

**Scriptures and Doctrine :: The Near/Far Fulfillment Pattern of Biblical Prophecy****The Near/Far Fulfillment Pattern of Biblical Prophecy - posted by docs (), on: 2017/1/4 12:05**

## The Near/Far Fulfillment Pattern of Biblical Prophecy

It has long been recognized that Biblical prophecy is normally fulfilled not in a single event but in a series of events which bring the original prophecy to its final consummation. In keeping with this prophetic fulfillment pattern, Biblical prophecy normally unfolds in a progressively fulfilling way. In the unfolding of redemptive history the prophecy is seen to take on a more detailed significance pertaining not only to the near future of the prophet but also many times including a more specific and exhaustive fulfillment in the eschatological future. Many Biblical prophecies, particularly from the Old Testament, have been spoken a few thousand years ago and have had near/far-like/kind fulfillments but yet have not seen a complete and exhaustive fulfillment which often is to come in the far future. The prophets spoke not only of contemporary events as they constantly related these contemporary events to the last great event at the end of history: the Day of the Lord when God will visit His people and establish His kingdom. In Biblical prophecy, the near present and the far future are often blended together without chronological distinction as they are often blended together in apparent disregard for chronology.

Designations of the near/far fulfillment pattern:

- 1) "Double" or "dual" fulfillment
- 2) The "near view" and the "far view" of prophecy
- 3) Sensus plenior - a phrase used to describe the "fuller sense" seemingly given to Old Testament prophecies as they unfold in the light of New Testament revelation.
- 4) A "canonical process" which develops more fully and more specifically the original sense and intent of the prophecy.
- 5) The "now and not yet" - this aspect of prophecy emphasizes that a given prophecy may well come to realization now yet awaits its fuller manifestation later; its fulfillment is both now and later
- 6) The "already" and the "not yet" - this aspect is that the prophecy has already been fulfilled but is not yet consummate as it will be in its exhaustive and complete future fulfillment.

The matter of progressive fulfillment is standard issue in Biblical prophecy and IS the rule and not the exception. It cannot be ignored and must be borne in mind to correctly interpret the prophetic word.

Only that approach to scriptural prophecy is safe that not only recognizes the near and far pattern of fulfillment but also insists on the exhaustive fulfillment of every element and detail of the prophecy, according to the well established conventions and forms of biblical language, according to the intent of the original author, both human and divine. The near/far fulfillment pattern is intrinsic to the Old Testament mystery of Christ and the gospel now revealed in the face of Jesus Christ.

However, this pattern of fulfillment should not be taken to imply change or "reinterpretation" of the plain language of prophecy and the definite timing of the post-tribulational Day of the Lord. The events of the end must answer to the highly descript language of the prophecies down to the last jot and tittle. Remember, the key goal of the eschatological prophecies is always to show the basic order of Israel's eschatology which is no less the eschatology of the New Testament, with this one difference: The Day of the Lord restoration of Israel is now understood in terms of Christ's return (Acts 3:21). In Hebrew eschatology the Day of the Lord was to be the event at which the long prophesied Messiah was to appear. In the face of New Testament revelation, we now understand the Day of the Lord is the event at which Christ will make His second advent as the Messiah of Israel - the Day of Christ, the Day of His appearing. Though the mystery is magnificent in what it adds, it changes nothing of the plain language of promise.

SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLES OF NEAR  
FAR FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY

1) Genesis 3:15 - this VERY FIRST PROPHECY in the Bible speaks of a coming Deliverer and Savior.

15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.

This very first prophecy in the Bible sets the stage and provides a clear example of the near/far fulfillment pattern of Bible prophecy. There is occasional one-to-one fulfillment as the Bethlehem m prophecy (Micah 5:2) yet the pattern is usually more complex. We can see that the Genesis 3:15 prophecy serves as a prototype example of the near/far fulfillment pattern of so many other prophecies.

