

WITNESSING

THE END

**DANIEL'S
SEVENTY SEVENS
AND THE
FINAL DECREE
EVERYONE MISSED**

CHRISTIAN WIDENER

*The Internationally Acclaimed Researcher Who Solved The Enigma Of The Temple
Location In Jerusalem Has Made Another Mind-Blowing Discovery...*



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WITNESSING THE END: Daniel's Seventy Sevens and the Final Decree Everyone Missed

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DEDICATION

TO THE SAINTS WITNESSING THESE LAST DAYS—May this book help guide and comfort you through the trials and difficulties that lie ahead.

To my family and friends, thank you for your assistance and advice in this great endeavor, for your encouragement, and for listening patiently to me explaining many of these ideas over the years. And to the one to whom all praise and glory are due, the Son of the Living God, Jesus Christ, may this offering be accepted as a pleasing aroma in Your sight.

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

– Ephesians 1:17-19a



(Cover image) *The Apocalypse of John the Evangelist writing on the island of Patmos* by Hans Memling, from "Saint John's Altarpiece – right wing," oil on oak, c. 1479, Memling Museum, Bruges, Belgium.

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A Mighty Angel Standeth upon the Land and Upon the Sea
by Benjamin West, oil on paper, 1797.

*And he swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, “**There will be no more delay!**”*

— Revelation 10:6



Starting Daniel's Seventieth Week by Elena Widener

INTRODUCTION

THIS BOOK WILL HELP YOU UNDERSTAND BIBLE PROPHECY. It is not a farfetched and esoteric study of eschatology (the part of theology concerned with the last days). It is a practical guide that will teach you how to connect the dots and recognize what God has been doing to fulfill his great and precious promises right before our eyes. In my first book, *The Temple Revealed*, I thought that trying to settle centuries of debate regarding the former location of the Jewish temple, as an outsider to biblical archaeology, was daring. And I suppose in many ways it was, but this book is daring on a whole new level. This time I am writing to tell the world that biblical prophecies have not only been coming true in modern times, but also that they reveal that the End of Days has finally arrived. In a small way, I feel like Daniel who considered the prophecies of Jeremiah and counted the years that had been declared by the Lord for the restoration of Jerusalem.

... I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years. So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.

– **Daniel 9:2-3**

Likewise, Daniel revealed a divine declaration of years to be counted, which undoubtedly pointed to the start of Jesus' ministry and his substitutionary death on the cross. But unlike Jeremiah's prophecy that ended with a decree to restore Jerusalem, Daniel's begins with one.¹ A divine bit of poetry. But here is the breaking news. I think there is another divine declaration, one that determines the time of the end, and it is embedded into the same prophetic passage in Daniel—making it a double prophecy, if you will. I have good reasons for suspecting this. They are based on evidence that in my estimation is so far beyond coincidence that it would be ludicrous to not take them seriously, and it calls for a major re-think on Daniel's prophecy. You see, there was another decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. One that is, even today, etched in stone but was somehow missed. And unless we close our eyes and call it happenstance, the most obvious conclusion is that once again a divine count has begun—a giant hourglass whose sand has been quietly draining out for centuries. But what must stir us out of our slumber, is that in 2020 the hourglass ran out—and a much smaller one began. One that will only run for seven years...

Nonetheless, no date in the future can be declared definitively because we are not God. We can only observe events and infer times from what God has told us, and we know that we are fallible. Daniel's example teaches us that we should be searching these

¹ See Jeremiah 29:10, 2 Chronicles 36:22-23, and Daniel 9:1-2 & 25.

things out and expecting God to always do what he said he will do, but with humility, knowing that we can get it wrong. Notice that Daniel, when he saw that the number of years for the desolation of Jerusalem had been completed, the first thing he did was to seek the Lord in prayer. This shows us that Daniel did not lean on his own understanding but acknowledged that it is the Lord who determines when the correct time has arrived, not us. Even though we may think we figured it out, we need to check with Him first. And in this case, the Lord affirmed that Daniel had correctly understood what he had revealed to Jeremiah. Rather than demonstrating a prohibition against date setting, this example from the life of Daniel teaches us to keep looking for the appointed times with both caution and confidence, knowing that God will always keep his word.

As with my first book, I didn't rush these ideas to publication. I've been wrestling with them for over a decade—testing them, researching everything, and watching. Then in 2020 the world began to change, and many of the things I had been watching for and searching out started to become clear. But still I wrestled and watched. Finally in 2021, I felt in my spirit that it was now time to write. It was time to sound an alarm.

What you will discover in the following pages is mind-blowing. Whatever preconceptions you have about the meaning of specific Bible prophecies, I guarantee that some of them will be challenged in this book; however, everything I am presenting is from a literal and premillennial viewpoint. And to make this clear up front, I don't have any special revelations directly from God through dreams or visions to share with you—just the Word of God and historic writings and documented events that I've uncovered in my research, aided by the grace and wisdom of the Holy Spirit who indwells me, as he does all true followers of Jesus Christ.

Now about the layout of the book. The most explosive material is found in chapter 5, *Seventy Weeks Have Been Decreed*. Many people will want to just jump straight there, and you are welcome to do so. Here's the problem, though. I've shared these ideas informally many times, and I've seen that they are hard to take in right away. People are often missing some background information that prevents them from seeing the whole picture. [*It's like trying to skip the first four chapters in Calculus. You need to get a handle on the previous chapters before you'll be ready for the fifth one.*]

What I've done to help address that problem is to start from the beginning with two chapters on how I think prophecy should be interpreted and why. So, in chapter 1, we'll look at how Jesus and his disciples interpreted the Old Testament scriptures for us. This will help set ground rules for making decisions about whether a present-day event can be considered to have been a fulfillment of Scripture or not. You see, we can all be guilty of using our own logical criteria for the interpretation of prophecy—attempting to decide what is right in our own eyes.

“You shall not do at all what we are doing here today, every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes.” – **Deuteronomy 12:8 NASB**

But we have many examples of how God wants us to understand and apply prophecy in the Scriptures themselves, and they must be our ruling authority. The early church fathers also shared their thoughts with us in numerous writings. After reviewing some of them in chapter 2, I think you'll agree that what I am suggesting is consistent with the earliest expressions of the prophetic expectations of the church, which helps us confirm that we are preserving a pattern of sound doctrine.

What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. – **2 Timothy 1:13-14**

These first two chapters will be challenging for those new to studying the Bible, though. If you find yourself bogging down in the details, try skipping to chapter 3. Then, when you've finished the book and start wondering if this could all really be true, you can return to them. By fully understanding the foundation of how I've arrived at these conclusions, you'll be better equipped to trust and act on their implications.

The next issue I've seen is that people can be very comfortable making inferences and predictions about how God will someday fulfill his word in the future, theoretically. Yet, they can be very hesitant to apply that understanding in the present for fear of getting it wrong. The analogy would be a student who expresses that they feel very comfortable with the material they have been asked to learn—until it is time for the test. Or it may be that the present event wasn't what they were expecting, and it doesn't match the way they already decided the prophecy should have been fulfilled. Either way, many avoid recognizing present events as fulfillments of prophecy. This is the subject of chapter 3.

I do two things in chapter 4 that will help set the stage for chapter 5. First, one of the main reasons to believe we are now living in the last generation comes from understanding the prophetic significance of the return of Israel as a sign to the nations. Second, surveying the numerous prophecies that have already been fulfilled regarding Israel teaches us what to expect from prophecy in modern times. This is another way to calibrate our minds on how God wants us to understand and apply prophecy so that we can more easily recognize future fulfillments of his Word.

Chapter 5 is the climax of the book. Many believe we are now living in the last days before the promised return of Jesus Christ to redeem his saints and judge the world for its sin. After finishing this chapter, I think you will not only agree but will also

understand exactly where we are in the biblical last days timeline. But speaking of Christ coming to redeem his saints and gather his elect, in chapter 6 I will tackle what I believe the Scriptures teach about the rapture and its timing.

In chapter 7, I go back to recognizing prophecies that have been fulfilled in the present day and cover even more reasons to believe that we truly have reached the appointed time for Christ's return. Then in chapter 8, we'll talk about the age of the earth and the oldest eschatological teaching of the early church that there is a relationship between the creation week and the end of the age. After that, we'll look at the prophetic model of the Year of Jubilee in chapter 9. It's not until chapters 10 & 11, though, that we'll really start to look forward to what the Bible tells us is coming around the corner but hasn't happened yet. In those chapters, I will indulge in some speculation about what we might expect next. Lastly, chapter 12 is the wrap-up where I share some final thoughts and my best advice for how to face the days ahead.

Some of the things I uncovered in the research for this book have ominous implications. There are multiple prophetic passages that I think could all lead a reasonable person to conclude that we may already be in the final seven-year period that Daniel spoke about, typically referred to as the tribulation. Many of the prophecies about the last days are relatively general descriptions and do not lend themselves to discerning any specific dates. They just paint a picture of what the end of days will look like. However, I go over a few that can be read to suggest certain dates or date ranges. You'll find them in chapter 4 (in the parable of the fig tree), in chapter 5 (in Daniel's seventy weeks), in chapter 8 (in the days of Creation and the age of the earth), and in chapter 9 (in the prophetic model of the Year of Jubilee). But rather than shy away from those, I've taken my stand in faith on the reliability of the Bible. I believe that the prophecies have been given to us

to be known and understood at the right time, so that when we see the things that God foretold, we will believe.

"I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe."
— John 14:29

Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets.
— Amos 3:7

I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.
— Isaiah 46:10

When God said he would tell us what is going to happen beforehand, he meant it. And when you finish this book, having considered everything I have to share, I think you will agree that the hour is late, and it is better to be forewarned than caught unaware and unprepared. An alarm sounded when the enemy is already at the gates is no warning at all. Nevertheless, some may still see what I'm sharing as trying to set dates and predict the future... but that's not what I'm doing. I'm taking God at his Word and connecting the dots between what he told us to "*know and understand*" and real events that have happened in modern times. God is the one who determines everything in its time; but he has given us dates and the counting of time in Scripture because he wants us to follow along. God wants us to study his Word—to search out what he has concealed there until the proper time—so that when they begin to happen, we will recognize them.

It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings.
— Proverbs 25:2

This book is loaded with evidence that we are now witnessing the end, the culmination of human history before the return of Christ—based on real events directly compared with Scripture. By the time you finish this book, you’re either going to be blown away that so many things have happened to fulfill Scripture with such little fanfare, or you’ll be thinking that I’ve assembled one of the biggest lists of ambiguous coincidences you’ve ever seen. I hope you conclude the former and not the latter; but if you’ve scanned through the Table of Contents, you might already be thinking one or the other. However, without going through all this evidence for yourself, you won’t really know. Evidence can’t be judged without hearing it. And in this book, you are going to find a lot of evidence. Some may find the style a little academic [*I was a university professor after all!*]; but I’ve tried to write this for everyone who not only wants to know the truth but who may also want to investigate further and verify what I’ve said. You’ll also discover many unique insights into the prophecies of the end times that you won’t find anywhere else.

And once you’ve heard it all, I hope it inspires you to want to be ready for the bridegroom (*Matthew 25:1-13*), because he’s coming. Like Johnny Cash warned in his song, “The Man Comes Around”,² we should pay attention to the words that God had written down so long ago for us... so that we can be ready when he gets here.

² Johnny Cash. “The Man Comes Around,” *American Recordings*, Released May 24, 2002.

He replied, “Go your way, Daniel, because the words are rolled up and sealed until the time of the end.”

“Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked.”

“None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand.”

– Daniel 12:9-10



At the Village of Emmaus—Luke 24:13-35 by Heinrich Hofmann, in Thomas Kempis. *Imitation of Christ* (Philadelphia: A.J. Holman & Company, 1893): 304.

1

HOW JESUS AND THE DISCIPLES INTERPRETED PROPHECY

NOT ALL CHRISTIANS AGREE on the proper methods for interpreting Bible prophecy; and over the past two millennia since Jesus Christ ascended back into heaven, numerous proposals have been developed. The only approaches I think we should consider, however, are the examples in Scripture of how Jesus and his disciples interpreted and applied prophecy. Then of secondary importance is looking at how the earliest church fathers understood the prophetic texts (we'll look at that in chapter 2). Interpreting prophecy is about understanding what God has revealed to us and wants us to know about the future.

Many are not willing to read prophecy the way Jesus and his disciples did. And even if they try to, they will often get it wrong. One reason for that may be because they haven't studied enough how prophecy is quoted and applied in the New Testament. It is easy to look for verses and lines to support one's own point of

view, while ignoring verses to the contrary. [*I've tried very hard to avoid doing that myself in this book.*] This is also a problem in Christian theology in general, so it isn't constrained to prophecy alone. But if that is true, then how do we learn to read prophecy properly and avoid making mistakes interpreting it? Well, we start by looking at how it was used in the New Testament.

Quoting the Meaning—Not the Exact Wording

And he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

– **Matthew 2:23**

When we read this New Testament quote, we are sure that this was a prophecy about Jesus. And yet, we know that Nazareth was not recognized as having a messianic association by most Jews in the first century because of Nathaniel's question recorded in John 1:46; "*Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?*" And indeed, there is no precise match in the Old Testament to which we can directly compare Matthew's statement. What are we to do with that? Shall we conclude that Matthew misquoted the Old Testament, or worse, that he just made it up? No, I don't think so. What it means is that we have been introduced to a principle of understanding and applying Bible prophecy. God, through Matthew's Gospel, is teaching us to look for the meaning of a passage and not get hung up on the exact wording.

Now, I admit that can get messy. But it is, I believe, the only rational way to understand how Matthew could "inerrantly" quote that phrase as prophecy when it isn't found explicitly in the Bible. Here's how we can begin to analyze and understand a tricky passage like that. The resolution is found in searching out the Hebrew root word of Nazarene, *netser* (Strong's H5342), meaning "branch." And to make it even more complex, there is

more than one word for “branch” in Hebrew. You also have several synonyms for *netser*. One is *tsemach* (Strong's H6780), meaning a sprout, a shoot, or a branch, another is *choter* (Strong's H2415), meaning branch, twig, or rod. There is also, *yowneq* (Strong's H3126), meaning a sucker or sapling (of a tree felled and sprouting), and *sheresb* (Strong's H8328), meaning the root of a tree or vine (a branch in the ground). Altogether, there are plenty of messianic associations connected with these images of a branch or young shoot. As you read these verses, notice how the image of a branch is tied to messianic hopes.

In that day the Branch (tsemach) of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel.

– Isaiah 4:2

“The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch (tsemach), a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.

– Jeremiah 23:5

“Listen, High Priest Joshua, you and your associates seated before you, who are men symbolic of things to come: I am going to bring my servant, the Branch (tsemach). See, the stone I have set in front of Joshua! There are seven eyes on that one stone, and I will engrave an inscription on it,” says the Lord Almighty, “and I will remove the sin of this land in a single day.”

– Zechariah 3:8-9

Tell him this is what the Lord Almighty says: “Here is the man whose name is the Branch (tsemach), and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the Lord. It is he who will build the temple of the Lord, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two.”

– Zechariah 6:12-13

Then all your people will be righteous and they will possess the land forever. They are the shoot (netser) I have planted, the work of my hands, for the display of my splendor. — **Isaiah 60:21**

The image of the branch is also seen in the image of a young or tender shoot (*yowneq*), and Isaiah continues to connect the idea of a branch with messianic expectations. We see both the promise of the conquering king in Isaiah 11, and the suffering servant in Isaiah 53. Both passages also connect the picture with roots (*sheres*), as from a stump in the ground that may appear dead but is very much alive.

A shoot (choter) will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots (sheres) a Branch (netser) will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—and he will delight in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist. — **Isaiah 11:1-5**

He grew up before him like a tender shoot (yowneq), and like a root (sheres) out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. — **Isaiah 53:2**

The vision of the Branch, in a messianic sense with its association with Judah (the tribe of David) and a future judgment, is even

seen cryptically in the blessing of Jacob (Israel) on his son, Judah (*Genesis 49*). In this blessing, we see a combination of messianic prophecies.

The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his. He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch (soreq); he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes. – Genesis 49:10-11

First, there is the promise that the line of Judah would be kings—and that the land of Judah would be the place of the kings' rule. Furthermore, before that rule fails, the one who will someday rule the nations will come. This created the expectation that the Messiah would appear before the end of Jewish rule over Judah, which was fulfilled by the birth of Jesus Christ before the end of the Herodian dynasty.³ The promise of the Messiah king is

³ One might question whether the Herodian dynasty can really be associated with Judah, arguing that Herod was a foreign ruler. The Jewishness of Herod the Great was highly debated, even in his lifetime; but the writings of Josephus confirm that Herod was descended by blood from the Hasmonians, who ruled before him and were known to be descended from the line of Judah. Flavius Josephus, in *Antiquities of the Jews*, includes a disjointed genealogy of Herod the Great, delivering Herod's family tree in pieces. [Eleazar (Auran) Mattias was the brother of Judas Maccabeus who were sons of Mattathias, the son of John, the son of Simeon, the son of Asamoneus (b. 12, c. 6, s. 1). Jason was the son of Eleazar (b. 12, c. 10, s. 6). Antipater I was the son of Jason (b. 13, c. 5, s. 8). Herod the king of the Jews, was the son of Antipater II, also called Antipas, who was the son of Antipater I (b. 14, c. 1, s. 3).] Josephus also says that Nicolaitis of Damascus testified that Herod's father Antipater "was of the stock of the principal Jews who came out of Babylon into Judea," but then ambiguously says that the assertion was to gratify Herod. Next, Josephus alleges that the government of the Asamoneans (Hasmonians) ceased with the death of Antigonus: "...and it came to Herod, the son of Antipater, who was of no more than a vulgar family, and of no eminent extraction, but one that was subject to other kings. And this is what history tells us was the end of the Asamonean

connected visually with a donkey and colt (*Zechariah 9:9*) and the “*choicest branch*” *soreq* (Strong's H8321), which means the strong branch of a choice grapevine. It is another synonym for *netser*.⁴ And lastly, the vision relates to divine judgment at the end of the age with the reference to washing his garments in wine; “*his robes in the blood of grapes.*” In this one passage we have a vision of both Christ’s first advent and his promised return.

Now considering all these prophetic images together, it is much easier to see how Matthew can affirm that the prophets declared; “*He shall be called a Nazarene*”—even though there is no precise quote for this in the Old Testament. In that sense, the name Nazarene would mean a man of the branch, as well as a man from the town of Nazareth (the place of the branch). Some may see this as a stretch; but it is essential to see these kinds of connections if one truly wants to not only understand prophetic fulfillments in the past but also in the present. And specifically, to recognize that God uses synonyms interchangeably. Thus, it doesn’t even have to be the same word if it means the same thing, which brings us to the next principle for interpreting prophecy.

Similar Images or Ideas Are Generally Related

There is a well-known Jewish principle for interpretation called *getzerah shawah*, or the relating of passages based on similar words or word pictures. It is also referred to as a verbal analogy or verbal parallel. For prophecy, this means that similar images

family (b. 14, c. 16, s. 4).” In this quote, Josephus is not denying that Herod was a blood relative. He is calling Herod a mongrel descendant and a usurper. Josephus does not see Herod as a rightful inheritor of the throne, which must be the reason he says that the Hasmonean line ended with the ascension of Herod, even though he was a relative.

⁴ Imagine if you held up all these words as pictures of what they represent in a class of grade school kids. Would they be able to recognize what all these words have in common? I think so.

of events should be seen as connecting different passages of Scripture together. It is a very important principle to understand because we find it taught indirectly through fulfilled prophecies in the New Testament, as we saw previously in the example of the branch. A simple way to visualize this idea is to picture a deck of cards. When you find matching cards with the same rank, you know they go together. There are many scriptural examples that could be used to illustrate this idea; but the “Son of Man” image (used sparingly in the Old Testament but often in the New Testament) is a great one. The main messianic association in the Old Testament for the title comes from the book of Daniel.



Four of a Kind by Elena Widener

In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. — Daniel 7:13a

In the vision we are told that there was one “*like a son of man.*” By itself, the expression literally just means a human man. And in fact, the title is used extensively in the book of Ezekiel, when God is addressing the prophet, as a “son of man.” However, the Son of Man in Daniel’s vision was seen “*coming on the clouds of heaven,*” giving this human-looking person the qualities of God. The reference to riding on or being surrounded by clouds tells us that the referent is divine.

There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, who rides across the heavens to help you and on the clouds in his majesty.— Deuteronomy 33:26

In the gale and the storm is His way, and clouds are the dust beneath His feet.

– Psalm 68:4b NASB

The Lord wraps himself in light as with a garment; he stretches out the heavens like a tent and lays the beams of his upper chambers on their waters. He makes the clouds his chariot and rides on the wings of the wind. He makes winds his messengers, flames of fire his servants.

– Psalm 104:2-4

Above the vault over their heads was what looked like a throne of lapis lazuli, and high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man. I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him. Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. When I saw it, I fell facedown, and I heard the voice of one speaking.

– Ezekiel 1:26-28

We also read that God would raise up a Son of Man for himself in Psalm 80. It speaks of the establishment of Israel as a choice vine in the land, and the overall context is the establishment, judgment, and restoration of Israel. However, in verse 17, we see an image that I take to have a double meaning that applies to God's promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Son of Man.

Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand, the son of man you have raised up for yourself.

– Psalm 80:17

When all these passages are examined carefully, the idea of a divine “Son of Man”—who is the Son of God, sitting at his right

hand, and riding on the clouds—is seen across all these Scriptures, even though the descriptions are not identical. To make these connections, one must recognize the verbal analogy, not the exact wording. Some may have difficulty with that; but we know that these connections were well understood by the chief priests and teachers of the law because of the reaction recorded in Mark 14. Jesus was questioned about being the Messiah, “*the Son of the Blessed One*,” by the high priests. He answered them by replying that he was the Son of Man who would come on the clouds of heaven—the fact that the high priest tore his robes after Jesus said that indicates that his claim was fully understood.

Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?” “I am,” said Jesus. “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.” The high priest tore his clothes. “Why do we need any more witnesses?” he asked.

– **Mark 14:61-63**

The New Testament is very clear that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Son of Man images given in the Old Testament (see *Matthew 24:30* and *Revelation 1:12-20*). Jesus is the “*exact representation*” of God’s being (*Hebrews 1:3*). This means that, while Jesus took on flesh and became a man, he has always been the visible embodiment of the invisible God. In fact, Jesus is the image of God that existed before man was made, and in whose image it was said: “*Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness (Genesis 1:26).*” Jesus affirmed this by telling the Jews that he existed before Abraham (*John 8:58*).

The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

– **Hebrews 1:3**

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

– **Genesis 1:26-27** NASB

Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."

– **John 8:58**

Making these connections is very important for understanding who the Son of Man is as revealed in both the Old and New Testaments. Without making connections by similar analogy, the fullness of the image may not be understood. Furthermore, when an image presents itself in an unexpected location, it is important to consider the possibility of an association. For example, the image of a son of man seated on the clouds in Revelation chapter 14 will either challenge one's understanding of when God gathers his elect, or it will call into question the timing of the vision with respect to the surrounding judgments. The only other possibility is to just ignore the obvious parallels with the passages of Scripture we've just listed here and pretend that there could be no association between this passage and Matthew 24, for example.

I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one like a son of man with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, "Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.

– **Revelation 14:14-16**

My personal view is that there is a long pause of time (somewhere between six and thirty months) between verse 16 and the next verse; but we are not specifically told that in the text. In fact, we are not even told what happens to those harvested in verses 14-16. It is only by connecting that passage to earlier passages that we can have any insight into who they are and what their fate may be. We do know what happens to those collected in the second harvest, though. Nobody will want to be in that one...

Still another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine, because its grapes are ripe." The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God's wrath. They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses' bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia.

– **Revelation 14:18-20**

Accordingly, the ability to connect similar passages by analogy—under the principle of *getzerah shawab*—is another important tool for understanding prophecy the way Jesus and his disciples did. However, I should note here that there are two main mistakes that can be made with this principle. The first one is failing to recognize the analogy, therefore missing the connection with other passages. The second is wrongly associating passages that are similar but not really related. Both are exegetical mistakes, or errors of interpretation. I wish that there was an easy way to distinguish when those kinds of mistakes are made. The way I do that, practically, is to look at the big-picture implications of recognizing or denying the associations. I then try to discern which is more in line with the rest of Scripture and what I know about God. But in general, I think the burden of proof is on denying associations of similar passages, not on the affirming of them.

Stopping in the Middle of a Sentence

Another example of how prophecy should be understood comes from Luke 4:16-21. In the account, Jesus went into the synagogue on the Sabbath, and he read a passage from the scroll of Isaiah. They didn't use the chapter and verse references we have now, but he read from what we now call chapter 61.

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

– Luke 4:16-21

Jesus just stopped in the middle of a sentence or expression. He didn't even finish the rest of what should have been read from the appointed portion of Scripture for that day. He just cut off in the middle of verse 2, leaving out "*and the day of vengeance of our God,*" which was a prophecy for his second coming, not the first. This establishes a principle for applying prophecy that teaches that even if statements are right next to each other, then they don't have to be chronologically close together in time, or indeed even directly connected. This means that the prophecy ends not at the end of a passage or sentence, but wherever the fulfillment happens to end.

Admittedly, this sets up a precedent that can be confusing; but once the principle is recognized, it can be used to calibrate our understanding of how we should view prophecy. If we fail to understand and apply this principle, then it can lead to applying unnecessary constraints on our interpretation of prophecy that will then invariably cause us to get it wrong.

Prophecies from Different Prophets May be Combined

The proof text for this idea comes from Matthew 27. The story is the account of Judas betraying Jesus for thirty pieces of silver; but he then later feels remorse and attempts to return the thirty silver pieces to the chief priests. They don't accept the money, so Judas throws it at their feet and then goes out and hangs himself. After Judas' death, the silver is used to buy the potter's field, as a burial place for foreigners.

Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: "They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price set on him by the people of Israel, and they used them to buy the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me."

– Matthew 27:9-10

This prophecy is only attributed to Jeremiah, and yet it includes a major portion from Zechariah as well. In these passages, the idea of buying a field with silver in obedience to the command of the Lord is the overarching narrative. Here are the passages in question:

"I knew that this was the word of the Lord; so I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel and weighed out for him seventeen shekels of silver."

– Jeremiah 32:8b-9

You, Sovereign Lord, say to me, "Buy the field with silver and have the transaction witnessed."

– Jeremiah 32:25

I told them, “If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it.” So they paid me thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said to me, “Throw it to the potter”—the handsome price at which they valued me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them to the potter at the house of the Lord. —Zechariah 11:12-13

In the above references we have the Lord’s command to buy the field, and we have the price for the land of seventeen shekels. At first glance, seventeen shekels doesn’t sound like thirty pieces of silver, but here’s where a little history and some math come in. For the temple, the half-shekel was the official silver coin for temple usage. In ancient Israel, there were multiple shekel weights and even different standards for measurement that were sometimes utilized, so it is not possible to be completely certain about the precise weights of shekels or pieces of silver. There are, however, sources we can refer to make a good estimate.⁵ In Jeremiah’s day, the shekel is believed to have been in the range of 12.9 grams; but by the first century they were using Tyrian shekels that weighed about 14.3 grams. Half-shekels were used for the temple tax, so a standard “piece of silver” would have been half of Jeremiah’s shekel.⁶ Using those numbers, the seventeen shekels of Jeremiah were equivalent to thirty pieces of silver (i.e., thirty Tyrian half-shekels) in the first century.⁷ The Jeremiah passages don’t give us the reference to the potter’s field, though. That additional information comes from Zechariah. Therefore, we get the primary instruction from Jeremiah, but there are additional

⁵ “Shekel,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Keter Publishing House, 1972), 1347-8.

⁶ Tyrian shekels in the first century weighed an average of 14.3 grams and a half-shekel was 7.15 grams. This is supported by looking at the weights of real shekels and half-shekels from the first century. For examples, see: www.forumancientcoins.com/numiswiki/view.asp?key=tyrian%20shekels.

⁷ Seventeen shekels times 12.9 grams each equals 219 grams. Divide 219 grams of silver by 7.15 grams per Tyrian half-shekel, and you get 30.6 pieces of silver (30 if you discard the remainder).

details in the account from Zechariah. This example teaches us that revelations from different prophets can be combined into one prophetic narrative—like connecting puzzle pieces together.



One Prophecy May be Embedded in Another

“You will all fall away,” Jesus told them, “for it is written: ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’” – **Mark 14:27**

This is a quote from just a portion of Zechariah 13:7. Most of the passage cannot be applied to Christ’s betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane. Only this portion was to be seen as prophetically applying to that moment in Mark 14:27. Let’s look at the full passage and take note of how many different events and prophecies are amalgamized into one.

⁴ *“On that day every prophet will be ashamed of their prophetic vision. They will not put on a prophet’s garment of hair in order to deceive. ⁵ Each will say, ‘I am not a prophet. I am a farmer; the land has been my livelihood since my youth.’ ⁶ If someone asks, ‘What are these wounds on your body?’ they will answer, ‘The wounds I was given at the house of my friends.’ ⁷ “Awake, sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is close to me!” declares the Lord Almighty. “Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, and I will turn my hand against the little ones. ⁸ In the whole land,” declares the Lord, “two-thirds will be struck down*

and perish; yet one-third will be left in it. ⁹ This third I will put into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, ‘They are my people,’ and they will say, ‘The Lord is our God.’”

– Zechariah 13:4-9

Watch how, as we move through the prophecy, multiple prophetic events emerge. It is as if we are looking at a collage. In verse 4, I think we are looking forward to the messianic age, but verse 6 looks to the betrayal of Christ at the last supper. Then verse 7 is a vision later of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane with his disciples. But we switch in verse 8 to possibly the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. And verse 9 seems to point to the redemption of Israel at the return of the Lord. This can be very confusing, unless we understand that sometimes prophecies can be like a Thanksgiving dinner plate with turkey, mashed potatoes, gravy, cranberry sauce, and corn, etc.—all on the same plate. Each of the dishes are part of the meal, but they don’t all necessarily connect in the way we think they should.



Thanksgiving Dinner by Elena Widener

Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. —Zechariah 9:9

Here's another one. Zechariah 9:9 stands apart from the rest of the chapter. In Zechariah 9, verses 1-8 are about God judging Israel's enemies, and verses 10-17 are about the last days' restoration of Israel and the messianic age. But this one verse, prophesying Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem on the Sunday before Passover and his crucifixion, is sandwiched between them; "*like an apple of gold in a setting of silver*" (Proverbs 25:11).⁸ We easily recognize it by comparing it with the account of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem that is recorded in Matthew 21:1-11, which we are told was a fulfillment of prophecy.

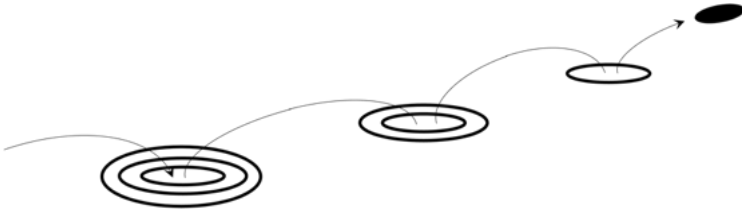


From these scriptures we learn that, for prophetic passages, context is not necessarily the key to figuring out a prophecy. It requires an understanding of the image being shown, and then recognizing if that image is part of the surrounding context or separate from it. An analogy would be looking at a rock to determine what is precious—the whole stone, (like lapis lazuli) or just a part (like an emerald crystal encrusted in calcite and graphitic shale). And like rockhounding, it takes study to be able to tell the precious from the mundane.

⁸ Pierre André Leclercq, "Box an Apple," CC BY-SA 4.0, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Box_an_apple.-_Ambre_des_Mines_de_Kaliningrad_\(2008\).JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Box_an_apple.-_Ambre_des_Mines_de_Kaliningrad_(2008).JPG)

Prophecies May Have Multiple Fulfillments Over Time

Another important principle is that prophecies may have multiple fulfillments over time—like stones being skipped over the water. And like a stone being skipped, they may have only one fulfillment, or two (*e.g.*, a near and far one), or they may be fulfilled multiple times down through the ages. A cycle that just keeps repeating until the final splash at the end.



All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

– **Matthew 1:22-23**

A good example of a prophecy with two clear fulfillments comes from the prophecy of the virgin that would conceive and give birth to a son. This is one of the core prophetic verses of our faith—the virgin birth. When we look at the passage in Isaiah, though, we see that the prophecy about the birth of Christ was embedded in a much nearer-term prophecy given to Ahaz. The Lord tells Ahaz to ask him for a sign, but he is unwilling to, so God tells him what the sign will be.

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. He will be eating curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, for before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the

two kings you dread will be laid waste. The Lord will bring on you and on your people and on the house of your father a time unlike any since Ephraim broke away from Judah—he will bring the king of Assyria.”
 – **Isaiah 7:14-17**

Without the specific reference in Matthew to affirm that Isaiah 7:14 was a prophecy about the birth of Jesus the Messiah, one could easily pass over it. It could have been understood to be completely historical, even in the first century; reasoning that it was simply a part of God’s message to Ahaz about a sign in his days. Why? Because the core part of the prophecy had to be something that was fulfilled in some way in those days. We don’t know exactly who, but a young woman probably gave birth to a child named Immanuel, meaning “God with us,” before Israel was invaded and conquered by the Assyrians. The baby wasn’t the promised messiah, he was the promised sign indicating that Israel would soon be invaded.⁹ The word for virgin, *alma*

⁹ Ahaz died in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, and his son Hezekiah began to reign (2 Kings 18:1). Three years later, Samaria, the capital of Israel, was invaded by the Assyrians, and after a three-year siege, they were defeated and exiled (2 Kings 17:5-6), so six years after Ahaz’s death the first expression of the prophecy was completed. The sign to Ahaz was that a child named Immanuel would be born, and before he was old enough to choose between right and wrong (somewhere between 3-7 years of age), the two kings he dreaded would be laid waste. So, Ahaz couldn’t have seen the entire fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy, but he certainly could have seen the birth of the child and would have then known that Isaiah’s words would soon come to pass. Since Ahaz died when he was just 36 years old (2 Kings 16:2), perhaps Ahaz fathered a child with a young unmarried girl before he died (and she named the boy Immanuel). Or maybe something similar happened in Ahaz’s household before he died, so that he would recognize that the word of the Lord had been kept. It is also possible that only Hezekiah saw the fulfillment of the prophecy, not Ahaz. Some would argue against the possibility of a double fulfillment here saying it must only be a double reference prophecy, but I see no objective basis for ruling out double fulfillments (ref.: Arnold Fruchtenbaum. *The Footsteps of the Messiah* (Ariel Ministries, 2004): 5-6.).

(Strong's – H5959), in Isaiah's prophecy literally means a young unmarried woman. Hence, there is no conflict understanding that such a woman could give birth. However, the man who got her pregnant would have either had to marry her (*Deuteronomy 22:28-29*), pay the bride price (*Exodus 22:16-17*), or divorce her quietly (*Deuteronomy 24:1*).¹⁰ It was a given in those days that a young unmarried woman was chaste. As soon as it was known that she had been with a man, she would have no longer been called an *alma*. Consequently, “virgin” and “unmarried woman” were synonyms.

Multiple Fulfillments May Occur in Different Ways

The above example also highlights one more important principle. The same verse (*Isaiah 7:14*) above can be fulfilled one way at one time and in a different way in a future time. In other words, the first time the prophecy was fulfilled by a man getting a young woman pregnant in the natural way. The second time, it was looking forward to the birth of Jesus, when a young woman named Mary was made pregnant by the Holy Spirit, without natural relations. Both were true fulfillments, but they weren't identical. They just had to meet the overall description in the prophecy, which was a young unmarried woman becoming pregnant.

There is another part of this prophecy that had two fulfillments—they will call his name “Immanuel.” The first time, it seems this may have been the baby's actual name. The second time, it was not the boy's given name—that was Jesus—but as the exact physical representation of the invisible God (*Hebrews 1:3*), Jesus was literally “God with us.” Hence, the name Immanuel foreshadowed Christ's deity. And that aspect of the name in the prophecy was unique to the life of Jesus. Therefore, even in

¹⁰ The only exception to those three possibilities from Torah law would be if that man was the king. In that case, she could have been made a concubine.

the prophetic echoes, there can be differences, without violating the integrity of the interpretation.

Prophecies Should Generally be Understood to be Literal

There is yet one more principle of interpretation that we can learn from the prophecies of Christ's birth. In the application of the above passages, the other main point that emerges is that the fulfillments that were observed and recorded in the New Testament were literal. When we examine the account in Matthew 1 and we read the account of Mary becoming pregnant, we clearly understand that Mary became pregnant by the Holy Spirit, having never known a man before. This is clear because of the context in Matthew's account.

Having now examined the original prophecy in Isaiah 7, we understand why many have tried to argue that the word for virgin just meant a young unmarried woman, rather than a woman who had never had intimate relations with a man. The reason would be to deny the deity of Christ—if Jesus had been born naturally from the union of a man and woman. The argument is that in Hebrew there is a specific word for a woman who has never had sexual relations with a man, *bethulah* (Strong's H1330); but Isaiah didn't use that word, therefore, that wasn't what Isaiah meant. But now that we have seen that the same scripture can have multiple fulfillments in different ways, we know why God didn't tell Isaiah to write *bethulah* instead of *alma*. Have you already guessed it? Because only one of the future fulfillments could be a *bethulah*, but they could both be an *alma*.¹¹

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came

¹¹ They could both be unmarried young women and virgins prior to getting pregnant, but only one of them truly remained a virgin.

together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”). When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.— Matthew 1:18-25

These prophecies, and the rest of the Messianic prophecies regarding the birth and life of Jesus Christ in the first century, were all fulfilled literally. They weren't metaphors. They weren't clever allegories. They were literal signs and events that really happened. Since we have these examples, we should also expect that future prophecies will be fulfilled in the same way. Especially when we consider the words of the angels, at the ascension of Christ into heaven, telling us that Jesus would literally return in the same way that they had just watched Him leave.

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? 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 1:9-11

Furthermore, the plain meaning cannot be eclipsed by secondary interpretive inferences that rely on someone’s special insights to understand the true meaning. In other words, you cannot invent a figurative interpretation to the text that contradicts or denies its plain meaning. When people do that, they destroy the sensibility of the text, and it becomes open to every private interpretation. Peter affirmed that, “*no scripture is of any private interpretation*” (2 Peter 1:20) and said that the true author of any book of the Bible is the Holy Spirit. Consequently, the plain meaning of Scripture, which can be read by all, should always take precedence over arguments that rely on “*fine sounding arguments*” (Colossians 2:4), earthly wisdom (James 3:15), or inferences about what the author may have been thinking or feeling, would have known, etc. Of course, this principle does not apply to obviously figurative passages, where from within the text it is clearly defined, either explicitly or by context, to be only metaphorical. This would be like when Jesus spoke in parables; or in Revelation 17:7 when the angel explains to John the image of the woman riding the Beast.

Additionally, even in obviously figurative instances, a proper metaphorical understanding cannot contradict the sense of the image that is being used to make the metaphor. For example, in Acts 10:9-17, we read about Peter seeing a vision of a sheet being let down from heaven filled with all kinds of animals, both clean and unclean. In the passage, we are specifically told that Peter was being shown a vision. So, we expect that it may be figurative. But in the vision, Peter is told to kill and eat. At first, he refuses, but God tells him not to call anything impure that he has made clean. We are also told that Peter wondered at the meaning of the vision. Next, we read that the vision was given to help Peter understand that the Gentiles were also made pure by faith in

Christ and that they would receive the Holy Spirit, just as they had (*Acts 10:34-35, 45*).

