

# A PROPHETIC RESET

## *Rev.22.16 T The Bright & Morning Star*

### **INTRODUCTION**

There are three vital elements to the mission of the church. These are: first to witness to Jesus and the gospel; second, to witness to the “Way” namely the pathway of life modeled by Christ and the apostles, and third, to witness to the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ and its advent. In all three commissions the first in Matthew 28.19, the second in the Sermon on the mount and the third in the communion bidding “This do until I come” the apocalypse and numerous places in Christ’s teaching. In all of these we are to be led by the Spirit as were all the prophets and guided by the word which is the Holy Spirit’s manual.

The longer I live I appreciate the more the interconnection of all three commissions and the vital nature of the *love of His appearing* to inspire us in daily attention to all three. The scope of this monograph is specific to the appearing of our lord and our gathering to Him-in other words to the third bidding of our Lord in respect of His Parousia(*the visit to take the church to its prepared places promised in John 14*) and Return when once again our Lord will taste of the fruit of the vine on earth.(Lk22.18)

### **THE SOCRATIC STYLE**

Most of my writing is in a robust style sometimes verging on polemics but this engagement with *a-millennial theory* in respect of things future and prophetic is drawn up in question and answer style. I cannot evade conclusions that are by their very nature uncomfortable to a revisionist school of bible teaching whose fault line runs back to an error of one no less distinguished than Augustine of Hippo. The questions assimilate to a series of probing manoeuvres which if followed through lead to an inescapable verdict in favour of teaching predominant in the sub-apostolic age and received by tradition and text from the apostles themselves-broadly considered to-day to fall within the category of pre-millennialist interpretation. The questions I pose are designed to encourage a much wider appreciation of the indispensable nature of the concept of a glorious but not interminable kingdom of Messiah on earth,

the reality of a concluding military-political desolation to this secular age and the necessity of a prior Parousia which marks the “escape”(ARPAZO 1 Thessalonians 4.17) of the righteous from this Noah like long predicted desolation and the intermission of fearful conflicts where man’s inhumanity to man is seen at its worst-with such **anguish as has not been known since the creation** of the world. *How, I ask, can the a-millennialist (one who dismisses Christ’s 1000 year rule fulfilling the Lord’s prayer petition)—nay any Christian-dismiss or deny our Lord’s very words and their exposition in the Apocalypse-i.e. the Tribulation?* That is the core question at the disruptive heart of modern history which leads us naturally into the wider text of question and answer that follows.

## **WHERE DO WE READ OF AN ESCAPE?**

Someone will counter immediately with undisguised chagrin

**Q1 “Where do you get that idea?”** The answer is “From St. Paul!” We read in 1Thessalonians 4.17 “The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout....then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord”. This was Paul’s advice to the first Church in Europe circa AD 50 in the light of reaction to the death of early Christians he led to Christ in that city where faith has flourished since those days.

But a Christian let us say a missionary or a believer in the *latter rain* might well ask, **Q2 Why would our Lord interrupt the course of Church history especially now?** There are a handful of good reasons why we must shortly expect a massive spiritual change. The first is because “low at the throne of God in heaven” appeal is being made by saints who testified “unto blood” in bitter latter day persecution that Christ rescue His own and then return and rule. The second is the escalation of the Matthew 24 procedural developments in international strife and the ever more concerted and brutal antichrist rule. The third is the pose of Russia as a brutal desolator well attested in Ezekiel 38. The fourth is the jeopardy of Israel now resettled for over 70 years but hated of many nations and threatened with war and ruin by Iran. The fifth is derived from personal enquiry into the Aramaic of Revelation 6-7 and respects

the trauma perpetrated by the rider on the white horse who is bent on military conquest with serious impact on world wheat and barley supply and brutal missile and drone belligerence that will soon impact world peace and initiate the use of nuclear devices to perhaps even to Europe. With this new era of war we will in time arrive at a point where as Christ said “The days shall be shortened!” Matt 24.22 and Mark 13.22.