The Champion of Genesis 3:15 that was promised to defeat the tempter finds initial realization in the earthly ministry of Jesus casting out demons (Matthew 12:28). By casting out demons, He Himself explains, Satan's kingdom is divided and plundered. In Jesus, God has made good on His promise to defeat the tempter. But there is obviously more to it than that. And again Jesus Himself says so. In anticipation of His death He declares,

“Now is the prince of this world cast out” (John 12:31)

Here, in Jesus’ death, Satan loses his head (Heb 2:14-16). Here the promise finds its fulfillment. Yet Writing to the Roman believers Paul declares that,

God will “crush Satan under your feet shortly” (Romans 16:20).

So we find the promise is fulfilled and “not yet” fulfilled. And of course Revelation 20 fills in the final details with Satan’s bondage in the abyss and then finally being cast into the lake of fire forever. Here, at last, the prophecy is finally and fully fulfilled. Thus we see that the answer to the original promise was not one-to-one. The fulfillment came in a succession of events which brought the promise to its full consummation by being partially fulfilled in the somewhat immediate near future yet finding a complete fulfillment in a set of stages of fulfillment only fully realized by a consummate occurrence in the far distant future. Near and far.

2) Deuteronomy 18:15, 18-19 - Moses prophesies of a prophet like him to come

15 The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him

18 I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in His mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

19 And it shall about that whoever shall not listen to My words which He shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him.

Moses' prophecy of a prophet like him to come surely finds its answer in the long succession of Israel’s prophets. God made good on His promise to provide continued direction for the nation of Israel in her land. But of course the prophecy is fully realized in Christ, the Prophet par-excellence, the Son, the true revelation of God (Hebrews 1:1-2)

1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,

2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, who He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

3) The abundant prophecies of the coming of the Messiah “ they unfold similarly in a near/far (already/not yet) pattern of fulfillment. They may not have known it beforehand, but it is clear that the Messiah's coming would be a two-fold two-stage event. Of course, the New Testament would reveal the mystery of Christ's two fold advent that would make glorious sense of what lay hidden in the glorious foreview of the prophets (I Peter 1:10-12).

10 As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry,

11 seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.

12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven " things into which angels long to look.

So there is the first coming and the second coming. At the first coming the promise is realized (near), but not until the second advent (far) will it be consummated.

Indeed, the very promise of salvation is fulfilled "now" in Christ (Romans 5:1) but still awaits the second advent of Christ when the people of God are to be raised to meet Christ in the air (I Thess 4:16-18) as all saints living and dead are to be glorified and put on immortality (I Cor 15:51-54). Our salvation therefore is presently realized (near) but "not yet" fully manifested as it will in the future (far).

4) Daniel 8:11; 2,7,9 " Daniels prophecies of Greece and Rome

What better example of the distinction between near and far fulfillment than Daniel's vision of the progress of human government and civilizations than his prophecies regarding Greece and Rome? Unless one is prepared to spiritualize the resurrection (this study does not), a gap (a near and a far fulfillment ) MUST be recognized between Greece (Daniel 8,11) and Rome (Daniel 2,7,9), and the full eschatological end that follows the last and greatest tribulation (Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 12:1-2; Matthew 24:21; II Thess 2:4,8; Rev 7:14).

5) Israel's eschatology of the ever imminent Day of the Lord

This event, the Day of the Lord, is typically portrayed against the backdrop of the threatening menace of the contemporary superpower of the day (Assyria, Babylon, Medes, etc.). The judgmental assault by these powers would at times be described as the Day of the Lord and have a fulfillment in the somewhat immediate life of the prophet (near) but many times was used by God to describe conditions at the eschatological end of the age (far) when the events at the Day of the Lord will be fully fulfilled resulting in a transition from this age to the next.

6) Isaiah 13:1-22 " Isaiah prophetically pictures the overthrow of Babylon in apocalyptic colors as though it were the end of the world.

Prophecies about Babylon

1 The oracle concerning Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw.

2 Lift up a standard on the bare hill,  
Raise your voice to them,  
Wave the hand that they may enter the doors of the nobles.

3 I have commanded My consecrated ones,  
I have even called My mighty warriors,  
My proudly exulting ones,  
To execute My anger.

4 A sound of tumult on the mountains,  
Like that of many people!  
A sound of the uproar of kingdoms,  
Of nations gathered together!  
The Lord of hosts is mustering the army for battle.

