

# Behind “Left Behind”

*The Flawed Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism*

Steve C. Singleton



**Behind “Left Behind”:**  
*The Flawed Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism*

Second Edition  
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# Behind “Left Behind”

## *Introduction*

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### **Teaching End-Times Prophecies Through Fiction**

Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins (hereafter called L&J), authors of the “Left Behind” series of 12 novels, present a fictitious account of future world events based on their interpretation of biblical prophecies of End Times. [▶1] In 1999 L&J released *Are We Living in the End Times?* hereafter, *End Times*), an explanation of End-Times prophecy. [▶2] In that same year, LaHaye published a revision of his 1973 commentary on Revelation, *Revelation: Illustrated and Made Plain* (hereafter, *Made Plain*), [▶3] renaming it *Revelation Unveiled* (hereafter, *Unveiled*). [▶4] Although passages here and there within the novels reveal the End-Times teaching of the authors, I employ these three books, *End Times*, *Made Plain*, and *Unveiled*, as more convenient sources for L&J’s understanding. Again and again, L&J make close connections between the novels and *End Times*.

Behind “Left Behind” is a scheme of End-Times events known as Dispensational Premillennialism (or Dispensationalism). This complex synthesis [▶Figure 1], based on the interweaving of passages scattered throughout the Bible, first appeared with the teaching of 19th-century Plymouth Brethren leader John Darby. Modified and popularized in the notes of the Scofield Reference Bible, [▶5] this teaching was promoted by many preachers and Bible teachers for the last hundred years. Unfortunately, this teaching depends on extensive mishandling of the Bible – both Old and New Testaments.

## ***Nine distinct interpretation errors***

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To provide a detailed refutation of all of LaHaye and Jenkins's errors would involve writing a book at least as long as *End Times*. I only have space to point out the nine common errors they repeatedly make in biblical interpretation. I call them "common" because they tend to be the kinds of errors all of us are prone to make as we seek to understand the Bible. In fact, two important books – D. A. Carson's *Exegetical Fallacies*[\[6\]](#) and James Sire's *Scripture Twisting: 20 Ways Cults Misread the Bible*[\[7\]](#) – have classified, explained, and illustrated such mistakes.

In what follows I will briefly describe each error and provide one or more examples from *End Times* or one of the other sources. The purpose of this review is to convince you that L&J are much better at writing and marketing fiction than they are at faithfully interpreting biblical prophecy. Once you begin to understand the kinds of mistakes they make, you will begin to see past what might at first seem plausible. In fact, you may find that their errors seem to jump right off the page!

### **Error 1: Collapsing contexts – Uniting what should remain separate**

L&J have committed the error of collapsing contexts, tying passages together merely because of similar phraseology. Here is how Carson describes this error:

What gives interpreters the right to link certain verses together, and not others? The point is that all such linking eventually produces a grid that affects the interpretation of other texts. There may be fallacies connected not only with the way individual verses are interpreted, but also with the way several passages are linked—and then also with the way such a link affects the interpretation of the next verse that is studied![\[8\]](#)

To discern the meaning of a given passage in any biblical book, you should read the entire book and examine how the passage contributes its part to the message of the book as a whole. If you think you already know what a passage means, you can test your understanding by seeking to explain how the passage fits into its context. This L&J repeatedly fail to do.

#### ***Examples: the “day of the LORD” passages***

An important example is the way L&J understand the Old Testament “day of the LORD” passages. They quote Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum with approval: “In every passage of the Scriptures that the term the ‘Day of Jehovah’ or the ‘Day of the LORD’ is found, it is always and

without exception a reference to the tribulation period." [▶9] By "the tribulation period," L&J refer to a future seven-year period in which they believe the personal Antichrist will rise to power and then conduct a reign of terror.

The damage this kind of generalization does to the meaning of the Bible is hard to understate. It necessarily involves ignoring the context of passage after passage. Let's look briefly at seven Old Testament occurrences of "the day of the LORD," examining the context of each to find an answer to the question, To what historical event is the prophet's expression, "day of the LORD" referring?

Clear evidence exists within the context of each passage that the "day of the LORD" refers to one of four historical disasters in ancient times when God displayed His wrath, either against His people, the nations, or both. These four disasters are:

- a. *Assyrian domination* – the overthrow of the northern nation of Israel and the surrounding nations, ending in the destruction of the fortified cities of Judah and the unsuccessful siege of Jerusalem during the period from 732 to 701 B.C.E. [▶10]
- b. *Babylonian domination* – the multiple deportations of Israelites from Judah beginning in 605 B.C.E., leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C.E. [▶11]
- c. *Medo-Persian domination* – the fall of the city of Babylon to the Medes and Persians in 539 B.C.E. and the fall of the Babylonian empire in the years that followed. [▶12]
- d. *Roman domination* – the Roman war against the Jews that began in 66 C.E., leading up to the fall of Jerusalem to Titus in 70 C.E. [▶13] [▶Figure 2]

In addition to these, there is a fifth possibility:

- e. *Final judgment and transformation of the world* – this event is still in the future, even for us.

L&J assign every passage to event e, but the context of each passage must decide. In each of the examples below, I will point out which of these events the text is calling the "day of the LORD" and provide the proof from the context.

### **Isaiah 13:9 (Medo-Persian)**

The prophet describes "the day of the LORD" as "a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger." He says it will be a day when God makes the land desolate and destroys sinners within it. It will be a day, he says, when "The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will become dark and the moon will not give its light." It will be a day when God "will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins." Isolated from their context and taken literally, these words could certainly appear to describe some global disaster.

We must recognize, however, that the prophets frequently used descriptions of cosmic catastrophe (e.g., the darkening of the sun and moon, the falling of the stars to the earth, the descending of impenetrable clouds and lightning, and great earthquakes) to describe sudden upheavals of the political status quo. [▶14]

Such symbolism communicates this message: "You think that your nation will go on forever, as dependable as the rising of sun and moon. You assume that the other nations will continue as they exist now, just as the stars maintain their places in the night sky. You imagine that your security and your income will remain as stable as the mountains. But something is about to happen that will interrupt the continuity you suppose will go on forever. Nations will fall, peoples will be slaughtered or exiled, and economies, as well as incomes, will collapse."