## ***THE DAYS SHALL BE SHORTENED***

### ***Q3 Whatever could the shortening of days mean?***

This could be a question for the scientist or astronomer but it is one to which our Lord affirmed He had formulated the answer.

The astronomer might advise that the earth’s movement is under natural threat of orbital change through impact with a huge maverick meteorite. So will the earth spin faster? This is speculative. The Greek word “shorten” κολοβω has to do with “cutting horns” of a dangerous farm animal. This practice the farmer would follow to spare others of the herd being bored to death. Militant or warring nations in the bible are referred to as “horns”. Nicander amongst the Greek writers refers to “stunted warfare” referring to *battle method* being curtailed and stopped. It would seem the entire order of the warring world will be disrupted amid gross trauma or by geo-physical change or even direct divine intervention. The intent of the Lord is to spare flesh in His great mercy amid man’s inhumanity and expansionist warring.

The answer is incomplete without acknowledging a long promised disruptive act that spares God’s children at the time of the end. We are told that the Lord will descend from heaven and take the righteous home to honour His promise of 1Thessalonians 5.9 and save those His *called out ones* according to His undertaking to the early European Christians “The Lord has not appointed us unto wrath *but to gain our possessions of life* through our Lord Jesus”(Aramaic rendering). This reading accords with the earlier exegesis of 1Thessalonians 4.17.

## ***TRIBULATION THOUGHT THROUGH***

***Q4 Which days are shortened?*** You might expect the answer “The last days”-but that is a flat contradiction-the last days are the last days. The true answer is the days of Daniel’s last “Heptad or seven years”. But again if these are shortened they are not seven years!

The mind of God does not defer from the prophecy of Daniel and the Heptad (seven years) of trouble but in compassion through the period of “seals” in Revelation 7-8.5 qualifies the intensity of the first part of the Tribulation. The timing and possibly gracious delay of the Rapture (cf Matthew 24.48, Luke 12.45(v22 to 13.8 spell out how the Lord is patient & loving) to reach more souls. Again in Revelation 10.6 where during the anguish of trumpets grace again intervenes with words of authority “There shall be delay no longer” and makes its awesome contribution to relieving the intensity of the tribulation which equates to the period of the trumps and vials-a 3.5 year saga of wars. This has implications for Pre-millennial thought for it pushes the Laodicean church period(symbolized by the purple woman) into the tribulation period issuing in the warping of both as when tectonic plates collide. The terrible trouble brewing in the world today eventually pitches us into a type of judgment by fission and fire which our Lord paralleled to that of Noah and meted out for very similar reasons of corruption and violence.

John the divine is posed a vital question which he rightly affirmed the angel of the Lord alone could answer. **Q5“Who are these and whence came they”?** Answer (Revelation 7.14) ‘These are they that have come away from the face of great tribulation and have *washed* their robes and *made them white* in the blood of the Lamb’. Aramaic helps us understand that the *dust* of the tunic and the *stains of deeper sort* were gone. John had never seen these persons or such numbers-they represented a far distant future age literally thousands of years ahead-as far from him one way in time as Abraham was the other. These represented people groups of which he had never heard. What would have quickened him is that they had lived on the cusp of time foretold by Jesus in Matthew 24.21 Mark 13.19 and Luke 21.36. Luke reminds us that Jesus promised those of that anguished generation would be equal to the challenge and worthy as harvesters to escape/flee/vanish ARAQ and stand before the Son of Man (The Rapture).

## **WHO INVENTED THE RAPTURE?**

**Q6 Who indeed is worthy to escape??** The “*rapture*” or “*escape*” or “*bridal feast*” or “*bridegrooms call*” or “*Lightning from the east to the west*” is woven into the entire texture of our Lord’s teaching and He initiated this glorious finale for the harvesters that they

might rejoice with the sower and mutually enjoy the company of Christ. You will remember that our Lord in Matthew 24.26-27 29-31 and 25.1-12 referred to His Parousia visit and subsequently of His “appearing in glory to all the nations and if you check the text carefully you will see that in between those events the heavens are darkened and the moon does not give her soft light and the powers of heaven will have been shaken to and fro like a boat on the sea. As to the secular sequel the rich pickings found by what aerial drones or planes can survey the scene will become the booty of these military scavengers that our Lord calls the “eagles”.(Matthew 24.28).

