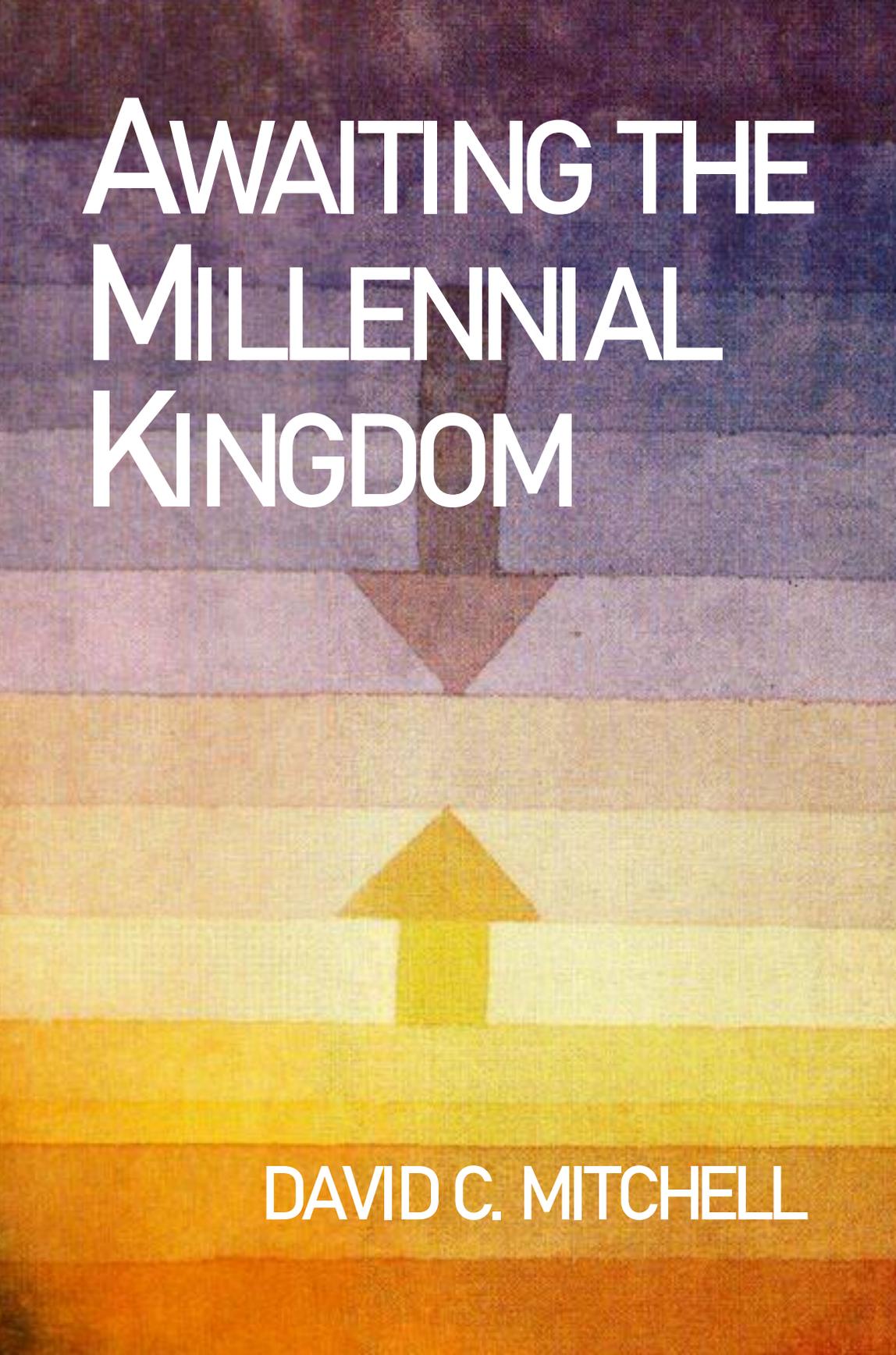


AWAITING THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM



DAVID C. MITCHELL

**AWAITING THE MILLENNIAL
KINGDOM**

By the same author

The Message of the Psalter
An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms

The Songs of Ascents
Psalms 120 to 134 in the Worship of Jerusalem's Temples

Messiah ben Joseph

Jesus: The Incarnation of the Word

How To Be Happy For Ever (No, really!!)

