

# The Message for the Last Days



# THE MESSAGE FOR THE LAST DAYS

*Biblical and Historical Understanding of End  
Times*

K.J. SOZE

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# INTRODUCTION

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Readers of any long, difficult book will know the temptation to skip to the last pages to find out what happens in the end. But there is no satisfaction in taking such a shortcut. The sum of the narrative ebbs and flows provide the conclusion its power and meaning. For readers of the Bible, the book of Revelation has a similar allure: *How does it all end anyway?* But the same principle applies: Revelation is the last book of the Bible we should study. Without a foundational understanding of the gospel message, we won't be able to understand the Apocalyptic prophecies.

Prior to a deep study of Revelation, it is best to read other related end-time passages from Genesis to Jude and study the series of covenants God made with his people. The covenants provide crucial background information for events yet to occur. We also need to understand this key biblical concept: the physical realm we observe on earth and the heavenly realm are on separate planes, bridged only by the spiritual realm. Good biblical scholarship therefore requires us to discern whether a given passage refers to the physical (visible, earthly) realm, the heavenly (unseen)

realm, or the spiritual realm (the link between the seen and unseen).

Given the modern appetite for this topic, I expect you have already encountered many of the competing schools of thought on end-time prophecies and events. You may be familiar with terms such as *premillennial* and *amillennial*, or understand the differences between *pre-tribulation*, *post-tribulation*, or *pre-wrath rapture*. If not, I will provide definitions as appropriate, but this book is not meant to be an exhaustive primer on competing viewpoints. Certainly there are plenty of good books and websites that dig into each of these perspectives. I do assume that you share a belief that God created the world (focusing here on *intelligent design* rather than method) and that God continues to be active in our lives. Other readers are welcome, but be warned that if you disagree here, you'll likely be at odds with the rest of my conclusions.

I aim to show in these pages how the gospel is integral within end-time events. Some Christians shrug off the Bible's prophetic passages altogether, figuring that if we're saved, why bother thinking about these complexities? But the strongest gospel message we can help deliver is the complete gospel that culminates with the last days.

This book compares literal interpretations of the Bible to figurative interpretations to show how each affects our belief system—and how preconceived belief systems affect our interpretations.

Our goal should be to set aside our preconceptions and objectively interpret Bible passages related to end

times—even if the passage uses figurative language. Figurative language, after all, can be used to describe an event that literally occurred. Christ's first advent, for instance, was the literal fulfillment of prophecies that included figurative language. The prophetic metaphors and visions ultimately corresponded to physical outcomes on earth that humans could observe.

Shouldn't it follow that Jesus' second coming would also be a literal event foretold by figurative end-time prophecies?

Not according to many popular end-time beliefs. Although such adherents believe that prophecies about the first advent were literally fulfilled, they do not believe in the literal fulfillment of the remaining second-advent prophecies. I suspect that many people who hold such beliefs are not consciously aware of the inconsistency. So I urge you as you read this book to deliberately examine the basis for your own end-time beliefs. See what holds up under scrutiny.

The gospel in the Bible is a message of redemption and resurrection—not merely a path to spiritual enlightenment. If you don't believe Jesus lived, died, and was physically resurrected, you probably won't like the literal treatment of biblical prophecies presented in this book. However, if you believe Jesus walked the earth, died, and was bodily resurrected, and if you believe the Bible contains prophecies that correspond to end-time events, then you should read on.

This book was written for you whether you are a dispensationalist, a preterist, an amillennialist, a post- or

pre-millennialist, whether you're into replacement theology or covenant theology. I don't ask you to approach this book from one specific *ist* or *ism*—only that you open yourself to the possibility that there is a common, objective ground of interpretation for the gospel in relation to end-times. You may encounter challenges in these pages to long-held beliefs. Should this happen, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth about his Word. Whether he leads you out of old misconceptions or into renewed conviction, praise God and rejoice in his truth.

This book focuses on the continual unveiling of God's unified plan to redeem mankind. According to God's plan, he saves all people the same way, no matter what period of history they live in. A common thread weaves throughout the old covenants and into the new covenant, whereby we see how God's Word ties everything together into the same gospel message for all people throughout history.

There is no fundamental difference in how someone gets "saved" in the Old Testament versus the New Testament: the Holy Spirit produces faith within a person who in turn believes in God for eternal life. We in our modern lives rely on the same faith that saved those who lived thousands of years before Christ. The timing of Christ's first advent did not change how God implements salvation for everyone. As God says in Malachi 3:6, "*For I the Lord do not change.*"<sup>1</sup>

Both the Old and New Testaments repeatedly use language that says God "pours out his Spirit." The same God that poured his Spirit upon the Old Testament saints now reveals himself to us:

1. See also Hebrews 6:17 and James 1:17.

*“If you turn at my reproof, behold, **I will pour out my spirit** to you; I will make my words known to you.”*

—Proverbs 1:23

*“God’s love has been **poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit**, who has been given to us.”*

—Romans 5:5

*“[God] has also put his seal on us and **put his Spirit in our hearts** as a guarantee.”*

—2 Corinthians 1:22

The passage in Joel 2:28 is repeated in Acts 2:17: *“And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that **I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.**”*

God used the same plan for salvation then as He does today. Whether a person lived on earth before or after the death and resurrection of Christ makes no difference. All people throughout history are saved through faith in the grace of the promises made all the way back in [Genesis 3:15](#) and onward throughout Scripture.