Now, here's the principle in action. Some argue that since we are specifically told that the vision applied to the Gentiles, we can exclude the literal interpretation that all animals are now clean and may be eaten. In other words, they want to say that the literal expression of the vision is not true (that all foods are now clean and can be eaten), but the figurative interpretation of the dream is true (that Gentiles are now clean along with believing Jews). This cannot be. Only if the analogy in the vision is true can the thing it represents also be true, meaning that both are true. God has now made all foods clean, and he has accepted the Gentiles and made them clean, too. Mark confirms this simple understanding of Peter's vision by explaining Jesus' parable regarding what defiles us—and asking if it is caused by something that comes from outside the body or from what is already inside it.

“Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? For it doesn’t go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.) — **Mark 7:18-19**

As one looks through the Gospel accounts, there are references to one literal fulfillment of prophecy after another. Again, besides the parables, every instance where we are told that the Scriptures were fulfilled occurs in a literal sense. Let's examine a few of the more direct and obvious prophetic fulfillments. For instance, in Matthew 8:17 there is a direct quote from Isaiah 53:4, but it is from the Greek Septuagint translation, so it is worded a little differently, but it means the same thing.¹²

¹² If you look up the two Hebrew words, pain (*holi* - Strong's H2483) means sickness and disease and suffering (*makob* - Strong's H4341) means pain and suffering, as in an ailment or affliction.

Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering. – **Isaiah 53:4**

This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: “He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases.” – **Matthew 8:17**

And here is another example. It is only a partial quote, but it was totally literal. There was no rational and legitimate reason for the Pharisees to hate Jesus. They hated Him because of their own sin and their pride.

“But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: ‘They hated me without reason.’” – **John 15:25**

Those who hate me without reason outnumber the hairs of my head; many are my enemies without cause, those who seek to destroy me. – **Psalms 69:4**

Another literal fulfillment of a prophecy is seen in a psalm that describes some people dividing the psalmists’ clothes and casting lots for his garment. The precise literal fulfillment was observed when Christ was crucified on the cross in John 19.

*When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. “Let’s not tear it,” they said to one another. “Let’s decide by lot who will get it.” This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled that said, “They divided my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.” So this is what the soldiers did.– **John 19:23-24***

They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment. – **Psalms 22:18**

The point is that, while these are just a few examples, every prophetic fulfillment recorded in the New Testament was a literal one. Consequently, any view of prophecy that rejects the literal fulfillment of the prophecies regarding Christ's second coming at the end of the age—arguing that earlier prophecies were literal, but the last days ones will be figurative—should be rejected.

True Prophetic Insights Should Have Multiple Witnesses

One witness is not enough to convict anyone accused of any crime or offense they may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. — Deuteronomy 19:15

This last one might be obvious—I almost skipped it because it is so foundational in my thinking—but it is a key principle to be watching out for. The context of Deuteronomy 19:15 is simply about convicting people who are accused of wrongdoing, but there is a general principle laid out after that which applies to a much broader context. The specific application of the principle is that convicting someone of a crime requires two or more witnesses, but the general principle is that important matters should be established with multiple witnesses.

In the context of prophecy (and theology in general), the lesson is that all important doctrines or interpretations should be established using more than one reference in the Bible (i.e., two or more witnesses). The witnesses can be split between the Old Testament and the New Testament, or found in the writings of two different books, prophets, disciples, etc.—but there needs to be more than one. Admittedly, one witness might be crystal-clear and the other vaguer and more veiled but that is okay. [*In the Old Testament the New is hidden, and in the New Testament the Old is*

made manifest.” – *St. Augustine*.¹³] The important thing is that both passages distinctly support the proposed idea or interpretation. This rule doesn’t make an idea infallible because our reasoning can still be flawed, but it can help to guard us against making mistakes of interpretation.

Prophecy Isn’t Easy, But It Is Reliable

There is a lot of technical talk here about different ways to understand prophecy; but without getting your arms around these subtleties, it can be easy to reject true fulfillments because they don’t match one’s expectations. We naturally want prophetic interpretations to be easy, cut-and-dried, incontrovertible, and unmistakable. But when we examine the prophetic fulfillments that are certified in the New Testament, we see that it isn’t always so simple. And we’ve looked at less than ten percent of the prophecies! I’m not trying to shake anyone’s faith here in the reliability of God’s prophetic word. I’m trying to shake off a rigid and legalistic view of prophecy—one that presumes that literal fulfillments must occur in exactly the way they are imagined, with perfect neat precision, however one defines that. We must trust prophecy as something “completely reliable” (*2 Peter 1:19*).

We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

– **2 Peter 1:19**

¹³ St. Augustine. *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum*, VII, 2.73. Taken from: Allan Fitzgerald et al. (eds.) *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Wm. B. Eerdmans’ Pub., 1999): 144.



Quintus Florens Tertullian (church father circa AD 160-220) by André Thevet, wood engraving, Lyons, France, 1584.

2

PROPHECY AND THE ANTE-NICENE EARLY CHURCH

OVER THE PAST TWO THOUSAND YEARS, a multitude of methods for understanding Bible prophecy have been proposed and embraced by the church; particularly as time wore on and Christ's return was delayed beyond all expectations. But if we want to understand how the earliest Christians understood prophecy, then we need to look to the writings of the ante-Nicene church fathers—the writings of the early church prior to the Council of Nicaea in AD 325.

Stick With Premillennialism

In the writings of the early church fathers, we find a viewpoint that is modernly described as “historic premillennialism.” This view can be found in the writings of: Justin Martyr (c. 100-165), Irenaeus (c. 120-202), Tertullian (c. 145-220), Hippolytus (c. 170-236), Commodianus (c. 240), and Lactantius (c. 260-

330). Most scholars recognize that these early Christians clearly believed in premillennialism—meaning that Christ would return to the earth and reign for a literal thousand years at the end of the age of the Gentiles (*Luke 21:24*).

The way I see it, knowing that all the past prophecies regarding Jesus’ first advent were fulfilled literally and that the earliest church fathers also had a premillennial viewpoint settles the debate. I find no compelling reason to hold a postmillennial or amillennial viewpoint—one which believes that the millennium is not a literal thousand years but instead is a metaphorical allusion to the current church age that has now been going on for almost two millennia. There are some differences between postmillennialism and amillennialism regarding whether the church will gradually conquer and convert the world, or instead whether Christ will just return in power and glory to destroy the wicked; but either way, both believe that Christ will return after the present church age to establish a new heaven and new earth.¹⁴

My dismissiveness to the amillennial viewpoint may seem unfair to some—as if I am trying to claim victory without the duel. But I have found that there is a form of unbelief regarding prophecy that spawns and supports amillennialism and postmillennialism. Consequently, attempting to argue through it on a point-by-point basis seems fruitless. As you’ll see in this chapter, amillennialism is the second oldest approach to trying to understand end times prophetic writings in the Bible, and it has been debated endlessly since that time. Instead of opening that can of worms, it seems wiser to just present the evidence to support the fact that a literal

¹⁴ Once there were bigger differences between postmillennialism and amillennialism. Both presume that the seals, trumpets, and at least the first six bowls of Revelation are metaphorically already upon us (preterism), and we are now awaiting Christ’s return to create a new heaven and a new earth, following this present and indefinite “millennial” church age. Both also deny a literal view of most last days prophecies.

and premillennial perspective was the original eschatological viewpoint held by the earliest and most reliable church fathers in the era between AD 100-250.

What Early Christians Believed

If the only issue at stake was the understanding of the literal and future nature of Christ's one-thousand-year reign on the earth, then perhaps the issue would be less contentious. But that isn't the only matter debated regarding the prophetic beliefs of the early church. The other topic that is discussed is the timing of Christ's return with respect to the rapture of the Church. It is argued that the idea of a secret rapture is never mentioned by early Christians. Rather, they appear to have understood that Christ's collection of the saints will occur at the end of the tribulation. Consequently, the theology of the early Christians regarding the end of days (their eschatology) is modernly described as posttribulational or historic premillennialism.

It has been argued that rapture-based eschatology (any time before the end of the tribulation) is a modern invention and a heresy that developed within the church in the 1800s.¹⁵ Contemporary premillennialism is often labeled as "dispensational" and is said to be wholly different than historic premillennialism. Certainly, doctrines regarding the rapture have proliferated over the past two centuries; however, this is an entirely separate issue, which I will address in chapter 6. But let me explain the error that is made by making special distinctions within premillennialism to argue that any modern expression of it is a new heresy. First, such proponents ignore the fact that there was no postmillennial position until probably the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries. Second, while amillennialism is a lot older than that, it wasn't until the third century (but mostly in the fourth) that support

¹⁵ www.biblicaleschatology.org/2008/12/04/the-history-of-the-rapture/

began to build for an allegorical understanding of the book of Revelation, in the writings of the early church.

Consequently, neither of those two viewpoints have an unbroken historical testimony back to the earliest church fathers, and yet, notably, premillennialism does. Contrary to the other views, the premillennial idea is not new—it is the oldest eschatological interpretive framework we have. A quick look at some quotes from some of the earliest and most trusted ante-Nicene fathers on the subject should help clear this question up.

Justin Martyr Believed in Premillennialism

For example, Justin Martyr (c. AD 114-165) in his dialogue with Trypho the Jew affirmed that there will be a thousand-year reign of Christ from Jerusalem. He was confident that the visions of Ezekiel and Isaiah had not yet been fulfilled but one day would be. And this was in the time when Emperor Hadrian and his successor Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Pius, transformed Jerusalem into Aelia Capitolina (circa AD 132-161) trying to paganize the city.

But I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand-years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, [as] the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare. – **Justin Martyr**¹⁶

¹⁶ A. Cleveland Coxe, Alexander Roberts, and James Donaldson. *Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325, Vol. 1*, “Justin Martyr: Dialogue with Trypho” (Hendrickson Pub., 1995): 239.

Irenaeus Believed in Premillennialism

Irenaeus (c. 120-202), a highly respected church father and disciple of Polycarp (who was himself a disciple of John the Apostle), was also clearly a premillennialist—an assessment that some dispute because he didn’t specifically address the issue of the reign of the saints on the earth for 1,000 years. However, he says that “*the day of the Lord is as a thousand years.*” This sounds like he is equating the day of the Lord with one thousand years, not just any day, which would mean that the time of God’s judgment in the great tribulation and Christ’s second coming (known as “the day of the Lord”) would also include his one-thousand-year reign on the Earth in the millennium.¹⁷ He also declared that the six days of creation represent 6,000 years of man’s rule on the Earth, and then God rested on the seventh day, implying the analogy applies to the millennium also. And Irenaeus gives us another interesting tidbit. While we know that Jesus declared that there would be a great apostasy in the last days, Irenaeus also sees the whole of human history, after the fall of man, as one extended apostasy. I think that is an accurate way to describe it.

[He gives this] as a summing up of the whole of that apostasy, which has taken place during six thousand years. For in as many days as this world was made, in so many thousand years shall it be concluded. And for this reason the Scripture says: “Thus the heaven and the earth were finished, and all their adornment. And God brought to a conclusion upon the sixth day the works that He had made; and God rested upon the seventh day from all His

¹⁷ Admittedly, we can only infer what he meant by that statement. However, by combining the well-known phrase “Day of the Lord,” which is strongly associated with God executing his judgment on mankind, and one-thousand years, which was associated with the millennial reign of Christ, he seems to be connecting those events.

works.” This is an account of the things formerly created, as also it is a prophecy of what is to come. For the day of the Lord is as a thousand years; and in six days created things were completed; it is evident, therefore that they will come to an end at the six thousandth year. – **Irenaeus**, *Against Heresies* ¹⁸

Hippolytus Believed in Premillennialism

Hippolytus (c. 170-236) was also a premillennialist. He followed Irenaeus in recognizing that man’s time to rule the earth would last for six thousand years, followed by a thousand-year reign of Christ and the Church. He is also more explicit in associating the final thousand-year sabbath rest with the future kingdom of the saints, when they will reign with Christ on the earth.

For as the times are noted from the foundation of the world, and reckoned from Adam, they set clearly before us the matter with which our inquiry deals. For the first appearance of our Lord in the flesh took place in Bethlehem, under Augustus, in the year 5500 and He suffered in the thirty-third year. And 6,000 years must be accomplished, in order that the Sabbath may come, the rest, the holy day “on which God rested from all His works.” For the Sabbath is the type and emblem of the future kingdom of the saints, when they “shall reign with Christ,” when He comes from heaven, as John says in his Apocalypse: for “a day with the Lord is as a thousand years.” Since, then, in six days God made all things, it follows that 6,000 years must be fulfilled. – **Hippolytus of Rome** ¹⁹

¹⁸ Coxe. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, “Irenaeus Against Heresies, b. 5 (XXVIII),” v. 1, 557.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, “Hippolytus: Fragments from Commentaries,” v. 5, 179.

In this quote, Hippolytus is affirming that the age of the earth should be reckoned from Adam and that the earth will be 6,000 years old when Christ returns the second time. Unfortunately, we also see that Hippolytus was mistaken in his calculation that the age of the earth was 5,500 years old at the birth of Christ. While his presumption about the earth's age was flawed, he also reported that Christ was crucified in AD 33—a date which would have been much easier for him to have known with certainty (we'll discuss this more in chapter 5). And finally, we can directly infer that Hippolytus expected the 1,000-year reign of Christ on the earth to be a literal one thousand years, completing the sabbatical model of six days of work and one day of rest. This means that Hippolytus, too, believed in a form of premillennialism.

The Epistle of Barnabas is Premillennial

Perhaps the earliest expression of the idea that the world would be 6,000 years old at the second advent of Christ comes from the Epistle of Barnabas (c. 100). This letter is not a part of biblical canon; and while Clement of Alexandria (c. AD 150-215) and Origen (c. 184-253) held that the writer of this letter was the Barnabas who accompanied Paul, none of the earlier church fathers mention the letter.²⁰ By the time of Eusebius, it was ultimately left out of the official canon of the church, but it was still preserved and read. Nevertheless, the fact that this idea arose so early, and that both Irenaeus and Hippolytus accepted the idea as well, lends a lot of credence to the proposal.

Therefore, my children, in six days, that is, in six thousand years, all things will be finished. "And He rested on the seventh day." This meaneth: when His Son, coming [again], shall destroy the time of the wicked man, and

²⁰ Ibid., "Epistle of Barnabas," v. 1, 133-5.

judge the ungodly, and change the sun, and the moon, and the stars, then shall He truly rest on the seventh day.
 – **Epistle of Barnabas** ²¹

Tertullian Believed in Premillennialism

Another early church father, Tertullian (c. 145-220), can also be found to have believed in a literal understanding of the thousand years mentioned in John’s Revelation. He confesses that Christ’s kingdom “is promised to us upon the earth” and affirms that it will be for one thousand years in Jerusalem.

But we do confess that a kingdom is promised to us upon the earth, although before heaven, only in another state of existence; inasmuch as it will be after the resurrection for a thousand years in the divinely-built city of Jerusalem.
 – **Tertullian, Against Marcion** ²²

Don’t Forget Commodianus, Victorinus, and Lactantius

I’ve concentrated on the earliest testimonies above, but the tradition also carried forward strongly into the third and fourth centuries. One can point to the testimony of Commodianus (c. 240), a bishop of North Africa, who also held to the view of a literal one-thousand-year reign of Christ.²³ Then there is Victorinus, Bishop of Petau (Ptuj, Slovenia), who was martyred in AD 304. He similarly affirmed a thousand-year millennial reign of Christ.²⁴ And Lactantius (c. 260-330), who was also from Africa and

²¹ Ibid., 146.

²² Ibid., “Tertullian Against Marcion,” v. 3, 342.

²³ Ibid., “Instructions of Commodianus,” v. 4, 211 & 218.

²⁴ Ibid., “Victorinus: On the Creation of the World,” v. 7, 342.

became an advisor of Emperor Constantine, also held the view that there would be a true and literal one-thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth.²⁵ I trust that this review of the early church fathers is sufficient to support that most did indeed hold a premillennial viewpoint.

The Rise of Amillennialism in the Church

However, to avoid giving the impression that there was unanimous agreement from the early church fathers on the issue of premillennialism versus amillennialism, one does begin to find dissenting voices starting in the third century. You can find the idea being questioned by Dionysius of Alexandria (c. 200-265). He argued against the literal nature of the book of Revelation, and he even argued against its authorship by John the Apostle. For me, that immediately places Dionysius in the category of an unreliable witness. Dionysius was a follower of Origen (c. 185-254), who was a giant of the faith at that time but was also himself guilty of many controversial ideas.²⁶ Origen is often called the father of allegorical interpretation, and he was denounced by Theophilus of Alexandria as the “hydra of all heresies” in AD 400.²⁷ Many of the later heresies and false doctrines that are known to have come from Alexandria most likely arose from Origen or his students, like Dionysius, who continued to develop them. This included the growth of amillennialism in the centuries

²⁵ Ibid., “Lactantius: The Divine Institutes,” v. 7, 217-8.

²⁶ For example, as a young man Origen castrated himself to be more virtuous and obey Jesus’ command in Matthew 19:12 regarding eunuchs. The Greek word in that passage, *eunouchizō* (Strong’s G2134) could be taken to mean literal self-castration, but more obviously meant to remain unmarried and celibate, as Paul chose to be. Such extreme behavior helps explain how Origen simultaneously displayed his intense love and devotion for our Savior but also exhibited poor judgment in many of his doctrinal positions.

²⁷ Friedrich Kempf. *The Church in the Age of Feudalism* (Burnes & Oates, 1980): 126.

that followed the Council of Nicaea when Christianity began to flourish as the dominant religion of the Roman empire.

Nevertheless, I am not against allegorical interpretations that support or add to our literal understanding of the biblical texts. There are many examples of this in the Old Testament, like the relationship of Boaz and Ruth as a metaphor for the love God has for Israel, as well as for Christ and the Church. However, to imply or affirm that the story of Ruth and Boaz is merely a story given to us to teach some higher principles, but was not a literal and historical event, would be crossing the line into heresy. False teachings began to develop even in the days of the Apostles, as Paul warned in Acts 20:28-30, speaking of savage wolves who would “distort the truth” after his departure. Consequently, the arguments that developed following Origen for a purely allegorical interpretation of John’s Revelation and other prophetic scriptures, do not preserve a true record of sound Christian doctrine.

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. – Acts 20:28-30

Irenaeus Believed in Dispensations and the Rapture

It has also been argued that dispensational premillennialism and a belief in the rapture were not ideas of the early church. However, Irenaeus spoke in favor of recognizing God’s dispensations. He also spoke about the timing of the rapture, or the sudden “catching up” of the church happening before the time of “tribulation such as has not been since the beginning,” making a clear reference to

Matthew 24:21. Hence, assertions that both the idea of the rapture and the recognition of distinct dispensations were not concepts in the early church do not seem tenable to me. It is true that the early church fathers did not write about a pretribulation rapture, as it's modernly described, but that's a completely different point. One cannot argue against a pretribulation rapture and then claim victory over premillennialism.

Inasmuch, therefore, as the opinions of certain [orthodox persons] are derived from heretical discourses, they are both ignorant of God's dispensations, and of the mystery of the resurrection of the just, and of the [earthly] kingdom which is the commencement of the incorruption, by means of which kingdom those who shall be worthy are accustomed gradually to partake of the divine nature.²⁸

And therefore, when in the end the Church shall be suddenly caught up from this, it is said, "There shall be tribulation such as has not been since the beginning, neither shall be." For this is the last contest of the righteous, in which, when they overcome they are crowned with incorruption. – **Irenaeus**, *Against Heresies*²⁹

Clement of Rome on Christ's Return to Jerusalem

In the end, a thorough review of early church eschatology reveals that they were simply looking for the literal return of the Lord to the earth in Jerusalem, as we read from Clement I of Rome (c. AD 30-100). Eschatology was not keenly developed at that time, at least in the expressions that have survived to the present day, but clearly their expectations were for a real and literal return of Christ to the earth, "to His temple."

²⁸ Ibid., "Irenaeus Against Heresies," v. 1, 561.

²⁹ Ibid., 558.

Of a truth, soon and suddenly shall His will be accomplished, as the Scripture also bears witness, saying, “Speedily will He come, and will not tarry;” and “The Lord shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Holy One, for whom ye look.” — **Clement of Rome**³⁰

We can also find that very early in church history some Christians, like Dionysius, struggled with a literal understanding of the book of Revelation and the Old Testament prophets. That struggle continues within the church into the present day. Amillennialism, as a framework for understanding what has been happening in the modern age to fulfill the prophecies of both the Old and New Testaments about the last days, is bankrupt. It simply cannot stand up to the plethora of literal events that we will discuss in the chapters ahead. But the fact that it has been debated by the church since at least the third and fourth centuries means that it won't be possible to quickly settle the matter here.

Hopefully, this short summary on the views of the early church will be helpful to some. For those who are still struggling with questions regarding an amillennial viewpoint, I can only say that I hope you will hang on through the rest of the book and then reevaluate whether you want to hold to a mostly literal view or a mostly allegorical view of prophecy, because that is what it really comes down to.

Wisdom is Proved Right by Her Children

The proper way to interpret prophecy has been under contention since the days of the early church, and even long before that as recorded in many places in both the Old and New Testament.

³⁰ Ibid., “The First Epistle of Clement,” v. 1, 11.

We need to be careful that Jesus' words to the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who had "*rejected God's purposes for themselves*" (Luke 7:30) don't also apply to us in this modern age.

Jesus went on to say, "To what, then, can I compare the people of this generation? What are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to each other: 'We played the pipe for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not cry.' For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' But wisdom is proved right by all her children." – Luke 7:31-35

Another way to say "*wisdom is proved right by all her children*" is "the truth will prove out in the end." I would argue that the present fulfillments of Bible prophecy are indeed proving out a literalist interpretation of the Scriptures, right before our eyes. And when Jesus gives us the picture of children saying, "*we played the pipe for you, and you didn't dance,*" it looks like a picture of adults who are expecting God to do things according to their own ideas and desires. But God will do what he wills. He doesn't dance to our tune. Rather, we should dance to God's tune.

The other word picture we see is that when faced with the fulfillment of prophecy, the Pharisees and teachers of the law criticized and rejected it. Instead of recognizing and embracing that Jesus' teachings were from God, they called them evil. In the same way, what is our response to the fulfillments of God's Word that we are currently witnessing? How do we avoid making the same mistake and responding as the Pharisees did in their unbelief? After you read through this book, examining the prophetic fulfillments assembled here, I hope you will see that "*wisdom is indeed proved*

right by all her children,” and that the correct method for the interpretation of prophecy is proven right when it is fulfilled.

Studying the Bible to Know Prophecy

The final point I want to make in this chapter is regarding how crucial it is to spend time studying the prophecies of both the Old and New Testaments. One cannot recognize the fulfillment of a prophecy one is unaware of. Without an in-depth knowledge of the Bible, it is very difficult to maintain one’s familiarity with all the prophecies that we need to be watching for—there are just so many that it’s hard to keep them all in mind. Thus, it is important for us to keep studying them to allow the Holy Spirit to speak to us through them.

In fact, it is commonly estimated that up to one-third of the Bible is prophecy. If that is correct, then of the 31,103 total verses in the Bible there would be over 10,000 prophetic verses! J. Barton Payne’s, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, places the number at 8,352 prophetic verses.³¹ I think he underestimates the number (some of the passages I’ve highlighted in this book aren’t referenced in his encyclopedia, for example); but either way, that’s a lot to study! The only way to keep that many verses in mind is to spend a lot of time reading and thinking about the Scriptures. It should also help keep us humble, knowing that no one can figure out everything before it happens. Conscious of the Scriptures, we

³¹ For details see [Payne, J. Barton. *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy: The Complete Guide to Scriptural Predictions and Their Fulfillment* (Harper & Row Publishers, 1973): 674-5.] Payne lists a total of 1,817 separate prophecies across the Old and New Testaments, which are described in 8,352 verses. Dividing that number by 31,103 total Bible verses would mean that the Bible is only 27 percent prophecy. But Payne holds a less literal and less futurist view of prophecy than I do. Allowing that there may still be many more prophecies that were missed in his encyclopedia (some of which are discussed in this book), one-third still seems like a good general estimate.

must watch the world around us and be ready to recognize when and how they are fulfilled. And when we do, they will help us to discern the times and act as a light for our path (*Psalm 119:105*), because they were given directly by the Holy Spirit to guide us (*2 Peter 1:20-21*).

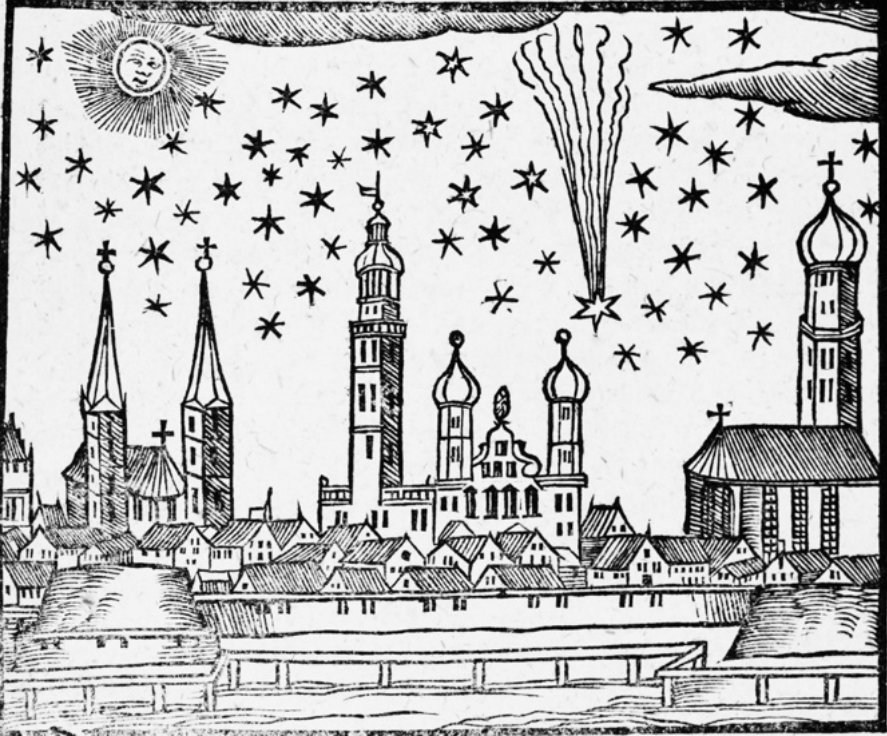
Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

– **Psalm 119:105 NASB**

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

– **2 Peter 1:20-21**

[Great job! You've completed the first two chapters! That was a lot of deep stuff to think about, but it has gotten you ready to understand how to solve some challenging prophetic puzzles.] In the next chapter, we'll go over some principles for how we can put those lessons to work and start connecting the dots between what the Bible says and what we have been witnessing all around us.



The Comet of 1618 over Augsburg by Elias Ehinger, c. 1618-1653.

3

RECOGNIZING THE SIGNS

WHEN WE READ ABOUT THE DAYS OF THE ISRAELITES, the times of Jesus, and the following accounts of the Apostles, there are many examples of God fulfilling his prophetic word; and yet significant numbers of people in that day did not recognize it. I find that surprising. And yet, is that not what Isaiah foretold?

Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? — **Isaiah 53:1 NASB**

Some will be tempted to read Isaiah 53:1 solely in the context of the rest of the chapter. They will apply it only to the description of the suffering messiah, expressed as the failure of a large part of Israel to recognize Jesus as the Messiah, but I think this verse has a much broader context. Let's break down the first question, "*Who has believed our message?*" Another way to say that is, "Who has believed my prophets?" In that sense, the question cannot be constrained to mean only Isaiah, as if all the other prophets were

believed completely. In other words, through Isaiah, God is asking who has believed in his prophecies. The implication is that not many truly or fully believe in God's prophetic Word.

The next question is, "*And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?*" The arm of the Lord is the action of God in the world fulfilling his promises. Said another way, God is asking who has seen his hand at work in the world to fulfill his Word. Consequently, a literal and broad understanding of this verse is that God is asking who has believed his prophecies, and who has recognized it when he fulfills his Word?

It Takes Faith to Recognize Prophecy

It is one thing to read Isaiah 53:1 and apply it to the Jewish people living in the time of Jesus, but it packs a much bigger punch if we apply this to everyone living on the earth today, including ourselves. Why? Because there is a deficiency in the church today regarding understanding prophecy. First, there is biblical illiteracy regarding what has been spoken—most people have not studied it enough on their own to know all that God has prophesied. Second, there is no overarching consensus in the church on how it should be interpreted. Without a common interpretive lens, there is no way to come to a common understanding of God's prophetic word, so each man, church, or denomination interprets the Scriptures how they see fit. Third, even when things happen that appear to fulfill Scripture, many are hesitant to proclaim that a fulfillment has occurred. This is especially difficult when the description in the prophecy is not clear or there are multiple potential interpretations of it.

The consequence of this is that people tend to be uncertain of when prophecy has been fulfilled; but at the same time, they may be very certain of how they imagine a prophecy will be fulfilled

in the future. This is backwards. We should be certain when prophecy is fulfilled because it has happened. We can directly compare events to Scripture and should be able to judge if an event matches the prophecy or not. Conversely, we should reserve some uncertainty regarding exactly how God will fulfill his Word in the future, because God may do things in a way that we can't even imagine right now. Nevertheless, when God does act to bring his Word to pass, we should recognize it as "*the arm of the Lord*" that has done it.

When disaster comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it?— Amos 3:6b

The missing component to being able to recognize fulfillments of God's prophetic word is FAITH. Without faith, it is impossible to please God (*Hebrews 11:6*). And I would say that it is similarly impossible to recognize God's hand at work. Paul tells us that prophecy is a sign for believers, not unbelievers (*1 Corinthians 14:22*). What does that mean? It means that you must believe and have faith to see and comprehend prophecy.

Paul also tells us that prophecy is supposed to be revealed and made known to help bring people to faith in God (*Romans 16:26*). How can we do that as believers if we are not studying and making use of the prophetic writings? Shouldn't we be holding them up as lights and guides to the nations, believing that they are something completely reliable (*2 Peter 1:19*)? But some have treated the prophecies with contempt by ignoring them or downplaying their relevance (*1 Thessalonians 5:19-21*). Often, the reason they don't pay attention to prophecy is because they don't think the interpretations are reliable.

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

— **Hebrews 11:6**

Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is not for unbelievers but for believers.

– 1 Corinthians 14:22

[the mystery hidden for long ages past]...but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith.

– Romans 16:26

Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good.— 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21

Look at these scriptural testimonies regarding the importance of embracing prophecy by faith. They are a light for us in a dark place. We must use wisdom to understand them and test everything, but we cannot forsake them. We must be willing to exercise our faith in the recognition of God fulfilling his Word. To see world events that match prophetic pronouncements—and yet remain in unbelief—would seem to be the result of a lack of faith, or otherwise a lack of diligence to investigate the matter.

We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

– Hebrews 6:11-12

Missing Christ's First Visitation

As Jesus approached Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, he wept over the city because they did not recognize the appointed time of his visitation. There were numerous prophecies indicating

not only that Jesus was the Messiah, but also that the timing of his arrival was at hand in the first century. The Wise Men from the East recognized the appointed time (*Matthew 2:1-9*), as did Simeon of Jerusalem, Anna the prophetess (*Luke 2:22-38*), and many others. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law largely did not. Their failure to recognize the times and the arrival of the Messiah led to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple. Luke 19 records the words of Jesus before his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, just days before his crucifixion. His statement begs a couple of questions. First, “How did they miss that he was the Messiah?” And second, “If there was an appointed time for his first coming and they failed to recognize it, could we also miss the appointed time for his promised return?”

When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, “If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.”

– **Luke 19: 41-44**

Let’s start with the first question. There were many ways they should have recognized the appointed time. You could argue that his miracles alone testified to the fact that he was the Messiah. He was a son of David, was born in Bethlehem Ephratah to a virgin, fled to Egypt, grew up in Nazareth, ministered in Galilee, was preceded and affirmed by John the Baptist, and he had just ridden through the East Gate into the Temple Mount on a

donkey, all in fulfillment of different Bible prophecies.³² He also appeared at the appointed time—483 years (sixty-nine times seven) after an edict by Artaxerxes to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, in accordance with Daniel’s prophecy of seventy weeks.³³

Finally, and most importantly, Jesus directly told the Pharisees and the teachers of the law that he was the Messiah, the Son of God, sent by his Father (*John 10:22-40*). So, there were both signs and direct revelations that they missed or refused to recognize. Prophecies were fulfilled right under their noses, but they didn’t see them or just couldn’t believe them. And as a result, they suffered the pronouncement of Jesus in Luke 19, when thirty-seven years later the temple and all of Jerusalem were destroyed in AD 70. We can’t just blame the religious leaders for not seeing what was right in front of them, though. Jesus also said some things to the disciples that they couldn’t understand, either. For example, he told them directly that he was going to be killed and would then rise from the dead three days later (*Mark 9:9-10, 31-32*).

As they were coming down from the mountain, He gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man rose from the dead. They seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead meant.

– **Mark 9:9-10 NASB**

For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, “The Son of Man is to be handed over to men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later.” But they did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask Him.

– **Mark 9:31-32 NASB**

³² The references are found in: Isaiah 11:1, Micah 5:2 & Isaiah 7:14, Hosea 11:1, Isaiah 9:1-2, John 1:29, Ezekiel 44:1-2, and Zechariah 9:9.

³³ I have more to say on that subject in chapter 5: *Seventy Weeks Have Been Decreed*.

Jesus used very plain language, and yet the disciples couldn't comprehend what he meant. But how can that be? Why wasn't what he said clear to them? The disciples just couldn't imagine how the literal words Jesus was telling them could be true, and therefore they reasoned that they must mean something else. It wasn't that they didn't hear him or didn't understand his words. Mark wrote that the disciples "*seized upon that statement*" and then discussed what it meant. When a rational and truthful person makes a fantastic statement, it is logical to assume that it was meant as a metaphor or hyperbole. An example would be: *The runner flew down the track*. A problem arises, however, when a literal statement is wrongly understood to be outside the realm of possibilities.³⁴ When that happens, it can cause us to misunderstand the simplest of statements. Since this happened to both the Pharisees and the disciples, we must also be on guard against making similar mistakes when interpreting prophecy.

Could Many Also Be Caught Unprepared for Christ's Second Coming?

This brings us back to the second question: If there was an appointed time for his first coming and they failed to recognize it, could we also miss the appointed time for his promised return? And the obvious answer is, yes, we could. To avoid making the same mistake, we need to know the specific signs that the Bible tells us to watch for, and we need faith to believe them. Jesus promised to return (*John 14*), and he gave many signs of his return (*Matthew 24 & Luke 21*). He also told us to watch so that we would recognize that the time had arrived and not be taken by surprise.

"Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on

³⁴ E.g., that the millennial reign of Christ will be literally for one thousand years.

you suddenly like a trap. For it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth. Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.” – Luke 21:34-36

*While people are saying, “Peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. **But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief.** You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.*

– 1 Thessalonians 5:3-5 (emphasis added)

There were very serious consequences for not recognizing the time of Jesus’ first visitation. The Scriptures teach us that Christ’s return will surprise people “*like a thief*” who are in the darkness with their “*hearts weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and the anxieties of life*” and aren’t watching. Accordingly, we must be “*always on watch*” and praying that we can “*escape all that is about to happen,*” so that we will “*be able to stand before the Son of Man*” when he comes. I think we can be pretty sure from these verses that those who are looking for his appearing will not be taken by surprise, though. We can also be sure that it will be even more disastrous to fail to recognize the signs of Jesus’ second appearing than it was at his first appearing.

Shifting our Approach

There is an incredibly important shift in our approach to examining prophecy that must take place when we are considering how to analyze it for the future versus recognizing its fulfillment in the present, or the past. This concept is akin to understanding that when playing football and the ball is in your control, you play

offense, but when you lose the ball, you must switch your lineup and play defense. In a metaphorical and parallel way, you must do something similar when studying prophecy.

For example, when examining prophecy and considering the future possibilities for its fulfillment, we must think broadly about all those possibilities and recognize that even our best imaginations may be unable to supply the true or full meaning. That's like playing offense. But when we look at prophecy and compare it to things that have already happened, we must take a different approach. You no longer are worrying about every possibility, but instead are examining whether the past event can be reasonably described by the prophecy or not. That's like playing defense. Accordingly, when looking at the past, we should not be easily shaken from identifying a clear alignment of events with the prophetic text based on the existence of any number of alternate possible or suggested meanings of the prophecy—unless it is obviously not fully completed by the past events. In that case, we should recognize only a partial fulfillment or an intermediate fulfillment, without denying the expectation for another more complete fulfillment in the future.

Here's an example of what I mean. A man receives a message from his pastor that someone from his church will be dropping by to bring him a meal because his family is sick. At that point, the sick man is free to imagine who precisely from his church might be visiting him, and to wonder what kind of food it might be. Next, a colleague from work brings by a box of oranges and drops them off at the sick man's house. Was this the promised meal from a church member? No. It was sort of similar, but the colleague was not from his church and a box of oranges, while they represent food, are not a full meal. Hence, he continues to wait and wonder. He suspects that the meal will be brought by the Jacksons who are well known for often providing that service to people who are sick from the church. He imagines that it will

be Mrs. Jackson's famous chicken piccata. Then the doorbell rings. And it is someone else. It is a man he recognizes from church, but he doesn't even know his name. The man kindly drops off a big bag of hot food, pasta by the smell of it. Then he wishes the sick man well and departs. Now at this point, for the sick man to continue to expect Mrs. Jackson to show up with her chicken piccata, is just silly. Because it is no longer about imagining who and what might show up, it is about evaluating whether someone from the church showed up with a meal, or not. In the same way, we need to avoid failing to recognize that a prophecy has been fulfilled when the stated conditions have been met, regardless of whether it was what we were expecting.

God wants us to recognize it when he fulfills his promises. We know that this is his heart when we read passages like this one in Isaiah. It applies specifically to the people recognizing the hand of the Lord when he restores the land, but it is also obviously a general statement that can be applied to the fulfillment of all of God's promises. Otherwise, men would be tempted to conclude that it was either done by their own efforts or that it happened by accident, questioning whether God is truly sovereign over the affairs of men.

[Speaking of the restoration of Israel]. . . *so that people may see and know, may consider and understand, that the hand of the Lord has done this, that the Holy One of Israel has created it.* – **Isaiah 41:20**

Watching for His Return

So again, the Bible clearly teaches that we are to wait expectantly for the literal second coming of Jesus Christ to the earth at some future time. We are to watch for the signs of his return so that we will know when it is near. Jesus warned us that if we do not, we may be caught by surprise and assigned a place with the

hypocrites and unbelievers, where there will be *“weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come . . . But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, ‘My master is staying away a long time,’ and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” — **Matthew 24:42,48-51**

“Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’” — **Mark 13:35-37**

However, even though most know about these admonitions to watch, it seems that oftentimes when I begin a conversation with someone about Bible prophecy, who is not already a prophecy watcher, I hear something like, “But, you know, Jesus will come just like a thief in the night, so we really can’t know when He’s coming back.” To which, I generally want to respond, “You are in error, because you don’t know the Scriptures...” But even though Jesus made statements like that to the Pharisees, it doesn’t feel like we can get away with speaking like that these days, so I am generally much more diplomatic. Nevertheless, when people quote the reference to the thief in the night, they are typically ignoring the words of Paul in 2 Thessalonians that *“children of the light and children of the day”* would NOT be taken by surprise “like a thief.” The most commonsense and obvious

way to understand Paul's words is that only those not watching as Jesus commanded will be taken by surprise. In the same way, we know that Noah was not surprised by the flood. God told him far in advance. Noah even had to build the ark first; but everyone who was not on the ark was taken by surprise.