## ***WHERE DO WE BEGIN ETERNITY?***

**Q7 Should we be called home do we join the spirits of just men made complete in paradise-**in sight of the glorious city being made ready as a bride for her bridegroom. Exactly, at the rapture we enter the Father’s house where we share in the unparalleled joy of the bridal feast.(John 14 and Matthew 25.1-10).

The descent of the Holy City which is our home wherever the Lamb leads us-demonstrates that this great provision for the people of God is far different from the “city of God” as envisaged by Augustine-for although he contemplated some of its inhabitants it was in the nature of his concept to become anchored like Kierkegaard’s geese in a very earthbound setting.

Saints who rule with the Lord are to expect to live as He said “like the angels” (Matthew22.30, Mark12.25, Luke 20.35). Our future engagement with the earth resembles theirs. We are not going to be in charge of every town council for the Messianic era on earth features sinners submissive to Christ and untroubled by the devices of the devil-though the Holy City whose mobility is attested in Revelation21.2 can enable our placement adjacent to the earth and afford a role of supervision yet enable freedom from earth’s defilement.

## ***WHAT ABOUT THE BEMA?***

**Q8 What about The judgment seat of Christ?**

Popularly called the Bema by Paul it is a feature where quite specific

arraignment on a type of person by person basis was conducted in Greek society except that there it did not summon the entire civil population. The sheer numbers involved and the reproof and reward involved render it akin to an audience with a monarch. That this might be fitted in during the bridal feast would seem highly incongruous. That it might be a gathering en masse is extremely unlikely although **the day of judgment of the wicked** (and remember that there are a variety of judgments-that of the saints, the nations, the angels and the wicked) could be conducted after this fashion. Should it take place at our passing to glory so that shortly thereafter we meet Jesus in tranches (as in 1Corinthians 15.23) is very possible –but even then thousands are daily being called home to glory. The plain truth is we shall all meet our judge but He is also our advocate *and the ineffable nature of this question demands that we suspend judgment in sheer awe of our Lord* and in face of our incapacity to match the task and the eternal setting. The judgment of the wicked shall be after the millennium and judgment begins at the house of God previously according to our understanding.

## **IS RAPTURE ORTHODOX?**

**Q9 Doesn't the church's work just carry on when Jesus comes back to bring good cheer and overdue ecumenical unity and world peace?** Hardly-indeed the proposition is preposterous. Wars, strife of nations, famines and diseases followed by suffering not experienced since Adam-more traumatic than the flood-allied to the sun darkened and the moon turned to blood-amid unprecedented warfare-that is what Jesus said and that's why He plans an intermission for saints in heaven, a shortening of the days of terror for the righteous.

Besides not only did the apostles teach exactly these things but as the gospel spread they were taught everywhere-Papias in **Phrygia**, Justin in **Palestine**, Irenaeus in **Gaul**, Nepos in **Egypt**, Apollinaris and Methodius in **Greece**, Victorinus in **Germany**, Tertullian in **Africa** and Lactantius in **Italy**-everywhere rapture tribulation & millennium were taught so that *Harnack* said the glorious reign of Christ(the millennium) should be included in all doctrinal statements it was of such sub apostolic period pedigree.

Irenaeus who taught in France held there were 3 classes of men: (1) Heretics who deny the resurrection of the flesh and the Millennium (2)

Orthodox who assert both Resurrection and Christ's kingdom on earth and (3) believers who consent *yet endeavour to allegorize and turn to metaphor those scriptures that speak of the millennial reign* –these agree more with heretics than the orthodox.