*“Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because **they did not pursue it by faith**, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, as it is written,*

*‘Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense;  
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.’”*

—Romans 9:31–33<sup>2</sup>

What is faith? It is a bridge in one sense of the term. It connects the grace given to us by the Spirit with our reliance upon this gift. Faith begins to form when we receive God's grace, then is completed when we act in obedience to God. Faith is a bridge from grace given to living by this gift. And in faith we await God's final installment of his promise to us—the second coming of his Son to our world.

The author takes no credit at all for anything found to be correct in this book. Any truth in this book is rooted in the biblical passages alone. This author takes full responsibility for any error of interpretation or commentary.

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2. What about people who have never heard this gospel based upon faith in the promises of God? Read Romans 1, 2, and 10 for a further exploration of that topic.

## CHAPTER 1.

# BIBLE INTERPRETATION PRINCIPLES

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A key to understanding the Bible is learning how to properly interpret it through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Sounds simple. However, cultural traditions and personal biases complicate our efforts. Another barrier arises from the biblical concept that there are three realms of existence: our physical world, God's heavenly realm, and a spiritual realm that bridges the other two. This multi-realm structure can create paradoxes where something is true in one realm but may seem contradictory in another realm. Passages that seem contradictory are possible to harmonize by identifying their relationship to these separate realms. But we will be frustrated and confused if we try to force all passages into merged realm context. The kingdom of heaven's interaction on earth is a good example that will be thoroughly explored.

As discussed in the Introduction and [Appendix 1](#), biblical prophecies can utilize literal or figurative language while referring to the physical, heavenly, or spiritual realm.<sup>1</sup>

1. This creates six possible combinations: Literal/Physical, Literal/Heavenly, Literal/Spiritual, Figurative/Physical, Figurative/Heavenly, and Figurative/Spiritual.

Knowing the point of reference in a given passage will untangle many complex paradoxes found in Scripture. The big picture and complete context of the Bible will start to come together as you sort the paradoxical puzzle pieces according to their categories. With proper perspective comes correct insight.

If this sounds like a lot of work, don't blame God for making it difficult for us to understand the Bible in its original context—the fault belongs to our own culture and traditions. Our experiences and biases obstruct our efforts to interpret passages objectively. Depending on tradition or preconceived notions, a person generally falls into one school of interpretation and follows along with others in that grouping:

1. A belief that the Bible is primarily focused on the spiritual realm and our mystical enlightenment;
2. A belief that the Bible is concerned with our welfare in both the physical and spiritual realms;
3. A belief that the Bible is primarily concerned with the physical realm and our bodily welfare.

People within the first camp do not necessarily give every passage a spiritual interpretation. They acknowledge that there are actual historical events mentioned in the Bible. But they predominantly view the language of the Bible as metaphorical, analogical, symbolic, or allegorical. This approach allows us to make Bible passages mean whatever we want to believe. Interpretation becomes a subjective matter—but this book is about objective approaches to the Bible. If you yourself tend to read the Bible through a purely

spiritual lens, this book will present some interpretations you perhaps have not considered before. I challenge you to read with an open mind.

Likewise, people in the third camp do not necessarily interpret every passage literally. There are obvious metaphors (figurative language) in the Bible, but for the most part, this person believes in the history of the Bible, the miracle accounts, the existence of Satan, and the fulfillment of prophecies. People in this camp believe that prophesied events that have not yet occurred will be fulfilled on earth; they are not focused on spiritual fulfillment.

A 2016 Barna study found that about 7 percent of Americans fall into this third camp. Most proclaimed Christians fall into Camp 2.<sup>2</sup>

Camp 2 is the hardest perspective to nail down because there is room for numerous belief systems between the extremes of the physically focused and spiritually focused camps.

At the dawn of Christianity, believers mostly fell into either a Hebrew way of thinking (an eastern perspective) or a Greek (western-centric) mindset. Within 100 years after the time of the apostles, each viewpoint had its

2. "The State of the Church 2016." Barna Group, 2016. Accessed on April 30, 2019, at [www.barna.com/research/state-church-2016/](http://www.barna.com/research/state-church-2016/) - Note: this link may be broken. Other trends are found in the 2019 survey here - <https://www.barna.com/research/state-of-the-bible-2019/>.

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