

THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS

Phase 1: “Times of Refreshing—Refining the Saints”

by

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INTRODUCTION

The official titles I’ve been given for these two papers are “*The Millennium*” and “*The Restoration of all Things*”. However, I’d like to take the liberty of unofficially changing those titles (or should I say ‘merging’ them) by naming them both—in order to clarify the subject matter—as “*The Restoration of All Things, Parts 1 and 2*”. I’ve subtitled Part 1 as “*Times of Refreshing—Refining the Saints*” and Part 2 is subtitled “*Cleansing the World—Completion of the Church*”.

My reason for doing this is because “The Restoration of All Things” plainly comes in two distinct but linked phases from our earthly point of view and, as we’ll see in our time together, **if there is any biblically-satisfying understanding of that ecclesiastically-loaded word, “Millennium”, it is to be identified with the first phase of “The Restoration of All Things”**. I’ll be developing all this with many examples from Scripture as we go along.

One thing I will say is that I don’t want to become embroiled in any arguments or disputes about any aspect of this subject. I’m here simply to stimulate our thinking by laying out what I believe that the Scriptures plainly show. Believe me, over the past twenty years or so I’ve considered all the arguments from every standpoint. So if you disagree with what I say today, I will politely beg to differ and will agree to disagree with you. I have no wish to become entangled in what are essentially endless disputes. I am always open to changing my thinking but not through hand-to-hand combat.

What I want us to do today is to unattach ourselves from any manmade systems of teaching about this subject. I don’t mean that we must ignore **any** human instruction that we’ve ever received. I mean that we must—at least while we are hearing these two papers—leave behind any manmade **systems** of teaching which we may have taken on board.

I’m not going to elaborate on any classic labels of the so-called millennium, like Premillennialism, Postmillennialism or Amillennialism. I’m not going to spend any time giving you pros and cons for one or the other view, or knocking things down or building things up, saying to you “*Well, you’ve got three choices, so which is it going to be? You’ve got to choose this one... or this one... or this one*”. Neither am I here to score points by saying “*My way of seeing things is better than yours*”. I hope you’re not here for that either. So often, people feel threatened if they hear some views which don’t exactly fit their own. There’s no need to feel threatened by anyone’s views if you feel secure in your own. Only the person who is not secure in his view tries to shoot down other people who have differing views in a hail of bullets. And there are a lot of bullets flying around in the Christian scene!

All I’m saying is that if what I say today rings true then see if it **is** the truth. Find out. Don’t just accept what is said. Scrutinise it. Hunt it down. Search it out. Check it out. I’m simply here to share my understanding of Scripture, honed over the last 23 years on a very beaten and sometimes rather weary anvil. (I speak as a man!). If you listen to what I’ve got to say and don’t accept it, I’m not

going to condemn you or wrestle with you. I'll be happy if you hear me out and go on your way with some warmth in your heart and a fresh breeze in your soul.

This is my plan: To take us through what I believe to be the plain and simple meaning of Scripture in relation to these two phases of "The Restoration of All Things". After that, each of us can then go on to develop that plain and simple meaning in the spirit of truth and discovery. But I'm hoping that by the end of these two papers, the conclusions will be inescapable.

There are three main headings in this first paper: **1) What do we mean when we say that "The Restoration of all Things" is in two phases? 2) What was the trigger point for the first phase of "The Restoration of all Things"? 3) The 'Mystery of God' and "The Restoration of all Things".**

I. WHAT DO WE MEAN WHEN WE SAY THAT "THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS" IS IN TWO PHASES?

I'm not saying anything strange when I speak about **two phases** in the process of "The Restoration of All Things". It's understandable that we should be wary when we hear something that we may not have heard before; but just because we haven't previously encountered an idea doesn't mean that it isn't kosher! Sometimes it takes seeing something from a different standpoint in order to be able to see it as we've never seen it before and—in fact—as **we're really supposed to see it!** It's as if we can say: "*Wow, I knew that already! Why have I never thought of it before?*" Do you know that feeling? That's when the Spirit has switched on your mind in a supernatural manner. It means you're ready to receive.

Whenever I hear people speak about two-stage-this or two-stage-that, my discernment radar kicks into action. We have to examine these things carefully. In terms of eschatology, for example, it is very common to hear people speak about the Second Coming of Christ being in two stages—first, something called "The Rapture" then, sometime later, the proper Second Coming of Christ. That's **not** at all what I'm speaking about here, when I speak about two phases. On the contrary; for I believe that this is a huge blunder which has become endemic in Christian thinking today—to the detriment of the church's witness.

When I speak about two phases in these two talks, I'm dealing here with the whole process of the transformation of creation from its fallen state into a new universe, which is what "The Restoration of All Things" is really all about. The Big Picture. This is the very essence of what the Bible is telling us. God creates. Angels and humans fall. The universe changes. But God had a plan to deal with that all along. He wasn't taken by surprise by the Fall. Not at all! **And the Bible is all about the manner in which the Lord has chosen to make right everything which went wrong with His creation when the human and angelic part went astray.**

Essentially, the Bible advertises the biblical doctrine of renewal. That's what we are speaking about in these two talks today. The biblical doctrine of renewal. Many of the popular teachings about the "Millennium" today are not only off-beam but they miss the point completely concerning the divinely-appointed process of renewal in this world—which, as we'll see, is not so much related to any earthly happenings as to spiritual ones. **In fact, the very phrase, "The Millennium", is a complete misnomer which has rooted the mentality of the church in *terrestrial fallacies* instead of *celestial realities*.** But... I'm getting ahead of myself here. We'll open this up some more as these papers roll along.

So, why can we say that "The Restoration of All Things" is in two phases? That's our first main heading. Well if you want some straightforward Bible passages which clearly reveal the two phases in this process of the transformation of creation—"The Restoration of All Things"—let's go first to the very passage where the phrase "The Restoration of All Things" is mentioned in full. Here's Peter in Acts 3:19-21:

“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until **the times of restoration of all things**, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began”.

