

# *Alêtheia Christian Fellowship*

*January 10, 2010*

*“Literally.” “Literally?”*

*Sunday school next week, Service at 9:15, Service at 10:45 with modified King’s Kids.*

## NEWS

Pray for our people.

Wednesday Night Activities next week at 6:30 PM?

330 N. Somers Rd. (Mail: PO Box 10626) Kalispell, MT 59904~ (406) 755-1776

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## **MATTHEW 24:15-28 ~ <sup>15</sup>“Therefore...**

The abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet...

<sup>22</sup>“Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved...

<sup>23</sup>“Then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ’... <sup>27</sup>“For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. <sup>28</sup>“Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

Every time you see a therefore...

From His answer we can see that He takes it as two things...

*Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.*

*God Bless You!*

No Temple for daily sacrifice, no Judaism as God established it. There is a New Covenant written in the Messiah's Own blood, which is the only sacrifice that can work for anyone (Galatians 3:28). There is only one way (John 14:6, I Timothy 2:5).

Was Jesus trying to be cryptic?

Be \_\_\_\_\_. That was the Lord's point.

Literalists think literal is better because they think literally. Symbolists, we'll call them, want to take the Bible in the genre that it was written, aiming to take it as intended.

Both groups regularly take their methods too far - both sides slip into extreme positions and then because the gap is so great between them - they can no longer relate, and so, they revile.

To be sure, there is going to be a literal, physical, bloodbath and that's the point - not just to make you know that, or even believe that, but to make you feel that.

And of course, we need to keep coming back to the overall point of this Section, this Gospel, this Testament, this Bible... Which is...

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Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon/Elder

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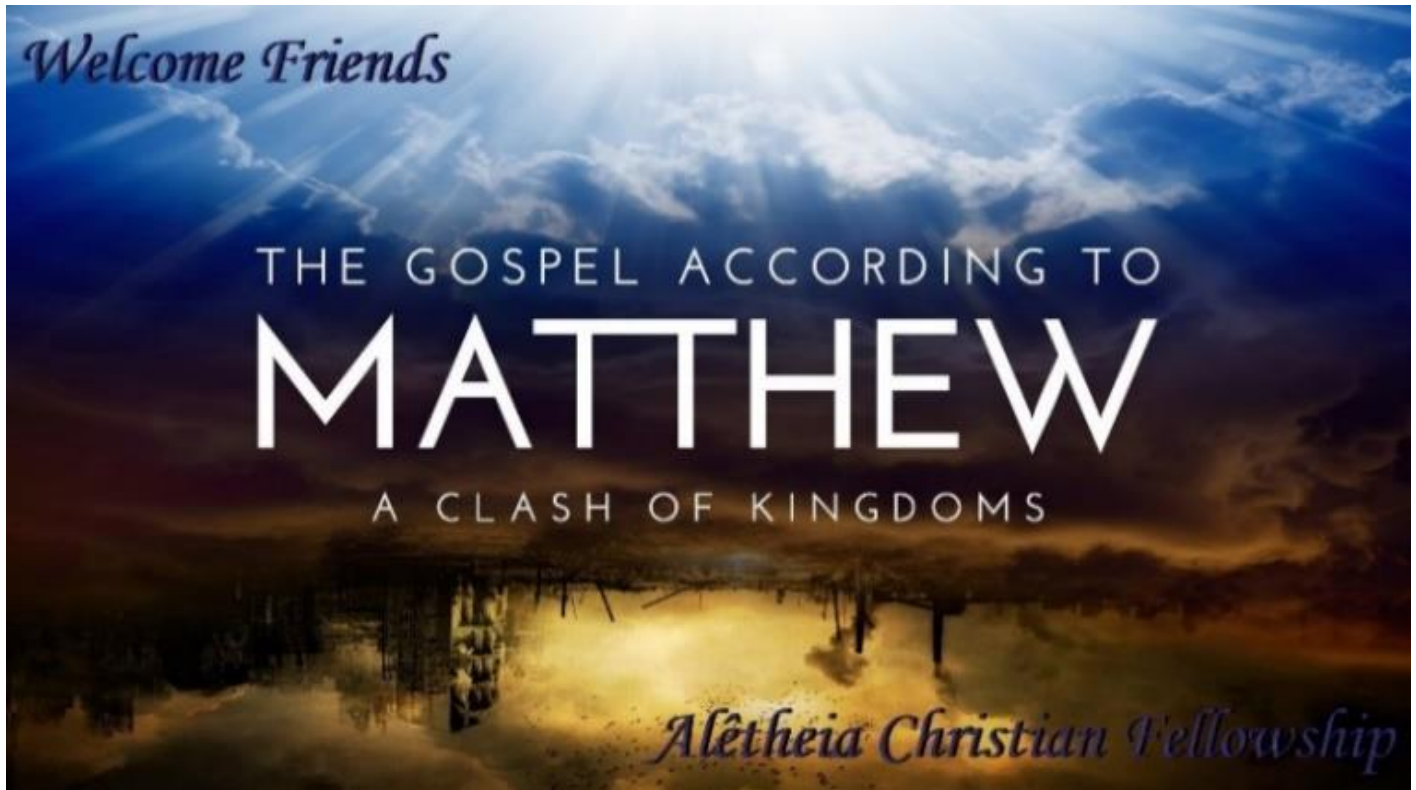