Therefore, we again see that the only logical way to avoid being surprised by the judgment that is coming, "like a thief in the night" is to be watching for the signs of the times that Jesus, the prophets, and the Apostles warned us about in the Bible. And if you have been watching, then you already know that we are currently seeing events in the world around us that match very closely with the conditions we were warned about. The chief sign was the return of Israel as a nation, which we'll discuss in the next chapter.

Having been warned, we cannot afford to ignore such obvious signs. While every Christian generation has longed to see the return of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ, and some have even falsely predicted past dates for his return, no Christian generation has ever seen the preponderance of things we are witnessing today, except for those who lived in the time of Christ. Yet, when we look forward, it is as if we are looking through a dim glass window where not everything is perfectly clear.

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

– 1 Corinthians 13:12 NASB

We know the events being described in the Bible are real events that will happen in the course of human history, and that everything God has declared will someday come to pass. Although, it may come in parts or stages, and it may have an early fulfillment and a last days fulfillment, etc. Accordingly, we need to keep an open mind that God may literally fulfill a prophecy in a way that

we cannot imagine or guess beforehand. We must remember that what God says in his Word is inerrant, but our preconceived notions and interpretations of the text are not. Thus, we must watch with humility. However, when we recognize that God has fulfilled his Word, we must also call it out with courage.

[And I want to pause here and say, “Good job! You’ve made it through some tough concepts and are now ready to wade in deeper.”] I hope you are prepared to be blown away by how many prophecies have been fulfilled in recent times. It is truly awesome to consider that God has chosen us to be alive on the earth at this time to witness the culmination of all his promises. In the next chapter, we’ll look at why the return of Israel is the biggest sign indicating how late the hour truly is.

Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, right at the door.

– **Mark 13:29** NASB



A photo of the Flag of Israel flying at the Western Wall of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem (taken on January 16, 2020).

4

THE BIGGEST SIGN—THE RETURN OF ISRAEL AS A NATION

MOST OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS wrote about a time when the messiah would restore all things to the Jewish people and return them to their land. Probably the single greatest sign that the world has entered the last days was the return of Israel as a nation in 1948. Since that time, people have been asking the question whether this is a legitimate fulfillment of Bible prophecy or just an interesting coincidence. The return of Israel as a nation forces us to answer some important questions. First, are God's promises made in the Old Testament to the Israelites applicable to the Jewish people living in Israel today? Second, have we seen the fulfillment of last days prophecies in this generation, and if so, does that mean that we are now in the last of the last days? To find the answers to those questions, we need to examine how current events fit the scenarios predicted for the return of Israel.

The Holocaust Foretold

I remember first seeing footage of Holocaust victims when I was in middle school. It was beyond shocking. It was horrifying. It helped me understand what evil looks like, and why it is so important to stand up against it. When reports and images of the horrors of the Holocaust finally got out after the war, they shocked the world... they moved the world.³⁵



When I reflected on those events, it seemed to me that such a severe tragedy for the Jewish people must have been foretold through the prophets. Searching the Scriptures, I think that indeed it was. David prophesied about a time of great tribulation that would lead to the appointed time to show favor to Zion. He described suffering and pain, becoming skin and bones, being taunted, having one's name used like a curse, being thrown aside, placed among ruins, withering away, and even burning bones. I don't think it requires too much imagination to visualize gold stars, ghettos, concentration camps, or the death camps with their gas chambers and ovens, when reading these descriptions. It would seem utterly hopeless, except for the final lines, "*You will arise and have compassion on Zion, for it is time to show favor to her; The appointed time has come.*" Out of this unspeakable tragedy, God changed the heart of the world and brought Israel once again back into her own land.

³⁵ Photo by Joseph LoCascio. "Dead Prisoners: WW2 Concentration Camp." April 30, 1945, cc by-sa 3.0. Sadly, we expect that the horror of the Holocaust will even be surpassed under the rule of the Antichrist during the great tribulation.

*For my days vanish like smoke; my bones burn like glowing embers. My heart is blighted and withered like grass; I forget to eat my food. In my distress I groan aloud and am reduced to skin and bones. I am like a desert owl, like an owl among the ruins. I lie awake; I have become like a bird alone on a roof. All day long my enemies taunt me; those who rail against me use my name as a curse. For I eat ashes as my food and mingle my drink with tears because of your great wrath, for you have taken me up and thrown me aside. My days are like the evening shadow; I wither away like grass. But you, Lord, sit enthroned forever; your renown endures through all generations. **You will arise and have compassion on Zion, for it is time to show favor to her; the appointed time has come.** — Psalm 102:3-13 (emphasis added)*

It may be tempting for some Christians to think that the Jews brought all of that suffering on themselves because God rejected them for their hardness of heart; but God has repeatedly delivered his people through tribulation and travail to save them because He loves them. Remember the deliverance of Noah. If you think Noah was on a pleasure cruise for a year while the earth was being destroyed by water, you might have the wrong picture of what being saved through a global flood was like.

Job, too, was a preacher of righteousness in his day; and yet God put him through some terrible trials so that Job would know Him even better and serve as an example to future generations of those who fear God. In the days of Moses, again the people of Israel were delivered through great hardship. Later in the times of the Judges, God's people were also delivered by travail. The days of Esther and the Maccabees were likewise such occasions. Each time, the hardships drew the people of God closer to

himself and set an example of patience and endurance under tribulation—waiting for, and trusting in, God’s deliverance.

Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior.

– **Habakkuk 3:17-18**

There is one more example of the fulfillment of Psalm 102 that God took upon himself. It can be seen in the trial of God asking Abraham to offer his son as a sacrifice, but instead, God himself provided the sacrifice (*Genesis 22:13*). Read the beginning words of Psalm 102 again and imagine them applied to our savior, Jesus Christ, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.³⁶ God sent his Son, as the Messiah of Israel, to suffer and die, according to the prophets, *at just the right time*—the appointed time.³⁷

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

– **Romans 5:6**

Remember, there can be more than one fulfillment of a given prophecy. It is a demonstration of God’s power and omniscience that can he make a proclamation with multiple fulfillments down through the ages, like a skipping stone. Before Psalm 102 pointed to the Holocaust of modern times, it first pointed to the time when God would send his one and only son, who would face a

³⁶ If you don’t see the parallels with Christ’s suffering on the cross, also read Isaiah 53, which gives us a striking prophetic description of Christ’s crucifixion. The vision is of extreme suffering—it would be difficult to say which description (Isaiah 53 versus Psalm 102) is worse.

³⁷ I’ll have more to say about the appointed times of Christ in chapter 5 on the seventy weeks of Daniel.

an even greater trial than the one he knew the Jewish people would face 1,900 years later. The purpose of both trials was for the ultimate deliverance of his people and of the nations. And this will also be true of the final travail that those who “*hold fast their testimony about Jesus*” will face in the great tribulation (*Revelation 12:17*). And yet, once again, travail will yield to deliverance. Psalm 102 ends with a promise of restoration. God will renew all of creation, as if changing worn-out clothes.³⁸

They [heaven and earth] will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded.

– Psalm 102:26

Israel Reborn in a Day

In a wave of support from the global community, the appointed time finally arrived in 1948. As inexpressibly horrific as the Holocaust was, it opened the door for one of the most amazing works of God the world has ever seen—the regathering of the exiles and the restoration of the nation of Israel. Independent sovereign nations were not formed by international agreements in the days of Isaiah. Independence was gained at the point of a sword, through hard-fought battles. And yet, Isaiah predicted what we have observed.

On November 29th, 1947, the UN General Assembly voted in favor of Resolution 181, adopting a plan to allow for the partition of the British Mandate into two states, one Jewish and one Arab.³⁹ The fateful day arrived on May 14, 1948, when the Jewish

³⁸ The prophetic implications of this verse are confirmed in Hebrews 1:10-12.

³⁹ “1947: The international community says YES to the establishment of the State of Israel,” *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, <https://mfa.gov.il/Jubilee-years/Pages/1947-UN-General-Assembly-Resolution-181-The-international-community-says-Yes-to-the-establishment-of-the-State-of-Israel.aspx>

people living under the British Mandate of Palestine officially declared their independence, and the nation of Israel was reborn. There had not been an independent Jewish nation for nearly 2,000 years. But just as Isaiah predicted, Israel was declared a new sovereign state... in a single day. The appointed time had come.

“Who has ever heard of such a thing? Who has ever seen such things? Can a country be born in a day or a nation be brought forth in a moment? Yet no sooner is Zion in labor than she gives birth to her children.”

– Isaiah 66:8

The Return of Israel as a Nation

Repeatedly in the Old Testament, God promised that, although he would scatter his people throughout the nations as a judgment for their sin because they had forsaken him, he would also regather them. There are an overwhelming number of verses, passages, and even whole chapters, dedicated to the return of the tribes of Israel to the land. Here are some of them.

He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; he will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth.

– Isaiah 11:12

“Fields will be bought for silver, and deeds will be signed, sealed and witnessed in the territory of Benjamin, in the villages around Jerusalem, in the towns of Judah and in the towns of the hill country, of the western foothills and of the Negev, because I will restore their fortunes, declares the LORD.”

– Jeremiah 32:44

Therefore say: “This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I will gather you from the nations and bring you back from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you back the land of Israel again.” – Ezekiel 11:17

“I will bring you from the nations and gather you from the countries where you have been scattered – with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with outpoured wrath.” – Ezekiel 20:34

“This is what the Sovereign Lord says: When I gather the people of Israel from the nations where they have been scattered, I will be proved holy through them in the sight of the nations. Then they will live in their own land, which I gave to my servant Jacob.” – Ezekiel 28:25

“For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land.” – Ezekiel 36:24

One of the challenges regarding these passages is not whether they were fulfilled in 1948, but rather whether they were already fulfilled by Judah’s return from the First Diaspora—when Israel was scattered by the Assyrians and Judah by the Babylonians. First, we’ve already established that prophecies can be fulfilled more than once. Second, Isaiah specifically mentioned that he would gather the remnant of Israel a second time, and that this time they would be gathered from the four quarters of the earth. Isaiah also mentioned several nations by name, all of which have had large Jewish populations returning to Israel. We are even told by Hosea that this final re-gathering is one of the principal signs of the last of the “last days.” He wrote that Israelites would be without a king or sacrifices or high priest (alluded to by the mention of the sacred stones and ephod), for a very long time,

but afterwards, they would come trembling back. As we look back on history, this is exactly what happened.⁴⁰

In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the remnant that is left of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of the sea. He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; he will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth.

– Isaiah 11:11-12

For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or idol. Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the LORD and to his blessings in the last days.

– Hosea 3:4-5

One Nation Under One King

Another distinguishing factor from the first regathering is that it was primarily made up of the tribes of Judah and Levi, whereas Ezekiel wrote that the regathering in the last days would include the whole house of Israel. The temple records were destroyed in AD 70, but DNA analysis and oral traditions passed down for generations indicate that the lost tribes of Israel have been returning. One can only speculate about whether representatives from every tribe have returned yet, but with Jews returning from all around the globe, even from places like India and Ethiopia, it is reasonable to suppose that they have.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Nadav Safran. *Israel—the embattled ally* (Harvard Univ. Press, 2009): 84-94.

⁴¹ “Who are the ‘Lost Tribes of Israel?’” *Jewish Voice*, February 12, 2018, www.jewishvoice.org/read/blog/who-are-lost-tribes-israel

As for you, O house of Israel, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Go and serve your idols, every one of you! But afterward you will surely listen to me and no longer profane my holy name with your gifts and idols. For on my holy mountain, the high mountain of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD, there in the land the entire house of Israel will serve me, and there I will accept them. There I will require your offerings and your choice gifts, along with all your holy sacrifices. I will accept you as fragrant incense when I bring you out from the nations and gather you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will show myself holy among you in the sight of the nations.

– Ezekiel 20:39-42

Ezekiel later specifically prophesied that when Judah and Israel returned to the land, they would be joined together into one nation; never again to be divided into two different nations. Modernly, most Jews have lost confirmation of their tribal affiliations. The associated connections to specific geographic portions of land, by tribe, have also been totally lost. Consequently, there is no longer even a basis for dividing Israel into two kingdoms.

“Say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am going to take the stick of Joseph—which is in Ephraim’s hand—and of the Israelite tribes associated with him, and join it to Judah’s stick. I will make them into a single stick of wood, and they will become one in my hand.’ Hold before their eyes the sticks you have written on and say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I will take the Israelites out of the nations where they have gone. I will gather them from all around and bring them back into their own land. I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains

of Israel. There will be one king over all of them and they will never again be two nations or be divided into two kingdoms.”

– Ezekiel 37:19-22

This also presents a good reason to question the wisdom of the so-called “Two-State Solution,” which aims to permanently divide the land of Israel between the Jews and the Arab Palestinians—when we consider that God said, “*and they will never again be two nations or be divided into two kingdoms...*”

The Restoration of Israel Despite Their Corrupt Practices

Ezekiel also wrote that the Israelites would be returned to their land despite their “*evil ways and corrupt practices.*” According to a study conducted in 2009, almost half (46 percent) of Israeli Jews were secular.⁴² This means that although they might still participate in some of the religious festivals (like non-Christians, celebrating Christmas because it’s a cultural tradition), they were not observant Jews. They didn’t believe in the “World to Come” or the Messiah, either.⁴³ Still, about 80 percent of all Jews said they believe that there is a God; however, only 40 percent said they observe religious practice meticulously or to a great extent. Any time God is not the primary object of worship in a person’s life, then there is an idol taking that place. Therefore, we can see that the first part of this prophecy is complete. Israel was restored to the land, even though they had not all returned to the Lord. Now we are waiting for the second part, when they will repent and loathe their former actions.

⁴² Asher Arian. *A Portrait of Israeli Jews: Beliefs, Observance, and Values of Israeli Jews, 2009* (Jerusalem: Israeli Democracy Institute, 2012): 30. Online at <https://en.idi.org.il/publications/6870>

⁴³ Ibid, 49.

Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel, the land I had sworn with uplifted hand to give to your fathers. There you will remember your conduct and all the actions by which you have defiled yourselves, and you will loathe yourselves for all the evil you have done. You will know that I am the Lord, when I deal with you for my name's sake and not according to your evil ways and your corrupt practices, you people of Israel, declares the Sovereign Lord. — Ezekiel 20:42-44

And as Ezekiel prophesied, God is overlooking their sin until he brings them to repentance. Paul affirms their future repentance in Romans, saying that God “*will turn godlessness away from Jacob.*” Godlessness is clearly seen in Israel today, where about half of the population would describe themselves as atheists or agnostics. In modern Israel, a relationship with God and the application of his Word is not a ruling factor in the lives of most of its citizens. To be fair, though, America is very similar, except substituting Christianity for Judaism, of course.⁴⁴ In fact, secularism has been growing since the late nineteenth century, and it saw tremendous growth worldwide nearing the end of the twentieth century and following.⁴⁵

“I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The deliverer will come from

⁴⁴ Dalia Fahmy. “Key findings about Americans’ belief in God.” *Pew Research Center*, April 25, 2018, www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/04/25/key-findings-about-americans-belief-in-god/

⁴⁵ Steven Kettell. “Secularism and Religion.” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. Jan. 25, 2019, <https://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-898>

Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.”—Romans 11:25-27

We need Christ to come back and turn godlessness away from not only Israel, but also the whole world. God has been waiting for the “*full number of Gentiles*” to come in, but he will not forget about his people. And that isn’t just a promise in the New Testament. Zechariah also prophesied that the Jews would return to God and receive Christ as the Messiah—the one they pierced. God’s spirit of grace and supplication will enable them to understand how Jesus fulfilled all the messianic scriptures. And when they do, their repentance and faith will also be a light and a sign for the Gentiles. The question is, “When will these things happen?” The passage doesn’t tell us precisely, but the references to weeping and Megiddo in the last line suggests that we are talking about a time well into the tribulation. But praise God that many Jewish people have already come to know Jesus as Messiah. According to Jewish sources, using data from 2008, their best estimate was that at least 500,000 Jews already believed in Jesus.⁴⁶ And of course, Jesus, his disciples, and all the earliest saints were Jews. God has never stopped calling his people to himself.

“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. On that day the weeping in Jerusalem will be great, like the weeping of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo.”
—Zechariah 12:10-11

⁴⁶ “Statistics,” *Jews for Judaism*, <https://jewsforjudaism.ca/statistics/>

He says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth."

– Isaiah 49:6

The Order of the Return

The Bible even predicts the order of the return of the Jews to their land. Both Isaiah and David predicted that the first to return would come from the east and the west, then the north, and finally the south. Following the creation of the state of Israel, a massive wave of 684,000 Jewish immigrants came to Israel.⁴⁷ As predicted, a large part of those first immigrants came primarily from Oriental countries to the east of Jerusalem. They were Zionist in their outlook, and they viewed their return to Israel as fulfilling the “Ingathering of the Exiles” to the Holy Land.⁴⁸ Many European Jews from the West also joined in this first wave of immigration. They were generally secular and had more practical reasons for immigrating to Israel—fleeing antisemitism and looking for a more secure place to live in the wake of a devastating world war. Next, after the Six-Day War, there was another large movement of Jews to the land of Israel. This time the majority were from Russia in the north.⁴⁹ The fourth large migration of Jews came from Ethiopia in the south, just as predicted.⁵⁰ Of course, all the waves of immigration included a proportion of people from all over the world, but these prophecies described the primary composition of these historic migrations, in the revealed order found in both Isaiah and the Psalms.

⁴⁷ Safran. *Israel—the embattled ally*, 89.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 92.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 94.

⁵⁰ Louis Rapoport. *The Lost Jews: Last of the Ethiopian Falashas* (Stein & Day, 1983): 185-217.

“Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ and to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’ Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth...”

– Isaiah 43:5-6

“Let the redeemed of the LORD say this – those he redeemed from the hand of the foe, those he gathered from the lands, from east and west, from north and south.”

– Psalm 107:2-3

The Permanent Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

As I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah along with their neighboring towns,” declares the Lord, “so no one will live there; no people will dwell in it.”

– Jeremiah 50:40

In the land of ancient Israel, the site of Sodom and Gomorrah has been discovered. Researchers have suggested that the destruction could have been caused by the mid-air explosion of a massive meteor,⁵¹ but the Bible gives us an explanation of what really happened that is even more spectacular. Nevertheless, what they found is evidence of a massive fiery destruction of the entire plain. The area is near the Dead Sea, and to this day it is a wasteland where no one lives, as Jeremiah prophesied when he said that Babylon would be destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah. [*Some may see this as a trivial fulfillment, but to have declared thousands of years ago that a place would be wasteland forever, and for it to now still be a wasteland, four-thousand years later, seems impressive to me.*]

⁵¹ Ted E. Bunch, et al. "A Tunguska sized airburst destroyed Tall el-Hammam a Middle Bronze Age city in the Jordan Valley near the Dead Sea." *Scientific Reports*, v. 11, n. 1 (2021): 1-64.

The Land a Continual Waste

Ezekiel foretold that not only would there be a return of the Jewish exiles to the Holy Land in the last days, but also that when they did return, it would be to a land that had been a continual waste up until that time. It is a striking prophecy, considering that Israel was once a very lush land. It quickly became a wasteland, though, after the destruction of Jerusalem, and it remained that way for almost two millennia.

After many days you will be called to arms. In future years you will invade a land that has recovered from war, whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate. They had been brought out from the nations, and now all of them live in safety. — Ezekiel 38:8

It is well documented that Palestine was a continual waste up until the time of the creation of the state of Israel. In fact, Mark Twain, in his visit to the Holy Land in 1867, had this to say:

“Of all the lands there are for dismal scenery, I think Palestine must be the prince. The hills are barren. The valleys are unsightly deserts fringed with feeble vegetation that has an expression about it of being sorrowful and despondent...It is a hopeless, dreary, heartbroken land...Palestine sits in sackcloth and ashes...Where Sodom and Gomorrah reared their domes and towers, that solemn sea now floods the plain, in whose bitter waters no living thing exists—over whose waveless surface the blistering air hangs motionless and dead...Nazareth is forlorn; ...Jericho the accursed, lies a moldering ruin today, even as Joshua’s miracle left it more than three thousand years ago; Bethlehem and Bethany, in their poverty and their humiliation, have nothing about them now to remind one that they once knew the

high honor of the leader's presence; the hallowed spot where the shepherds watched their flocks by night, and where the angels sang Peace on earth, good will to men, is untenanted by any living creature, and unblessed by any feature that is pleasant to the eye. Renowned Jerusalem itself, the stateliest name in history, has lost all its ancient grandeur, and is become a pauper village; the riches of Solomon are no longer there to compel the admiration of visiting Oriental queens; the wonderful temple which was the pride and the glory of Israel, is gone...Capernaum is a shapeless ruin...Bethsaida and Chorazin have vanished from the earth, and the "desert places" round about them where thousands of men once listened to the leader's voice and ate the miraculous bread, sleep in the hush of a solitude that is inhabited only by birds of prey and skulking foxes. Palestine is desolate and unlovely." – **Mark Twain**⁵²

Mark Twain was not famously given to an ardent and fanatical faith in God and the Scriptures; but in his account of his visit to the Holy Land, his faith in the events of Scripture is expressed in his recognition of the places where biblical events occurred. For example, he noted that "Jericho the accursed, lies a moldering ruin today, even as Joshua's miracle left it more than three thousand years ago." This shows that Twain believed in the miracles of the Bible. Twain refers to Jesus Christ as "the leader," but with reverence. And Twain indirectly demonstrated that he understood Christ's prophecy regarding Bethsaida and Chorazin, when he remarked that those two cities had "vanished from the earth," an allusion to Jesus' pronouncement in Matthew 11:21-23. But Twain's descriptions confirm the poor condition of the land prior to the return of the Jews as a nation (as prophesied); however, it is obvious that one could no longer call the land of Israel a wasteland. Once again, it has been built up and is flourishing.

⁵² Mark Twain. *The Innocents Abroad* (Collins Clear-type Press, 1869): 606-8.

“Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day.”

– **Matthew 11:21-23**



View looking southwest toward Jerusalem, circa 1898.⁵³



View looking southwest toward Jerusalem in 2011.⁵⁴

The LORD builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the exiles of Israel.

– **Psalms 147:2**

⁵³ “Jerusalem Cityscape.” *G. Eric and Edith Matson Photograph Collection* (taken between 1898 and 1946), <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/matpc.08440>

⁵⁴ “Old City, Jerusalem,” *State of Israel*. December 12, 2011, CC BY-SA 2.0, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jerusalem_Old_City_\(8118442767\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jerusalem_Old_City_(8118442767).jpg)

The Desolate Places Rebuilt and Productive

Since the Jews began returning to Israel in the nineteenth century, and especially since the creation of the Jewish state in 1948, lands that were once barren and desolate are now farms, orchards, plantations, and grazing grounds for livestock. From a state the size of Vermont, Israel exports fine fruits and vegetables all over the world. They are world leaders in modern agriculture and irrigation.

In days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will bud and blossom and fill all the world with fruit. — Isaiah 27:6

The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. — Isaiah 35:1

They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations. — Isaiah 61:4

I will build you up again, and you, Virgin Israel, will be rebuilt. Again you will take up your timbrels and go out to dance with the joyful. Again you will plant vineyards on the hills of Samaria; the farmers will plant them and enjoy their fruit. — Jeremiah 31:4-5

The final fulfillment of making Israel prosper must also clearly include the millennial kingdom; and yet, as soon as Israel became a nation again, the fulfillment of these verses began to be seen in the land of Israel. We read that God intentionally wanted this to be a sign to the nations. He wanted everyone to know that it was brought about by the strong arm of the Lord, who does everything he says he will do.

“Then the nations around you that remain will know that I the LORD have rebuilt what was destroyed and have replanted what was desolate. I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it.” – Ezekiel 36:36

The Division and Restoration of Jerusalem

In 1948, on the day Israel declared its independence, they were invaded by Egypt from the South, Jordan on the East, and both Syria and Lebanon in the North. This began Israel’s War of Independence (or the 1948 Arab Israeli War). When Israel’s neighbors invaded her, their stated intention was to put an immediate end to the newly declared Jewish state. Although the Israelis had no standing army and were greatly outnumbered, they were victorious against all odds.⁵⁵ However, arguably the fiercest battle in the war was fought with Jordan over Jerusalem. At the end of it, the armistice line divided the city in half between the Old City and the New City. When the Jewish Quarter in the Old City fell, many were killed, others were taken into Jordanian captivity, and the rest were deported to the New City. Their homes were pillaged and set ablaze, and the synagogues were destroyed.⁵⁶ And as one might expect, some of the women taken captive were also ravaged.⁵⁷ When peace was finally made under the 1949 Armistice Agreement, Jerusalem was divided in half for the first time in its four-thousand-year history.

⁵⁵ “Against All Odds - Israel Survives,” *Questar Entertainment*, 2011. On YouTube, <https://youtu.be/SsN5bqVzX34>

⁵⁶ Teddy Kollek and Moshe Pearlman, *Jerusalem: A History of Forty Centuries* (Random House, 1968): 250–52.

⁵⁷ Shimon Re’em. *Female Prisoners of War in Israel’s War of Independence* (National Midrasha for Underground and Zionism Studies, 2010) in Lilach Rosenberg-Friedman. “Captivity and Gender: The Experience of Female Prisoners of War during Israel’s War of Independence.” *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women’s Studies & Gender Issues*, no. 33 (2018): 64–89, <https://doi.org/10.2979/nashim.33.1.04>. The article’s goal seems to be minimizing the perceived severity of the treatment women received during that time by arguing that it really wasn’t that bad. Regardless, it confirms it happened.

“For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city.”
 — Zechariah 14:2 NASB

The modern fulfillment of this prophecy is often overlooked. This verse clearly speaks of dividing Jerusalem in half prior to the return of Jesus Christ to the earth in power and glory. Many view this as a yet-future event,⁵⁸ but the events described in verse 2 literally happened in 1948–49! The devastation of that time can be seen in this photo taken near the Tower of David after the armistice.⁵⁹ Thus, we can compare historical events directly with the biblical account. And when we do, it’s very difficult to ignore the precision of the prediction. The fact that events that match Zechariah’s description have already occurred in recent history should not escape our attention.



Furthermore, verse 3 accurately describes the military victories that Israel has had since that time. The miraculous victories Israel has experienced make a very strong argument that God has truly

⁵⁸ It is commonly thought that this verse refers to something that will only happen in the Gog-Magog War, or at the abomination of desolation when the Antichrist begins to reign, or at the end of the great tribulation leading up to the battle of Armageddon.

⁵⁹ Photo of a divided and devastated Jerusalem. From the Ammunition Hill Museum Exhibits, Historic Images of Jerusalem, circa 1948-50. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Divided_Jerusalem_P1010016.JPG

been fighting for them. This has been evidenced by Israel's survival in the War of Independence and in all its wars since that time. Most remarkably, Israel unequivocally won both the Six-Day War in 1967 and the Yom Kippur War in 1973, where the odds were certainly not in their favor.

Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. — Zechariah 14:3 NASB

Therefore, we should consider that these events may have already been fulfilled in modern history and that we are now living in the days between verses 3 and 4. In verses 4 and 5 we see a picture of Jesus standing on the Mount of Olives that is split in two, so we know that those events are obviously still to come.

In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south. You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the Lord, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him! — Zechariah 14:4–5 NASB

The phrase “*in that day*,” at the start of verse 4, can sound as though it is talking about the very same day as verses 2 and 3; however, the reference could easily apply to only the final battle of a series of wars, which are the subject of verse 3. In other words, if we understand that verse 3 is a long series of battles, where God delivers Israel victoriously from every one of them, then the events of verse 2 (Jerusalem being divided) don't have to happen at the same time as verses 4 and 5. In fact, I doubt that

even the future events described in the last two verses will happen at the same time (Jesus standing on the Mount of Olives, Jews fleeing into the wilderness, and Jesus returning with his holy ones to defeat the Antichrist).⁶⁰ When you analyze it closely, there are too many disparate details to imagine that everything could happen in such rapid succession. Therefore, it is best understood as a picture of the last days, not a statement that everything will take place in twenty-four hours. Since the city really was divided in half, for the first time in Jerusalem's four-thousand-year history, I think it is reasonable to conclude that 1948–49 already saw the fulfillment of that portion of the prophecy, and we can confidently affirm that verse 2 has been fulfilled and that verse 3 is still in progress.

Israel's Neighbors Against Her

Israel's neighbors have a long history of being at odds with her; but who would have thought that 2,500 years later, the situation would be unchanged? For most of Israel's history, the nations that have surrounded Israel have generally been her outright enemies. For short periods of time, there have periodically been peaceful relations with some of the nations; but down through the ages in the Middle East, there have perpetually been wars between Jews and Arabs. The prophet Jeremiah gave an exhaustive list of Israel's enemies, prophesying that in the last days God was going to make the surrounding nations drink the cup of his wrath.⁶¹ We know from ancient history that this list includes virtually every ancient nation that surrounded Israel in the sixth century

⁶⁰ I'll expound more on this in chapter 10.

⁶¹ Some may see Jeremiah 25:15-29 as purely historical, but because of the similar images in Revelation 16:19 and Isaiah 29:8-9, one can assume that this prophecy of Jeremiah is also looking forward to the last days. The prophecy says that it will be a time when God calls down a sword upon all who live on the earth, i.e., the last days.

BC when Jeremiah was prophesying. But Jeremiah also says the kings of “*the coastlands across the sea*” will be there, the kings of the north “*near and far,*” and indeed “*all the kingdoms on the face of the earth.*”

*So I took the cup from the LORD’s hand and made all the nations to whom he sent me drink it: **Jerusalem and the towns of Judah**, its kings and officials, to make them a ruin and an object of horror and scorn and cursing, as they are today; **Pharaoh king of Egypt**, his attendants, his officials and all his people, and all the foreign people there; all the **kings of Uz**; all the **kings of the Philistines** (those of **Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron**, and the people left at **Ashdod**); **Edom, Moab and Ammon**; all the kings of **Tyre and Sidon**; the **kings of the coastlands across the sea**; **Dedan, Tema, Buz** and all who are in **distant places** ; all the **kings of Arabia** and all the kings of the foreign people who live in the desert; all the **kings of Zimri, Elam and Media**; and all the **kings of the north, near and far**, one after the other—all the **kingdoms on the face of the earth**. And after all of them, the **king of Sheshach** will drink it too. Then tell them, ‘This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Drink, get drunk and vomit, and fall to rise no more because of the sword I will send among you.’ But if they refuse to take the cup from your hand and drink, tell them, ‘This is what the LORD Almighty says: You must drink it! See, I am beginning to bring disaster on the city that bears my Name, and will you indeed go unpunished? You will not go unpunished, for I am calling down a sword upon all who live on the earth, declares the LORD Almighty.’” — **Jeremiah 25:17-29** (emphasis added)*

The rebirth of Israel as a nation immediately re-ignited that saga, and it has been an issue ever since. Just looking at the nations in the Arab League, there are a total of sixteen Arab league members that have refused to normalize ties with Israel or even acknowledge its existence.⁶² It is expected that more Arab nations will make peace with Israel and join the Abraham Accords, but it is unlikely that they all will. Furthermore, nations like Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan have similarly refused to recognize Israel and are not showing any signs that they will be ready to make a peace deal with Israel anytime soon, either. There are, however, some countries that have thankfully made peace with Israel. The first Arab nation to sign a peace treaty with Israel was Egypt in 1973. This was followed by Jordan in 1994. Both nations were bitter enemies prior to the treaties and had both participated in unprovoked attacks against Israel. Then remarkably, beginning in 2020, more nations began making peace with Israel under the Abraham Accords. The United Arab Emirates and Bahrain were the first to move forward, followed by Morocco and Sudan. And while that was an amazing step toward a new era of peace in the Middle East, the decades that followed the creation of Israel simply proved that nothing much had changed in the Middle East between Jews and Arabs—except for the nation names and the technologies available.

Then, when we look beyond the surrounding nations, we also see that most of the world has turned against Israel. From the United Nations (UN), there have been consistently more resolutions condemning Israel than any other country in the world, three times more in 2020.⁶³ And although they are clearly one-sided against Israel, they are generally approved by about 80 percent of

⁶² They are Algeria, Comoros, Djibouti, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen.

⁶³ “Israel most condemned by UN in 2020 – three times other nations.” *Al-Jazeera*, December 24, 2020, www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/24/un-condemns-israel-most-in-2020-almost-three-times-rest-of-world

the 193 member nations (member states, as they are called by the UN) when they go up for vote.⁶⁴ After two thousand years, Jeremiah's prophecy was not only correct about Israel's neighbors, but also about how the nations of the world would react to her. The United States has consistently been the only country standing in the way to veto these corrupt resolutions, and I think America has been blessed for it (*Genesis 12:3*).

"I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." – **Genesis 12:3**

ATTACKS FROM GAZA AND LEBANON

There is another prophecy that I believe foresaw the attacks on Israel in modern times from Gaza and Lebanon. Again, it's the ancient names that are used, but the events in our present day are following the scenario described by Joel.

Why are you doing these things to me, Tyre and Sidon? Are you trying to get even with me, land of Philistia? If you are, I will very quickly repay you for what you have done! For you took my silver and my gold and brought my precious valuables to your own palaces. You sold Judeans and Jerusalemites to the Greeks, removing them far from their own country. Look! I am rousing them from that place to which you sold them. I will repay you for what you have done! I will sell your sons and daughters to the people of Judah. They will sell them to the Sabeans, a nation far away. Indeed, the Lord has spoken.

–**Joel 3:4–8 NET**

⁶⁴ "2018 UN General Assembly Resolutions Singling Out Israel – Texts, Votes, Analysis," *UN Watch*, November 15, 2018, <https://unwatch.org/2018-un-general-assembly-resolutions-singling-israel-texts-votes-analysis/>



Map of Israel Showing Philistia, Tyre & Sidon, and the Sabeans

At first glance, this prophecy may not seem related to today, but a quick look at a map (above) can shed some light on what is being described. Tyre and Sidon are in modern-day Lebanon, from where Hezbollah has been attacking Israel. Philistia was the area that the Gaza Strip mostly occupies today, from where Hamas has been attacking Israel. Furthermore, the Sabeans were from Arabia, which could then be understood to mean that Arabs would take over the areas of Gaza and Lebanon and use them as bases for attacking Israel. Although Hamas and Hezbollah have continued their periodic assaults on the state of Israel for decades, they have been repelled and subdued time after time. Each time, the destruction they planned is turned back “*on their own heads,*” as Joel declared. In many cases, rockets they have fired have even fallen back into their own territory.⁶⁵ When you

⁶⁵ Sharon Wrobel. “Failed Hamas Rockets Falling Short in Gaza Killed 17 Civilians in Monday Incidents Before IDF Airstrikes, Says Security Official.” *Algemeiner*, May 13, 2021, www.algemeiner.com/2021/05/13/failed-hamas-

consider how closely this 2800-year-old prophecy matches the present situation, it sure looks like a fulfilled prophecy.

ATTACKS FROM JORDAN

Did the Bible also foretell the modern-day attacks of Jordan on the country of Israel? I believe it did. Obadiah wrote a prophecy concerning Edom, an ancient kingdom that was mostly contained within the area of present-day Jordan. I think it proved to be amazingly accurate at predicting the Jordanian invasion of Israel in 1948 and their continued conflicts with Israel through 1967, and even beyond—to the present day under a cold peace.⁶⁶

Because of the violence against your brother Jacob, you will be covered with shame; you will be destroyed forever. On the day you stood aloof while strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them. You should not gloat over your brother in the day of his misfortune, nor rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their destruction, nor boast so much in the day of their trouble.

You should not march through the gates of my people in the day of their disaster, nor gloat over them in their calamity in the day of their disaster, nor seize their wealth in the day of their disaster. You should not wait at the crossroads to cut down their fugitives, nor hand over their survivors in the day of their trouble.

The day of the Lord is near for all nations. As you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head.

rockets-falling-short-in-gaza-killed-17-civilians-in-monday-incidents-before-idf-airstrikes-says-security-official/

⁶⁶ Sheldon Kirshner. "Israel's Cold Peace with Jordan." *Times of Israel*, October 28, 2019, <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/israels-cold-peace-with-jordan/>

Just as you drank on my holy hill, so all the nations will drink continually; they will drink and drink and be as if they had never been.
 – Obadiah 1:10-16

While some may feel that the above passage is as clear as mud, there are several key statements that I think connect this passage with modern events. It describes the people of Edom: 1) doing violence against their brother Jacob, 2) conspiring with other nations to attack Israel,⁶⁷ 3) gloating over Israel's misfortune, 4) marching through their gates [Jerusalem], 5) ambushing the Israelites on the roadways, and 6) drinking on [occupying] God's holy hill.

To better understand how this passage reflects modern events, it is helpful to review the history of the conflict between Jordan and Israel from 1948 to 1967, and their relationship post-1967. First, Jordan played a key role in the first Invasion of Israel in 1948. They were joined by Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, along with volunteers from another three Arab nations. Following that war, Jordan remained an enemy of Israel from 1948 to 1967. They have also controlled God's "*holy hill*" (the Temple Mount) since 1948, with only a short interruption of about ten days following the Six-Day War.⁶⁸ Not only that, but while Jordan and Israel have had a peace treaty between them since 1994, it has remained for most of the time a cold peace. Jordan remains critical of Israel on almost all issues related to the Temple Mount and their politics regarding the Palestinians. The thrust of God's message to

⁶⁷ The Hebrew phrase is *yom amad neged*. Translators often translate this as "*on the day you stood aloof*." However, the word *neged* (Strong's H5048) can also mean stood as a counterpart to, a mate of, in parallel with. Hence, rather than "aloof," in this case I think the proper sense is collaborator, co-conspirator, or accomplice.

⁶⁸ Yossi K. Halevi, "The Astonishing Israeli Concession of 1967," *The Atlantic*, June 7, 2017, www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/06/israel-paratroopers-temple-mount-1967/529365/

Edom is that he is not pleased with what they have done to his people Israel. I think Obadiah's words remain a potent warning to the Kingdom of Jordan today. God has again promised to return the evil deeds of Israel's enemies back onto their own heads.