What we see here is that the two phases are synchronized with the two comings of Christ. Through the work of Christ on the Cross, it becomes possible for people to repent and be converted that their sins may be blotted out—as a result of which they are able to partake in “*times of refreshing*” which “*come from the presence of the Lord*”. Although I believe that there are other layers to the concept (ultimately it takes in the whole of Christ’s coming at His return at the end of the age in judgement—the ultimate in refreshment for believers), nevertheless, in the immediate sense it’s a clear reference to the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer—a gift to **every** believer in Christ.

Notice that Peter says: “*so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before...*”. The “times of refreshing” involves Christ being sent to us spiritually even though He must remain in heaven until the times of “The Restoration of All Things”—that is, until the Second Coming and Final Judgement. One of the fruits of the first coming of Christ is that all believers in Him enjoy the presence of Christ through the indwelling Spirit. We see this clearly in John 14:19-23:

“A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I *am* in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him **and manifest Myself to him**. Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, “*Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?*” Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and **We will come to him and make Our home with him**”.

Do you see how this dovetails with Peter saying “*so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ*”? This is a leading characteristic of this Gospel Age. Repent, believe, that your sins may be blotted out as far as the Lord is concerned and then you will be refreshed in the midst of this fallen world by the spiritual presence of Christ through the Holy Spirit. (I shudder to think of the ways that this idea of “times of refreshing” has been twisted in recent Church history; but I’ve dealt with all that elsewhere).

This is why I’ve subtitled this first of the two papers as “*Times of Refreshing—Refining the Saints*”. This is just the first phase in “The Restoration of All Things”. It is an intermediate phase. It encapsulates the time which stands between the first Coming of Christ and the Final Judgement. This whole time period from the first coming of Christ until the Final Judgement is, in fact, known as “The Last Days”. All of it. “*God has in these last days spoken to us by His Son*” (Heb.1:2). These are the last days, my friends. Also known as “*the last time*” (Jude 18), “*these last times*” (1 Pet.1:20) and “*the last hour*” (1 Jn.2:18). That’s the time in which we are living right now and have been for the past two thousand years!

The Second Coming of Christ, and the Final Judgement which it heralds, marks the second phase of “The Restoration of All Things”. And we’ll be looking at that second phase in our session after lunch. But in this first phase, note that we still live in the midst of a fallen world. We still fall sick. Earthquakes still happen. Our teeth fall out. Our bodies die and decompose. “The Restoration of All Things” is not yet complete, as we see clearly in Rom.8:18-23:

“For I consider that the sufferings of **this present time** are not worthy *to be compared* with **the glory which shall be revealed in us**. For the earnest expectation of

the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. **For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.** Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for **the adoption, the redemption of our body**” (Rom.8:18-23).

Do you see how the two phases of “The Restoration of All Things” are wrapped up in this passage too? There is “*this present time*” and there is also “*the glory which shall be revealed in us*”. On the one hand we have the fact that “*the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now*”, while on the other hand we are “*eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body*”. Two phases. One which we are in the midst of now—in which restoration is only partial, in the lives of believers—and the other which is yet to come after the return of Christ—when the restoration will be completed.

So those two phases of “The Restoration of All Things” are all wrapped up in the two comings of Christ. As it says in Hebrews: “*Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation*” (Heb.9:28). The same two-phase operation is in there too. The first coming of Christ was to provide the remedy for sin; the second coming will be to restore all things—the completion of salvation. The first is for the purposes of saving and refining souls; the second is for the cleansing of the universe as a whole.

This is the age for the renewal of those who follow Christ. During this first phase, the universe remains essentially the same but the believer is transformed. **So, we can say that the renewing of the Christian is phase one in the renewing of the universe.**

Jesus said to the disciples, “*Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration (i.e. “The Restoration of All Things”), when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*” (Matt.19:28). We’ll be looking at that text in more detail in our second session, but suffice it to say that all those who partake in the regeneration in grace (Jn.3:3) shall also partake in the regeneration in glory; for as grace in salvation is the first regeneration, so the glory of the fullness of redemption is the second regeneration. **Two phases of “The Restoration of All Things”: In one the Lord diffuses grace on believers through the Gospel; in the other the Lord bestows glory on the church through His transformative power.**

So the kingdom of God has come in grace but it has not yet come in glory. And if I may provoke you a little here, we are going to see today that this phase of grace—the first phase of “The Restoration of All Things”—is the true “Millennium” and everything which is symbolised in those first few verses of chapter 20 of the Book of Revelation.

So that concludes our first heading: “*What do we mean when we say that ‘The Restoration of all Things’ is in two phases?*” Our second heading asks the question:

II. WHAT WAS THE TRIGGER POINT FOR THE FIRST PHASE OF “THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS”?

This is an intriguing question. You may say “*Well surely the creation of Israel in Old Testament times was the beginning of ‘The Restoration of All Things’*”. In a sense, you would be right. But—and it is a big “but”—the entire Old Testament era and all that took place in it was merely preparatory and symbolic, no matter how rooted it was in historical fact. In the Old Testament era restoration was **latent** but not **patent**. That whole era merely pointed to the Messiah and had to await something else before the first real phase of restoration would get underway.

So how did things begin to be restored in the first phase of “The Restoration of All Things”? Again, you may answer: “*Well, surely it was the Incarnation, or the Crucifixion, or the Resurrection or Ascension of Christ*”. That would certainly be a logical answer... and it also wouldn’t be wrong. But there was another generally overlooked element involved which kick-started the whole process in space, time and history—one of which we may greatly underestimate the significance. When Christ’s disciples asked Him, “*Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?*” (Mt.17:10-12), Jesus answered by saying:

“Indeed, **Elijah is coming first and will restore all things**. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands”.

Now when Christ says that “*Elijah is coming first*”, to whom is He referring? Is he referring to the Old Testament prophet, Elijah, who was returning to do the job? After all, it does say in Malachi 4:5-6:

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse” (Mal.4:5-6).

