

BIBLICAL PROPHECY

John 15:15 “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”

Revelation 1:3 “Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.”



Rev. Dr. Jerry Schmoyer
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INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK

BIBLICAL PROPHECY

“Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near” (Revelation 1:3). God promises a special blessing to those who study Biblical prophecy and apply it to their lives. In this book, I have tried to clearly explain the main events of the future in the manner God has revealed them in His Word. I have tried to apply them to our lives as well. Prophecy isn’t something we study just to have more knowledge in our head. God revealed the future to us so it will affect our daily lives.

God wants us to be waiting and watching for His return (Micah 7:7). Knowing what will be happening helps us to better be able to do that. We need to wait patiently for His plan to unfold, but we also need to be watching for His return. The story is told of a fishing boat that returned after being gone for many weeks. As they neared the shore, the sailors looked at the crowd assembling to catch a glimpse of their loved ones. One man became concerned because his wife was not there. After the boat landed and he was done with his chores, he went to his home. When he got there his wife ran to him and gave him a welcome home. “I have been waiting for you,” she said. “Yes,” he replied, “But the other men’s wives were watching for them.” This book will help you better wait for His return, but more than that it will help you watch for Him as well.

Pray before you read and as you read, asking God to reveal His truths to you so you understand what He is saying and can apply the truths to your life. It is my desire that this book helps you learn and apply what you learn because, as the Bible says, the time is indeed near!

Rev. Dr. Jerry Schmoyer

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BIBLICAL PROPHECY

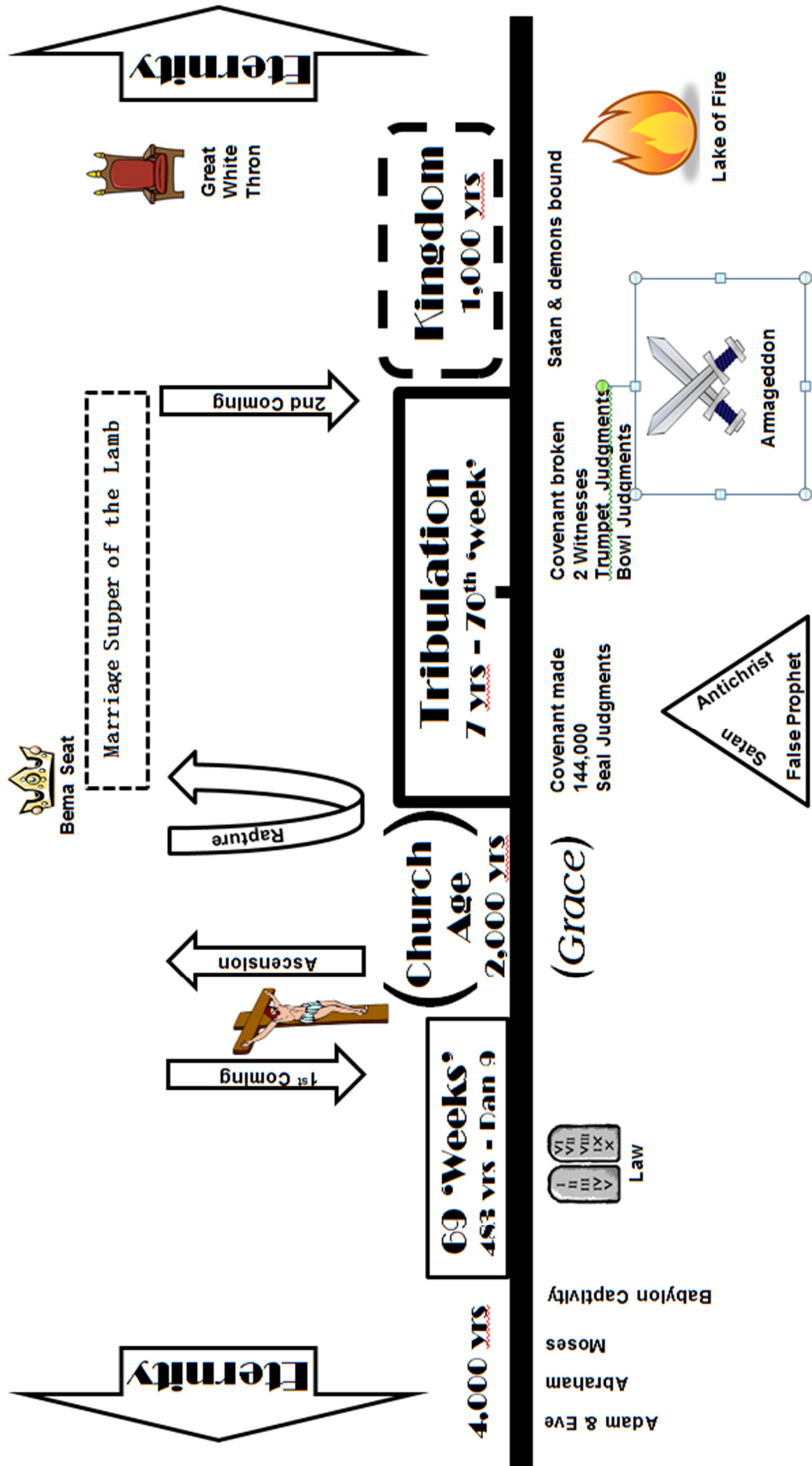


Chart 1: Biblical Prophecy Overview

1. GOD REVEALS HIS PLANS TO THOSE HE LOVES

The future begins with the past. All things begin with God and they end with Him as well. God has always existed (Genesis 1:2; John 1:1). He has no beginning or end. He planned everything that would happen before the world was created (1 Peter 1:20; Ephesians 1:4; John 17:24). He then created a perfect world (Genesis 1). God gave the beings He created, both human and angelic, a free will so they could choose to worship Him, but 1/3 of the angels rebelled and were thrown out of heaven (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:17). Humans, too, used their free will to rebel and disobey God (Genesis 3:1-13). When God pronounced His curse on Adam and Eve, He told them what would be happening in the future (Genesis 3:14-19). Revealing the future to His children is something God has always done.

Because mankind continued to turn from God and refused to follow Him, as seen in Noah's flood and the tower of Babel, God chose one man, Abraham, and set him apart to make a special nation from him (Zechariah 2:8; 13:1). It was His plan for this nation to spread His Word to the rest of the world (Deuteronomy 4:5-8; 6:4-9) and to bring the Messiah to the world (Romans 9:5). The Jews are unconditionally His special people for all eternity (Jeremiah 25:11-13; Genesis 15:6, 12). God told Abraham he would be the father of a great nation that would bless the world (Genesis 18:18). He also told him when he planned to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:17-19). He told him that his descendants would be in bondage in Egypt for four generations (Genesis 15:13-16).

God restored the Jews from Egyptian bondage, but continual disobedience eventually put them in captivity in Babylon, something God had repeatedly warned would happen if the nation didn't turn back to God (Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10 see also Obadiah, Joel, Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah and Habakkuk). He then told them that after 70 years they would return to their homeland (Jeremiah 25:11, 29:10).

Thus it is clear that God wants to share His plans with us, His people, whom He calls His friends (John 15:15). He wants us to be forewarned, to trust His sovereign control and not fear, and to be better prepared to serve Him and spread His Word to others. This is why God promises a special blessing for those who study His prophecies and apply them to their lives (Revelation 1:3).

APPLICATION: We are very blessed that the Creator of the universe, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, wants to be our friend and share His future plans with us! *"I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you"* (John 15:15). Just as we like to share our plans with those who are important to us, so God wants to share His plans for the future with us. A good friend will listen to our plans and rejoice with us in them. We, too, as God's friends should listen as He reveals His plans in His Word and rejoice. He has shared with us what will happen. This book will help you understand and appreciate all God wants us to know about the future. Listen carefully to what He has to say to you.

2. GOD'S OUTLINE FOR THE FUTURE

Because we are His friends, God wants us to know His plans for the future (John 15:15). He started revealing them to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. After they sinned by listening to Satan, God summarized what the future would hold. *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will crush your head, and you will strike His heel"* (Genesis 3:15). God was foretelling that there would be constant conflict between Satan and his followers and God. This would culminate in Satan causing a painful

wound ("strike his heel") against God's special offspring – the Messiah. However the Messiah would defeat Satan ("crush his head") at the same time. This happened at the crucifixion, the ultimate battle between God and Satan. God is saying the battle which started in Eden will continue on, but ultimately God will be the victor. Satan cannot defeat God (1 John 4:4).

Throughout the Old Testament, God revealed more and more of His plan to His people, details that would encourage them and remind them of the ultimate victory that was theirs. However, it was while they were in captivity in Babylon that God revealed the whole outline of the future to Daniel. This was a framework that all future prophecies build upon. It is God's outline for all that has happened from then to eternity future. In Chapters 2, 7 and 8 God said there would be 4 world empires: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. Even though Rome itself does not rule the world today, much of the world follows their basic principles of government, measurement, finances, philosophy, culture, and many other things. Thus we are still in the time of 'Rome' and will continue to be so until Jesus returns.

BABYLON, the first world power, ruled from 606-539 BC. Babylon was the head of the statue (Daniel 2:32, 38) and the lion, king of the beasts (Daniel 7:4, 12, 17). The head stands for Babylon as the first empire of the known world. It started after the flood (Genesis 10:10) and has taken many forms but has always been basically the same. Part of it still exists today (see Revelation 17 and 18).

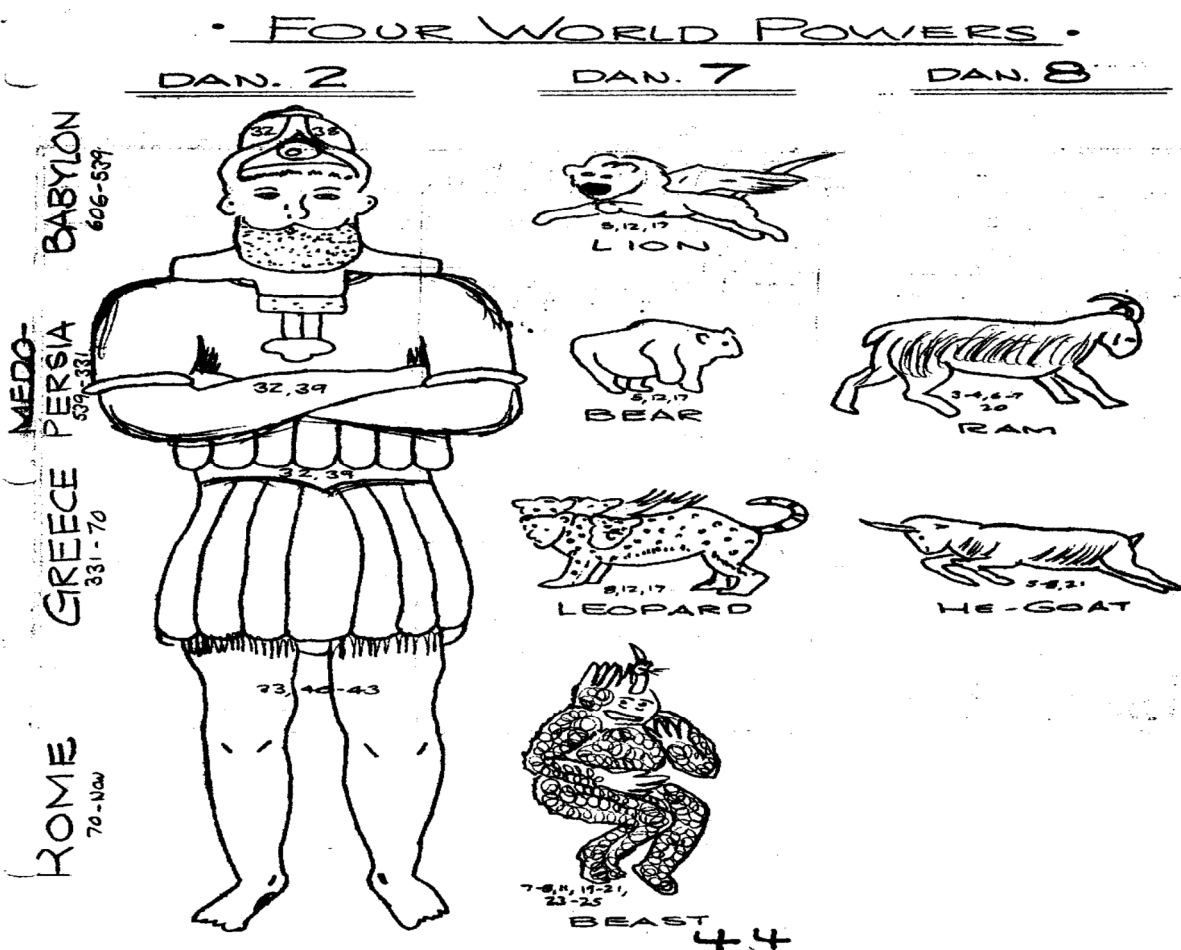


Chart 2: Four World Powers in Daniel 2, 7, 8

The head is formed of gold (Daniel 2:32). Babylon is called the “Golden City” (Isaiah 14:4; Jeremiah 51:7). Also, the apostate church is referred to as ‘Babylon’ and is golden (Revelation 18:16). Gold distinguished Babylon because it was used more profusely by her than by any other empire in images, shrines, adornments of temples, etc. Gold is pure, and Nebuchadnezzar, as ruler, had more pure power than any of the other world rulers.

Babylon is also described as a lion, the king of the beasts. Babylon was the first and greatest empire. The eagle wings show the same thing, for the eagle is the king of the birds (Daniel 7:4). The lion is strong, courageous and devouring. So was Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar himself was called a lion (Jeremiah 4:7). The lion is the most noble of all beasts, but it is still a beast.

It was during the time Babylon ruled that Aesop was writing his “Fables” in Greece and the Vedas and Upanishads were being written in India. Babylon was the first world empire but was soon replaced by Medo-Persia.

MEDO-PERSIA was actually two combined empires, Media and Persia. They ruled the known world from 539-331 BC. The chest with 2 arms shows their dual nature (Daniel 2:32, 39), as does the ram with 2 horns (Daniel 8:3-7, 20). The strength of Media was shown by the bear (Daniel 7:5, 12, 17). The bear being lifted up on one side (Daniel 7:5, 12, 17) and one horn of the ram being lifted above the other (Daniel 8:3) both show one nation would be stronger than the other.

Silver (Daniel 2:32) was synonymous with money in the ancient world, and Medo-Persia focused on business and commerce. They acquired wealth and expressed their ambitions and sense of values in terms of money. Silver is inferior to gold, and Medo-Persia was inferior to Babylon in the quality of the men who ruled, the system of picking rulers, governmental organization, morality, achievements and in internal unity.

A bear is also used to describe this kingdom (Daniel 7:5). A bear is next in line to a lion in dominance, but it is far less regal, has less dignity, is slower and heavier than the lion. But it is stronger and more cruel. This described Medo-Persia as compared to Babylon. The bear, like Medo-Persia, is all-devouring and greedy and it lacks dignity.

The other animal mentioned, the ram, is sturdy but not extra strong (Daniel 8:3-7, 20). It is solid and unmovable. It thrusts, butts, and casts down its enemies.

Confucius lived in China during the time Medo-Persia ruled. Medo-Persia warred with Greece, which was going through its classical age. Socrates, Plato and Euripides were born in Greece, and the Parthenon built. India was experiencing its period of Sanskrit. The epic poem “Mahabharata” was written, and Siddhartha Gautama, founder of Buddhism, was born.

GREECE, 331-70 BC, followed Medo-Persia when Alexander the Great led his armies in world conquest (the goat in Daniel 8:5-8).

The Greeks were celebrated for their brass armor which they perfected (Daniel 2:32, 39). Brass is a clear-sounding metal which stands for the clear eloquence of speaking and oratory for which the Greeks were famed.

The belly and thighs show that Greece will start out as a unit but divide and never be rejoined (Daniel 2:32, 39). Alexander divided his empire into four parts for his four generals, but in reality Syria and Egypt gained dominance over all the others.

The leopard springs from hiding and is very cruel (Daniel 7:6). It is smaller, weaker but swifter than a bear or lion. It can be very fierce, and it depends on its quickness and surprise. Greece, like a leopard, appeared tame but was really very deadly. The four heads refer to

Alexander's four kingdoms, as do the four wings. They also refer to the speed of their movement, which is what gained them victory in war.

The goat has more strength and agility than a ram (Daniel 8:5-8, 21). It is extremely quick and can cover much ground in little time, as did the armies of Greece. The great horn (Alexander the Great) being replaced by four weaker ones refers to the division of Alexander's kingdom at his death.

During this time period the Han dynasty ruled in China. The epic poem, Ramayana, was written in India. Alexander the Great moved his armies in the Punjab. Later, Ashoka the Great reunited much of Southeast Asia.