## **CHRISTIAN REVISIONISTS DIVERT THE STREAM OF PROPHECY**

**Q10 When did early pre-millennial teaching about rapture, tribulation and millennium go off the rails?** The answer will surprise you- through two renowned teachers- Clement of Alexandria and Augustine of Hippo.

(A) Sadly the learned Mosheim died early-had he lived he would have more than out-thought Origen and could have maintained the force of pre-millennial truth. Origen in Mosheim's words "*Wished to have the literal and obvious sense of the words of scripture disregarded and an arcane sense, lying concealed in the envelope of the words, to be sought for*". Lactantius who was an effective quarry of Origen in his 72<sup>nd</sup> chapter of his *Epitome* and on Revelation 13 states "*Christ will deliver all nations into subjection to the righteous who are alive and will raise the righteous dead to eternal life and will Himself reign with them on earth, and build the holy city, and this kingdom of the righteous will be for a thousand years*". It is of interest that Julian *the Apostate* popularised Origen's allegorical method of dispatching prophecy. Advocates of truth in the literal sense of scripture were sidelined. Gaius and Dionysius first cast doubt on the genuine inspiration of the Apocalypse since it would not fit their theories. The substitution of an allegorical sense scrubbed 1000 from the text and Old Testament references-many prefiguring end times and totaling 600 were disregarded. They figured Jewish disobedience forever disenfranchised them of the return of Messiah. (B) Augustine 396-430AD in his *City of God* re-positioned "**the binding of Satan**" in Jesus' time (thus capping the tribulation); the "first resurrection" becomes the new birth, the 1000 year kingdom of Christ is the church age (then with 600 further years to run). He believed Constantine's conversion consolidated that age. Augustine had no place for Israel's Messiah and *foisted on the world a false millennium*. Reformers took over much of Augustine's teaching and since his millennium had run out a-millennialism was the only

viable premise left unless they reverted to the pre-millennarian apostolic position.

(C) More recently Calvin's affirmation of scripture's literal meaning held prospect of potential recovery of the future Messianic millennium of the Apocalypse but it was stymied when Calvin himself called the millennium "purile" because in his estimate it impugned the *sovereignty of God*. *On Augustine's template it was truly mighty confusing-but* Calvin's choice to follow Augustine in replacing the Messianic kingdom and its promises with Church history threw the reformed movement into an understandable rejection of Augustine's millennium and conversely an acceptance of Augustine's church age replacement –wiping out the future relevance of Revelation 21 and collapsing Pauline doctrine of the Rapture whilst wiping out the Tribulation teaching of Matthew 24 Mark 13 and Luke 21 and John in Revelation 6-18. Calvin discarded the Fathers, developed a false historical view and projected reformed tradition into a giant theological black hole in direct conflict with the sovereign plan outlined in the Apocalypse.

## ***ARE THERE NORMS TO GUIDE AS TO THE IMMINANCE OF THE RAPTURE?***

**Q11 When can we expect the Lord's return-is it imminent?** The word "immanent" means "remaining likely"

whereas "imminent" means "overhanging" or about to happen. At this point in time we can call the return of Christ in the form of his Parousia visit or the Rapture "imminent" and on the following norms:

- (1) **The return of the nation of Israel** to the land promised to Abraham from which for 2000 years she was banished but since 1948 there has been *aliyah* from many nations. cf Matthew 24.34, Mark 13.30 and Luke 21.32. Many including Grattan Guinness foresaw this event which has now passed into history 74 years ago. The Lord promised that the offspring or *branches* of those who returned would see all prophecy fulfilled. Mt 24 32-35. Guinness' theory was 691 AD The Bomination of the mosque +1335 years to blessedness (Daniel 11-indicate a 2026 terminus roughly within the 7 day theory of Rabbis, Barnabas and Peter (2 Peter 3) but to be expected by 2033[having regard to the ministry of Jesus and adding 4 years BC to our Lord's birth]