No, that wasn’t actually referring to Elijah, the Old Testament prophet, for the Lord Jesus clearly shows (and we should surely trust His interpretation over all others) that this prophecy was in fact referring to John the Baptist in symbolic form. Here we should highlight an important aspect of Bible interpretation which is often overlooked. **For most of the muddled thinking in the church today concerning the Endtimes and eschatological teaching is the direct result of the failure to acknowledge symbolism in Scripture when it is plainly intended.** Such ‘dumb literalism’, as I call it, is the scourge of the church. (As we’ll see, that is precisely why there is so much kerfuffle about “The Millennium” today—a willful refusal to apply symbol where it should be applied).

As the angel said to Zacharias concerning his son, John (directly quoting Malachi 4:5-6): “*He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord*” (Lk.1:17). So when Malachi wrote that the Lord said: “*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord*”, He didn’t mean the literal Elijah but one who would come in the spirit and power of Elijah—namely, John the Baptist. Let Scripture interpret Scripture, as it should. Thus, John the Baptist, as the last of the Old Testament prophets, kick-started “The Restoration of All Things” with his ministry “in the spirit and power of Elijah”, as the forerunner and harbinger of Christ the Redeemer.

Obviously, the centerpiece and axis of “The Restoration of All Things” was the Crucifixion & Resurrection of Christ (both retrospectively and prospectively throughout time), while the crowning element in the process was His Ascension. But the element designed by the Lord to be the initiating catalyst in this cosmic process was the Elijah-like ministry of John the Baptist.

It is important to recognize the huge importance of his ministry in relation to “The Restoration of All Things”. As Isaiah said in his remarkable prophecy about John the Baptist:

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken’” (Isa.40:3-6).

That is a classic Old Testament symbolic description of “*The Restoration of All Things*”; and it was John the Baptist who—through the Spirit filling Him (Lk.1:15)—set it all under way.

This brings us to our third main heading and one on which we will spend most of our time in this session.

III. THE “MYSTERY OF GOD” AND THE FIRST PHASE OF THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS

It is very important for us to see “The Restoration of All Things” in the context of The Big Picture—the vast spread of the history of redemption. The overarching theme in the first phase of “The Restoration of All Things” is the enactment of a plan by God which had been concealed from the beginning of history but has been gradually revealed as time has gone by. There has been a progressive revelation of the plan of God. Such concealment has been necessary because of the presence of evil powers in the universe. As we know, the Bible is the story of how evil has invaded the creation and is then overcome by our All-Powerful God.

The idea that this evil will one-day be eradicated from His universe by the Creator who permitted it to come into that universe is what lies at the very heart of the Bible. This is what the Scriptures teach from start to finish: that evil came into this world but that, ultimately, righteousness will overcome it and will be established in the new universe which will be brought into being after the Second Coming of Christ (Rev.21:1-5). This is what “The Restoration of All Things” is all about.

The process of evil in this world—which began with the Fall—is known in Scripture as “*the mystery of iniquity [or lawlessness—Greek: anomia]*” (2 Thess.2:7). However, alongside of that “mystery of lawlessness”, there has been another mystery: the mystery of God; and I want to talk at some length here about this “mystery of God” because it is the passing of the “mystery of God” through time which leads inexorably to the denouement which we call “The Restoration of All Things”.

Here is a Scripture text which clearly links “the mystery of God” to “The Restoration of All Things”: “*In the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, **the mystery of God would be finished***” (Rev.10:7). The seventh angel is the one who sounds the Final Trump—the declaration of the appearance of Christ at the Second Coming in judgement and to bring in “The Restoration of All Things”. At that point, “*the mystery of God*”, it says, *would be finished*”. What does this “mystery of God” involve? Grasping this “mystery of God” is most important for our conception of “The Restoration of All Things”, for it lies at the very heart of it. There are four things which we can observe concerning the “mystery of God”.

1. The ‘Mystery of God’ Involves the Fulfilment of the Entire Plan of God in Creation and Redemption

In the fifth chapter of the Book of Revelation, we read of a scroll sealed with seven seals which no one was worthy to open except the Lord Jesus Christ. This scroll and its seals represent the entire span of God’s eternal plan of redemption—leading ultimately into the new creation. It entails the accomplishment of God’s eternal plan in Jesus Christ. It unveils that “mystery of God”, which only Jesus Christ can disclose, of how God’s judgement and His Kingdom will come to pass. So that scroll reveals the hidden purposes of God in the perfecting of the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is what the entire book of Revelation is all about. It is the revelation of the place of Jesus Christ in the plan of redemption; and thus it is meant to give comfort to the suffering church who may doubt His work behind the scenes as it is hidden from our view during this first phase of “The Restoration of All Things” and doesn’t come into view until the second phase at the conclusion of this present age.

The seals which are opened in chapter six of the Book of Revelation and at the beginning of chapter eight conceal the mystery, which only Jesus Christ can reveal, of how God’s judgement and His Kingdom will come in all its glory. This is what is charted in the Book of Revelation. In the days of the sounding of the seventh angel (the seventh trumpet), the “mystery of God”, it says, would be finished. It is the ultimate outcome of the entire plan of God—the vindication of His purpose in creation.

The mystery of God is revealed in the work of Christ, as shown in the Book of Revelation. It is a mystery because we do not understand it presently. It can be perplexing. The Lord has chosen that the flow of humanity in creation should pass along the long, dark pathway of sin, suffering and death in order to arrive at the ultimate place He wants it all to be: “The Restoration of All Things”. But so much of this mystery is being revealed to us in the Book of Revelation. That is its purpose. It is really saying: “*Yes, you have been saved and yes, you will have tribulation in this world but nevertheless Christ is divine and is in control of all things right until the end*”.

The sounding of the seventh trumpet, which brings the fulfilment of the eternal plan of God, is the central point in the Book of Revelation. It is the moment we are all waiting for. The whole creation has waited for it with bated breath, as it were. It brings an end to the mystery. Finally.