ROME conquered Greece and is the final world empire (70 BC to the present). It is depicted by the two legs (Daniel 2:33, 40-43). Iron (Daniel 2:33, 40) is the hardest metal but is inferior to the other metals in many ways. Rome, too, was the hardest empire and crushed everything in its way. But like iron, it has less internal value. Rome was inferior to those before it in the way power was used. The clay having been mixed in (Daniel 2:33, 41-42) weakened the iron so that it lost its internal stability, and Rome's form of government was weaker than those who went before. The ten toes (Daniel 2:42-43) refer to the 10 kingdoms comprising the Roman Empire in the last days. The feet (Daniel 2:42-43) are stable while bearing direct pressure but can be easily broken. They are struck at the time when they are most readily overthrown and thus the most vulnerable (Daniel 2:44-45). This will happen when Jesus returns at the end of the Tribulation, His Second Coming. It is still future, showing that we are still living in the time of Rome's influence. This includes their form of government, mathematics, commerce and culture still holding predominance in Europe, the United States, and much of the world.

Rome is also described as a beast (Daniel 7:7-25). This is the worst of all the animals and is a creature too terrible to describe. The 10 horns refer to the ten divisions or countries which form it, the same as the 10 toes. During this time an evil ruler called Antiochus Epiphanies will come to power (Daniel 8:23-27; 11:21-35). He is a picture of the coming evil one, the Antichrist. The little horn Daniel saw refers to this coming Antichrist which will rise from the Roman Empire in the last days (Daniel 7:24-25; 8:23-26). We will examine more about the Antichrist when we study the Tribulation.

APPLICATION: Many clear, specific prophecies in Daniel 9, 10 and 11 have been fulfilled to the smallest detail, leading skeptics to claim these passages must have been written after the events for no one could so clearly predict them hundreds of years in advance. Yet the Dead Sea Scrolls provide abundant proof that these amazing prophecies were written hundreds of years before they happened. These fulfilled prophecies are further proof of the accuracy of the Bible and the certainty of the fulfillment of prophecies to come. Our enemy may try to put doubt about these things in our minds, but here alone is abundant proof to the accuracy and inspiration of the Bible. It truly is a very special book we can depend on. That's why it is so important for us to learn all it has to say to us, including what will happen in the future.

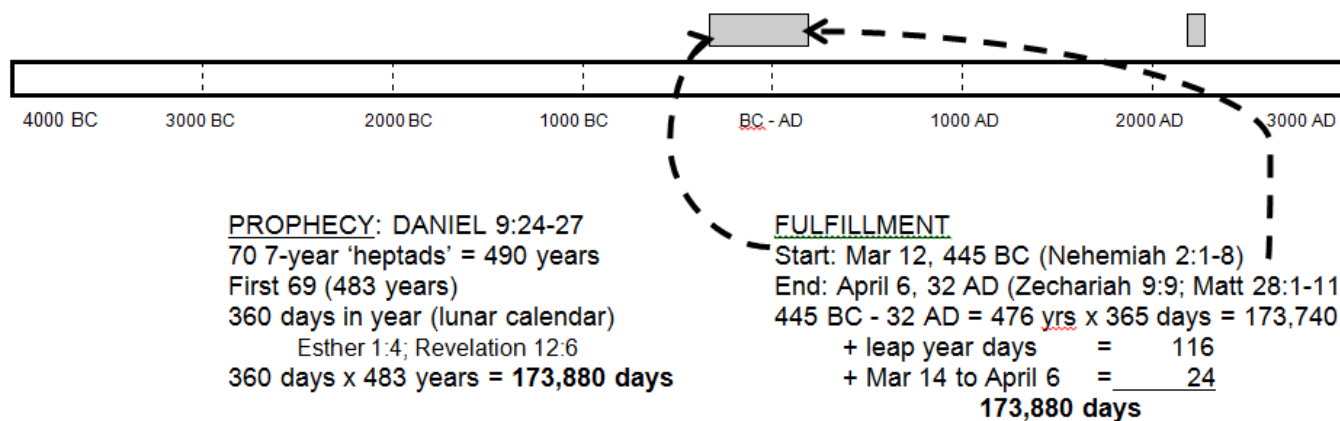
3. 70 7-YEAR PERIODS IN DANIEL 9

As the prophesied 70 years in captivity came to a close, Daniel, who was aware of this prophecy, asked God what would happen next (Daniel 9:1-23). God told him that the 70 years of captivity would be followed by 70 "sevens" (Daniel 9:24-27). The word for these "sevens," 'heptad,' can be translated "seven-year period" (Genesis 29:17). Thus God told Daniel that Israel's future would consist of 70 seven-year periods, or 490 years (Daniel 9:24-27). *"Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and*

prophecy and to anoint the most holy. Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing" (Daniel 9:24-26).

Numbers, as well as colors and materials, often have symbolic significance in the Bible. The number seven is the most-used number in the Bible (600 times). It refers to perfection and completeness (Genesis 2:2-3; Leviticus 13:5-6). Revelation is structured around seven sevens (churches, seals, trumpets, bowls, etc.). Seven times seven intensifies the significance of seven (49 - Leviticus 23:15; 25:8) as does seven times 10 (70 - Genesis 50:3; Daniel 9:2; Psalm 90:10). Therefore 490 is the ultimate completeness ($7 \times 7 \times 10$). It is no surprise that God uses 490 years to show the completeness and perfection of His work with His people. Three is the number of God (Trinity), so three 490-year time periods are the ultimate in God's sovereign outworking.

The first of these three 490-year periods was from when the Jews went into Canaan (1586 BC) to when the Jewish kingdom was established (1096 BC). This included the time of Joshua and the Judges. The second was from when the kingdom was established (1096 BC) to when the Jews went into captivity in Babylon (606 BC). This included Saul, David, Solomon and all the kings that came after them. Following the Babylonian Captivity came the third and final 490-year period, starting with the return from Babylon and continuing until the Messiah returns



in Glory.

Chart 3: 70 7-Year Periods in Daniel 9

This final 490-year time period was prophesied to start with "the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem" (Daniel 9:24), which happened March 14, 445 BC (Nehemiah 2:1-8). The first 69 of these 7 year 'heptads,' or 483 years, would end when "the anointed One will be cut off" (Daniel 9:26). This was fulfilled April 6, 32 AD. It was that day, called Palm Sunday, that Jesus publicly offered Himself as the Messiah-King and was turned down (Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:1-11; Luke 19:28-40).

The period between March 14, 445 BC and April 6, 32 AD was exactly 483 years, to the day! Years then were 360 days long, following the 12 month, 30-day lunar calendar (Esther 1:4). This will be the measurement for years in the Tribulation as well (Revelation 12:6, in referring to the 70th 'heptad,' says the last 3 ½ years will be 1260 days long which equals 360 day years for these 'heptads.'). Thus 483 years of 360 days each equals 173,880 days.

Now, from 445 BC to 32 AD is 476 calendar years. We have 365 days our calendar years. 476 times 365 results in 173,740 days. Add to this 116 leap-year days during that time and include 24 days from March 14 to April 6 and the grand total is 173,880 – the same as prophesied!

Since the first 69 'heptads' were literally fulfilled, we know the last one will be, too. This is still future. It will begin when the "ruler who will come" (Daniel 9:26 - we call him the 'Antichrist') will make a seven-year peace treaty with Israel, which he will break in the middle (Daniel 9:26-27). He will be similar to Antiochus Epiphanies (Daniel 8:9-14) but much, much worse (Daniel 11:36-45). He will "destroy the city and the sanctuary" (Daniel 9:26). These things are yet

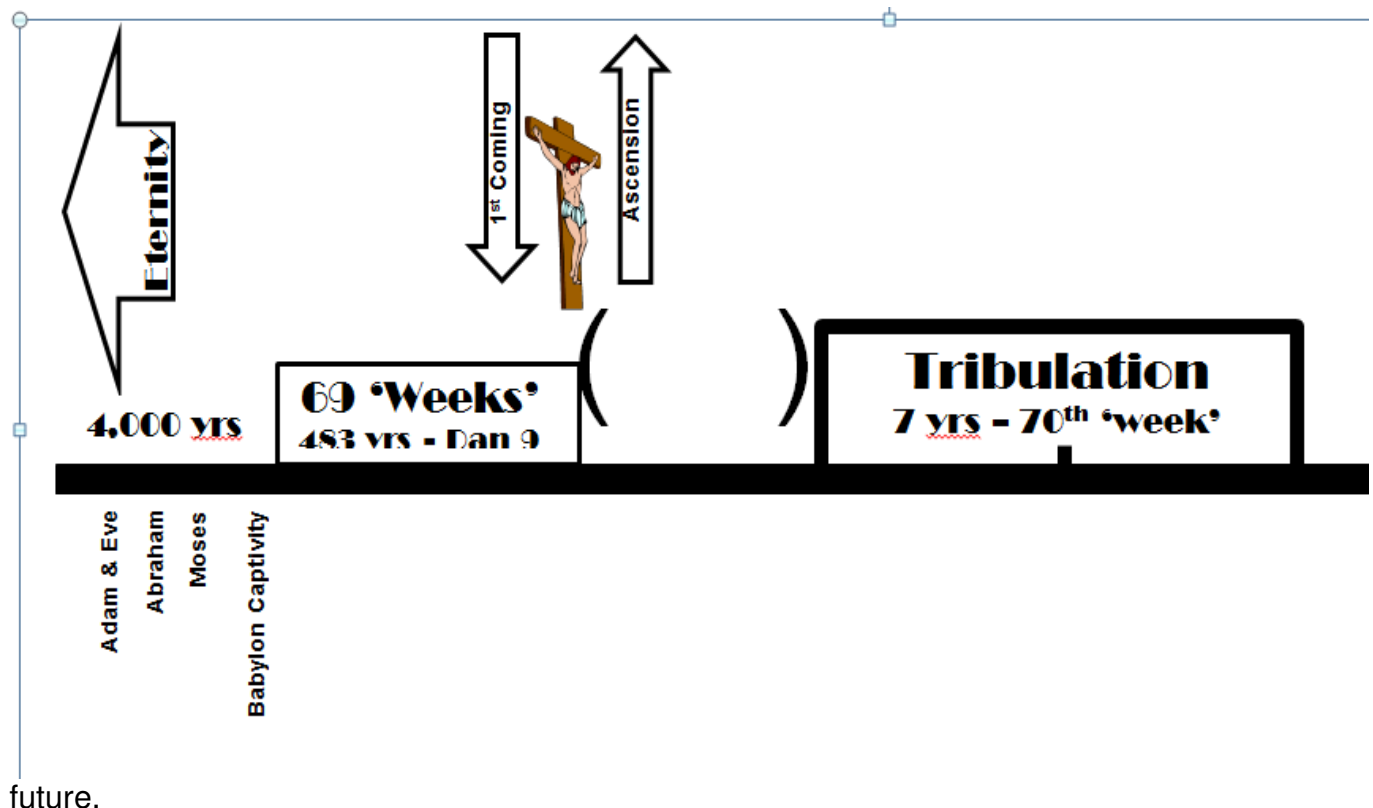


Chart 4: Daniel's 70 Seven-Year Periods and Jesus' Coming

Thus we live in the time between the 69th and 70th week. We see this as a parenthesis in God's dealings with Israel, with Israel set aside because of their rejection of the Messiah (Jesus). It was prophesied that the Jews would be scattered (Deuteronomy 28:64, Leviticus 26:33) and the land desolated (Leviticus 26:33; Deuteronomy 29:22-23). The Jews would be persecuted (Deuteronomy 28:65) but preserved (Isaiah 66:22; 49:15-16; Jeremiah 30:11; 31:35-37). They would be blinded spiritually (Isaiah 6:9-10). This began in 70 AD with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. It will continue until the rapture when the final 70th seven-year period begins.

The chart below shows how these 70 7-year periods in Daniel 9 line up with the four world empires predicted in Daniel 2, 7 and 8.

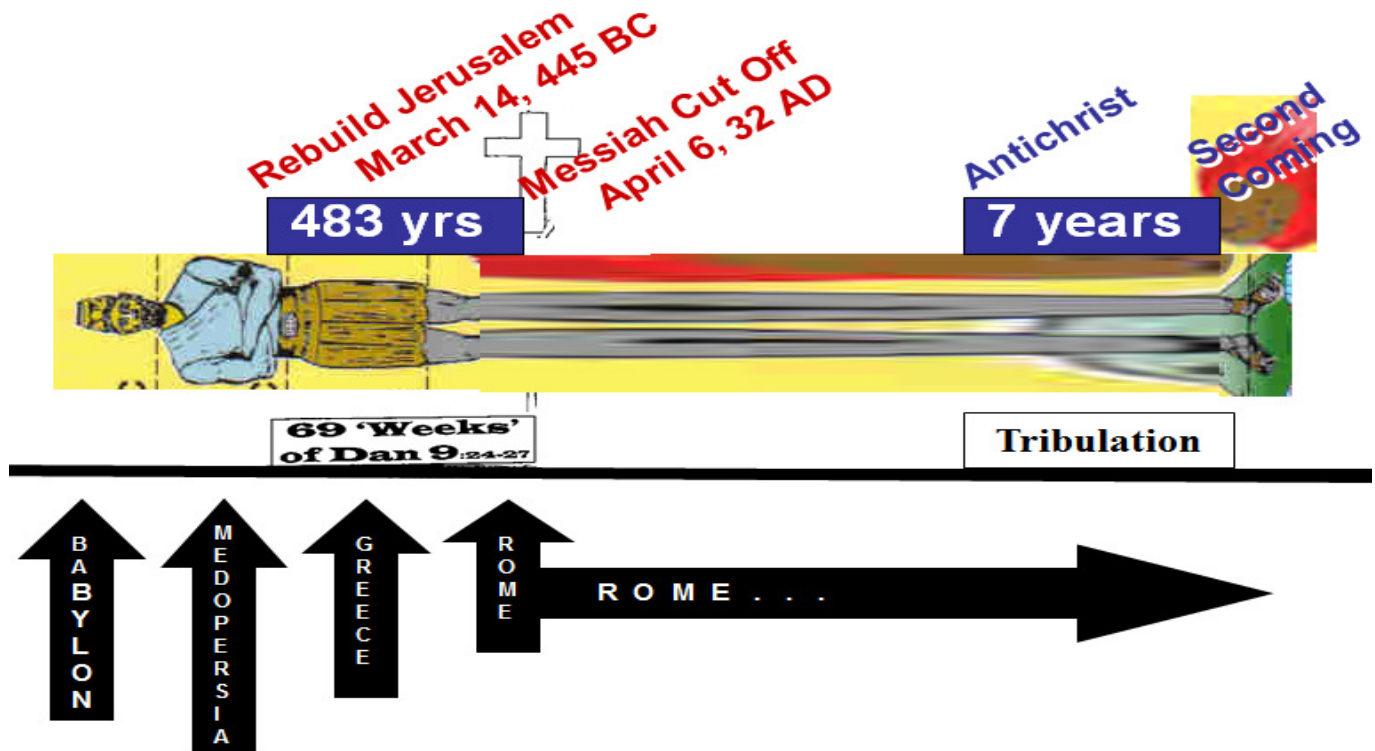


Chart 5: Daniel's 70 7-Year Periods and the 4 Empires in Daniel 2, 7, 8

APPLICATION: God can know and predict these specific events to the very day. That shows how great His knowledge of the future is. But it also shows that He is in control of the future as well, for He assures that everything turns out as He predicts. God can control world events and have these things happen exactly when and how He wants. If He can do that with nations, He can certainly do that with individual lives – with our lives. Be assured He is in control of everything in your life as well. It is all going according to His plan. Your life may not be unfolding according to your plan, but as long as you trust He is in charge you have nothing to fear. If He brought all these events to be when He wanted and used them for His purpose rest assured He is doing the same thing in your life.

4. THE MESSIAH'S FIRST COMING

The most important part of God's plan was when He would come to earth as the Messiah. He revealed that to man in great detail. It was first foretold in Eden (Genesis 3:14-15) and repeated to Enoch (Jude 14-16), Job (Job 19:25-26), David (Psalm 2:4-6), Isaiah (Isaiah 9:6-7), Micah (Micah 5:2) and many others. The Jews in Jesus' day knew it was time for these prophecies to be fulfilled and were looking for the Messiah (Matthew 11:23; Luke 7:19).

God Himself left heaven to live on earth in about 5 BC (Matthew 1:20-23). He voluntarily laid aside that part of being 'God' which would have made life easier and instead faced everything as a human being the same as us (Philippians 2:6-8). He was still God but as a man went through all we go through (Hebrews 2:17-18; 4:15).

The Jews themselves recognize hundreds of clear, specific prophecies about the first coming of the Messiah. All these have been literally and totally fulfilled by Jesus of Nazareth, proving beyond any doubt that He is the Messiah. Listed below are 61 Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah with their New Testament fulfillment.