AWAITING THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

DAVID C MITCHELL



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*HOW many years has man been driven
Far off from happiness and heaven?
When wilt thou, gracious LORD, restore
Thy wandering church, to roam no more?*

*Six thousand years are fully past
Since Adam from thy sight was cast;
And ever since, his fallen race
From age to age are void of grace.*

*When will the happy trump proclaim
The judgment of the martyr'd Lamb?
When shall the captive troops be free,
And keep the eternal jubilee?*

*Hasten it, LORD, in every land,
Send thou thine angels and command:
“ Go sound deliverance; loudly blow
“ Salvation to the saints below! ”*

*We want to have the day appear!
The promis'd great sabbatic year,
When, far from grief, and sin, and hell,
Your saints in ceaseless peace shall dwell.*

*'Till then, we will not let thee rest,
Thou still shalt hear our strong request;
And this our daily prayer shall be,
LORD, sound the trump of jubilee.*

After John Cennick (1718–55)

To Pastor Robert Dodoo of São Paulo, Brazil

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Introduction

THIS BOOK is about the millennial week, the coming end of this age, and the dawn of the Sabbath millennium. In it, I show that we are about to enter the long-awaited times of the messianic age.

Yet, just before I finished this book, in late August, I had a mishap. I was cutting winter logs for our wood-fire and the chainsaw cut through the wood into my leg. I had been wielding this machine for ten years without incident. But there are no smart accidents, and I suppose I just got complacent. In a trice, it cleft my leg to the bone, severing the anterior tibular tendon. Yet God was good. For a start, I could have cut my leg off, but didn't. It was also surprisingly painless and bloodless. In fact, I thought it was just a scratch. I walked up the slope into our house and told my daughter, "I've cut my leg, but it's just a scratch." I pulled aside the lacerated trouser leg to look. She screamed. "That's not a scratch. You need to go to hospital right now." A good neighbour drove me quickly to Brussels Saint Luc teaching hospital, ten minutes from our door. My wife, who is probably the best doc in the world, phoned her colleagues at Emergency to alert them and I was received with *Ooh-la-las*. A smiling surgeon told me, *Les tronçonneuses nous donnent beaucoup de travail intéressant*. (Chainsaws give us a lot of interesting work.) Within four hours I was on the operating table. The young surgeon cleaned out the wound and sutured the tendon. Then I was two days lying broken on a hospital bed. To my roommate I croaked the praises of the medical staff and the wonders of modern medicine. *Ah oui*, he replied, *c'est une belle époque pour les accidents graves!* (Oh yes, it's a great time for serious injuries!) After I was released from hospital, I was confined to hopping on crutches, rolling on a wheelchair, or sitting with my leg up for six weeks. Six weeks! Unable to walk as summer turned to chill autumn! It loomed ahead dimly. Yet, as the weeks passed, things got better. There was, thank God, no infection. After three weeks, they removed the stitches and the bandage. After four, I was feeling stronger. How I longed for the end of the sixth week and the start of the seventh, when I could stand and walk again! Then I would be restored to freedom and life. That seventh week shone before my eyes like a Sabbath of joy.

The Bible too speaks about six ages of impediment, confinement, and captivity, after which the world will enter a seventh age of liberation, a Sabbath millennium, when the Messiah will return to rule in Jerusalem and creation will enter into the liberty of the blessed sons of God. These six ages, each of one thousand years, began with the creation of Adam and are coming to a close now, in our own time. This millennial week is one way the Bible, the sages of ancient Israel, and the Church Fathers, measured the passing of the ages.

But the Bible and the sages had a second way of calculating the ages of the world. This was by the jubilee cycle, which Moses legislated in Leviticus, a recurring forty-nine-year cycle which also began at Adam's creation and runs to our own time.