So, firstly, this “mystery of God” entails the fulfilment of the entire plan of God in creation and redemption.

2. The ‘Mystery of God’ Involved the Necessary Concealment of the Redemptive Mission of the Lord Jesus Christ

Paul the apostle speaks of “*the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory*”, and he then adds “*which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*” (1 Corinthians 2:7-8)

This mystery of God involved the concealment of the true significance of the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ. “*Had they known...*”. It was vital that they shouldn’t know. And surely the term, “*the rulers of this age*”, doesn’t merely refer to Satan’s **human** collaborators but to the entire demonic realm at his disposal. The Scripture reveals them to be the “*rulers of the darkness of this age... spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places*” (Eph.6:12) and Satan himself to be “*the god of this age*” (2 Cor.4:4). In other words, the satanic powers had no foreknowledge that the death and atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ would signal the destruction of their pretended world system and attempted new world order on earth. How vital it was that they remained in ignorance! One could say that the whole fabric of the universe depended on it! The Lord used stealth and secrecy to protect His plan of salvation. There is an interesting corroborative statement to this effect in Ignatius of Antioch’s letter to the Ephesian church written only seventy-five years after the death of Christ:

“Now the virginity of Mary, and He who was born of her, were kept in secret from the ruler of this world [Satan]; as was also the death of our Lord; three of the mysteries the most spoken of throughout the world, yet done in secret by God”.¹

Something of the nature of this secrecy can be seen in the fact that King Herod, as a human agent of Satan, was forced to carry out a mass slaughter of innocent babies in the vain hope of flushing out the Messiah (Mt.2:3-18). The devil is certainly not omniscient! The terms “all-knowing” and “all-powerful” can only ever be ascribed to God, as history and the Bible ably show. This is how the powers of darkness were able to be overcome and Christ was able to declare on the

¹ *The Ancient and Modern Library of Theological Literature: The Apostolic Fathers, Part II, ‘The Epistles of St. Ignatius and St. Polycarp’* (Griffith, Farran, Okeden & Welsh, 1889), p.78.

Cross that “*it is finished!*” Literally, from the Greek, “*It has been accomplished!*” The mystery of lawlessness had been overturned and renewal could finally begin.

Are we seeing the Big Picture here? For “The Restoration of All Things” doesn’t happen all at once—**can’t** happen all at once. It is progressive, taking place over a vast period of time during which the Lord uses stealth and strategy to defeat the powers of darkness.

So, secondly, the “mystery of God” entailed the concealment of the redemptive mission of Christ—beginning with the Incarnation.

3. The ‘Mystery of God’ Involved a Postponement of the Execution of Judgement

Technically-speaking, after the Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension, the Lord could have moved straight on to the Final Judgement. But He didn’t—for many good reasons, as we’ll shortly see. Instead, there was a stay of execution in judgement, a postponement of it.

In the context of the “mystery of God” in the tenth chapter of the Book of Revelation, the apostle John speaks of a “*delay*” (Rev.10:6) in the bringing about of the full manifestation of Christ’s victory, which would not be fulfilled until the seventh trumpet, at which time the kingdoms of this world would openly be shown to be the kingdoms of the Lord Jesus Christ. We looked at part of that passage earlier: “*In the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished*” (Rev.10:7). But if we look at the context, we will see the strategy laid out:

“The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, **that there should be delay no longer**, but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets” (Rev.10:5-7).

As the final trumpet sounds and the end of the age arrives, it says that there would be no more delay — no more suspension of judgement — the allotted span of time for the Gospel Age would have come to an end and judgement could begin. Then the “mystery of God” would be finished.

It is so important to grasp this. The verse literally says “*that there should be time no longer*”. This is another way of saying “*Time’s up! The waiting is over*”. The delaying of the end which took place after the Resurrection—with all the complexities of the subsequent Gospel Age—will come to its conclusion and the mystery of God will then have been completed. Why has there been this staying of judgement of, so far, thousands of years? There are a number of reasons. Let us go into them as subheadings in this section.

a) There has been a Postponement of Judgement so that the Gospel could be Preached to the Nations and the Full Number of God’s People can be Brought into the Kingdom

In the eleventh chapter of the Book of Revelation, we have a marvellous passage about the witness of the church in the Gospel Age. It speaks about the fact that “*the Gentiles will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months*”. Now this 42 months (or three and a half years) goes by two other names in the Book of Revelation which are equivalent to it. **1) 1260 days:** “*Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days*” (Rev12:6). “*And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth*” (Rev.11:3). **2) Time, times and half a time:**

“Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male *Child*. But the woman was given two wings of a

great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent” (Rev.12:13-14).

There, the term used is “*time, times and half a time*”, which is another way of saying 1260 days or three and a half years: “time” = one year; “times” = two years; and “half a time” = half a year. The reason that John uses that image is because it draws on its symbolic use in Daniel 7:25 and 12:7 to describe the persecution of the saints. John frequently takes powerful Old Testament symbols and then transforms them for his own Scripture-writing purposes (e.g. golden lampstand, two-edged sword, thrones, living creatures, beasts, etc.). Very occasionally, they carry the same meaning as when they were used in the Old Testament; but mostly he changes crucial aspects of them in order to fit the context into which he is placing them.²

So the “*holy city*” (i.e. Jerusalem spiritually understood as the New Testament church, cf. Heb.12:22; Rev.3:12; 21:2,10) being trodden “*underfoot for forty-two months*” involves the same time period as the prophesying of the two witnesses (the witness of the church in the Gospel Age) and that of the protection of the church (which takes place throughout that age). The overall picture in the Book of Revelation is that as the saints witness to the world they are persecuted by the Gentiles throughout the entire Gospel Age (the symbolic 1260 days / 3½ years / time, times and half a time), but that they are also protected from the full blast of satanic destruction during that time, because there has been a restraint on Satan in order to permit the spread of the gospel and the growth of the body of Christ. The power which he enjoyed prior to the coming of Christ has been greatly diminished. This witness of the church throughout the Gospel Age is what is being spoken of in Rev.11:3-7.