5 They are coming from a far country,  
From the farthest horizons,  
The Lord and His instruments of indignation,  
To destroy the whole land.

Judgment on the Day of the Lord

6 Wail, for the day of the Lord is near!  
It will come as destruction from the Almighty.

7 Therefore all hands will fall limp,  
And every man's heart will melt.

8 They will be terrified,  
Pains and anguish will take hold of them;  
They will writhe like a woman in labor,  
They will look at one another in astonishment,  
Their faces aflame.

9 Behold, the day of the Lord is coming,  
Cruel, with fury and burning anger,  
To make the land a desolation;  
And He will exterminate its sinners from it.

10 For the stars of heaven and their constellations  
Will not flash forth their light;  
The sun will be dark when it rises  
And the moon will not shed its light.

11 Thus I will punish the world for its evil  
And the wicked for their iniquity;  
I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud  
And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless.

12 I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold  
And mankind than the gold of Ophir.

13 Therefore I will make the heavens tremble,  
And the earth will be shaken from its place  
At the fury of the Lord of hosts  
In the day of His burning anger.

14 And it will be that like a hunted gazelle,  
Or like sheep with none to gather them,  
They will each turn to his own people,  
And each one flee to his own land.

15 Anyone who is found will be thrust through,  
And anyone who is captured will fall by the sword.

16 Their little ones also will be dashed to pieces  
Before their eyes;  
Their houses will be plundered  
And their wives ravished.

Babylon Will Fall to the Medes

17 Behold, I am going to stir up the Medes against them,  
Who will not value silver or take pleasure in gold.

18 And their bows will mow down the young men,  
They will not even have compassion on the fruit of the womb,  
Nor will their eye pity children.

19 And Babylon, the beauty of kingdoms, the glory of the Chaldeans'™ pride,  
Will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.

20 It will never be inhabited or lived in from generation to generation;  
Nor will the Arab pitch his tent there,  
Nor will shepherds make their flocks lie down there.

21 But desert creatures will lie down there,  
And their houses will be full of owls;  
Ostriches also will live there, and shaggy goats will frolic there.

22 Hyenas will howl in their fortified towers  
And jackals in their luxurious palaces.  
Her fateful time also will soon come  
And her days will not be prolonged.

Isaiah therefore prophesies of the coming judgment of Babylon in the not so distant future (near) as the Day of the Lord (13:6,9,13) yet at the same time uses prophetic language that describes conditions in the distant future at the eschatological Day of the Lord which will end this present age (far).

7) Daniel 11:3 " Daniel viewed the great eschatological enemy (far) of God's people as the historical king of Greece (near).

3 And a mighty king will arise, and will rule with great authority and will do as he pleases.

Yet this king takes on the coloration of the eschatological Antichrist " Daniel 11:36-39.

36 Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god (see II Thess 2:4), and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done

37 And he will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the desire of women, nor will he show regard for any other god; he will magnify himself above them all.

38 " But instead he will honor a god of fortresses, a god whom his fathers did not know; he will honor him with gold, silver, costly stones, and treasures.

39 " And he will take action against the strongest of fortresses with the help of a foreign god; he will give great honor to those who acknowledge him, and he will cause them to rule over the many, and will parcel out land for a price.

The details of Daniel 11 so graphically portray Antiochus Epiphanes the historical king of Greece that critical scholars insist that "Daniel" wrote after the fact. Of course we deny their conclusion, but the prophecy's fulfillment in Antiochus is obvious. Antiochus performed an abomination in the temple by slaughtering many priestly officials and placing the unclean sacrifice of a pig on the altar (Daniel 11:31). But then Jesus speaks of this abomination as yet future (Matthew 24:15). As does Paul (II Thess 2:3-4). Judging from the many thematic parallels of Revelation 13, so does John the human author of Revelation. So, in a significant near/far pattern of prophetic fulfillment, the prophecy is fulfilled by Antiochus (near) yet is fulfilled again by Titus and his legions who set up an abomination in the temple in 70 AD ( still near to a degree) and will be fulfilled yet again in a consummate manner by the eschatological end of days Antichrist (far).