- (2) **The discovery of nuclear fission.** Never before has this discovery which awaited the development of knowledge in an exponential manner been remotely possible. In 2 Peter 3.10 we read of seven days of man's spiritual history and of the discovery and use of fission in *the day of the Lord* and in 2 Peter 2.12 we read of the earth's destruction in *the day of God*. The discovery and harnessing of nuclear fission is a key element in recognizing the period when Christ shall return. **the "big quake"** referred to 10 times in scripture should really be another "norm" because it relates to the rapture-cum-tribulation and is best known by the quotation in Haggai 2.6 & 21 quoted in Hebrews 12.27.
- (3) **The preaching of the gospel to all nations** as a sign of the completion of the commission foretold in Matthew 24.14, 26.13 and Mark 14.9. Satellite ministry and the i-phone have brought this day very near.
- (4) Circumstances demanding **a middle-east peace plan** with guarantees which plan is scrapped after three and a half years (The middle of Daniel's 'seventh week'). This plan must come in view on the cusp of the desolating war scenarios at the leading edge of the tribulation. it is likely to impinge on Palestinian Israeli relations and involve a time when Israel has become a "heavy stone" for all nations (Zechariah 12.3)
- (5) This day will not come before **"the falling away"** and the gross increase of iniquity which our Lord called "the return of the days of Noah". (Matthew 24.37, Luke 17.26 with 1 Peter 3.20 & 2 Peter 2.5)
- (6) **The Laodicean state of the church** at large. The Antichrist is by definition to appear in his ultimate form after Christ has called His people to the bridal feast-which may at the door of Daniel's seventh week or some way into it. In this connection I would point to the highly significant oecumenical parable our Lord told in Matthew 24.43.
- (7) **The abomination that causes desolation** or "the abomination of the desert" (Greek Βδελυγμα ερημωσης/Hebrew ממונמ מוזחמז) will stand in the holy place. A second reference of our Lord to this antichristian imposter is in Matthew 24.26 "Lo he (Messiah) is in the desert-believe him not". Daniel pronounces

that he who understands αναγιγνωσκων νοειτω this sign must be wary because of personal endangerment. Readers are advised by the Holy Spirit to carefully recognize this sign with sad and devastating associations set in the temple area of Jerusalem.

- (8) Finally our Lord Christ directed that we “watch **the fig tree and all the trees**”. This demands attention to political and military developments in the world besides the persecution of the Lord’s people. The glorified saints are calling for Christ’s rule. The groaning earth is echoing that call. The appearance of the desolator of Daniel and the roused state of Russia brings us to a precipice from which a clear view of the approach of the Armageddon can be foreseen. The seals, trumps and vials of the Apocalypse and their disturbing story is I believe like the Philistine ambush of Samson. Beware the fake Messiah-the imposter-the horseman of Revelation 6 and watch how the war of the bread basket proceeds to snatch peace from the earth. If every war ends with a stalemate or a peace plan be aware of the time-possibly imminent when nations cry “Peace, peace” yet there will be no Shalom.

## ***WHAT SORT OF PEOPLE OUGHT WE TO BE?***

Jesus gave us directions as to our Christian walk while we work and await his coming. You find these in Luke 21 34-36. I summarise.

1. Be kind to one another as we bring the ship of Christianity to harbour- seek the good of our brothers and salvation of all men we can reach- evangelise to the finish.
2. We must not let our hearts become hard Βαρυνοθοσις
3. We are to avoid profligate living κραιμαλη
4. Never to be found drunken μεθη- we are back in days of Noah
5. Not be anxious overmuch μεριμνος Βιωτιμας
6. Ever involved in gospel work- not a spectator settled on earth- we are going to glory- so not καθημαι επιεισερχομαι armchair believers
7. Ever watchful prayerful αγρυπνω and counted worthy to escape (1Thessalonians 5.9) to join the bridal feast –so look up and aim high keeping in touch with our Lord day on day.

