

The Church of the Servant King

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Prophecy Series

(Proph20B_The Coming of the Lord_Lsn2)

AN EXAMINATION OF SELECT PASSAGES USED TO SUPPORT THE PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE VIEW

In this second lesson in this series in which we are examining the subject of “The Coming of the Lord,” we will study two subjects: 1) the length or duration of the period of human history known as the “tribulation;” and 2) major passages used to support the pre-Tribulation view.

THE LENGTH OR DURATION OF THE TRIBULATION PERIOD

Daniel 9:24-27

24 “***Seventy weeks*** have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy *place*. **25** “So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be *seven weeks* and *sixty-two weeks*; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. **26** “Then *after the sixty-two weeks* the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end *will come* with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. **27** “And he will make a firm covenant with the many for *one week*, but *in the middle of the week* he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations *will come* one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”¹ [*Italicized, bold and underline inserted for emphasis*]

Observations

There is probably no more significant of a passage than Daniel 9:24-27 that establishes the length of what we refer to as the Tribulation period. Our understanding of our Lord’s great prophetic discourses in Matthew 24-25, Mark 13 and Luke 21 hinge upon our understanding of this passage. A large portion of our understanding of the book of Revelation hinges upon our understanding of this passage as well.

Volumes have been written about this passage and this study is not designed to present and analyze everything written about this passage – even if that were possible. Rather, I will attempt to deal as objectively as possible with what the passage does say. I will then compare this passage with other references to it and to the period of human history that is the subject of this passage. Let’s begin with an analysis of exactly what the passage says, then we will interpret the passage.

Daniel probably wrote Daniel 9 within the same year that the events of chapter 5 (Belshazzar’s feast and the fall of the Babylonian empire to the Medo-Persian empire) and chapter 6 (Daniel’s overnight stay in the lion’s den) occurred (i.e. ca. 539 B.C.). In chapter 9, we

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from *The New American Standard Bible*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation, 1977).

find Daniel examining the Scriptures and discovering the prophecy of his predecessor, Jeremiah, who prophesied that 70 years of captivity and desolation of Jerusalem (see Jer 25:11-12; 29:10-14; 26:23, 28 cf. 2 Chron 36:21). As Daniel read the prophet Jeremiah's predictions (Dan 9:1-2), he began to understand that the 70 year period was coming to a close.² The first half of Daniel 9 documents Daniel's prayer on behalf of Israel for God to forgive Israel's disregard of her covenant obligations and allow Israel to return to her land. Then, in the midst of Daniel's prayers, the angel Gabriel appeared to Daniel in the form of a man and provided Daniel with more detailed revelation relating to Israel's future. As it turns out, some of that prophecy would be fulfilled in Israel's more immediate future (e.g. the return to Jerusalem and the rebuild of the Temple and city walls – 9:25B). The remainder of the prophecy relates to more distant future events from Daniel's perspective. Some of the more significant highlights from these four verses are depicted below.

Breakdown of the Passage

Verse 24

24 “Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression [1st Advent], to make an end of sin [1st Advent], to make atonement for iniquity [1st Advent], to bring in everlasting righteousness [2nd Advent], to seal up vision and prophecy [2nd Advent], and to anoint the most holy place [2nd Advent].

- The period is “seventy weeks”
- Essential to any interpretation of this passage is the meaning of the word “week”.
- The Hebrew word for “week” is *shabua* and literally means *a seven*.
- So in Hebrew, the idea of 70 weeks (*shabua* – *seven*) is seventy sevens.³
- Leviticus 25:8 illustrates this concept by equating “...seven sabbaths of years...” with “...seven times seven years...” or “...forty-nine...” years.
- Thus, Daniel's prophecy concerns 490 years of Jewish history
- “Your people” and “your holy city” are obvious references to the Jews and Jerusalem
- The duration of 490 years is designed to accomplish several things:
 - “To finish the transgression” – 70 Sabbatical years had not been observed throughout Israel's history as required by the Mosaic Law (Lev 25:1-7).
 - It would take 490 years of Jewish history to allow for 70 sabbatical years to be observed – thus, “finish” or put an end to the “transgression.”