In contrast to such violent upheavals of the political status quo, the prophets sometimes symbolize times of great blessing by the opposite – the sun and the moon shine extra brightly, the sun refuses to set, the moon remains full, and the sea becomes calm. [▶15]

The Isaiah 13 prophecy begins with the words, "An oracle concerning Babylon" (v. 1). In verses 14–16, only a few verses after the reference to the day of the LORD and with no break in the thought, Isaiah speaks of people being captured and thrust through, being caught and falling by the sword, their infants dashed to pieces before their eyes, their houses looted, and their wives ravished. Isaiah is describing the effects of battle as experienced in his own time.

The next verses, Isaiah 13:17–19, state, "See, I will stir up against them the Medes, who do not care for silver and have no delight in gold. Their bows will strike down the young men, they will have no mercy on infants, nor will they look with compassion on children. Babylon . . . will be overthrown by God. . . ."

The "day of the LORD" that the prophet predicts was fulfilled in 539 B.C.E., when the Medes and Persians captured Babylon and shortly after conquered the entire Babylonian Empire. It was a "day of the LORD" because God was meting out righteous punishment for all of the tragedies His people had suffered at the hands of the Babylonians. He punished them by allowing the Medes and Persians to conquer their empire. This passage certainly does not apply to an event still future to us. It refers, instead, to disaster c from the list above.

### **Joel 2:31 (Roman domination)**

In Acts 2, Peter clearly applies this passage to the first Pentecost after Christ's Resurrection and the subsequent events leading up to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. In view of this fact, it is incredible that Bible believers would take it as a prediction of some other historical event.

Peter recognized the Spirit's descent as Joel's predicted outpouring. As a matter of fact, Peter's entire Acts 2 sermon is based on Joel 2:32: "Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved." Peter demonstrates that Jesus is the LORD, that repentance and baptism in his

name is how to call on him, and that forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit as a gift are the fulfillment of the promise of salvation. He uses "many other words" summarized by the exhortation, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation" (v. 40).

"Save yourselves!" is the urgent cry to avoid the wrath hanging over the heads of that generation. The destruction of Jerusalem was only 40 years away when Peter cried out these words! The terrors of the Jewish war with the Romans (66–70 C.E.), which Josephus describes so vividly, Joel portrays in cosmic symbolism. In this "day of the LORD"—disaster d—also described by Jesus Himself, [▶16] God repaid a rebellious nation that had rejected the Messiah and persecuted His followers. [▶17] To apply it to events future to us flies in the face of Peter's application.

### **Amos 5:18, 20 (Assyrian domination)**

Amos denounces those who long for the "day of the LORD," warning them that it "will be darkness, not light... darkness, not light – pitch-dark, without a ray of brightness." The reasons the northern nation of Israel was about to suffer this wrath from God were many: they oppressed the poor and the righteous, they accepted bribes, they combined their worship of God with idolatry, and they were complacent about their sins. [▶18] The prophet announces that they will go into exile beyond Damascus, their rich people will be at the head of the line of captives, [▶19] while others will be slain. [▶20] This passage clearly refers to disaster a. To apply Amos 5:18 and 20 to an event still future to us destroys the context.

### **Obadiah 15 (Babylonian domination)**

Obadiah's statement that "day of the LORD is near for all nations" is at the end of a denunciation of the Edomites for their hostile actions toward Judah on the occasion that a foreign army plundered Jerusalem. [▶21] The event that has just happened is probably disaster b, the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. The prophet promises, "As you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head." [▶22]

If you read the entire Book of Obadiah (only 21 verses), you will discover that the prophet is crying out against the Edomites for siding with Judah's enemies when it was overthrown. The prophet warns that God will pay Edom back in kind for her callousness and cruelty. In fact, verse 18 predicts, "There will be no survivors from the house of Esau. The LORD has spoken."

To make these verses apply to some event yet future to us has no justification in or out of the text. True to the prophecy, the Edomites did pass out of existence when the Idumeans of New Testament times died off. They cannot suffer destruction some time in the future, because they already disappeared two millennia ago. Once more, nothing in the context indicates a fulfillment beyond the immediate future for Obadiah's contemporaries.

### **Zephaniah 1:14 (Babylonian domination)**

The opening verses of Zephaniah date his prophecy during the reign of Josiah, who died in 620 B.C.E. The circumstances surrounding Josiah's death involved the passing of the Assyrian Empire and the rise of the Babylonian, resulting only a few years later in a Babylonian invasion of Judah and the eventual capture and destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E.

Zephaniah predicts that Judah's princes will be punished along with the idolaters. He predicts that the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who believe the LORD will do nothing for or against them, will lose their businesses, their wealth, their houses, and their vineyards. [23] He goes on to include the surrounding nations in this wrath: Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Cush, and even Assyria would all soon fall. This was all fulfilled when the Babylonians swept through the area a few years after Josiah's death, causing disaster. Nothing in the context suggests a fulfillment beyond the prophet's original audience.

### **Zechariah 14:1 (Roman domination?)**

Zechariah prophesied after the return from Babylonian exile (see Zech. 1:1). The "day of the LORD" mentioned in Zech. 14:1 comes only three verses after the verse Jesus applies to his own death, "Strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered" (Zech. 13:7). [24]

The intervening verses predict the death of two-thirds of the people in the land; the LORD refines the surviving third and makes it His own. This corresponds well to disaster d, the war the Romans waged against the Jews in 66–70 C.E. The "day of the LORD" will be an occasion, the prophet says, "when your plunder will be divided among you." [25] Zechariah continues, "I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city." This almost seems like an eyewitness account of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, but seen with the eyes of inspiration and faith. None of this can refer to events yet in our future.

It is true that the subsequent verses [26] move quickly into a fantastic description of surrealistic events; certainly a literal fulfillment of these verses has not yet occurred. Yet alternative interpretations exist that have at least as much, if not more, credibility than the theory that they predict some situation yet future to us. Perhaps these verses are a conditional prophecy whose conditions were never met. [27] More likely they involve a symbolism of God's relationship with the new Israel – the faithful remnant and converted Gentiles. The image of the mountain in Zechariah is similar to prophecies in Isaiah 2 and Micah 4 that clearly refer to the church, and there are close parallels between Zechariah 14:8, Ezekiel 47:1–12, and Rev. 22:1–2, 17.