“I will give *power* to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire. When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them” (Rev.11:3-7).

I don’t have time here to do a complete exposition of these glorious verses—as much as I would love to do so! But this imagery of the olive trees and lampstands comes from: Zec.4:11ff, where the lampstands represent the people of God and the olive trees which supply the oil represent the grace of God which gives them light and life. “*Then he answered me and said, “Do you not know what these are?” And I said, “No, my lord.” So he said, “These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth”*”. In Rev.1:20, the Lord says to John: “*The seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches*”. Thus, the two witnesses are a symbolic representation of the church’s witness in this age. Under Old Testament law, at least two witnesses were needed in order for the truth to be established in any jurisdiction. “Two” represents the number of witness needed for truth to be ascertained, as we see from Deut.19:15: “*By the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established*” (cf. Num.35:30, Jn.8:17: “*It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true*”). So Rev.11:3 is about the Gospel witness of the church in the first phase of “The Restoration of All Things”. As the gospel involves the witness of truth, the symbol of two witnesses is used here to represent that.

² In terms of my understanding of the Book of Revelation, I hold to the Cyclic or Synchronist view, which interprets the Book of Revelation as presenting a series of visions which provide a symbolic presentation of the whole of the present Gospel Age. When you take this approach, you find that there are seven huge cycles given which, although following on from one another in the book itself, are not historically consecutive but simply present the Gospel Age in a different aspect each time.

In Zechariah, the two olive trees were the anointed ones — Zerubbabel and Joshua. Here in Rev.11, the two witnesses plainly represent the witness of the Gospel to the world through the servants of God throughout this Age. Now, regarding this witness of the Gospel by the servants of God, let us note that they are under divine protection, v.5. And what is this fire which devours their enemies? Why it's the Word of God itself, as we see from comparing other Scriptures which reveal this: "*The LORD talked with you face to face on the mountain from the midst of the fire*" (Deut.5:4). "*Therefore thus says the LORD God of hosts: 'Because you speak this word, behold, I will make My words in your mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them'*" (Jer.5:14). "*Is not My word like a fire? says the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?*" (Jer.23:28-29).

If only we really understood the power of the Word of God. For that is the Word that we speak—the Word which can never be contradicted or quenched. The refusal to listen to the Word of God through the mouth of the witnesses brings certain death (spiritual death). Yes, they (we) have extraordinary powers indeed. In v.7 we see that it is the prayers of the saints which contribute towards the coming of the Day of Judgement (cf. Rev.8:1-6 & 2 Pet.3:11-12).

Note also that there is a time set for the witness of the church to end: "*When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them*" (Rev.11:7). There will come a time when the witness of the church will cease as the end of the age draws to a close and all hell will break loose as Satan is loosed from his restraint by divine decree and then awfully persecutes the church. Take note that this is exactly parallel to Rev.20:3,7:

"But after these things he must be released for a little while... Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth... They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city".

Again, we see the beast ascending out of the bottomless pit and making war against the saints and overcoming them and killing them—just the same as it says in Rev.11:7. The suspension of judgement after the killing of Christ—the "delay"—was so that the Gospel could go out into the world. But there was also a suspension of judgement on Satan, who has been under restraint during that time of suspension, symbolically represented in Rev.20:1-3 as being chained in the bottomless pit. When he is let loose at the end of the age, evil will come to its head under the reign of his representative on earth, the Antichrist, and then the delay of judgement will be removed and the powers of darkness will be dealt with once and for all. We see this teaching not only in the Book of Revelation but elsewhere in the New Testament.

It is true that Satan is highly active in human affairs—and especially in those of the church. Let's face it, he still wanders around like a roaring lion (2 Pet.3:8). But to just leave it at that would not be doing justice to the mass of Scripture which reveals that Satan has been bound so that the Gospel can be spread. Let us go into this in more detail, for it has a great bearing on our understanding of the one thousand years in Rev.20.

Until the Cross, Satan had access to the throne of God (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7) and fulfilled the role of the 'accuser' (cf. Zec.3:1-2). However, after the ascension of the Lord Jesus, Satan was cast out of heaven (Rev.12:10), while Christ continued his work as the '*one Mediator between God and men*' (1 Tim.2:5) interceding on behalf of His people, pleading for us on the basis of His holy sacrifice, thus eliminating Satan's accusatory role (Rom.8:33-34,38-39). This victory of Christ over Satan was not a partial, incomplete affair — it was final and absolute. As Paul puts it, "*Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it [i.e., the cross]*" (Col.2:15). The world-system had indeed been under the usurped rulership of Satan for a time, but Jesus overcame this "world" (Jn.16:33) when His blood was shed on the cross.

As a result, He could comfort His disciples after the Resurrection with the assurance that *“all authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth”* (Mt.28:18). After that, no authority remained to Satan.

The far-reaching cosmic significance of this mighty victory cannot be over-emphasised. It had been anticipated by Jesus when, after the return of the seventy disciples from a successful mission, in which even the demons were subject to His authority, He said, *‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven’* (Lk.10:17-18). This complete authority of Jesus over the demonic realm in the wake of His death, resurrection and ascension was prophesied by David when he said, *“You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive”* (Ps.68:18), which Paul reiterated in Eph.4:7-10). From this point on, the whole of the created order was disturbed as Christ’s great victory set in motion the antidote to the evil effects of the Fall which was both prospective and retrospective. The satanic realm was then *“cast down to the earth”* from heaven (Rev.12:7-9), exactly as Christ had foreseen and foretold (Lk.10:18; Jn.12:31).