But on Mount Zion will be deliverance; it will be holy, and Jacob will possess his inheritance.
 – **Obadiah 1:17**

And interestingly, the next line of the prophecy (*Obadiah 1:17*) could also be read to mean that Israel would get back the Temple Mount, because it says that Mount Zion would be delivered and made holy, and “*Jacob will possess his inheritance.*” Perhaps, this too, came to pass (at least in part) on June 7, 1967, when Israel retook East Jerusalem, the Old City, and the Temple Mount.⁶⁹ After about nineteen years, East and West Jerusalem were reunited. Jacob once again possessed his inheritance. Arguably though, this verse still partially looks forward to a future time, since Mount Zion (presumably God's holy hill and the Temple Mount) has not yet been made holy and is still under the control of the Muslim Waqf; but we know that someday it will be. We also read that the lands of Moab and Ammon will be together in the last days. Both of those ancient lands are contained within present-day Jordan. Zephaniah prophesied that they would be hurling insults at the people of Israel, and that as a result their land would be made a wasteland. Jordan has remained in a general state of peace with Israel since 1967, and diplomatically since 1994, but they haven't ceased their rhetoric against Israel, or their condemnations of her actions at every opportunity.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ “The Six-Day War: The Liberation of the Temple Mount and Western Wall (June 7, 1967),” *Jewish Virtual Library*, www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-liberation-of-the-temple-mountain-and-western-wall-june-1967

⁷⁰ Dror Zeevi. “Israel and Jordan: A Peace in Ruins.” *Crown Center for Middle East Studies*, 133 (2020): 1-7, www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/middle-east-briefs/pdfs/101-200/meb133.pdf.

“I have heard the insults of Moab and the taunts of the Ammonites, who insulted my people and made threats against their land. Therefore, as surely as I live,” declares the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, “surely Moab will become like Sodom, the Ammonites like Gomorrah—a place of weeds and salt pits, a wasteland forever. The remnant of my people will plunder them; the survivors of my nation will inherit their land.” This is what they will get in return for their pride, for insulting and mocking the people of the Lord Almighty. The Lord will be awesome to them when he destroys all the gods of the earth. Distant nations will bow down to him, all of them in their own lands.—Zephaniah 2:8-11

ATTACKS FROM EGYPT

Joel also prophesied that Egypt would be attacking Israel again in the last days. And Egypt’s participation with Jordan is also implied in the prophecy because they are listed together. Also in the prophecy, we are told that their punishment will be observed in the days when *“a spring will issue from the Lord’s house.”* This means that the attacks from both Egypt and Jordan had happened before this time, which we know refers to the millennium. Thus, we understand that these judgments against Egypt and Jordan will be for sins against God and Israel that were committed in the days of tribulation or earlier.

In that day the mountains will drip with sweet wine, and the hills will flow with milk. All the streams of Judah will flow with water, and a spring will issue from the Lord’s house, watering the Valley of Acacias. Egypt will become desolate, and Edom a desert wasteland, because of the violence done to the people of Judah in whose land they shed innocent blood. But Judah will be inhabited forever, and

Jerusalem from generation to generation. I will pardon their bloodguilt, which I have not pardoned, for the Lord dwells in Zion.

– Joel 3:18-21 HCSB

ATTACKS FROM SYRIA

We also read about attacks from Damascus (Syria) in the last days. Amos prophesied that they would thresh Gilead “*with sledges having iron teeth.*” On Yom Kippur in 1973, Syria invaded the Golan Heights.⁷¹ They brought a force of 1,400 tanks and 1,000 artillery pieces. When you consider Amos’ description, it’s not hard to see the potential similarities with a Syrian T62 tank (photo below). In ancient times, the areas of their invasion into Israel through the Golan Heights would have included Bashan on the north side and Gilead on the southern end.



*A Syrian T62 Tank from the 1973 Golan Heights invasion.*⁷²

This is what the Lord says: “For three sins of Damascus, even for four, I will not relent. Because she threshed Gilead with sledges

⁷¹ Mark Shiffer. “Valley of Tears: The Yom Kippur War.” *War History*, April 3, 2019, <https://warhistoryonline.com/instant-articles/valley-of-tears.html>

⁷² “Destroyed Syrian T62 Tank after Yom-Kippur War near Ortal,” 1973, cc-by-2.5, [//commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:PikiWiki_Israel_4223_Israel_Defense_Forces.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:PikiWiki_Israel_4223_Israel_Defense_Forces.jpg)

having iron teeth, I will send fire on the house of Hazeal that will consume the fortresses of Ben-Hadad. I will break down the gate of Damascus; I will destroy the king who is in the Valley of Aven and the one who holds the scepter in Beth Eden. The people of Aram will go into exile to Kir,” says the Lord. — Amos 1:3-5

Syria has been hard pressed and a weakened nation since their defeat by Israel—even more so following the Syrian Civil War in 2011. Over six million Syrians fled their country as refugees and another nearly seven million were displaced within Syria. According to some sources, by 2021 there were over thirteen million Syrians in dire need of humanitarian aid.⁷³ President Bashar al-Assad has also had difficulties maintaining full control over his nation, and while in 2021 he began showing signs that he may be able to reassert control over his country, his rule is still in jeopardy.⁷⁴ Much larger players (like Russia, Iran, and Turkey) are all vying for some measure of control over Syria; so in its present state, the threat that the scepter could soon pass from the Assad dynasty remains real. This means that while we have certainly seen the fulfillment of most of this passage, there may yet remain some judgments to come.

Jerusalem, a Cup of Trembling

Zechariah also prophesied that Jerusalem would be the center of attention (in a bad way) in the last days and gives a strong warning to anyone who would go against God’s people or his city Jerusalem. Who would believe that over 2500 years after those words were

⁷³ “Syria Refugee Crisis,” *UNHCR*, www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/syria/

⁷⁴ Tom O'Connor. “Syria’s Bashar al-Assad Returns to World Stage in Defeat for US, Win for its Foes.” *Newsweek*, October 13, 2021, www.newsweek.com/2021/10/22/syrias-bashar-al-assad-returns-world-stage-defeat-us-win-its-foes-1637831.html

written, in this modern technological world of eight billion people, that Jerusalem would still be the city that the whole world was watching? I mean seriously! Is that something likely to be predicted without divine revelation?

I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling. Judah will be besieged as well as Jerusalem. On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves. – **Zechariah 12:2-3**

Some might associate this verse with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, but one major detail doesn't fit. God says, "*I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations.*" Because it was not "immovable" when the Roman armies besieged it, this must be about the last days. And if this verse is about the protection of Jerusalem in the last days, then it should make you wonder, "Will the Antichrist ever be able to truly conquer Jerusalem, even in the tribulation?" [*I don't have an answer for that one, it's just a question to think about.*] It is often assumed that it will be, but there are verses about judgment and salvation for Israel and Jerusalem throughout the Scriptures. Understanding the full meaning and timing of every one of them before they happen is not something we can know with certainty—but at least we know what to watch for.

Destruction of Jewish Settlements

The Israeli government has destroyed hundreds of settlement homes and forcibly removed thousands of Jews from resettled towns in Gaza, Judea, and Samaria.⁷⁵ Questions of legality aside,

⁷⁵ M. Sones. "15 years later: The full IDF operational Gaza expulsion plan." *Israel National News*, 7-30-20, www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/284468; Hillel Fendel. "Settlers: Barak is War Criminal." *Israel National News*, December 20, 2009, www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/135090

however, families in the settlements were evicted using force and their homes were demolished by the military. Many of the residents resisted the government mandated evictions because they felt the evictions were illegal and were against God's will.⁷⁶ On the whole, I agree with the settlers—based on these prophecies, I think God would too.

The LORD God said: "You leaders of Israel have robbed and cheated my people long enough! I want you to stop sinning and start doing what is right and fair. You must never again force my people off their own land. I, the LORD, have spoken."

– Ezekiel 45:9 CEV

The women of My people you evict, each one from her pleasant house. From her children you take My splendor forever. – Micah 2:9 NASB

The Jewish People Would Retain Their Identity

Though I scatter them among the peoples, yet in distant lands they will remember me. They and their children will survive, and they will return.

– Zechariah 10:9

No other people in history have maintained their identity, customs, beliefs, and language after being conquered and completely removed from their homeland for more than a few centuries. In every case, within a few generations, the conquered or exiled people have lost who they are. Even if they retain some aspects of their heritage and culture, such as the gypsies found all over Europe, they can no longer trace their origins back to

⁷⁶ Martin Fletcher. "Settlers believe evacuation betrays God's will," *NBC News*, August 17, 2005, www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna8983559

their beginning. The Jews are unique in that regard and have been miraculously sustained for more than 2,000 years in exile.⁷⁷

Israel as a Strong Nation

The prophets Zechariah and Micah also prophesied that Israel would be a powerful nation. Although Israel is one of the smallest nations on the earth, it is also one of the most militarily and technologically advanced nations on the earth.⁷⁸ Though they represent just 0.2 percent of the world's population, they have been awarded more than twenty percent of the world's Nobel Prizes.⁷⁹ Some people might argue that this one is easy to declare into the future, but fulfilling those prophecies with such a tiny nation—that's a miracle!

On that day I will make the leaders of Judah like a firepot in a woodpile, like a flaming torch among sheaves. They will consume right and left all the surrounding peoples, but Jerusalem will remain intact in her place.
— Zechariah 12:6

“In that day,” declares the LORD, “I will gather the lame; I will assemble the exiles and those I have brought to grief. I will make the lame a remnant, those driven away a strong nation. The LORD will rule over them in Mount Zion from that day and forever.”
— Micah 4:6-7

⁷⁷ David Reagan. “The Preservation of the Jewish People: A Great Miracle,” *Lamplighter*, v. XXXVII, no. 3, May-June 2016, 3-7, http://lamb-lion.com/xfiles/publications/magazines/Lamplighter_MayJun16_Preservatio-n-Jews.pdf

⁷⁸ Uzi Eilam. *Eilam's Arc: How Israel Became a Military Technology Powerhouse* (Sussex Academic Press, 2011).

⁷⁹ “Jewish Nobel Prize Laureates (1901-2020),” *Jewish Virtual Library*, www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jewish-nobel-prize-laureates

The Restoration of the Hebrew Language

Hebrew, as a spoken language, was gradually replaced with the common languages of the day. This began around the eighth century BC for the ten northern tribes when they were conquered and scattered throughout the Assyrian empire. The same thing happened to Judah in the sixth century BC when Jerusalem was conquered by the Babylonian empire. Each subsequent empire that conquered the land of Israel also generally brought a new language, such as Aramaic, Persian, Greek, and Latin. The Jewish people were forced to maintain at least two languages, one religious and one secular.

For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, that they all may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one accord.
 – Zephaniah 3:9 NKJV ⁸⁰

By the nineteenth century Hebrew was thought to be a dead language; however, it was revived by some of the Jews who returned to Israel (circa 1880s).⁸¹ They developed teaching tools and opened schools to teach Hebrew. By the time the nation of Israel was declared in 1948, Hebrew was widely spoken and was made the official language of the Jewish state.⁸² This is another modern fulfillment of a prophecy about the last days.

⁸⁰ The NKJV has a better translation of this verse. Many translations write “*pure lips*” instead of “*pure language*,” but the Hebrew word *sapa* (Strong’s H8193), is the same word in Genesis 1:11, “*Now the whole world had one language (sapa) and a common speech*,” which seems to be the truer sense here.

⁸¹ Chaim Rabin. “The revival of Hebrew as a spoken language.” *Journal of Educational Sociology* 36, 8 (1963): 388-392.

⁸² David Reagan. “The Revival of the Hebrew Language,” *Lamb & Lion Ministries*, <https://christinprophecy.org/articles/the-revival-of-the-hebrew-language/>

The Shekel

It's been nearly two thousand years since the shekel was in use, but with the formation of the Jewish state it has been reinstated as the common monetary unit in Israel. Israel initially began printing money in the denomination of the Israeli Pound, but in 1980 they transitioned to shekels, and thus fulfilled the vision of Ezekiel. Writing about the preparation for the restoration of Israel in the last days, he made mention of the shekel and the proper measurement of money. Its placement in chapter 45, along with the description of a millennial temple, tells us that shekels would again be used in the last days in Israel, as indeed they now are.



Israeli One Shekel Coin

The shekel is to consist of twenty gerahs. Twenty shekels plus twenty-five shekels plus fifteen shekels equal one mina.—Ezekiel 45:12

The Restoration of the Sanhedrin and Temple Artifacts

And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering.

— **Daniel 9:27a** NASB

This prophecy implies that, by the middle of the seven-year tribulation period, sacrifices will again be occurring on the Temple Mount. Otherwise, how could they be halted by the Antichrist at that time? Sacrifices ended with the destruction of the temple in AD 70. The Sanhedrin was abolished another 359 years later, when Emperor Theodosius II passed a law to end the Jewish patriarchate on May 30, 429, after the death of Gamaliel VI, the Sanhedrin's last president.⁸³ Over the last five hundred years,

⁸³ P. Schäfer, *The History of the Jews in the Greco-Roman World* (Routledge, 2003): 187.

there have been five failed attempts to reinstate the Sanhedrin, but in 2004, a nascent Sanhedrin was again formed and has been operating credibly since that time with the support of hundreds of the most scholarly and influential rabbis in Israel.⁸⁴ They have called themselves the “Nascent” Sanhedrin, hoping that over time they would gain acceptance within the Jewish community as the fully revived Sanhedrin. The provisional Sanhedrin began petitioning to perform a fully kosher practice sacrifice with a blemish free lamb the day before Passover in 2007.⁸⁵ Since about 2011, the new Sanhedrin has been conducting practice sacrifices with blemish-free lambs and petitioning the Israeli Supreme Court to reinitiate sacrifices on the Temple Mount.⁸⁶ Practice sacrifices have been made in cooperation with The Temple Institute, which was founded in 1987. The Institute has been remaking most of the temple artifacts and priestly garments needed to reestablish the priesthood, restore sacrificial offerings, and to rebuild the temple.⁸⁷ One of the most striking temple artifacts that has been remade is the golden menorah (see photo, right), but that is not all that has been prepared. In addition to the priestly garments and vessels for priestly service that have been prepared, there is now even a



⁸⁴ Nascent Sanhedrin website: www.thesanhedrin.org/en/index.php/The_Nascent_Sanhedrin ; “Sanhedrin Launched in Tiberias,” *Arutz Sheva*, 1-20-05, www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/70349

⁸⁵ Nadav Shragai. “Present-day Sanhedrin Court Seeks to Revive Ancient Temple Rituals,” *Haaretz*, February 28, 2007, www.haaretz.com/1.4808340

⁸⁶ “Sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb Returns to Jerusalem after Millennia,” *Breaking Israel News*, April 19, 2016, www.breakingisraelnews.com/66076/passover-sacrifice-makes-comeback-overlooking-temple-mount-photos.

⁸⁷ See the Temple Institute website: www.templeinstitute.org/main.htm

school in Israel training the first generation of priests.⁸⁸ A portable altar, constructed in full compliance with both biblical regulations and the instructions found in the Mishnah, has also been built and made ready for the future temple.⁸⁹

Finally, there have been concerted efforts for decades to breed completely blemish-free red heifers. Jewish law, *halacha*, requires that red heifers cannot have worn a yoke or had a calf, must have no physical defects or blemishes, and they can have no more than two hairs that are not red. According to the Mishnah, the heifer must also be at least three years old.⁹⁰ As of 2021, the Temple Institute did not yet have a perfect heifer, but they were monitoring multiple candidates to see if they would eventually meet all the requirements of Jewish law.⁹¹ They have even conducted a practice red heifer sacrifice to be ready for the real one.⁹² Detailed architectural plans have also been made for the entire temple complex, including a building that would house the new Sanhedrin.⁹³ The Nascent Sanhedrin has even begun to officially call on the Jewish people “to contribute towards the acquisition of materials for the purpose of rebuilding the Holy Temple,” and in the years since, many Jewish people have answered that call.⁹⁴ What remains now

⁸⁸ “Temple Institute Announces School to Train Levitical Priests,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, August 2, 2016, www.jta.org/2016/08/02/israel/temple-institute-announces-school-to-train-levitical-priests

⁸⁹ Ahuva Balofsky, “Jewish Temple Altar Rebuilt, Ready for Use,” *Israel National News*, Mar. 9, 2015, www.breakingisraelnews.com/32009/altar-jewish-holy-temple-rebuilt-jewish-world/

⁹⁰ “Red Heifer,” *Jewish Virtual Library*, www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/red-heifer

⁹¹ “Red Heifer Update March 1 2021,” <https://youtu.be/7ksWQ75DW9k>

⁹² A. E. Berkowitz. “Exclusive: Burning Of Heifer Takes Place In Preparation For Third Temple.” *Biblical News*, August 15, 2019, www.israel365news.com/135387/exclusive-burning-red-heifer-takes-place-preparation-third-temple/

⁹³ “Blueprints for the Holy Temple,” *Olive Press*, 2-12-11, <https://olivepress.wordpress.com/2011/02/12/blueprints-for-the-holy-temple/>

⁹⁴ Hillel Weiss and R. Chaim Richman. “The Sanhedrin’s Decision Regarding the Holy Temple, the Temple Mount, and Jerusalem,” 28 Iyar 5765 (June 6, 2005), www.thesanhedrin.org/en/index.php/Hachrazah_5765_Iyyar_28

is just building it, which is waiting on the collective will of the people of Israel to be moved by the Spirit and blessing of God.

Rebuilding Jerusalem’s Walls and the Sealing of the East Gate

Then He brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary which faces toward the east, but it was shut. And the Lord said to me, “This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter by it, because the Lord God of Israel has entered by it; therefore it shall be shut.”

– Ezekiel 44:1-2

This prophecy refers to the sealing up of the eastern gate of the Temple Mount, called the Golden Gate, which faces the Mount of Olives and leads directly into the Temple Mount. In my first book, *The Temple Revealed*, I go over the extensive history of this gate and its connection with the Temple of Solomon. It is also the gate that I believe Jesus used for his triumphal entry into Jerusalem before he was crucified.⁹⁵ The walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt by the Turkish Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, beginning in 1537.⁹⁶ After restoring and rebuilding the Golden Gate, he then sealed it in 1541 (see photo, right), presumably when he heard about the prophecy that the Messiah would enter Jerusalem through the East Gate.⁹⁷ And yet by doing so, he



⁹⁵ Christian Widener. *The Temple Revealed* (End Times Berean, 2020): 80-81.

⁹⁶ See chapter 5.

⁹⁷ J.E. Peters. *Jerusalem* (Princeton, 1985): 411, 479-80.

inadvertently helped maintain the truth of God’s Word that this gate would be shut and would remain shut.

Foreigners will rebuild your walls, and their kings will serve you.

– **Isaiah 60:10a**

Furthermore, Suleiman also fulfilled a prophecy that foreigners would rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and, as prophesied, he was a benevolent ruler who “ministered” to God’s people by treating both Jews and Christians equitably during his reign. This likely began with the development of a treaty between Suleiman and the King of France in 1535 to regulate the relations between their two states.⁹⁸ The terms dictated “the right to practice their own religion” without being molested, which seems to have promoted fair treatment for both Christians and Jews. During this period under Suleiman’s rule, Jews reported living “in happiness and tranquility, each according to his condition and fortune, for the royal authority is just and great,” and they were allowed to engage in all kinds of trades and even religious studies.⁹⁹

Desecrations on the Temple Mount

It is important to remember that God is the one who has declared that the location of the temple is important to him. It is the place where God says that he will place his throne and the soles of his feet and will dwell among the sons of Israel forever. And when talking about the temple, we are immediately directed to the area of the Temple Mount, and to Jerusalem in general. This is the only place on the planet that God has called his own, in writing. And by calling it a “holy” place, it means that it is entirely separate from other places.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 535-6.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 474-5.

He said to me, “Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever. And the house of Israel will not again defile My holy name, neither they nor their kings, by their harlotry and by the corpses of their kings when they die, by setting their threshold by My threshold and their door post beside My door post, with only the wall between Me and them. And they have defiled My holy names by their abominations which they have committed. So I have consumed them in My anger. Now let them put away their harlotry and the corpses of their kings far from Me; and I will dwell among them forever.”

– Ezekiel 43:7-9 NASB

That is why it is so strange that we read of the defilement of God’s holy temple “*by the corpses of... kings.*” It is strange because it would have been such an abomination to have people buried on the Temple Mount, so we don’t expect it to be possible. But are there corpses of kings buried on the Temple Mount? Have there ever been? Or is that a mistranslation of the text? These are important questions when we are determining if a prophetic fulfillment has been observed, or not.¹⁰⁰ Well, on June 4, 1931, Hussein ibn al-Hashimi, King of the Hejaz died and was soon buried on the Temple Mount, near the Cotton Merchants’ Gate, close to where the temple should be standing, on the northwest

¹⁰⁰ Some readers may jump in here saying that the translation should read “lifeless idols” and not “corpses of their kings.” The Hebrew word is *peger* (Strong’s H6297), which generally means a dead body or carcass, but it also applied to idols. The confusion comes from verses like Leviticus 26:30, “*I will destroy your high places, cut down your incense altars and pile your dead bodies (peger) on the lifeless forms (peger) of your idols, and I will abhor you.*” The proper translation depends on what Ezekiel was talking about. It is also conceivable that both uses are in view through multiple fulfillments at different times, but the present reality of a king’s corpse buried on the Temple Mount absolutely fulfills the requirements of this verse.

interior of the Temple Mount.¹⁰¹ Here is a picture of his tomb on the Temple Mount (see photo, right). That’s amazing! The words of Ezekiel, written around 593-571 BC, were fulfilled less than a century ago. It is incredibly unlikely that a king would be buried in the 36 acres of the Temple Mount by pure happenstance. By my calculations, the odds are at best 1 in 4,361 (or only a 0.02 percent chance).¹⁰² That means it is a very unlikely thing to predict without divine inspiration.



The other fulfillment that we see from this verse is from the phrase: “...*setting their threshold by My threshold and their door post beside My door post, with only the wall between Me and them.*” By recognizing that the true location of the former Jewish temple

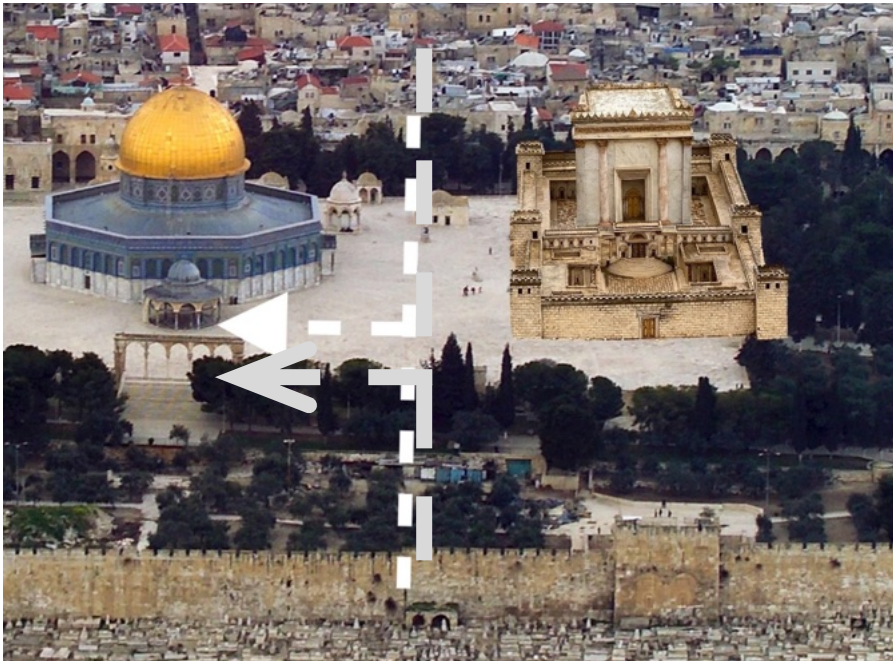
¹⁰¹ Robert D. Kaplan. *Eastward to Tartary: Travels in the Balkans, the Middle East, and the Caucasus* (New York: Random House, 2000): 205.

¹⁰² Some might say that a king could be found buried anywhere if you wait long enough. But of the 15.7 billion acres of land on the earth, few have any kings buried on them, and the 36 acres of the Temple Mount are expressly forbidden to have anyone buried there in the first place. Wikipedia lists 287 different monarchies that have existed around the world since the early Bronze Age. Recognizing that kings are often buried together or in proximity for a given monarchy, we could estimate that all the world’s kings from the early Bronze Age until now are entombed in less than 10,000 acres of land. We should also acknowledge that people only inhabit about 10 percent of the land on the planet. Using those numbers, one could estimate that the odds of having a king buried on the 36 acres of the Temple Mount, by pure happenstance, is 1 in 4,361 (36/157,000 or a 0.02 percent chance).

was just north of the Dome of the Rock, we get a very clear view of what God was denouncing in this prophecy. If the Jewish temple were erected today, directly in front of the East Gate, the Dome of the Rock would be sitting right next to God’s temple (see image below). This looks like the scene we could envision from the book of Revelation.

I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, “Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, with its worshipers. But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.

– Revelation 11:1-2



Composite image by the author with notations to show the exclusion of the outer court to the south, where the Dome of the Rock sits.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Widener. *The Temple Revealed*, 220.

The Lesson of the Fig Tree

Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.

– Matthew 24:32-34

God has given us many specific signs in his Word that precede his second coming. The lesson of the fig tree is one of the more cryptic ones, though. A large part of the imagery simply provides an analogy for recognizing the signs of something emerging. Just as one should see that the budding of a fig tree means that fruit will be coming soon, when we see the signs that Jesus foretold, we should expect that his return is close at hand. In this picture of a budding fig tree, you can see that just as the leaves are emerging, the fruit has already begun to form on the branches (photo on right).¹⁰⁴



There is also the promise that the generation that sees the signs in Matthew 24 will not pass away (all die) before these things take place. But there is another possible meaning hidden in Jesus' parable. The budding of the fig tree's branches can be taken as a

¹⁰⁴ JLPC. "Common fig tree (Ficus carica), new leaves and fruit." *Wikimedia*, cc by-sa 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Figuiier_Printemps_FR_2013.jpg

metaphor for the return of Israel as a nation in 1948.¹⁰⁵ If we understand that Jesus’s statement “*this generation will not pass away until all these things have happened*” applies to the generation that saw the return of Israel as a nation, then it begs the question, “How long is a generation?” Interestingly, Psalm 90 says that the span of a person’s life is between seventy to eighty years. If we use that as an indication of the length of time for one generation, then we could infer that the Lord’s return must come somewhere between 2018 and 2028.

Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures; yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away.

– Psalm 90:10

Balaam’s Error and Replacement Theology

The account of Balaam is given in Numbers 22-24 and 31. Balaam was a Gentile who worshiped God; but he was enticed by Israel’s neighbors to curse them and to put stumbling blocks in their way. The story is easy to overlook as just an odd event that happened in the days of Moses. Balaam is mentioned several more times, in Deuteronomy 23:4-5, Joshua 13:22 and 24:9-10, Nehemiah 13:2 and Micah 6:5, but these other Old Testament references are in the context of remembering the things that the Lord had done for Israel. It is not until the New Testament that

¹⁰⁵ Jeremiah 24 includes a prophecy that compares Israel to two baskets of figs, one good and one bad. God says to Jeremiah regarding the good figs that he “*will plant them and not uproot them.*” I count a total of 25 references that associate fig trees with the land of Israel in the Old Testament, like Zechariah 3:10, which says, “*In that day each of you will invite your neighbor to sit under your vine and fig tree,*” declares the Lord Almighty.” There is also the image of an almond branch budding from Aaron’s staff in Numbers 17, which is similar to a fig tree budding. Lastly, there is a similar image in Isaiah 11:1, “*A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.*” While this is clearly about Jesus, it also evokes an image of the future return of Israel.

we see a grave warning about following Balaam. In fact, Peter, Jude, and John all mention Balaam in connection with the end times and Christian believers that have fallen away. Let's look closely at some of them.

Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: There are some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality. — **Revelation 2:14**

They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Bezer, who loved the wages of wickedness. — **2 Peter 2:15**

Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error; they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion. — **Jude 1:11**

In two of these verses, money is mentioned along with Balaam, and the other verse mentions sexual immorality. The typical understanding of the reference to Balaam, therefore, is that he is a symbol of Christians who go after ill-gotten gain, such as found in 1 Timothy 6:5-10, or of those who entice others to sin, such as found in 2 Peter 2:18. But there is another option that I don't think has received much consideration, and your Bible commentary probably won't be of much assistance, either. Why? Because most people, including the commentators, overlook the primary classification of who Balaam was. He was a gentile "holy man" who was asked by Israel's enemies to help them curse the Israelites. Said another way, he was a gentile believer who helped the surrounding pagan nations (now comprised of Islamic Arab countries) to fight against Israel.

Accordingly, applied more broadly and assuming we really are now in the last days, I believe that the full meaning of these verses is not just talking about Christians who have a love of money, but more pointedly, they are talking about Christians who are embracing Replacement Theology and opposing Israel by supporting the Palestinian cause, Boycott Divest and Sanction (BDS), and other anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist movements.

Replacement Theology is the idea that the Church has not just been grafted into the promises of Israel, as taught by Paul in Romans chapters 9-11, but it has instead completely replaced the nation of Israel as the inheritor of God's promises.¹⁰⁶ To borrow from an Old Testament example, to affirm Replacement Theology is like believing that Israel has become Esau and that the Church, like Jacob, has stolen Israel's birthright, with God's blessing. But Paul is very clear that the heart of Israel will only be hardened "*until the full number of the Gentiles has come in*" (Romans 11:25).

Also, if you haven't heard of the BDS movement, it is a Palestinian-led organization that seeks to delegitimize the state of Israel and hurt them economically.¹⁰⁷ Their justification is based on a revisionist version of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.¹⁰⁸ As an example, many Palestinians deny that the Holocaust ever happened. They also deliberately forget that it was Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt that invaded Israel on multiple occasions to wipe them out, not the other way around. If you don't know the true history of the conflict, then their claims may sound reasonable and just. But when you know the truth, their accusations amount to a thief calling the police on a homeowner for defending their family and property against them! When well-meaning Christians support

¹⁰⁶ David Reagan. "The Error of Replacement Theology: Has the Church Replaced Israel?" *Lamb & Lion Ministries*, <https://christinprophecy.org/articles/the-error-of-replacement-theology/>

¹⁰⁷ <https://bdsmovement.net>

¹⁰⁸ <https://emetnews.org/palestinian-myths/>

these movements, they are supporting and believing in lies—the kinds of lies that are also told, for example, by the Iranian regime against America. In fact, the Iranians are big supporters of Hamas and Hezbollah, the terrorist allies of the Palestinian governments in Gaza and the West Bank.

However, it is important to say that not everyone who embraces replacement theology is anti-Semitic; but you will rarely find someone who does and yet also wants to bless Israel and pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Furthermore, I should also mention that I have visited and enjoyed the hospitality of quite a few Palestinian Arabs in Judea and Samaria (now often called the West Bank). I met many that seemed kind, honorable, and deserving of a chance to have a better life than the current contentious situation allows. Under the right conditions, perhaps many Palestinians would make wonderful Israeli citizens. Nonetheless, that cannot be said of their current leadership, nor of a significant percentage of the population, whose hatred for Israel is palpable and dangerous.¹⁰⁹ The world needs to stop trying to blame Israel for the current state of this conflict. The truth is that most of the responsibility for the present situation lies with the rabid leadership that has governed the Palestinians for over five decades, and the countries that have encouraged them.

Here is the warning, though. In Revelation 2:14, God says, “*Nevertheless, I have a few things against you.*” One of the major things God is holding against them is that they were acting like Balaam. In other words, he is calling out Christians who are against Israel and are siding with her enemy neighbors, just like Balaam did. And he is saying to “*whoever has ears to hear what the Spirit says to the churches*” that they better stop it. I hope that Christians who are following Balaam’s error will repent and turn

¹⁰⁹ Justin Kron & Todd Morehead, prod. “Hope in the Holy Land,” *Philos Project*, (2021), <https://hopeintheholyland.com/#home>

back to a sound understanding of God’s Word and will begin to love and support the Jewish people. Not because I say so, but because of “*him who has the sharp, double-edged sword.*”

[To the Church in Pergamum]

¹² *“To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. ¹³ I know where you live—where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: There are some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality. ¹⁵ Likewise, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. ¹⁶ Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. ¹⁷ Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.*

– **Revelation 2:12-17**

Nevertheless, to avoid being unbalanced, I will also point out that Jesus commends many of them for remaining true to his name. Consequently, this means that we need to be patient and loving with those that don’t yet understand the significance of God’s plan for the Jewish people because they’ve been deceived by replacement theology. Pray for them. Love them. Warn them. “*Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.*”

The rest were killed with the sword coming out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.

– Revelation 19:21

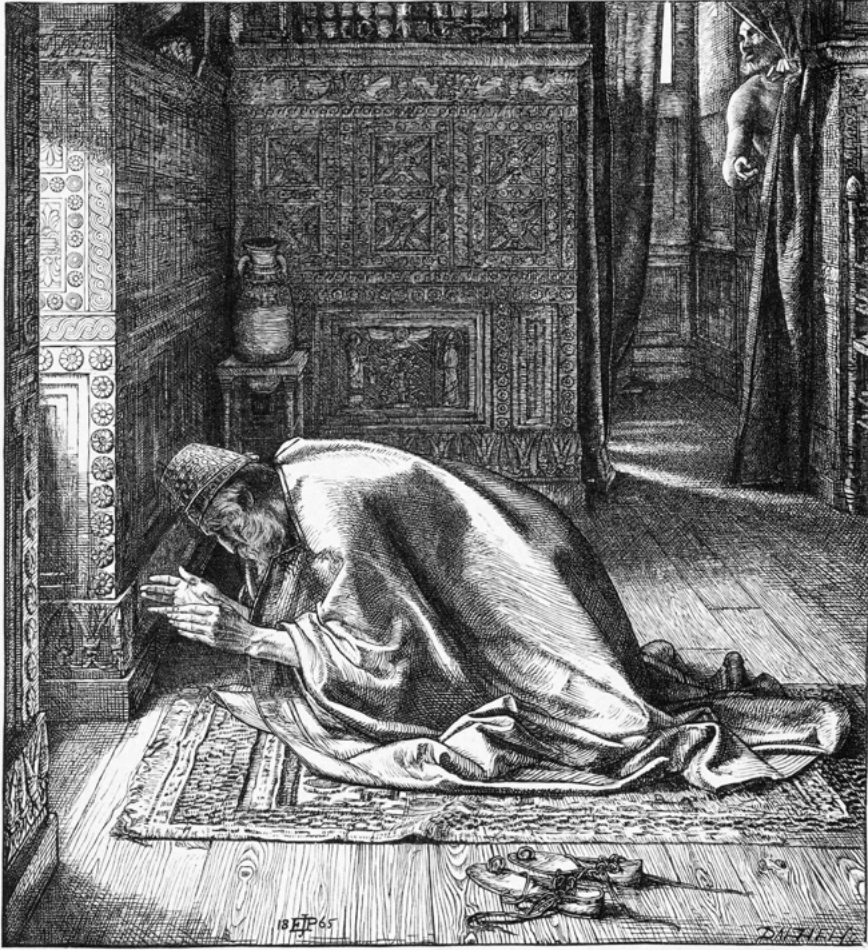
The Greatest Sign of Our Age

Clearly, the promises of God to Israel are still in force and will be carried out, just as God has declared. Even though the Jewish people who do not currently accept Christ as the Messiah are enemies “*as far as the gospel is concerned,*” they are “*loved on account of the patriarchs*” (Romans 11:28). The end is near. Exactly how much time remains before Christ’s return no one can know for sure; but we should recognize that, with current events in Israel matching so closely with what God told us in his Word to expect, his return must be close at hand.

The return of Israel as a nation is the single greatest sign of our age. It is just as significant as the sign to the nations of the deliverance of the Israelites from the Egyptians and their passage through the Red Sea. Jeremiah prophesied that in the last days the sign of Israel becoming a nation, which we see before us now, would become more important to people than talking about Israel’s deliverance from Egypt through Moses. Many today are now eagerly expecting the return of the Lord for the exactly the reason that Israel is once again a nation on the earth. So, we can confidently say that this prophecy, too, has come to pass.

“So then, the days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when people will no longer say, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,’ but they will say, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the descendants of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.’ Then they will live in their own land.”

– Jeremiah 23:7-8



Daniel's Prayer by Edward John Poynter, in *Dalziels' Bible Gallery* (New York: Scribner and Welford, 1865-81).

5

SEVENTY WEEKS HAVE BEEN DECREED

WELL, THIS IS IT. Whether you've read all the way through the previous four chapters, or you've just skipped straight to this one, this is the climax of the book. I'm going to introduce a whole new dimension to the traditional interpretation of Daniel's prophecy—something that's been hidden within it for a long time, waiting for "*the time of the end*" (*Daniel 12:4*).

This is a subject that many people will feel that they already fully understand, so in the first part of the chapter we'll work through and clarify some things about how the prophecy is traditionally interpreted and see where there are problems. It's like getting into a boat with a bunch of holes in the hull underneath the water line; before we can try to sail anywhere, we need to go down into

the hull and patch most of the leaks. Otherwise, we won't get very far. Along the way, we'll unravel some mysteries that have been debated in the church since its earliest days, like determining the dates for the beginning of Jesus' ministry and his crucifixion. Those two dates determine the total length of Christ's ministry, and they have significant implications for understanding Daniel's prophecy of seventy weeks. After we've covered that background, you'll be ready to see how a decree that everyone missed is the key to unlocking a major mystery about Daniel's seventy sevens.

The prophecy begins with Daniel realizing that the seventy years for the desolation of Jerusalem had been completed (based on the word of the Lord revealed to the prophet Jeremiah), and so he began to pray and fast and seek the Lord. In response, the Lord sent the angel Gabriel to reveal a picture of the world's empires from that time to the end of days and he gave Daniel the prophecy of Seventy Weeks—written circa 539 BC, it is one of the key texts about the last days found in the Old Testament. This prophecy of Daniel was also referenced by Jesus, certifying that it pertains to the last days.¹¹⁰

The Prophecy

Among other things, the prophecy of Seventy Weeks (*Daniel 9:24-27*) sets up our understanding that the tribulation will last for a total of seven years, and that the final three-and-a-half years of the seven-year tribulation will be the time of the reign of the Antichrist and the great tribulation. It also tells us that everything that is being revealed in the prophecy is triggered by a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem.

¹¹⁰ In Matthew 24:15, Jesus directly references Daniel's abomination of desolation (*Daniel 9:27*) while telling the disciples what to watch for before his return.

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

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

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

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

– Daniel 9:24–27 NASB

490 Years and Six Missions

Beginning with verse 24, we learn that a period of seventy weeks has been decreed by God. In case you are not familiar with this idea, when Daniel says seventy weeks (or seventy sevens), he means seventy weeks of years or seventy periods of seven years, which would be $70 \times 7 = 490$ years. It is a type of sabbatical decade (except 7 years instead of 10). It is sometimes also called a heptad. That’s why you will see both seventy “sevens” and seventy “weeks.” The idea that this correctly means 490 years, not 490 days, has been fully affirmed throughout church history.

Plus, there is internal evidence that makes it clear that it meant seventy “weeks of years” in Daniel 9, because later in Daniel 10:2-3, he wrote that he fasted for three sevens, but added “*of days*” at the end to indicate he meant three weeks, not twenty-one years.¹¹¹ Among people who consider the prophecy generally literal, all would agree that the seventy sevens still represents some counting of 490 years.¹¹² A final observation we can make from this passage is that the period of 490 years must complete six things: 1) to finish the transgression, 2) to make an end of sin, 3) to make atonement for iniquity, 4) to bring in everlasting righteousness, 5) to seal up vision and prophecy, and 6) to anoint the most holy place.