### Malachi 4:5 (Roman domination)

Before the coming of the day of the LORD, which Malachi describes as "great and dreadful," the prophet says that the LORD will send "Elijah" with the mission of turning the hearts of fathers and their children toward each other. The New Testament identifies this "Elijah" as John the Baptizer, the forerunner of Jesus Christ. [▶28] Although some responded to John's ministry of preaching repentance, the leaders of the nation did not, [▶29] making the nation liable to the prophet's dreadful, final words, "or else I will come and strike the land with a curse." That curse was fulfilled in disaster d, the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. Once more, the "day of the LORD" had a fulfillment that is now in our past.

### Do all "day of the LORD" passages refer to a future "Tribulation"?

These seven examples clearly show L&J's error in following Fruchtenbaum's claim that the phrase "the day of the LORD" always and without exception refers to a tribulation period future to us. The only possible explanation seems to be that L&J approach each of these passages, and perhaps others as well, believing from the start that it has an application future to us. They certainly cannot justify such a conclusion from the context of any of these passages.

### What about "equivalent" terms?

Other passages containing phrases analogous to the "day of the LORD" must also be evaluated according to the context of each. Here is a brief examination of a list by Dr. Fruchtenbaum presented by L&J, [▶30] with a brief analysis of each passage:

<b>Disaster passages analogous to "The Day of the LORD"</b>			
<b>Passage</b>	<b>Which disaster?</b>	<b>Phrase in text</b>	<b>Clues from the context</b>
Jer. 30:7	Babylonian domination	"time of Jacob's trouble"	Established by Jer. 30:11–18 (see 29:20–23). These verses speak of the Babylonian invasion that destroyed Jerusalem and caused many of the survivors to go into Babylonian exile.
Daniel 9:27	Roman domination	"abomination of desolation"	Seventieth week – Compare Dan. 9:26–27 with Dan. 12:1, 7 and with Mark 13:14–19, 30.
Isa. 28:21	Assyrian domination	"Jehovah's strange work"	Isa. 28:1–6, 13b, 18, 22 (prediction of fall of Samaria in 721 B.C.E. and the devastation of all of Judah except Jerusalem in 701).
Deuteronomy 32:35	Unspecific	"day of Israel's calamity"	Covenant curse, ultimately fulfilled in d, the Roman destruction of Jerusalem.

<b>Passage</b>	<b>Which disaster?</b>	<b>Phrase in text</b>	<b>Clues from the context</b>
Obadiah 12-14	Babylonian domination	"day of Israel's calamity"	The verbs in verses 12-14 are all past tense, speaking of the Babylonians overwhelming all of the resisting nations. but 15 is future, speaking of the fall of Babylon to the Medes and Persians.
Deuteronomy 4:30	Unspecific	"tribulation"	The pattern described here was characteristic of much of Israel's history (see Judges 2:10-19).
Isaiah 26:20	Assyrian domination	"indignation"	Isa. 24:1-3, 10-13; 25:2; 26:20-21 (Assyrian invasion devastated Judah, but Jerusalem miraculously survived.)
Daniel 11:36	Roman domination	"indignation"	Dan. 9:27; 11:36b; and 12:1, 7 all refer to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem—the "end" of the temple, the priesthood, and the Mosaic covenant already rendered obsolete at the cross. 11:36 starts out with the reign of Augustus and his dominion over Palestine after the naval battle of Actium (31 B.C.E.).
Isaiah 34:8; 35:4	Assyrian domination	"overflowing scourge"	Isa. 31:8-9; 34:2, 8; 36:1-37:38 – The invasion of Sennacherib the Assyrian brought devastation to Judah and the surrounding nations, but God intervened to rescue Jerusalem.
Isa. 61:2	Roman domination	"day of our God's vengeance"	Jesus quotes this verse when announcing his ministry in Nazareth (Luke 4:18-19), stopping the quotation before the statement about vengeance. As the nation rejected him, his discussions of wrath became more frequent (see Luke 12:57-59; 13:1-9; 14:31-33; 17:22-37; 20:14-18; 21:5-33; 23:28-31).
Daniel 12:1	Roman domination	"time of distress"	See above for Dan. 11:36
Zephaniah 1:15-16	Babylonian domination	"time of trouble, day of wrath, day of distress, day of wasteness, day of desolation, day of darkness, day of gloominess, day of clouds, day of thick darkness, day of the trumpet, day of alarm"	Zephaniah prophesied just at the moment of the rise of Babylon to conquer the former power, Assyria (see Zeph. 2:13)

<b>Passage</b>	<b>Which disaster?</b>	<b>Phrase in text</b>	<b>Clues from the context</b>
Amos 5:18, 20	Assyrian domination	“day of darkness”	Amos specifically predicts an exile beyond Damascus in 5:27 (compare 6:7).
Joel 2:2	Roman domination	“day of darkness, day of clouds, day of thick darkness”	See earlier discussion about Peter’s Pentecost sermon, applying Joel 2:28–32 to his generation, then warning them about the coming wrath, fulfilled in the Roman destruction of Jerusalem.
Matthew 24:21, 29	Roman domination	“great tribulation, tribulation”	Clearly refers to the overthrow of Jerusalem by the Romans (see especially Matt. 24:2, 34 and compare Luke 21:6, 20, 32).

Rather than forcing all of these passages to apply to the same disaster, as L&J do, a better approach is to determine which disaster each text describes based on its context. The way to link together all of these passages is to point out that there have been several occasions the Bible describes as the “day of the LORD,” each involving a punishment of the wicked and a vindication of the righteous. If you cannot tell from the context to which historical disaster a passage refers, you cannot automatically assume it refers to this one or that one. Absent conclusive evidence, we must admit that we don’t know which event it describes.