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Alêtheia ~ Matthew 24d ~ 010321  
“Literally.” “Literally?”



In the second service last week we didn't actually get to the end of the sermon and so I'll quickly review the final bit to catch everyone up. We got to where I said that Christianity is not about doctrine nearly as much as it is about love.

It's difficult to love the way we are commanded because, there's trouble all around. There's been trouble, we're in trouble now, and there will be trouble in the future. The thing is though, we have a mission.

Once we're a Saved, Christian, Child of God, disciple of Jesus, person... our existence fully belongs to God. The only reason... Please get this and understand it and accept it and embrace it... The only reason we live as physical people on earth is to do so as God's emissaries - His messengers, His ambassadors - His agents. A Christian belongs to the Master and He has purchased with a price more than we can actually comprehend. As part of the transaction when you accepted Eternal Life in Christ, is to surrender your entire being, your entire everything, here and now, there and forever, to Him. You do not own yourself. Realistically no one owns themselves, God owns all, but He allows the unsaved to think they do, as just another part of their delusion.

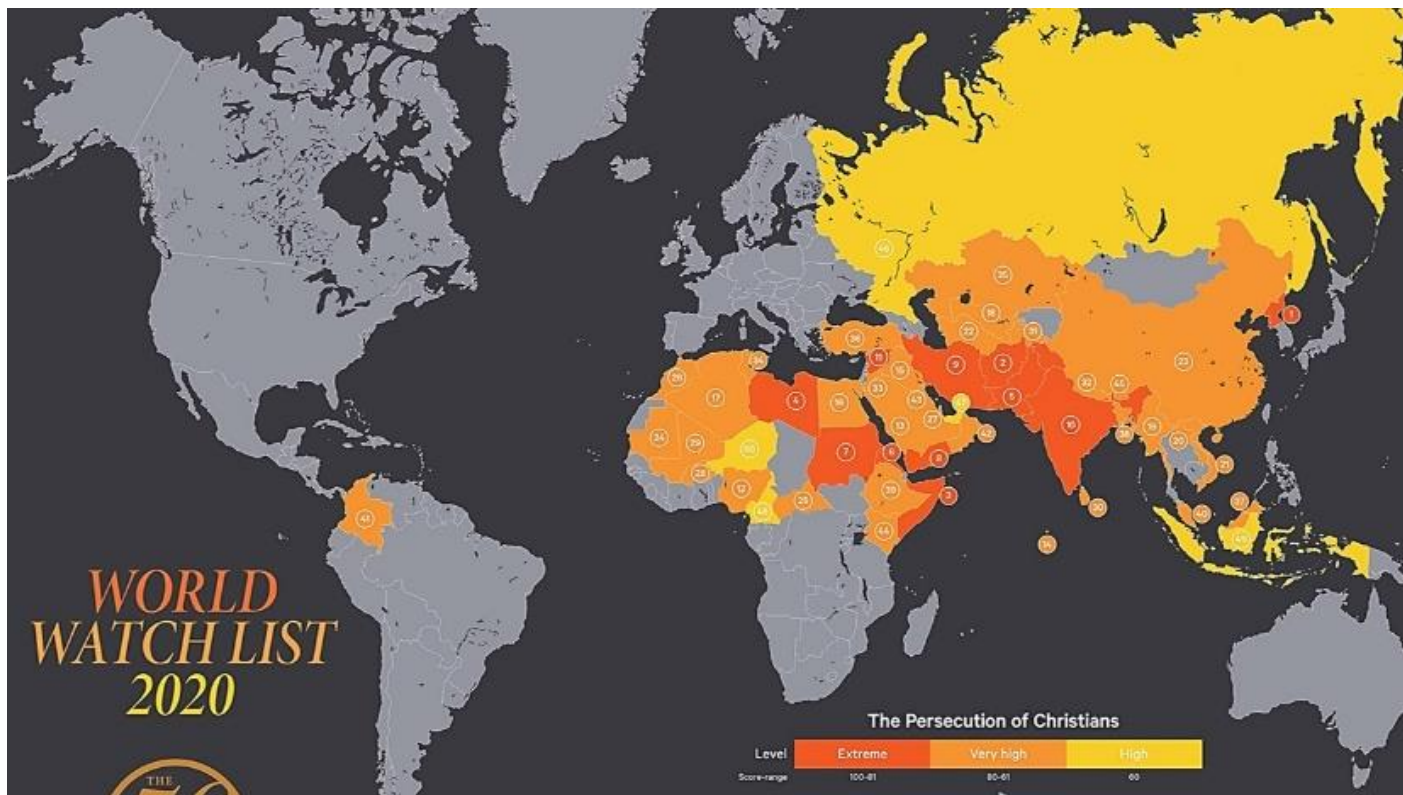
Now, each and every one of us has been sent on a vital mission behind enemy lines by our Supreme Commander, otherwise known as the Word of God Almighty. It is literally a mission of Love. Now, please hear this... None of us want that mission. All of us want a different mission and so we are constantly chafing against the yoke, constantly kicking against the goad.