The Decree to Restore and Rebuild Jerusalem

In verse 25, the next thing we read is that there will be a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem that will serve as the starting point for counting the seventy weeks. One of the signs that the Pharisees and Sadducees missed in the time of Jesus was the fulfillment of this prophecy from the book of Daniel. It is written that “*from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks.*” Seven plus sixty-two is sixty-nine. That means that from the issuing of a decree to restore Jerusalem until the messiah, or anointed one, there will be 483 years ($7 \times 69 = 483$). This would appear to be a very straightforward interpretation of the text. At the very least, any studied rabbi would have been aware of this potential interpretation and would therefore have likely been watching for its fulfillment. However, there were some things that presented a challenge to their proper understanding of this passage.

¹¹¹ Travis Snow. *The 70 Weeks Jubilee* (Voice of Messiah, 2021): 46.

¹¹² The word for seven, *sabua* [*shavua*] (Strong's H17620), can literally mean the number seven, a period of seven days (a week), or seven years (a heptad). The context makes it clear that we are talking about a long time, i.e., seven years.

THE FIRST DECREE

To begin with, there were four possible decrees which the Jews could have tried to reference as the decree of Daniel's prophecy. The first decree, found in Ezra 1:1-4, was made by Cyrus circa 538/537 BC.¹¹³ It allowed the first exiles to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple, following the seventy years of exile prophesied by Jeremiah. If that was the decree that Daniel was speaking of, then the Messiah would have been expected to appear in 55/54 BC. We can be sure that this first decree wasn't the one Daniel was speaking of, though, for three reasons. First, Jesus wasn't born until fifty years later. Second, the decree didn't mention rebuilding Jerusalem. Lastly, there is no solid historical church support for this first decree.¹¹⁴

THE SECOND DECREE

There was also another decree issued by Darius I (c. 518 BC). It is recorded in Ezra 6:1-12. This decree mainly just affirmed the earlier decree of Cyrus. This would have yielded an expected date for the Messiah of 35 BC, which didn't happen either. But again, this decree does not mention restoring and rebuilding Jerusalem and, of course, it clearly didn't line up with the lifetime of Jesus.

¹¹³ Why is the date listed as 538/537 BC? Because the ancient calendars held that Spring was the beginning of the New Year, and therefore any given ancient year overlapped with two years in our modern calendar dating system. Thus, if the event was early in the ancient year, it would be 538, but if it was late in the year, then 537.

¹¹⁴ The early church historian Eusebius, writing around AD 314, did associate this first decree with the prophecy of Daniel (see: Eusebius. *Demonstratio Evangelica*. Book VIII, Ch. 2, 126-131. Online version: www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0882/_P38.HTM). However, Eusebius dissented from the opinions of the early church fathers and introduced his own conjecture relating the years of the decree to the conquering of Jerusalem by Pompey (Pompeius). Unfortunately, he just created additional confusion by presenting a rather disjointed and logically self-defeating explanation for Daniel's prophecy.

The early church father Tertullian (c. AD 198) wrote that the start of the decree should be from the beginning of the reign of Darius, when Daniel first saw the vision, but the errors in his accounting disqualify this date just as surely as a simple count from 518 BC does.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, it would be easy to imagine that some Jews did look for the arrival of the Messiah on this decree, or the first one by Cyrus but were disappointed. The idea that the Jews had already witnessed the appearance of multiple false messiahs is recorded in the Book of Acts. While we are not given the exact timing of these false messiahs, they had arisen in the not-too-distant past and may have claimed a connection with one of the earlier decrees.¹¹⁶

But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. Then he addressed the Sanhedrin: “Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.”

— Acts 5:34-39

¹¹⁵ Coxe. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, “Tertullian: An Answer to the Jews, c.VII,” v.3, 158-60.

¹¹⁶ To establish a messianic claim, they would have needed a connection to prophecy, and may have timed their claims to match one of the earlier timeline windows from Daniel’s prophecy.

THE THIRD DECREE

The third decree the Jews could have looked to is recorded in Ezra 7:11-26 and it was issued by Artaxerxes I in 458 BC.¹¹⁷ The year following 483 years from that decree was AD 26 to 27. Hence, this decree was indeed at an appropriate time to relate to the life of Christ. The decree also specifically names Jerusalem, and it is recorded in Scripture. While the rebuilding of the city is not explicitly mentioned, it does acknowledge that Jerusalem is the city of God, and it says that in addition to providing for the temple sacrifices, the Jews could do whatever seemed best to them “*with the rest of the silver and gold*” according to the will of their God. Therefore, this decree is indeed a viable option.

[King’s Decree on Behalf of Ezra]

Now this is the copy of the decree which King Artaxerxes gave to Ezra the priest, the scribe, learned in the words of the commandments of the Lord and His statutes to Israel:

Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect peace.

And now I have issued a decree that any of the people of Israel and their priests and the Levites in my kingdom who are willing to go to Jerusalem, may go with you. Forasmuch as you are sent by the king and his seven counselors to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem according to the law of your God which is in your hand, and to bring the silver and gold, which the king and his counselors have freely offered to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem, with all the silver and gold which you find in the whole

¹¹⁷ Kitchen. *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 74.

province of Babylon, along with the freewill offering of the people and of the priests, who offered willingly for the house of their God which is in Jerusalem; with this money, therefore, you shall diligently buy bulls, rams and lambs, with their grain offerings and their drink offerings and offer them on the altar of the house of your God which is in Jerusalem. Whatever seems good to you and to your brothers to do with the rest of the silver and gold, you may do according to the will of your God. Also the utensils which are given to you for the service of the house of your God, deliver in full before the God of Jerusalem. The rest of the needs for the house of your God, for which you may have occasion to provide, provide for it from the royal treasury.

I, even I, King Artaxerxes, issue a decree to all the treasurers who are in the provinces beyond the River, that whatever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, may require of you, it shall be done diligently, even up to 100 talents of silver, 100 kors of wheat, 100 baths of wine, 100 baths of oil, and salt as needed. Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be done with zeal for the house of the God of heaven, so that there will not be wrath against the kingdom of the king and his sons. We also inform you that it is not allowed to impose tax, tribute or toll on any of the priests, Levites, singers, doorkeepers, Nethinim or servants of this house of God.

You, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your God which is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges that they may judge all the people who are in the province beyond the River, even all those who know the laws of your God; and you may teach anyone who is ignorant of them...

– Ezra 7:11-25 NASB

THE FOURTH DECREE

Now from here on it begins to get complicated, because there was also possibly a fourth decree mentioned in Nehemiah 2:1-9. It was also issued by Artaxerxes I, but thirteen years later in 445/444 BC. It was more of a letter, though, that further clarified and added funding to his original decree (like the decree Darius made to support the first decree of Cyrus). Plus, counting 483 regular solar years from there would yield a date of AD 39/40, which is too late to have been associated with Jesus. This would seem to disqualify the fourth decree from consideration except that the fourth decree mentions rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, while the third decree does not specifically mention rebuilding Jerusalem itself.

I also said to him, "If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah? And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the royal park, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy?" And because the gracious hand of my God was on me, the king granted my requests. So I went to the governors of Trans-Euphrates and gave them the king's letters.

– Nehemiah 2:7-9a

In response to this timeline dilemma, Dr. Harold W. Hoehner published a now widely known theory to resolve the problem in his book, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* in 1977.¹¹⁸ He was building on the work of Sir Robert Anderson, who in 1881 proposed the use of a 360-day year to reconcile the timing of

¹¹⁸ Harold W. Hoehner. *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Zondervan, 1977): 126-39.

Daniel's Seventy Weeks.¹¹⁹ Sir Robert's proposal started the count with the second decree of Artaxerxes, which he dated to March 14, 445 BC and ended on April 6, AD 32, counting 480 years of 360 days per year or 173,880 days. Dr. Hoehner then improved on those calculations. He followed Sir Robert's 360-day year method, but he counted from 1 Nisan, 444 BC to 10 Nisan, AD 33.

Both positions were in turn building on the position of Julius Africanus, circa AD 232-240. He was the first to suggest that the fourth decree was the proper one to use for Daniel's prophecy.¹²⁰ Africanus also suggested that the prophecy of 490 years was completed when Jesus began his ministry in the year following the start of John's ministry (*Luke 3:1*), in the sixteenth year of Tiberius Caesar. Like Hoehner and Sir Robert Anderson, Julius Africanus recognized that there were too few years between 444 BC and AD 27 (475 years by his calculations), or even AD 33 (which was thirteen years short of sixty-nine weeks and six years short of seventy weeks). To make the math work out, Julius Africanus assumed the use of a short Hebrew year of 354 days. This is a similar solution to the later proposals, but it used a completely different number days that was no less speculative than Sir Robert's proposal. Thus, we should reject a counting method that is less than a solar year. Even though Africanus is an early testimony, he simply helps demonstrate that there is no historically validated precedent for a 360-day year.

A Critical Review of the 360-day Prophetic Year Hypothesis

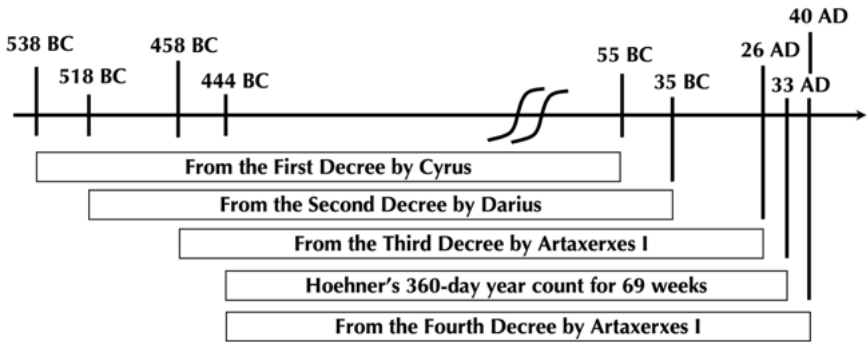
Since the 360-day year counting method is now so widely accepted, it is important to firmly prove that using solar years is

¹¹⁹ Robert Anderson. *The Coming Prince: The Last Great Monarch of Christendom* (Trumpet Press, 2014): 74-78. First published in 1881 by Hodder and Stoughton.

¹²⁰ Coxe. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, "The Extant Writings of Julius Africanus," v.6, 135.

(and has always been) the proper way of counting years—in Daniel’s prophecy and in the Bible in general. If you’ve already studied Daniel’s prophecy of seventy weeks, then you probably already know about the common assertion that these years should be counted with 360 days, not 365.25 days. However, the underlying motivation for this consideration is to make the count of sixty-nine weeks fit between 444 BC and AD 33, which is a necessity if the fourth decree is to be considered at all, as seen in the summary chart below.

The Sixty-Nine-Week Date Windows for the Appearance of the Messiah with Respect to Four Possible Decrees



There are several ways that this assertion is supported. First, it is written in Genesis that Noah’s flood was five months and one-hundred-fifty days total (*Genesis 7:11,24; 8:3-4*). By deduction, each month could be assumed to have had thirty days in it. Likewise, it is assumed that the forty-two months in Revelation 13:5 must be the same as the 1,260 days of Revelation 11:2-3 and 12:6, again yielding an average of thirty days per month. The presumption is supported by the phrase “*a time, times, and half a time*” (which is taken to mean three and a half years) that is found in Daniel 12:7 in connection with the Antichrist, and in Revelation 12:14 regarding the protection of the woman in the wilderness. Taken together it is assumed that a prophetic month in God’s calendar must be thirty days long, and forty-two months

must be a year and a half. While the idea may be attractive, on close inspection, it has too many difficulties in defending itself.¹²¹ The first problem is that the Israelites never counted years using just twelve thirty-day months. True, they used a lunar calendar, but they always periodically adjusted to the solar year by adding a thirteenth month. Not only that, but there is just no historic support for a 360-day “prophetic” year, prior to Sir Robert Anderson in 1881.¹²² Plus, there are some mistakes in Hoehner’s calculations for the number of days between March 5, 444 BC and March 5, AD 33 that reportedly throw off his count by a month and four days.¹²³ And he might be off by a year, if the decree was really in

¹²¹ At first blush, the idea of such incredible precision—down to the very day of 173,880 days—is indeed attractive. However, the deliberate use of seven-year increments is not unlike measuring the same period as a multiple of decades. In other words, by using such a large unit of measurement, the corresponding precision required to fulfill the description is also accordingly decreased. For example, most people would think that the use of the term decade to cover an actual period such as 9 years, 8 months and 3 days, or 10 years, 5 months and 17 days would be perfectly accurate. Both are reasonably approximated by the larger unit of measure, a decade. Therefore, by the same token, anything more than six or less than eight could still be reasonably approximated by the number seven, i.e., a week. That doesn’t mean that God can’t be more precise if he wants to be, but the unit of measure that he intentionally chose in this case does not require it. Furthermore, we simply do not have enough information to fix the dates as precisely as Dr. Hoehner attempts to do.

¹²² There are no Jewish or early church sources to support this position (except for Julius Africanus who tried to argue for 354-day years). Sir Robert does reference the Babylonian calendar, which used twelve lunar months of thirty days each, to support his position, but he failed to mention that even the Babylonians regularly inserted an extra month to correct to the solar year. Hence, the idea is entirely speculative.

¹²³ The error is in the calculation of the number of days per solar year in the Julian versus Gregorian calendars. The error is only 4 days out of 173,880, but when you are making an argument based on precision down to the very day it undermines the argument. Hoehner is also reported to have a more significant error resulting from using outdated Babylonian date conversion tables that sets his dates off by one month. For a critical review see: Chris Sandoval. “The Dispensationalist Christian Interpretation of the Seventy Weeks,” *The Secular Web*, 1-31-07, [//infidels.org/library/modern/chris-sandoval-daniel/#dispensationalist](http://infidels.org/library/modern/chris-sandoval-daniel/#dispensationalist)

445 BC, as proposed by Sir Robert Anderson, and not 444 BC, as presumed by Hoehner.¹²⁴ There is also the question of the meaning of the phrase “*a time, times, and half a time.*” It probably does mean three and half years in a general sense, but it is more nuanced than that. It is a very cryptic statement, in both Hebrew and Greek. It would have been easy to simply write three and half years, but the word in Hebrew is *moed* (Strong’s H3259), which means an appointed time, meeting, season, signal, or feast. It only means a year in the sense that the time, season, feast, etc. may be an annual event. Hence, we should assume that God’s use of such a cryptic phrase is deliberate,¹²⁵ and recognize that it is an imprecise term that equally fits 1,278.4 days (3.5 solar years) and 1,260 days (or forty-two months).

The final problem is that you would have to assume that every prophecy related to a counting of years in the Bible was always calculated using a 360-day year.¹²⁶ But without clear instruction to the contrary, you would expect that every reference to a given number of years in the Bible is to be counted just like any other years. [*It shouldn’t take a special decoder ring to come up with the right date for a prophecy.*] Thus, it seems the most sensible position is to use the solar year when counting years in the Bible.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Ed Rickard. “Lesson 8: Literature on the Sixty-Nine Weeks,” April 22, 2021, www.themoorings.org/Jesus/Messianic_prophecy/69_weeks/literature.html

¹²⁵ I would say, not only is it deliberate, but it is hiding some meaning, for example that the proper counting of the years is indexed to one of the Jewish feast days.

¹²⁶ It’s not a great number of prophecies to consider perhaps, but it would include: Isaiah 7:8, 23:15, 38:5, Ezekiel 19:11-13, Jeremiah 25:11, Zechariah 1:12. One would even need to question the interpretation of Psalm 90:10, is the length of a prophetic generation 70 to 80 years, or 69 to 79 years? I think a standard solar year makes the most sense overall, because the Jews always corrected their calendar to that.

¹²⁷ There is a good refutation of the 360-day prophetic year hypothesis also found in: Snow. *The 70 Weeks Jubilee*, 215-26.

Supporting the Third Decree

When we look to the early church fathers for a consensus regarding which decree might best be associated with Daniel's prophecy of seventy weeks, there is no clear favored position.¹²⁸ This might lead one to conclude that there is no definitive conclusion that can be made about the best way to interpret Daniel's prophecy. Some might even feel that the prophecy is no clearer now than when it was first written. But Daniel was told that the prophecy would be sealed until the time of the end (*Daniel 12:9*). Therefore, the lack of a clear early church teaching regarding this prophecy should not be surprising to us. One might object, though, that Artaxerxes' first decree in 458 BC did not specifically mention rebuilding Jerusalem, but the letters sent with Nehemiah thirteen years later did. And this is indeed a valid objection. To answer this, we need to review exactly what Daniel wrote in chapter 9. Daniel wrote "*from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem*" and also that "*it will be built again, with plaza and moat.*" Did Artaxerxes' first decree allow for the beginning of the restoration of a plaza or moat?

Artaxerxes' decree restored the rule of law and administration, and it recognized Jerusalem as the city of God (*Ezra 7:15-19*). That's not far off, but what of the specific mention of "plaza" and "moat?" Well, those two words, plaza (*rechob* – Strong's h7339) and moat (*charumts* – Strong's h2742) are not mentioned in either decree by Artaxerxes. However, the *rechob* of the House of God is mentioned in *Ezra 10:9*, when all the tribes of Judah and Benjamin assembled there to discuss their intermarrying with foreign wives. I think the case can be made that a plaza (*rechob*) was indeed restored under the first decree of Artaxerxes because they were all able to meet there—since it was at that time already usable as a

¹²⁸ J. Paul Tanner. "Is Daniel's seventy weeks prophecy messianic? Part 1." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 166, no. 662 (2009): 181-200.

meeting place. In this case, it is reasonable to conclude that when Artaxerxes decreed that they could also do whatever else they thought best with the rest of the gold and silver, “*according to the will of your God,*” a wide door was opened by this first decree.

As a result, we have a solid base for inferring that the initial rebuilding of the temple by Ezra also included improvements to the plaza (*rechob*) of the Temple. The second decree of Artaxerxes was a reinforcement of his first decree, because the work to restore the rest of the city had stalled. It provided additional resources and manpower and more specifically spelled out his intent to support the full restoration of Jerusalem, which he had already opened the door for in his first decree by calling it “*the city of the God of Israel.*” If I imagine myself being Ezra at that time, I don’t think I would have had any trouble understanding that I could use Artaxerxes’ first decree as a justification for also starting to rebuild other parts of Jerusalem.

Consequently, there is a strong case that the referenced decree was the third decree, which was issued by Artaxerxes in 458 BC. The later decree of 445/444 BC just reinforced the earlier one. To further support this view, it is necessary to establish some key dates—namely, the timing of the start of the ministry of John the Baptist and of Jesus, as well as the date of Christ’s crucifixion. From a gospel perspective, plus or minus a few years on the precise dating of those events is just an academic question. But if we are trying to defend the truthfulness of those accounts or to connect those dates to other events in history, then it is very helpful to have an accurate understanding of them.

The Start of the Ministries of Jesus and John the Baptist

Remember that the year AFTER 483 years had passed following the third decree in 458 BC was from AD 26 to 27. If this connection is correct, then this should be the start of Jesus’ ministry;

however, many believe that his ministry didn't start until later, like AD 29 or 30. To help resolve this question, there are some important clues in Scripture that give us the approximate dates for the start of the ministries of both John and Jesus. First, Jesus was conceived six months after John the Baptist (*Luke 1:26*), of course meaning that John was only 6 months older than Jesus. Second, Jesus was born before Herod the Great died. Scholars have suggested dates for Herod's death in 4 BC and 1 BC, partly because Josephus reports that there was an eclipse of the moon near the end of his life (there were eclipses in both those years).¹²⁹ That doesn't mean that Herod died in the same year as the eclipse, though, just close to it. Many events happened between the eclipse and the Passover that followed Herod's death. Allowing more time for Herod's death (early in 3 BC), followed by several months of preparation for his massive funeral prior to the Passover of that year, we get the best fit to the various events described by Josephus and others.¹³⁰ Hence, Herod died in January of 3 BC (probably on the second of Shevat¹³¹), after a thirty-seven-year reign that started in 40 BC.¹³²

¹²⁹ Dwight R. Hutchison. *The Lion Led the Way*. Fourth Ed. (Editions Signes Celestes, 2021): 324-5.

¹³⁰ This will still be debatable for some, but this summarizes my assessment.

¹³¹ Vered Noam. "Megillat Taanit: The Scroll of Fasting." *The Literature of the Sages, Second Part: Midrash and Targum, Liturgy, Poetry, Mysticism, Contracts, Inscriptions, Ancient Science and the Languages of Rabbinic Literature* (2006): 339-362.

¹³² In Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews*, b. 14, ch. 14, s. 5, we read that Herod the Great was made king by the Romans on the 184th Olympiad, during the second consulship of Caius Domithis Calvinus and the first consulship of Caius Asinius Pollio. This strongly indicates a date of 40 BC. The Olympiads began in 776 BC, so 184 4-year Olympiads later (736 years) was 40 BC. Plus, both consulships were initiated in 40 BC, but Gaius Asinius Pollio was removed in October of 40 BC. [H.H. Scullard. *From the Gracchi to Nero* (London: Methuen & Co., 1970):167, 249.] For all of Josephus' statements to be correct, it could not have been later than the end of 40 BC that Herod began to rule. We also read in *Wars of the Jews*, b. 1, ch. 33, s. 8 that Herod died having reigned for 37 years after being made king by the Romans. This yields a date of 3 BC for his death. Furthermore, Josephus reports that Philip died in the 20th year of Tiberius after having reigned for 37

Early accounts from Eusebius¹³³ (fourth century) and Macrobius¹³⁴ (fifth century) tell us that the children under two, whom Herod ordered to be killed (*Matthew 2:13-23*), were killed around the same time that Herod executed his son (Antipater), which was just before he himself died. And Jesus could not have been more than two years old when Herod died, which means that he would have been born no earlier than 6 BC and as late as 4 BC, but most likely between late 5 BC and early 4 BC.¹³⁵ Furthermore, there is inscriptional evidence, found on a coin, that reveals that Quirinius was governor of Syria and Cilicia from 11 BC through 4 BC, which further supports this date range.¹³⁶ Accordingly, most Christian scholars believe that Christ was born in 5 or 4 BC.¹³⁷ Despite the reasonable agreement within Christian scholarship for the dating of Christ's birth, there are two main positions for the dating of the start of his ministry. Luke tells us that John's ministry began in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar (*Luke 3:1*). The primary point of controversy is whether Luke was counting from the year that Tiberius Caesar began his co-regency with Augustus in AD 12, or after Augustus died and Tiberius became

years (*Antiquities* b. 18, ch. 4, s. 6). For all the dates to fit together, we must assume that Josephus was counting twenty years from Tiberius' inauguration as Augustus in AD 14, confirming Philip's death later in AD 34 after having reigned for thirty-seven years. This also agrees with an inauguration early in 3 BC, after 37 years on the Roman calendar, following the death of Herod the Great.

¹³³ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, b. 1, ch. 8, s. 3.

¹³⁴ Ambrosius Theodosius Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, book II, chapter IV:11.

¹³⁵ It is thought that Jesus was at least two years old when Herod died because he killed all the boys that were two years old and under (*Matthew 2:13-23*). But it is safe to assume that Herod would have killed boys that were a little older than the reported time when the Magi saw the star—just to be sure, and because ascertaining a young child's age would not have been easy when there were no birth certificates. Hence, Jesus could have been much younger than the normally assumed two years of age.

¹³⁶ Randall J. Price. *The Stones Cry Out* (Harvest House, 1997): 299.

¹³⁷ Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, 37; J.I. Packer et al. *Nelson's Illustrated Encyclopedia of Bible Facts* (Thomas Nelson, 1995): 41, "Bible Chronology"; D. & P. Alexander (eds.). *Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible* (Eerdmans, 1973): 472.

the sole regent in AD 14, giving him the title of Tiberius Caesar Augustus. Based on which position one chooses, the start of Jesus' ministry was either in AD 27,¹³⁸ or AD 29.¹³⁹

The problem with a co-regency viewpoint, is that other ancient sources (Josephus, Appian, Plutarch, Suetonius) don't start their counts from Tiberius' co-regency.¹⁴⁰ However, there is ample evidence that Tiberius was in fact made a co-regent with Augustus beginning in AD 12.¹⁴¹ The only question then is whether Luke was counting that time in his reckoning of fifteen years. Since Luke used only the name Tiberius Caesar in his account, rather than the title of Tiberius Caesar Augustus he took on later, the earlier date of AD 26 is a reasonable assumption.

Not only that, but the earlier date is particularly compelling when you consider that we are also told that Jesus began his ministry at about thirty years of age (*Luke 3:23*). Since Jesus was born near the end of 5 BC or early in 4 BC, then John, who was born six months earlier, was born sometime in 5 BC.¹⁴² Both of their ministries began about thirty years later—John's in AD 26 (when he was about thirty) and Jesus' in AD 27, presumably at least six months after John started his ministry. If we don't use the earlier date, then we must assume that Luke's "about thirty" may have really meant thirty-two, assuming the fifteenth year of Tiberius meant AD 28 instead of AD 26. Some have argued that Luke's wording "about thirty" could have applied to Jesus at an age of up to thirty-three, but that seems a weak position to hold.¹⁴³

¹³⁸ Packer. *Nelson's Illustrated Encyclopedia of Bible Facts*, 40-1; Alexander. *Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible*, 472.

¹³⁹ Hoehner. *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, 37; Craig S. Keener. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Intervarsity Press, 1993): 196.

¹⁴⁰ Darrell L Bock. *Studying the Historical Jesus* (Baker Academic, 2002): 72.

¹⁴¹ Rainer Reisner. *Paul's Early Period* (Eerdmans, 1998): 40.

¹⁴² Also held by: Hoehner. *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, 11-27.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 37-8.

Furthermore, if we can agree with the widely accepted view that Jesus was baptized and began his ministry in AD 26/27, then it should be easy to recognize that this 484th “year” was sixty-nine sevens, or about 483 years (of 365 days each), after the decree of Artaxerxes in 458 BC. Hence, we can conclude that the fulfillment of Daniel 9:25 was not when Jesus made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, but instead was seen when Jesus was revealed as the Messiah at the baptism by John, when: “*The heavens were opened, and [John] saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on [Jesus], and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.’—Matthew 3:13-17*”

There is one more clue from Scripture, and it demonstrates that the first century Jews also considered AD 26/27 to be a viable date for the appearance of the Messiah. In John 1:19-28, we are told that the Jews sent priests and Levites to inquire about John and to find out if he was the Messiah. Thus, the Jews were at that time looking for the Messiah, presumably because they were aware of the decree by Artaxerxes and knew that AD 26/27 was the year after 483 years from when it had been issued, in accordance with Daniel’s prophecy of seven weeks and sixty-two weeks.

The Date of the Crucifixion

At this point, besides weakening a well-loved interpretation of the Daniel prophecy using a 360-day year, we have not departed from any traditional views regarding these decrees. Nevertheless, by designating the decree of 458 BC as the correct one, there are some associated implications for the date of Christ’s crucifixion. To start with, there are only two viable options for the event that had Passovers beginning on Friday, and they fall on AD 30 and AD 33.¹⁴⁴ But if Christ’s ministry was, as is traditionally believed, only about three and a half years long, then his crucifixion should

¹⁴⁴ Hoehner. *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, 99-105.

have been in AD 30. This position is supported by numerous Christian scholars who favor an early start of Jesus' ministry in AD 26/27.¹⁴⁵ However, early church fathers, like Hippolytus, reported that Christ was crucified in AD 33.¹⁴⁶ There are also good historical arguments from the reign of Pilate to support this date.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, there are multiple ancient sources that confirm that Christ was crucified in AD 33, including reports that there was a great earthquake and an eclipse of the sun at that time.¹⁴⁸ The earliest account is by Phlegon (c. AD 137), who reported that all those things occurred in the fourth year of the 202nd Olympiad (AD 33).¹⁴⁹ Plus, the only reports of an earthquake in Israel during Christ's ministry are in AD 33.¹⁵⁰ The best way to resolve this dilemma, while preserving the dates of AD 26/27, is to consider that Jesus' ministry was about seven years in length. [*It was a little less than seven years, but in Jewish reckoning a part of a year is counted as a whole year (Siftei Chakhamim, Genesis 17:26:1).*] Admittedly, a seven-year ministry is not a traditional viewpoint, but the Scriptures do not specify exactly how long Jesus' ministry lasted, nor his age at his crucifixion. We also know that Jesus did many more things than what were recorded in the Gospels, both before and during his ministry (*John 21:25*). So, there is no conflict with Scripture if Jesus had a seven-year ministry.

¹⁴⁵ Price. *The Stones Cry Out*, "Appendix--Chronology of Historical Figures"; Alexander. *Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible*, 472; Packer. *Nelson's Illustrated Encyclopedia of Bible Facts*, 41.

¹⁴⁶ Coxe. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, "Hippolytus: Fragments - Commentaries," v.5, 179.

¹⁴⁷ Hoehner. *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, 105-14; Bock. *Studying the Historical Jesus*, 76-77.

¹⁴⁸ For more information on the sources to support that there was an earthquake and three hours of darkness during the crucifixion see: www.christianevidence.net/2017/12/historical-evidence-darkness-earthquake.html.

¹⁴⁹ Paul Maier. *Pontius Pilate* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1968): 366; Phlegon's citation is a fragment from *Olympiades he Chronika* 13, ed. Otto Keller, *Rerum Naturalium Scriptores Graeci Minores*, 1 (Leipzig Teurber, 1877): 101.

¹⁵⁰ "Significant Earthquake Information: AD 33," NOAA, www.ngdc.noaa.gov/hazel/view/hazards/earthquake/event-more-info/8178

The length of Jesus' ministry was a subject widely debated by the early church fathers. Suggestions ranged from just one year all the way up to over ten years. The theory that his ministry lasted at least ten years is based on the comment of the Jews to Jesus that he was "*not yet fifty years old*" in John 8:57. Hence, Irenaeus, circa AD 180, argued that Jesus must have been over forty!¹⁵¹ This makes it clear that no one in the early church knew for sure how long Jesus' ministry lasted. Later, Eusebius (fourth century) claimed that his ministry lasted for less than four years because of Josephus' account of the length of the terms of the high priests that served during that time.¹⁵² There are problems with Eusebius' assumptions about the high priests, though, so it's not an airtight argument by any means; but from that point on, it became the traditional view in the church. It is almost universally accepted that since there are only three, or maybe four, unique Passovers recorded in Scripture, then Jesus' ministry couldn't have been longer than three years, but there is no scriptural basis for presuming that every Passover of Jesus' ministry was recorded by the Apostles (*John 21:25*). Considered altogether, there is no concrete reason to deny that Jesus' ministry could have been much longer than the traditionally supposed three and half years.¹⁵³ Looking at all the corroborative sources for both an early start (AD 26/27) and a later crucifixion (AD 33), it seems wiser to accept a longer length of ministry than to preserve the unsupportable traditions of a three-year ministry, or to assume

¹⁵¹ Ibid., "Irenaeus Against Heresies," v. 1 (Ch. XXII), 391-2. It isn't hard to imagine, however, that a thirty-six-year-old Jesus, who had been living outside, working hard, and sleeping so little, could have looked to be in his forties.

¹⁵² Eusebius. *Ecclesiastical History*, (b. 1, ch. 10), 25-6.

¹⁵³ This also makes Eusebius' assertion that Christ was crucified in the eighteenth year of Tiberius Caesar highly suspect, since it is obvious that he calculated the date based on his presumptions about the length of Christ's ministry. See: William Smith and Henry Wace, eds. *A Dictionary of Christian Biography, Literature, Sects and Doctrines: AD. Vol. 2* (J. Murray, 1880): 353; Eusebius. *Ecclesiastical History* (b. 1, c. 10), 25-6.

that Luke was not counting the co-regency of Tiberius Caesar in his calculation of the fifteenth year (assuming Jesus was about thirty-two years old, not thirty, when he started his ministry).

Here's a bonus question. On what day of the week was Christ crucified? Many, including myself, have questioned whether Jesus was really crucified on Good Friday, which is the long-held tradition of the church. Why? Well, Christ was undoubtedly raised on the first day of the week, Sunday, just before dawn (*John 20:1, Mark 16:2-4, Luke 24:1-2 & Matthew 28:1*). Furthermore, Luke 9:22 says that he would be raised on the third day, which agrees with a Friday crucifixion and Sunday resurrection. However, Matthew 12:40 says that Christ would be buried for three days and three nights but there were only two nights from Friday afternoon to Sunday morning. To solve that dilemma, some have argued that Jesus was crucified on Thursday because the 14th of Nisan, the day designated in the Torah as the start of Passover, began not on Friday, April 3, but at sunset on Thursday, April 2 in AD 33. A Thursday crucifixion easily provides three days and three nights, but there is a better answer, and it maintains the tradition of Friday.

First, under Jewish reckoning, a part of a day is counted as a whole day, as explained numerous times in the Talmud. Thus, Friday to Sunday, in a Jewish way of thinking, could be counted as three full days. Additionally, even in a general sense Friday, Saturday, and Sunday are clearly a total of three days. Next, three "nights" can be counted literally if we include the solar eclipse during Christ's crucifixion as a third "night"—when darkness fell on the land for three hours (*Mark 15:33*) at the end of which Jesus breathed his last (*Mark 15:37*). Some might wonder how this could truly be counted as a night, but again the answer comes from understanding Jewish thought. They say that night begins after the twilight of sunset when the first three stars become visible (Mishnah Torah, Sabbath 5:4). The Greek historian Phlegon,

when he reported that there was a solar eclipse in AD 33, also said that the “stars even appeared in the heavens.” Hence, the darkness during Christ’s crucifixion, which ended with his death, could honestly be counted as the first of three nights.

Next, in Exodus 12:6 it says that the Passover sacrifice was to be made “between the evenings” (*beyin ha’arbayim*) of Nisan 14, even though the tradition was to wait until the next afternoon to offer the lambs (Jerusalem Talmud Horayot 1:1:3). This explains how Jesus celebrated the Passover dinner with his disciples on Thursday night (*Mark 14:17*) at the beginning of Nisan 14. Then later, but still on Nisan 14, he was tried and crucified on Friday, when the Passover lambs were traditionally sacrificed. Consequently, a crucifixion on Friday does give us the best explanation of everything that the Scriptures testify about this blessed event.

Why Were There Seven Sevens and Sixty-Two Sevens?

In the pronouncement to Daniel, the sixty-nine weeks until the messiah are mysteriously divided into seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. A reasonable explanation is found by recognizing the 458 BC decree of Artaxerxes and considering that the restoration of Jerusalem would be “*in times of distress*” (*Daniel 9:25*). The forty-nine-year period (seven weeks of years) probably covers the time from the first decree of Artaxerxes to the death of Nehemiah (presumably in 409 BC or thereafter) when all the promised restorations were finally completed. To be clear, there are no references that give us exactly forty-nine years for the restoration of Jerusalem, and we do not know historically or biblically the exact date of Nehemiah’s death. What we do have, though, is a report about this given by Josephus.¹⁵⁴ He describes Nehemiah as having continued to build up Jerusalem over a long period of time, and he tells us that Nehemiah “lived to a great age and did

¹⁵⁴ Josephus. *Antiquities of the Jews*, b.11, ch. 5, s. 8.

many excellent things.” This is reinforced by Nehemiah 13:6-7, which reports that Nehemiah returned to the king in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes (c. 432 BC), but that sometime later he came back again to Jerusalem to continue working on its restoration. Accordingly, at least twenty-six years after the first decree in 458 BC are accounted for.

Nehemiah then returned to work for Artaxerxes, but he later returned to Jerusalem (*Nehemiah 13:6-7*) before Artaxerxes’ death, which was in 424 BC. This means that Nehemiah stayed no more than an additional eight years as a servant of Artaxerxes in Babylon, and then retired from his post and returned to Jerusalem. Based on Josephus’ account, once Nehemiah did return, he lived out the rest of his days in Jerusalem, and then died at a “great age.” If the rebuilding of Jerusalem took 49 years, counted from the third decree in 458 BC, then the work would have been completed in 409 BC. After Nehemiah’s final return to Jerusalem (c. 424 BC), he would have only had to live another sixteen years to fulfill the prophetic timeline. Allowing that Nehemiah was perhaps in his early thirties or forties when he first petitioned the king, then it’s logical to think that Nehemiah could have completed the restoration of Jerusalem as a man in his sixties or seventies.¹⁵⁵ Granted, there is some conjecture here, but it is not unreasonable or inconsistent with the information available. The idea that Nehemiah completed the repairs in 409 BC was first proposed as early as 1715 by Humprey Prideaux, in justification of his position that the counting of the weeks prophesied by Daniel should begin with the third decree made by Artaxerxes in 458 BC.¹⁵⁶ Clement of Alexandria (c. AD 200) also asserted that the

¹⁵⁵ Assuming Nehemiah was 30-40 years old in 444 BC, he would have been between 65-75 years old in 409 BC.

¹⁵⁶ Humprey Prideaux. *Historical Connection of the Old and New Testaments: Comprising the History of the Jews and Neighboring Nations, from the Decline of the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel to the Time of Christ. Vol. II* (New York: Bliss and White, et al., 1823): 52-3 & 551, First printed in 1715-1718.

temple was rebuilt in forty-nine years, but he didn't give the start and ending dates.¹⁵⁷

The Meaning of Cut Off and Have Nothing

Continuing, Daniel's prophecy tells us that after sixty-two weeks, the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing. But what does that mean? If you are familiar with the Daniel prophecy already, you'll be thinking that it is a simple answer—that the Messiah will be killed (i.e., crucified in the case of Jesus), which is a correct but incomplete answer. [*To fully answer the question, we'll need to get a little technical in this section; but by the end of this short discussion, I think you're going to be amazed at the significance and will see that it further reinforces the connection of Daniel's prophecy with the crucifixion of Christ in AD 33.*]

Counting forty-nine years from the third decree of Artaxerxes, we get a presumptive date for the completion of the restoration of Jerusalem. Another sixty-two weeks brings us to the beginning of Jesus' ministry when he was baptized and first officially recognized as the Messiah. The Scriptures tell us that after the baptism, Jesus was immediately led by the spirit into the wilderness for forty days (*Mark 1:11-13*). But there's a problem. When we connect the end of the sixty-two sevens to the start of Jesus' ministry, it is not the time when Jesus was crucified, which we associate with the time that "*the anointed one will be cut off and have nothing.*" True, Jesus being crucified even seven years later is still "*after the sixty-two sevens,*" but then it could almost be counted as sixty-three sevens. Thus, this presents a challenge to connecting the start of Jesus' ministry to the completion of sixty-two sevens.

¹⁵⁷ Coxe. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, "Clement of Alexandria—The Stomata, or Misc.," v. 2, 329.