1. Born of the seed of woman: Genesis 3:15; Galatians 4:4; Matthew 1:20

2. Born of a virgin: Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18, 24, 25; Luke 1:26-35
3. Son of God: Psalms 2:7 (I Chronicles 17:11-14; II Samuel 7:12-16); Matthew 3:17; 16:16 (Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35)
4. Seed of Abraham: Genesis 22:18 (12:2-3); Matthew 1:1; Galatians 3:16
5. Son of Isaac: Genesis 21:12; Luke 3:23,34 (Matthew 1:2)
6. Son of Jacob: (Numbers 24:17 (Genesis 35:10-12); Luke 3:23, 34 (Matthew 1:2; Luke 1:33)
7. Tribe of Judah: Genesis 49:10; Luke 3:23,33 (Matthew 1:2; Hebrews 7:14)
8. Family line of Jesse: Isaiah 11:1, 10; Luke 3:23,32 (Matthew 1:6)
9. House of David: Jeremiah 23:5 (II Samuel 7:12-16; Psalm 132:11); Luke 3:23,31 (Matthew 1:1; 9:27)
10. Born at Bethlehem: Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1 (John 7:42, Matthew 2:4-8; Luke 2:4-7)
11. Presented with gifts: Psalm 72:10 (Isaiah 60:6); Matthew 2:1,11
12. Herod kills children: Jeremiah 31:15; Matthew 2:16
13. His pre-existence: Micah 5:2 (Isaiah 9:6-7; Psalm 102:25); Colossians 1:17 (John 1:1-2; 8:58; Rev 1:17)
14. He shall be called Lord: Psalm 110:1 (Jeremiah 23:6); Luke 2:11; 20:41-44
15. He shall be Immanuel (God With Us): Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23; Luke 7:16
16. He shall be a prophet: Deut 18:18; Matthew 21:11 (Luke 7:16; John 4:19; 6:14; 7:40)
17. He shall be a priest: Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 3:1; 5:5-6
18. He shall be a judge: Isaiah 33:22; John 5:30; II Timothy 4:1
19. He shall be a king: Psalm 2:6 (Zech. 9:9; Jeremiah 23:5); Matthew 27:37; 21:5 (John 18:33-38)
20. Special anointing of the Holy Spirit: Isaiah 11:2; Matthew 3:16-17; 12:17-21 (Mark 1:10-11)
21. His zeal for God: Psalm 69:9; John 2:15-17
22. Preceded by messenger: Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 3:1-2; 3:3; 11:10
23. Ministry to begin in Galilee: Isaiah 9:1; Matthew 4:12,13,17
24. Ministry of miracles: Isaiah 35:5, 6a; 32:3-4; Matthew 9:32,33,35; 11:4-6 (John 5:5-9)
25. Teacher of parables: Psalm 78:2; Matthew 13:34
26. He was to enter the temple: Malachi 3:1; Matthew 21:12
27. He was to enter Jerusalem on a donkey: Zechariah 9:9; Luke 19:35-37a (Matthew 21:6-11)
28. "Stone of Stumbling" to the Jews: Psalm 118:22 (Isaiah 8:14; 28:16); I Peter 2:7 (Romans 9:32-33)
29. "Light" to the Gentiles: Isaiah 60:3; 49:6; Acts 13:47,48a; 26:23; 28:28
30. Betrayed by a friend: Psalm 41:9; 55:12-14; Matthew 10:4; 26:49-50; John 13:21
31. Sold for 30 pieces of silver: Zechariah 11:12; Matthew 26:15; 27:3
32. Money to be thrown in God's house: Zechariah 11:13b; Matthew 27:5a
33. Price given for potter's field: Zechariah 11:13b; Matthew 27:7
34. Forsaken by His disciples: Zechariah 13:7; Mark 14:50 (Matthew 26:31; Mark 14:27)
35. Accused by false witnesses: Psalm 35:11; Matthew 26:59-61
36. Dumb before accusers: Isaiah 53:7; Matthew 27:12-19
37. Wounded and bruised: Isaiah 53:5 (Zechariah 13:6); Matthew 27:26
38. Smitten and spit upon: Isaiah 50:6 (Micah 5:1); Matthew 26:67 (Luke 22:63)
39. Mocked: Psalm 22: 7, 8; Matthew 27:31
40. Fell under the cross: Psalm 109:24-25; John 19:17; Luke 23:26; Matthew 27:31-32
41. Hands and feet pierced: Psalm 22:16 (Zechariah 12:10); Luke 23:33 (John 20:25)
42. Crucified with thieves: Isaiah 53:12; Matthew 27:38 (Mark 15:27,28)
43. Made intercession for His persecutors: Isaiah 53:12; Luke 23:34
44. Rejected by His own people: Isaiah 53:3 (Ps 69:8; 118:22); John 7:5,48; 1:11 (Matthew 21:42,43)
45. Hated without a cause: Psalm 69:4 (Isa 49:7); John 15:25
46. Friends stood afar off: Psalm 38:11; Luke 23:49 (Mark 15:40; Matthew 27:55-56)

47. People shook their heads: Psalm 109:25; 22:7; Matthew 27:39
48. Stared upon: Psalm 22:17; Luke 23:35
49. Garments parted and lots cast: Psalm 22:18; John 19:23-24
50. To suffer thirst: Psalm 69:21; 22:15; John 19:28
51. Gall and vinegar offered Him: Psalm 69:21; Matthew 27:34
52. His forsaken cry: Psalm 22:1; Matthew 26:46
53. Committed Himself to God: Psalm 31:5; Luke 23:46
54. Bones not broken: Psalm 34:20; John 19:33
55. Heart broken: Psalm 22:14; John 19:34
56. His side pierced: Zechariah 12:10; John 19:34
57. Darkness over the land: Amos 8:9; Matthew 27:45
58. Buried in rich man's tomb: Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:57-60
59. Resurrection: Psalm 16:10; 30:3; 41:10; 118:17 (Hosea 6:2); Acts 2:31 (Luke 24:46; Mark 16:16)
60. Ascension: Psalm 68:18a; Acts 1:9
61. Seated at right hand of God: Psalm 110:1; Hebrews 1:3 (Mark 16:19; Acts 2:34-35)

No one else in history ever came near to fulfilling these, and no one ever since the birth and tribal records of all Jews were destroyed when Jerusalem fell in 70 AD. The fulfillment of these prophecies by Jesus proves the authenticity of the Bible as God's Word as well as the fact that Jesus is God.

Despite all the clear evidence that Jesus of Nazareth met all the requirements to prove He was the Messiah, the nation as a whole rejected Him (Matthew 21:4-17). As was also prophesied, He went to the cross to pay for the sins of mankind (Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; 1 Peter 2:24). His resurrection, too, was prophesied ahead of time (Psalm 16:8-11; 49:15; 40:1-4; 22:25-27; 110:1; Isaiah 53:10, etc.). Jesus Himself prophesied He would be crucified and come back to life (Mark 8:31; 9:30-32; 10:32-34; John 10:18; etc.). It was on the cross that Satan's power was broken, his 'head crushed' (Genesis 3:15). He won't meet his final doom until after the Millennium, but his eternal fate was sealed on the cross.

Jesus also predicted that He would ascend back to heaven after the crucifixion and resurrection (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9). Jesus is now seated in heaven where He intercedes and mediates for us (Acts 7:55-56; 9:3-5; 22:6-8; 26:13-15; Ephesians 2:6; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; Colossians 3:1; Revelation 1:13-18).

Since there were so many clear, specific, fulfilled prophecies of Jesus' first coming, so there will be of His second coming as well. The first happened as foretold, and the Second Coming will, too.

APPLICATION: God knew ahead of time what would happen to Jesus. His rejection and crucifixion did not take Him by surprise or change His plan. It was His plan for it to happen. He predicted all these things in the Old Testament so we would know Jesus is the Messiah but also so we would know that all this was part of His plan. Otherwise it would be easy to think that what happened to Jesus was a mistake. We often think that the difficulties and painful events we face are a mistake and that God is not in charge of them. But God knows everything that will happen to us as well. Nothing in your life catches Him by surprise. He knows it will happen. He allows it for our growth and His glory. He took the worst thing that ever happened, the crucifixion, and brought the best thing that ever happened out of it – our salvation. All that happens in your life is under His control and He will bring good out of it as well (Romans 8:28).

5. THE PRESENT CHURCH AGE (GRACE)

Because they rejected their Messiah, Israel was temporarily set aside, and God's focus shifted to His new Body of believers, the Church. This is the parenthesis between the 69th and 70th weeks of Daniel 9 as explained above. We are not under the Law as the Jews were but are under grace, also fulfilling predictions (Jeremiah 31:31; Luke 22:20; Hebrews 8:8; 9:15; 12:24).

However, while the Jews as a nation are set aside, individually they can still come to Jesus for salvation and many are doing so. One day, the nation will be restored and be the center focus of God's program (Romans 10:1-4; 11:7-12), but we (the Church) will be raptured and in heaven with our Bride Jesus at that time (Revelation 19:7). The Church is composed of all believers, whether Jew or Gentile by birth (Galatians 3:26-27). We become one new Body in Christ at salvation (Ephesians 1:22-23; 3:6; 4:1-6, 12, 16).

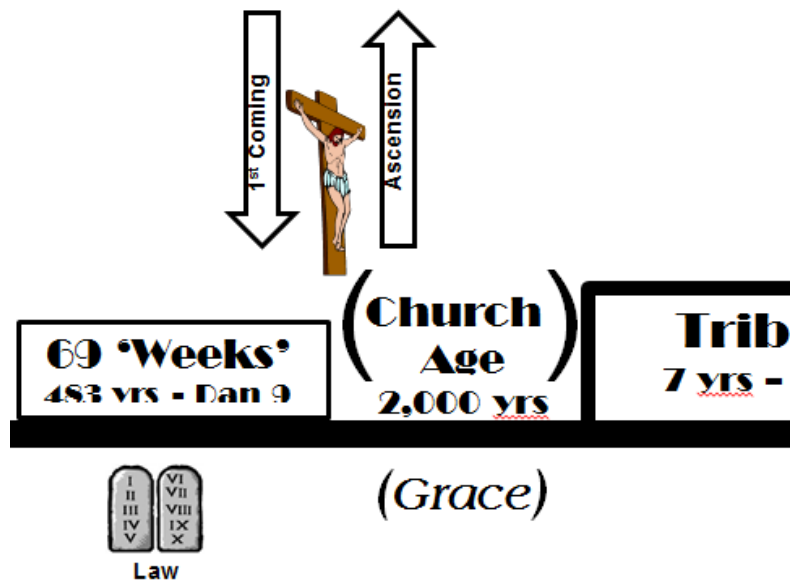


Chart 6: The Present Church Age

APPLICATION: What a great blessing and privilege we have in living in the time of grace instead of law. God's grace is abundantly clear in our lives. Had we been living during the time of the Law in the Old Testament, we would have had hundreds, even thousands of laws and regulations to constantly obey. It is a great honor it to experience God's grace in our lives. Thank Him for His grace shown in your life. Show His grace to others in the way you treat them as well.

6. ISRAEL DURING THE CHURCH AGE

Since the Jews are temporarily set aside, the focus is on the Bride of Christ, composed of born-again (John 3:1-24) Jews and Gentiles (Galatians 3:28). Individually Jews can come to Jesus and become part of the Bride of Christ although as a nation they are blinded because their rejection of Jesus hardens their hearts (Romans 11:7-10; Isaiah 6:9-10).

It was prophesied that the Jews would be scattered as a nation (Deuteronomy 28:64; Leviticus 26:33). This began in 70 AD with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. It was also prophesied that the land of Palestine would become desolate (Leviticus 26:33; Deuteronomy 29:22-23). In addition, the Bible says the Jews will be persecuted (Deuteronomy 28:65). Despite all this, God will preserve the Jews from destruction (Isaiah 66:22; 49:15-16; Jeremiah 30:11; 31:35-36).

Eventually the Jews will be gathered back into their own land but still in unbelief (Ezekiel 36:22-28; 37:1-7; Deuteronomy 30:3-8; Isaiah 10:22-23). The land of Israel will be reclaimed (Isaiah 35:1-7; Joel 2:21-26). Israel will become a nation again (Isaiah 66:7-8). The nation of Israel will be strong militarily (Zechariah 3:9), and the nation will return to the Hebrew language

(Zephaniah 3:9). The stage was set in 1914-1918 when the nation was planted (fig tree of Mt 24:32-34). Israel grew into a full-grown fig tree (symbol of Israel) capable of budding in 1948 (fulfilling Ezekiel 37:1-8).

APPLICATION: The Jews have been and still are God's special people. They have been set aside, and we Gentiles have been allowed to become children of God. That is all by God's mercy, nothing we deserve. The Jews' loss is the Gentiles' benefit. We should be thankful God has allowed us to be grafted into Him (Romans 11:17-24). We have nothing to brag about or put our pride in. We should pray for the Jews to come to God as their Savior and Lord. We should thank God for His grace in allowing us to be part of His plan and His family. We should do all we can to help His people, the Jews, in any way we can. It is only because of their rejection of Jesus as Messiah that God has allowed us to come to Him.

7. WHEN A CHRISTIAN DIES

When I go on a trip to India, I make plans and preparations far in advance. I want to make sure everything is ready when the time comes to make the trip. I'm sure you do the same. But there are many people who will soon be taking a trip yet have not make any preparations. It's the trip they will take when they leave this world for the next. They know it is coming but put off getting ready for it. Some aren't sure exactly where they will be going, or what they will be doing when they get there.

I guess all of us wonder at one time or another about what happens when we die. "If a man dies, will he live again?" Job asks (14:14). As Christians our answer is a resounding "Yes." After all, everything we believe and live for is based on the fact of us living forever. If we are wrong about this we are wrong about everything we believe and worse off than those who have no hope of life after death (1 Corinthians 15:19).

It's very important we understand the truth of what happens when we die. Our future assurance, and that of our loved ones, is all based on it. If Satan can get us to doubt the reality of eternal life he can bring discouragement and defeat quite easily. The truth of the matter is, though, that God created us to live forever with Him. Sin entered and spoiled that plan (Genesis 3). Along with sin came death, but even death shows God's mercy for it enables us to be reunited with God again instead of living separated from Him on this earth forever. Death also acts as a reminder that this life is temporary and an eternal destiny awaits us.

The problem, though, is that death from sin means separation from God for all eternity. God desires for us to live with Him forever - not separated from Him. Jesus came and paid for our sin so we can spend eternity in heaven with Him (1 Corinthians 15:21-22). But how can we be absolutely, totally sure our loved ones who believed in Jesus went there? How can we know beyond a doubt that we will go there?

ARGUMENTS FOR LIFE AFTER DEATH: One argument for life after death is the universal belief of all peoples everywhere that there is more than this life. God has built a "homing instinct" into all peoples to look for something more. He has created us with a God-shaped vacuum that only He can fill. "He has set eternity in the hearts of men" (Ecclesiastes 3:11). We all look forward to a time and place when evil will be gone and justice will prevail. Clearly that will not happen in this life.

Another proof for eternal life is the accounts of near-death experiences from those who have 'died' and been brought back to life. A woman in our church shared such an experience at one time. Paul himself writes about such an event in his life, saying that what he experienced was too wonderful for him to be able to share with others (2 Corinthians 12:2-5). The dying

words of many believers attest to that which awaits at death. D. L. Moody said, as he was dying, "Earth is receding. Heaven is approaching. This is my crowning day."

While many believers speak of heaven, there are also numerous accounts of those who have died and gone to hell before being brought back. A man relayed his harrowing account in our church as well.

THE BEST PROOF OF LIFE AFTER DEATH comes from God's inspired Word, the Bible. Giving us an accurate, true and inspired revelation is not too hard for God to do – it is well within the realm of His ability. Not only is it possible, but it is also necessary, for without God revealing His truth to us, we would be ignorant of it. He must reach out to man, or we wouldn't understand His plan and will for us. Jesus considered the Old Testament to be true and inspired. Paul and Peter did also affirming that what the other wrote was also from God. There have been hundreds of clear, meticulous prophecies which have come true to the very last detail. The Bible speaks of many scientific facts which were unknown to man at the time it was written but which current science knowledge has affirmed time after time. Thousands of books have been written proving the Bible is indeed God's inspired Word, so we can trust what it says. That includes what it says about heaven and hell.

David had assurance he would "dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Psalm 23:6). He knew when he died God would "take me to Himself" (Psalm 49:15) and "take me into glory" (Psalm 73:24). Solomon declares that "the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Job knew this as well. "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see Him with my own eyes — I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!" (Job 19:25-27).

Jesus Himself affirmed eternal life time after time. When the religious rulers tried to trap Him He quoted Exodus 6:3 where God affirmed, "I Am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." He is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Mark 12:26-27). Abraham, Isaac and Jacob still live at this moment, and God is still their God. "I Am" their God, not "I was" their God!

When He brought Lazarus back to life, Jesus said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26). He brought three people back to life, and when He Himself was resurrected, many who had been dead for some time came back to life (Matthew 27:50-53). Clearly, Jesus had the victory over death.

One of the clearest statements affirming life after death was made by Jesus on the cross to the thief hanging alongside Him who believed in Him: "Today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). There is no soul sleep, no intermediary state and no purgatory – just instantly to heaven. Paul affirms this in 2 Corinthians 5:8 "away from the body and at home with the Lord."

Immediately at death, His spirit went to heaven, and three days later, His body was physically resurrected and changed into an eternal body, proving to all His power over death. He appeared 10 times to over 500 people. The disciples who saw Him became courageous instead of fearful, willing to give up their lives for Him. The early church was built on the truth of the resurrection and spread everywhere. Paul, Stephen and John saw Jesus themselves. The institution of Christian baptism attested to the resurrection after death, and switching worship from Friday to the First Day of the week, the day of Resurrection, also shows the reality of Jesus' coming back to life.