Yet John tells us the Antichrist has come (I John 4). He is there seen as the false teachers who lead men astray and deny that Christ has come in the flesh. So Antichrist "has come" yet "will come." He is "now" (near) and he is "not yet" (far) and will only manifest a exhaustive and total fulfillment in the latter half of Daniel's all important end of the age seventieth week out of which the end of the age(far) will occur. Near far.

8) Daniel 9:24-27 " the tremendously significant prophecy given to Daniel of the seventy sevens.

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.

Daniel is unique in separating the contemporary near fulfillment from the more distant and ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy.

At the end of the seventieth seven (the last half of the seventieth seven – Daniel 7:25; 9:27; 12:7,11), all the historical types of the final desolator and oppressor find their ultimate fulfillment in the “little horn” of Daniel’s prophecy (Ezekiel 38:17; Daniel 7:8; 8:9, 23; 11:21, 36-37, Ezekiel 38:17 – compared with II Thessalonians 2:4)

We see:

- 1) Past Antiochus Epiphanes and Titus – types of the final oppressor (near)
- 2) Future Antichrist (the “little horn”) – the ultimate fulfillment (far) of the earlier types

9) Joel 1- chapter 3:3 – Joel speaks of a soon to come judgment of locust and drought (near) and imperceptibly moves without notice of chronological distinction into the eschatological judgments of the Day of the Lord (far).

Ch 1

The Devastation of Locusts

1 The word of the Lord that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel:

2 Hear this, O elders,  
And listen, all inhabitants of the land.  
Has anything like this happened in your days  
Or in your fathers’ days?

3 Tell your sons about it,  
And let your sons tell their sons,  
And their sons the next generation.

4 What the gnawing locust has left,  
the swarming locust has eaten;  
And what the swarming locust has left,  
the creeping locust has eaten;  
And what the creeping locust has left,  
the stripping locust has eaten.

5 Awake, drunkards, and weep;  
And wail, all you wine drinkers,  
On account of the sweet wine  
That is cut off from your mouth.

6 For a nation has invaded my land,  
Mighty and without number;  
Its teeth are the teeth of a lion,  
And it has the fangs of a lioness.

7 It has made my vine a waste  
And my fig tree splinters.  
It has stripped them bare and cast them away;  
Their branches have become white.  
8 Wail like a virgin girded with sackcloth  
For the bridegroom of her youth.

9 The grain offering and the drink offering are cut off  
From the house of the Lord.  
The priests mourn,  
The ministers of the Lord.

10 The field is ruined,  
The land mourns;  
For the grain is ruined,  
The new wine dries up,  
Fresh oil fails.

11 Be ashamed, O farmers,  
Wail, O vinedressers,  
For the wheat and the barley;  
Because the harvest of the field is destroyed.

12 The vine dries up  
And the fig tree fails;  
The pomegranate, the palm also, and the apple tree,  
All the trees of the field dry up.  
Indeed, rejoicing dries up  
From the sons of men.

13 Gird yourselves with sackcloth  
And lament, O priests;  
Wail, O ministers of the altar!  
Come, spend the night in sackcloth  
O ministers of my God,  
For the grain offering and the drink offering  
Are withheld from the house of your God.

Starvation and Drought

14 Consecrate a fast,  
Proclaim a solemn assembly;  
Gather the elders  
And all the inhabitants of the land  
To the house of the Lord your God,  
And cry out to the Lord.

15 Alas for the day!  
For the day of the Lord is near,  
And it will come as destruction from the Almighty.

16 Has not food been cut off before our eyes,  
Gladness and joy from the house of our God?

17 The seeds shrivel under their clods;  
The storehouses are desolate,  
The barns are torn down,  
For the grain is dried up.

18 How the beasts groan!

The herds of cattle wander aimlessly  
Because there is no pasture for them;  
Even the flocks of sheep suffer.

19 To You, O Lord, I cry;  
For fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness  
And the flame has burned up all the trees of the field.

20 Even the beasts of the field pant for You;  
For the water brooks are dried up  
And fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

Ch 2

The Terrible Visitation

1 Blow a trumpet in Zion,  
And sound an alarm on My holy mountain!  
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,  
For the day of the Lord is coming;  
Surely it is near,

2 A day of darkness and gloom,  
A day of clouds and thick darkness.  
As the dawn is spread over the mountains,  
So there is a great and mighty people;  
There has never been anything like it,  
Nor will there be again after it  
To the years of many generations.