These two ancient systems of timekeeping – millennia and jubilees – are, or should be, the basis of all biblical eschatology. They permit us, knowing the times of the jubilee cycle, and knowing the time of the incarnation of Jesus the Messiah, to calculate the date of Adam's creation. More pertinently, they let us calculate the time of the end of our own age, the sixth millennium. With this method we may calculate that the final jubilee year of the sixth millennium begins now, in autumn AD 2024, on 10 Tishri, and ends in autumn AD 2025, at sundown on 29 Elul. Then, on 1 Tishri 2025, we enter the Sabbath millennium, in which the Messiah will return to set up his throne. Yet there may be a transition period between the end of the sixth millennium, in autumn 2025, and the day of the Messiah's longed-for *parousia* in the seventh millennium.

But here is the good news. He is not late. He has never been late. Everything is going according to plan.

David C. Mitchell
Brussels, September 2024

1



Time for the Future



LONG TIME AGO, in 1993, I was talking to a Baptist friend. We spoke about a project this person was doing which would finish in 1996. “I hope you get it finished before the Lord comes,” I said.

One doesn't always know the best thing to say. But, you see, at that time, I was reading about the millennial week, the ancient teaching that this current age will last six thousand years and be followed by the Messiah's thousand-year Sabbath kingdom of peace and plenty. I had heard of it in early Christian teaching. Now I was learning that the rabbis of Jesus's time held to it too. So I found myself asking, “Could the time of his coming really be as easy as counting 6,000 years from creation?” I knew that James Ussher had calculated the creation of Adam in 6004 BC. (His calculations feature in the King James Bible.) And I was discovering that some rabbinic dates of creation were very close to Ussher's. Clearly, adding 6,000 years to 6004 BC gave a date of 1996 in our own time. Could it really be that easy?

So I added blithely, “He's coming in 1996.”

My friend felt, I fear, that I was being flippant and replied, with simple candour, “Well, I know he's coming soon anyway.”

And he is coming soon. But he didn't come in 1996. He still hasn't come yet, almost thirty years later. Yet I wasn't the first person to hope ahead of time. It seems the apostle Paul hoped the Lord Jesus might come in his time (1 Thess. 4:15–18). But he didn't. The Greek Fathers, who

dated creation in 5,500 BC, expected him in the sixth century AD. They got the tribulation all right, from 536 to 549: four years of volcanic winter issued in failed crops, raging famine, and bubonic plague, killing a quarter of the Roman world. But he didn't come. Others expected him in AD 1,000. And many at other times since. But we are still waiting.

MILLENNIA AND JUBILEES

Yet, if we believe the Bible, he is still coming. And every day that goes by brings his coming nearer. And knowing that this age is to last 6,000 years really can help us to know when he will come. Not exactly. But generally. For he who said, "No man knows the day or the hour," also castigated the Pharisees for not being able to read the signs of the times. Those same Pharisees knew full well that Daniel had foretold that the Messiah would come at the end of ten jubilees, or 490 years, from the rebuilding of Jerusalem in the fifth century BC. For almost 500 years they had been counting the jubilees to the appointed time. But they refused to know him when he came.

So hoping to calculate the time of his return is not foolish. If we really know the divine timetable of the ages, we really can know the times of his coming. As for my premature hope that he would come in 1996, it wasn't all Ussher's fault. Ussher was close, probably only a year out. What I didn't know back then was that the calendar of the ages is counted not only in millennia, but also in jubilees, just as Gabriel told Daniel. The overlap of jubilees and millennia adds another twenty-seven years to the calculation.

That brings us, in fact, to autumn 2024 as the beginning of the final jubilee year of the sixth millennium. More precisely, this final jubilee year will begin on 10 Tishri 2024 and run till autumn 2025. It's quite ironic that, having worked on this book for some years, this only became clear to me in the summer of 2024. One is writing a book on the end of the age, just as the age is about to end. But this doesn't render it useless. For a start, the year autumn 2024 to 2025 is not the end of the world, but only the end of the sixth millennium. There will certainly be a transition period into the Sabbath millennium. In fact, since Daniel's prophecy, there are two jubilee cycles interlocking at an interval of eighteen years. That seems to be the transition period. But what is important in all this, as events unfold around us, is that we see that God's plan for the ages is

not arbitrary or *ad hoc*. He is not sitting thinking, “When will I send my Son back? I can’t make up my mind.” Not at all. Everything is happening according to his timetable of the ages which he has known since the beginning (Acts 1:7). If the King hasn’t come yet, it is because the times were not fulfilled. And though we cannot know the day, we can certainly recognize the times.