By the time these 490 years run their course, God will have completed six things for Israel. The first three have to do with sin, and the second three with the kingdom. The basis for the first three was provided in the work of Christ on the cross, but all six will be realized by Israel at the Second Advent of Christ.

² Although not stated, it is very possible that Daniel was aware of Isaiah's prophecy that God would raise up a king named Cyrus who would order that the Temple in Jerusalem be rebuilt (Isa 44:28; 45:1-2, 4, 13). In 538 B.C. Cyrus issued a decree (2 Chron 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4; 5:13) that the captive Jews should return to their home and rebuild the temple. The Jews reached the land and began work on the restoration of the Temple ca. 536 B.C. – approximately 70 years after having first gone into captivity. Zechariah dates the seventy year period of captivity as being measured from the destruction of the Temple in 586 B.C. (Zech 7:5) to the completion of the rebuild of the Temple in 516 B.C. (Ezra 6:15).

³ McClain, Alva J., *Daniel's Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1940), 12-15.

1. At the end of the 490 years God will **finish** the **transgression** of Israel. The verb “to finish” ... means “to bring something to an end.” Israel’s sin of disobedience will be brought to an end at Christ’s second coming when she repents and turns to Him as her Messiah and Savior. Then she will be restored to the land and blessed, in answer to Daniel’s prayer.

In Old Testament days the highpoint in Israel’s festival calendar was the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16). On that day the nation assembled before God, acknowledged her sin, and offered blood sacrifices to cover that sin. Though that sacrifice covered Israel’s sin for 12 months, it did not permanently remove that sin (Heb. 10:1-3). It was necessary that a sacrifice be offered God that would permanently remove all the accumulated sins. This sacrifice was offered by Jesus Christ who by His death made payment for all sins that had not been removed in the past (cf. Rom. 3:25). So His atoning work on the cross has made possible His future “finishing” of Israel’s transgression.

2. God will **put an end to sin**. The verb ... has the idea of sealing up. Here the thought is sealing something up with a view to punishment (cf. Deut. 32:34; Job 14:17). This emphasized that Israel’s sin which had gone unpunished would be punished—in or through Jesus Christ, her substitute, who would bear the sins of the world on the cross. Then at Christ’s second coming he will remove Israel’s sin (Ezek. 37:23; Rom. 11:20-27).

3. God will **atone for wickedness**. The verb “to atone” ... means “to cover or expiate.” This too relates to God’s final atonement of Israel when she repents at Christ’s second coming, as the provision for that atonement has already been made at the cross. Israel’s day of atonement should be kept in view here too, as in the first of these six accomplishments. On that day God provided a just basis on which He would deal with a guilty people. The blood applied to the mercy seat (“the atonement cover,” Lev. 16:14) over the ark of the covenant enabled Him to dwell among his sinful people. Similarly Daniel’s prophecy promised that because of Christ’s blood shed on the cross God would deal with sinners, and here in particular, with sinners in Israel.

Being propitiated (i.e., satisfied) by Christ’s blood, God can atone for or expiate sin. The Greek words for “atonement cover” (*hilasmos*; KJV, “mercy seat”) and “propitiate” (*hilaskomai*) are related.

4. The second three accomplishments deal with positive aspects of God’s program. Being satisfied by the death of Christ, God will **bring in everlasting righteousness**. The form of the verb “bring in” here means “to cause to come in.” The word “everlasting” (here pl. in Heb.) means ages. Thus this phrase (lit., “to bring in righteousness of ages”) is a prophecy that God will establish an age characterized by righteousness. This is a reference to the Millennial kingdom (Isa. 60:21; Jer. 23:5-6).

