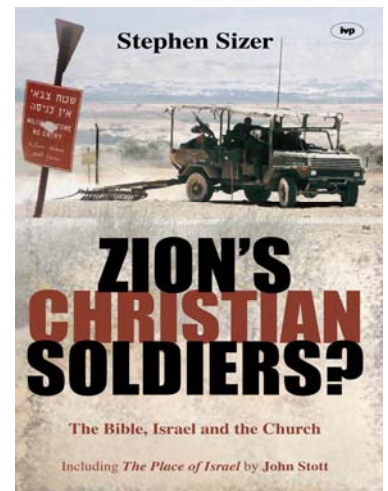


Zion's Christian Soldiers

6 Seminars: Stephen Sizer

1. The Bible Tells Them So: Is it possible to read the Bible too literally?
2. Israel and the Church - who are God's chosen people?
3. The Promised Land - From the Nile to the Euphrates?
4. Battle for Jerusalem - Eternal Capital of the Jews?
5. The Coming Last Day's Temple: Ready to Rebuild?
6. Overture to Armageddon: Want to be Left Behind?



The "End Times" theology of popular writers like Hal Lindsey in his Late Great Planet Earth and Tim LaHaye's Left Behind series captivated the imagination of generations of Evangelical Christians. For some, linking today's news headlines and Scripture gave everyday life a sense of urgency and significance; yet such flights of fancy have had devastating real-life consequences for the people of the Middle East.

Just as certain Biblical interpretations defended slavery and Apartheid, Scripture has been used to justify Middle Eastern occupation, oppression, and injustice, in defiance of the concerns of the Hebrew prophets and in policies that are truly anti-Christ. Mainstream media and scholarship has only recently caught on to the central role played by such beliefs in influencing American foreign policy, and many are justly concerned at what seems to be a suicidal will-to-Apocalypse.

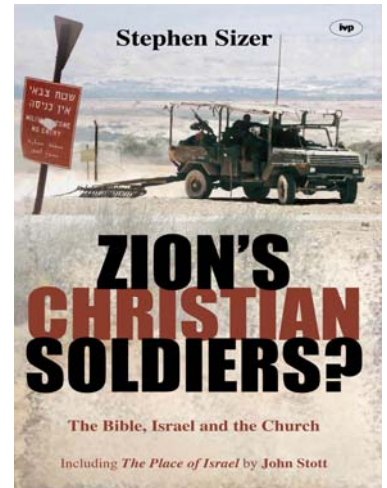
Anglican clergyman Stephen Sizer, remaining committed to the authority of Scripture, traces the roots of End Times theology to its particular recent and sectarian sources. He challenges the validity of its interpretations and conclusions and raises morally-urgent questions about both this theology's influence on US policy-making and its use to justify contemporary Israeli policies.

This seminar offers a chance for Evangelicals to reassess their tradition's responsibility for contributing to unjust policies and a dangerous world-situation that needs more creative and Christ-like responses than fanning the flames of conflict while ignoring suffering and waiting for Armageddon.

Seminar 1: The Bible Tells Them So: Is it possible to read the Bible too literally?

“You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me.”

(John 5:39)



1. Important presuppositions when reading the Bible

We must read the Bible literally

We must read the Bible contextually

- Who was the writer?
- To whom is it being written?
- What kind of literature is it?
- What is the cultural and historical context?
- What is the meaning of the text (our only access to the author's intention)?
- How was the text interpreted by those who first received it?
- Why was the author saying/writing it?

We must read the Bible progressively

2. Interpreting prophetic and apocalyptic scripture

3. Some common mistakes made by ultra-literalists

Transient Literalism: What did the Apostle John actually see?