Many will realize right away that I'm telling you the Truth. We recognize that we don't want to be ruled by,

and defined by Agapê Love. We want to reserve the right to defend ourselves with anger, with aggressive language, with hate, with physical violence, as necessary... We don't want no stinking mission of Love! For the rest of you who think that doesn't describe you... You're deluded.

So, I know that I don't have that within me. I don't have the love for it, and as a consequence, I do have the fear to be on guard against any attack of any kind. But I also know to Whom I belong, and I understand that I live to serve His interests, not my own...

So, I pray that Christ Jesus would fill me, and that His love would emanate from me as He wishes. And my friends, when it does, not only am I performing my mission, my reason for being, but my own personal faith is strengthened. His Spirit is moving through me and I know He exists and that I am His, because His unnatural Love is manifested... And so, instead of being afraid of an attack, I can face the day, no matter what it holds. I can run the race that He has set before me... Because I know that He has me.



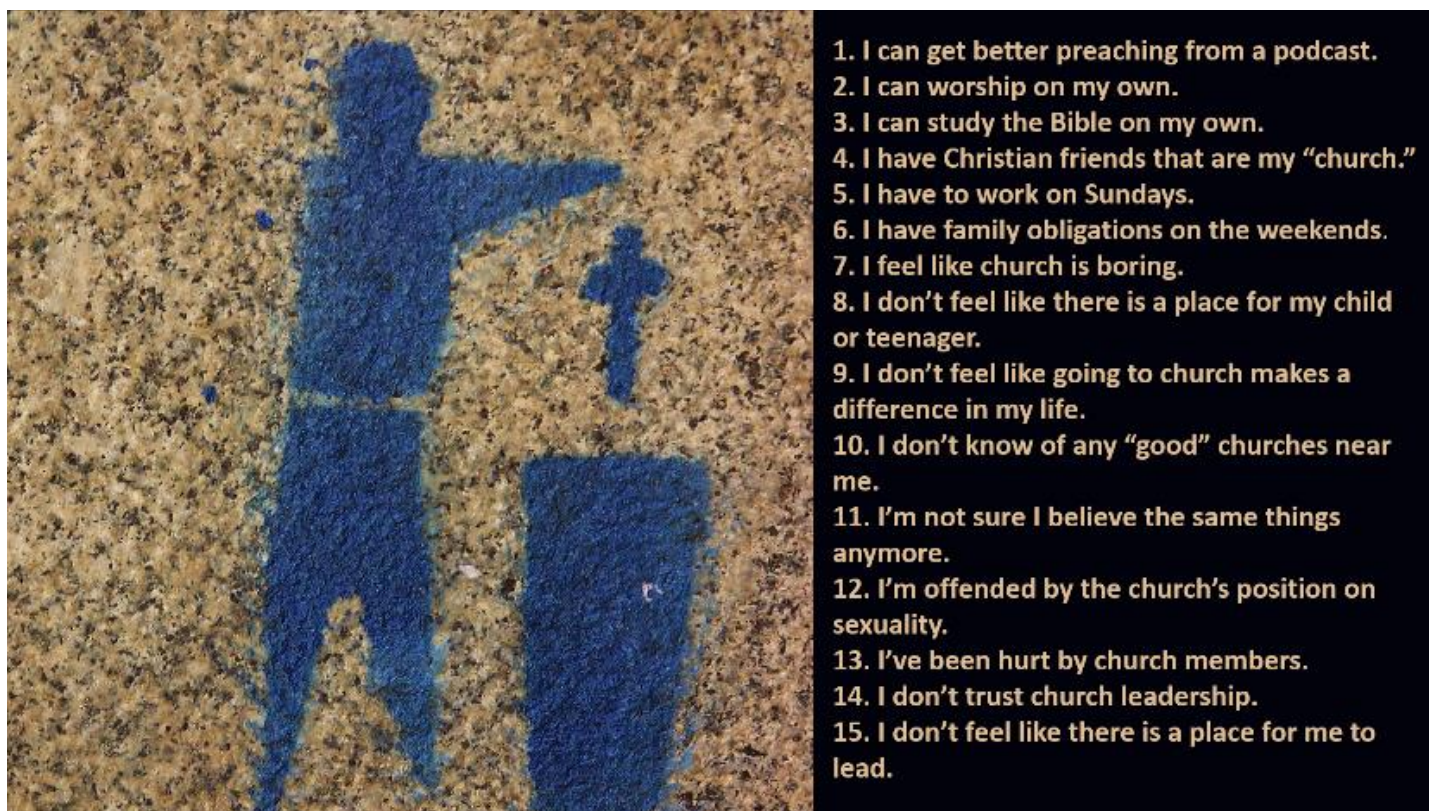
And what does this course set before me hold?  
 Matthew 24:9-12, from the children's Bible again...  
 9"Then people will hand you over to be treated badly and killed (the treated badly part is the Greek word θλίψις [thlēps-ēs] meaning tribulation. They will hand you - my very own personal disciples - over to tribulation and they will kill you.). All nations will hate you because of me. 10At that time, many will turn away from their faith. They will hate each other. They will hand each other over to their enemies. 11Many false prophets will appear. They will fool many people. 12Because evil will grow, most people's love will grow cold.