WHY ESCHATOLOGY?

This book is about Eschatology – from Greek *eschatos* or “last” – that is, the theological discipline of what the Bible says about the Last Things, the things that will happen at the end of this age and thereafter. Some resent this fascination with eschatology. They say, maybe, that it’s of no practical use. How can eschatology help me feed my kids? How can it solve social injustice or the climate crisis or global poverty? Others object that eschatology is a hallmark of loony cults. They pooh-pooh those who take much interest in it. Anglican theologians are good at this. Bishop Michael Green had no doubts:

Throughout history, apocalyptic sects in Christianity have played down both cross and resurrection in favour of heightened eschatological expectation. They have developed millennial descriptions, timetables of the Rapture, and geographies of heaven and hell.¹

Now never let it be said that I disregard the cross. *In the cross of Christ I glory, tow’ring o’er the wrecks of time.* My hope is in the cross. But some theologians cite the cross to suggest that eschatology is a matter for children. I think there are several reasons why they do this. Since the cross and resurrection are historical they feel safe to talk about them. But the return of the Lord is future. Our only basis for talking about the future is prophecy and they are not sure what bits of that to believe or take literally. We cannot expect the Bible to tell us the future, they say. We misread the prophets if we imagine they speak about the future, they say. They say prophets don’t foretell, they *forth-tell*; they don’t predict the future, they proclaim social justice. They say the Revelation was written not to teach us about the future but to remind the early church that God knows their trials. They think that those who take prophecy too seriously should grow up and talk about the cross and the resurrection.

¹ Green, *Empty Cross of Jesus*, 163.

But eschatology is not a matter for children. It is just as vital as the doctrines of incarnation, atonement, resurrection, ascension, heavenly reign, and the sending of the Spirit. If his incarnation was wonderful, his parousia is no less so. If his affliction was wonderful, his vindication is no less so. Jesus had a lot to say about his return in glory, and whoever relegates it to myth or symbolism, or fails to study what he really meant, is making a bad mistake. The cross may be the head of the Christian faith, but a head without trunk and limbs is not a functioning body. To overstate one truth at the cost of another is to have a lop-sided faith.

Eschatology was the abiding interest of Isaac Newton. Like Ussher, he calculated the date of creation so as to determine the time of the return of Jesus, which he thought would happen in 2060. (I'll explain his calculation later.) Newton's best known work on eschatology is his commentary *On Daniel and the Apocalypse* (1733). But he left many unpublished papers on the subject, including another treatise on the Revelation.² A century ago, it was acquired by the polymath and antiquarian Avraham Yahuda. Yahuda showed it to his friend Albert Einstein. Einstein, after studying it, wrote to Yahuda expressing his fascination with Newton's calculations. So those of us who devote time to the study of eschatology can rest assured that we are not in the company of fools.

Newton's comments on prophecy in these unpublished papers are worth considering. He rejects any notion that biblical prophecy is mere encouragement to remind us that God is with us. "The holy Prophesies," he says, "are no other than histories of things to come." (f16r)

He rejects any notion that prophecy cannot be understood. Though it may be hard to understand, diligence in study will make it clearer, especially as the time draws near.

If they [prophecies] are never to be understood, to what end did God reveale them? Certainly he did it for the edification of the church; & if so, then it is as certain that the church shall at length attain to the understanding thereof. (f2v)

Consider also the designe of the Apocalyps [the Revelation]. Was it not given for the use of the Church to guide & direct her in the right way, And is not this the end of all prophetick Scripture? If there was no need of it, or if it cannot be understood, then why did God give it? Does he trifle? But if it was necessary for the Church then why doest thou neglect it, or how knowest thou that thou art in the right way, and yet doest not understand it? (f3v)

² Untitled treatise on Revelation, Section 1.1. (Yahuda Ms. 1.1).