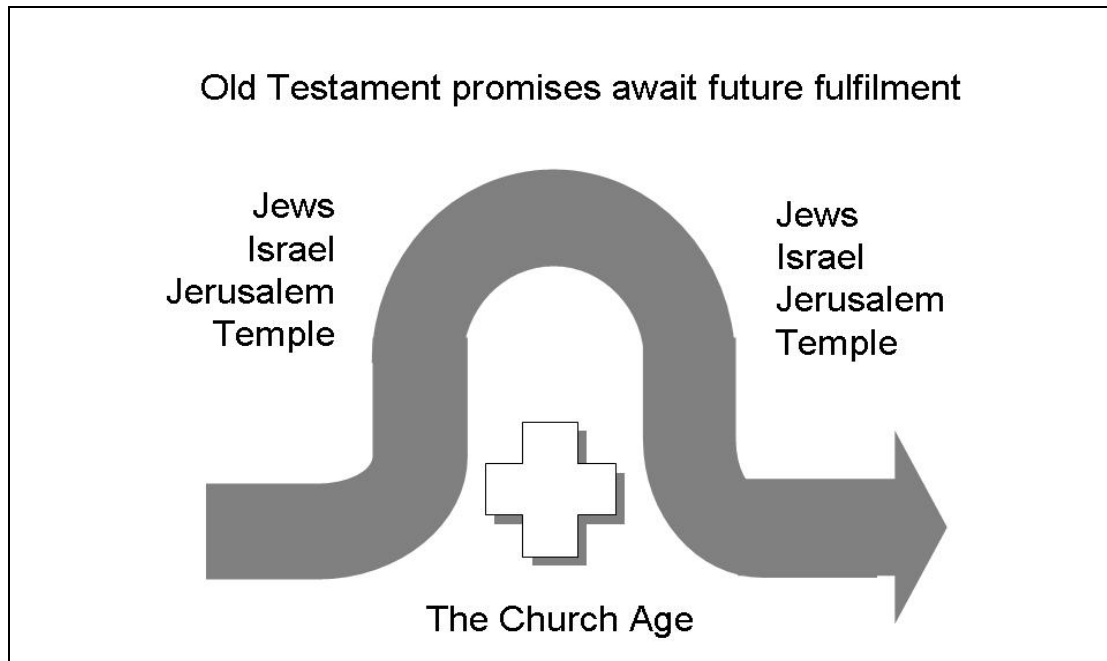
Speculative Literalism: Revealing or veiling the Apocalypse?

Contradictory literalism: Are the 200 million Chinese troops or demons?

Enhanced Literalism: Are Gog and Magog really Russia?

Arbitrary Literalism: But isn't America mentioned in the Bible?

Answering the Ultra-Literalists



Summary Points

1. We must interpret the Bible literally, contextually and progressively.
2. We must see how the New Testament helps to interpret the Old Testament.
3. We must take special care when interpreting prophecy and the apocalyptic scriptures.
4. We must avoid the temptation to allow contemporary events to determine our interpretation.
5. The ultimate question of any passage is this – how does it relate to God’s purposes fully and finally revealed in Jesus?

Passages to Review

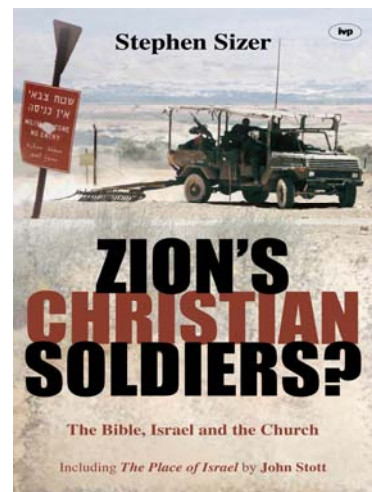
John 5:24-40; Colossians 2:8-19; 2 Timothy 3:10-4:5; Hebrews 1:1-14; Hebrews 4:1-13; Hebrews 10:1-25

Questions for Further Study

1. What are my presuppositions as I read the Bible?
2. Which books or writers have influenced or shaped them?
3. How was the coming of Jesus the fulfilment or postponement of the promises made to Israel?
4. How is Jesus central to the Bible message?
5. In what ways is the Old Testament a ‘shadow’ of the New Testament?
6. Which aspects of the Old Covenant are now ‘obsolete’ for Christians?

Seminar 2: Israel and the Church: Who are God's Chosen People?

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.” (Ephesians 2:13-16)



1. The Sand and the Stars

2. Blessing and Cursing Israel

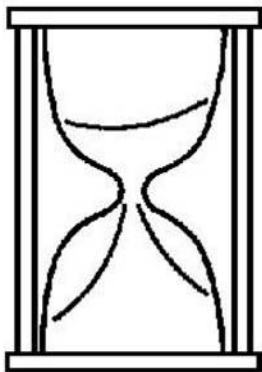
3. The Israel of God in the Old Testament

An Inclusive Israel
 An Inclusive Inheritance
 An Inclusive Temple

4. The Israel of God in the New Testament

The Vine and the Vineyard
 What does it mean to be a Jew?
 What does 'All Israel' mean?
 What does it mean to be the 'Chosen People'?
 What about the idea of a 'Remnant'?
 So who are the real 'Children of God'?