Without a doubt, the Bible affirms there is immediate life after death for the believer. Yet often we fear death. We are like a bunch of caterpillars moping around an empty cocoon,

mourning the loss of our loved one while forgetting that they are not gone, just transformed into what they were created to be in the first place - released from the confines of this mortal body to fly upwards in beauty and grace. Don't look at the empty cocoon, look at the glorious butterfly!

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE MOMENT OF DEATH? The Bible, along with the testimony of many believers, is that angels appear to accompany the person's soul/spirit to heaven where Jesus personally greets them with a hug and words of love and welcome. What a start! At the moment of death, our body remains behind and our immaterial part, that which loves, laughs, feels, dreams – the real us – is taken immediately to God's presence (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

It seems God provides a temporary eternal body until the Rapture when the earthly remains of our physical body will be brought back together, changed into an eternal body and will replace our temporary eternal body (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; Isaiah 26:19). In each case, our body will be like Jesus' resurrection body. "He will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body" (Philippians 3:21). Our eternal body will have the same appearance as our earthly body (at the prime of life, not when we are old and sick) but will not be subject to sin, sickness, sorrow or death (2 Corinthians 5:1-8).

The sober truth of the matter is that every single human being will live forever, but only those who put their faith in Jesus will live with Him in heaven (John 3:16). Those who have not done so will spend eternity in hell, the "lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15) where "they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Revelation 20:10). This will be a place of "everlasting destruction which is shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of His power" (2 Thessalonians 1:9). Originally prepared only for Satan and the angels who fell with him (Matthew 25:41-42), it will become a place of agony for any who reject God's mercy and forgiveness (Luke 16:23-24). It will be a place of agony (Luke 16:24) not just physically because of the continual burning but emotionally because of the lack of hope, the guilt and remorse, the darkness and loneliness and the separation from God and all He provides. The good news is for those who believe in Jesus there is now and forevermore "no condemnation" (Romans 8:1).

Instead, for us who believe, there will be rewards given to us based on our faithfulness in this life. These will be given for living in victory (1 Corinthians 9:25), leading others to salvation (1 Thessalonians 2:19), righteous living (2 Timothy 4:8; 1 John 3:3; 2:29), faithfulness even to martyrdom (Revelation 2:10; James 1:12) and faithfully looking for His coming glory (1 Peter 5:2-4).

What a great difference faith in Jesus will make! NOW is the time to make sure. "If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15). This is one trip we all want to be ready for because once death comes it will be too late to change destinies. Acceptance brings eternal life in heaven forever; rejection means eternal life in hell forever. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

WHAT IS HEAVEN LIKE? The most common description of heaven is as 'home' (2 Corinthians 5:8). "Going home" is the way the Bible describes it. Unfortunately, many of us don't have such fond memories of our earthly home. God created it to be a place of love and security, of comfort and acceptance, of familiarity and peace – the best place we can be on earth. Take that and multiply it a few million times, and you have a description of heaven.

Jesus said He is now preparing 'rooms' for us in His father's house and will one day take us there to be with Him (John 14:1-3). He created this earthly world in 6 days, and it was a marvelous place before sin entered. If He can create this in 6 days, imagine what He can create in 2,000 years!

In addition to being home, heaven is also the place of God's presence – that is what makes it so glorious. Jesus will be on the throne, and we and the angels will be worshipping Him (Revelation 4:2-11). For all eternity we will be with Him. Revelation tells us there will be no more sea (21:1), tears, death, sorrow, crying or pain (21:4). Gone will be all sinners (21:8), fear (21:12), sin and evil (21:27), disease and injuries (22:2) and all the consequences of the fall and curse (22:3). Since Jesus will be the light, there will be no sun or moon (21:23) nor will there be any night (21:25).

John, in Revelation, also tells us of the many wonderful things that will be present in heaven: unending fellowship with God (21:3, 7, 22), newness (21:5), and the water of life (21:6; 22:1). It will be filled with unimaginable beauty (21:11, 21), uncompromised security (21:12), unbroken unity between believers (21:12, 14) and unlimited holiness (21:16). Present forever will be unending light (21:23; 22:5), untold wealth (21:18-21), unrestricted access (21:25), unending fruit from the tree of life (22:2), unceasing service to God (22:3) and unending reigning with Jesus (22:5).

Other passages in the Bible describe heaven as well. It will be a place of rest (Hebrews 4:1-11; Revelation 14:13), full knowledge (1 Corinthians 13:12), holiness (Hebrews 12:14; Ephesians 2:21), joy (1 Thessalonians 2:19; Jude 24), glory (2 Corinthians 4:17) and worship (Revelation 7:9-12; 19-10).

Just think – if you trust in Jesus, recognizing Him as God Himself come to earth to pay the penalty for your sin, you will be there for all eternity. Guaranteed! There's nothing more sure in this life than death. And as sure as our bodies will die, our spirits will live forever with Jesus. Think about this for a while before moving ahead with your day. Thank God for this truth. Let it wash over you. When you really grasp it, it'll make all the difference in the world to you!

APPLICATION: Jesus had stern, sober words for His listeners: "What profit is it for a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?" (Matthew 16:26). Many neglect thinking about eternity thinking (or at least living) as if this is all there is. Yet step back and think of all eternity as a line from one wall in your home to the other. If that stands for eternity, how long a portion of it would represent this earthly phase of your existence? One foot? One inch? Or a segment too small to even be seen? Most assuredly it would be the latter. So if this existence is so short in light of eternity, why would anyone focus solely on it instead of the life to come? And if our faithfulness as Christians during this life will be rewarded by God giving extra blessings and crowns for eternity, why shouldn't we make this a priority in our living. Obviously there IS something we can take with us – reward for faithfulness. Actually, we send it up ahead of ourselves, and it's waiting there when we arrive. The worse things become here below, the more blessing there is in heaven if we remain faithful.

Remember, it's all because of Jesus. He says, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:4-6). He is the way, the ONLY way to heaven. We must put our faith in Him for salvation. Then He wants us to stay faithful in service to Him as well.

We never know when we are going on our trip to heaven. It could happen at any time. Therefore, it's important to stay faithful at all times and in all ways. This life is our only opportunity to serve Him and show Him to others by our lives.

Also, we should learn from this that we have a confident assurance of where we will go so our time until then can be more peaceful. Discouragement and defeat should not enter in - not when we keep our eyes on our future in heaven with God forever. Remember, this life is as bad as it gets for all eternity, and soon even this will be over. For those who aren't believers, those we sometimes envy, remember that this life is as good as it gets for them. Let them have

their 'benefits' that we don't seem to enjoy. Satan runs this world system and rewards those who serve him now. But our Father rewards His children in the next life, and that's far better and longer lasting than Satan's benefits in this life!

And finally, knowing this should help encourage us to live a holy life and keep growing in God's grace. What an amazing, wonderful God we serve! He has faithfully provided everything for our salvation and eternity with Him. There are difficulties and pain while here. Things happen we don't understand. But this is just temporary.

Meditate on Paul's words. *"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal"* (1 Corinthians 4:16-18).

8. THE RAPTURE: NEXT EVENT IN GOD'S PROGRAM

The current age of grace, the parenthesis between the 69th and 70th weeks of Daniel 9, will end when Jesus returns to take His people to heaven with Him. This event is called the Rapture, and it is the next event in God's prophetic calendar. This event pertains only to those who are in the Church, the Body of Christ, which is composed of all believers (Jew or Gentile) from the time of Jesus until the Rapture occurs. Passages which foretell this are John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:54.

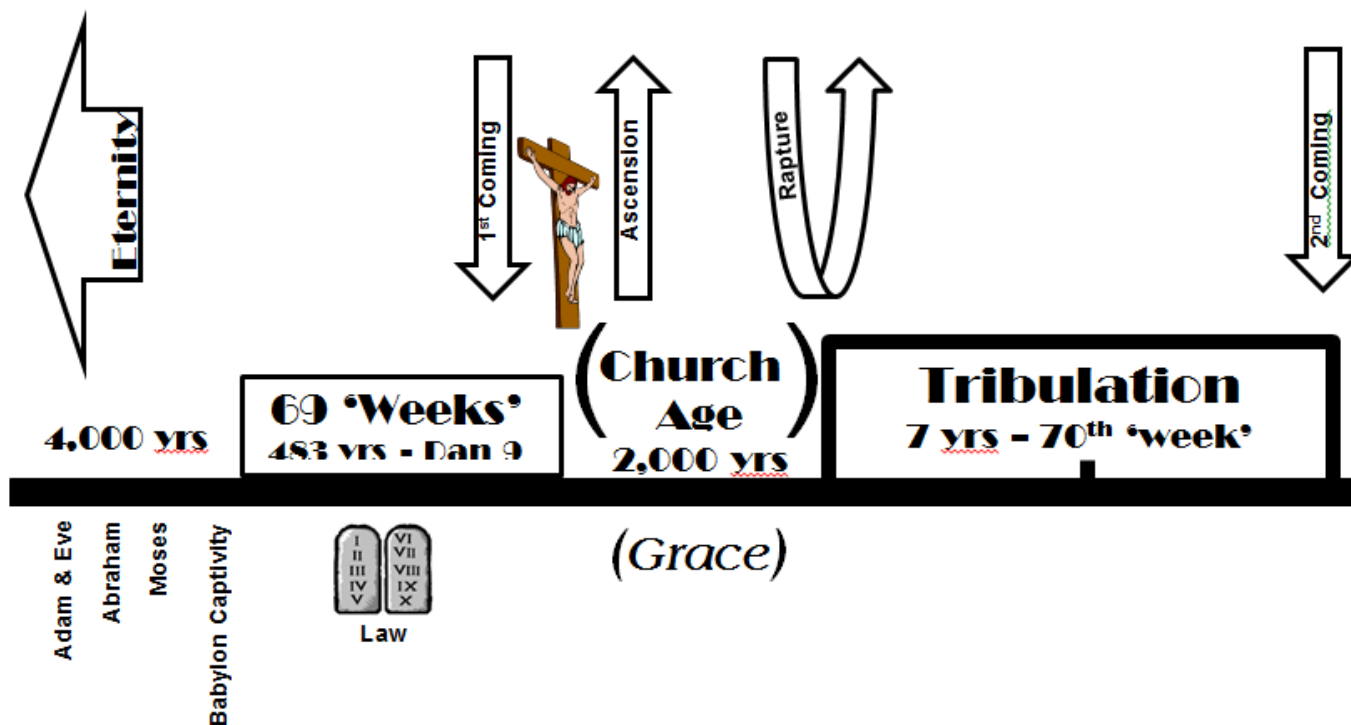


Chart 7: The Time of the Rapture

THE TIME OF THE RAPTURE is BEFORE the Tribulation, not during it or after it! Christians will not have to go through the Tribulation because it is a time of judgment, and believers are not under God's judgment (Romans 8:1; Revelation 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:9). God kept Lot from judgment in Sodom and Gomorrah, Noah from judgment by the flood, Rahab from the destruction of Jericho and the Jews from plagues number four through ten in Egypt. We will be rescued from the coming wrath (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

Also, the Bible says the Rapture is “imminent” – there is nothing that needs to happen before it. It is the very next event in the future (2 Peter 3:10; James 5:8; Philippians 3:20). The Rapture is called the “blessed hope” (Titus 2:13). That’s not true if we have to go through even part of the tribulation. In addition, the Holy Spirit will be gone when the Antichrist begins his work at the start of the Tribulation (2 Thessalonians 2:3, 5-9). The Holy Spirit indwells all God’s people, so if He is gone, we will be gone as well. Finally, there is no mention of the Church on earth during the Tribulation. The Church is referred to 17 times in Revelation 1-3, but from chapters 4-18 which speak of the Tribulation on earth, there is not one mention.

THE PATTERN FOR THE RAPTURE is the pattern of a groom coming for his bride in Israel during those times. The people in Jesus’ day would have clearly understood the Rapture for they lived it out whenever someone got married. The whole event started with the groom going to the bride’s home, making a promise and commitment to the bride and paying the bride price so she could be his. That pictures Jesus leaving heaven to come to earth, promising to be our Savior and paying the price for our sins on the cross so we could be His. The father would accept the bride price if he thought it was sufficient, like God accepted the work of Jesus on the cross for us by bringing Him back to life.

Then it is up to the bride to show her acceptance of the groom’s offer by taking and drinking a cup of wine he offered her. It is up to each one of us to accept Jesus’ gift of salvation and partake of it personally. By doing so the Jewish marriage was sealed and legally binding. When we accept Jesus’ gift of salvation, we are His, and our salvation cannot be lost. It, too, is legally binding in the heavens.

Even though the couple is legally married, the groom then returns home alone to work on building a home for his bride while the bride stays at her father’s home and prepares herself for the groom’s coming. Jesus ascended to heaven and left His Bride, the Church, here on earth where we are to prepare ourselves for His return. When the father knows the time right, he will tell his son to go get his bride. The son will gather his friends and, with trumpet blasts announcing their coming, proceed to the bride’s house. Just the same way, one day God the Father will tell His Son Jesus the time is right for Him to get His Bride. Jesus and the angels will come for us with trumpets blasting. This is the Rapture.

The bride in Palestine was then taken to the groom’s home where a seven-day marriage celebration occurred. They will then spend the rest of their lives together in the groom’s home. So, too, we will have a seven-year celebration called the Marriage Supper of the Lamb right after Jesus comes for us. Then we, too, will spend eternity with Him in heaven as His Bride.

THE PROMISE OF THE RAPTURE is given in John 14:1-3. *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”* Jesus said these words the night before His arrest and crucifixion. He is comforting and encouraging His disciples. Instead of looking at present problems, they are to look to their glorious future.

In those days when a young man became legally married to his bride, he would leave her where she lived and go to His home to build the rooms where they would live. These would be part of his family’s house. Each family would have their own room and all would share the common living space in the central courtyard. This place, called the New Jerusalem, will be a cube 1,500 miles or 2,500 kilometers on each side. It will be large enough to hold 100 billion people. We can only imagine how glorious it will be! It took Jesus six days to create this beautiful universe. Imagine what He will create with 2,000 years of preparation!

Jesus says He is now preparing a place for us to dwell with Him, and He promises to come back for us – He absolutely guarantees it (John 14:3). The angels who spoke to the

disciples when Jesus ascended to heaven promised the same thing. *"This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven"* (Acts 1:11). He will come back, and it will be the same as when He went. It will be visible, actual and physical. This is the Rapture, the next event in God's program.

The early Christians treasured these promises and looked forward to the day Jesus would return for them, but He didn't come right away. Time passed. Some believers died from persecution, age or illness. Those who were alive started wondering what would happen to them when Jesus returned. Paul answered that question.

THE PLAN OF THE RAPTURE is presented by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. *"Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 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. Therefore encourage each other with these words."*

The word Rapture' is never mentioned in the Bible. It is a Latin word meaning 'to catch', or 'to snatch away.' This passage clearly describes that event. Paul says when Jesus returns to rapture us He will bring with Him those who have "fallen asleep." That refers to the sleep of the body, for the soul goes immediately to heaven at death (Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:8). God gives believers who die a temporary body until He returns. Then their earthly body will be brought back to life and changed into an eternal body like Jesus' body after His resurrection. At this same time, believers who are still alive will be changed into their eternal bodies without dying, and both groups will be taken up to meet Jesus in the sky.

There will be three loud sounds during this event. There will be a loud military type command, like when Jesus called Lazarus out of the tomb (John 11:43). This will be the Groom calling for his Bride when the Father finally says He can go bring her to the home He has been preparing. Second, there will be trumpets announcing His coming, in such a way as the friends of the groom would sound to let the bride know they were on the way. Third, there will be the voice of Michael and the angels shouting in joy and victory as they bring us to heaven and begin the final great battle to destroy Satan and his demons.

THE SPEED OF THE RAPTURE is quicker than we can blink our eyes. *"Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed--in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality"* (1 Corinthians 15:51-53).

These Rapture events will happen quicker than a blink. There will be no warning, no time after the trumpet sounds to get ready, to confess sin, to accept Jesus as Savior. It will be over before we even realize it is happening. Instantly our bodies, whether alive or dead, will be changed to be an eternal body like Jesus' resurrection body. This is similar to what happened to Elijah and Elisha (Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5; 2 Kings 2:1, 11).

THE RAPTURE AND THE SECOND COMING are different events. This Rapture is NOT the same as Jesus' glorious Second Coming. The Rapture is the next event in God's program that we should be looking for. Jesus will appear in the air to take all true believers to heaven to be with Him. The Second Coming will happen seven years after the Rapture when Jesus returns to earth to end sin and establish His Kingdom. The chart below shows the differences.