Next, Newton warns of the grave dangers of ignoring prophecy, for those who do so will fall calamitously short in the trials of the last days.

Indeed, the danger of neglecting prophecy is great. For Daniel spoke clearly of the time of Messiah's coming, but the first-century Jews, by their ignorance of scripture and hardness of heart, failed to discern the signs of the time of his appearing (Matt. 16:3; Luke 19:44).

Consider how our Saviour taught the Jews in Parables that in hearing they might hear & not understand & in seeing they might see & not perceive. And as these Parables were spoken to try the Jews so the mysticall scriptures were written to try us. Therefore beware that thou be not found wanting in this tryall. For if thou beest, the obscurity of these scriptures will as little excuse thee as the obscurity of our Saviours Parables excused the Jews. (f2v)

If God was so angry with the Jews for not searching more diligently into the Propheesies which he had given them to know Christ by: why should we think he will excuse us for not searching into the Propheesies which he hath given us to know Antichrist by? For certainly it must be as dangerous & as easy an error for Christians to adhere to Antichrist as it was for the Iews to reject Christ. And therefore it is as much our duty to indeavour to be able to know him that we may avoyd him, as it was theirs to know Christ that they might follow him. (3r)

Finally, Newton speaks of the great blessings which God bestows on those who study prophecy.

Lastly consider the Blessing which is promised to them that read & study & keep the things which are written in <5r> this Prophecy. *Blessed is he that readeth & they that hear the words of this Prophecy & keep the things which are written therein, for the time is at hand*, Rev. 1.3. And again to reinforce the invitation to take these things into consideration, the same Blessing is repeated in Ch. 22.7 And does God ever annex his blessings to trifles or things of indifferency? Wherefore be not overwise in thine own conceit, but as thou desirest to inherit this blessing consider & search into these Scriptures which God hath given to be a guide in these latter times, & be not discouraged by the gainsaying which these things will meet with in the world.

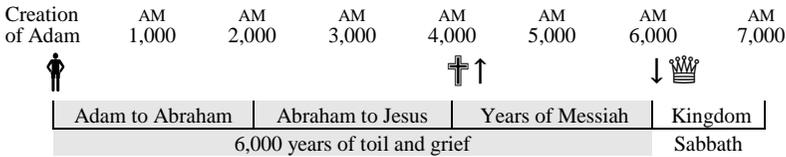
Indeed, there are many blessings attached to the study of prophecy. One of the greatest is, as the apostle John says, "We know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure." (1 John 3:2–3) That is to say, those who ponder the return of the Lord find it has a purifying influence upon the heart and soul and character. Rather than

it being an idle hobby, an active hope in the Lord's return is essential to the growth of Christian faith and character.

THE MILLENNIAL WEEK

The ancient prophecy of the millennial week is one of the key subjects of this book. According to this prophecy, our world-age will last seven thousand years. Each thousand years is one day of a millennial week. And so there will be six thousand years of toil and grief, and then, with the seventh millennium, will come the blessed Sabbath of creation, the time of rest and peace, the thousand-year reign of the Messiah in Jerusalem. Here it is, counted in AM (Anno Mundi) years from creation.

Figure 1. The millennial week



Now you may reply, "I never heard of that ancient prophecy." But you have probably heard of the millennium spoken of by John in Revelation 20. And what is important to realize is that John's millennium is, so to speak, the tip of the iceberg of the millennial week. John's millennium is the seventh Sabbath millennium which follows the six.

But some say it is actually the other way round. John's millennium is not the seventh millennium of the millennial week. On the contrary, John spoke about only *one* millennium and then other people came along and turned this idea into a whole week of millennia.³ But there are two very good reasons why this cannot be so.