Marvelously, the answer is found by examining the meaning of the word translated “cut off.” In Daniel 9:26, it says that the anointed one (*mashiach*, or Messiah) would be “cut off” (*karet* - Strong's H3772) and “have nothing” (*ayin* - Strong's H369). The Greek Septuagint translation of this passage gives us the idea that the anointed one will be condemned and then killed or tried and executed.¹⁵⁸ This should confirm that it is an allusion to our savior, Jesus Christ. But there is still a little more we can dig out of that phrase. One challenge for translating from a nuanced language like Hebrew to a very precise language like Greek (or English for that matter), is that you are forced to choose a single primary meaning for the translation.¹⁵⁹

To see if there might be more to the story, let's look closer at the word *karet*. It is generally translated “cut off,” but it can mean to be killed, to be exiled, to be literally cut-off and removed,¹⁶⁰ or even to make a covenant.¹⁶¹ In this context, though, the meaning is most obviously killed or exiled. We know being killed is clearly in view, but what about exiled? The punishment for breaking many of the commandments was to be cut off (*karet*) from among the Israelites. In this case, the meaning of *karet* (or *karat*)

¹⁵⁸ The Greek phrase is *krima ouk estin*—where *krima* (Strong's G2917) means judgment & condemnation, *ouk* (Strong's G3756) is a negating adverb, and *estin* (Strong's G1510) means to be, to exist, to be present. In other words, the phrase means that [the anointed one] will be judged and killed. Since Jesus was tried by the Sanhedrin, Herod, and Pilate, and was then condemned and executed, there is no problem seeing the crucifixion of Jesus as a fulfillment of this part of Daniel's prophecy.

¹⁵⁹ Consequently, additional nuanced meanings are almost always lost in translation, which is why people do word studies of the original languages in the Scriptures.

¹⁶⁰ This word is also used of circumcision, as when Zipporah cut off (*karet*) the foreskin of her son (*Exodus 4:25*).

¹⁶¹ In the case of when it applies to a covenant it is for a blood covenant where an animal was cut in two, but when it does, there are also companion words that make the context clear that a covenant is in view.

is debated by rabbis, but it is generally seen as either divine punishment (i.e., God himself will kill them, make them infertile, strike them with a wasting disease, etc.) or exclusion from the community of Israel. Considering its use in Scripture, my own take is that sometimes they were executed and other times they were exiled and turned over to God, depending on the circumstances.¹⁶² So the sense of this word is that people who were “cut off” were generally shut out from the community of Israel and turned over to God’s wrath or mercy, whatever form that might take. By the first century, Israel was no longer a single monolithic community. They were fractured into Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots, etc., all living under Roman authority who took away their ability to perform capital punishment for violations of the Torah, so exile from the community would have been the only accepted practice in those days. If we think about the meaning of *karet* including the sense of being exiled and cut off from the community, then it recalls the example of the scapegoat in Leviticus 16.

He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites—all their sins—and put them on the goat’s head. He shall send the goat away into the wilderness in the care of someone appointed for the task. The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a remote place; and the man shall release it in the wilderness.

– **Leviticus 16:21-22**

¹⁶² There are multiple verses that one could reference for this. For example, Leviticus 20:10, when two people are caught in adultery, they are to be put to death (*mut* - Strong’s H4191). Then in Exodus 31:14 we read that anyone who desecrates the Sabbath is to be put to death (*mut*), and if they work on the Sabbath they shall be cut off (*karet*). This verse would seem to equate being put to death with being cut off (reference *Matthew 12:5*). And yet, in Numbers 19:20-21, someone who is unclean and fails to purify themselves is also to be cut off (*karet*), which seems more likely to mean exile not execution. Therefore, it looks like it can mean both.

After the sins of the people were laid on the head of the scapegoat, it was sent out into the wilderness. We see a similar picture in the life of Jesus who was also sent out into the wilderness at the beginning of his ministry, and he also bore all our iniquities, as foretold in Isaiah 53:6.

And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. – Isaiah 53:6b

Jesus died on the cross as the lamb (or scapegoat) of God who took away the sins of the world (*John 1:29*).¹⁶³ In a similar way, those who were considered unclean were also made to live outside the camp and were excluded from the community of Israel, like the lepers and others who had skin diseases (*Leviticus 13*). In the Gospels, we read about multiple encounters that Jesus had with lepers. This tells us that he was spending a lot of time where they were.

Anyone with such a defiling [skin] disease must wear torn clothes, let their hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of their face and cry out, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ As long as they have the disease they remain unclean. They must live alone; they must live outside the camp.

– **Leviticus 13:45-46**

So, what am I suggesting? That there are two senses in which we can understand the word *karet* in the prophecy of Daniel and BOTH were fulfilled by Jesus. One sense started at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry with forty days in the wilderness and continued

¹⁶³ Some may have trouble with using the goat analogy interchangeably with the lamb analogy because of Jesus’ parable about separating the sheep from the goats (*Matthew 25:31-46*), but Jesus talking about the end of the age is a different matter. Jesus both became sin for us, as a goat, and was the blemish-free sacrifice who knew no sin, the lamb, as we read in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*” Thus, the two images are prophetic synonyms. This comparison is also found in church writings as early as the Epistle of Barnabas (AD 100).

after that as he wandered from town to town for the next seven years. Jesus was always on the move and no longer had any fixed home (*Matthew 8:19-20*). The conditions for the second sense of the word were met by his death on the cross.

Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."
 – **Matthew 8:19-20**

That both senses are in view is also demonstrated in Isaiah 53. In Isaiah 53:3 we read about the Messiah being “*despised and rejected*,” which fits the description of someone exiled and cast out like a leper. But in Isaiah 53:8, we read that the Messiah will be cut off from the land of the living, clearly meaning killed.¹⁶⁴ Therefore, I think that God chose the word *karet* in Daniel 9:26 intentionally because it can have the dual meaning of killed and exiled or cast out. The writer of Hebrews also applies both of those senses to his description of Jesus’ suffering and dying “outside the camp.”

He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.
 – **Isaiah 53:3**

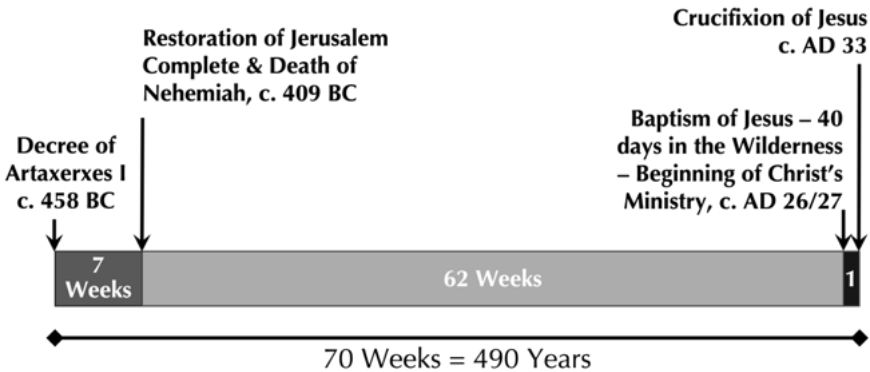
The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore.
 – **Hebrews 13:11-13**

¹⁶⁴ The word for “cut off” that Isaiah uses in this case is *gazar*, or *gozer*, (Strong’s H1504). It also means to cut or kill, but in a more physical and literal way, so there’s no confusion in this case about the intent, as there could be with *karet*.

For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished. — Isaiah 53:8b

Either way, Jesus fulfilled both senses of the word *karet*, and the statement that after sixty-nine weeks (7+62 = 69) the anointed one (the Messiah) would be “cut off” was true. One interpretation would lead to recognizing the fulfillment immediately, the other at the completion of the final week, but both were in a period that was “after” sixty-nine weeks have passed following the decree. And if you’re ready for a real mind-bender, Jesus fulfilled all four meanings of the word *karet*. The sense of word that means to be “cut off and removed” was fulfilled in the fact that he ascended into heaven after his resurrection. The fourth sense of the word, meaning “to make a covenant” was also fulfilled in his sacrificial death, with his blood symbolizing the new covenant (see *Luke 21:20*, fulfilling *Jeremiah 31:31*).

Accounting for the First Seventy Sevens of Daniel 9:24



If we recognize that Christ was crucified at the end of seventy sevens (490 years) for the forgiveness of our sins, then it may also point us to a surprising connection with Christ’s lesson to Peter about forgiving his brother “seventy times seven” times (*Matthew 18:21-22*). Besides teaching a lesson about the need for

continued forgiveness, Christ was foreshadowing his soon completion of seventy times seven years (to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for our wickedness—*Daniel 9:24*) by choosing that specific example with the number 490.¹⁶⁵

Did Jesus' Crucifixion in AD 33 Fulfill the Seventy Sevens?

Another issue that arises, by recognizing that Jesus' earthly life completed seventy sevens (490 years), is that many people still consider the final week of Daniel's prophecy unfulfilled. So how can that be? The traditional understanding of Daniel 9 holds that the seventy weeks are divided into two periods. The first is a continuous period of sixty-nine total weeks that led up to the crucifixion of Christ. The second period is a final week separated by an indeterminate gap of time until the signing of a peace treaty (*Daniel 9:27*), which ushers in the end of the age. But under this timeline, 490 years passed between the issuing of a decree in 458 BC and the crucifixion of Jesus in AD 33. Then does that mean the prophecy was fulfilled? Only partially. Let's review the six things that Daniel 9:24 says will be completed in seventy sevens:

- 1) to finish the transgression
- 2) to make an end of sin
- 3) to make atonement for iniquity
- 4) to bring in everlasting righteousness
- 5) to seal up vision and prophecy
- 6) to anoint the most holy place

¹⁶⁵ Translators struggle with whether it should be “seventy-seven (77) times” or “seventy times seven (490) times” in Mathew 18:22. The Greek expression, *hebdomēkontakis hepta*, is somewhat ambiguous. Here *hebdomēkonta* (seventy) with a *kis* (times) ending means “seventy times” and *hepta* means “seven.” If it was *hebdomēkontakis heptakis*, “seventy times seven times,” then there would be no doubt. The expression is the same as the one in Genesis 4:24 (from the Septuagint) that is often translated as “seventy-seven times,” which explains why there is some confusion, but I think seventy times seven (490) is the correct understanding.

It should be easy to agree that the first three things were accomplished by Christ's death on the cross, but it is more difficult to support the view that the last three have been fulfilled (although many scholars have tried). If Daniel 9:24-27 was entirely fulfilled by Christ's death on the cross in AD 33, then Paul would not have referred to the lawless one setting himself up in the temple of God (*2 Thessalonians 2:3*), which was written after AD 52 and obviously before he died (AD 64-68). Paul made a clear allusion to Daniel's abomination of desolation that Jesus preached about in Matthew 24. This gives us Paul's affirmation of Jesus' teaching that Daniel concerns the last days and his second coming. And lest someone argue that the destruction of the temple completed the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy, it should be recognized that there is no counting of Daniel's seventy weeks that takes us to AD 70. However, the destruction of the temple in AD 70 was foretold in Daniel 9:26, "*The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary.*" The question is whether AD 70 was the last time the temple will be destroyed, or if Daniel 9:26 also refers to the desecration of a future tribulation temple. [*We may not have to wait too long to find out on that one...*]

It has also been argued that this list doesn't really refer to the Messiah at all, but instead it is an allusion to the people of Israel and Jerusalem who are both the indirect object and primary subjects carrying out these tasks.¹⁶⁶ But it would be a grave mistake to assume that the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Joseph and Mary, who was born in Bethlehem, and was crucified in Jerusalem for the sins of the whole world, is not the ultimate referent who has already started and will certainly finish all six tasks in Daniel

¹⁶⁶ Snow. *The 70 Weeks Jubilee*, 122-36. It is one thing to say that this prophecy also alludes to a practical and secondary fulfillment that will be seen in the Jewish people and the nation of Israel in the last days, as the fulfillment of Romans 11:26-27—but concluding that this list doesn't refer to the first and second comings of Jesus as Messiah is a major error.

9:24. Let's keep moving through the prophecy, though, to see if there are more details that will help us understand this mystery.

Two Promised Appearances

A very important part of this prophecy is found in Daniel 9:25, where Daniel includes two titles: Messiah and prince. Most translators assume that one title modifies the other, like "Prince" modifying the title "Messiah" and so they add a "the" between the two titles. But in the Hebrew, there is no conjunction. There are just two titles side-by-side.

So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah [the] Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. – Daniel 9:25 NASB

We also read that Jerusalem will be built again "*with plaza and moat.*" Those are two very specific features that some find to be mysterious, but they are two major clues to help us understand the prophecy more fully (we'll get to those in just a minute). Let's continue reading the passage.

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

– Daniel 9:26 NASB

In verse 26 we see the title "Prince" again, but this time it says that "the prince who is to come" will destroy Jerusalem and the

Temple.¹⁶⁷ Thus, we begin to associate the title “Prince” with the Antichrist beginning in verse 26. But if the word “Prince” (*nagid* - Strong's H5057), refers to the Antichrist in verse 26, why would we not suspect that it also alludes to the Antichrist in verse 25? Therefore, we should consider that the title “Prince” in verse 25 is not just a title being modified by “Messiah,” as in differentiating between an “anointed prince” and one who isn’t anointed—or meaning “Messiah the Prince” as we read above—but that the use of these two titles may have some additional significance.¹⁶⁸ In verse 25, the prophecy could be declaring that there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks until the Messiah AND that there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks until the Antichrist. In that case, though, we would need another decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, and a second period of seventy weeks—meaning there would be TWO periods of seventy weeks, just like there will be two advents of the Messiah.

If the full prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 has not yet been completed, then there really should be another decree. Which if that is the case, then it opens the door for looking for a second period of 490 years to be associated with the return of Christ. It doesn’t prove or disprove whether there are two periods of seventy sevens, or just one. But the Jews weren’t expecting there to be two visitations by the Messiah, either. They read the prophecies

¹⁶⁷ Historically, Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed in AD 70 (37 years after Christ’s crucifixion). Even though the destruction didn’t fall within the 490 years, some have tried to say that this means the entire prophecy is now complete, rather than just this portion. But John’s Revelation, written circa AD 95-96, still describes the time of the Antichrist (Beast and the False Prophet) as being in the future. Now, we know that the destruction of the temple was just a major event that happened between the two periods of 490 years, along with the referenced endless wars.

¹⁶⁸ It could also simply be a designation to relate the messiah with King David who was also called by both titles, messiah (*mashiach*) and ruler (*nagid*), but I think it’s more than that. For more on the Davidic connection see: Snow. *70 Weeks Jubilee*, 186-8.

of both arrivals and combined them into one. What if that is also true of the Daniel 9 prophecy? In that case, there might be a much better explanation for how Daniel's seventy weeks will be fulfilled, rather than inventing the need for a giant gap until the seventieth week.

The Decree to Rebuild Jerusalem Everyone Missed

Astonishingly, there was a fifth decree, one to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, that was issued two thousand years after the other decrees we've already looked at. While many are familiar with the decree of Artaxerxes I, not many know that there was another such decree in the sixteenth century AD made by Sultan Suleiman I, who began to restore and rebuild Jerusalem around 1537 AD.¹⁶⁹ At that time, Suleiman rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem and the Golden Gate, as we discussed in chapter 4. Accordingly, we do have a relatively modern decree that deserves our present consideration. And why should we consider it? Because of the prophecy given by Isaiah.

Foreigners will rebuild your walls, and their kings will serve you.
 – Isaiah 60:10

When the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt the first time (c. 444 BC), only the Jews participated in their rebuilding, as told in Nehemiah 2:20. The surrounding foreign nations, who had been taking over the lands of Israel following the exile of the Jews to Babylon, were asking to “help” the Israelites rebuild the walls so that they could frustrate their plans. But Nehemiah saw through their deception and would not let them have any part in helping with the process of rebuilding the city or its walls. Hence, Isaiah's prophecy was still looking forward to a more future date.

¹⁶⁹ F.E. Peters. *Jerusalem*, 479-480.

I answered them by saying, “The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it.”

– Nehemiah 2:20

Consequently, the prophecy in Isaiah 60:10 can be reasonably applied to the restoration of Jerusalem and its walls accomplished by Sultan Suleiman I, beginning in 1537 AD.¹⁷⁰ Isaiah’s prophecy provides a corroborating witness that this modern decree was also in view in the prophecy related by Daniel.

The Decrees are Carved in Stone!

Sultan Suleiman restored many parts of Jerusalem between 1537-1541. His equivalent name in English is literally Solomon, and we know that he saw himself as a second King Solomon because he had the title engraved in stone during his reign.¹⁷¹ This may explain why he took such a special interest in the rebuilding of Jerusalem and why he placed carved stone plaques at many of the specific repairs that he made around the city to document them. But those stone plaques stand as a permanent record of his decrees regarding the restoration of Jerusalem... decrees that are etched in stone. They present archaeological evidence that exhibits, in the strongest way I can imagine, proof that the second rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem was being directly referenced by Daniel.

¹⁷⁰ Some might object that after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, control of the city passed to non-Jews for the next nineteen hundred years. Hence, the walls were repaired and restored many times, all by foreigners. That is true, but it only affirms the principle that multiple fulfillments are possible (the skipping stone through time), so there is no conflict. Additionally, the restoration by Suleiman was unique and documented by a decree.

¹⁷¹ Mehmet Tütüncü. *TURKISH JERUSALEM (1516-1917): Ottoman Inscriptions from Jerusalem and Other Palestinian Cities* (Haarlem, Netherlands, 2006): 34.

...it will be built again, with plaza (*rechob*) and moat (*charuwts*), even in times of distress. — Daniel 9:25b NASB

In verse 25, it says that Jerusalem’s restoration will include work at a “plaza and moat.” If you read different translations, you will find that they have struggled with the proper meaning of the ancient Hebrew words in English. Some have translated it “streets” and “trench” for example. Earlier in this chapter, we talked about how the word for plaza, *rechob*, was specifically used in Ezra 7:15-19, speaking about the plaza of the temple (i.e., the Temple Mount). It can also mean a wide street area (for a meeting place at a gate or square in the city), but we have a good scriptural tie for associating it with the temple, in this case.

The word *charuwts* can mean a moat or trench, but a simple trench, such as large ditch dug in the earth or rock, would not be listed as a structure that needed to be restored. It makes more sense that it was a large, fortified moat. Thus, plaza and moat look like the best translations of those words. Another reason we can be confident that the reference is to a moat is because one of the repairs Suleiman made included an actual moat. It can still be seen today around the Citadel of David, the so-called Tower of David (see photo, right), near the Jaffa Gate inside the Old City. [*The view is from the east side of the tower, looking north, and was taken January 13, 2020.*]

When the moat was repaired, he embedded a carved stone plaque in the wall to document his work. The part of the moat where the plaque is located was buried in 1898, but a photo of it was taken



by Max van Berchem before it was covered over in the expansion of the city (see photo, below).¹⁷²



Here is the translation of the stone plaque above:¹⁷³ “*The order to construct this tower for protection of the Islamic walls by his power and duration of his reign, and to dispose of the favouring idols by his force and strength, the One that did Allah especially elected to rule the neck of the Kings in the World, the possessor in chain of the throne of Caliphate, Sultan son of Sultan, son of Sultan, Son of Sultan, Süleyman...*”

It is truly amazing! There is an actual moat within the Old City of Jerusalem, and it has a plaque proclaiming its restoration by Suleiman; however, there is no date on this specific plaque. Perhaps it was left off, or as the “...” suggests at the end of the inscription, the final portion was damaged and became illegible. Fortunately, that is not the only plaque I want to show you. Suleiman also extensively repaired the plaza of the temple, and he placed a fountain (*sabil*) and another plaque with an inscription to document its restoration. It not only confirms that the Temple Mount was an area restored by Suleiman, but it also gives us a date for his decree. It is called *Sabil Bab el Atm*, meaning fountain at the Gate of Darkness (see photo, top of next page ¹⁷⁴).

¹⁷² Tütüncü. *Turkish Jerusalem*, “Figure 009. Cat. 7B-Cat. 40.”

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, 45.

¹⁷⁴ Sabil Bab el Atm photo by Chris Yunker, November 18, 2007, cc-by-sa-2.0, [//commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jerusalem_Temple_Mount_\(2541924071\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jerusalem_Temple_Mount_(2541924071).jpg)

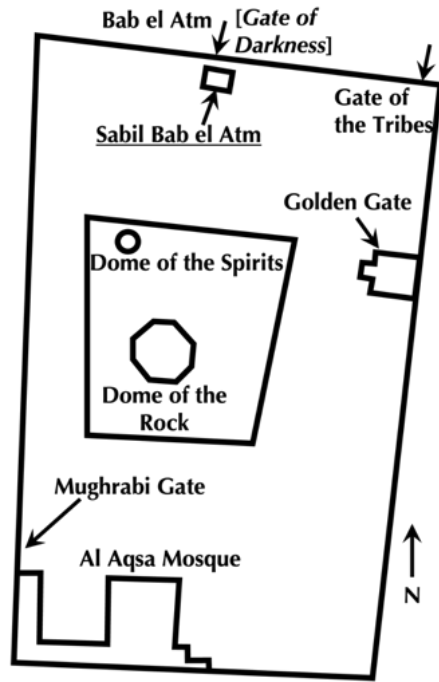


The translation of the plaque (photo above)¹⁷⁵ is: “He has ordered the construction of this blessed *Sabil*, our Master, the Sultan, the greatest Sultan and the honourable Hakan, who rules the necks of the nations, the Sultan of the lands of Rum, the Arabs and Persians (*ajams*), the Sultan Süleyman, son of Sultan Selim Khan, may Allah perpetuate his reign and his sultanate, On the date of Hijra of the Prophet at the beginning of Shaban the blessed in the year 943. And blessings be upon Muhammed and upon his followers.”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ Photo of Suleiman’s decree courtesy of Veit Ullrich, April 2022.

¹⁷⁶ Tütüncü: *Turkish Jerusalem*, 74; In total, Suleiman had nearly three dozen inscriptions documenting his work in Jerusalem between 1536-1541. Within the walls of the city, the oldest is at the *Sabil el Wad*, which is near the *Bab el Kattanin* (Cotton Merchants Gate) of the *Haram al-Sharif* (Temple Mount). It is dated December 14th, 1536. The next oldest one is at another fountain (*sabil*) in the city called, *Sabil Bab el Silsile*, dated January 4, 1537. These dates are all very close. I’ve highlighted the one that is located on the plaza of the temple (the Temple Mount), since “plaza” is mentioned in verse 25. Either way, we are looking at a decree date that is between December 14th, 1536, and January 23rd, 1537.

The plaque Suleiman had placed there is located at the north end of the Temple Mount about fifteen meters south of the Gate of Darkness (*Bab el Atm*), as shown in the diagram below. It is dated “the beginning of Shaban 943.” The date given by this plaque converts to a modern date ranging from between the 13th to the 23rd of January, 1537 on our Gregorian calendar.¹⁷⁷ That gives us a verifiable date range from which to begin counting 483 years forward. And for those who are not great at doing math calculations in your head, if you count 483 years from 1537, that brings us to the year 2020!



Temple Mount map, indicating the location of the fountain and Suleiman’s decree.

Therefore, applying Daniel’s prophecy to the decree of Suleiman that he issued in 1537, and counting sixty-nine weeks of years, brings us to the year 2020. It’s not a maybe, it’s not a could be, it just is 483 calendar years after that event. That doesn’t prove for sure that we are now in Daniel’s final seventieth week, but it is an historic fact that the year 2020 saw the completion of sixty-nine weeks of years since Suleiman’s decree! If carved stone plaques, placed at both a plaza and a moat, declaring Suleiman’s decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, do not compel you to consider that we are now in a second period of seventy sevens,

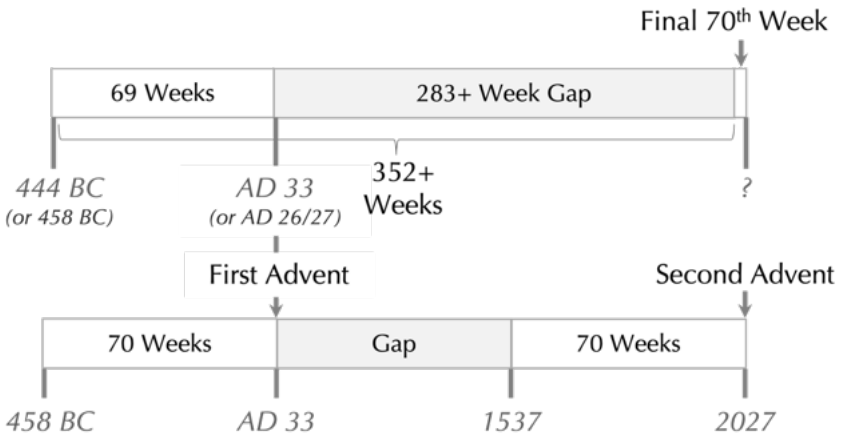
¹⁷⁷ The Arabic word here, *aš-šahr* (translated as “the beginning of” the Arabic month of *Shaban*) means within the first ten days.

then ask yourself, “What would I have to see to accept the postulate that we are now in a second period of seventy weeks?”

The Seventieth Week Gap Theory Doesn’t Make Sense

Another reason to consider the possibility that there are two periods of seventy weeks is that there have now been 352+ weeks of years since the decrees of Artaxerxes I to restore and rebuild Jerusalem in 445/444 BC.¹⁷⁸ However, is it a logically satisfying position to say that while the Bible says it will be seventy weeks, it has already been 350+ weeks since Artaxerxes I issued his decrees? Why would there be a “timeout” in the count? God could certainly decide to call a prophetic pause in the count, but there isn’t a clear scriptural justification for supporting that assumption.

Comparing Two Seventy Week Periods to the Popular Gap Theory



John Walvoord admitted that the idea of a prophetic gap between Daniel’s weeks is only a presumption. It arose because people didn’t have a better explanation for how and when the six events listed in Daniel 9:24 could have been, or would be, accomplished.

¹⁷⁸ Counting from the third decree in 458 BC, it has been 354 weeks.

“While the interpretations of the first sixty-nine sevens is thus afforded a literal fulfillment, nothing can be found in history that provides a literal fulfillment of the last seven or the seventieth week. It has been taken by many that this indicated a postponement of the fulfillment of the last seven years of the prophecy to a future seven-year period preceding the Second Advent. If so, a parenthesis of time involving the whole present age is indicated.”
 – **John Walvoord**, *The Rapture Question*¹⁷⁹

Confirming Signs for a Second Period of Seventy Sevens

The fact that these decrees are carved in stone and are visible for all to see is simply amazing; but, if that is all true, then there should have been other confirming signs as well. Were there any other signs in 2020 that confirm that the events Daniel foresaw in the final week have begun to happen? I think so, but let’s finish looking at the last verse of the prophecy.

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

– **Daniel 9:27 NASB**

We begin verse 27 by recognizing that by “he,” we are still talking about the Antichrist, the prince who is to come. He will “make [a] firm” or as other translators write it, he will “confirm” the covenant. We need to ask the question, “What covenant?” The covenant could easily be understood to refer to the Abrahamic

¹⁷⁹ John Walvoord. *The Rapture Question* (Zondervan, 1979): 26.

Covenant, in which God promised the land of Israel to Abraham through his son Isaac (*Genesis 17*). It is possible that the reference to a covenant just means that they will make an agreement or treaty between them. I think it more likely, however, that it means that the agreement will recognize the legitimacy of Israel as a nation and God’s covenant with Abraham to give them the land. Furthermore, when the treaty is made, Daniel says that it will be with “the many.” That could mean many people in a large nation, but in this modern age, it could easily be understood to mean that it will be adopted by many nations.

Traditionally, it is also understood from this verse that the Antichrist will personally and publicly make a peace deal with Israel, smiling at the cameras while he signs the treaty. This may not be the case, though. The Antichrist may simply confirm or give his support for “the covenant” by affirming an agreement or treaty that has already been made—and when he does, it may or may not be public. Just because the Antichrist arrives on the scene, or begins to ascend to power, in the beginning of the week, it doesn’t mean he must be publicly visible and known to all at that time. My assumption is that the Antichrist is currently operating in the shadows. We may not fully recognize him until the middle of the seventieth week when he halts the sacrifice and grain offering and causes the abomination of desolation. But based on this understanding of the prophecy and these current events, he has probably already begun to move into position.

The Confirmation of the Covenant with the Many

To kick off the last seven years of the tribulation, we do need a confirmation of the covenant, though. Has there been any? Well, I think there has been. First, we had an Israel-Palestine peace plan, sponsored by President Donald Trump and formally

published on January 28th, 2020.¹⁸⁰ The plan was released almost exactly 483 years after these inscriptions. Then later the same year, some of the gulf Arab states began making peace with Israel under the Abraham Accords.¹⁸¹ The first agreements were officially signed on the White House lawn on September 15, 2020. They were initially signed by UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan, and other nations are also expected to adopt and sign these agreements. Hence, a new era of peace began in the region in 2020, as some key Arab states expressed their recognition of Israel and their interest in a broad-range collaboration to mutually benefit their countries.

Because Daniel's prophesied "confirmation of the covenant" will begin a final period of seven years, many expect there will be a formal peace treaty for a precise period of seven years. However, a seven-year time limit on the agreement is not explicit in the text. The Bible may say seven years because that is all the time that is left. Consequently, an agreement at the start of the tribulation would be *de facto* a seven-year agreement.

Furthermore, by naming these peace deals with Israel as the "Abraham Accords," we are being shown that the "confirmation of the covenant" has been satisfied simply in the naming of the peace agreements. Some might insist that these events must all happen at the exact same time before believing it was orchestrated by God, but the precision of the prophecy is in seven-year increments, so agreements within a few months of each other seem precise by that measure. Others believe that the covenant has nothing to do with the Abrahamic covenant at all, but instead that it is merely a generic application of the Hebrew term referring to a future political agreement that will be

¹⁸⁰ *Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People*, Jan. 2020, www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Peace-to-Prosperity-0120.pdf

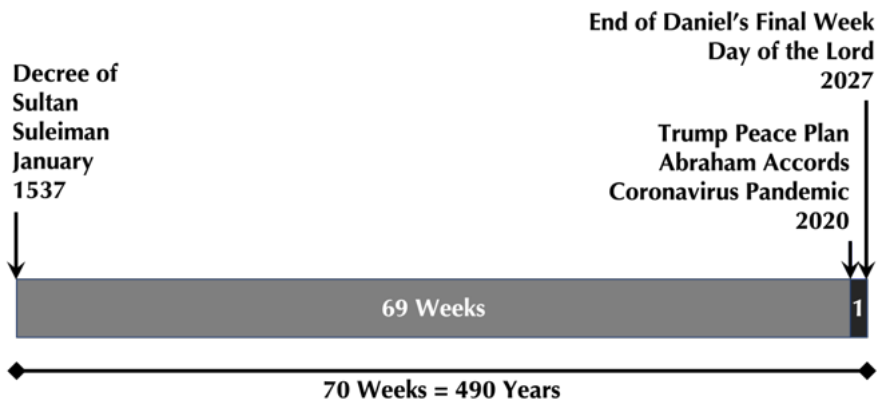
¹⁸¹ "The Abraham Accords Declaration," *US Department of State*, www.state.gov/the-abraham-accords/

confirmed directly with the Antichrist.¹⁸² That could theoretically be possible, but when we are faced with the reality of an actual set of agreements that so closely conform with Daniel's description, it behooves us to recognize their viability until proven otherwise.

Has the Countdown of Another Seventy Weeks Begun?

The case is building. We have a second decree by Suleiman almost two thousand years after the first one by Artaxerxes. Then, 483 years (69 sevens) after Suleiman's decree, a peace plan was put forward by both the U.S. and Israel and it culminated in the Abraham Accords. So far, that seems to put us on track for now being in the final week of Daniel 9:27. There is still a lot that needs to happen to prove this is Daniel's final week, but all the signs indicate that it is.

Daniel's Final Seventy Weeks



For example, in the middle of this final seven-year period, there will be a halt to sacrifice and grain offering and an abomination of desolation in a rebuilt Jewish temple. But how can that happen? I'll get into that in chapter 10. But for starters, the emerging Jewish Sanhedrin has cited the Israel-Palestine peace

¹⁸² Snow. *The 70 Weeks Jubilee*, 297-303.

plan put forward by Donald Trump, and they have claimed that it gives them the authority and approval to begin reinstating sacrifices on the Temple Mount.¹⁸³ And as soon as the sacrifices are restarted, the call to rebuild the Temple will be right behind it. Consequently, these current events could be tied together with the peace plan, just like we read in Daniel 9:27.

Finally, many other Gulf States, like Saudi Arabia, have lent their support for these plans, and many believe that they will soon sign on to the Accords, as well.¹⁸⁴ All of this together means that, while everyone was expecting that there would be great fanfare associated with the final peace deal of Daniel 9:27, it is not impossible that it could be something more like the present deal, which appears to be moving forward without everyone realizing its possible connection with Daniel's prophecy. I'll also go over more details about what to watch for regarding the rebuilding of the temple in chapter 10.

One simple but hard to answer question is, "How could this have gone basically unnoticed until now?" I don't know, but I think I know why. Remember, the angel Gabriel told Daniel that the prophecy was to be sealed up until the time of the end. Now that we've arrived there, I think it's being unsealed (*Daniel 12:9*).

But, if you were taught all the reasons that Christians should expect a pretribulation rapture—and you feel that those arguments are airtight—then this take on Daniel 9:24-27 will be very hard for

¹⁸³ Adam Eliyahu Berkowitz. "Thanks to Trump: Pascal Lamb could be Sacrificed on Temple Mount for first Time in 2,000 Years," *Breaking Israel News*, Feb. 27, 2020, www.breakingisraelnews.com/145899/thanks-to-trump-pascal-lamb-could-be-sacrificed-on-temple-mountain-for-first-time-in-2000-years/

¹⁸⁴ Tovah Lazaroff and Lahav Harkov. "Saudi FM praises Abraham Accords, puts Palestinian statehood first," *The Jerusalem Post*, August 4, 2021, www.jpost.com/middle-east/saudi-fm-praises-abraham-accords-puts-palestinian-statehood-first-675817

you to swallow, because there hasn't been a rapture yet. How can we be in the final week of Daniel's Seventy Weeks if the church is still here? I've heard some very well-respected prophecy teachers make exactly that kind of argument; but the answer is either that all the evidence I just presented is wrong, or there will not be a pretribulation rapture after all. Of course, the other answer is that all these things weren't known before because they hadn't been unsealed, yet, as the angel said in Daniel 12:9. So, it is understandable that it may take some time to process and adjust to new information like this. In the next chapter, we will look at the scriptural reasons why Christians should keep an open mind about the timing of the rapture and not count on it to take place before the seven-year tribulation even begins.

He said, "Go your way, Daniel, for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time."

— **Daniel 12:9** NASB



*Christ coming in glory, in William Ambrose Spicer, *Our Day in the Light of Prophecy* (Pacific Press, 1917): 58.*

6

THE RAPTURE

THE BLESSED HOPE OF THE CHURCH is to someday see the return of Jesus Christ to this earth. This hope has been explicitly expressed in the earliest writings of the church, not to mention throughout the New Testament. Nevertheless, one of the biggest debates among conservative, premillennial, Christians regarding the return of Jesus Christ in the last days, is the timing and sequence of the gathering of the saints when he returns (i.e., the rapture). Part of the question relates to understanding whether there is a difference between Christ coming on the clouds to gather his elect (*harpazo*), and Christ coming (*parousia*) on a white horse with his armies to the earth to execute his judgment on the nations (*Revelation 19:11-21*). Traditionally, these are referred to as the rapture and the second coming (or second advent), respectively. There is also some debate about whether the rapture will be “secret,” so that only raptured saints will know

what happened, or will it be something seen by all? In other words, will everyone raptured just vanish mysteriously into thin air one day, or will Christ coming on the clouds to gather his elect be widely witnessed and a fearful sign of God's imminent unfolding judgment? Many Christians would agree with the fact that Christ will someday come bodily to gather his elect, just as the Scriptures foretell; however, the timing of that return with respect to the final seven years of Daniel 9:27, and the tribulations described in John's Revelation, is another matter.

In this chapter, we're going to look very closely at what the Bible says about the gathering of the elect. While we won't be able to answer when the exact moment of our rescue will come (Remember, "*no man knows the day or the hour.*" – *Mark 13:32*), we will know what to be watching for. And you'll see why we should be prepared to wait for Christ's promised *harpazo* of the saints until sometime during the second half of Daniel's seventy weeks, based on some very direct verses in Scripture.

Recognizing Different Rapture Views

To begin with, there are multiple locations in both the Old and New Testaments where the return of the Lord, the Day of the Lord, the time of Jacob's trouble, the great tribulation, and the gathering of the saints are described. In most cases, similar but unique elements are included in each description. This creates multiple synoptic accounts that must be sorted and interpreted. Are the events being described fundamentally the same—as in many of the accounts described in the Gospels where each witness conveys a unique frame of reference—or are they separate and unique events? And when will they happen, or did they already happen?

The primary views regarding when this “gathering of the saints” will occur are: 1) before the seven years of Daniel (pretribulation), 2) in the middle of Daniel’s 70th week (midtribulation), 3) sometime after the middle of the tribulation (prewrath), and 4) at or near the end of the tribulation (posttribulation). It doesn’t help that most of the many proponents of each prospective view, and its variations, are generally devout believers and are completely convinced that they understand the prophecies correctly, while others do not. The reason that there is so much controversy is because there are several possible literal interpretations of the text. A typical response to this dilemma is to pick the view that is believed to be the most correct, and then to move forward under firm conviction. I think we should consider, though, that God intentionally left some things out in the description of the timing of these events—so that we would need to reserve final judgment on the exact timing and remain watchful.

The above notwithstanding, there is an alternative that satisfies all the considerable objections that can and have been raised about these other views in the past. It is a kind of hybrid position that I call “*post-midtribulation*,” i.e., some unknown time in the second half of Daniel’s seventieth week. Such a view avoids the trap of trying to determine definitively the exact moment of Christ’s return within the Revelation timeline, while recognizing that there are still many things that we can say definitively about the rapture and what we should be watching for.

I would like to begin by pointing out that everyone universally recognizes that this is a difficult and divisive issue. Furthermore, as Dr. John Walvoord, and others, have pointed out, all the various rapture positions are derived from inductions of Scripture; because there are no explicit statements in the Bible that identify unequivocally when the rapture of the saints will occur.¹⁸⁵ They

¹⁸⁵ Walvoord. *The Rapture Question*, 181.

are all built on assumptions that over time have solidified, through repetition, into doctrines that no longer acknowledge the serious questions and numerous inferences they contain. This is particularly true of the pretribulation rapture view. In Dr. Walvoord's book, *The Rapture Question*, he presents fifty arguments for pretribulationism, and yet not even one of them would be capable of standing on its own as a solid proof.¹⁸⁶ Rather, the weight of his case rests on the number of circumstantial arguments constructed, none of which are remarkably defensible. Upon close inspection, the assertion of a pretribulation rapture is not nearly as sound as it appears... but then neither are the traditional midtribulational or posttribulational views. The published views that I am aware of all have flaws in their reasoning or contain unsupportable assumptions. Those weak points are often exploited by their opponents and used to bolster their own tenuous views.

As a soft starting point for attempting to resolve this dilemma, let us do our best to stay humble and remember that our assurance rests on the physical return of Christ to earth to gather us to himself, not on knowing the timing of his return. Furthermore, the wise man will hope for an early rescue, but will prepare himself to pass through tribulation, knowing that while some pastors today are preaching health, prosperity, and an easy life, Jesus never did. We were never promised a total escape from trials and tribulations. Just ask modern believers in China, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, and elsewhere who are suffering terrible persecutions... most likely, even as you are reading this. [*Heavenly Father, protect and strengthen those believers. Fill them with your Holy Spirit; give them the words they need to speak on your behalf, courage to bravely face their trials, and faith and hope in the rewards hereafter. Amen!*]

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 270-6.