RAPTURE	SECOND COMING
Christ comes <u>for</u> His own (John 14:3; 1Thessalonians 5:28; 2 Thessalonians 2:1)	Christ comes <u>with</u> His own (1Thessalonians 3:13; Jude 1:14; Revelation 19:14)
Christ comes in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17)	Christ comes to the earth (Zechariah 14:4; Acts 1:11)
Christians to the Father's house (John 14:1-3)	Resurrected saints do not see the Father's house
Christ <u>claims</u> His bride (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)	Christ <u>comes with</u> His bride (Revelation 19:6-14)
Removal of believers (1 Thessalonians 4:17)	Manifestation of Christ (Malachi 4:2)
Only His own see Him (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Affects only believers.	Every eye shall see Him (Revelation 1:7) Affects all mankind.
Tribulation begins (2 Thessalonians 1:6-9)	Tribulation ends and Millennial Kingdom begins (Revelation 20:1-7)
Marriage Supper of the Lamb follows immediately (Revelation 19:1-10)	Millennial Kingdom follows immediately (Revelation 20:1-7)
Saved delivered from wrath (1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9)	Unsaved experience the wrath of God (Revelation 6:12-17)
No signs precede Rapture (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3)	Signs precede Second Coming (Luke 21:11, 15)
Focus: Lord and Church (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)	Focus: Israel and kingdom (Matthew 24:14)
World deceived (2 Thessalonians 2:3-12)	Satan bound so cannot deceive (Revelation 20:1-2)
No mention of Satan (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)	Satan bound in Abyss for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:1-2)
Believers depart the earth (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17)	Unbelievers taken away from the earth (Matthew 24:37-41)
Unbelievers remain on Earth	Believers remain on earth (Matthew 25:34)
No mention of establishing Christ's Kingdom on Earth	Christ has come to set up His Kingdom on Earth (Matthew 25:31, 34)
Christians taken to the Father's house (John 14:1-3)	Resurrected saints do not see the Father's house (Revelation 20:4)
Imminent —could happen at any moment. No signs for it to happen.	Cannot occur for at least seven years. Many signs (Matthew 24-25)
Precedes career of the man of sin (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3)	Terminates career of the man of sin (Revelation 19:20)
Time of joy for believers	Time of mourning for unbelievers

Chart 8: Rapture and Second Coming Compared

APPLICATION: Just think, at any second Jesus could return and we'll be instantly changed and be with Him. Make sure you have accepted His gift of salvation so you are ready to go. Live for Him each moment of each day. If you are a Christian but have sin in your life, you will still be raptured but you will regret your unfaithfulness. Even if there isn't sin in your life, if you are too busy with other things to serve Him, you will regret that as well. Being found faithful and living for Him when He returns is what each Christian should strive for. *"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and*

would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him” (Matthew 24:42).

9. SIGNS OF THE TIMES

The question we always ask is when the Rapture will occur. Unfortunately, no one knows, but many signs let us know the general time. There were hundreds of prophecies about the first coming. Jesus rebuked Israel’s rulers for not recognizing the signs of His first coming (Simeon and Anna knew - Luke 2). Just as many prophecies of the Second Coming are recorded. God wanted His people to know when Jesus came the first time, and He wants us to know when He is coming back (Matthew 16:3).

The exact date of Jesus’ return is unknown (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3; Daniel 12:4) so we should always be ready (Matthew 24:42-44). We don’t know the day or hour (Acts 1:7; Matthew 24:36) but do know ‘season’ – the general time. While there are no events that have to come to pass before the Rapture, if we look at conditions on earth at the start of the Tribulation, which follows the Rapture and compare them to conditions today, we can see that the time could be very near.

Jesus Himself gave several ‘signs’ of what would be happening when the Tribulation was near. These he likened to labor pains (Matthew 24:8). They start small and gradually grow until culminating in birth. In His analogy, the ‘birth’ is His return to earth at the end of the Tribulation. These prophecies are given by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24 – 25). The general, starting signs He gives (Matthew 24:4-14) include deception, wars, famines, epidemics, earthquakes, martyrdom for believers, false prophets, lawlessness, loss of love and world evangelism.

The seven main sins of the tribulation show how close we are to them today (Revelation 9:20-21). These are rebellion against God, worship of demons, idolatry, murder, sorceries (including drug usage), sexual immorality and theft.

Paul’s list of signs of the last days also shows how close we are (2 Timothy 3:1-7). He says people will be selfish (“lovers of themselves”), covetous and greedy (“lovers of money”), boasters, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, rebellious, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers and false accusers, without self control, fierce, despisers, traitors, reckless, proud, lovers of pleasure and they will not have God’s power.

Jesus describes the last days as being like “the days of Noah” when He returns (Luke 17:26-30; Genesis 6:1-9). People will be continuing in their daily life of sin not realizing the soon coming of judgment. There will be sexual perversion, their thoughts will be constantly turned to evil, and they will disregard the consequences of coming judgment.

Peter’s sign of the last days is that men will scoff about Jesus coming back (1 Peter 3:3-7). They will also mock God as Creator. They will deny the fall of man, the flood in Noah’s day, Jesus’ life and His return.

APPLICATION: If God had told us the exact time of His return, people would put off getting right with Him until the last minute, and Satan would do all he could to counterfeit it and bring confusion. So God keeps it a secret but lets us know enough to realize it could be any time, and it could be very soon! So what are we to do until He comes? Live as if it could be today.

We are to work while we wait. A gardener for a large estate was taking a visitor through the castle and the beautiful, well-groomed grounds. As the visitor had lunch with the gardener and his wife, he commended them for the beautiful way they were keeping the gardens. He asked, "By the way, when was the last time the owner was here? He said, "It was about ten

years ago." The visitor asked, "Then why do you keep the gardens in such an immaculate, lovely manner?" He said, "Because I'm expecting him to return." He persisted, "Is he coming next week?" The gardener replied, "I don't know when he is coming, but I am expecting him today." Although he didn't come that day, he was living in the light of the owner's imminent return. The gardener wasn't hanging over the gate, watching down the road to see whether his master was coming. He was in the garden, trimming, cutting, mowing, weeding, planting. He was busy. We must be busy in the Lord's work, living as if He were coming today – because He might!

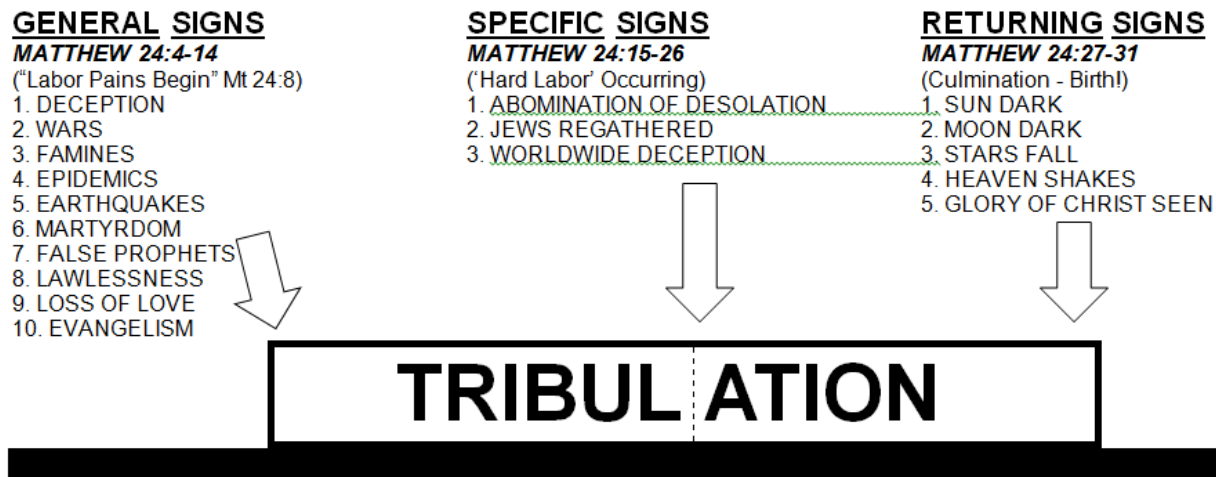


Chart 9: Jesus' Signs in Matthew 24-25

10. THE BEMA SEAT

Immediately after the Rapture will come the ‘Bema’ seat. “Bema” in Greek literally means “platform” or “step” and refers to the place where judgments were made or rewards given (Matthew 27:19; John 19:13; Romans 14:10). It is sometimes translated “Judgment Seat of Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:10) but this implies judgment of sin when we know all our sins are gone and there will be no judgment for God’s people (Romans 8:1). The Bema seat is more a place of reward or recognition as in athletic contests where awards were given to the victors. It is where our positions and responsibilities for all eternity will be assigned, all based on our faithfulness and service (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). This has nothing to do with salvation, but is about further blessing in eternity based on faithful service in this life (Romans 14:10).

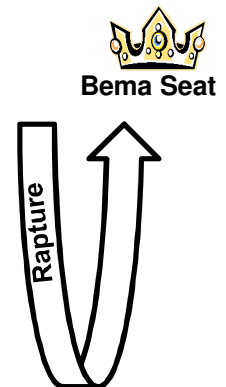


Chart 10: Bema Seat

In addition, special crowns, or rewards, will be given to believers for living in victory (1 Corinthians 9:25), for leading others to salvation (1 Thessalonians 2:19), for righteous living (2 Timothy 4:8; 1 John 3:3; 2:29), for faithful living, even unto a martyr’s death (Revelation 2:10; James 1:12) and for looking for His coming glory (1 Peter 5:2-4). God will give us crowns for living for Him - what a blessed time that will be.

APPLICATION: The only reason we can get these crowns is because of Jesus, not because of anything we have done. In recognition of that, we will lay our crowns at His feet (Revelation 4:4, 10). Our crowns will be the only things we will be able to give Him. How sad it would be to be empty-handed. How glorious it will be to give them back to Him in thankfulness for all He has

done for us and in recognition that we only have them because of Him. Will you have crowns to lay before His feet? Are you living in faithfulness to Him now? Today is your only chance to do so. Faithfully serve Him in all you do. You'll never regret it.

11. THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB

Immediately following the Bema seat reward-giving time will be the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 4:4; 5:6, 8, 14), a seven-year celebration by the Bride (Church Age believers) and the Groom (Jesus). Old Testament believers who have died and gone to heaven will be there as guests but not part of the Bride (Matthew 9:15; 22:10; Mark 6:22, 26; Luke 14:16). During the seven-year Tribulation on earth, believers will be in heaven celebrating and enjoying the presence of our beloved groom, Jesus.

APPLICATION: What a difference between us who are believers and who will be celebrating and feasting with Jesus in heaven compared to those who will be left behind during the terrible Tribulation on the earth.

It is all because of what Jesus did for us on the cross! We can take no credit for it. All the glory goes to Him. Just to be there will be wonderful, but more than that, we'll be the Bride of Jesus, the one He loves. We will be the center of His attention and the focus of all His love. Imagine a new groom with the bride he loves and has been waiting to be with. This is how Jesus will feel towards us, this and much more!!!

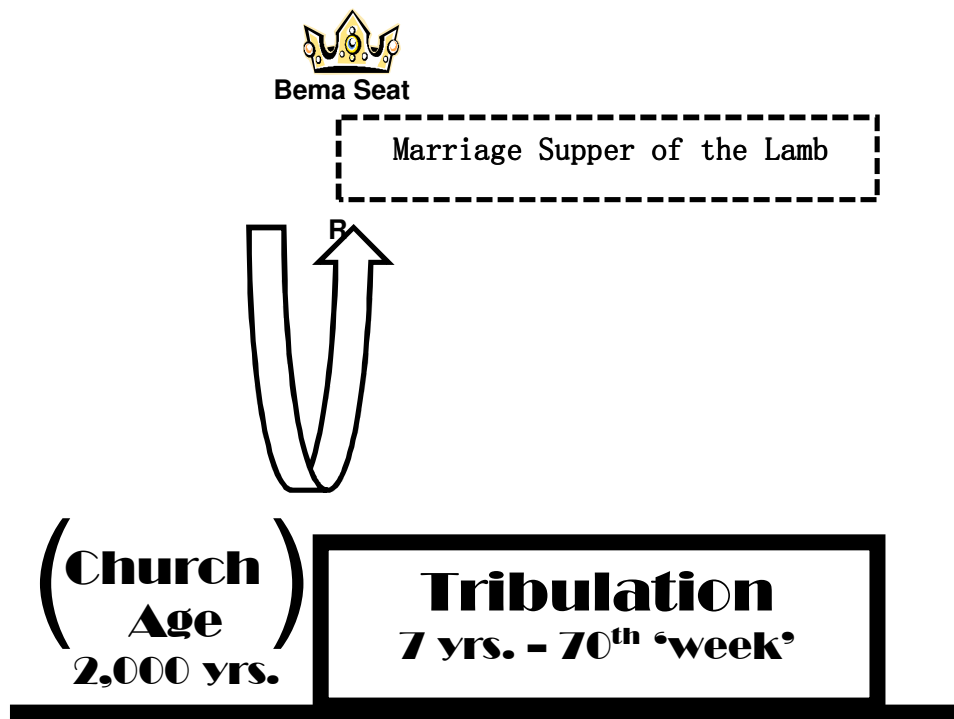


Chart 11: The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

12. THE TRIBULATION

While believers have been raptured and are in heaven celebrating with our Groom, Jesus, the Tribulation will be taking place on Earth. This is the 70th week of Daniel (Daniel 9:24-27). It is the prophesied time of destruction worldwide (Ezekiel 38:19-23; 39:9, 25-29; Revelation 6 - 19). The time of grace will be over, and the Law will be back in effect, like in Old Testament times. This is the day of God's vengeance on sin and unbelievers. When He quoted Isaiah 61:1-3, Jesus stopped before "the day of vengeance of our God" because this was not a part of why He came the first time (Luke 4:16-21), but it will be what happens on earth after we are raptured.



Chart 12: Satanic Trinity

SATAN will rule the world. When the Church is raptured, Satan will know his time is short. He won't have God's people, the Church (Bride of Christ) to attack, so He will turn his attention to attacking God's people, the Jews. Jews and Gentiles who become believers during this time will be attacked especially hard (Revelation 12:7-9). Satan will do all he can to destroy Israel (Revelation 12:13-17). He will rule the world, something he has been trying to do since he was cast out of heaven. He will indwell the Antichrist and through him rule the world.

THE ANTICHRIST will be a Gentile (Revelation 13:1) and will come from 'Rome' (Daniel 7:7-8; 9:25). This refers to the land area and countries that have been influenced by

Rome (like Europe and the United States).

The name "Antichrist" appears only in 1 John 2:18-22; 4:3 and 2 John 7. Other names for him are: Bloody and Deceitful Man (Psalm 5:6), Wicked One (Psalm 10:2-4), Man of the Earth (Psalm 10:18), Mighty Man (Psalm 52:1), the Enemy (Psalm 55:3), the Adversary (Psalm 74:8-10), Head of Many Countries (Psalm 111:6), Violent Man (Psalm 140:1), Spoiler (Isaiah 16:4-5; Jeremiah 6:26), Branch of the Terrible One (Isaiah 25:5), Profane and Wicked Prince (Ezekiel 21:25-27), Vile Person (Daniel 11:21), Prince That Shall Come (Daniel 9:26), Prideful King (Daniel 11:36), Man of Sin (2 Thessalonians 2:3), Son of Hell (2 Thessalonians 2:3), Lawless One (2 Thessalonians 2:8), Angel of the Bottomless Pit (Revelation 9:11), Beast (Revelation 11:7), One Coming in His Own Name (John 5:43), the King of Fierce Appearance (Daniel 8:23) and the Destroyer (Daniel 9:27). These describe what kind of a person he will be.

Who the Antichrist is will not be known until after the church is raptured (2 Thessalonians 2:3). Believers now living won't know who he is, for they will be gone before he takes over the world. He will come as a man of peace (Revelation 6:2) and make a treaty supporting Israel (Daniel 9:27). The Antichrist will eliminate three of ten countries or rulers on his way to power (Daniel 7:8, 24; Revelation 17:10; 13:3). This probably is three of the ten countries of the revived Roman Empire (10 toes, 10 horns). They are quickly and totally defeated by the Antichrist. Perhaps this is where the United States fits in – one of those who rebel and lose their power. He will come bringing world-wide peace, so all will follow him because all want world peace (Revelation 6:2). He will be very, very deceptive and totally mislead the whole world (Daniel 8:25). The Tribulation will officially begin when the Antichrist makes a peace treaty with Israel, causing all the nations in the world to get rid of their weapons.

He is a human being but will be indwelt by Satan Himself (2 Thessalonians 2:3). This will happen in the middle of the Tribulation when the Antichrist will set himself up to be worshipped in the temple (Daniel 9:27). Judas, who was clearly indwelt by Satan, is a type of the Antichrist. It is said of both of them that they are both "doomed to destruction" (2 Thessalonians 2:3; John 17:12). Judas was clearly Satan-possessed (Luke 22:3; John 13:26-27; 17:12), so we can assume the Antichrist will be as well.

It is no surprise, then, that he will be very proud and self-centered and will exalt himself over God (Daniel 11:36-39). The Antichrist will be the last Gentile king (Revelation 18:1-24), a world-ruler like Nimrod who built the Tower of Babel (Revelation 13:7; Daniel 11:36; 7:23). He will have supernatural intelligence and persuasiveness (Daniel 7:8, 20; 8:23). He will be very crafty and subtle, more than anyone has ever been (Ezekiel 28:6). It seems he will die and come back to life, counterfeiting Jesus' resurrection (Revelation 13:3-4, 14). This 'miracle' will win the following of the world. This will happen close to the beginning of the Tribulation, maybe even before it. It may be one of the things that cause everyone to follow him. With so many

people suddenly removed in the Rapture, many people will panic. They will look for a strong ruler to step in and take charge. He will appear to be just the man to restore order in the world.