Although the evil effects of the Fall are still very much with us throughout the Gospel Age, the powers of the satanic realm and its ability to influence human affairs in the wake of Christ’s absolute victory have been greatly transformed. There are a number of significant Scriptures which reveal that Satan has been *‘bound’* or restrained in the wake of Christ’s victory. I want to go into these because they are absolutely central to our concept of the thousand years or so-called Millennium. Just look at the first three verses of Rev.20:

“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the Devil and Satan*, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while” (Rev.20:1-3).

The bottomless pit is a symbol. Right? The key is a symbol. Right? The dragon and serpent are symbols. Right? The chain is a symbol. Right? So why do so many want to force the thousand years to be the only literal aspect of the verse? In the context of the Book of Revelation, “a thousand” simply means a lengthy indeterminate number known only to God! You see, my friends, there is a context to this binding of Satan for a period of time in history and it is not in the future. Let’s chase this down. The Lord Jesus said to the Pharisees, in the context of casting out demons:

“How can one enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods **unless he first binds the strong man and then he will plunder his house?**” (Mt.12:29).

Think about this carefully. The Lord is plainly referring there to His own ministry and what would happen as a result of His victory on the cross. He was going to bind Satan (i.e. put him under a serious restraint) and then plunder his house and goods. What does that mean? Prior to that time, with a few individual exceptions, the nations had been in complete bondage to Satan. But in the wake of Christ’s victory on the Cross, there would be a release from that bondage so that it would be possible for the Gentiles to be brought into the kingdom of God in quantity, rather than the occasional trickle that it was in the Old Testament era.

We fail to understand the full supernatural significance of this, which is an astonishing change from Old Testament times, where comparatively few people out of the Gentiles were saved. As is clear from the context (cf. Mt.12:22-29), the Lord Jesus was here describing the victorious aim of His earthly mission, which was set in motion at the scene of the Temptation in the wilderness (Lk.4:1-13), consolidated through the mission work of Jesus and the disciples, and finally fulfilled at Calvary.

In Jerusalem, shortly before His arrest, Jesus predicted His death on the Cross and said, “*But for this purpose I came to this hour*” (Jn.12:27). To what purpose was He referring? Four verses later He tells us: “*Now is the judgement of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out*” (Jn.12:31). The term “cast out” is most appropriate. In the same way that Jesus cast out demons from individual people during His earthly walk, so He also banished the Prince of Demons from his then-current sphere of activity as the “*ruler of this world*”, lording it over the Gentile nations. From the moment that Jesus’ mission on earth was fulfilled, Satan legally ceased to be its permitted ruler. The end of the last Gospel record is the final time that he is referred to as such (Jn.14:30). Throughout the rest of the New Testament, Satan is never once referred to as being “the ruler of this world”; instead, he assumes the title of “*prince of the power of the air*” (Eph.2:2), having been cast out of heaven in the wake of the Cross (Rev.12:10; Jn.12:31).

We see here that Christ came to bind the strong man (Satan) so that his house or his domain (that is, the Gentile nations) would be well and truly plundered, and souls within those nations would begin to be delivered from the power of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of God. After the Cross, Resurrection and Ascension, spiritual supremacy over the planet was now openly established as being in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. One day, the full number of those coming into the kingdom will be complete. Until that time, for as long as this “delay” must happen in the “mystery of God”, we must exercise great spiritual patience.

A number of other Scriptures make reference to this ‘binding’ or restraining of Satan which our Lord promised would be fulfilled in the wake of His victory on the Cross. In his second letter to the Thessalonians, Paul reveals that the return of Christ will not happen until two events have taken place in history: first, the final great apostasy, followed by the revealing of the “*Man of Sin*” (2 Th.2:3)—a figure agreed by discerning Bible expositors to be the final and ultimate manifestation of Antichrist in the person of a man (cf. 1 Jn.2:18).

A few verses later, Paul speaks of a powerful restraining factor which prevents this ultimate event from taking place before its allotted time (2 Th.2:6). The restraint here involves the Divinely-appointed holding back of the full exercise of demonic ‘*power, signs, and lying wonders*’ by the Satan-inspired Man of Sin, and the prevention of a universal belief in the Satanic Lie (2 Th.2:9-11). That is what is under restraint, bound. This will all be released from that restraint shortly before the Second Coming of Christ (2 Th.2:8) and those dastardly things will come to a head.

Please will you now compare 2 Thess.2:3-12 with Rev.20:1-3 & 7-10 (I’ll be dealing with vv.4-6 in the second paper). We would have to be blind not to notice that there is a remarkable correlation of these verses in Paul’s second letter to the Thessalonians with the first verses of Chapter 20 in the Book of Revelation, in which the sequence of events follows exactly the same pattern. That pattern goes like this:

- There is a lengthy period of Divine restraint upon the powers of darkness preventing them from gathering the nations into one conglomerate Church-destroying, Christ-hating entity.
- This is followed by a short period during which the restraint will be taken away and Satan will be divinely permitted to achieve his goal.
- This short period of demonic mayhem is immediately succeeded by the Second Coming of Christ, who will effect the resurrection, judge the world, and bring in “The Restoration of All Things”.

It may be objected by some that the verses in Rev.20:1-3 which speak of the binding of Satan cannot possibly refer to the Gospel Age in which we are now living because Satan has very obviously been able to wreak havoc in both the Church and the world during the last two thousand years and therefore cannot have been “bound”. It is true that there has been a considerable amount of Satan-induced havoc throughout the Gospel Age. However, we are not claiming that these verses

teach that *all* satanic activity has been *wholly* bridled, for they refer only to a *particular historical situation* which is being held back from fulfilment until the time is ripe in God's cosmic plan. We need to understand this. **The specific historical situation which Satan is restrained from fulfilling throughout the Gospel Age (i.e. while he is said to be bound by Christ) involves his ability to deceive the nations into one great universal, global, Christ hating, enmity towards God's body of people across the world** (Rev.20:8-9). This is why the text states that when the restraint has been loosed, Satan "*will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle*" (Rev.20:3,7-9; cf. 17:13-14). That has been his object throughout history, and its constraint in this present age has enabled the Gospel to be spread throughout the nations by a postponement of the time of the end — that "delay" which is part of the "*mystery of God*" (cf. Rev.10:5-7). The same picture is presented in 2 Thess.2:1-12, where we see that after the restraint has been taken away, "*the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders*", coupled with global delusion and deception, will explode across the world.