5. God will **seal up vision and prophecy**. All that God through the prophets said He would do in fulfilling His covenant with Israel will be fully realized in the millennial kingdom. Until they are fulfilled, prophecies are “unsealed.” (“Seal” translates the same verb ... used in the second of these six accomplishments.)

6. God will **anoint the most holy**. This may refer to the dedication of the Most Holy place in the millennial temple, described in Ezekiel 41-46. Or it may refer not to a holy place, but to the Holy One, Christ. If so, this speaks of the enthronement of Christ, “the Anointed One” (Dan. 7:25-27) as King of kings and Lord of lords in the Millennium.

These six accomplishments, then, anticipate the establishment of Israel's covenanted millennial kingdom under the authority of her promised King. The six summarize God's whole program to bring the nation Israel the blessings He promised through His covenants (Gen. 15:18-21; 2 Sam. 7:16; Jer. 31:31-34).⁴

Verse 25

25 "So you are to know and discern *that* from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince *there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks*; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.

- The decree that is referenced here is the decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus on March 5, 444 B.C. that authorized the Jews to rebuild the city and the walls of Jerusalem.
- The period from the command "to restore and rebuild Jerusalem" (Dan 9:25A) until "Messiah the Prince" consisted of two periods of "seven weeks" and "sixty-two weeks" (Dan 9:25B) which total 69 weeks.
- The first "seven week" period (or 49 years) probably refers to the period needed to complete the building of the wall, the city's infrastructure and the clearing away of all debris. (The actual construction of the wall only took 52 days).
- Nehemiah records the opposition that the Jews faced during the rebuild effort thereby fulfilling Daniel's prophecy that the rebuild effort would be during "times of distress."
- This timeline leaves one week or seven years of the 70 week period (Dan 9:27).

Verse 26

26 "Then *after the sixty-two weeks* the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end *will come* with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.

- Most conservative theologians interpret the phrase in verse 25 ("until Messiah the Prince") to relate to the Messiah Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday – the day on which Jesus presented Himself as the Messiah to the nation of Israel in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9.

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout *in triumph*, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your king is coming to you;
He is just and endowed with salvation,
Humble, and mounted on a donkey,
Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (Zech 9:9)

- This leads to an interpretation of the phrase in verse 26 that reads "Messiah will be cut off and have nothing" to refer to Jesus' crucifixion.
- The word that is translated "cut off" is used of executing the death penalty on a criminal.⁵
- At the time of Jesus' execution, He had no kingdom and was not King over an earthly kingdom as had been prophesied of the Messiah.
 - "The people of the prince who is to come" is a reference to the followers of the Antichrist. (A similar destruction of Jerusalem occurred in A.D. 70; however, that destruction did not occur during the 70th week of Daniel's prophecy).

⁴ John F. Walvoord, and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary – Old Testament*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc., 1983, 1985), 1361-62.

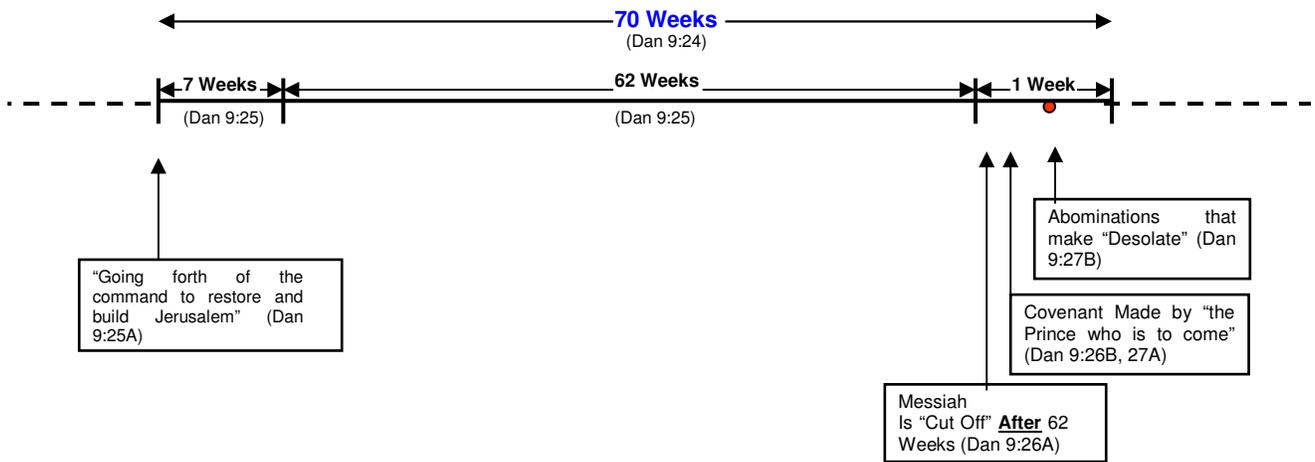
⁵ *Ibid.*, 1364.