Not Appointed to Wrath

And while it is true that Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5:9 that we are “*not appointed to wrath*,” it does not necessarily follow that passing through tribulation on this earth would violate that statement. It certainly does not preclude that we could be present for at least some part of Daniel’s seventieth week. We can say for sure that we will not face God’s wrath for our sins on account of the righteousness of Christ; but inferences about what that might mean during the tribulation should not be held dogmatically.

I am confident that believers will not experience the bowls of God’s wrath, or the great winepress of his wrath talked about in Revelation 14 & 16; but we cannot assume that God couldn’t deliver us through them, like he did with the Israelites on the night of the Passover. Otherwise, what would we have to say to encourage tribulation saints during that time? It is interesting, though, that in the book of Revelation it does not say that God’s wrath has come on the earth until after the sixth seal has been opened (*Revelation 6:16-17*). That doesn’t necessarily prove anything by itself, but it’s worth thinking about. My point is that the argument that according to 1 Thessalonians 5:9 we are not appointed to wrath and therefore will not experience any part of Daniel’s seventieth week is pure conjecture. It simply cannot stand as a proof text for the timing of the rapture.

Christ’s Physical Return and the Gathering of the Elect

Let’s review why we believe in the return of Jesus Christ to this earth. The first reason is because of the promise of the angels when Jesus ascended into heaven (*Acts 1:11*). They specifically promised that Christ would return in the exact same way he left. If we believe the testimony of the Apostles that Jesus lived on the earth, died for our sins, rose again on the third day, and ascended into heaven before their very eyes, then a similar, future, literal,

and physical return to earth is the obvious implication of their promise.

“Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? 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

Scripture teaches us that someday there will be an instantaneous global resurrection of the saints that have died and a sudden transformation of all living saints into immortal beings with imperishable bodies and that this will happen *“in the twinkling of an eye”* at the *“last trumpet.”* I think that sounds crazy. It is completely outside of my experience. But I believe it because the God of the universe, who holds everything together and always keeps his Word, said it. There are so many other things that God has promised and fulfilled, why would we doubt for a second that he means what he said about this, too?

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

We also believe in a miraculous gathering of the elect because of 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17. This is one of the classic passages that everyone recognizes as speaking of the rapture (*harpazo*) of the saints. Like the letter to the Corinthians, this letter to the Thessalonians was also written by the Apostle Paul. It describes, with additional details, the same event he wrote about to the Corinthians.

Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For 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 word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until 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 (harpazo) together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. — 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

Notice that in the passage above, Paul wrote, “*According to the Lord's word...*” He used the Greek words, *en logos kyrios*, literally “by the word of the Lord,” which points more to the Scriptures (*logos*) as the referent than to a special vision or dream. This means Paul was referencing something Jesus said, which begs a question. Do the Gospels record that Jesus said anything similar? Yes, they do. There is an amazingly parallel account in Matthew 24.

Connecting Matthew 24 to 1 & 2 Thessalonians

Matthew 24 is often called the Olivet Discourse because Jesus taught his disciples about the last days while sitting on the Mount of Olives. He was probably overlooking the Temple Mount as he was talking to them. The chapter begins with Jesus standing in the temple courts with his disciples. He tells them to look around at all the buildings. He then tells them that not one stone of the buildings around them would be left standing on another!

They must have been shocked, but evidently, they were shocked into silence, because they didn't ask him anything else until after they left the temple. Later, when they were sitting on the Mount of Olives, his disciples asked him two, or possibly three, questions.¹⁸⁷

As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

– **Matthew 24:3**

Their questions imply that they understood that Jesus was going to leave them, but they also knew he would return at the end of the age. They realized that it wasn't yet time for Jesus to fulfill the rest of the messianic prophecies in the Old Testament regarding a renewed Davidic kingdom ruling over the nations of the earth from Jerusalem; but they wanted to know when he would. Fortunately, Jesus answered them, and Matthew recorded it for us. Jesus proceeded to describe the signs that would be observed before his return, and after that he described what his return would be like.

"Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other."

– **Matthew 24:30-31**

¹⁸⁷ Depending on how you look at it, there is some ambiguity in the disciples' last question. Christ's return and the end of the age could be counted as related but separate events. This is presumably why they were inspired to add "*and the end of the age,*" instead of simply asking, "What will be the sign of your coming?"

Examine the Matthew 24:30-31 account carefully. In its overall essence, what is different between it and 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17? There are three matching events found in BOTH passages:

- 1) Jesus, the Son of Man, is depicted coming on the clouds
- 2) Angels gather the elect to join Jesus in the clouds
- 3) A trumpet announces both his arrival and the gathering of the saints

The only difference some might try and point to is that Jesus did not mention the resurrection of the saints in Matthew 24:30-31. However, he did say that the elect would be gathered from “*one end of the heavens to the other.*” Could that description not easily include both saints from heaven (who have died) and saints from the earth (who are still alive)? Especially when we consider Jesus’ words affirming that there would be a resurrection of the dead when they hear the “*voice of the Son of Man*” in John 5:25?

Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.

– John 5:25

It could be proposed that this was only an allusion to the general salvation of one’s soul, but notice that Jesus implied two senses to the meaning of his comment. The first, to a future resurrection of the dead, when he said, “*a time is coming.*” The second was in a spiritual sense and “*has now come,*” through faith in him and rebirth by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, since all the ideas expressed by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 can be found in things Jesus said himself in the Gospels, I think we should attribute the words *en logos kyrrios* to mean things that Jesus taught his disciples that are preserved for us in Matthew 24:30-31 and John 5:25. Another point to mention is that some would suggest that Matthew 24 is not about the rapture at all, but instead looks to the image of Christ riding on a white horse to execute his judgment on the

nations found in Revelation chapter 19. But does this description really fit, or is the description in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 a better match for Matthew 24?

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS." And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, "Come, gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and the mighty, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, great and small."

– Revelation 19:11-18

Upon close inspection, this description of Christ coming to execute judgment on the nations is different than that of the Son of Man coming on the clouds. There is no mention of gathering the elect. There is no trumpet mentioned, either. It is an execution of judgment on the wicked. If anything, the saints are already with Christ and are also riding on white horses, dressed in white linen, bright and clean.¹⁸⁸ Clearly, associating Matthew 24 with Revelation 19

¹⁸⁸ The armies of heaven wearing white linen are not specifically identified for us. It could be argued that they are angels, not saints, but just a few verses earlier,

is much more tenuous than connecting it with 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. The case for connecting those passages gets even stronger when we look at what Paul wrote in 2 Thessalonians. Paul was addressing a concern of the Thessalonian church, presumably because of a false report, that the Day of the Lord had already come—they were worried that they had missed the gathering of the saints.

“Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy (apostasia) comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?”— 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5 NASB

In this simple reminder from Paul, there is a retelling of Jesus’ teachings in the Olivet Discourse (*Matthew 24*) that I believe Paul is alluding to when he says in verse 5, *“Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?”* A great many

in Revelation 19:6-8, we are given an image of a great multitude of saints in heaven *“wearing white linen, bright and clean,”* and we are told *“fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God’s holy people.”* Therefore, when we read that the armies of heaven are *“dressed in fine linen, white and clean,”* it seems difficult not to assume that the great multitude of the saints mentioned earlier are not among them. Jude 1:14 seems to mention this same event and declares, *“See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones,”* but even Jude’s reference is unclear whether it means saints, or angels, or both. My bet is that it will be both.

expositors have discussed this passage at length; however, I think it is best if we don't read beyond the simple words of the text. This is Paul's second letter to Thessalonica. In the first letter he told them about the catching up of the saints to meet the Lord in the air at "*the coming of the Lord*" (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), but in the second letter Paul implies that the Thessalonians had been unsettled by a false word that the Day of the Lord had already come, meaning they feared that they had been "left behind." Paul writes to assure them of some signs that they must watch for before the Day of the Lord comes, namely the apostasy and the revealing of the man of lawlessness, which is exactly what a plain reading of Matthew 24 would suggest.

Some have tried to argue that the Greek word *apostasia* (Strong's G646) doesn't mean a falling away or departure from the faith, but instead is really a synonym for *harpazo* (Strong's G746) or catching away in the rapture; but that is an egregious mishandling of the text.¹⁸⁹ If people also twisted the other words of scripture to that degree, they could support just about any heretical idea someone wanted to propose, such as homosexuality or universalism, which is already being done by the apostates that Paul warns about in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. In his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul pointed to the words of Christ in his discussion of the rapture. When Paul gives them two specific things that must come before "*the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to Him*," and both of those things are found in Matthew 24—as some of the last signs before his return in verses 30 and 31—how can it be overlooked that all these verses are connected?

¹⁸⁹ Look at the other uses of *apostasia* from Acts 21:21 & the Greek Septuagint: Joshua 22:22; 2 Chronicles 29:19; Jeremiah 2:19 & 29:32. It means rebellion, i.e., apostasy, not taken away, as in raptured. Paul wrote both letters to the Thessalonians, he had studied the Septuagint (a Greek translation of the OT, circa third century BC), and he contributed to the book of Acts. It is hard to believe that he could have confused *apostasia* with *harpazo* or used them as synonyms.

Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand.

– Matthew 24:9-15

If you read Matthew 24:9-15 carefully, the apostasy and the appearance of the man of lawlessness are right there. Paul is merely referring the Thessalonians back to Matthew 24 to reassure them that they haven’t missed the promised return of the Lord and his gathering of the saints. This was something that he also says he was teaching them previously when he was with them.¹⁹⁰ And we should have every expectation that Paul was indeed teaching from the Gospels when he was visiting the Thessalonians and every church that he visited. By the time Paul went to Thessalonica the second time, he would have had both Matthew and Mark. Luke and John may not have been written yet, but a few years later Paul’s letters to the Colossians and 1 Corinthians clearly quoted from Luke.¹⁹¹ Paul may have even contributed to it, since Luke

¹⁹⁰ This could have been in either his first trip to Thessalonica (c. AD 50-51) or during his second trip (c. AD 55-56), but I assume 1 Thessalonians was written after the first trip and 2 Thessalonians after his next visit on his second missionary journey.

¹⁹¹ Paul quoted Luke 10:7 in 1 Timothy 5:17-18, “*the laborer deserves his wages,*” and Luke 22:19-20 in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. For more examples, see: <https://medium.com/koinonia/ignore-the-skeptics-paul-knew-the-gospels-3b4e010e11e2>.

ministered to Paul while he was in prison in Caesarea (c. AD 58-60) and likely traveled with him to Rome (c. AD 60-62).¹⁹² There should be no doubt that Paul contributed to Luke's writing of the book of Acts. If Paul also contributed to the Gospel of Luke, then what Paul received as the gospel directly from Jesus is sufficiently preserved in Luke's Gospel, along with



Luke the Evangelist by Claude Vignon, c. 1610

other firsthand accounts that Luke collected. Paul also referenced the teachings of Jesus in 1 Timothy, which is a reference to the accounts in the Gospels. Thus, we know that Paul knew the Gospels, affirmed them, and encouraged the believers to follow them.

If anyone teaches otherwise and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, they are conceited and understand nothing. – 1 Timothy 6:3-4a

Connecting Matthew 24 to the First Six Seals of Revelation

Now that we can see a clear connection between Matthew 24 and 1 & 2 Thessalonians, we can also connect Matthew 24 to the first six seals of the Book of Revelation. The prophetic writings in both the Old and New Testaments are speaking of the same time of

¹⁹² Bo Reicke, "Caesarea, Rome, and the Captivity Epistles," W. Ward Gasque & Ralph P. Martin, eds., *Apostolic History and the Gospel. Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F.F. Bruce*. (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1970): 277-286. Online: https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ahg/caesarea_reicke.pdf

judgment in the last days. And if we understand them correctly, we should be able to have an idea of how they interconnect. Let's look closely at the similarities. Let's work through Matthew 24 and Revelation 6 in a sequential manner. If you look up these passages yourself, you'll see that the order has not been changed to make it look like a match. This section moves straight through both chapters, putting similar passages together. The following themes are found in both passages and can be compared directly to one another. When they are compared side-by-side and point-by-point, it seems nonsensical to maintain a position that the passages are not related. There are nine points of comparison.

1. The promise of a coming deception
2. Wars and rumors of wars
3. Famine, scarcity of food and an increase in food prices
4. Pestilence and death
5. The persecution of the saints and apostasy
6. Signs in the heavens
7. The son of man coming on the clouds
8. The raptured saints in heaven
9. The seventh seal and the first trumpet

THE PROMISE OF A COMING DECEPTION

It should be no secret to a student of Bible prophecy that the last days will be marked by deception.¹⁹³ It's an ironic warning, though. Why? Because everyone uses that warning to assume that the person who understands things differently than they do must be deceived! Almost no one reads that warning and thinks, "Hmm. What have I been led to believe that is wrong? I'd better listen closely to that person who disagrees with me and see if I'm

¹⁹³ If you're not sure what I'm talking about, check out these scripture references: Matthew 24:4, Mark 13:22, Luke 21:8, 1 Corinthians 6:9, Galatians 6:7, Colossians 2:4, 2 Thessalonians 2:10-11, 2 Timothy 3:13, Titus 1:10 & 3:3, James 1:16, 1 John 4:1, Revelation 13:14, 19:20, & 20:10.

missing something.” Accordingly, it is probably our pride that makes us most vulnerable to deception. The second thing that contributes to deception is ignorance—not knowing what the Bible really says. A third thing that leads to being deceived is a lack of faith in the reliability and certainty of God’s Word. One of the primary purposes of this whole book is to equip believers with the knowledge and understanding they need to avoid deception on a wide range of points regarding the end times. Now back to the similarities between Matthew 24 and the first six seals (*Revelation 6*)—notice that the first thing Jesus warns them about, in his Olivet Discourse, is deception. John also implies that deception will be the *modus operandi* of the rider on the white horse.

I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, “Come!” I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.

– **Revelation 6:1-2**

Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many.

– **Matthew 24:4-5**

The idea of deception might be hard to see in the first seal, but I think it is heavily implied. Many expect that the rider on the white horse represents the Antichrist. I partially agree with that, but only in the sense that he begins to rise to power at that point; not necessarily that he is immediately revealed to the whole world, or that he is fully in control of everything that is transpiring through the white horse. The Antichrist only rules for forty-two months (*Revelation 13:5*), and the seals presumably mark the beginning of Daniel’s seventieth week, so the first seal is opened at the beginning of a period of approximately three-and-a-half years where

the Antichrist is rising to power but is not IN power. But he begins to rise to power through intrigue, political maneuverings, and probably with the use of technology. He can't be using traditional warfare, though, because we'll see in a minute that the next rider takes peace from the earth. He can't take peace from the earth if it was already removed by the first rider. Therefore, the conquering of the white rider must be through deception.

WARS AND RUMORS OF WARS

The next thing that Jesus tells his disciples to be on the lookout for are “*wars and rumors of wars*” with nations (*ethnos* – Strong’s G1484) and kingdoms (*basileia* – Strong’s G932) in conflict. The word *ethnos* refers to different people groups, such as Jews and Arabs or Blacks and Whites, or Hutus and Tutsis. The word *basileia* was applied to distinctly governed nations. The vision Jesus laid out for his disciples is very similar to the vision of peace being taken from the earth by the rider on the red horse at the second seal. The power of the rider to “*make people kill each other*” includes both *ethnos* and *basileia*.

You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

– Matthew 24:6-7a

When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, “Come!” Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make people kill each other. To him was given a large sword.

– Revelation 6:3-4

FAMINE, SCARCITY OF FOOD AND AN INCREASE IN FOOD PRICES

Following war and conflict, famine will predictably be the next event. Jesus' warning in Matthew 24 and John's vision of the third seal both predict famine. We can expect that the wars, conflicts, and strife around the world will quickly lead to food shortages, increased food prices, and, for the poorest of the poor, starvation. The scales and the high cost of the food pronounced at the third seal imply both scarcity and rationing. Two pounds of wheat contains approximately the number of calories that the average person eats per day. Hence, one day's work will basically buy one day's food, meaning that many people will be living at a subsistence level and just surviving. The admonition "*do not damage the oil and wine*" tells us that luxuries will still be available for those that can afford them, but those less fortunate, the lower classes and the poorest countries, will be in dire need.

When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, "Two pounds of wheat for a day's wages, and six pounds of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!"

– Revelation 6:5-6

There will be famines and earthquakes in various places.

– Matthew 24:7b

PESTILENCE AND DEATH

Following the famines, Luke also includes pestilences in the description of this period. And Matthew refers to all these previous

things as *“the beginning of birth pains.”* Soberingly, the revelation given to John tells us that a quarter of the earth’s population will perish during the days of the pale horse who brings death.

When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, “Come!” I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth. – Revelation 6:7-8

There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven. – Luke 21:11

All these are the beginning of birth pains. – Matthew 24:8

THE PERSECUTION OF THE SAINTS AND APOSTASY

These unprecedented times of death and birth pains will lead to the heaviest time of Christian persecution the world has ever seen. The persecution will purify the church, and many false converts will fall away and leave the faith. Jesus is very clear about this in his account of what he told his disciples to expect. John also describes the martyred saints as sitting under the altar of God, awaiting the judgment that Christ will soon pour out on the ones who slaughtered them. But miraculously, just like during other times of great persecution, there will also be a mighty move of the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel around the world despite, and even through, the persecution.

“Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time

many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”

– **Matthew 24:9-14**

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been.

– **Revelation 6:9-11**

During this time, it seems that we will enter the last forty-two months of the tribulation and the time of the Antichrist’s rule on the earth. Jesus warns his disciples to be on the lookout for the abomination of desolation, which again was something that Paul also referenced as something that must happen before the gathering of the elect.

“So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in

winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.”

– **Matthew 24:15-21**

These times will be so bad for believers that Jesus also warned his disciples that he would have to cut short these days; otherwise, no flesh would be left. By “no flesh” it may mean literally no one, or it may mean that no believers would have survived. Since the context is within the persecution of believers, I think it is most likely the latter. Jesus also describes an even more intense time of deception, with signs and wonders being displayed. This matches the descriptions of the rise of the False Prophet, or the beast from the earth, who also displays signs and wonders to deceive people. Thus, it’s further confirmation that this period of persecution will extend into the second half of the tribulation.

“If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you ahead of time. So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the wilderness,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.”

– **Matthew 24:22-27**

It exercised all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose

fatal wound had been healed. And it performed great signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to the earth in full view of the people. Because of the signs it was given power to perform on behalf of the first beast, it deceived the inhabitants of the earth. It ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. — **Revelation 13:12-14**

SIGNS IN THE HEAVENS

At this point, things are going to be looking hopeless, unless we remember and trust in the warnings of our Lord. Just when things are getting their darkest, there will be incredible signs in the heavens showing us that our redemption has arrived. Matthew says that the moon will not give its light, while John says the whole moon will turn blood red. A simple way to reconcile those accounts could be a total lunar eclipse, which is often called a blood moon. It may also refer to a thick smoke that will be over the face of the earth. Either way, it's easy to imagine how these could be references to the same event. It's also not hard to imagine that Matthew's statement that the "*heavenly bodies will be shaken*" could also include an incredible shaking on the earth, as described by John.

I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. The heavens receded like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. — **Revelation 6:12-14**

“Immediately after the distress of those days, ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’” – **Matthew 24:29**

THE SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS

Immediately after the signs in the heavens of Christ’s return, which are revealed at the opening of the sixth seal, our blessed hope will be revealed. What’s amazing when you compare these passages is how complementary they are. Jesus simply tells us, *“And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man...”* We don’t know what they say, or do, or anything else. We’re just told what they will see and how they will feel. Then in John’s Revelation, we are shown what they will do and what they will say.

Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.
– **Matthew 24:30**

Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?”

– **Revelation 6:15-17**

In the two passages we see *“all the peoples of the earth”* and *“the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free.”* These descriptions don’t leave

anyone out—it’s the whole world. The big question that Revelation 6:17 raises is: How can the world recognize that the great day of the wrath of God and the Lamb has come without having seen a revelation of the Son of Man? In other words, how can the whole world look at wars, famines, plagues, and some celestial phenomena and conclude that they need to hide from “*the face of him who sits on the throne*” and from “*the wrath of the Lamb*?” I think the answer is because they just saw heaven open like a scroll and the Son of Man coming on the clouds with power and great glory. Not only that, but Revelation 1:7 confirms the connection between the coming of the Son of Man and the sixth seal. This one verse quotes Daniel 7:13, Matthew 24:30, and Zechariah 12:10 and assembles them all together. This tells us that they are all part of the coming of the Son of Man on the clouds and confirms that it will be an event seen by all. By my reckoning, that rules out a secret rapture.

Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all peoples on earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen. — **Revelation 1:7**

In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. — **Daniel 7:13**

And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. — **Zechariah 12:10**

We are told that “*every eye will see him, even those that pierced him,*” which in the Zechariah passage is applied to the people of Judah and Jerusalem; however, Zechariah is connected to Matthew,

telling us that at that same time *“all peoples on earth will mourn because of him.”* Those differences are resolved by understanding that, while the whole world will be affected, Israel will experience a repentance that leads to life, while the rest of the world will cower in the worldly sorrow that brings death.

Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. — **2 Corinthians 7:10**

THE RAPTURED SAINTS IN HEAVEN

The next thing that Jesus tells them is that he will gather his elect from the four winds. We’ve already seen how this relates to the classic rapture passages, so it would be good to see where this gathering of the saints could connect with John’s Revelation.

“And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.” — **Matthew 24:31**

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” — **Revelation 7:9-10**

Notice that the very next scene after the sixth seal is the sealing of the 144,000 (*Revelation 7:1-8*), followed by the appearance of the great multitude in heaven that *“no one could count”* (*Revelation 7:9-17*). Admittedly, this group of believers could simply be the believers from all time who have died and are now awaiting

the consummation of the age in heaven, combined with all the recently martyred saints who were killed during the first six seals. But later John tells us who they are.

Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?” I answered, “Sir, you know.” And he said, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

– **Revelation 7:13-14**

The phrase, “*these are they who have come out of the great tribulation*,” is grammatically said to denote an extended process, not an instantaneous event.¹⁹⁴ Therefore it is argued that the great multitude that no one can count cannot be an allusion to the rapture. However, if we understand the great multitude to include two groups, martyred saints (during the great tribulation) and recently raptured saints (those who have just come out of the tribulation), then there is no conflict with John’s use of a verb denoting an extended process. And if we look back to the fifth seal, we read that there were two groups associated with white robes—one is fellow believers, but the other is martyred believers.

And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.

– **Revelation 6:11 NASB**

John is telling us that God is waiting for the full number of believers to be completed before he will pour out his complete wrath, but John distinguishes between fellow servants and their

¹⁹⁴ John MacArthur. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur explains the book of Revelation* (Moody Publishers, 2007): 147.

brethren (martyrs). This idea is clearer in the NASB translation, but the difference between these two groups is explained by John MacArthur in his book, *Because the Time is Near*. And while there may not be enough evidence here to be dogmatic, “*the great multitude that no one could count*” is an excellent place to potentially envision the rapture of the church. The main point I want to make here, though, is that there is no simple theological argument to rule it out, nor is there one that proves it undisputedly. I see this as the first possible rapture point, based on my understanding of all these scriptures; but even if it is, there is no way to know the day or the hour of this moment.

“Fellow servants and brethren” are two classes of people. The first group was alive and willing to die like the martyrs, though they would not. The second group were those who will be killed.” – John MacArthur¹⁹⁵

THE SEVENTH SEAL AND THE FIRST TRUMPET

This last point of comparison doesn’t come from Matthew 24, but there is another scripture verse that amazingly continues to support the idea of a rapture following the opening of the sixth seal. It is found in Luke 17 where God’s last days judgment is compared to the days of Noah and Sodom and Gomorrah. Many will be familiar with the biblical prediction that the last days would again be like the days of Noah. Some may also be aware of the comparison with Sodom and Gomorrah. Considering the recent overwhelming support for homosexuality globally, the warning seems quite relevant now. However, few will have recognized that this passage also gives us some amazing details about the timing of the rapture.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 134.

“But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed.”

– **Luke 17:29-30**

Think about what this verse is saying, literally. A comparison is being made between the rescuing of Lot and Jesus appearing to rescue believers. But here is where it gets interesting. Luke is telling us that Jesus said that fire and brimstone would again rain down on the wicked on the very day that Jesus rescues believers in the last days. And it is reminiscent of what Peter said, as well.

And if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the depraved conduct of the lawless (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)—if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment.

– **2 Peter 2:7-9**

With that in mind, let’s keep moving with the prophetic chronology. After the sixth seal, the very next event is the seventh seal, followed by the first trumpet. So, what happens when the seventh seal is opened, and the first trumpet is sounded?

When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

– **Revelation 8:1**

The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down on the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

– **Revelation 8:7**

Following the sixth seal there is silence in heaven for half an hour, and then right after that, the first trumpet is sounded, which will send what is essentially fire and brimstone raining down on the earth—on the same day that the saints will be rescued, as Luke foretold. Wow! How much more specific can it get? Could this be a simple coincidence? I don't think so.

COMPARISON OVERVIEW

There are eight similarities between Revelation 6-7 and the return of Christ described in Matthew 24:

1. The events described in the first five seals are reasonably similar in description and chronological order to the preceding tribulation events described by Jesus in Matthew 24:4-28, i.e., the events before he said, "*and after the tribulation of those days.*"
2. The sun darkens in both accounts. Whether this is from a solar eclipse, or some other natural or supernatural cause is unknown.
3. The moon doesn't give its light in one and turns red in the other. Both statements would be an accurate description of a total lunar eclipse, which is often called a "blood moon." It may also be some other natural or supernatural phenomenon, though.
4. The stars of the sky will fall in both instances. [*There is also a reference in Revelation 6:13 to "unripe figs" that may point to Matthew 24:32 "learn the parable of the fig tree."*]
5. Both describe a shaking. Matt. 24:29 says that "*the powers of the heavens will be shaken,*" while Revelation 6:14 says there will be a great earthquake and that every island and mountain will be moved from their places. A shaking in heaven and one on earth are not identical, but a shaking in the heavens could easily be concurrent with a shaking on the earth.

6. The statement that the sky will split apart like a scroll in Revelation 6:14 would be a good way to describe a window in the sky opening into heaven. If we understand it in that way, then such an event could easily be described as the sign of the Son of Man appearing in the sky (*Matthew 24:30*).
7. We also see the world mourning over the coming destruction in both scenes. Matt. 24:30 says that “*all the tribes of the earth will mourn,*” while Rev. 6:16-17 refers to everyone on the face of the earth, from the rich and famous to the slave, hiding and crying out. If we understand that these are the same events, then we are even told what the people of the earth will cry out, “*Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?*”
8. Finally, both have descriptions that could be the rapture of God’s people. In Revelation 7:9-17 we see a great multitude that no one could count. This may refer to the same group we see gathered from the four winds to meet the Lord in the air with the martyred saints. It doesn’t have to be, but it fits.

No One Knows the Day or the Hour

Now before someone says, “But you can’t know the day or the hour, because the coming of the Lord will be like a thief in the night.” Paul addressed that very point in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6, except that he told them that they would NOT be surprised because they were “*not in darkness*,” like the rest of the world. The clear teaching is that if we are awake and sober and watching for the Lord’s return, then we should not be caught by surprise.

But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day.

– 1 Thessalonians 5:4–5a NASB

We have a heavy responsibility to prepare ourselves for the things to come—not just for our own welfare (*Philippians 2:3-4*)—we must minister to others and evangelize the lost. The reason this point is so important is that a correct understanding of the church’s role in end times events has immense ramifications. The discussion of when the rapture will occur is a question of practical importance. If the church does not expect to be present during the first part of the tribulation, then they may not be adequately prepared to minister to the millions of people who are going to be suffering and dying, or to take advantage of the unparalleled outpouring of God’s spirit for evangelism. The days of tribulation before the return of the Lord will be a tremendous opportunity for the church, and we need to be prepared.

The implications of expecting to pass through the first half of the tribulation are also important, because it widens the range of prophetic events that we should be watching for to include events from the first three and half years. The consequences of watching for those things, but being raptured first are minimal; however, the consequences of being unprepared to face at least the first half of the tribulation could be much more serious.

As for the overall timing of the rapture, well, truly, no man knows the day or the hour. Many different inferences and assumptions can be made to try and determine the exact time, but ultimately, there is just not enough information given to us to pin it down. Consequently, I think it is best to try and keep an open mind until we can see more clearly. Think of it like driving in the fog. We just can’t see that far ahead. The danger is that we settle our minds on one option that gives us a wrong expectation and causes us to miss things that are happening right in front of us or just leaves us totally unprepared for the coming troubles, perhaps even destroying the faith of some.

The Doctrine of Imminency

Believers have always been admonished to live with an urgent expectancy of the Lord's return. Scripture teaches us to watch and be ready for the Lord's return at any time. And while all of this is true, over the last two hundred years or so, a new church doctrine has developed. It is the Doctrine of Imminency. The idea is based on Scripture and on the historical belief of the church that they needed to be ready at any moment because we do not know when the Lord will return. There are numerous Scriptures that teach that he will suddenly return, and that we are expected to be ready.

The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God who inspires the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place."

"Look, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll." — **Revelation 22:6-7**

"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour." — **Matthew 25:13**

For, "In just a little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay." — **Hebrews 10:37**

All of that is true. We are commanded to be ready, and to be expectantly waiting for the Lord's return at any moment; but here's what I think is the primary logical flaw within the Doctrine of Imminency, in the way it is modernly espoused. The assumption is made that man cannot obey those commands, if in fact the reality is that Christ cannot return until some predetermined list of things occurs. The thinking is that if we know that Christ really can't return because the tribulation hasn't started yet, then

Christ's return is not truly imminent, and knowing this we can't live as if Christ's return is imminent, either. The belief is that in this case all the Bible's commands to watch and be ready at any moment would be moot. Hence the doctrine is not just that we should be always ready, but rather that the Lord can speedily return at any moment he chooses, regardless of any present events, so there are no specific signs that can truly indicate that his return is near or not. But that simply isn't true. It would be like saying that soldiers can't benefit from a training exercise if they know it's not real.

Logically, God has always had an appointed time designated for the Lord's return. True, no one knows that exact time except God himself, but we know that it is already set. The day of our death is a similar concept. We don't know when it will happen, but God has already numbered our days.

“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come.” — **Mark 13:32-33**

The answer is simply that believers are commanded to live psychologically and spiritually in a state of readiness for the Lord's return, even when they know that certain signs must precede it—just like soldiers training in a time of peace. And furthermore, any logical deductions we attempt to make cannot be used to override the plain meaning of scriptures that essentially tell us exactly what to watch for and to expect. Of necessity, we must temper our understanding of imminency with scriptures that teach us what we are to be watching for.

He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that

summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near. – Luke 21:29-31

In the passage above by Luke, Jesus was saying, when you see these events start to happen, then you will know that his return is near. The obvious implication is that if those things aren't happening, then his return is not near (i.e., if the fig tree has not budded, summer is not near). Now, does that mean that his followers would be justified in no longer living in a way that demonstrated eager expectation for the Lord's return? No way! You could really pose the same question regarding sinful acts and our knowledge of forgiveness. If we know that Christ's sacrifice can cover any number of sinful acts, then how can we possibly be expected to live a righteous life free from sin?

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

– Romans 6:1-3

In the same way, although we may know that a specific set of circumstances have not happened yet (from a prophecy in the Bible giving us a sign of Christ's return), in no way does that negate our responsibility to live in a way that demonstrates an eager expectation for the Lord's return. And consequently, one cannot use the concept of imminency to redefine the clear teachings of Scripture regarding the things that must happen before Christ returns to gather his church.

Did Paul Really Have Matthew's Gospel to Reference?

Some may also try to object that Paul couldn't have had a copy of the Gospel of Matthew at the time he wrote 1 Thessalonians, and

therefore couldn't have been referencing it in his letter. However, that would be a baseless objection. First, it can't be proven or disproven. Second, there are plenty of good reasons to believe he did have it. For instance, Paul went to visit Peter in Jerusalem around AD 37-38. Matthew could have easily written his account by that time.¹⁹⁶ However, Paul was taught the gospel directly by Jesus and the Holy Spirit (*Galatians 1:11-12*). We assume that this included the recounting of the events of Jesus' life and his teachings. If that is the case, then Paul may not have had a copy of Matthew in AD 37-38 because we read in *Galatians 2:2* that fourteen years later Paul visited Jerusalem again and commented: "*I presented to them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. I wanted to be sure I was not running and had not been running my race in vain.*" The question this raises is, was Paul talking specifically about the Good News for the Gentiles, or was he talking about the whole of the revelation about Christ's life and ministry? If he was just talking specifically about the Gentiles now having an opportunity for salvation, then Paul could have already had the Gospel of Matthew. If Paul meant all the teachings about Jesus' life and ministry, then Paul would not have had Matthew's Gospel until AD 52, after he met with the Apostles for a second time. Nevertheless, Paul could have still known about the events that were recorded by Matthew directly from Jesus himself. Either way you look at it, there is no sound reason to say that Paul could not have been referring to the teachings of Jesus, which were recorded by Matthew, whether he had a copy of his Gospel or not.

And anyway, when did Paul write 1 & 2 Thessalonians? Paul didn't visit the Thessalonians until his second missionary journey, circa AD 49-52, which ended in his return to Jerusalem. It seems reasonable to presume that Paul wrote 1 & 2 Thessalonians after

¹⁹⁶ Many believe Matthew was the first Gospel, and according to the early church father Papias, he originally wrote it in Hebrew, see: Coxe. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, v. 1, 155.

his second missionary journey was over (sometime after AD 52), but not immediately after he had just left them.¹⁹⁷ In that case, he could certainly have been referencing Matthew in his first letter, because by then he would have received a copy in Jerusalem during his second visit. Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume that since the Apostles were taking care to write and circulate letters to the churches, then they were also making sure that any Gospels available at that time were also being circulated to them. Thus, by AD 52, if the church of Thessalonica didn't already have a copy of Matthew, wouldn't Paul have included any available copies of the Gospels with his letter? Accordingly, we can be confident that Paul knew all about the events recorded in Matthew 24 when he wrote 1 & 2 Thessalonians. [*Hopefully, this diversion has not only enhanced the case for a connection to Matthew 24, but it has also increased your confidence that the Gospels were written very early, with the clear intention of preserving God's inspired Word.*]

Remaining Questions that Should Keep Us Watchful

In my mind, the case would be open and shut for the timing of the rapture at this point, except for a few outstanding questions that can be raised. These open issues demonstrate that it's difficult to have complete certainty over a particular rapture position while there remain open questions that probably can't be completely answered. The points above should establish that the gathering of the elect must be both after the middle of the

¹⁹⁷ Some commentators date 1 & 2 Thessalonians to AD 50-51, which would have been almost immediately after Paul left them. That doesn't seem reasonable, given Paul's commendation to them in 1 Thessalonians 1:7-8, "*And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere.*" Paul wrote that this happened after he had lived among them (verse 5). Consequently, this first letter must have been written years later, not months later, so the date for his first letter must be after his visit to Jerusalem (c. AD 52), and perhaps as late as the days when he was living in Ephesus (c. AD 53-54).

tribulation and after the sixth seal; but the exact timing of the rapture after that is still in question, so we must remain watchful.

Another point is this: Even if there is a gathering of the elect that happens immediately after the sixth seal, won't there also have to be another gathering of saints at the Revelation 19 return of Christ on a white horse? Won't he need to collect people who came to faith after the rapture to be with Him in Jerusalem? We know that there will be lots of saints who are killed during the reign of the Beast, as we read in Revelation 20:4, i.e., the saints who will live under the Beast's kingdom and will be beheaded because they refuse to worship the Beast or receive his mark.

I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

– **Revelation 20:4**

Here is the question that must be considered. When Christ returns on a white horse to execute judgment, followed by what is more likely the saints (not angels) wearing white robes and riding on more white horses, will there still be any saints alive who refused to worship the Beast or receive his mark? It seems very plausible that there will be, and that they too will need to be gathered up with the rest of the believers at that point. Therefore, if there was a rapture of the saints before that moment, then there would have to be a second gathering at this final appearance of Christ as well, meaning two raptures: a first fruits harvest and the main harvest. Of course, there are other possibilities. One is that the one and only gathering of living saints will be at the events of Revelation 19. The other is that

there will no longer be any living saints on the earth when Christ returns, because every single one of them will have been beheaded (or executed, died, etc.), and no one will repent unto salvation in the last moments before his return. My point in bringing this up is that, if there are any believers left alive on the earth at that point, I cannot believe that they will be expected to find their own transportation to meet up with Jesus in Jerusalem. I know we don't have enough information right now to settle all those questions; I'm only asking them because I want to make it clear why we need to remain humble concerning our assumptions of how God may fulfill his Word, when it hasn't happened yet.

Another question one could raise is when does “*one like a Son of Man*” swing his sickle over the earth? By similarity of vision, it is very difficult to not connect this image of the Son of Man with the visions of Christ coming on the clouds to gather his elect in Matthew 24:30-31 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.

I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one like a son of man with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, “Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.” So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.

– **Revelation 14:14-16**

Unfortunately, the Scriptures don't tell us the timing of this event. We know this harvest takes place before a second harvest that is thrown into the great winepress of God's wrath. What we don't know is how much time passes between the two harvests. One might assume that they happen almost concurrently, as in

the harvest depicted in the parable of the weeds sown by an enemy among the good seed (*Matthew 13:30*). But the harvest in Revelation 14:14-16 could be years earlier than the harvest of the grapes of God's wrath in the next verses. And we can't assume that Matthew 13:30 means that the rapture will happen after the Battle of Armageddon, either—based on the statement that first the weeds are collected and burned, because that could just be referring to the end of the millennium. Since we can't presently prove either scenario solely from Scripture, we must wait and see.

“Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.”—Matthew 13:30

And what about the two witnesses who are testifying on the earth during the entire forty-two months of the Beast's reign? Is there a rapture at some point during the second half of the tribulation when the two witnesses and the 144,000 will be left behind?

When do the three angels fly through mid-heaven preaching the eternal gospel and warning the inhabitants of the earth (*Revelation 14:6-13*)? Surely it will be before most people have already been forced to get the mark of the Beast, but when will that be?

How do we know that the seventh trumpet isn't the last trumpet that Paul was talking about in his letter to the Corinthians? I mean, can we say for sure that it won't be? Some may already feel sure that they do know, but the more prudent position, at this point, is to at least leave open the possibility that it is.

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. —1 Corinthians 15:51-52

What are the seven thunders, and why is what they said sealed up? The only reason I can think of is that believers will be there to hear it, and when the seven thunders speak, God wants us to pay attention, but he doesn't want us to know the message until that time. When will that happen, though? We don't know.

Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars. He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand. He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke. And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down."

– **Revelation 10:1-4**

After the sixth trumpet, the Bible tells us that the world will still not repent. Does that mean literally no one? Will there still be believers on the earth at that point? Does that mean that by the time the sixth trumpet is blown the full number of believers is now complete? These are questions that we can only guess at.

The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.

– **Revelation 9:20-21**

Irrespective of a rapture, there will still be saints living on the earth during the tribulation. John tells us repeatedly that believers will be enduring persecution throughout the days of the

judgments of God's scroll and throughout the rule of the Beast's kingdom. These passages make it clear that even if there is a rapture at the sixth seal, there will still be believers on the earth, even during the great tribulation.