First, we have texts from before the time of the Revelation that speak of the millennial days of creation. The earliest are the Book of Jubilees, 2 Enoch, and the Targum of Hosea. Since these texts already speak of, or allude to, several millennial days, long before the Revelation was written, they cannot be taking their ideas from there. Second, the millennial week appears explicitly in the epistle of Barnabas, from the late first century AD. But it also appears just as explicitly in rabbinic literature only a little later, in the second century. It is unlikely that the Pharisees (Rabbis) or the Nazarenes (early Hebrew Christians) borrowed

³ So Charles 1913: 2.451n.

such an idea from one another. The Christian and Rabbinic teachings must derive from an older common source. And so again we must accept that this idea was around before Barnabas's epistle and John's Revelation. And so the prophecy of the millennial week does not derive from the millennium of Revelation 20. Rather, the millennium of Revelation 20 derives from the more ancient teaching of the millennial week.

But some say, rightly enough, that patristic and rabbinic teachings are not Scripture. And so, since the millennial week is taught neither in the New Testament nor the Old, it is not a biblical doctrine, and we need not reckon upon it. But I would dispute that the millennial week is not found in the Old or New Testaments. It is found in both, if we know where to look. The evidence is the patristic and rabbinic teachings themselves. Any time we find the same idea in Christianity and Judaism, we must understand that they share the same idea only when both regard it as true. For that to happen, the only explanation is that both saw it as a teaching of the Old Testament scriptures, which were the foundation of the faith of ancient Israel, before that faith split into the Christian Church and the Jewish Synagogue.

So in this book I propose that the millennial week, though not explicitly taught in the Old Testament, is fully implied within it. It was a necessary deduction which the sages of ancient Israel made from their scriptures. It is therefore very much a biblical doctrine. That is why it is also taught, later on, by Jesus and the apostles. And that is why it also appears clearly in the teaching both of the early Church Fathers and of their contemporaries, the Pharisees, whose views are recorded in rabbinic literature. It is a single Old Testament idea inherited equally by the Synagogue and the Church.

I will trace the development of the millennial week through history. In Judaism, it shows an admirable solidity, remaining virtually the same through two millennia. But in Christianity, it falls under the influence of neoplatonism, whose adherents – particularly Origen and Augustine – confused the earthly and heavenly states promised to the faithful. As a result, historical Christian eschatology metamorphoses into a faith with no millennium and no earthly reign of the Messiah. Then it goes through fifteen hundred years of twists and turns as Christian thinkers struggle to reconcile the teaching of the Bible with the errors received from Origen and Augustine. But in this book, we return to the view of the New Testament and the earliest Church Fathers.

The millennial week is implied both in the Old Testament and the New. But we can go further. If we read carefully we will see that all the foundational ideas of New Testament eschatology are not really New Testament ideas at all. All of them – resurrection, rapture, conflagration – derive from the Old Testament. There is almost no distinctive New Testament eschatology. It all derives from the Old Testament. And that is why every element of New Testament eschatology is also reflected in rabbinic Judaism. And that is why the Rabbis can help us understand the New Testament as well as the Old. Both faith traditions received the same beliefs from the ancient scriptures.

THE HISTORY OF ESCHATOLOGY

If the millennial week is the underlying structure of biblical eschatology, it follows that the loss of that structure must lead to biblical eschatology collapsing catastrophically into an amorphous mass of unshapen ideas. And that is exactly what happened when, in the early third century, Origen of Alexandria beget the warped eschatology still held in so many corners of the Church. The millennial kingdom on earth, he said, was merely a fable for the simple. Instead, the disembodied righteous would inherit a heavenly and spiritual kingdom. His follower, Augustine of Hippo, tried to reconcile Origen’s extreme teaching with the New Testament. He brought back the resurrection of the body, which Origen had discarded. But there was, Augustine agreed, no future Sabbath millennium. Instead, our current age, the church age, was the long-awaited millennium. At the end of it, there would be a great judgement. Then the saved would ascend to heaven in resurrected bodies and the unsaved depart into eternal torment. Thus they dumped the framework of biblical eschatology in a demolition that lasted for the best part of 1,500 years. Calvin was another who held to this teaching. The Book of Revelation, he said, was incomprehensible, a “wax nose” that one could twist any way one wished. You can’t open the treasure-box if you’ve lost the key.