3 A fire consumes before them  
And behind them a flame burns.  
The land is like the garden of Eden before them  
But a desolate wilderness behind them,  
And nothing at all escapes them.

4 Their appearance is like the appearance of horses;  
And like war horses, so they run.

5 With a noise as of chariots  
They leap on the tops of the mountains,  
Like the crackling of a flame of fire consuming the stubble,  
Like a mighty people arranged for battle.

6 Before them the people are in anguish;  
All faces turn pale.

7 They run like mighty men,  
They climb the wall like soldiers;  
And they each march in line,  
Nor do they deviate from their paths.

8 They do not crowd each other,  
They march everyone in his path;  
When they burst through the defenses,  
They do not break ranks.

9 They rush on the city,

They run on the wall;  
They climb into the houses,  
They enter through the windows like a thief.

10 Before them the earth quakes,  
The heavens tremble,  
The sun and the moon grow dark  
And the stars lose their brightness.

11 The Lord utters His voice before His army;  
Surely His camp is very great,  
For strong is he who carries out His word.  
The day of the Lord is indeed great and very awesome,  
And who can endure it?

12 "Yet even now," declares the Lord,  
"Return to Me with all your heart,  
And with fasting, weeping and mourning;

13 And rend your heart and not your garments."  
Now return to the Lord your God,  
For He is gracious and compassionate,  
Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness  
And relenting of evil.

14 Who knows whether He will not turn and relent  
And leave a blessing behind Him,  
Even a grain offering and a drink offering  
For the Lord your God?

15 Blow a trumpet in Zion,  
Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly,

16 Gather the people, sanctify the congregation,  
Assemble the elders,  
Gather the children and the nursing infants.  
Let the bridegroom come out of his room  
And the bride out of her bridal chamber.

17 Let the priests, the Lord's ministers,  
Weep between the porch and the altar,  
And let them say, "Spare Your people, O Lord,  
And do not make Your inheritance a reproach,  
A byword among the nations.  
Why should they among the peoples say,  
"Where is their God?"

Deliverance Promised  
18 Then the Lord will be zealous for His land  
And will have pity on His people.

19 The Lord will answer and say to His people,  
"Behold, I am going to send you grain, new wine and oil,  
And you will be satisfied in full with them;  
And I will never again make you a reproach among the nations.

20 "But I will remove the northern army far from you,  
And I will drive it into a parched and desolate land,

And its vanguard into the eastern sea,  
And its rear guard into the western sea.  
And its stench will arise and its foul smell will come up,  
For it has done great things.â€  
21 Do not fear, O land, rejoice and be glad,  
For the Lord has done great things.

22 Do not fear, beasts of the field,  
For the pastures of the wilderness have turned green,  
For the tree has borne its fruit,  
The fig tree and the vine have yielded in full.

23 So rejoice, O sons of Zion,  
And be glad in the Lord your God;  
For He has given you the early rain for your vindication.  
And He has poured down for you the rain,  
The early and latter rain as before.

24 The threshing floors will be full of grain,  
And the vats will overflow with the new wine and oil.

25 â€œThen I will make up to you for the years  
That the swarming locust has eaten,  
The creeping locust, the stripping locust and the gnawing locust,  
My great army which I sent among you.

26 â€œYou will have plenty to eat and be satisfied  
And praise the name of the Lord your God,  
Who has dealt wondrously with you;  
Then My people will never be put to shame.

27 â€œThus you will know that I am in the midst of Israel,  
And that I am the Lord your God,  
And there is no other;  
And My people will never be put to shame.

The Promise of the Spirit  
28 â€œIt will come about after this  
That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind;  
And your sons and daughters will prophesy,  
Your old men will dream dreams,  
Your young men will see visions.

29 â€œEven on the male and female servants  
I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

The Day of the Lord  
30 â€œI will display wonders in the sky and on the earth,  
Blood, fire and columns of smoke.

31 â€œThe sun will be turned into darkness  
And the moon into blood  
Before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.