Promise to Abraham
The Remnant of Judah
The Remnant of Exiles
Jesus the 'seed' Remnant
The Apostolic Remnant
The Pentecost Church
The Great Multitude



Genesis 12:3, 22:17
2 Kings 17
Isaiah 6:13; 10:20 Ezra 9:9-15
Isaiah 53; Galatians 3:16
Acts 1:12-14
John 1:12-13; Acts 2:41, 4:4
Revelation 7:4-10

Israel: The Church in the Old Testament	The Body of Christ: The Church in the New Testament
Righteous live by faithfulness (Hab. 2:4)	Righteous live by faith (Romans 1:17)
Holy people (Deu. 7:6; 33:3; Num. 16:3)	Holy people (Eph. 1:1; Rom. 1:7)
Chosen (Deu. 7:6; 14:2)	Chosen (Col. 3:12; Tit. 1:1)
Loved (Deu. 4:37)	Loved (Col. 3:12; 1 The. 1:4)
Called (Isa. 41:9; 2 Chr. 7:14)	Called (Rom. 1:6-7; 1 Cor. 1:2)
Assembly (Psa. 1:5; 89:5; 149:1)	Assembly (Acts 7:38; 20:28; Heb. 2:12)
'Church' = Assembly in Greek OT (Mic. 2:5)	Church (Matthew 16:18; 18:17; Eph 2:20)
Flock (Eze. 34:2, 7; Psa. 77:20)	Flock (Luke 12:32; Act. 20:28)
Holy nation (Exo. 19:6)	Holy nation (1 Pet. 2:9)
Treasured possession (Exo 19:5)	Special possession (1 Pet. 2:9)
Kingdom of priests (Exo. 19:6)	Royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9)
Children of God (Hos. 1:10)	Children of God (Joh. 1:12)
People of God (Hos. 2:23)	People of God (1 Pet. 2:10)
People of his inheritance (Deu. 4:20)	Glorious inheritance (Eph 1:18)
My dwelling place = tabernacle (Lev. 26:11)	Dwelling among us = tabernacle (Joh. 1:14)
I will walk among you (Lev. 26:12; Jer. 32:38)	I will... walk among them (2 Cor. 6:16-17)
I will be his father = of David (2 Sam. 7:14)	I will be a father to you (2 Cor. 6:18)
God is a husband betrothed (Jer. 3:14; 31:32)	Christ is a husband betrothed (Eph 5:25-30)
Twelve tribes (Gen. 49:28; Rev. 21:12)	Twelve Apostles (Mar. 3:14; Rev. 21:14)

Summary Points

1. God has only ever had one people
2. Citizenship of Israel was always open to all people who acknowledged God.
3. Old Testament analogies for Israel are applied in the New Testament to the Church
4. God's people has always been inclusive and spiritual not exclusive and physical
5. The promises made to Abraham are fulfilled in and through the Church.
6. Those who receive Jesus as their Lord and Saviour are:

Branches in the Vine	Brethren of Jesus
Chosen People	The Remnant
Children of God	Children of Abraham & Sarah
The Israel of God	

Passages to Review

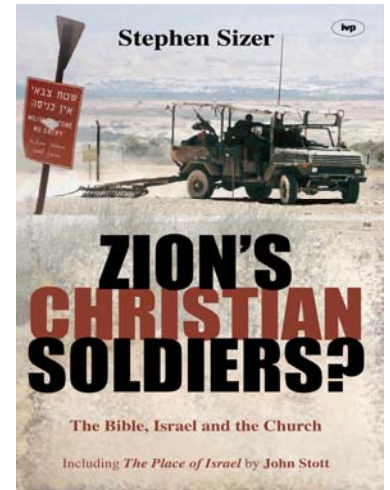
John 15; Ephesians 2; Galatians 4; Romans 2; Romans 9-11.