### **Do any “day of the LORD” passages refer to events still future to us?**

Some passages actually *do* refer to the final judgment and transformation of the world (event e). In Second Thessalonians, Paul twice refers to the time of Christ’s return. He says that Christ will punish both those who don’t know God and those who don’t obey the gospel “on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.” [\[▶31\]](#) Note that in contrast to Dispensational teaching, the righteous and the wicked both participate in Judgment Day—a triumph for the former, a tragedy for the latter.

In the following chapter, Paul explains that the “day of the LORD” will not come until the “rebellion occurs and man of lawlessness is revealed.” [\[▶32\]](#) This “man of lawlessness” is apparently a supernatural being, for he was already present (but hidden) at the time of the writing of Second Thessalonians, [\[▶33\]](#) yet he will be revealed and then destroyed at the coming of Christ (v. 8).

Perhaps Satan himself is the person being described, for the expressions “man of lawlessness” and “son of destruction” are Semitic idioms common during that period for someone characterized by whatever trait is in the possessive. [\[▶34\]](#) He is certainly working behind the scenes, the hidden power of evil in the world, yet restrained by One

who is LORD of all that is good. Christ’s coming will pull off the disguise, reveal him for who he really is, and then destroy him utterly. [▶35]

In the Corinthian epistles, written shortly after those to the Thessalonians, Judgment Day is the theme of Paul’s references to the “day of the LORD.” Paul says the Corinthian Christians are eagerly waiting for Christ to be revealed, and he promises that God can keep them strong “to the end” so that they will be blameless on “the day of our LORD Jesus Christ.” [▶36] Later in First Corinthians, Paul points to the positive reason for administering church discipline, so that the offender’s spirit may be “saved on the day of the LORD.” [▶37] Paul discusses the event of Christ’s return in chapter 15, though “day of the LORD” or “day of Christ” does not appear. Instead, Paul calls it “the end” (v. 24), associating it with the resurrection of the dead.

This same idea carries into Second Corinthians, as Paul anticipates boasting over the Corinthians “in the day of the LORD Jesus” (2 Cor. 1:14) and everyone having to “stand before the judgment seat of Christ, that each may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10). “Judgment seat” (*bēma*) is the word normally used for the governor’s chair from which he tries cases. [▶38] Christ, the King of kings and LORD of LORDS will render judgment to all—the righteous and the wicked.

Yet, despite the clear application of these passages to the general resurrection and Day of Judgment, involving both saints and sinners, some “day of the LORD” passages in the New Testament do not refer to event e, the Second Coming, general resurrection, and Judgment Day. They refer to disaster d, the Roman war against the Jews (67–70 C.E.) and the subsequent destruction of Jerusalem. The context of Luke 17:24’s “the Son of Man in his day” (“in his day” omitted by some early manuscripts) and “the days of the Son of Man” (v. 26) is the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. This is indicated not only by the reference to “this generation” in verse 25, but also by v. 17’s gathering of vultures, or eagles (symbolic of Rome), ‘vulture’ and ‘eagle’ being the same word in Greek. [▶39] See the parallel passage in Matthew 24:23–28 and the flow of the context through Luke. [▶40]

The destruction of Jerusalem was a “day of the LORD” similar to the three “day of the LORD” fulfillments in Old Testament times. God brought His righteous wrath against the wicked, punishing them severely for their sins by the war, the siege of Jerusalem, the burning of the Holy City and its temple, the massacre of thousands, and the forced exile and enslavement of the survivors. It was a time for demonstrating the LORDship of Jesus Christ over his enemies, a time when his sovereignty became apparent to all. [▶41]

As pictured in Daniel 7:9–10, 22, 26–27 and predicted by Jesus himself in Matthew 26:64, its fall signified “the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven. He

approached the Ancient of Days . . . and was given authority, glory, and sovereign power." It is important to point out that the image is of Christ's coming, not to the earth, but before the throne of God in heaven. The city that murdered the prophets, stoned those sent to it, killed the Messiah, and persecuted His apostles and disciples received the covenant curses as God had warned, [42] in exactly the manner God's Son had predicted. [43]

One ambiguous passage is Second Peter chapter 3, in which "the day of the LORD" occurs in verse 10: "But the day of the LORD will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare." Within this verse itself there are several difficulties. The simile comparing the coming of the "day" to a thief's stealthy arrival is not helpful to determine the verse's application, because "like a thief" describes both the "coming" at the destruction of Jerusalem (Matt. 24:43) and at Judgment Day (1 Thess. 5:2). The same is true of a "coming" Jesus threatened to the church at Sardis (Rev. 3:3).

Neither can we find the solution from the phrase about the falling of the sky or the dissolution of the elements, for this could be the same kind of cosmic catastrophe symbolism we have already encountered in the Old Testament prophets. As for the last clause regarding "the earth," we observe a tough disagreement among the manuscript witnesses ("laid bare," "discovered," or "burned up" are the basic options [44]). Plus, there are reasons for arguing that the Greek for "the earth" would better be translated "the land," the usual Jewish term of affection for the land of Palestine. [45] To understand that it is the land (instead of the earth, the planet) that will be burned up, laid bare, or found, changes the meaning considerably, no longer requiring the end of the world.

The point of all of this is that Second Peter chapter 3 very well could be another description of disaster, the Roman destruction of Jerusalem as "the day of the LORD." On the one hand, early tradition places Peter's martyrdom shortly after the 64 C.E. fire at Rome in a horrible persecution Nero conducted against the Christians of the city. This would mean that the apostle wrote Second Peter just a few years before the Jewish insurrection broke out in June of 66 C.E. [46]

On the other hand, preceding verses in chapter three compare this coming "day of the LORD" to creation and the Great Flood, concluding, "...the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." Although the words "day of judgment" themselves do occur here, seeming to point to event e, a more literal rendering weakens the case: "kept unto a day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly men." A day of judgment is not necessarily *the* day of judgment. Peter's "day of the LORD" must remain ambiguous.

Despite some uncertainty, then, uncertainty that arises from paying close attention to the context, it remains clear that L&J sometimes paint with too broad a brush, until everything becomes the same color. Rather than bending context to our will, we must bend our will to context.