32 â€œAnd it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the Lord  
Will be delivered;  
For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem  
There will be those who escape,

As the Lord has said,  
Even among the survivors whom the Lord calls.

The Nations Will Be Judged

3 "For behold, in those days and at that time,  
When I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem,

2 I will gather all the nations  
And bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat.  
Then I will enter into judgment with them there  
On behalf of My people and My inheritance, Israel,  
Whom they have scattered among the nations;  
And they have divided up My land.

3 "They have also cast lots for My people,  
Traded a boy for a harlot  
And sold a girl for wine that they may drink.

We see that Joel has prophesied of a soon to come imminent judgment of locusts and drought which he refers to as the Day of the Lord. Yet without notice of a change in chronological distinction, Joel's prophecy takes on the characteristics of the distant future when the final eschatological judgments at the Day of the Lord are poured out on the nations. In other words, the imminent historical judgment (near) is seen as a type of, or a prelude to, the eschatological judgment (far). The two are blended together in apparent disregard for chronology, for the same God who acts in the imminent historical judgment (near) will also act in the final eschatological judgment (far) to further His one redemptive purpose.

This is a classic example of the near/far pattern of fulfillment of Bible prophecy.

11) Amos 5:18, 27 "Amos prophesies of the impending judgment on Israel at the hands of the Assyrians

18 Alas, you who are longing for the day of the Lord, for what purpose will the day of the Lord be to you? It will be darkness and not night;

27 "Therefore, they will now go into exile beyond Damascus," says the Lord, whose name is the God of hosts.

In this prophecy, the impending historical judgment on Israel at the hands of the Assyrians was called the Day of the Lord. Yet Israel's final salvation will also occur at the eschatological Day of the Lord in the distant future. (Amos 9:11).

11 In that day (near to or the actual Day of the Lord) I will raise up the the fallen booth of David, and wall up its breaches ; I will also raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old;

Thus Amos prophesies of a imminent judgment of Israel at the hands of Assyria and called it the day of the Lord yet his prophecy also speaks to a day far in the future at the eschatological Day of the Lord when Israel's final judgments are complete and they experience lasting salvation as a nation.

The prophecy of Amos therefore had a near fulfillment in the immediate life of Amos and the nation yet will have a far and complete fulfillment in the distant future. Near/far fulfillment.

12) Zephaniah 1-2:3 "Zephaniah begins to prophesy and warn the people of Judah of coming judgment on their continuing apostate condition.

Day of Judgment on Judah

1 The word of the Lord which came to Zephaniah son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah son of Amon, king of Judah:

2 "I will completely remove all things  
From the face of the earth," declares the Lord.

3 I will remove man and beast;  
I will remove the birds of the sky  
And the fish of the sea,  
And the ruins along with the wicked;  
And I will cut off man from the face of the earth, declares the Lord.

4 So I will stretch out My hand against Judah  
And against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem.  
And I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place,  
And the names of the idolatrous priests along with the priests.

5 And those who bow down on the housetops to the host of heaven,  
And those who bow down and swear to the Lord and yet swear by Milcom,

6 And those who have turned back from following the Lord,  
And those who have not sought the Lord or inquired of Him.  
7 Be silent before the Lord God!  
For the day of the Lord is near,  
For the Lord has prepared a sacrifice,  
He has consecrated His guests.

8 Then it will come about on the day of the Lord's sacrifice  
That I will punish the princes, the king's sons  
And all who clothe themselves with foreign garments.

9 And I will punish on that day all who leap on the temple threshold,  
Who fill the house of their lord with violence and deceit.

10 On that day, declares the Lord,  
There will be the sound of a cry from the Fish Gate,  
A wail from the Second Quarter,  
And a loud crash from the hills.

11 Wail, O inhabitants of the Mortar,  
For all the people of it be cut off.

12 It will come about at that time  
That I will search Jerusalem with lamps,  
And I will punish the men  
Who are stagnant in spirit,  
Who say in their hearts,  
The Lord will not do good or evil!  
The Lord

13 Moreover, their wealth will become plunder  
And their houses desolate;  
Yes, they will build houses but not inhabit them,  
And plant vineyards but not drink their wine.