For 1,500 years, the church tried to understand biblical eschatology without the key. They sought to force the scriptures into a twisted system of their own devising. But the more they stuck to their system, the more they expanded it, the less the scriptures complied. For the word of God does not yield to man-made systems, but only to the God-given framework they had rejected.

It is the millennial week, and the understanding or misunderstanding of it, which leads to all the ideological positions of historical eschatology. These positions give rise to a range of terms that will crop up over and over again. We will look at them in detail as we go along. But if we define them now before we set out, we will have a better idea of them as we meet them. They are all linked to different ways of reading the book of Revelation.

The first four terms are about the Book of Revelation as a whole, and about how it relates to our own times.

Futurism is the view of the early Church Fathers. This view sees the first three chapters of the Revelation – the vision and the letters to the churches – as historical, but all the events from the fourth chapter on as taking place at the end of this age, in the years before the return of Jesus.

Historicism appears in early medieval times. It sees the events of the first three chapters of Revelation as symbolically representing seven ages of the church. Then it sees the events from the fourth chapter on as taking place not in the future, but now, in our own time, in the church age, and happening around us. Following this view, Protestants saw the Antichrist as the Pope and the scarlet whore as the Roman Church.

Preterism arose in the early seventeenth century. Preterists think that everything in the Revelation until the end of chapter nineteen was fulfilled in Roman times. Even the coming of Christ, in chapter nineteen, was fulfilled when he judged Jerusalem in AD 70. Only the last three chapters await a future fulfilment. In time, Preterism morphed into Idealism.

Idealism arose in the early twentieth century. This is the view that the events of the Revelation are merely symbolic of the struggle between good and evil but have little correlation to any events on earth, either future or past. Some idealists still accept that this age will end with the coming of Jesus. But others think the world will simply become better as the ‘veil’ between this world and the spiritual world is lifted and mankind begins to live in the consciousness of God.

These are the four ways to interpret the Revelation. But there are a further four ways of reading the twentieth chapter of the Revelation and the thousand-year kingdom or millennium spoken of there.

Millennialism is the view that Jesus will return in future to set up an earthly kingdom for 1,000 years, as the Old Testament prophets and the Revelation say. This view – also known as millenarianism or chiliasm –

goes hand in hand with the Futurism of the early Church Fathers. In modern times it is more commonly known as Premillennialism, since it asserts that Jesus will return *before* the millennial kingdom.

Amillennialism ('No-millennialism'), also called 'realized' or 'present' millennialism, is Augustine's view that our own present age is the millennium spoken of in the Revelation. Thus there is no millennium still to come. In death, the faithful go to heaven and the unfaithful to hell. Finally, Jesus will return, not to reign on earth, but to raise and judge mankind, to send the righteous and wicked to their allotted places, and to destroy the earth. This goes together with the medieval Historicist view of the Revelation.

Postmillennialism ('After-millennialism') arose in the eighteenth century. It is a variant of Amillennialism. But it sees the end of this age climax into a golden age of worldwide conversion to Christianity and global blessing, as a result of the witness of Christians in the world. Then, at the end of the golden age, Jesus will return to judge and destroy the world and take the faithful to heaven and send the few remaining wicked to hell. This also goes hand in hand with the Historicist view of the Revelation.

Dispensational or Darbyite pretribulationism (pretribulationist premillennialism) arose in the mid-nineteenth century, in the teaching of J.N. Darby. It is a form of millennialism which believes that Jesus will appear secretly to catch the faithful church up to heaven before the Antichrist begins his persecution. Then, during the time of the Antichrist, Jews and others will be converted to Christ, and will suffer in the Antichrist's Great Tribulation. Then, seven years later, Jesus will return with those raptured earlier to defeat the Antichrist and judge the earth. A variation on it is 'mid-tribulationism' which believes that the Church will remain on earth during the relative peace of the Antichrist's initial rule, but then be taken away before his persecution begins in earnest.