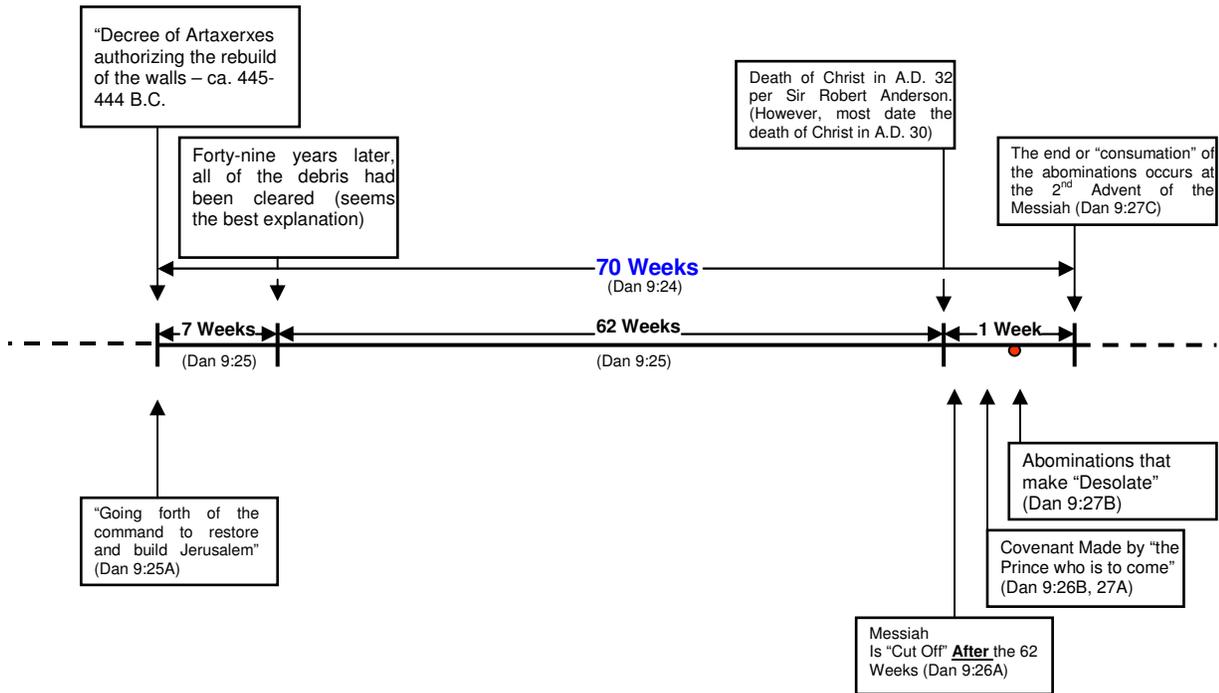
- This view is supported by Revelation 11:2 and Zechariah 14:1-3 which prophesy at least a partial destruction of Jerusalem during the Tribulation. Zechariah 14:1-3 indicates that the city is in existence although it is overtaken by war at the very moment that Christ comes back at His Second Advent.
 - This would explain the phrase in verse 26 that “till the end of the war desolations are determined.”
 - We know that a Temple will exist during the Tribulation period based upon such passages as Revelation 11:1-2 and that it will be desecrated and destroyed by Gentiles during this period (Rev 11:2 cf. 13:14-15; Lu 21:24; 2 Thess 2:4).
 - Also, we know from Ezekiel 40-43 that a new Temple will be built during the Millennium unlike any that has ever existed.
- Thus, Daniel 9:26 is a reference to the destruction of the Temple that will exist during the Tribulation period by the forces of the Antichrist.

