapture of the Church at the close of this age and concurrent with the second coming of Christ. Among premillennialists there are several views. **1. Pretribulation rapture.** a. Meaning. The rapture of the Church (i.e., the coming of the Lord in the air for His saints) will take place before the seven-year period of the Tribulation begins. Therefore, the Church will not go through any of the Tribulation period according to this view. b. Proof cites. (1) The promise to be kept out of the hour of trouble (Rev. 3:10). (2) The removal of the residence aspect of the indwelling Spirit’s work in believers requires the removal of believers too (2 Thess. 2). (3) The Tribulation is a time of the outpouring of the wrath of God and the Church is exempt from wrath (Rev. 6:17; cf. 1 Thess. 1:10, 5:9). (4) The rapture can be imminent only if it is pretribulational (1 Thess. 5:6). **2. Midtribulation rapture.** a. Meaning. The rapture will occur after three and a half years of the Tribulation have passed. b. Proof cited. (1) The last trump of 1 Corinthians 15:52 as the same as the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11:15 and that is sounded at the middle of the Tribulation. (2) The Great Tribulation is only the last half of Daniel’s 70th week and the Church is promised deliverance only from that (Rev. 11:2; 12:6). (3) The resurrection of the two witnesses pictures the rapture of the Church, and their resurrection occurs at the middle of the period (Rev. 11). **3. Posttribulation rapture.** a. Meaning. The rapture will occur at the end of the Tribulation. The Church will be on earth during the entire Tribulation. The rapture is distinct from the second coming though separated by only a very short interval of time. b. Proof cited. (1) The rapture and the second coming are described by the same words. (2) Preservation from the wrath means supernatural protection while living in that time, not deliverance from the period (as Israel was protected from the plagues while living in Egypt). (3) Saints are seen on the earth during the Tribulation (Matt. 24:22). **4. Partial rapture.** a. Meaning. Only saints who are worthy will be raptured before the wrath of God is poured out; those who have not been faithful will remain on the earth to endure the Tribulation. b. Proof cited – verses like Hebrews 9:28, which require preparedness. (Taken from the “Survey of Bible Doctrine,” Ryrie Study Bible)

### The Rapture and the Second Coming

Some people get confused with the specific events of the end times. One can see how the Rapture and the return would be an easy place for this to happen. At this point, a very important distinction must be made. These two events are separated by location. As we saw in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, the Rapture is when living believers are “*caught up together*” in the clouds with the resurrected Christians of all ages “*to meet the Lord in the air.*” Zechariah makes it clear that the Second Coming is when Christ comes back to earth at the end of Armageddon and He will “*stand on the Mount of Olives*” in Jerusalem to make war with the enemies of the Jews. Regardless of when the Rapture occurs, it is distinct from the Second Coming both because of where it occurs (Rapture=in the air; Second Coming=Jerusalem) and who it is for (Rapture=Christians; Second Coming=Jews).

## SESSION 7: ESCHATOLOGY (CONTINUED)

### The Millenium

The word “millennium” is from the prefix “mille” which means 1,000. The Millenium is the thousand year period when Christ will reign on earth, fulfilling the promises God made in the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New covenants.

📖 Review these verses and summarize what they teach about this period.

**Revelation 11:15**—*“Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever’.”*

**Revelation 20:1-6**—*“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and 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. 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 of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; 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 reign with Him for a thousand years.”*

### The Second Coming and the Millenium

This is where some of the technical labels of eschatology come into play, as they define where one stands regarding when the Second Coming occurs. The view that the Second Coming is before Christ reigns on earth for a literal 1,000 year period is known as the “Premillennial View.” The position that Christ returns after His Millennial reign is called the “Postmillennial View.” A third position, known as the “Amillennial” view, doesn’t distinguish between Israel and the church, sees the Millenium as figurative of heaven. Again, Ryrie is helpful in sorting out:

#### THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

**Postmillennial View.** 1. Meaning. The second coming of Christ is after the Millennium. 2. Order of events. The latter part of the Church Age (that is, the last 1,000 years of it) is the Millennium, which will be an era of peace and abundance brought about through the efforts of the church. After this, Christ will come. Then will follow general resurrection and judgment and eternity. 3. Method of interpretation. Postmillennial interpretation is largely spiritualized with regard to prophecy. However, Revelation 20 will be fulfilled in the earthly kingdom that is brought in through the church’s efforts.