## **Error 2: Separating what should remain united**

The mistake of “collapsing contexts” – bringing together what should remain distinct – has an opposite mistake: severing what should remain a congruent whole. Verses that join together into a biblical book form a context, and express their message taken together unless we have strong reasons within the context itself for splitting them apart. Yet this exegetical amputation is what L&J do again and again, ignoring the context because they seek to understand passage after passage according to the artificial construct of Dispensational Premillennialism. Two significant examples are their treatment of multiple references to the coming of Christ in the same context and their interpretation of Titus 2:13’s “the blessed hope and the glorious appearing.”

### ***Separating multiple references in the same context***

L&J believe the return of Jesus Christ will happen in two stages: first, they claim that He will come *for* the saints (they call this the “Rapture”), secretly snatching away all faithful Christians, transforming the living and raising the dead, but leaving behind all unbelievers, the living on the earth and the rest of the dead still in their graves. Then, they say, at least seven years later, perhaps longer, Christ will come *with* the saints (they call this the “Second Coming,” though sometimes they use the term for both events). At this time He will fight and win the Battle of Armageddon, raise the tribulation martyrs, and usher in a reign from Jerusalem that will literally last for 1,000 years (the Millennium).

This concept of the two-stage return of Christ is based on a literal interpretation of Revelation 20, though they tie in other passages from both the Old and the New Testament. In fact, L&J reproduce charts they attribute to Dr. Thomas Ice listing 24 “Rapture” passages (all from the New Testament) and 22 “Second Coming” passages (five from the Old Testament and 17 from the New Testament). [\[▶47\]](#) Rather than discussing each of these passages in detail, I will briefly discuss four of the New Testament books in which passages from both are found: First and Second Thessalonians, First Peter, and Jude. I will attempt to demonstrate that L&J have followed Dr. Ice into error by creating two distinct, end-time events out of what the contexts prove only refer to one – the final return of Jesus Christ at the time of both the

general resurrection (involving both the righteous and the wicked) and the universal Day of Judgment.

### First Thessalonians

L&J apply 1 Thessalonians 1:10, 2:19, 4:13–18, and 5:9, 23 to the “Rapture” but 1 Thessalonians 3:13 to the “Second Coming” at least seven years later. The first of these verses, 1 Thess. 1:10, says the Thessalonians are waiting for Jesus’ coming, describing Jesus as God’s Son whom He raised from the dead, the one “rescuing us from the coming wrath.”

Note that the tense of the participle “rescuing” is present, not future. This is not referring to something Jesus will do in the future, but to what He is doing in the present (present for the Thessalonian Christians). The context is conversion, as the previous verse makes clear. As the Thessalonians turn to God from idols, Jesus rescues them from the coming wrath. This verse does not describe a snatching away of people from the earth before a time of great suffering; it is describing the spiritual benefits of salvation. The entire human race stands under condemnation and will some day suffer the wrath of a just God unless rescued. One by one, as people turn to God in trusting obedience, the rescue takes place. Without this misapplied phrase, 1 Thess. 1:10 has nothing to suggest it applies to the “Rapture.”

Nothing in the context of 1 Thess. 2:19 suggests “Rapture” either. To the contrary, we encounter the word “presence, arrival” (*parousia* in Greek), a word used in extrabiblical Greek to describe the visit of a ruler. [48] *Parousia* clearly refers to the coming of Christ in a number of passages, including Matt. 24:27, 39 and 1 Cor. 15:23). [49] That fact makes L&J’s application of 2:19 to the “Rapture” puzzling. The same word *parousia* occurs in the next passage, 1 Thess. 3:13: “May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our LORD JESUS comes with all his holy ones.” *Parousia* binds these two verses together, strongly suggesting that they both refer to the same event, not to two different events.

The same principle holds true for 1 Thess. 4:13–18, for “*parousia* of the LORD” occurs in verse 15. How L&J can apply this passage to a secret Rapture is astonishing, for the LORD comes with the “voice of the archangel and God’s trumpet,” presumably too loud to keep the event a secret. Of course, they believe that only Christians will hear this, but they believe this without any biblical proof.

Nor does this text support their view that at the Rapture only New Covenant believers will experience the resurrection. By the phrase, “the dead in Christ will rise first” (v. 16), Paul is not distinguishing their resurrection from a resurrection of the wicked or of the Old Covenant saints. Paul limits the discussion to what happens to Christians, living and dead. He says the dead in Christ will arise first before the living meet the LORD. Nothing

in the context, however, leads us to reject the doctrine of a single resurrection of all of the dead—Old Covenant and New Covenant, righteous and wicked—as is clearly taught in John 5:28–29.

As a matter of fact, the parallels between this passage and First Corinthians 15 strongly indicate that both passages are describing one resurrection of the dead, not two or more. The following concepts tie the two passages together:

<b>Ties Between First Thessalonians 4 and First Corinthians 15</b>		
<b>Biblical truth</b>	<b>1 Thessalonians 4</b>	<b>1 Corinthians 15</b>
Christ’s own resurrection is tied to the resurrection of His people.	1 Thess. 4:14	1 Cor. 15:20–22
The resurrection will take place just after a trumpet call.	1 Thess. 4:16	1 Cor. 15:52
After that, those who are raised will join the living.	1 Thess. 4:17	1 Cor. 15:50

L&J, in fact, list both passages as referring to the Rapture. [50] Yet First Corinthians 15 clearly teaches a general resurrection. Verse 22 says: “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.” Who are the “all” that will be made alive? The same “all” that die! The next verse lays out the steps:

- a. Christ was raised (v. 23).
- b. Those who belong to him will be raised at his *parousia* (v. 23).
- c. The “end” comes, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father (v. 24a).
- d. After destroying all dominion, authority, and power (v. 24b).
- e. He must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet (v. 25).
- f. The last enemy to be destroyed is death (v. 26).

These steps, however, are out of chronological order. The true order is a, e, d, f/b, c:

<b>Sequence of End-Times Events in First Corinthians 15</b>		
<b>Verse(s) in 1 Cor. 15</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Comments</b>
v. 23	Christ was raised from the dead (a).	This had already happened and was in the past when Paul wrote First Corinthians.