14 Near is the great day of the Lord,  
Near and coming very quickly;  
Listen, the day of the Lord!  
In it the warrior cries out bitterly.

15 A day of wrath is that day,  
A day of trouble and distress,  
A day of destruction and desolation,  
A day of darkness and gloom,  
A day of clouds and thick darkness,

16 A day of trumpet and battle cry  
Against the fortified cities  
And the high corner towers.

17 I will bring distress on men  
So that they will walk like the blind,  
Because they have sinned against the Lord;  
And their blood will be poured out like dust  
And their flesh like dung.

18 Neither their silver nor their gold  
Will be able to deliver them  
On the day of the Lord's wrath;  
And all the earth will be devoured  
In the fire of His jealousy,  
For He will make a complete end,  
Indeed a terrifying one,  
Of all the inhabitants of the earth.

Ch 2

1 Gather yourselves together, yes, gather,  
O nation without shame,

2 Before the decree takes effect  
The day passes like the chaff  
Before the burning anger of the Lord comes upon you,  
Before the day of the Lord's anger comes upon you.

3 Seek the Lord,  
All you humble of the earth  
Who have carried out His ordinances;  
Seek righteousness, seek humility.  
Perhaps you will be hidden  
In the day of the Lord's anger.

13) Matthew 24 - the Olivet Discourse

Signs of Christ's Return

This Olivet Discourse spoken by Jesus was concerned with the historical judgment at the hands of the Roman armies (Luke 21:20) and the eschatological appearance of Antichrist. Rome was a forerunner (near) of the eschatological Antichrist (far) (Daniel 11:36-39).

14) All of history in the minds of Bible writers was divided into two ages - this age and the age to come

The age to come is the time of outpouring of Messianic blessing, and in the first coming of Jesus that age dawned (Hebrews 6:4-5). In Christ we are they upon whom the ends of the ages have come (I Cor 10:11).

11 Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

The writer to the Hebrews could speak of this time now as "these last days" (Hebrews 1:1-2)

1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,

2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, who He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

Yet Paul speaks of "the last days" as still future (II Timothy 3:1).

1 But realize this, in the last days perilous times shall come.

There is both the "now" and the "not yet," the "already" and the "not yet," a present (near) and a future (far) manifestation.

15) The Kingdom of God

The same near/far fulfillment pattern is true also in reference to the Kingdom. His Kingdom is "now." But He also taught us to pray, "Thy Kingdom come" (Matthew 6:9-10).

9 Pray, then, in this way: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.

10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done as it is in heaven.

Jesus taught that the Kingdom was future (Matthew 7:21; 25:31)

7:21 Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.

25:31 But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.

Jesus, Paul and other New Testament writers regularly spoke of Christ's Kingdom as future (II Timothy 4:1).

1 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearance and His kingdom.

The Kingdom for Jesus and the apostles, was "now and not yet." Its fulfillment comes in stages of near fulfillment and far fulfillment.

16 The Revelation of John "The Apocalypse"

While the Revelation was primarily concerned to assure the churches of Asia of the final eschatological salvation at the end of the age, together with the judgments of the evil powers, this had immediate relevance to the first century believers. For the demonic powers which will be manifested at the end of the age in the great tribulation (far) were also to be seen in the historical hatred of Rome for God's people (near) and the persecution they were to suffer at God's hands.

The beast of the Apocalypse is both Rome (near) and the eschatological Antichrist (far), and, we might add, any demonic power which the church must face in her entire history. The great tribulation is primarily an eschatological event, but it includes all tribulation which the church may experience at the hands of the world, whether by first century Rome (near) or by later evil powers (far).

Of relevance for the church today:

1) The near/far fulfillment pattern IS the norm and not the exception

2) If an event in the past has been described as the Day of the Lord it does not prevent a future occurrence of the Day of the Lord at the end of this age that will serve as a transition into the next age.

3) Antiochus and Titus desecrated the temple and performed abominations (near) but this does not prevent a future exhaustive fulfillment of the abomination of desolation by Antichrist in the future (far).

4) If Jerusalem was surrounded by the armies of Titus in 70 AD, in the near/far nature of prophetic fulfillment, it does not preclude this type of event from happening again in the eschatological future.