**Amillennial View.** 1. Meaning. The second coming of Christ is at the end of the Church Age and there is no earthly Millennium. Strictly, amillenarians believe that the present state of the righteous in heaven is the Millennium, but there is no earthly Millennium. 2. Order of events. The Church Age will end in a time of trouble, Christ will come, there will be general resurrection and judgment, then eternity. 3. Method of interpretation. Amillennial interpretation spiritualizes the promises made to Israel as a nation and says they are fulfilled in the Church. According to this view, Revelation 20 describes the scene of souls in heaven during the time between the first and second comings of Christ.

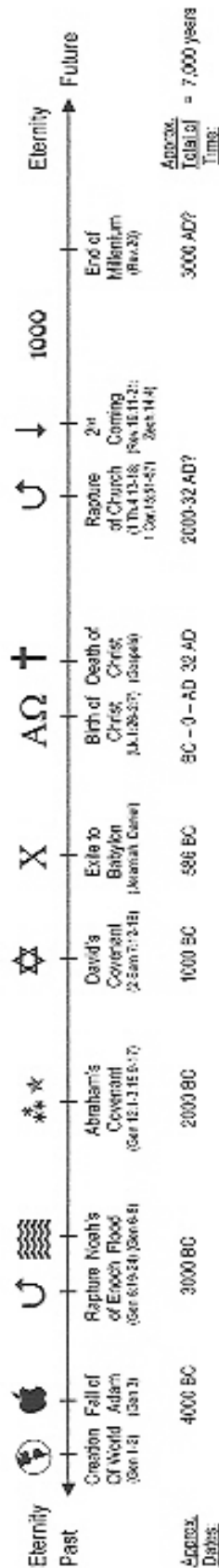
## SESSION 7: ESCHATOLOGY (CONTINUED)

**Premillennial View.** 1. Meaning. The second coming of Christ will occur before the Millennium. 2. Order of events. The Church Age ends in the time of Tribulation, Christ returns to the earth, He sets up and rules His kingdom for 1,000 years, the resurrection and judgment of the unsaved occur, then eternity. 3. Method of interpretation. Premillennialism follows the plain, normal, literal, historical, and grammatical method of interpretation. Revelation 20 is understood literally. 4. The question of the Rapture. Among premillennialists there is no agreement as to the time of the rapture.

The remaining events associated with the end times are the differing resurrections, the judgments, and the distributing of rewards. These are summarized in the “Optional Additional Study” that follows this section.

## SESSION 7: ESCHATOLOGY (CONTINUED)

### Biblical Timeline

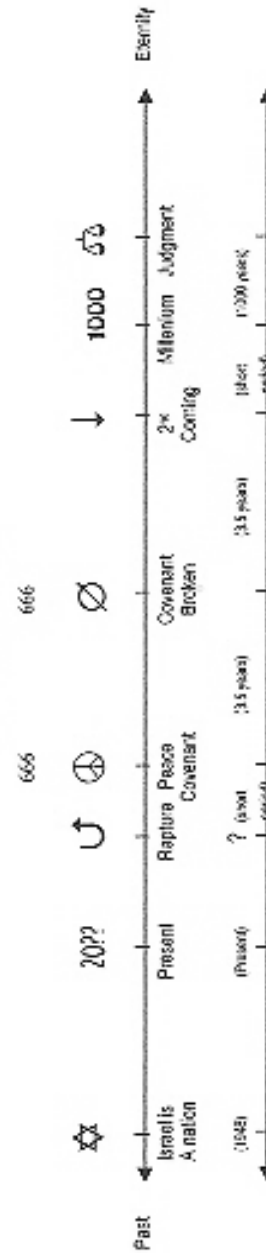


### Mathematical Significance

Important events seem to happen in sequences of seven



### Last Days Timeline





## OPTIONAL EXTRA STUDY: ESCHATOLOGY

### I. THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

**The Description of the Rapture.** 1. The Scripture. 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-57; John 14:1-3. 2. The events. a. The descent of Christ. b. The resurrection of the dead in Christ. c. The change from mortal to immortal bodies for Christians living at the time. d. The meeting with Christ in the air to ascend to heaven.