Questions for Further Study

1. Why are the followers of Jesus described as God's 'chosen people'?
2. Which of the Old Testament analogies for Israel applied to the Church in the New Testament do you find most meaningful and why?
3. What exactly was the 'wall of separation' that Jesus has broken down?
4. How did he remove it and why?
5. In what sense was the 'remnant of Israel' reduced to one man as Jesus died on the cross?
6. How does the idea of a remnant evolve and develop in scripture?
7. In the light of this how should we regard Jewish people today?

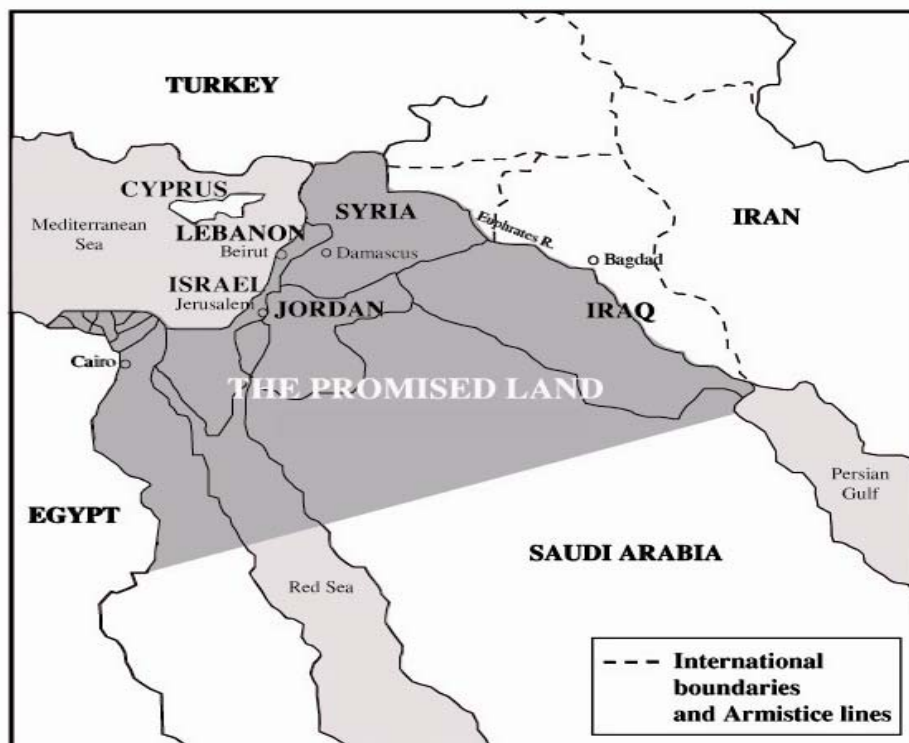
Seminar 3: The Promised Land – From the Nile to the Euphrates?

“I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.” (Genesis 17:7-8)



1. The Significance and Purposes of the Promised land
2. The Geographical Boundaries of Israel: From Egypt to Iraq?

The Israel of Theodore Herzl (1904)
and of Rabbi Fischmann (1947)



3. Everlasting Possession or Conditional Residence?

4. Repentance, Revival and Restoration: But in which order?

5. The Kingdom: Nationalistic or Universal?

6. The Promised Land in the New Covenant

7. Is Jesus going to restore the Kingdom to Israel?

8. The Fig Tree and David's Fallen Tent

9. Redefining the Kingdom: An inclusive inheritance in the world

10. The Kingdom Revealed in the Mystery of Christ

Summary Points

1. The covenant promises made to the Patriarchs concerning the Land were understood as having been fulfilled in the Old Testament.
2. The Land, like the earth itself, belongs to God and his people were at best aliens and tenants with temporary residence.
3. Residence in the Land was always conditional and inclusive.
4. Jesus repudiated a narrow nationalistic kingdom.
5. His kingdom is spiritual, heavenly and eternal.
6. This is the inheritance of all who trust in Jesus Christ.