He will lead the whole world (Revelation 13:7; Daniel 11:36; 7:23) and lead all to worship him (Revelation 13:4, 14-15; 14:9; 15:2; Daniel 11:37). All his followers must wear his number, 666 (Revelation 13:17-18). Instead of the promised peace, he will bring war, famine and death (Revelation 6:3-8; Daniel 9:26). He will do all he can to destroy those who start coming to God for salvation (Revelation 13:7; Daniel 7:21,25). He will have immense power and wealth (Revelation 18; Daniel 11:43) and will even change the times and laws (Daniel 7:25).

He will be defeated at the end of the Tribulation when Christ comes back at the Second Coming (Revelation 19:18), and then he will be cast into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 19:20). His destruction will be swift and thorough (Revelation 19:19-20; Daniel 7:11; 11:45). In essence, the Antichrist will counterfeit the work of Christ in order to take attention from Jesus and put it on himself instead.

CHRIST	ANTICHRIST
God manifest in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16)	Satan manifest in the flesh (2 Thessalonians 2:7)
Came from above (John 6:389)	Ascends from the pit (Revelation 11:7)
Came in Father's name (John 5:43)	Comes on own name (John 5:43)
Humbles Himself (Philippians 2:89)	Exalts himself (2 Thessalonians 2:4)
Despised by man (Isaiah 53:3; Luke 23:189)	Admired by all (Revelation 13:3-4)
At the end exalted (Philippians 2:89)	At the end cast down to hell (Isaiah 14:14-15; Revelation 19:20)
Does His Father's will (John 6:38)	Does his own will (Daniel 11:36)
Came to save (Luke 19:10)	Comes to destroy (Daniel 8:24)
The Good Shepherd (John 10:4-15)	The Evil Shepherd (Zechariah 11:16-17)
The True Vine (John 15:1)	The vine of the earth (Revelation 14:18)
The Truth (John 14:6)	The Lie (2 Thessalonians 2:11)
The Holy One (Mark 1:24)	The Lawless One (2 Thessalonians 2:8)
The Man of Sorrows (Isaiah 53:3)	The Man of Sin (2 Thessalonians 2:3)
The Son of God (Luke 1:35)	The Son of Perdition (2 Thessalonians 2:3)
The Mystery of godliness" (1 Timothy 3:16)	The Mystery of Iniquity (2 Thessalonians 2:7)
Indwells His Church (Matthew 16:18)	Indwells his synagogue (Revelation 2:9; 3:9)
Offers Communion cup (Luke 22:17-20)	Offers demons' cup (1 Corinthians 10:21)
Filled with Holy Spirit for 3 ½ years	Indwelt by Satan 3 ½ years
Died at age 33	Alexander the Great, type of Antichrist, died at 33

Chart 13: Christ and Antichrist

APPLICATION: As we see the world turning further and further from God's plan and purpose, and more and more to rejection of God's truths, we should remember it means that Jesus' return is that much closer. Don't be surprised at the advance of evil and the persecution of God's people. It is to be expected. It doesn't mean God is losing and Satan is winning. God knows all this will happen. He is patiently waiting for those who will come to Him to do so. At His appointed time, Jesus will come back for us, the Tribulation will begin, and we will be free from this world forever. Don't be discouraged, just faithfully serve Him until He returns.

THE FALSE PROPHET is the third person of Satan's counterfeit trinity (Revelation 16:13). Satan counterfeits God the father, The Antichrist counterfeits God the son (Christ) and the False Prophet counterfeits God the Holy Spirit. He will be a Jew (Revelation 13:11) who is the head of apostate church which forms after Rapture of true Church. Those who are 'religious' but never accepted Jesus as their Savior will be left behind, forming this 'church' (1 Timothy 4:1-2).

HOLY SPIRIT	FALSE PROPHET
Glorifies Christ	Magnifies Antichrist
Seals Believers	Seals unbelievers
Leads in worship of God	Causes all to worship 'god' *(Satan/Antichrist)
Ministry comes from Christ	Authority comes from Antichrist
Miracles authenticate	Miracles authenticate (power from Satan)

Chart 14: Holy Spirit and False Prophet

This world church leader will receive power from Satan and the Antichrist. He will do miracles like Elijah, which will win people to the Antichrist. He will control all commerce (Revelation 13:16-17). To get people to worship the Antichrist he will build a statue of him in the temple in Jerusalem and kill any who do not worship him (Revelation 13:13-17). He will make the statue talk, either miraculously or through trickery. Either way, people will believe it is supernatural. This is the same as when Nebuchadnezzar, in his pride and world rulership, built a statue for all to worship him (Daniel 2, 3). He is a traitor (like Judas) and kills true believers (Revelation 13:11-18).

THE NATIONS on earth who will take a leading role during the Tribulation will be:

1) The West, led by the Antichrist, including Israel which is under covenant to the Antichrist (Daniel 9:27), the revived Roman Empire (ten nations from or related to Europe) and perhaps the USA if it is still in existence.

2) The North, from the area that is now Russia, which will oppose the Antichrist (Ezekiel 38:2-6). The Arab nations will align with the North and together challenge the Antichrist for control of Palestine and its riches (Ezekiel 28:7; Daniel 11:40-42).

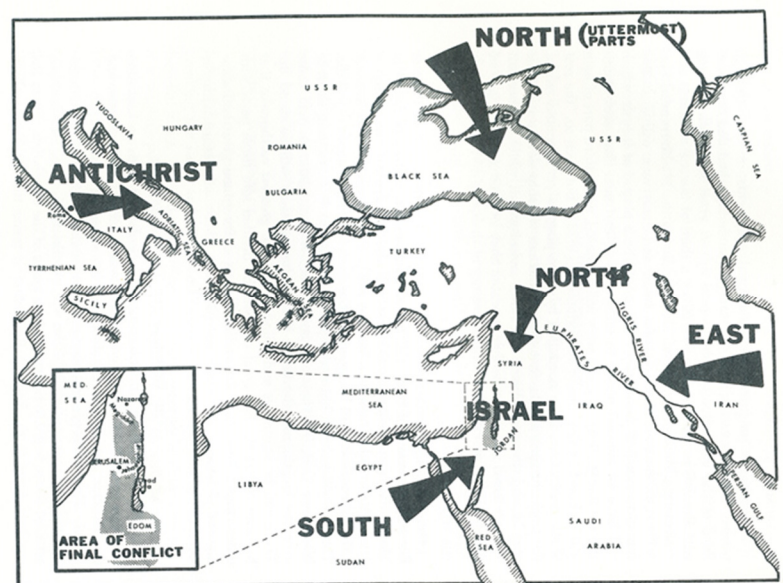


Chart 15: World Powers in the Tribulation

3) The East, a 200 million man army from across the Euphrates, which may include China, Japan and India. They will be waiting for a chance to control Palestine themselves (Revelation 16:12-16; 9:13-21; Daniel 11:40-44).

4) The South, probably Egypt, which will align itself with the North (Daniel 11:40).

THE EVANGELISTS who will share God's message of salvation with everyone will be new believers, saved after (or perhaps because of) the Rapture. All true believers will be taken at the Rapture, along with the Holy Spirit and His restraining influence (2 Thessalonians 2:5-9). Therefore God will set aside others to carry his word throughout the world. There will be 144,000 Jewish evangelists, like Elijah, Elisha or John the Baptizer. They will turn to Jesus for salvation after the Rapture and be set apart for God. They will preach throughout the whole earth (Revelation 7:1-8; 14:1-5). They will be sealed with the Holy Spirit, so they cannot be killed (Joel 2:28-32). This is the ultimate fulfillment of that which was only pictured at Pentecost (Acts 2). Many Jews and Gentiles will come to God for salvation because of the pressures of the tribulation. This is one of the main purposes of the Tribulation - to turn Israel to God (Zechariah 12:10; Hosea 3:4-5; Romans 11:25-29; Revelation 7:9). These Evangelists will go throughout the whole earth and preach God's Word.

APPLICATION: Satan is a great deceiver (Genesis 3:4; John 8:44) and will deceive the whole world, even believers if God doesn't intervene (Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:32). He deceives today. He twists the truth and lies, as He did to Eve in Eden (Genesis 3:4). His lies are plentiful: God isn't real, He doesn't hear, He doesn't care, He is not in control, our sin is too awful for Him to forgive, He won't help us when we need Him, etc., etc., etc. Deception is a major tool of his, so beware. Ask God daily for His wisdom (James 1:5; 3:17). Follow His truth only (2 Corinthians 2:1-10) to avoid deception. Warn those you know who are being deceived, who are believing Satan's lies and turning from the truth. The better you know God's Bible the more aware you will be of God's wisdom.

THE TRIBULATION WILL START with the Antichrist making a seven-year covenant with Israel, assuring them of peace and protection for their disarming (Daniel 9:27). This will make them vulnerable to attack. This happens very shortly after the Rapture, after the Antichrist first comes to power. Remember, he won't be known until after the Rapture (II Thessalonians 2:3). He will be alive but not seen in the position and power he will have as the Antichrist until after the Rapture.

The Antichrist will come to power by deceiving the world. There is a 'lie' of his that those left behind will believe (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12). No one knows what this lie will be, but it could be his explanation of what happened to everyone just raptured. He could state that evil people were taken and good people left (as in Noah's day). He could say they were taken by space invaders (UFO's) or provide some 'scientific' explanation for the Rapture. Despite all that happens, God is still in sovereign control over everything, as in Job 1, 2 where Satan had to get permission from God before he could do anything to man (Revelation 13:7; 6:11; Daniel 7:25).

THE FIRST HALF OF THE TRIBULATION will be characterized by the Antichrist trying to bring peace and stability to the world. But it will really be a time for God to bring judgment on unbelief. All these coming judgments are wrapped up in a scroll, and only Jesus Himself can open it and bring about God's judgment (Revelation 5:1-14). His opening the scroll releases the first series of judgments - the seal judgments.

These **Seal Judgments** (Revelation 6:1-17; 8:1-2) will be as follows:

Seal 1. Rider on a white horse - peace (bloodless conquering) (6:2)

Seal 2. Rider on a red horse - war (6:3-4) The Antichrist will eliminate three horns (countries or rulers) on his way to power (Daniel 7:8, 24; Revelation 17:10; 13:3). This could be because they rebel against his leadership.

- Seal 3. Rider on a black horse – worldwide famine, perhaps from the previous war (6:5-6)
- Seal 4. Rider on a pale horse – death from war (6:7-8)
- Seal 5. Persecution (martyrs in heaven, especially Jews) (6:9-11)
- Seal 6. Destruction (great convulsions, earthquakes, volcanoes, sun black, moon red, stars fall, heavens roll, every mountain and island moved) (6:12-17)
- Seal 7. Silence (awaiting greater judgments of second half) (8:1-2)

During this time, the Antichrist will make Babylon the new world capital to unite all people everywhere. This can be likened to the tower of Babel which Nimrod used to try to unite the world in his day. It will be the center of the false religious system (Revelation 17) as well as world political center (Revelation 18).

The North and allies (Russia and Arab nations) will move in to take control of Palestine, despite the Antichrist's promise of peace. They will do so to control the riches in Palestine (Ezekiel 38:1-11, 15-23; Joel 2:2-21; Isaiah 10:12; 30:31-33; 31:8-9). The South (Egypt) will lead an attack against Israel (Daniel 11:40). Being disarmed made Israel very vulnerable. The Arabs will have gotten all the concessions they can through treaties and peace summits, thus weakening Israel. When they get no more through peaceful means, they will use warfare. The West, under the Antichrist, will protest but won't be able to stop them (Ezekiel 38:1-23). God will immediately and supernaturally destroy the North and allies as He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. It will take seven years to burn all the weapons (Ezekiel 39:1-4, 9-12). This will throw off the balance of powers in the world and leave the Antichrist as undisputed world ruler.

By the middle of the Tribulation, the third Temple will be rebuilt and functioning in Jerusalem on the site of the Dome of the Rock (Matthew 24:15; Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4; Revelation 11:1-2). It could be built before the Rapture or after, but it will be fully functioning by the middle of the Tribulation. What about the Dome of the Rock, which is a holy spot to the Arabs? How will the Jews get control of it? Perhaps settling this issue will cause Israel to trust the Antichrist. The Arabs will be weakened greatly after the North (Russia) is destroyed. The Antichrist may relocate the Dome of the Rock to the new Babylon as a special privilege for the Arabs. However he will do it, this will cause the Jews to further trust him, a mistake they will soon regret.

The first half of the Tribulation will be full of war and its results: famine and death. Great earthquakes will shake the earth and move every mountain and island. Still, the first 3 ½ years will be relatively peaceful and prosperous compared to what is to come. Literally all hell will break loose starting in the middle of the tribulation and continuing to the end.

THE MIDDLE OF THE TRIBULATION will bring many changes as things get much worse for everyone on earth, believers and unbelievers (Matthew 24:20-22; Revelation 6:17; 7:14; 11:1-3). It will be especially bad for the Jews. That is why it is also called "the time of Jacob's troubles" (Jeremiah 30:7). It will be FAR worse than the Spanish Inquisition or the Holocaust of Adolph Hitler (Deuteronomy 32:35; Obadiah 1:12-14).

This time is referred to as the "Day of the Lord" in the Old Testament. It also includes the time Jesus comes back and restores the Kingdom to Israel (1 Thessalonians 5:2-3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18-20; Obadiah 15; Zephaniah 1:7-8, 14, 18; 2:2-3; 14:1; Malachi 4:5).

Jesus gave some specific signs to know when this time will come. The labor pains He equates them to will have reached this point: the desecration of God's temple, the Jews regathering and worldwide deception (Matthew 24:15-26). During this time, the worst demons, now bound in chains, will be released to torment people on the earth (2 Peter 2:4; Revelation 12:7-9). Satan himself will be go wild, knowing his end is near. The Antichrist will break his treaty with Israel and forbid them to worship God (Daniel 9:27; 12:11). He will set his image up in the temple to be worshipped and require everyone to worship him and him only (Daniel 11:36-

39; Revelation 13:14-15; 2 Thessalonians 2:4). All who aren't believers will worship him as god (2 Thessalonians 2:11). Anyone who doesn't worship him and show it by taking the mark of 666 will be killed (Revelation 13:7, 18).

Despite how terrible these days will be, God will still offer forgiveness to those who turn to Him. He will show His power through two special witnesses who are set apart BY God 3½ days before the middle of the Tribulation. These will be men very similar to Moses and Elijah. They can't be harmed and will kill all who try to harm them. They will perform miracles and bring terrible drought and plagues (Revelation 11:1-13).

THE SECOND HALF OF THE TRIBULATION will be much, much worse than the first half.

Trumpet Judgments will flow from the scroll Jesus unrolls following the Seal judgments. These will be spread out through the final 3 ½ years (Revelation 8:7-9:19; 11:15-9).

Trumpet 1. Hail, fire and blood (1/3 earth on fire, 1/3 trees & all grass burned) (8:7)

Trumpet 2. Falling meteor (1/3 ships gone, 1/3 fish dead, 1/3 sea to blood) (8:8-9)

Trumpet 3. Falling star (poisons 1/3 fresh water) (8:8-10-11)

Trumpet 4. Sky (1/3 sun/moon dark, all stars dark, 1/3 day & night dark) (8:12-13
Matthew 24:27-31)

Trumpet 5. Woe 1 - Locusts (scorpions/demons) with extremely painful bites will sting unbelievers for 5 months (9:1-12)

Trumpet 6. Woe 2 - Satan's Army (200-million army) 1/3 men killed by demons (9:13-19)

Trumpet 7. Woe 3 - Earthquake (7000 die in Jerusalem) (Revelation 11:15-19)

The **Bowl Judgments** will occur right on the heels of the trumpet judgments during the final year of the tribulation (Revelation 16:2-21), culminating with the Battle of Armageddon

Bowl 1. Boils (painful sores on all with 666 – same as Plague 6 in Egypt) (16:2)

Bowl 2. Sea to blood (everything in ocean dies) (16:3)

Bowl 3. Rivers to blood (everything in rivers die - same as Plague 1 in Egypt) (16:4-7)

Bowl 4. Heat (sun scorches all) (16:8-9)

Bowl 5. Darkness (all in dark - same as Plague 9 in Egypt) (16:10-11)

Bowl 6. Euphrates dried up (so the West's army can march into Israel) (16:12)

Bowl 7. Hail (cities crumble - same as Plague 7 in Egypt) (16:17-21)

With the North defeated by God and the balance of powers thrown off, the West with the Antichrist (Daniel 7:7-8) will move in and take over Palestine (Daniel 11:36-42). The Antichrist will set up a coalition of nations (Revelation 13:7; 17:13; Psalm 2:1-3). They will fortify the mountains in anticipation of an attack by the East (Zechariah 12:2-3; 14:1-3). Because the North is out of the way, the East (with a 200-million man army) wants Palestine for herself (Revelation 9:14-16). This sets the stage for the Battle of Armageddon.