### II. THE TRIBULATION

**A. Its Duration.** It is the 70th week of Daniel and is therefore of seven years' duration (Dan. 9L27). Half the period is said to be 42 months or 1,260 days (Rev. 11:2-3). **B. Its Distinctiveness** (Matt. 24:21; Rev. 6:15-17).

**C. Its Description of the Rapture.** 1. Judgment upon the world. The three series of judgments describe these judgments (seals, Rev. 6; trumpets, Rev. 8-9; bowls, Rev. 16). 2. Persecution of Israel (Matt. 24:9, 22; Rev. 12:17). 3. Salvation of multitudes (Rev. 7). 4. Rise and dominion of Antichrist (2 Thess. 2; Rev. 13). **D. Its End.** The Tribulation ends in the gathering of the nations to the battle of Armageddon and the return of Christ to the earth (Rev. 19).

### III. THE MILLENNIUM

**A. Definition.** The Millennium is the 1,000-year period of the earthly reign of Christ in fulfillment of the Abrahamic, Davidic, and new covenants. **B. Its Designations.** The Millennium is called the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 6:10), the kingdom of God (Luke 19:11), the kingdom of Christ (Rev. 11:15), the regeneration (Matt. 19:28), the time of refreshing (Acts 3:19), and the world to come (Heb. 2:5). **C. Its Government.** 1. Its Head will be Christ (Rev. 19:16). 2. Its character. A spiritual reign which will bring in peace, equity, justice, prosperity, and glory (Isa. 11:2-5). 3. Its capital will be Jerusalem (Isa. 2:3). **D. Its Relation to Satan.** During this period Satan will be bound under the very end, when he will be loosed in order to deceive the nations and lead one final revolt against Christ (Rev. 20). Satan will be defeated and cast into the lake of fire forever.

### IV. THE FUTURE JUDGMENTS

**A. Judgment of Believers' Works.** 1. Time. After the Church is raptured. 2. Place. In heaven. 3. Judge. Christ. 4. Subjects judged. All in the Body of Christ. 5. Basis. Works done since time of salvation. 6. Result. Rewards or loss of rewards. 7. Scripture. 1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10. **B. Judgment of the Gentiles (or Nations).** 1. Time. At the second coming of Christ. 2. Place. Valley of Jehoshaphat. 3. Judge. Christ. 4. Subjects judged. Gentiles living when Christ comes. 5. Basis. Treatment of Christ's "brethren," i.e., Israel. 6. Result. Saved to enter the kingdom, or lost and cast into lake of fire. 7. Scripture. Matthew 25:31-46; Joel 3:2. **C. Judgment of Israel.** 1. Time. At the second coming of Christ. 2. Place. On the earth. 3. Judge. Christ. 4. Subjects judged. Jews who are living when Christ comes. 5. Basis. Acceptance of Messiah. 6. Result. Saved to enter the kingdom, or lost. 7. Scripture. Ezekiel 20:37-38. **D. Judgment of Fallen Angels.** 1. Time. Probably after the Millennium. 2. Place. Unspecified. 3. Judges. Christ and believers. 4. Subjects judged. Fallen angels. Basis. Disobedience to God in following Satan in his revolt. 6. Result. Cast into the lake of fire. 7. Scripture. Jude 6; 1 Corinthians 6:3. **E. Judgment of the Unserved Dead.** 1. Time. After the Millennium. 2. Place. Before the Great White Throne. 3. Judge. Christ. 4. Subjects judged. All unsaved men who have died from the beginning to this time. 5. Basis. Rejection of the Saviour places them in this judgment, but they are shown on the basis of their own works that they deserve eternal punishment. 6. Result. Lake of fire. 7. Scripture. Revelation 20:11-15).

### V. THE RESURRECTIONS

**A. The Resurrection of the Just** (Luke 14:4; John 5:28-29). 1. Includes the dead in Christ, who are raised at the rapture of the Church (1 Thess. 4:16). 2. Includes those saved during the Tribulation period (Rev. 20:4). 3. Includes O.T. saints (Dan. 12:2—some believe they will be raised at the rapture; others, at the second coming). These are included in the first resurrection. **B. The Resurrection of the Unjust.** All unsaved people will be raised after the Millennium to stand before the Great White Throne in judgment (Rev. 20:11-15). This second resurrection results in the second death for all involved.