Passages to Review

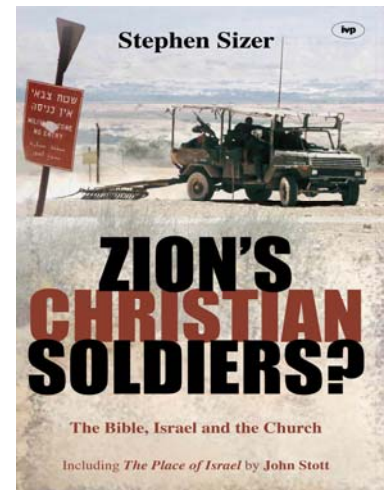
Genesis 17:1-8; Deuteronomy 2: 1-9; Deuteronomy 28:1-10, 15-16, 63-64; Psalm 105:6-11, 37-45; Ephesians 3:4-6; Romans 9; Hebrews 11:10-16.

Questions for Further Study

1. Who was the Holy Land promised to and why?
2. What requirements were given for residency?
3. What significance does the Holy Land have in the New Testament?
4. What is the Christian's inheritance?

Seminar 4: Battle for Jerusalem: The Eternal Capital of the Jews?

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’” (Matthew 23:37-39)



1. The Passion for Jerusalem

2. Jerusalem in the Old Testament

3. Jerusalem in the New Testament

The Times of the Gentiles

The Jerusalem Above

The Heavenly Jerusalem

The New Jerusalem

Summary Points

1. Many Christian Zionists defend and justify Israel's annexation of Jerusalem claiming it is the eternal, undivided and exclusive capital of the Jews.
2. Jerusalem became the capital of Israel briefly under David and Solomon before its decline following the disintegration of tribal alliances and their eventual exile.
3. The Old Testament vision of Jerusalem enjoying God's blessing is of an international and inclusive city of faith, justice and holiness.
4. Jerusalem in the New Testament is associated not with Israel, the Jews or the Temple, but with Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection.
5. The end of the 'times of the Gentiles' far from being a sign of Jewish national sovereignty more likely points to the return of Jesus.
6. The Jerusalem that rejected Jesus and his followers is associated with the immorality of Sodom and oppression of Egypt in the Book of Revelation.
7. Christians look instead to a heavenly Jerusalem as their spiritual home.

Passages to Review

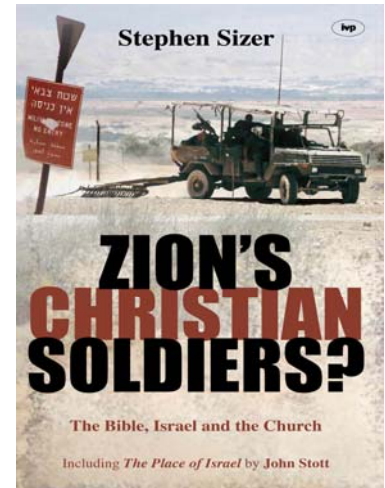
2 Samuel 6:1-19; Psalm 87; Isaiah 2:3-5; 63:3-6; Jeremiah 7:1-11; 21:3-10; Micah 3:9-12; Matthew 23:37-39; Luke 13:34-35; 19:41-44; 21:20-28; John 4:21-23; Galatians 4:21-31; Hebrew 12:18-29; Revelation 21:1-27.

Questions for Further Study

1. What role does Jerusalem fulfil in the purposes of God?
2. Why did the Prophets criticize the people of Jerusalem?
3. How did the coming of Jesus redefine the role of Jerusalem?
4. Why did Jesus weep over Jerusalem?
5. How should we interpret the 'times of the Gentiles' in Luke 21:24?
6. What do we learn about the 'New Jerusalem' from Psalm 87, Isaiah 2 and Revelation 21?
7. How should we pray for the peace of Jerusalem today?

Seminar 5: The Coming Last Day's Temple – Ready to Rebuild?

“Then the Jews demanded of him, “What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this Temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” The Jews replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” But the Temple he had spoken of was his body.” (John 2:18-21)



1. The Case for Rebuilding the Temple

Daniel 9 and the Case for Rebuilding the Temple

“The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary... War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. (9:26)

2000 Year Parenthesis :
The Prophetic Clock Stopped



He will confirm a covenant with many for one “seven.” In the middle of the “seven” he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.” (Daniel 9:27)