APPLICATION: One of the clearest lessons from the Tabernacle is that God is holy (Psalm 99:9; Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8). He hates sin and will one day judge sin. Just because evil seems to go unpunished now doesn't mean it always will. There will be justice one day – that is what the Tribulation is all about. God shows what He thinks of sin, evil and rebellion. His message is clear. He hates sin. When we sin, the only thing that steps between us and God's judgment is the blood of Jesus (1 John 1:7). We will never experience His wrath because Jesus took it for us on the cross (Romans 8:1). But that doesn't mean it is OK for us to sin. God expects us to be holy because He is holy (1 Peter 1:11-18). When God watches your life, does He see you as living a holy life or as allowing sin in your life? We all will commit acts of sin (1 John 1:8, 10), but we are to immediately admit our sin and ask God to forgive us (1 John 1:9). If there is any unconfessed sin in your life, confess it now. Be holy as He is holy.

THE END OF THE TRIBULATION is the culmination of the labor pains predicted by Jesus, His Second Coming. Signs indicating this is near will include the sun and moon turning dark, stars falling, the heavens being shaken and the glory of Christ being seen (Matthew 24:27-31).

At this time, everything will get as bad as it will ever get – the final end is near. Thus, this is called the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord (Joel 2:31; Malachi 4:5). The two witnesses will be killed and lie dead in the streets of Jerusalem for 3 ½ days where all will see them, then be miraculously brought back to life and taken to heaven (Revelation 11:7-12). The last Trumpet and Bowl Judgments are taking place during this time (Revelation 11:15-19; 16:17-21).

Then comes the **Battle of Armageddon**. This is when all the armies of the world are gathered ready to fight each other. Jesus will appear with His people who have been in heaven with Him and His angels. He will instantly and totally destroy all who oppose Him (Joel 3:2; 3:11-16; Daniel 11:40-45; Zechariah 12:1-9; 14:1-5; Isaiah 33:10; 34:2-4; Jeremiah 25:27-33). The nations will gather from the town of Megiddo (Ezekiel 38:9; Revelation 16:16), south through the Valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3:2), and into Jerusalem itself (Zechariah 12:2; 14:1-3), then down to Edom (Isaiah 34:1-6; 63:1) – an area 200 miles long. These armies will be completely destroyed by Jesus when He returns (Revelation 11:5; 19:11-20; Psalm 2:2; Zechariah 12:1-9; 14:1-4; Isaiah 33:1 to 34:17; 63:1-6; 66:1-6; Jeremiah 25:27-33; Daniel 11:45). With this defeat, the 'Times of the Gentiles' comes to a close. It started with the Babylonian Captivity and marked the time when Gentiles ruled in Jerusalem (Luke 21:24). Now Jesus will take His rightful throne, and the Jews will be restored. This is His Second Coming.

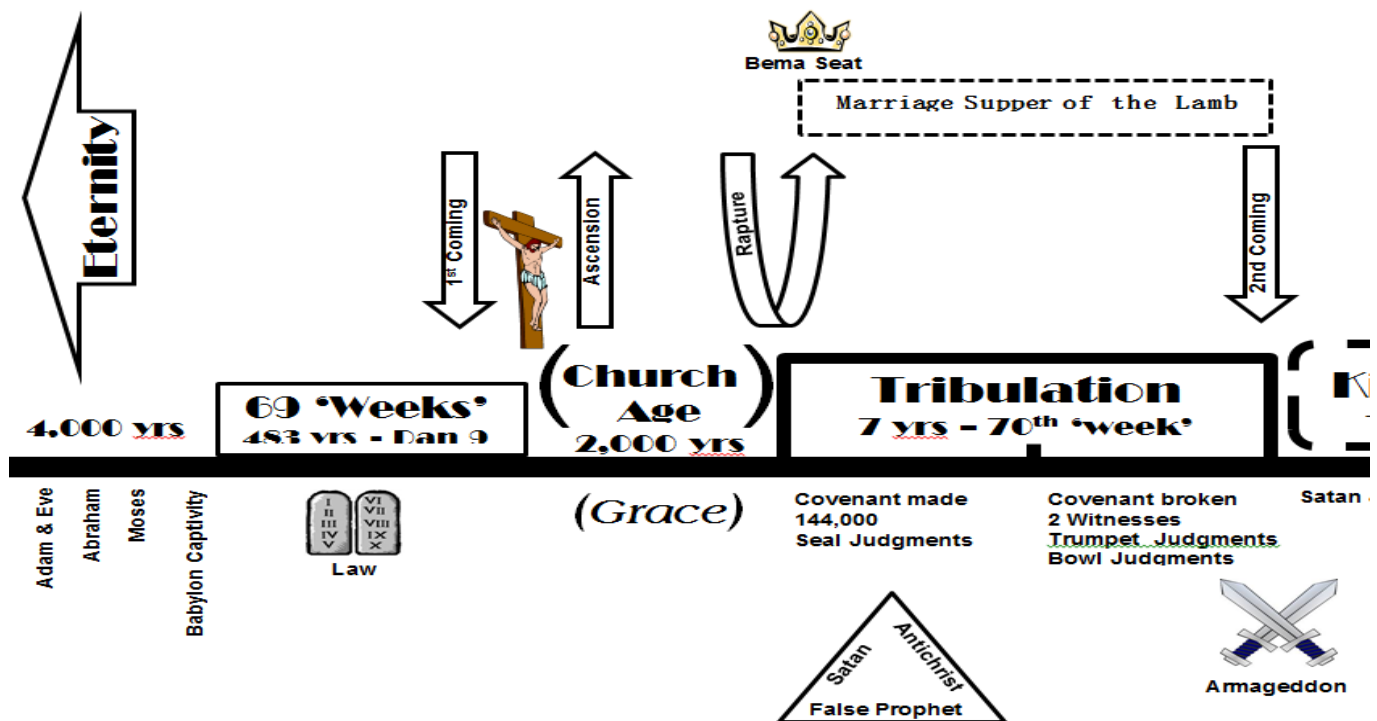


Chart 16: The Tribulation

APPLICATION: We now live in a world filled with sin and evil. Sometimes we wonder how it could ever get any worse. Yet during the Tribulation, conditions will be far, far worse than today. That is because God is actually holding back sin and evil by the presence of His own people (Matthew 5:13) and His Spirit (2 Thessalonians 2:6). When we are gone, and the Holy Spirit with us, then literally all hell will break loose on earth. Does the world seem bad now? For our sake God is holding back how evil the world can be when left on its own. Don't underestimate the inherent evil in the human heart (Genesis 6:5).

13. THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS

The Second Coming, also called the Glorious Appearing, is prophesied 318 times in the Bible (Titus 2:13; etc.). Jesus Himself will return from heaven, and we will be with Him (Daniel 7:13-15; Matthew 26:62-65). A single word from His mouth will destroy all the gathered armies of the world, ending the Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 19:11-20). Every eye will see Jesus' return (Zechariah 14:3-5; Acts 1:9-11; Daniel 7:13-15). The Jews will mourn when they realize they have rejected their Messiah (Zechariah 12:10-14).

Jesus will come down on the Mt. of Olives (Zechariah 14:5; Revelation 14:1) where the 144,000 will be gathered awaiting His return (Revelation 14:1). He will then enter Jerusalem through the Eastern Gate (Ezekiel 43:1-4). This is the same place God's Glory departed earth in Ezekiel's day (Ezekiel 10:18-19; 11:22-24). During Jesus' time on earth, God's Glory indwelt Him (John 1:1-14; Matthew 17:1-3; Mark 9:2). Now God's Glory indwells Christians, for His Spirit indwells us (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16).

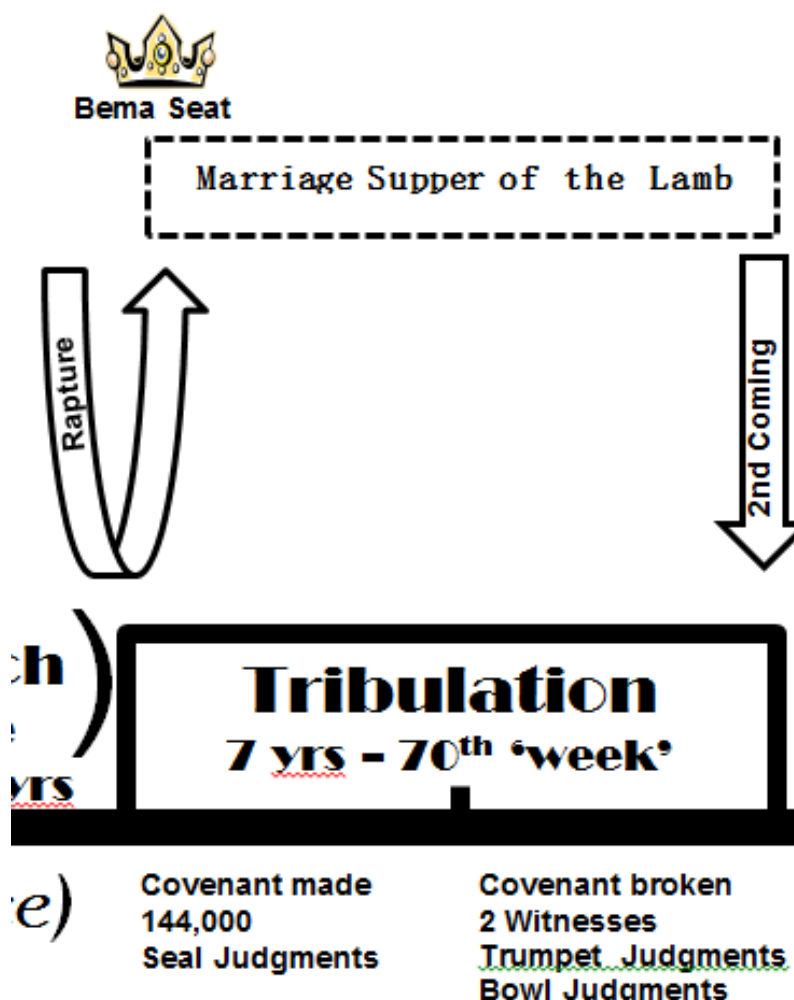


Chart 17: The Second Coming

APPLICATION: When life gets hard and things seem hopeless, remember that Jesus is coming back, and He will make everything right. This is our "blessed hope" (Titus 2:11-14), our confident assurance that He is in control, and He will be victorious. The word 'hope' does not mean a wish or desire, it speaks of confidence in something that is certain and guaranteed to happen. So stay faithful, no matter what you are facing. Jesus is coming back, and He's coming soon.

A story from history illustrates this point. A country was being invaded by another country that wanted to destroy it and enslave all the people. The people fled to a fortress and were valiantly trying to defend themselves and keep safe from their enemy, but it didn't look like they would be able to hold out much longer. Another nation that was their ally sent its army to help them. As they approached, they sent a signal from a distance, "Hold the fort, we are coming." God's message to us is the same, "Hold on, I am coming back and will end all pain and suffering. Just hold on a little longer."

14. JUDGMENT & BLESSING

JUDGMENT ON GOD'S ENEMIES will then take place. Satan and his demons will be bound in prison for 1,000 years and not able to work against God or His people during the coming thousand-year Millennium, also called the Kingdom (Ezekiel 28:1-10; Revelation 20:1-3). The Antichrist and False Prophet will be cast alive into hell and will remain there alive for all eternity (Revelation 9:20; Daniel 7:26; 8:25; 11:45). All unbelievers will be physically killed (Revelation 19:21; Matthew 24:36-41; 25:31-46). Later they will stand before God and face His judgment.

REWARD AND BLESSING ON GOD'S PEOPLE Believers alive on earth who have not been martyred will live on into the Kingdom (Matthew 25:31-46). Believing Jews on earth will be regathered back into Jerusalem, which will become the center of the world and the seat of God's throne (2 Samuel 7:9; Micah 4:1-8; Isaiah 60:1-3; Deuteronomy 30:1-10). Old Testament believers who have died and gone to heaven before the cross are in heaven in temporary bodies. The bodies of **Tribulation era believers who have died** and gone to heaven **will be resurrected** and they are rewarded (Revelation 20:4-6; 14:11-16; 6:9-11; Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:1-2).

APPLICATION: What God looks for in His people above everything else is faithfulness (1 Corinthians 4:2). He isn't impressed by what we know or what we can do – He gave us our intelligence and skill, and He can take it away if He chose to do so. Everything we have comes from Him. He does give us a free will to serve Him. He doesn't force us to do that. What He looks for in us more than anything else is faithfulness to Him (Luke 19:11-27; Matthew 24:45 to 25:30). When He looks at you, does He see that you are faithful? If you want to please Him, then be faithful in every thought and action. He is faithful to you (1 Corinthians 10:13; 2 Corinthians 1:18) - are you faithful to Him?

RESURRECTIONS

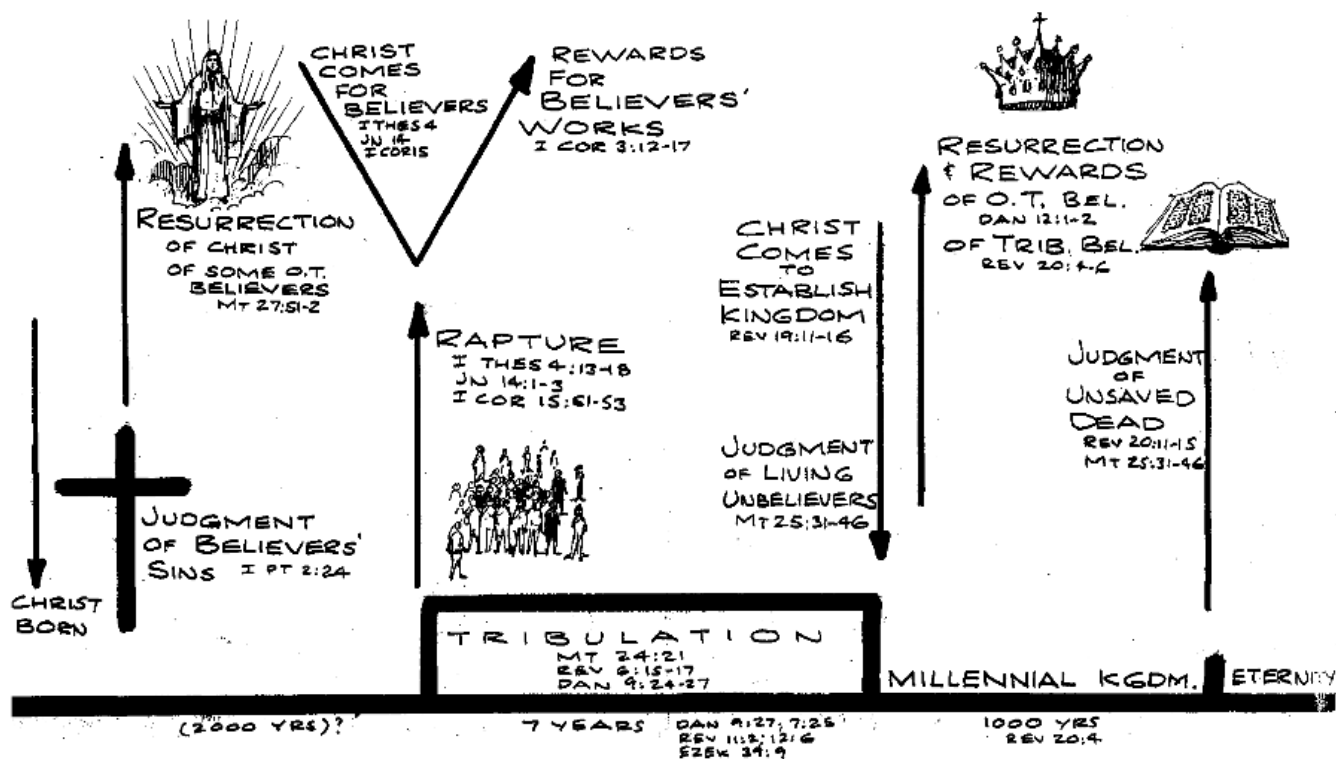


Chart 18: Resurrections

15. THE MILLENNIUM

The thousand-year Millennium, also called the Kingdom, is the culmination of all that has happened since Creation. It is what would have happened 2,000 years ago if the Jews had accepted Jesus as their Messiah when He came the first time. The earth will return to Garden of Eden conditions (Matthew 13:31-33).

Many Scriptures tell about the conditions during this time. Christ will reign on His throne (Zechariah 14:9). He is Prophet (Old Testament - past); Priest (New Testament - present) and King (Millennium - future). Jerusalem will be the center of the world (Zechariah 8:3; 3:14-17). The temple will be rebuilt and the land settled (Ezekiel 40 – 48 see chart 20 below). Israel will be exalted (Isaiah 62:1-12) and will have a new heart (Jeremiah 31:33-37; 32:37-41; Ezekiel 36:24-28). Everyone will worship Christ (Isaiah 12:1-6; 26:1-19; 35:10; Amos 9:11-12).