When John prophesies that the Satan-inspired nations "*surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city*" (Rev.20:9) after the Old Serpent has been released from being bound, we know that it was also from fulfilling this particular event—the total obliteration of the church—that the demonic realm had been restrained during the Gospel Age. Incidentally, the phrase "*the camp of the saints*" is not referring to the present-day capital of the modern secular state of Israel, because in the New Testament it is the Church (composed of both converted Jews and Gentiles) which is known as both "Israel" and "Jerusalem" (Gal.6:16; Heb.12:22-23; Rom.11:26a; Rev.3:12; 21:2,10). [I'll be developing this theme more fully in the second paper].

In the time of the Lord's Old Covenant people, the children of Israel, Satan worked perpetually through the heathen nations to effect the destruction of the nation chosen by God. Now that the Lord's people in the Gospel Age is represented by a spiritually-gathered, trans-national body, the devil's attentions are focused on the destruction of the Church, its doctrines, institutions, and the faith of individual believers. Such a mustering of the nations of the world-system into a global anti-Jehovah confederacy has been Satan's aim since the dawn of history. He almost succeeded at Babel on the plain of Shinar, but the time was not yet ripe and God intervened to confound his designs (Gen.11:1-9).

However, the victory of Christ put an end to the horrific deceiving of the nations by Satan. Throughout this age he has not been able to deceive the nations en masse in anything like the same kind of way. The Gospel has taken precedence to satanic empire. When he finally achieves his aim at the end of history, although it may at first appear to be Satan's victory, it will really be his defeat. For all along it was God Himself who '*has put it into [the nations'] hearts to fulfil His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled*' (Rev.17:17). It is this assurance of absolute divine sovereignty which enables the Lord's people to maintain '*patience and the faith*' during these difficult times (Rev.13:10).

Satan is still a powerful force in the world, but he is not its legitimate ruler; and because he knows that his time is limited, he is filled with a rage which he vents on the Church (Rev.12:12-17). **In other words, Satan is a dethroned vagrant without a kingdom, wandering about in a state of vindictive perplexity, with strictly limited powers as he awaits the inevitable coming judgement.** The failure to grasp that simple truth has led to all manner of ludicrous teachings in the church.

But before Christ's return, the restraint holding back the global conspiracy—which I believe is most likely to be God-given angelic power (cf. Rev.7:1; 9:14-15, where angels are used for the purposes of such restraint)—will be taken away and there will be a period of persecution of the saints and the rise to power of an evil world dictatorship. This mystery time of "delay", which John

refers to as “*the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ*” (Rev.1:9), is a time which involves, to the uttermost, “*the perseverance and faith of the saints*” (Rev.13:10; 14:12).

So there has been a suspension of judgement in order that the gospel could be preached to the nations and the full number of God’s people can be brought into the kingdom. Christ came to bind the strong man for that symbolic period of one thousand years—the entirety of the Gospel Age.

b) There has been a Postponement of Judgement so that this wicked world can fill up the “cup of its iniquity” and be ripe for judgement.

The Lord doesn’t come in judgement until He has exhausted every last drop of His grace and until evil has reached its fullness in the cup of iniquity. Do you remember Abram being told that it wasn’t possible to go in and possess the land at that time “*because the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete*” (Gen.15:16)? Iniquity has to come to its fullness and **then** the Lord judges. As the Lord said to the rulers of Jerusalem: “*Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers’ guilt. Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?*” (Mt.23:32). Only when that cup of iniquity is full will the Lord judge. “*And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled*” (Lk.21:24). There has to be a fulfilment of evil before judgement comes. So, in part, the “delay” of judgement was in order that the world would fill up its cup of iniquity and evil come to its proper culmination, as indeed it will, as we see in many places of Scripture.

So we can note about this “mystery of God” that it entails the fulfilment of the entire plan of God in creation and redemption, and that it involves a delay before its accomplishment, and that it also includes the witnessing time in which we are now living! We see this delay in the fulfilment of the “mystery of God” even in our principal text in Acts 3:19-21:

“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive **until** the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began”.

Heaven must receive Christ (i.e. He’ll be away from us) until the restoration of all things. “Until” implies that “delay”. That time of temporary “untilness” is the Gospel Age, during which there is that “delay”. This restoration of all things at the end of the delay—when the “mystery of God” comes to its completion—is the fulfilment of God’s plan of creation and redemption, what is described as “*a new heaven and a new earth*” at the end of the Book of Revelation (Rev.21:1).

4. *The ‘Mystery of God’ has Involved the Protection of His People During the Suspension of Judgement*

At the beginning of Rev.12, we see the coming of Christ as the antidote to the fall of Satan and the fact that His ascension (Rev.12:5b) triggers an awesome spiritual battle in the heavens which feeds down to our lowly level on earth (Rev.12:7ff.). What is interesting here is that the church is said to be generally protected from the total onslaught of Satan for a symbolic “*one thousand, two hundred and sixty days*” (Rev.12:6). The same general church protection is mentioned in Rev.12:13-14, only on that occasion the length of time is symbolically called “*time, times and half a time*”.

The gospel-witnessing church has been given a great measure of protection while Satan has been bound throughout the gospel age. We saw that the symbolic time-span of that age and witness was said to be “*1260 days*” (Rev.12:6). It so happens that the church is again said to witness for that symbolic 1260 days in Rev.11:3. Yet there this refers to the whole of the church’s witness

throughout the age. That's how we know that Rev.12:6 and 11:3 are parallel. They both refer to the Gospel Age of witness while Satan is under restraint.