2. The Quest to Build the Last Day's Temple

3. Armageddon and the Temple of Doom

4. The Temple: Redundant before it is even built

5. The True Temple is already under construction

Summary Points

1. Attempts by militant Jewish groups to destroy the Dome of the Rock and rebuild the Jewish Temple have widespread support and are taken very seriously by the Israeli authorities.
2. Any attempt to rebuild the Temple will very likely ignite an apocalyptic war with Muslims worldwide.
3. For some, the case for rebuilding the Temple is based on the mistaken belief that only through the reintroduction of the sacrificial system can Jewish people atone for their sins.
4. For others, the Temple must be rebuilt so that it can be desecrated one more time before Jesus returns.
5. This is only possible by the insertion of a 2000 year gap between Daniel 9:26 and 9:27 and Matthew 24:1-2 and 15-16.
6. This assumption must ignore the way in which previous Temples were desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes, the Jewish Zealots as well as by Titus and the Roman army.
7. There are four different theories as to where Herod's Temple was located and therefore there is no consensus as to where any new Jewish Temple should be built.
8. There is not a single verse in the New Testament that requires or justifies a Temple in Jerusalem.
9. The Temple was made redundant and obsolete when Jesus died on the cross.
10. Jesus is the true Temple
11. The Church, the Body of Christ, is likened to a living Temple.
12. The Apostles use Old Testament references to the Temple and apply them to the Church.
13. To advocate the rebuilding of the Temple is heresy.

Passages to Review

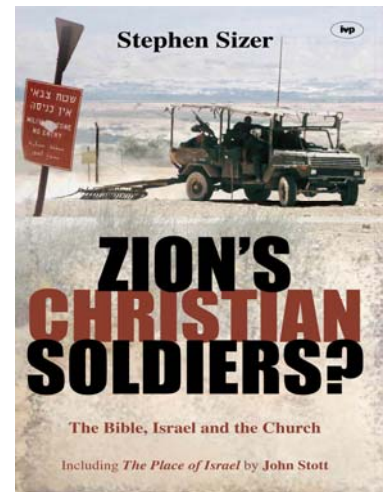
2 Samuel 7:1-17; John 4:21-24; Hebrews 9-10; Ephesians 2:19-21; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16; 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 21:9-27.

Questions for Further Study

1. What role did the Temple fulfil under the Old Covenant?
2. Why is an earthly Temple no longer required?
3. What or who is the Temple?
4. Where are we to worship God?
5. How would a future Temple in Jerusalem undermine the finished work of Christ?

Seminar 6: Overture to Armageddon: Want to be Left Behind?

“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)



What is the idea behind 'The Rapture'?

What does the Bible say about the Rapture?

The Signs of the Times

Armageddon or 'I'm a geddin out o' here'

The Future Assessed : But which one?

Amillennialism

Postmillennialism

Premillennialism

What does the Bible say about the return of Jesus?

It will be a personal return

It will be a visible return

It will be an unmistakable return

It will be a sudden return

It will be an unexpected return

It will be a glorious return

How should we live in the light of Christ's return?

Be Watchful
Be Faithful
Be Serving

Conclusions: The Last Word on the Middle East?

What have we found?
What difference has Jesus made?
How then does the Old Testament relate to Jesus?
Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armageddon?
Now that you know these things

Summary Points

1. The *Left Behind* phenomenon has created a destructive culture of pessimism and fatalism in Western Christianity.
2. This polarised and apocalyptic world view appears to be shaping US foreign policy in the Middle East and destabilising the peace process.
3. The idea of a secret two-stage Rapture is a recent innovation without biblical foundation.
4. The Signs of the return of Christ are intended to keep us watchful not tell us the time.
5. Armageddon is not necessarily a reference to an apocalyptic nuclear holocaust but the cosmic battle between good and evil.
6. Jesus Christ will return personally, visibly, unmistakably, suddenly, unexpectedly and gloriously.
7. In the light of his imminent return we should be watchful and faithful servants doing his will.

Passages to Review

Matthew 24:23-31; Mark 13:32-36; Luke 21:25-28; John 14:1-6; Acts 1:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; 2 Timothy 4:1-8; 2 Peter 3:4-10; Revelation 3:11; 7:9-16; 14:17-20; 16:13-20; 20:1-6.

Questions for further study

1. Why has the *Left Behind* craze gained such popularity?
2. How would you refute the idea of a secret Rapture from Scripture?
3. What are the 'Signs of the Times'?
4. How should we interpret them?
5. How should we live in the light of the Lord's return?