These are the main views historically held by Christians about when and how the kingdom of God is going to take over this world. But, broadly speaking, the great divide between them all is whether or not the twentieth chapter of Revelation gives an accurate "future history" when it says that Jesus will return to rule on earth for a thousand years.

For my part, I answer yes to that question. My view is what is called Historic or Classical Premillennialism. This was the faith of the early Church Fathers, as will become clear in the course of this book.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Eschatology has undergone a great resurgence in the last century. This was hardly unexpected. The 19th-century church historian Philip Schaff foretold, in his *History of the Apostolic Church*, that, just as each age of the Church makes its own discoveries from the fullness of divine revelation, so the attention of the last days would focus on the last things: death, afterlife, rapture, second coming, and resurrection.

When Schaff wrote he had no idea of the things we would be seeing in the world now. For we live in a time when many sense that the end of the age is at hand, that some great transformation is about to come upon the world. Some of these ideas began in the late nineteenth century when influential Christians and Jews pressed the British Empire to “view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people,” as the Balfour Declaration said. This led ultimately to the Declaration of the State of Israel in 1948, the Israeli conquest of Jerusalem in 1967, and the apocalyptic horrors now unfolding in the Middle East.

In the 1970s, Hal Lindsay began to popularize eschatology in books like *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1971), *The 1980's: Countdown to Armageddon* (1980) and *Planet Earth: The Final Chapter* (1999). Since then Christian apocalyptic consciousness has proliferated. Long or short, scholarly or infantile, books on Christian eschatology now abound.

But this is true not only for Christians. Jews too ardently await the coming of the Messiah. Some Israeli politicians believe they are now preparing the way for the soon appearance of the Messiah who will open the way for their dominance of the earth. Claims are made that Benjamin Netanyahu is the Messiah ben Joseph, who will wage war for control of the land, rebuild the temple, and gather in the exiles before the coming of the long-awaited Messiah ben David.

Meanwhile, Muslims await the coming of al-Masih ad-Dajjal, the False Messiah, heading an army of Jews and leading the world astray with miracles. But the Imam Mahdi will rise up against him and defeat the False Messiah, who will finally be slain by Isa (Jesus), who will appear as a Muslim prophet to assist the Mahdi.

But it's not just among religious believers. Expectation of the coming cataclysm is global. Our movies are replete with it: *After The Pandemic*, *Moonfall*, *Alien Conquest*, *Armageddon Tales*, *2012 Doomsday*, *4:44 Last Day On Earth*, *Apocalypse Now*. A recent story on Belgium's sedate

RTBF news speaks of how we can discuss with our children the impending *effondrement* (meltdown, collapse) of civilisation.

Nor is this sensationalism. What we see around us – global warming, environmental degradation, mass migration, economic chaos, threats of nuclear war – all lead us to understand that the world cannot continue forever as it now is. Soon we will reach tipping-point. Soon it will all go sky-high. Some vast, unknown, fearful change is about to come upon Planet Earth and all it holds. And we are not ready for that. Probably we will never be ready for that.

Some seek a way to flee the coming cataclysm. They buy land in the farthest corners of the globe – New Zealand or Alaska – where they build homes to withstand the coming meltdown. In fact, the building of these catastrophe-proof homes is a burgeoning industry among the wealthy. The builders tunnel down twenty metres or more into the earth, and construct a concrete-and-lead-encased fortress, safe against nukes and their fallout. Then the standard luxurious dwelling is built on top. If nuclear war should threaten, a lift or staircase takes the lucky one down to the subterranean safe-house. There, equipped with a year or more's food and drink, with all necessary forms of entertainment from bowling allies to movie theatres, the wealthy can sit out the cataclysm and its aftermath until, hopefully, law and order and food supply are restored. Others want to plant colonies on Mars to save the human race. Still others think the idea that you can ever escape is insane optimism. There's no way out, they say. Just accept your inevitable destruction. But some, like you and I, search the future-predicting Bible to gain insight into exactly what is coming. We do not despair at the coming cataclysm. We know it is replete with the good news of our redemption. Salvation from the wrath to come is what God promises his beloved. But the wise will prepare to meet it.