As we have said earlier, the overall picture in the Book of Revelation is that as the saints witness to the world they are persecuted throughout the entire Gospel Age (the symbolic 1260 days / 3½ years / time, times and half a time), but that they are also protected from the full blast of satanic destruction during that time. While Satan is bound from bringing his global reign of terror to fruition for the whole of the Gospel Age, the church is protected from complete destruction and the Gospel is allowed to flourish. There will be no **global** edict outlawing believers while Satan is under such restraint. That is the purpose of it during the Gospel Age. However, once that divine restraint is taken away and the Antichrist comes to power and all the terrors of the endtimes tribulation are unleashed, we will be in a very different world altogether.

It is not surprising that the Lord's people have often been perplexed at this "delay"—especially those who were alive during Jesus' post-resurrection ministry on earth. For example, shortly before Jesus' Ascension, His disciples asked Him, "*Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?*" (Acts 1:6). But they were ignorant of the mystery of God in His suspension of the final fulfilment of Christ's victory—not to mention the fact that they were then still also highly ignorant about the end of the old covenant and the end of the nation Israel as the Lord's people. They didn't know about "*the mystery of Christ... that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel*" (Eph.3:4-6), although they must have known very well the words of the prophets which spoke of it (e.g. Isa.11:10; 60:1-14).

CONCLUSION

So, if I may conclude, the biblical reality is that we are living in the period symbolically described in Rev.20:3 as one thousand years **right now** — and have been since the time of Christ. The Millennium does not involve a future reign of Christ on an unchanged earth. That symbolic one thousand years of satanic restraint has been in place throughout this Gospel Age. Christ bound "*the strong man*" (Satan) so that "*his goods*" (the deceived Gentile nations) were able to be released from their bondage. The Final Judgement was delayed for that very purpose. Satan's ability to bring on the global deception of the endtimes was held at bay under restraint. This is part of the glory of "The Restoration of All Things".

Both phases 1 and 2 of "The Restoration of All Things" are glorious in their own way. It's just that the glory comes to its full fruition in the second phase. Phase 1 is glorious because of the spread of the Gospel while Satan has been divinely restrained from deceiving the nations in the way that he did in the Old Testament era. Phase 2 is glorious because it openly declares the fullness of the Kingdom—the vindication of the saints, the kingdom in **all** its glory. **Thus we can say that Phase 1 is glorious because of the work in so many souls while Phase 2 is glorious because it makes everything whole.**

Let me conclude this session with a sobering thought: If we place the church's future hopes in an earthly kingdom, who do you think that the ruler of that earthly kingdom will be? Jesus Christ the Messiah? Don't you believe it for a moment! His kingdom is not of this world (Jn.18:36) and—as we have seen from Scripture—He will not return from heaven until He comes to judge the world and restore all things in the new heavens and new earth.

There is only one future ruler of an earthly kingdom which the Bible knows. Only one and no other. Are you with me here? Are you making all the right connections? Can we see where all this one thousand years earthly kingdom talk is heading? Yes, it is that serious. Satan is already preparing people to accept the Antichrist by mistaking him for Christ. It will be the greatest of his "lying signs and wonders". **For only the Antichrist will set up a kingdom on earth.** The Greek New Testament word, *antichristos* (of which "antichrist" is a translation) carries a dual meaning

not only of being “against Christ” but also of being “instead of” or “in the place of” Christ. Think about that very carefully.

Only the Antichrist can satisfy the yearnings of all the world’s religions for a coming global leader who sets up a Golden Age on earth. The Shi’ite Muslims, classical Buddhists, Tibetan Buddhists as well as Jewish people all have this idea in common. The Jews of the world are still awaiting their Messiah to bring a universal reign of peace and justice on earth. This fact takes on sinister proportions when one considers that enigmatic statement of the Lord Jesus to the Jews that, although they would not accept Him as the Messiah, “*if another comes in his own name, him you will receive*” (John 5:43).

Here we begin to gain an insight into the true identity of this global leader expected by so many of the world’s religions. As Augustine of Hippo (AD.354-430) rightly stated, concerning the words of the Lord Jesus to the Jews in John 5:43: “*He intimated that they would receive Antichrist, who will seek the glory of his own name*”.³ Similarly, Hilary of Poitiers (AD c.300-367) puts it like this: “*The Jews accordingly did not receive the Lord Jesus Christ who was the Son of God and God, but [they will] receive the impostor who calls himself God*”.⁴ This “impostor” will deceive not only the Jews but also the whole world into thinking that he is the fulfilment of the religious expectations enshrined in their prophecies.

Numerous other cults and groupings hold beliefs which are significant to this concept of a coming global leader. What are Christians to make of all this millennial expectancy and the advent of a global leader? Surely, just as the idea of a future Golden Age on earth has been fabricated by Satan in his strategy of the Last Days, as a way of seducing people from the biblical fact of eternal life in the New Heavens and New Earth, so he has dredged up the idea of a coming global leader who will set up a reign of peace and justice **on earth**—all in crass counterfeit of the Second Coming of the true Christ who will establish a **heavenly** kingdom (Jn.18:36; Luke 17:20; 2 Pet.3:12-13; Isa.65:17; Rev.21:1-5).

That is why we speak of these things with some urgency. Strong delusion is already being sown in people’s minds and we have to set the record straight. They will ridicule us. They will condemn us. They will say that we are mad and even dangerous. But that is all part of the delusion.

In our second paper, all of this will become even clearer as we look at the reasons why a literal one thousand year reign of Christ on earth has come to be so easily accepted. We’ll also be looking at why “The Restoration of All Things” could not possibly involve a kingdom on this present earth. “The Restoration of All Things” is the ringing in of a heavenly kingdom rather than an earthly one. As the apostle reminded us, we should **not** set our minds on earthly things,

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself” (Phil.3:19-21).

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³ Augustine of Hippo, “*Tractates on the Gospel According to St. John*”, Tractate XXIX, §8.

⁴ Hilary of Poitiers, “*On the Trinity*”, Book IV, Chapter.xxvi.