Chart 19: The Millennium

Believers will rule with Christ (Revelation 3:21; 5:9-10; 11:15-18; 15:3-4; 19:16; 20:4-6). The Jews will finally be safe in the land (Ezekiel 20:33-38). Jew and Gentile believers who weren't martyred will live on into the Millennium in physical bodies on earth (Matthew 25:31-46). This will fulfill the promises to Abraham and his descendants (II Samuel 7:8-17). They will marry and have children in perfect conditions, like Adam and Eve would have had if they hadn't sinned.

The code of conduct for those alive on earth during the Millennium will be the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). Righteousness will prevail everywhere (Isaiah 11:1-5; Jeremiah 33:15-16; Ezekiel 34:23-24). There will be rest, peace and joy everywhere (Isaiah 11:10; 25:1-12; 54:11-14; Jeremiah 23:5-6; 31:10-14; Ezekiel 34:11-15; Zechariah 8:3-6). The land will be blessed and made fruitful (Ps 72:16; Isaiah 27:6; 35:1-2, 7-9; 55:12-13; Ezekiel 34:11-15, 26-27; 36:30-38; Joel 3:17-21; Amos 9:13-15; Zechariah 8:12). Animals will not be afraid of men (Isaiah 11:6-8; Ezekiel 34:25). Pain & death will be gone (Isaiah 65:20, 22; 11:9; 60:18; Jeremiah 23:5-6). The main passages about conditions during the Millennial Kingdom are Ezekiel 40:1-4; Joel 3:17-21; Isaiah 11:7; 65:25).

APPLICATION: Finally, there will be safety and justice for everyone (Jeremiah 22:1-4; Lamentations 3:35-36). All will be at peace (Isaiah 11:6; 65:25). Something inside each of us longs for this. We often question if God is really in control and if things will ever be better – but they certainly will be better. Why is God waiting to establish His Kingdom on earth? He is waiting so that more can come to Him for salvation and eternal life (John 3:16-21; 1 Timothy 2:4). Be patient. It is coming. The few short years of this life are nothing compared to the thousand-year Millennium and then all eternity. Use this time to live for Him so more come to Him for eternity.

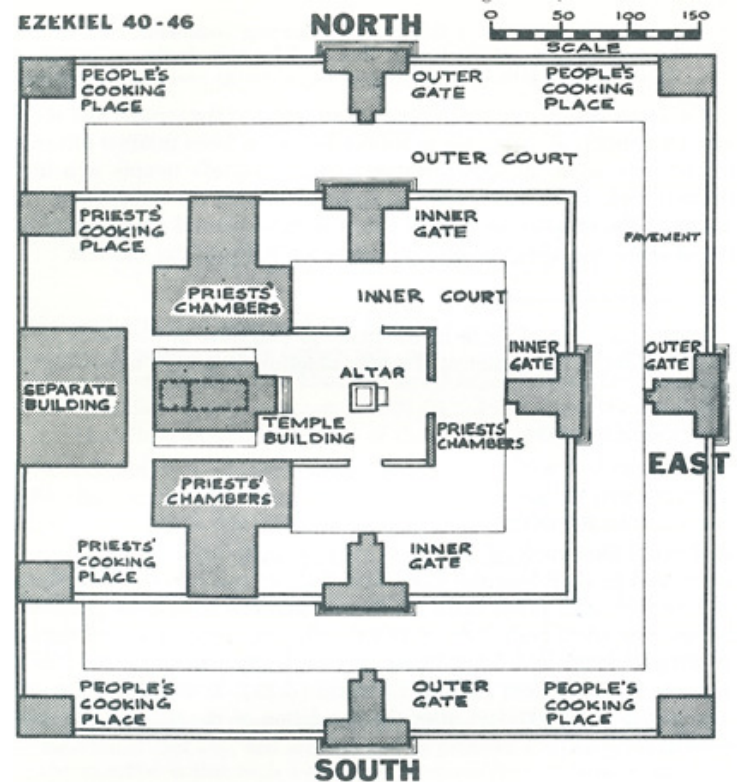


Chart 20: Millennial Temple (Ezekiel 40-46)

16. SATAN'S FINAL REBELLION

After the 1,000- year Millennium, Satan will be released and lead a final revolt against God (Revelation 20:7-10). Many people born during the Millennium will only outwardly keep God's law but in their hearts won't put faith in Him. They will join in this rebellion. Perfect conditions do not keep man from sinning. Sin is from within ('sin nature') not without (living conditions). Satan and his followers will be immediately destroyed and cast into hell (Revelation 20:7-10). This will be the ultimate fulfillment of the first prophecy in the Bible - about Jesus defeating Satan (Genesis 3:14-15).

APPLICATION: Even after a thousand years of living with Jesus' perfect rule on earth and Satan and his demons bound, millions will still rebel against God when given the chance. That is because sin starts within man, in his heart (Jeremiah 17:9; Genesis 6:5). No matter how perfect the conditions are man will choose sin. No matter how much money or how many possessions one has, he still chooses sin. Having more money doesn't remove sin, only the blood of Jesus does that (John 14:6; 1 John 1:7). Don't blame sin on your living conditions or what is happening around you. Sin comes from within (James 4:1-3). Don't blame it on anyone or anything. No matter how perfect life will be, man will still sin. The only solution is Jesus (Romans 6:23; John 18:11).

17. GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

Unbelievers of all ages, from Adam and Eve on, will be judged at the Great White Throne judgment, then cast into hell (Matthew 13:37-43, 48-50; Revelation 20:11-15). The Antichrist and False Prophet were cast alive into hell at the end of the Tribulation (Revelation 19:20). Until this time those who have not accepted God's free gift of salvation will be in a temporary holding place similar to hell (Luke 16:19-31). Everyone in this judgment will know his or her fate. There will be no doubt about their final destiny. This is God's way of showing they had a chance to turn to Him but rejected and do indeed deserve eternity in hell.

Satan and all demons will be bound in hell for all eternity as well (Jude 6; Revelation 20:10; Mark 3:29). Hell is a literal, actual place. It is not something just symbolic but is as real as heaven. Unbelievers, Satan and demons will live forever and ever in hell (Mark 3:29; Revelation 20:10).

APPLICATION: Some people think there will be time when everyone will stand before God, and then, God will tell them if they will go to heaven or hell. Nothing could be further from the truth. Those who come to Jesus for salvation will never, ever have to face judgment. Their sins were judged on the cross (Romans 8:1; 4:7-8; 5:1; John 3:18-19; 5:24; Galatians 3:13). If you have put your faith in Jesus, you will never have to face your sins or wonder if you will go to heaven. You are totally and completely forgiven forever (Psalm 103:3-14).

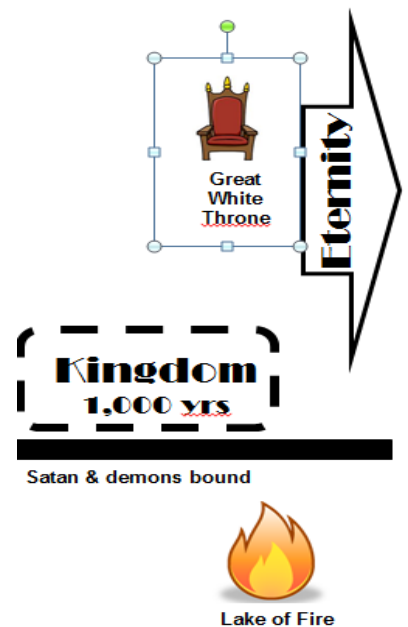


Chart 21: Great White Throne Judgment

18. THE ETERNAL STATE (HEAVEN)

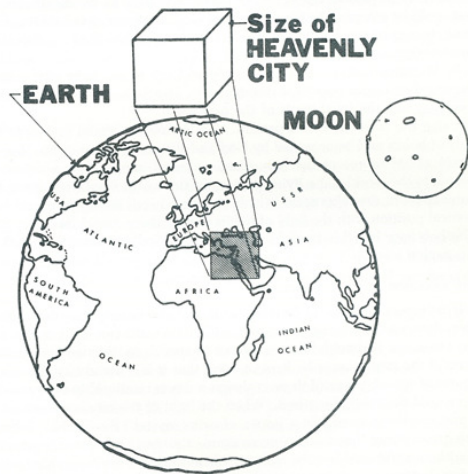


Chart 22: New Jerusalem

With some minor alterations, things will transition into the eternal state (2 Peter 3:13). Time will be no more. It's not that eternity is unending time; it's that there is no such thing as time anymore, so there can be no end to it. Believers alive on earth at the end of the Kingdom will receive resurrection bodies, as will kingdom age believers who died during the kingdom (Revelation 21:24). There will be an eternal city, the New Jerusalem (John 14:1-3; Revelation 21:1-2, 9-27). It will be about the size of the moon (see Chart 22).

The end of the book of Revelation shows that all had been lost in Eden had been regained. There is a close connection between the start of the Bible and the end of the Bible. The results of the fall (sin and the curse) are gone. (See Chart 23: Genesis & Revelation).


GENESIS & REVELATION

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Genesis 1:1	"I saw a new heaven and a new earth." Revelation 21:1
"The gathering together of the waters He called the sea." Genesis 1:10	"And the sea is no more." Revelation 21:1
"The darkness He called night." Genesis 1:5	"There shall be no night there." Revelation 21:25
"God made the two great lights, the sun and the moon." Genesis 1:16	"The New Jerusalem has no need of the sun and the moon." Revelation 21:23
"In the day you eat of the tree you shall surely die." Genesis 2:17	Tree of life ... "Death shall be no more." Revelation 21:4
Pain "greatly increased." Genesis 3:16	"Neither shall there be pain anymore." Revelation 21:14
The ground "cursed." Genesis 3:17	"There shall be no more curse." Genesis 22:3
Satan is in the garden	Satan in the Lake of Fire
Man driven from God's presence. Genesis 3:24	Man will "see God face to face." Revelation 22:4
First Adam and his wife Genesis 2 - 4	Last Adam and Bride Romans 5
Earthly paradise, the tree of life and the river of blessing – all lost through sin.	Paradise of God, tree of life and river of water of life – regained through Christ's death.
First sacrificial animal to cover sin.	The Lamb of God in the midst of the throne.
The serpent in the garden.	The devil, "that old serpent," cast out.
The first murderer, etc.	All such banished forever.
Rise of Babel /Babylon	Destruction of Babylon
Man's City	City of God
Entrance of sorrow, death and pain as a result of sin.	Wiping away all tears, no more death, pain nor sorrow.

Chart 23: Genesis and Revelation

Life from here on, or course, will be perfect (Revelation 21:1 to 22:20). There are some things that won't be in heaven for eternity (Revelation 21 - 22). There will be no more sea (21:1), no more tears, death, sorrow, crying or pain (21:4), no more sinners (21:8), no more fear (21:12), no more sun or moon (21:23), no more night (21:25), no more sin or evil (21:27), no more disease or injuries (22:2) and no more curse (22:3),

There are other things that will be in heaven for eternity (Revelation 21 - 22). These include unending fellowship with God (21:3, 7, 22), unending newness (21:5), unending water of life (21:6; 22:1), unimaginable beauty (21:11, 21), uncompromised security (21:12), unbroken unity between believers (21:12, 14), unlimited holiness (21:16), unparalleled size (21:16), untold wealth (21:18-21), unending light (21:23; 22:5), unrestricted access (21:25), unending fruit from the tree of life (22:2), unceasing service to God (22:3) and unending reign of Jesus on His throne (22:5).



Eternity

Heaven will be a place of rest (Hebrews 4:1-11; Revelation 14:13), full knowledge (1 Corinthians 13:12), holiness (Hebrews 12:14; Ephesians 2:21), joy (1 Thessalonians 2:19; Jude 24), glory (2 Corinthians 4:17) and worship (Revelation 7:9-12; 19:10). This will continue for all eternity (John 6:51, 58; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 3:18; 2 John 2; Hebrews 13:8; Revelation 1:8; 22:13).

APPLICATION: “Forever” is something that is hard for us to understand. Everything we know has a beginning and an end. Since it is our present experience that everything has an end, it is difficult to imagine life with no end. Something without end is not easy to imagine. Some things will end. Pain, sorrow, suffering and injustice will be no more. But joy, peace and being with Jesus as His beloved Bride will never ever end. It's hard to imagine. But it is true (John 11:25-26). It is our confident assurance. Remembering it helps us get through this short life – that's why God tells us what is coming. He is looking forward to spending all eternity with us (John 14:3), and we look forward to spending it with Him as well. What a glorious time that will be!

CONCLUSION

“Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near” (Revelation 1:3). If you have read this book you should have a better understanding of God's plan for us and for the future. God wants us to know what He has in store (John 15:15). More than knowing it, though, He wants us to apply this to our lives. Knowing what you learned in this book should change your life and help you live a more faithful life for Jesus. It should give you peace and confidence in God no matter what happens around you.

When Victoria was Queen of England she would make unexpected calls on the farmers in the country. Any day might be a royal day for them, so they always had a chair prepared for her visit. Their homes were kept spotless. They would keep a watch down the lane to their farm, hoping that this might be the day she would visit them. The anticipation of her visit brought them joy and kept them occupied and ready. Does the truth that Jesus will soon come for us cause you to watch for Him and keep your live clean and ready for His appearance? It should. “Amen. Come Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20).

HOW TO INTERPRET PROPHECY

By Rev. Dr. Jerry Schmoyer

Prophecy composes about 20% of the Bible, so correct interpretation of it is important. Many prophecies have already been literally fulfilled, so we know the remaining ones will also be fulfilled literally. For example, the destruction of Babylon, Assyria, Philistia, Moab, Damascus, Cush and Egypt in Isaiah 13-21 have been literally fulfilled. Some of these nations later came into existence again, others have not done so. Below are some principles to help you interpret prophetic passages.



All Scripture is to be taken in its normal, literal sense. The language of Scripture is no different than any other written or spoken language. All language is full of figures of speech. We use many similes and metaphors when we talk. We say “we are like sheep,” and “a mighty fortress is our God.” We understand those things to be symbolic, not literal. However that doesn’t mean we interpret every single word as being symbolic. When Jesus said “I am the door,” everyone knew what He meant. The use of figures of speech doesn’t take away from literal interpretation.

This is especially true in Revelation. No one expects an eagle to literally rescue a pregnant woman and fly her to the desert (Revelation 12:13-17). The symbols represent another reality either in the past (from our perspective) or yet to occur in the future. We need to be careful how we interpret the meaning of the symbols. It is doubtful that the eagle represents the United States, as someone once suggested, in spite of the fact that the eagle is its national symbol. We need to interpret the symbolism in terms of how they would have been understood by its original readers. No one who reads John’s writing when he first wrote it would have ever thought of the USA when he or she read about the eagle!

Even though we can’t understand all the details of each symbol, we can look at it through the eyes of the writer or original readers and interpret it as they would have. We can know that an eagle rescuing a pregnant woman means that a person/nation that gives birth to someone else is rescued from those trying to kill it. That part is clear and is enough to work with.

Therefore it is important to put yourself in the position of those who first read the Scripture. What would they have thought? How would they have taken the meaning? After all, it was written first to them, not just to us now. Therefore, it is important to know the historical context of the passage. What were the readers experiencing? What was happening in their lives? Why did the writer say what he did? How would he have assumed they would have taken what he had written. You see, prophecy must be understood the same normal communication.

To interpret prophecy in its normal meaning, we must take it in context of what is written before and after it. Look at the sentence, paragraph and chapter before and after the passage you are studying. What does the whole book and rest of the Bible say about it? Let the context interpret the prophecy. Scripture should witness to Scripture. Contradictions are never acceptable. Since God’s Word is inerrant (1 Timothy 3:16, etc.), it cannot be self-contradictory. If two passages seem contradictory, the truth has not yet been discovered.

Remember that some prophecies have a near (immediate) and far (future) fulfillment. Quite often a prophet would prophecy something that was to happen in his lifetime as well as in the far future. Isaiah 7:14 about a virgin/young woman giving birth was fulfilled in Isaiah’s day and also by the Messiah Jesus (Matthew 1:23). Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:31 which

was about the “abomination of desolation” had a near fulfillment (Antiochus Epiphanies in 167 BC) and far fulfillment (Antichrist in Tribulation). This is quite common and must be kept in mind.

God has not made prophecy hard to understand – He WANTS us to know what He is saying or He wouldn’t say it! (Amos 3:6-8; Isaiah 55:8-11; Mark 13:23). He wants us to study and understand it, so He doesn’t hide His truths from us. He sends His Spirit to teach us His truths (John 16:12-15). Pray and ask for guidance as you study prophecy, read it like you would any literature, and He will make it clear to you. It’s His plan for us!

CLOSING COMMENTS:

I am grateful for the opportunity and privilege of writing this book. It has been a joy and honor to share some of what God has taught me about the plans He has for His children and the whole world.

I would love to hear from you. If you have any suggestions to improve this book, questions for me or requests for prayer, please write to me. I can be reached at jerry@schmoyer.net.

Thank you and may God bless you as you serve Him while watching for His return. If I don’t meet you in this life, I will see you in heaven, and together we can share about the mercies of God in our lives.

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