While the preceding passage, Verses 4-8, could certainly apply to the entire sweep of time. Here we like to think that Jesus was only talking about the events leading up to the destruction of the Temple and the Jewish nation and then perhaps in the Tribulation after we're all safely Raptured...

Think about it, pray about it, see if your old ideas hold up. Whatever the future holds for us, we know life has been and still is extremely brutal for many others - not because life is brutal, but because they refused to disavow Christ.

Today, Christians are being shunned, abused, tortured, jailed, raped, and viciously murdered just because they refuse to deny Jesus. What we are told in America is to pray for them, if you happen to think about it, but don't worry, it won't ever happen to Christians in America. God loves us. Americans are His chosen people. He will never let us suffer - we're going to be Raptured out before it gets bad here. Again, think and pray, and ask yourself if it makes any Biblical sense. Does it fit a pattern in the Bible? I will tell you; it is vital to be ready to meet Jesus at every moment of every day - you need to be ready to leave this life, but you also must ready yourself to "Stand firm" through intense suffering.

Verse 9, not only treated badly, but betrayed... Notice that... You will be “Handed over.” You will be “Hated” by everyone, inside the church, because of your faith in Jesus. Not because of your insistence on some bit of doctrine like a Pretribulation Rapture, not because of your steadfast refusal to wear a mask, not because you bought all the toilet paper and ammunition you could afford, not because of anything else, but simply because you are faithful to the Lord. Far better to suffer for Him, than for your opinions.



Verse 10, in the NASB, “At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another.”



Many people will leave the church. Scott, that isn't the same as falling away from Christ or the Faith. Perhaps, but please hear me, local church participation is a litmus test, or a symptom of being in the Faith. People who shun church participation almost always fall further away from Jesus. Typically people leave the church because they had their feelings hurt, or were offended, or didn't get their way. Almost all attempt to hurt the church on their way out in return. They try to drag others away with them, or they disparage the pastor, or they repudiate Christ with their new lifestyle... Usually, it's something that ultimately gives God a black eye. Given an opportunity to hurt the church that hurt them, most will eagerly take it.



Verse 11, people will follow the entertainers. Itchy ears.  
“Are you not entertained?”