<b>Verse(s) in 1 Cor. 15</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Comments</b>
v. 25	He must reign until God has put all His enemies under His feet (e).	This reigning is present tense and was already going on at the time Paul wrote First Corinthians (see Col. 1:13).
v. 24d	He will destroy all dominion, authority and power (d).	This is an ongoing process (moving from the present to the future for the original readers), leading up to the return of Christ (see Col. 2:15 and Eph. 6:12).
vv. 26, 23	When He arrives ( <i>parousia</i> ), He will destroy the last enemy, death, and raise everyone from the dead (f/b).	The resurrection of the dead is the effect of conquering death, the last enemy, or, as Paul later says, "Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:54).
v. 24a	At "the end," Christ will deliver the kingdom to God the Father (c).	This happens immediately after the resurrection of the dead, leaving no room for a millennial reign. Christ conquers death, His <i>last</i> enemy; then the end comes. There is no space of time between the conquering of death and the end. The defeat of Gog and Magog at the end of the millennium would mean death is not the last enemy.

First Thessalonians chapter 5 is only a continuation of the discussion in chapter 4, as Paul's mention of the "*parousia* of our LORD Jesus Christ" (5:23) demonstrates. The "wrath" of 5:9 is not that of the so-called "Great Tribulation," but the eternal wrath after Judgment Day; note the contrast with "salvation."

A summary of these passages from First Thessalonians may prove helpful:

<b>End-Times verses in First Thessalonians</b>			
<b>Passage</b>	<b>Term in the text</b>	<b>Event according to L&amp;J</b>	<b>True Meaning</b>
1 Thess. 1:10		Rapture	Wrong! Christ rescues the believer from the coming wrath due because of sinfulness ( <i>parousia</i> does not occur). This happens at conversion. Also "wrath" probably refers to final, eternal wrath, not a temporal wrath during a future "Great Tribulation."
1 Thess. 2:19	<i>parousia</i>	Rapture	Wrong! The redeemed are vindicated when Christ "arrives" ( <i>parousia</i> ).

<b>Passage</b>	<b>Term in the text</b>	<b>Event according to L&amp;J</b>	<b>True Meaning</b>
1 Thess. 3:13	<i>parousia</i>	Second Coming	Correct! The blamelessness and holiness of believers will be displayed at Christ's return ( <i>parousia</i> ). If we can agree that this passage refers to Christ's final return, then why should we distinguish the other <i>parousia</i> passages from this one?
1 Thess. 4:13-18	<i>parousia</i>	Rapture	Wrong! Dead Christians will arise and join living Christians to meet the LORD at his arrival ( <i>parousia</i> ). Because nothing is said about the rest of the dead or the rest of the living, we can draw no conclusions about them one way or the other based solely on this passage, but other passages clearly teach a general resurrection.
1 Thess. 5:9	<i>parousia</i>	Rapture	Wrong! God has not appointed Christians for wrath but for salvation ( <i>parousia</i> does not occur).
1 Thess. 5:23	<i>parousia</i>	Rapture	Wrong! Christians will be kept blameless at Christ's return ( <i>parousia</i> ).

Both *parousia* and the theme of blamelessness tie these passages together as descriptions of a single event, the return of Christ.

## Second Thessalonians

When interpreting Second Thessalonians, L&J follow this same, back-and-forth pattern that they created in First Thessalonians:

<b>End-Times verses in Second Thessalonians</b>			
<b>Passage</b>	<b>Term in the text</b>	<b>Event according to L&amp;J</b>	<b>True Meaning</b>
2 Thess. 1:6-10	'reveal' ( <i>apokaluptō</i> )	Second Coming	Perhaps L&J refer this to the Second Coming because it speaks of taking vengeance on the wicked. But that is only a superficial view. The context speaks of saving the Christians from their enemies (see 1:6) – pointless if the Rapture already accomplished this years ago.
2 Thess. 2:1	<i>parousia</i>	Rapture	"...in behalf of the <i>parousia</i> of our LORD Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him..." Is this referring to one event or to two? In view of other passages, the answer is, one! If it referred to two, the sequence would be out of order for L&J's understanding, for "our being gathered to Him" would take place <i>after</i> the <i>parousia</i> .

<b>Passage</b>	<b>Term in the text</b>	<b>Event according to L&amp;J</b>	<b>True Meaning</b>
2 Thess. 2:8	<i>parousia</i>	Second Coming	“...whom the LORD Jesus will blow away with the breath of his mouth and destroy with the appearance of his <i>parousia</i> . . . .” We can both agree that this refers to the Second Coming.

They apply 2 Thess. 1:6–10 to the “Second Coming,” 2:1 to the “Rapture,” and 2:8 to the “Second Coming,” but the occurrence of *parousia* in both of the remaining passages is strong evidence that they both refer to the same event. The context provides even stronger support of this idea, because 2 Thess. 2:1 introduces the subject of Christ’s return of which verse 8 is the climax. Paul does not stray from the subject he introduces in verse 1 except to describe what events must necessarily happen before it is fulfilled.

[\[▶51\]](#)

### First Peter

L&J see “Rapture” in 1 Peter 1:7 and 13, “Second Coming” in 4:12–13, and “Rapture” once again in 5:4. In this case, it is not the word *parousia* that ties these passages together, but the word translated “reveal” (*apokaluptō*) and its synonym “manifest” (*phaneroō*). The former occurs in 1:7, 1:13, and 4:13; the latter occurs in 5:4:

<b>End-Times verses in First Peter</b>			
<b>Passage</b>	<b>Phrase from the text</b>	<b>Event according to L&amp;J</b>	<b>Entire text</b>
1 Peter 1:7	‘reveal’ ( <i>apokaluptō</i> )	Rapture	These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ <i>is revealed</i> .
1 Peter 1:13	‘reveal’ ( <i>apokaluptō</i> )	Rapture	Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your heart fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ <i>is revealed</i> .
1 Peter 4:12–13	‘reveal’ ( <i>apokaluptō</i> )	Second coming	But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory <i>is revealed</i> .