Verse 27

27 “And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations *will come* one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

- The Antichrist will make a covenant and break the covenant in the middle of the seven year Tribulation period. (The word “tribulation” comes from Matt 24:21).
- No doubt, this ruler will position himself as the “prince of peace” at the beginning of the Tribulation period and the covenant will be a part of his modus operandi.
- Jews of the Tribulation period will have resumed the observance of sacrifices and grain offerings. (This doesn’t mean that the Mosaic Law will be re-instated by God as the rule of life since Jesus fulfilled the Law in His sacrificial life and death. It simply means that Jews, probably unbelieving Jews, will have resumed the observance of the sacrifices associated with the Law).
- After this false “prince” establishes his power in the political realm, he will then attempt to extend his power to the religious realm and his megalomania will know no limits as he will require worship to be directed toward him.
- He will require that a statue of himself be erected in the Temple in Jerusalem and all worship his image (Matt 24:15 cf. 2 Thess 2:4; Rev 13:8, 14-15).





Application to Our Study

If the Tribulation (a.k.a. Daniel's Seventieth Week) is prophesied to be seven years and is a period specifically related to Jewish history (the Age of Israel), then this is one piece of evidence that supports the view that the believers of the present Age of the Body of Christ will not participate in this period of history. (A believer of the Age of the Body of Christ cannot also be a believer within the Age of Israel since the two dispensations do not overlap).

SELECT PASSAGES RELATING TO THE COMING OF THE LORD

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17

(v. 15) For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. (v. 16) For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. (v. 17) Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

Background:

Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians from Corinth in about A.D. 51. Thus, it is one of his earliest epistles – preceded only by Galatians. It is interesting that so early in his ministry, Paul addresses such a topic as the Rapture.

In this passage, Paul is addressing the Thessalonians' question regarding whether those who have died will miss the resurrection. Will the living have an advantage over the dead? (The

Corinthians were concerned with whether the dead would be raised at all per 1 Corinthians 15; however, the Thessalonians were concerned with whether the dead in Christ are going to be short-changed in any way).

Exegesis:

Paul begins his answer to the question in verses 13 and 14 as he discusses the fate of those “who are asleep.” In verse 15, Paul begins to relate the question to the *parousia* (translated “coming” in the NASV). Let’s examine this word.

- 1) This word does not always refer to the Rapture, rather it refers to the whole complex of events leading to the 2nd Advent.
- 2) It means more than “coming,” yet it includes that idea.
- 3) It emphasizes the thought of presence (since it is derived from *pareimi* which means to be present).
- 4) A good translation of this word is “arrival.”
- 5) So, in a sense, this word can be used in reference to aspects of both the Rapture and the 2nd Advent.
- 6) The event of the Rapture or the 2nd Advent depends upon the context.
- 7) The point of verse 15 is that the living will have no advantage over the dead in the *parousia*. The living will not precede the dead into the Lord’s presence.