Verse 12, because of the evil in the church... Get that. Because of the evil in the church... Disunity and disfellowship and hatred and vicious betrayal, “Most people’s love will grow cold.” The love here is Agapê. Obviously, the Christian affection and brotherly love is long gone, but now the choice to love others because Christ commanded it is gone as well. The word translated “Grow cold” in Greek does mean to cool, but in the normal usage it applies to a fire and means to extinguish the flame entirely. A cold fire is not a weak fire, it is a dead fire. The context favors that understanding. All love is dead because it was replaced by fear driven hate, as faith was abandoned.



Matthew 24:13, 13But the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. Standing firm to the end, means that there was something requiring a firm stance. Some will ask, “I thought it was Jesus alone, not Jesus plus “Standing firm to the end.” It is Jesus alone and always Jesus alone Who saves entirely. Only the person truly in Christ Jesus will have His power to “Stand firm.” The standing firm in the tribulation is proof that you are His.



Matthew 24:15-28, 15“Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), 16then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. 17“Whoever is on

the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. 18“Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. 19“But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 20“But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath. 21“For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. 22“Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. 23“Then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ,’ or ‘There He is,’ do not believe him. 24“For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. 25“Behold, I have told you in advance. 26“So if they say to you, ‘Behold, He is in the wilderness,’ do not go out, or, ‘Behold, He is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe them. 27“For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. 28“Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

Okay, big picture... We started with a “Therefore.” Every time you see a therefore, ask yourself what is it there for? It always means because of something

previously established; I now tell you this... What is the something previously established, exactly? You need to be careful because it isn't always just the last thing mentioned.

As here... The "Therefore" in this instance, signals that Jesus is now going to answer their questions from verse 3. At the same time though, we cannot lose our connection to Jesus' preface and background information - all the groundwork that He established in verses 4-14.

So, without forgetting that, Jesus was saying, here's the answer your question about the end of the Jewish Nation, it's capital and the Temple, My Return, and the End of the world.

<sup>15</sup>“Therefore when you see the **abomination** of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), <sup>16</sup>then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. <sup>17</sup>“Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. <sup>18</sup>“Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. <sup>19</sup>“But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! <sup>20</sup>“But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath. <sup>21</sup>“For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. <sup>22</sup>“Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; **but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.** <sup>23</sup>“Then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ,’ or ‘There He is,’ do not believe him. <sup>24</sup>“For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. <sup>25</sup>“Behold, I have told you in advance. <sup>26</sup>“So if they say to you, ‘Behold, He is in the wilderness,’ do not go out, or, ‘Behold, He is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe them. <sup>27</sup>“For **just as the lightning** comes from the east and **flashes even to the west**, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. <sup>28</sup>“Wherever the **corpse** is, there the **vultures** will gather.

From His answer we can see that He takes it as two things... Between the green words Jesus focusses in on the “Not one stone left standing upon another,” part. From verse 23 we have the topic of His Return and the End that follows.

Notice then the meaning of the final verse. Can you see what it is? How it is an example that exactly parallels the previous example?

Remember that Jesus started His answer with a preface that His disciples should not ever be misled by someone claiming to be the Christ. From verse 23 on, He expounds and expands that same theme... Verse

27 means that just as lightening in the east is obvious even in the west so will Jesus' Return be. Next, just as a dead body is obvious by all the vultures winging that way so will Jesus' Return be.

Big picture? The Disciples really asked two questions, not the single question they no doubt assumed and not the triple question some today assume. 1) When will Judaism end and 2) how will we know it's Your Return and the end of everything else?

What, you ask? When will Judaism end? Right. Jesus predicted the utter destruction of the House of the Jews, the destruction of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple 40 years before it happened. From that time until today - for 1,950 years Judaism, as instituted, has not existed on planet earth.