<b>Passage</b>	<b>Phrase from the text</b>	<b>Event according to L&amp;J</b>	<b>Entire text</b>
1 Peter 5:4	'manifest' ( <i>phaneroō</i> )	Rapture	And when the Chief Shepherd <i>appears</i> [literally, <i>is manifested</i> ], you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

Glory, revelation, reward—these are what all of these verses have in common. I have to ask, how can three of these verses refer to one event, and the fourth to another, when they all seem to point in the same direction? And how can the three, which all clearly emphasize a revealing, a manifesting, be taken to describe a concealing, a hiding? For that is what is involved in the Rapture, as taught by L&J as well as other Dispensationalists. According to them, Christ at the Rapture returns secretly; He does not “manifest” himself to the world.

Nor can they squirm out of the problem by claiming that the revelation is only for Christians. The context of First Peter suggests otherwise. In particular, there is First Peter 2:12, absent from L&J’s list, but significant nevertheless:

Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us (KJV “day of visitation”).

“Inspection Day”—just another expression for Judgment Day—takes place with both the wicked and the righteous present, for the verse says the pagans are glorifying God on the day “he visits us.” This hardly fits L&J’s Rapture, for they teach that day is only for true Christians, happening secretly with non-Christians remaining unaware it has taken place. Nor does it describe L&J’s “Second Coming,” for in their view, the righteous would already be redeemed from the earth. Their “Second Coming” would not be a day Christ “visits us.”

## **Jude**

According to L&J, verses 14–15 of the one-chapter book of Jude refer to their “Second Coming,” though verse 21 refers to the “Rapture.” Yet once more, the verses they refer to do not fit their teaching, for verses 14–15 say that “...the LORD is coming... to judge everyone....” Presumably “everyone” would include the saved as well as the lost, though Jude’s emphasis is definitely upon the ungodly. This is entirely in harmony with Paul’s statement that “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10). Nothing in Jude 21 distinguishes it as a Rapture passage – no secret appearing, no “snatching away,” not even a mention of resurrection.

The truth is that L&J’s separating of Second Coming passages into stage 1 (“the Rapture”) and stage 2 (“the Second Coming”) is unjustified by the context of any of these passages. They are making distinctions where Scripture does not. (I examine this topic more in the e-book, [Will Christ Return in Stages?. \[▶52\]](#)) We now move on to the other example of unwarranted distinctions, L&J’s mistreatment of Titus 2:13.

### ***Separating “the blessed hope” from the “glorious appearing”***

L&J seek to use biblical terminology for both the Rapture and the post-tribulation return of Christ. The former they call “the blessed hope,” the latter “the glorious appearing.” [\[▶53\]](#) Both expressions come from the same verse, Titus 2:13. Here is the entire paragraph, verses 11–14, as rendered by the KJV (chosen for its literalness):

11For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, 12Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; 13Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; 14Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

The words “that blessed hope” are joined by the conjunction “and” to the words, “the glorious appearing,” but that does not necessarily mean that the two phrases refer to two different events—certainly not to events separated by at least seven years! Yet separating these expressions into two distinct events is exactly what L&J propose to do. Here’s their description of Titus 2:13:

Dr. David L. Cooper often compared the Second Coming to a two-act play separated by a seven-year intermission (the Tribulation). The apostle Paul distinguished these two events in Titus 2:13 by designating them “the blessed hope and glorious appearing.” [\[▶54\]](#)

But does Paul distinguish them?

The phrase, “that blessed hope and the glorious appearing” is actually a figure of speech called *hendiadys* (from the Greek, “one, through two”), meaning that two different expressions combine to form one idea. The Greek grammar by Blass, Debrunner, and Funk (hereafter, B-D-F) describes *hendiadys*:

The co-ordination of two ideas, one of which is dependent on the other (*hendiadys*), serves in the N [ew ]T [estament] to avoid a series of dependent genitives. [\[▶55\]](#)

By “dependent genitives,” B-D-F mean a chain of related possessives, expressed in English by “of” prepositional phrases, as in 1 Cor. 11:7: “he is the image of the glory of God,” expressed by *hendiadys*: “he is the image and glory of God.” In this example, “image,” “glory,” and “God” are all connected. Each is dependent on the next, for God

## Notes

1. The novels are all published by Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, Illinois. [<RETURN<](#)
2. Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, *Are We Living in the End Times?* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1999). Hereafter cited as *End Times*. [<RETURN<](#)
3. Tim LaHaye, *Revelation Illustrated and Made Plain* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1973). Hereafter cited as *Made Plain*. [<RETURN<](#)
4. Tim LaHaye, *Revelation Unveiled* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1999). Hereafter cited as *Unveiled*. [<RETURN<](#)
5. First published in 1909. For a detailed analysis of Darby, along with a comparison between Darby's teaching and those of Scofield and other early Dispensational teachers, see Larry Crutchfield, *Origins of Dispensationalism: The Darby Factor* (New York: University of America, 1992), 211–212. [<RETURN<](#)
6. D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1980). [<RETURN<](#)
7. James Sire, *Twisting Scriptures: 20 Ways Cults Misread the Bible* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1980). Hereafter cited as *Twisting Scriptures*. [<RETURN<](#)
8. *Exegetical Fallacies*, 140. [<RETURN<](#)
9. *End Times*, 147. [<RETURN<](#)
10. Historical account: 2 Kings 17 – 19 (parallel accounts in 2 Chron. 32 and Isa. 36 – 37). [<RETURN<](#)
11. Historical account: 2 Kings 24 – 25 (parallel accounts in 2 Chron. 36:5–21; Jer. 39). [<RETURN<](#)
12. Historical account: Dan. 5; Herodotus, 1 §§190–191 (A. D. Godley, ed. and transl., *Herodotus* [Loeb Classical Library], 4 vols. [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1926], 1:237–241); hereafter cited as Loeb edition. [<RETURN<](#)
13. Historical account: Josephus, *The Jewish War*, volumes 2 and 3 in H. St. J. Thackeray, ed. and transl., *Josephus* (Loeb Classical Library), 9 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1976); hereafter cited as Loeb edition. [<RETURN<](#)
14. Besides Isaiah 13, examples include: Ps. 46:2–3; Isa. 5:30; 23:11; 24:23; Jer. 49:21; Ezek. 26:18; 32:7; 38:19–20; Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15–16; Hab. 3:11. [<RETURN<](#)
15. For each of these, respectively, see Isa. 30:26; Isa. 60:20; and Zech. 10:11. [<RETURN<](#)
16. See Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21. [<RETURN<](#)
17. See 1 Thess. 2:15–16. [<RETURN<](#)
18. Amos 5:11–12, 21–26; 6:1–6. [<RETURN<](#)
19. Amos 5:27; 6:7. [<RETURN<](#)
20. Amos 6:9. [<RETURN<](#)
21. Obad. 10–14. [<RETURN<](#)
22. Obad. 15. [<RETURN<](#)
23. Zeph. 1:8–9, 11–13. [<RETURN<](#)
24. See Matt. 26:31; Mark 14:27. [<RETURN<](#)
25. Zech. 14:1. [<RETURN<](#)
26. Zech. 14:3–11. [<RETURN<](#)
27. See Jer. 18:1–10. [<RETURN<](#)
28. See Luke 1:17; Matt. 17:9–13; Mark 9:1–13. [<RETURN<](#)
29. See Luke 7:29–30; Matt. 17:11–12; Mark 9:12–13. [<RETURN<](#)
30. *End Times*, 147–149. [<RETURN<](#)
31. 2 Thess. 1:8–10. [<RETURN<](#)
32. 2 Thess. 2:2–3. [<RETURN<](#)
33. See v. 4's present tenses, contrary to the mistranslated futures of the NIV. [<RETURN<](#)
34. See “children of destruction” – Greek rendering of Isa. 57:4; “sons of thunder” – Mark