## ***WHEN IS OUR LORD COMING?***

**Q 12** Before we look at a practical question outside of the technical range but just as vital we need to handle this old chestnut. Most cynics and indeed not a few a-millennial thinkers bring out their thought stopper “No man knows the day or the hour when the Son of man cometh” (Matthew 24.36) and so kick the matter into the long future. Remember the disciples probed vigorously to have an exact date declared at Olivet. Our Lord kept it under wraps. The Greek scriptures give our Lord’s reply as denying His awareness of the day of His return though He issues a series of signs. On that occasion of course He spoke in Aramaic and this is what He said “There is not anyone who knows – neither *a fleshly man* nor the angels in heaven but the Father in union” (**BAL HUD**). *So the Father’s awareness of the day would figure as knowledge shared in union with the Son? The Aramaic does not have “Even the Son” by way of exclusion.* The omniscience of Christ at the throne along with the apostolic word of Peter “Lord thou knowest all things” reinforce this ancient text. The further unveiling of the Apocalypse attests the extension of understanding our Lord committed to His Church. Another little quoted but relevant reference comes from Isaiah 61 where we read of the “Lord as equally competent to proclaim the “year of his favour” or grace as He initiated ministry and His competence to declare **the day of vengeance of our God**” (Isa 61.2). The Apocalypse 6-16 as combining seals, trumps and vials give the veriest detail of the Heptad or final 7 years which as they approach are arguably fairly readable. This verse often used as a diversionist tactic is truly an awakener not a distracter text and its purpose of vigilance should not be denied or trivialized.

## ***POSTSCRIPT***

In face of the criticism that there is only one reference to “a thousand years” in Revelation I would remind readers that there are actually 5 references in the context. In another commentary I have examined **24 separate Old Testament references** to the Golden Era or Kingdom of Messiah to which Jews even today look forward and would encourage you to pursue the subject through these references.

Psalm 9, Psalm 24.7-9, Psalm 45 7-17, Psalm 72, Isaiah4, Isaiah14, Isaiah28.20-22, Isaiah29 where the Hebrew reads ***“The Lord of hosts will visit in the house of the sea roaring and earth quaking and a great voice QOL GADHOL of snatching away and in the house of disturbing the people like chaff.”***, Isaiah40, Isaiah49.9-16, Isaiah 51.4-8, Isaiah52 7-10, Isaiah54 9-12, Isaiah 60.18-22 ***“The sun will not be your chief light but the Lord your age-long light and the moon not lend its light by quarters for the Lord will be your light for an age”***, Isaiah61.1-11 ***“Enemies shall minister and sow seeds and be your ploughmen-in their land they shall settle double the area and age long joy shall be theirs”***, Isaiah62.3-12, Isaia66 20-24, Jeremiah 31.38-40, Jeremiah 33 4-9, Jeremiah33.4-9 –the prophets 225<sup>th</sup> speech from the Lord ***“behold me raise her up for long continued days and restorative healing not by medicine but by sowing seed. I will reveal to them fragrance and abundance of Shalom and truth. I will turn back Judah and Israel and build them as at the BERESHITH-the very start.*** Daniel 14-18, Daniel 9.27 ***“In the middle of the week antichrist shall cause a cessation of the evening offering until the removal or hiding(Rapture & flight to safety of Israel)-contaminations shall have desolated or waste till the end of languishing and that determined or bitter or sharp will be poured out on the desolate.”***(Daniel’s anguish), Daniel 11 34-45 where the Armageddon thrust against Israel “comes to an end with no-one to help the aggressor”. Daniel 12 1-13 Michael stands up for God’s people...the wise shall stand for ever (the millennium) and still (for eternity) Daniel is told that ***from the cessation of Jewish rites until the contamination that destroys will be 3.5 years but within 45 days the glorious scene in Jerusalem will be up and running under Messiah and he (Daniel) will be at his post a man reserved*** for leadership in the era of Messiah.

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