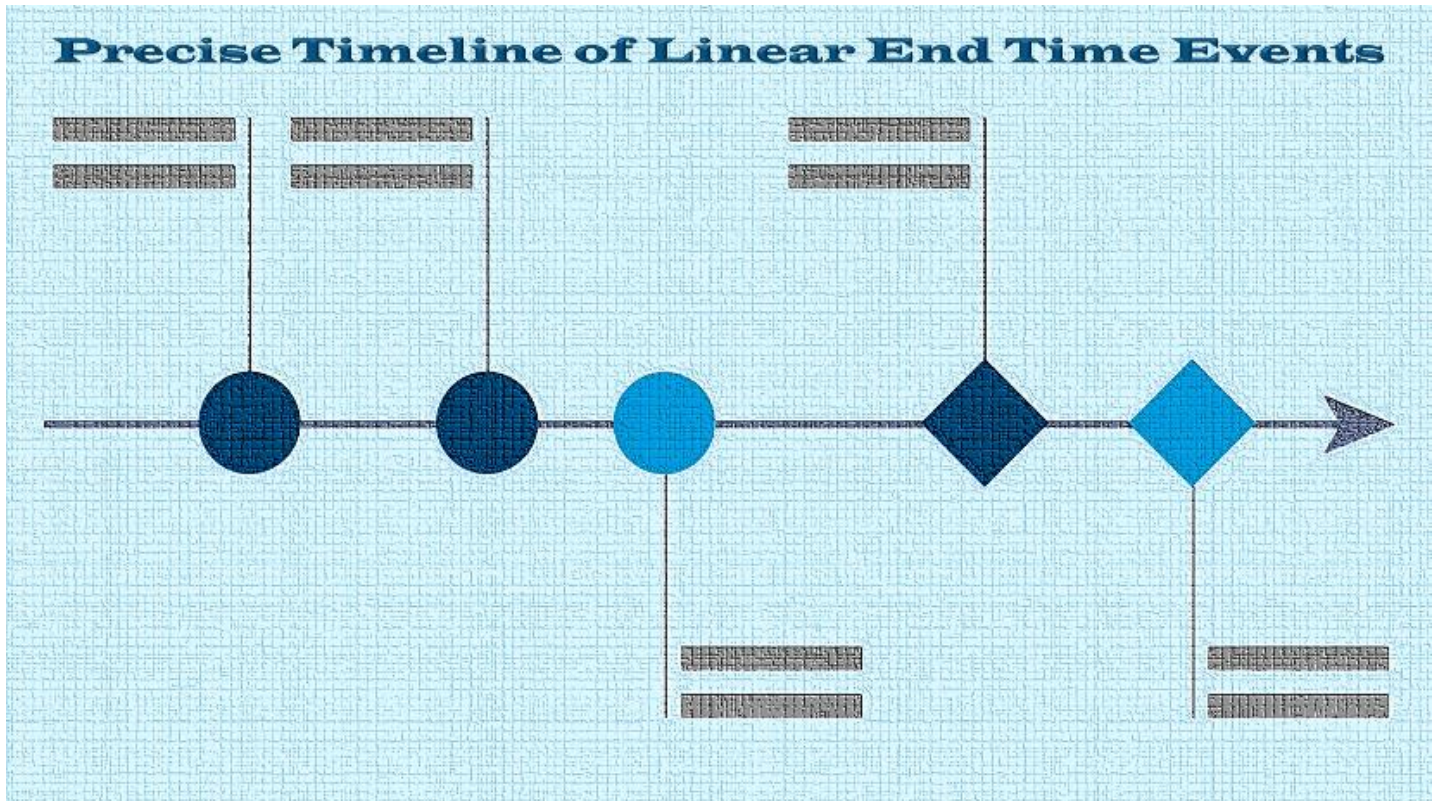




No Temple for daily sacrifice, no Judaism as God established it. The Temple does not exist, and so, just as Daniel predicted 500 years earlier, neither does the required daily and special sacrifices... The Judaism of the Old Testament is no more, because there is no sacrifice for sin. Why would God leave the Jews without the ability to atone for their sins for 20 centuries?

He didn't. There is a New Covenant written in the promised Messiah's Own blood, which is the only sacrifice that can work for anyone whether, "Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female," period (Galatians 3:28). There is only one way to the Father,

not a New way and an older way. (John 14:6, I Timothy 2:5).



Finally, beginning in verse 15, Jesus answers their questions... Sort of. What do I mean, "Sort of?" Well, His answer to the "When" question they posed ends up being anything but, an actual timetable that we modern Westerners would expect. Examine His answer as carefully as you like, there is no easily understood definitive timeline. His answer is open to interpretation as to "When," on a calendar, or clock.

As far as His answer to the “What will be the sign” question... Well, that is even less definitive as we will see.



Was Jesus trying to be cryptic? Not at all. So, what's going on? A “When” and a “What” as we would like it, was not Jesus' concern. That wasn't His point. His point was be ready. Be ready as a Follower of Mine - as a Christian person. Be ready to suffer greatly as you “Stand firm” in the Faith, and always be just as ready to be called home to stand before Me without warning... Be ready. That was the Lord's point.

Here's where we really enter the world of Apocalyptic Prophecy and it's like entering the Twilight Zone. We have so much difficulty with it because we are so unfamiliar with it. This ancient genre was never about setting precise timetables or using literal language. It was always about eliciting a visceral response by describing the future using figurative, descriptive, surprising, even shocking words to evoke images in the mind.