3:17; “son of destruction” – John 17:12; “son of encouragement” – Acts 4:36. [<RETURN<](#)

35. For a scholarly defense of this interpretation of 2 Thess. 2:3–12, see Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, (New International Greek Testament Commentary) (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990), 242–264. [<RETURN<](#)

36. 1 Cor. 1:7–8. [<RETURN<](#)

37. 1 Cor. 5:5. [<RETURN<](#)

38. E.g., Matt. 27:19; John 19:13; Acts 18:12; 25:6. The word is often translated “tribunal” when it occurs in Josephus, referring to the Roman seat of judgment often set up in the marketplace or other public area (e.g., *Jewish War* 2§172, 2§175, 2§176; Loeb edition, 2:391, 2:391, and 2:393, respectively). See Thomas McComiskey, “*bēma*,” 2:369–370 in Colin Brown, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1976). [<RETURN<](#)

39. See the discussion of *aetos* in Colin Brown, “Bird,” *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1975), 1:175. The entire article is pp. 172–176. [<RETURN<](#)

40. See Luke 10:13–15; 11:50–51; 12:49–59; 13:1–9, 31–35; then 17:20–37; followed by 18:1–8; 20:9–19; 21:3–36 (note especially verse 32); 23:28–31. [<RETURN<](#)

41. This view, that the Roman destruction of Jerusalem was a “day of the LORD” and a coming of Christ, but not the “day of the LORD” or the final coming of Christ, differs from the teaching of “70 A.D.” Max R. King and others. Unlike them, I distinguish New Testament passages prophesying event d from those predicting event e, relying on the context of each passage to tell me which is which. Primarily, any reference to the resurrection from the dead points to event e, not event d. For a detailed study of the various “comings” of Christ in the New Testament, see David B. Knox, “Five comings of Jesus, Matthew 24 and 25.” *Reformed Theological Review* 34, 2 (1975):44–54. [<RETURN<](#)

42. See the curses of the covenant recorded in Lev. 26:14–39; Deut. 28:15–68. [<RETURN<](#)

43. Mark 13; Matt. 24; Luke 17 and 21.

[<RETURN<](#)

44. For a detailed discussion, see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 636–637. Hereafter cited as *Textual Commentary*. [<RETURN<](#)

45. Hebrew: *’eretz Yisra’el*. Both the Hebrew word, *’eretz*, and the corresponding Greek word, *gē*, can mean land (e.g., Gen. 1:10; Judges 16:24; Isa. 8:8; 13:5, 9; Matt. 2:6, 21), ground (e.g., Gen. 1:11–12, 25; 1 Sam. 14:15; Mark 4:1), soil (e.g., Lev. 26:20; 27:30; Num. 13:20; Mark 4:5, 8), as well as the world (e.g., Gen. 1:1–2, 15, 17; Ps. 102:19; 108:5; Matt. 5:18, 35; 6:10). The context of each passage must decide. [<RETURN<](#)

46. *Josephus*, 2§284 (Loeb edition, 2:435).

[<RETURN<](#)

47. *End Times*, 99–105. [<RETURN<](#)

48. Albrecht Oepke, “*parousia, pareimi*” [arrival, arrive], 5:859–860 in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. by G. Kittel, trans. by G. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1964); hereafter cited as *TDNT*. [<RETURN<](#)

49. The context is ambiguous whether Matt. 24:27, 39 refer to the vindication of Jesus as the Christ at the destruction of Jerusalem, in line with Daniel 7:13, or to His final return at the General Resurrection/Day of Judgment. Nevertheless, it clearly does *not* refer to the Rapture as defined by Dispensationalists. [<RETURN<](#)

50. *End Times*, 99, 101. [<RETURN<](#)

51. For a closer look at Paul’s teaching of the *parousia*, see Joseph Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997), especially 141–142. [<RETURN<](#)

52. Steve C. Singleton, *Will Christ Return in Stages?* (Garland, Tex.: DeeperStudy, 2004). [<RETURN<](#)

53. *End Times*, 98 and 222–223, respectively. [<RETURN<](#)

54. *End Times*, 104. [<RETURN<](#)

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Steve C. Singleton has a BA in Bible, magna cum laude, and an MA in Religion from Lubbock Christian University and Abilene Christian University, respectively. He has completed many additional graduate courses in Bible, Greek, Hermeneutics, Church History, Theological German, and Systematic Theology from Harding School of Theology, Abilene Christian University, and Southwestern Seminary.

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