In verse 16, Paul provides further details regarding the specific *parousia* that is at issue. It is from the further details that Paul provides in verses 16 and 17 that we can know whether he is describing the Rapture or the 2nd Advent. Let’s look at the following points:

- 1) In verse 16, Paul uses the emphatic personal pronoun (Himself) to emphasize that the Lord will come for His Own, personally. This is an extremely important point.
- 2) Verses 16 and 17 must be contrasted with Matthew 13:41, 49 & 50.
- 3) Note that in Matthew 13:41, 49 & 50, Jesus indicates that angels attend His coming and perform the task of separating the “wicked from among the righteous and will cast them into the furnace of fire” where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
- 4) By itself, this distinction between these two passages does not imply two separate events; however, we shall examine other evidence that does allow us to see that the distinction between these two passages does relate to two separate events.

In verses 16 & 17, we observe several things concerning the *parousia* which do point to a contrast to other passages that describe the Lord’s coming.

- 1) First, Christ “descends from heaven.”
- 2) Second, the meeting between the believer and the Lord occurs “in the air.”
- 3) Third, this coming is announced by a great signal from heaven called a “shout of command.”
- 4) The Greek word is *keleusma* and was used of the cry of a ship’s master to his rowers and of a military officer to his soldiers.
- 5) Fourth, the “dead in Christ shall rise first.” The prepositional phrase “in Christ” is a technical phrase referring to Church Age believers.
- 6) Fifth, the living (believers) are said to be “caught up.”
- 7) The phrase “caught up” is the passive voice of the verb *harpadzo*.
- 8) *Harpadzo* means to snatch away, seize, or carry off by force.
- 9) In the passive voice, the picture is presented of a sudden forcible seizure by divine agency.
- 10) *Harpadzo* was translated into the Latin Vulgate using a form of the Latin verb *rapio* from which we get the term Rapture.
- 11) Sixth, the living and the dead in Christ will meet the Lord together at this *parousia* described by Paul and the meeting will be in the air.

Summary

This passage by itself does not establish the Rapture as a pre-Tribulation event. However, from this passage, we see that there is a definite distinction between Paul’s description

in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 and Jesus' description in Matthew 13:41, 49 & 50. Paul emphasizes the coming of the Lord Himself; whereas, Jesus taught that angels would attend His Coming and have certain responsibilities. Paul emphasizes that believers of the Church Age will meet the Lord in the air and there is no mention of the earth as that place of meeting.

1 Corinthians 15:50-53

(v. 50) Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. (v. 51) Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, (v. 52) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. (v. 53) For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

Background

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul discusses the resurrection of the body after physical death. In verses 50 to 53, Paul describes the relationship of the dead in Christ to the living at the *parousia* (the coming or arrival of Christ).

Exegesis

In verse 50, Paul says that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Of course, Paul is referring to the eternal vs. the Millennial form of the kingdom.

- 1) Believers of the present age will not inherit the kingdom of God in their earthly bodies; however, we know that believers of the "last days" who endure to the end of the Tribulation will inherit the earthly kingdom (Matt 24:13).
- 2) Paul describes truth that he is about to communicate as a mystery.
- 3) The term "mystery" is used by Paul to describe a previously unknown truth that is now being revealed through divine disclosure.
- 4) "Mystery" truths are truths that relate specifically to the Church Age.
- 5) This mystery truth has two parts: 1) some believers who live in this age will not die and 2) every believer whether living or dead will be changed at His coming.
- 6) The truth set forth in verse 52 parallels the truth found in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.
- 7) Verse 52 indicates that the dead will be raised and all Church Age believers will be "changed".
- 8) For the dead, this will involve the exchange of corruptible for an incorruptible body.
- 9) For the living, this will involve the exchange of mortality for immortality.

Summary

We see in 1 Corinthians 15:50 -53 another passage that presents different insight into the circumstances surrounding the *parousia*. Once again, a view of the *parousia* from Paul's teaching has distinctions and even contradictions from Jesus' teaching found in Matthew 25:31-34. Also, we see that a transformation will occur among the living and the dead believers in association with the *parousia*.