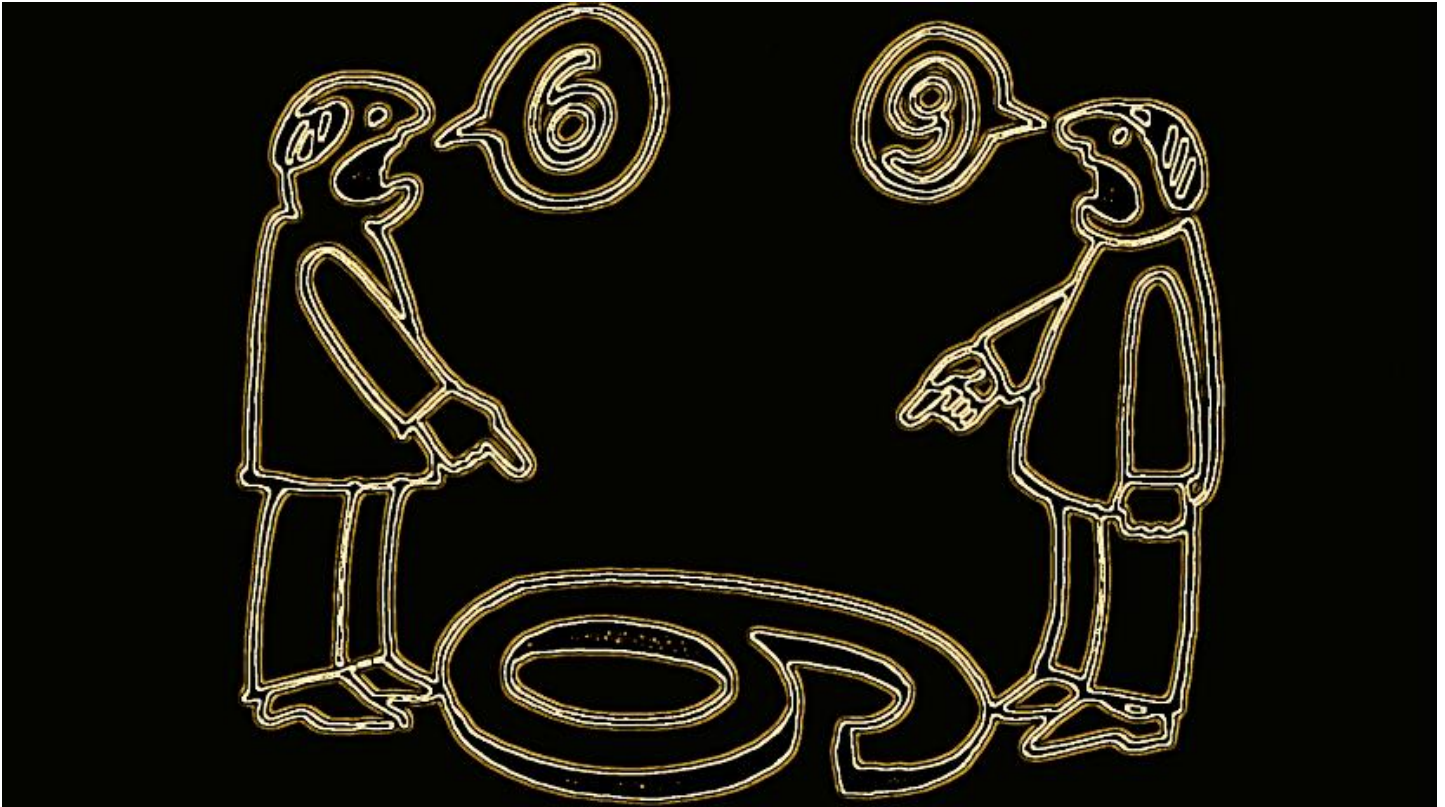
Now, what's prophesied is real, as in the event foretold will physically happen. That's kind of the point. The event will be so dramatic, only dramatic language can describe it. Let me give you an example... To make this work, I need you to relax, close your eyes, and just listen to the Scripture I'm going to read. It won't be a long passage... Trust me for a moment... Relax, close your eyes, and let God's Word wash over you.



Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. 18 Still another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine, because its grapes are ripe." 19 The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God's wrath. 20 They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses' bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia.



That was Revelation 14:14-20. The Greek distance of 1,600 stadia is equal to about 184 miles. Such a flow of blood would be on the order of 5.3 trillion cubic feet, put another way, it is 40 trillion gallons, or 318 trillion pints. Now, the average adult person has about 10 pints of blood, so that would take roughly 32 trillion people completely exsanguinated, that means completely drained of all blood. All of the blood of the entire earth's population is less than one tenth of 1% of the total needed to pull this off literally.



Remember all the time we spent over the last two weeks talking about Dispensational Premillennialism as opposed to Amillennialism? Remember that the biggest difference between them is that the first group takes everything as literally true, and the second as symbolic. Please, please, please, understand something incredibly important here. Both groups that I'm talking about take the Bible as God's Holy Word - they take it seriously and they take its authorship traditionally.

There are unbelievers who start from unbelief about the supernatural and the Bible - we're not talking about them. We're talking about people genuinely trying to

understand God's Word in the most God honoring way possible.

Literalists think literal is better because they think literally. If you are literally minded, you will think that to take God's Word seriously means to take it literally. In the other corner are people who try to recover the way people would have taken it at the time. For them, to honor God's Word is to take it as it was originally meant to be taken.

Literalists in the first camp not only want to make everything as literal as possible, but they also want to make it linear in time. One thing literally fulfilled, then the next and the next and so on in fixed linear time order. As I've said, it's how the Western brain works.

Symbolists, we'll call them, want to take the Bible in the genre that it was written. They take narrative, and dialog, and teaching, and command, as literal. They take figures of speech, poetry, and apocalyptic prophecy as they believe the author intended. It isn't that they have any less faith, or have any less regard for the Bible - it's that they are trying to take the Scripture as God intended, rather than trying to fit it to our more modern way of thinking.



Both groups regularly take their methods too far - both sides slip into extreme positions and then because the gap is so great between them - they cannot relate and so, they revile.

Please understand what I'm saying. We are seeing the same phenomenon playing out in America. People who have far more in common than they ever will in opposition. They take their minor differences to an extreme place, so that the chasm they themselves created between them is so vast, there is no way to bridge it - no way to meet in the middle, because we have eliminated the middle ground. Anyone suggesting a middle ground is advocating a slippery slope to the opposite extreme. There's no way forward.

The vast majority of Americans are actually reasonable middle of the road people who have been whipped into a frenzy of extreme polar opposites by the media on both sides and by the politicians on both sides... All to increase their wealth and power.

What do you do about it? How about being a reasonable Christian person seeking love and

understanding... Think what you like, do what you like... You will be explaining it to Jesus soon enough.



Back to the Book of Revelation passage I read to you. Remember that long ago? The “Sickle,” the “Grapes,” the “Winepress” and all the “Blood”? Literalists then have to get busy figuring out a way to make that work. Typically, they narrow the flow into a confined river.

To match other Scripture, no one knows the time, so the blood required must fit the number of people available. We hit a worldwide population of 1 billion about the time Darby founded his literalist interpretation in the early-to-mid-1800’s. It’s easy math (remember, “Math is fun”?). One billion times 10 pints equals 10

billion pints required. If we narrow the flow to 3 ½ feet wide, then it can be literally taken... Let's do that! Of course, where in Scripture does it say that it's a river, or confined in any way? Where does it say that it's 3 ½ feet wide, or even 30 feet wide? We must make unsupported assumptions, rather than just take the Word as it is... A whole lot of carnage.

On the other hand, what emotion was stirred in you when I read it to you? What image did the passage paint for you? What did you envision in your mind's eye? What impression did the words of the Bible evoke for you? That's the point of this genre.

To be sure, "Let God is true and every man a liar;" there is going to be a literal, physical, bloodbath and that's the point - not just to make you know that, or even believe that, but to make you actually feel that emotionally...

It was never supposed to be a literal amount of blood standing on earth (evidently in a huge area where the ground doesn't perk) that we were supposed to calculate. It's dramatic language to dramatize a dramatic event.

What I don't understand is literalists have no problem accepting that the "Clusters of grapes from the earth's vine," those grapes being "Ripe," and the "Winepress" itself, as figurative..., but insist the amount of blood is literal. Which is another problem with literalism... No one agrees on what to take literally and what can be let go as figurative.

That's not to say that the "Symbologists" don't have their issues as well. I just want everyone to be exposed to some of these things, so we'll all be in a more prepared to discover God's Message and its meaning, for us, today.

It's been a bit tedious over the last few weeks, but I'm confident that we will be the better for it as we move through these chapters.



And of course, we need to keep coming back to the overall point of this Section, this Gospel, this Testament, this Bible... God wins, and everyone in Christ Jesus the Savior He sent, wins with Him.