[Fifth trumpet] They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

– Revelation 9:4

It [the Beast] was given power to wage war against God's holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world. Whoever has ears, let them hear. "If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity they will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword they will be killed." This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of God's people.

– Revelation 13:7-10

This calls for patient endurance on the part of the people of God who keep his commands and remain faithful to Jesus. Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write this: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."

– Revelation 14:12-13

"Look, I come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed, so as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed."

– Revelation 16:15

I'm not sharing these questions because I don't have any guesses or suspicions regarding their answers, by the way. And some people probably already feel like they have good answers for some of them; but in my mind, there are still too many possibilities to be dogmatic about any of these points. So, what I am hoping to do with these questions is to remind us all that we just can't know every detail of what is coming. We must remain open and humble about our expectations for how these events will play out. We should pray for the blessing of the church in Philadelphia (*Revelation 3:10*) who will be kept from "the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth." But we must also be prepared to walk faithfully, "even to the point of death," as the believers of the church in Smyrna were asked to do (*Revelation 2:10*). Whenever the return of our Lord comes, may we be found ready and waiting... Maranatha!

[Thank you for letting me take you through such a controversial topic, and for sticking with it to the end. If you had a firm rapture position conviction prior to starting this chapter, then you may still not be sure what you think about everything I've presented here. That's okay. Some ideas need to marinate for a while, and we all need time to process new information. But for the time being, set any questions about the rapture timing aside, and let's take a look at even more modern fulfillments of God's prophetic word—showing us that his return is indeed at hand.]

[To the Church in Smyrna] *Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown.*

– Revelation 2:10

[To the Church in Philadelphia] *Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth.*

– Revelation 3:10



Beyond Babel, author's work modifying *The Tower of Babel* by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, 1563.

7

MORE REASONS TO EXPECT HIS RETURN IS NEAR

CERTAINLY, THE WHOLE WORLD is filled with a degree of uncertainty about what the future may hold. It may be based solely on things like climate change, various global crises, Islamic extremism, the world's exploding population, or a knowledge of end times Bible prophecy. Whatever the reason, the feeling that things are changing for the worse is pervasive in our society today. People have been living in an expectation of the promised return of Jesus Christ to judge the inhabitants of the earth for the past two thousand years; however, there is now an even more eager and growing expectation that his return is now at hand. To prophecy watchers, the rebirth of Israel in 1948 signaled to the world that the last days were upon us. Not everyone immediately recognized that the end of the world might be at hand, but by the end of the twentieth century, it was widely known that Evangelical Christians believed that the Apocalypse and the pouring out of God's judgment on the earth was near.

This came about through the influence of books like *The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsey, which sold an estimated 35 million copies by 1999 and was translated into more than 50 languages.¹⁹⁸ An enormous impact was also felt through books like the *Left Behind* series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, which similarly sold millions of copies and were even made into feature films viewed by millions more.¹⁹⁹ Those books, and many others, helped awaken an entire generation to the possibility that the return of Jesus Christ might happen soon.

This created enormous global expectation within the church at various times when people thought the end would happen. For example, there was the release of a pamphlet, *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988*, which created much ado about nothing, since obviously it didn't happen in 1988.²⁰⁰ Later, there was a global Y2K scare that caused millions of people to fear that the end of the world would be triggered by computer crashes around the globe because year-dates were previously entered into databases as the last two digits, not four, and they were about to reset from 99 to 00; however, it turned out that this would not bring about the end of the world, either. Then in 2012, the end of the Mayan calendar became the next date people worried might announce that the end of the world had arrived, but it too passed with a whimper. And those are just some of the date-setting attempts from the past four decades. But predictions regarding the end have been going on for a lot longer than that—as we read in this quote from Joseph Seiss, an American theologian and Lutheran minister who also wondered if the return of Christ would happen in his lifetime.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ Hal Lindsey and C. Carlson. *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Zondervan, 1970).

¹⁹⁹ Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins. *Left Behind* (Tyndale House Publishers, 1996).

²⁰⁰ E.C. Whisenant. *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will be in 1988* (World Bible Society, 1988).

²⁰¹ Joseph A. Seiss. *A Miracle in Stone*. (Porter & Coates, 1877): 311-2.

When the end of the present dispensation shall come has been an anxious question among Christians for nearly two thousand years. Inquiry, and desire to be informed about it, is the natural fruit of faith in what has been foretold and promised in the Scriptures. No one should be censured or lose caste for being concerned to know when the great things of his hopes are to be consummated. The holy Apostles themselves were deeply exercised and often inquired with reference to this point. But God has seen best to throw a thick veil over it, which we should not obtrusively try to lift by an over-curiosity of ours. And by whatever indications led to think our redemption on the eve of accomplishment, we should never lose sight of the Saviour's answer to those who sought his instructions on this point, namely: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." It is uncertain and dangerous ground on which to adventure.

Almost every century since our Lord's ascension has had its time set in human speculations for his return to judge the quick and the dead, but thus far all such attempts to fix upon the date have utterly failed, to the great discomfiture of those who thought themselves amply assured, thus piling up demonstration on demonstration to the truth of the Master's words: "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man." The Rationalistic world is ever parading these signal failures as the standing reproach of all prophetic study, and we put ourselves in the position of very unapt and unwilling scholars if we are not effectively admonished by them to suppress our zeal and to practice becoming reserve touching specific dates of unfulfilled predictions.

— **Joseph Seiss, *A Miracle in Stone* (1877)**

Joseph Seiss' admonitions merit serious consideration for any student of prophecy. We must always remain humble regarding our own capacity to understand the mysteries and revelations of God. And yet we must exercise faith in the recognition of his hand at work when he does fulfill his Word. This keeps us in a state of tension and readiness—like faithful servants, always on the lookout for the return of our master. In these present days, there are plenty of reasons to be on the alert.

The Days of Noah

The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. So the Lord said, "I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them." — **Genesis 6:5-7**

We are now in an age of man that in some ways is unlike any other, and yet in other ways, things are again just like they were in the days of Noah before the flood. This is exactly what Jesus told his disciples to expect in the last days.

As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. — **Matthew 24:37-39**

Scripture teaches us that the last days will be marked by moral depravity on a global scale. At many times in the past, certain places in the world have been cesspools of wickedness that would shock most civilized people. But Paul specifically warned about a general loss of civility, love, and empathy for our fellow man—a time when there would be blatant disregard for holiness of any kind and a general love of sin that would overtake mankind around the world.

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.

– 2 Timothy 3:1-5

One hardly even needs to turn on the television to see how far this country and the world have sunk into immorality and moral depravity. You tend to find the worst of it in large cities, but it is everywhere you look these days. Violent crime has been on the rise in the U.S. since 2014, with an unprecedented and precipitous spike in 2020 and no expectation for a reversal in that trend anytime soon.²⁰² It appears that people are just getting meaner and meaner anywhere you look these days.²⁰³ People are also becoming more and more thrill seeking and pleasure seeking. People are looking to find gratification and personal fulfillment

²⁰² “U.S.: The Rise in Violent Crime Could Continue in 2021,” *Global Guardian News*, 4-16-21, www.globalguardian.com/newsroom/violence_in_us2021

²⁰³ B. Goldsmith. “Are People Getting Meaner? When empathy is no longer a part of our psyche, what will happen to us?” *Psychology Today*, 8-21-18, www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/emotional-fitness/201808/are-people-getting-meaner

in food, movies, video games, phone apps, cars, hobbies, and an innumerable quantity of other distractions. And they are becoming increasingly “spiritual,” but in a sense that they define for themselves, which is gradually resembling old-fashioned paganism.²⁰⁴

One thing I found especially striking in the list above is “*disobedient to their parents.*” At first blush, that might sound like a “so what?” But try to imagine any time in the past two thousand years when there was a global pandemic of disrespect for one’s parents. One of the hallmarks of any stable society, regardless of religious beliefs, has always been that the parents rule the house. But in this modern world, fueled by the internet and social media, children everywhere have been increasingly disobeying their parents. Even in places like China, where respect for your elders and your family are held in high esteem, there have been major problems with rebellion from this present generation of young people. So much so, that China began putting legislation into place to hold the parents accountable legally for their children’s bad behavior.²⁰⁵ There is even a medical diagnosis for extreme cases that is now called oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), which, by some estimates, affects up to 16 percent of school-age children.²⁰⁶

Signs in the Heavens and on the Earth

Luke records that Jesus described a time just before his return that would also be full of a fearful expectation of coming judgment and disaster. That sounds like the present circumstances we

²⁰⁴ Pat Matriciana (Dir.). “Pop Culture Paganism.” *Jeremiah Films*, Jan. 5, 2009.

²⁰⁵ “China Drafts Law to Punish Parents for Children's Bad Behavior,” *Newsmax.com*, October 18, 2021, www.newsmax.com/world/globaltalk/china-parents-punishment-children/2021/10/18/id/1040868/

²⁰⁶ “Hostile, Disobedient and Defiant Behavior in Children,” *Yale Medicine*, www.yalemedicine.org/conditions/defiant-children

see in our world today! We also read that this fear and dread will be accompanied by signs in the heavens.

“There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken.”

– Luke 21:25-26

Accordingly, another thing that we expect to see in the last days is an array of general signs, both in the heavens and on the earth. There has been an unquestionable increase in natural disasters beginning in the 19th century, to the point that it seems that each year new records are being set for hurricanes, fires, earthquakes, tornadoes, floods, and the like, in one place or another. The whole earth is groaning with the wickedness of this generation. The world may call it “Global Warming” or “Climate Change,” but the church knows that it is a sign that God’s judgment on the earth is fast approaching.

I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

– Joel 2:30-31

There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven. – Luke 21:11

Thinking about those verses, it’s easy to picture eclipses, comets, crazy weather phenomena, fires, earthquakes, droughts, giant sinkholes, infestations, or terrible diseases—anything that makes large numbers of people take notice in a profound way. They are included in what Jesus described as birth pangs. While the world

has been experiencing them for a very long time, in the past few decades there has been a notable increase in such signs. As women experience during pregnancy, I think we can assume that these kinds of signs will become more frequent and increase in intensity (just like real labor pains) as the day draws near. So, what were some of the biggest signs in the early twenty-first century?

- ⇒ **Terrorist Attack at the Twin Towers**, New York, 2001
Two planes flew into the World Trade Center buildings in New York on September 11th, as part of four coordinated attacks by terrorists against the United States, claiming a total of 2,996 lives in the process. It was the deadliest attack ever perpetrated on American soil. It wasn't just a wakeup call to the United States. It was a sign to the whole world.
- ⇒ **Northern Sumatra Earthquake** (Magnitude 9.1) in 2004
The earthquake also caused massive tsunamis and claimed a total of 227,898 lives.
- ⇒ **Honshu, Japan Earthquake** (Magnitude 9.0), 2011
This earthquake also caused a massive tsunami, killed an estimated 29,000 people, and caused one of the greatest nuclear disasters in history at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant.
- ⇒ **Chelyabinsk Meteor Atmospheric Explosion, Russia**, 2013
On February 15, over the Ural region of Russia, a sixty-six-foot meteor exploded in the air with the force of up to 500 kilotons of TNT, which was about thirty times larger than the nuclear bomb dropped on Hiroshima.
- ⇒ **Four Blood Moons on Jewish Feast Days**, 2014-2015
Passover, 15th April 2014
Sukkot, 8th October 2014
Passover, 4th April 2015
Sukkot, 28th September 2015

⇒ **The Great American Eclipse**, August 21, 2017

On August 21, this total solar eclipse cut across the continental U.S. with excellent visibility.

⇒ **A Great Sign in the Heavens**, September 23, 2017

A unique sign was seen in the constellation Virgo which matched the description of Revelation 12:1-2, “*A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth.*” There were five specific characteristics which were satisfied astronomically, which haven’t happened altogether in any of the past six thousand years.²⁰⁷

⇒ **Comet NEOWISE**, July 2020

Comets have been associated with signs of impending doom from ancient times. There have been historic reports of more than seventy “great comet” sightings visible with the naked eye over the past 2,000 years, twelve since Israel became a nation in 1948. The last time comet NEOWISE visited the earth was about 4,500 years ago, which would have been in the days of Noah before the flood—perhaps coinciding with God’s declaration that he would wipe out everything with the breath of life from the face of the Earth, except those on the ark with Noah and his family, because of their wickedness (*Genesis 6:5-8*)—something to think about...

⇒ **The Great Conjunction**, December 21, 2020

A conjunction of the planets Jupiter and Saturn reached their closest point at the Winter Solstice. It was the closest one in 800 years. The combined light of the two stars was strikingly bright in the night sky, and the timing of its appearance hearkened back to the birth of Christ and the Epiphany.

²⁰⁷ Stephanie Dawn. “Revelation 12 – A Sign In The Heavens, September 23 2017,” May 24, 2017, <https://redmoonrapture.org/2017/05/24/revelation-12-a-sign-in-the-heavens-september-2017/>

Granted, none of these signs prove we are at the end of the world by themselves. But if someone says, “Signs! What Signs?”, then this list should help start them thinking. And this is only a partial list. This isn’t counting the numerous floods, fires, tornadoes, hurricanes and typhoons, giant hail, mudslides, locust plagues, sinkholes, massive dust storms, etc.—all of which now seem to be constantly in the news. There has been an unending list of disasters that the world calls evidence of climate change, but I call evidence that we are in the last days. Truly, there have always been natural disasters, but in our present age, it seems that both secular scientists and prophecy watchers agree that they are on the rise.

The Increase of Homosexuality

In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.

– **Jude 1:7**

Scripture teaches us that not only will the last days be like the days of Noah, but they will also be like the days of Sodom and Gomorrah, who were plagued with the grievous sin of homosexuality. We know this from the book of Jude and from the account we read in Genesis 19. Lot was visited by two angelic beings that appeared as men. The men of Sodom considered Lot’s visitors attractive and, later in the night, came to Lot’s house to violate his two guests. Because of this, homosexuality is thought to be the sin that most characterized the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom—both young and old—surrounded the house. They called to Lot, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them.”– **Genesis 19:4-5**

Scripture also tells us that God found the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah so grievous that he destroyed them utterly. Since homosexuality is the primary sin we read about, it is safe to assume that it was the main reason God was wiping them all out.

Then the Lord said, “The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know.” — **Genesis 18:20-21**

Then the Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah—from the Lord out of the heavens. Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, destroying all those living in the cities—and also the vegetation in the land. — **Genesis 19:24-25**

The rise of homosexuality in the world today is reminiscent of the days of Lot in Sodom and Gomorrah. And while some people try to claim that God is not against monogamous homosexuality in a committed relationship, the Bible is exceptionally clear that all homosexuality is a grievous offense and a sin against God.

Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error. Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done.

— **Romans 1:26-28**

We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.

– 1 Timothy 1:9-11

Around the world, acceptance of homosexuality and all its derivative perversions (LGBTQ...etc.) has been growing rapidly for the past two decades.²⁰⁸ In the West, the percentage of people who believe homosexuality should be accepted ranges from 67 percent in Brazil to 94 percent in Sweden. Support is still low in the African and Asian continents (from 7 to 37 percent in most of these countries), but here in the U.S., support reached 72 percent in 2020, up from 51 percent two decades prior. This is a tremendous increase globally, especially when you consider that for most of the past two thousand years, the percentage of global acceptance has likely been between 1 to 5 percent. So, from a prophetic perspective, this looks very much like a sign that we have reached the times that Jesus told us would immediately precede his return.

Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

– Romans 1:32

²⁰⁸ J. Poushter and N. Kent. “The Global Divide on Homosexuality Persists: But increasing acceptance in many countries over past two decades.” *Pew Research Center*, June 25, 2020, www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/06/25/global-divide-on-homosexuality-persists/

Antichrist Deceivers and False Messiahs

The last seven years of Daniel's seventy weeks are accompanied by the rise of the Antichrist. And yet, according to John, the spirit of the antichrist has been working among men on the earth for the past two thousand years. The antichrist spirit is the work of Satan, who has been opposing God and his people from the beginning. Nevertheless, a mark of the last days before Christ returns is the ever-increasing influence and deception of the Antichrist over the earth (culminating in his final forty-two-month reign), the rise of false messiahs, and the proliferation of false teachers.

Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. — 1 John 2:18

For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.
— 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12

Jesus also warned us that many would come in his name claiming to be the Messiah. Counting from the start of the twentieth century, there have been at least forty-two people who have claimed to be Jesus Christ (returned, reincarnated, or another one of his kind); nineteen of them are still around today.²⁰⁹ We can

²⁰⁹ In no particular order, here's a list of nineteen self-proclaimed messiahs from around the world, as of 2022: Riaz Ahmed Gohar Shahi (Pakistan), David Icke (England), Ryuho Okawa (Japan), Wayne Bent (USA), Oscar Ramiro Ortega-Hernandez (USA), Bupete Chibwe Chishimba (Zambia), Moses Hlongwane (South Africa), Claude Vorilhon (France), Hogen Fukunaga (Japan), Marina Tsvigun (Ukraine), Sergey Torop (Russia), Apollo Quiboloy (Philippines), Alan John Miller (Australia), David Shayler (England), Brian David Mitchell (USA), Alvaro Theiss (Brazil), Shoko Asahara (Japan), Eliud Wekesa (Kenya), Louis Farrakhan (USA); Here's a modern exposé on seven of them: Jonas Bendiksen.

easily take it for granted that people are claiming to be Jesus now; but two thousand years ago, when Jesus declared that many would come in his name saying “I am the Messiah,” it was an amazing statement to make. The fact that this is still happening, after all this time, is another obvious fulfillment of God’s Word.

For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many.
— Matthew 24:5

And not only is this still happening, but it is also becoming more prevalent. And there is probably a twentieth person to add to the list because in 2020 a leading rabbi in Israel claimed that he was already meeting secretly with the messiah.²¹⁰ But Jesus warned us that when he returns it will not be in secret. He won’t be holding private meetings in a dark room somewhere, or in a remote, secluded spot. When he returns it will be with power and glory, and it will be seen from one end of the sky to the other.

At that time if anyone says to you, “Look, here is the Messiah!” or, “There he is!” do not believe it. For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you ahead of time. So if anyone tells you, “There he is, out in the wilderness,”

The Last Testament: The Truth Shall Set You Free (GOST, 2017); You can find a list of more false messiahs here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_messiah_claimants ; Caleb Parke. “Farrakhan claims to be Jesus in 'Saviours' Day address: ‘I am the Messiah,’” *Fox News*, April 4, 2019, www.foxnews.com/us/farrakhan-claims-to-be-jesus-in-saviours-day-address ; Nathan Ochunge. “The Luhya gods who think they are Jesus Christ,” *The Standard*, March 31, 2018, www.standardmedia.co.ke/western/article/2001275116/luhya-gods-who-think-they-are-jesus-christ

²¹⁰ Ryan Jones. “Israeli Rabbi Says He’s Already Holding Meetings With Messiah,” *Israel Today*, October 15, 2020, www.israeltoday.co.il/read/israeli-rabbi-says-hes-already-holding-meetings-with-messiah/

do not go out; or, "Here he is, in the inner rooms," do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. – Matthew 24:23-27

John also warned about the Antichrist and false teachers, and he gave us some specific warnings to help identify them. They will deny that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Atheists and Satanists are easy to recognize because they deny both God and his son Jesus Christ; but the denial can manifest itself in other more subtle ways. There are numerous heresies regarding the nature of Jesus that have arisen over the years.²¹¹ Solomon wrote that *"there is nothing new under the sun"* (*Ecclesiastes 1:9*). Modern cults and other false religions are simply new faces on the same old lies. They will always deny at least one critical aspect of Christ's nature but may deceptively affirm others. The beliefs of Islam are a good example of this—the Koran clearly states that 'God is one, he has no son,' which implicitly denies that Jesus is God;²¹² however, they do believe that Jesus was a good man and a prophet, even a messiah, but not the savior of the world. Similarly, cults like the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses also deny aspects of the full triune deity of Jesus Christ and his shared personhood with the Father.²¹³

²¹¹ J. Warner Wallace. "Historic Heresies Related To The Nature Of Jesus," *Cold-Case Christianity*, November 27, 2017, <https://coldcasechristianity.com/writings/historic-heresies-related-to-the-nature-of-jesus/>

²¹² Quran. Sura 4 – An-Nisa (The Women), verse 171.

²¹³ I place the errors of Mormons and Jehovah's witnesses in a different category than Islam or Satanism, though. I compare them to Samaritans (a corruption of Jewish faith and practice) because their beliefs about the nature of Christ are a corruption of true Christian faith and practice. But it is important to remember that Jesus loved and sought out the Samaritans, calling them to repentance, and he recognized a few things they were doing right, as in the parable of the Good Samaritan (*Luke 10:25-37*). [*May they come to know and embrace the truth about Jesus Christ and bow before Him as both Lord and God, so that they may find salvation for their souls. Amen.*]

But every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. — 1 John 4:3

Who is the liar? It is whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a person is the antichrist—denying the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also. — 1 John 2:22-23

I say this because many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. — 2 John 1:7

Another sign is the rise of false teachers—purported Christians who deny the sovereign Lord who bought them (2 Peter 2:1). There are a growing number of mainline denominations who are falling away from sound historic doctrines of the church and are instead embracing the antichrist spirit of this age. We'll talk more about that in Chapter 11 under the title, *The Great Apostasy and False Teachings in the Church*.

But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves.
— 2 Peter 2:1

Global Media

For three and a half days some from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial.
— Revelation 11:9

Before the invention of the television, satellites, and broadband streaming video on the internet, it was inconceivable how the whole world could have looked at the dead bodies of the two witnesses in the streets of Jerusalem. Now it is obvious. It has only been since the turn of this past century that televisions, satellites, and internet access have become common. We now have global connectivity in even the world's poorest and least accessible countries. The Bible describes this event happening at the end of the great tribulation, and we now have all the technology in place to fulfill these verses.

Worldwide Evangelism

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

— **Matthew 24:14**

Another prediction about when the end will occur involves worldwide evangelism. Because of global accessibility to media and the internet, the fall of the Soviet Union, and the opening of China and other closed countries, the gospel is rapidly advancing into the last unreached strongholds with the good news of Jesus Christ. The final fulfillment of this prophecy appears to be close at hand. But lest we suppose that the end cannot come until we have reached every corner of the globe and every ear that hasn't heard, we should remember these two passages of Scripture.

When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. Truly I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

— **Matthew 10:23**

Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people.

— **Revelation 14:6**

We can infer from these verses that God is going to be the one who ultimately completes the final stage of global evangelism. Thus, when Jesus said that the gospel would “*be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come,*” while we know it’s true, we cannot assume that its fulfillment is fully dependent upon our human efforts, which could never truly complete so great a task. We should be wary of ecumenical “evangelization” movements that blend social justice with evangelism and seek to contextualize and transform the gospel for each “people group,” which can become “*another gospel*” (*Galatians 1:6*), e.g., the World Christian Movement.²¹⁴ Nevertheless, may the Lord bless our work with the gospel while it is still day, and may we have the freedom and ability to share the Good News until he comes again. During the lockdowns of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, the world saw for the first time how the ability to assemble could be suddenly taken away, even for churches. Censorship also began appearing in a significant way by social media companies and they began “fact checking” posts. Whole accounts were suspended or completely removed. It should now be much easier to understand why John may have warned us that someday night will come “*when no one can work,*” meaning that we may not be able to share the gospel anymore.

As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. — **John 9:4**

It reminds me also of the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25. One of the strangest parts of the parable are that the wise virgins can’t share their oil with the foolish ones. Instead, the foolish ones need to go to the marketplace and buy it for themselves. But if you think of the oil as wisdom (understanding, knowledge, and faith from the Holy Spirit) in a world of deception, then it is

²¹⁴ Albert James Dager. *The World Christian Movement: A Great Delusion Leading to the Religio-Political State of the Antichrist* (Sword Publishers, 2001): 25-40.

much easier to understand why the wise ones couldn't share their oil. It takes time to develop wisdom to understand the times and courage to exercise our faith in trusting in the Word of God.

You live in a world of deception. In their deception they refuse to know Me. This is the Lord's declaration. — **Jeremiah 9:6**

There is coming a day when the divide between truth and lies will be so big, you won't be able to just tell someone what the truth is anymore. The cognitive dissonance they feel will be too much. It will just be too hard to accept that everything they have been taught (by society, the government, the media, etc.) is a lie. At this point, we literally may not be able to share the truth anymore with people in a way they can accept.

Persecution of the Saints

Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. — **Matthew 24:9**

When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained.
— **Revelation 6:9** NASB

In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. — **2 Timothy 3:12**

Christian persecution has been going on since the days of the first apostles, but it has been worsening—growing particularly violent and widespread in recent years.²¹⁵ It has been estimated

²¹⁵ John Foxe and Voice of the Martyrs. *Foxe: Voices of the Martyrs: AD33 – Today* (Salem Books, 2019).

that over seventy million Christians have been martyred since the first century.²¹⁶ It's thought that around 900,000 were killed from 2007 to 2017.²¹⁷ Martyrdom often happens in the most closed countries, so even these estimates are likely underreported. All indications point to increasing persecution in the countries most closed to the gospel.²¹⁸ And it has been increasing in countries not typically known for being hostile to Christians because of increasingly secular laws, social norms, and business policies that reject traditional Christian morals and beliefs. And speaking of martyrdom, during the reign of the Antichrist, it is expected that even these staggering numbers will be made to look small. The book of Revelation has a total of twelve references to the martyrdom and persecution of the saints during the tribulation, which is first mentioned as a part of the scroll judgments at the opening of the fifth seal.²¹⁹ Jesus also warned about this in his Olivet Discourse. Clearly, the persecution and martyrdom of the saints is something that has been happening since the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7, but during the great tribulation it will intensify to a level never seen before.

International Commerce

So that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name. – Revelation 13:17

²¹⁶ Cath Martin, "70 million Christians' martyred for their faith since Jesus walked the earth." *Christian Today*, 25 June 2014, www.christiantoday.com/article/70-million-christians-martyred-faith-since-jesus-walked-earth/38403.htm

²¹⁷ Samuel Smith, "Over 900,000 Christians Martyred for Their Faith in Last 10 Years: Report." *Christian Post*, Jan. 16, 2017, www.christianpost.com/news/over-900000-christians-martyred-for-their-faith-in-last-10-years-report-173045/

²¹⁸ "The 50 Countries Where It's Most Dangerous to Follow Jesus in 2021." *Christianity Today*, Jan. 13, 2021, www.christianitytoday.com/news/2021/january/christian-persecution-2021-countries-open-doors-watch-list.html

²¹⁹ Revelation 6:9-11, 7:13-16, 12:10-11, 12:17, 13:7-10, 13:15, 14:12, 15:2-4, 17:6, 18:4-5, 18:24, and 19:1-2.

Prior to this new millennium, the technology was not in place to control international commerce as it exists today; however, now someone can use a credit card in virtually any country in the world. It wasn't until the late the 1990s that such a basic transaction was even possible. Now, between electronic fund transfers, cryptocurrencies, web-based payment systems, and cash apps, we are rapidly transitioning to a completely cashless society. Since most of what is needed to be fully cashless is already in place, no imagination is needed to understand how the Antichrist could control buying and selling for those who refuse the mark of the Beast. Efforts to go cashless advanced rapidly during the COVID pandemic, and it spurred attempts to control buying and selling based on someone's vaccination status.²²⁰ It isn't a far stretch from there to mandate that anyone who wants to buy or sell will have to receive a mark on their right hand or their forehead, which is already under experimentation.²²¹ We may not be there yet, but it looks like we are getting really close.

Modern Air Transportation and the Computer Age

But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase.

— Daniel 12:4 NASB

The first commercial aircraft flight was in 1949 (following World War II and the return of Israel as a nation). By 2019 there were nearly 40 million flights, carrying over 4 billion people, every year! Journeys that were nearly impossible or took months to

²²⁰ M. Sones. "We won't force vaccine; but here's what we will do." *Israel Natl. News*, November 26, 2020, www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/292039

²²¹ Meghan Roos. "People Get Microchips Implanted That Include Vaccine Records Amid New COVID Restrictions," *Newsweek*, 12/3/21, www.newsweek.com/people-get-microchips-implanted-that-include-vaccine-records-amid-new-covid-restrictions-1655916

complete are now measured in hours. Historically, the number of people that are traveling across the globe has increased exponentially. While Daniel's statement that "*many will go back and forth*" may not sound like much, when you consider it in the context of modern travel, it is hard to imagine a better way he could have said that. Intel released the first microchip in 1969, and computer speeds doubled every two years for nearly five decades. Arguably, that pace has finally reached the limits of silicon-based integrated circuit chips, but most people expect that computer power will still somehow continue increasing, using new technologies, into the foreseeable future.²²² By 2012, storage capacities for data had reached an unfathomable capacity. Storage capacity at the NSA "Bumblehive" is now being measured in yottabytes, where one yottabyte (YB) is a trillion terabytes (TB).²²³ Just about everything that happens digitally these days is being recorded, somewhere. And through artificial intelligence programming, companies and governments are learning how to make use of all that data. It's impossible to comprehend how much data is presently being generated daily, but it should be easy to understand that it is only a matter of time before evil people begin to abuse it. Ultimately, the data being assembled will bring an end to free societies because governments will have all the information and software they need to monitor and control people's inputs and outputs.

Nothing like this has ever been seen on the earth before, but when we consider the simple prophecy recorded by Daniel that "*many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase,*" it sure seems to fit. And Daniel's prophecy, written over 2500 years ago, said that these things would occur at "*the time of the end.*"

²²² M. Peckham, "The Collapse of Moore's Law: Physicist Says It's Already Happening," *TIME*, May 01, 2012, <https://techland.time.com/2012/05/01/the-collapse-of-moores-law-physicist-says-its-already-happening/>

²²³ <https://nsa.gov1.info/utah-data-center/index.html>

The Advent of Nuclear Weapons

There is a verse in Zechariah that may just be an allusion to the frightening, supernatural judgment of God in the last days, but another possible explanation for the type of plague described (that would not have been known in ancient times) is a nuclear explosion. God created the radioactive elements, including both Uranium and Plutonium. Without them, nuclear weapons would not be possible. Can we presume that God didn't know what those elements would be used for when he created them? Of course not. And he was also particular about where he distributed them in the earth's crust, controlling their proliferation. It seems likely that these elements could have a place in end times events, especially when you consider situations such as: 1) Russian President Vladimir Putin putting his nuclear forces on high alert following his initial invasion of Ukraine in 2022,²²⁴ 2) the numerous failed attempts at controlling Iran's nuclear program since the early 2000s, 3) China's growing nuclear arsenal,²²⁵ and 4) the existing nuclear arsenals held by North Korea and Pakistan. With so many hostile nations in possession of nuclear weapons, their use in a future World War III is not inconceivable. Hence, their discovery in this modern age is another possible sign that we are now in the last of the "last days."

This is the plague with which the Lord will strike all the nations that fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths. — Zechariah 14:12

²²⁴ S. Raskin. "Putin puts Russia's nuclear forces on high alert as tensions rise with West," *New York Post*, 2-27-22, <https://nypost.com/2022/02/27/putin-puts-russias-nuclear-forces-on-high-alert-as-tensions-rise-with-west/>

²²⁵ Mark Moore. "China expanding its nuclear weapons force faster than predicted: Pentagon," *New York Post*, November 3, 2021, <https://nypost.com/2021/11/03/china-expanding-nuclear-weapons-force-faster-than-predicted/>

The Return to Babel

We have seen how these last days have become like the days of Noah and Sodom and Gomorrah, but they are also beginning to resemble the days after the flood when all the people assembled at the tower of Babel. There is so much that can be unpacked from this one story, but only if we recognize it as true history.

Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. They said to each other, “Come, let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth.” But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. The Lord said, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.” So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel—because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

– Genesis 11:1-9

Without taking this account at its full-face value, it is of no use in interpreting the ancient past. However, when Genesis 11 is understood as history, a lot of human history begins to make sense. For instance, in the time of the construction of Babel (my estimate is around 2150 BC), there were two key features of the builders of Babel that have relevance for today. First, they were

all working together and speaking one language. Second, God said that if they continued working like that, then “*nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them.*”

Interestingly, the Bible tells that, in the beginning, everyone spoke the same language. Well, that is logical from both a biblical point of view and even an evolutionary one. Why? Because we learn our language from our parents. Accordingly, every language on Earth should have a common root. However, that’s not what we observe.²²⁶ There are multiple language families that have completely different structures.²²⁷ This is difficult to explain, unless you assume that people independently and spontaneously evolved language apart from something passed on from their parents—a scenario that has no evidence to support it. The only exceptions are a few languages developed theoretically as intellectual pursuits, and those that, over time, have changed and morphed or synthesized with other languages; but with more people on the planet than ever before, we are still rapidly losing languages, not gaining new ones.²²⁸ Therefore, it is more reasonable to believe that God created a multitude of incredibly diverse languages at Babel than to believe that literally thousands of diverse languages arose spontaneously on their own.

So why is that so significant? Because the international language of science is now English. In fact, it’s difficult to be an internationally

²²⁶ Kevin May. “Talking point,” *Creation* 23(2):42–45, March 2001.

²²⁷ Bodie Hodge. *Tower of Babel: The Cultural History of Our Ancestors* (Master Books, 2016): 65–74; Werner Gitt, “Origin of Human Language,” *Answers in Genesis*, June 7, 2012, <https://answersingenesis.org/evidence-for-creation/22-the-origin-of-human-language-ob2/>

²²⁸ An analogy for the changes we have observed in languages is the movement of a river’s course over time. As time passes, the path of a river can change a lot, but the path is traceable through time. And languages don’t suddenly appear from nowhere, but they can and do become extinct—at a surprisingly rapid rate at present. Also see, Luisa Maffi. “Endangered Languages, Endangered Knowledge.” *International Social Science Journal* 54, no. 173 (2002): 385–93.

recognized scholar today without it. I think it would be tough to even get a PhD in the sciences without at least being able to read English. It has become the common language that almost all significant science is being communicated in today. To be sure, scientists are still working and writing in their own native languages, but the serious work is also being published and disseminated in English. So even though we don't truly have a common language globally, science for the most part does.

Second, the main goal of all these modern technological advancements is really to figure out how to use science to bring about the next so-called phase of evolution and gain eternal life. The popular way to express that idea, however, is simply transhumanism—using cloning, manipulating the human genome, developing advanced materials, cybernetics, artificial intelligence, attempting to digitize the brain, etc. The development efforts of these technologies are, in a way, all being directed toward helping man to achieve immortality on his own, through science.²²⁹ We are again building the tower of Babel, but this time man is attempting to make himself into the tower.

The Time is ~~Near~~ Here

Some feel that this present age—having already stretched on for two thousand years—could continue this seemingly slow, inexorable march toward the end of days for another thousand years.

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. — 2 Peter 3:9

²²⁹ Alexander Thomas, “The science of transhumanism: How technology will lead to a new race of super-intelligent immortal beings,” *Daily Mail*, July 31, 2017, www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-4747174/Transhumanism-lead-immortality-elite.html

It is a demonstration of the Lord's patience with us that things have gone this far, but the tower man is again building has grown tall. In our hubris, it is a tower that we think will let us reach to the stars. We won't make it, though. Just like he did more than four thousand years ago, God will only let things go so far. The last time man finally went too far, God came down and put a stop to it, scattering the people over the face of the earth. At the current pace of technological advancement, I think we are close to that point. When looking at the whole picture of these last days, it is very difficult to imagine how things could continue to advance technologically, while simultaneously degrading morally (on a global level), without a major corrective. And the only one with the power to make a correction like that is God himself. True, the Lord could once again pour out his Spirit on all mankind to reform us, but isn't that exactly what we are expecting for the last days (*Joel 2:28*)? Based on all that we are seeing in the world, and its similarities with what was prophesied, we can be sure that this is not going to be another global reset, like the Tower of Babel.²³⁰ This time Jesus is coming down on the clouds, with power and great glory. He is coming to judge the kingdoms of the earth and establish his rule on planet earth from Jerusalem—and we will reign with him for a thousand years. The hour is late. Now is the time to wake up from our slumber because our salvation is drawing near (*Romans 13:11*). [*If you thought any of the things I just shared were compelling, just wait until you read the next two chapters...*]

Besides this, knowing the time, it is already the hour for you to wake up from sleep, for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.

— **Romans 13:11 HCSB**

²³⁰ There's certainly no hope for "The Great Reset" of the World Economic Forum (www.weforum.org/great-reset) or the "Build Back Better" agenda in the US (www.whitehouse.gov/build-back-better/). They will only make things worse, not better, and could never fix what is really broken in this world.



Africa and Europe from a Million Miles Away taken by NASA's Earth Polychromatic Imaging Camera (EPIC), July 6, 2015.
{{PD-USGov}}

8

THE AGE OF THE EARTH AND THE MILLENNIUM

THERE ARE MANY CHRISTIANS WHO QUESTION the purpose of the one-thousand-year reign of Christ on the Earth, mentioned in Revelation 20. They wonder whether it is a literal one thousand years or if it is meant to be understood figuratively. Assuming it should be figurative, it is sometimes understood to be an allusion to an undefined length of time when Christ will reign through his body the church, prior to his return to bring final judgment and “*a new heaven and a new earth*” (Revelation 21:1). But why shouldn’t we simply understand it to be an actual period of one thousand years as the Bible says it will be?

Literal or Figurative?

In chapter 2, we learned that a literal view of the millennium is expressed in the earliest church writings, but we also saw that a non-literal view began to develop as early as the third century in church history. Without looking at how prophecies were literally fulfilled in Bible times (as we did in chapter 1) or modern times

(as we've done in the previous chapters), it would be easy to debate the possible interpretations of any prophetic passage in the Bible. Is it literal? Is it figurative? But it is always the observation of literal historic events, matching the events described in the Bible, that causes people to recognize that a prophecy has been fulfilled. Have any of those past events also had an accompanying figurative fulfillment? Yes! But the figurative meaning cannot invalidate or contradict the literal one. It must be complementary because God does not contradict himself.

So why is there such a struggle over reading prophecies literally, and why do many insist that they must only be viewed figuratively? I find that it is generally because there is either 1) an inability to imagine how a prophecy could be literally fulfilled, and therefore the literal sense is found to be nonsensical, or 2) there is simply a lack of faith (or an incredulity) that God would do what the literal sense implies. That doesn't mean that there can't be a figurative insight on top of the literal fulfillment, which enhances the understanding of the prophecy in the literal sense. I think that's good—but the figurative sense must enhance it, not contradict it.

I'm bringing these points up because the question about the nature of the millennium is also related to the age of the earth; and like the millennium, people also question whether God's account of the creation week is literal or figurative. So, it isn't just prophecy where this issue arises. Many Christians question the true scientific age of the earth, and they attempt to reconcile the records of the genealogies listed in the Bible with the findings of scientists who believe that the earth is several billion years old. One way they can try to reconcile the discrepancy is by assuming that Genesis is more allegorical than literal.

A Thousand Years is Like a Day and the Creation Week

As I shared in chapter 2, the early church fathers believed that this present age would end when the world was six thousand years old. Their belief was supported using the verses that tell us that a day is like a thousand years with God. One is found in Psalms, and the other is in 2 Peter. We don't know if this interpretation was taught by the apostles, but the idea was recorded in church writings as early as AD 100 in the Epistle of Barnabas, and it was affirmed by Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and many others.²³¹

A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night. — Psalm 90:4

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. — 2 Peter 3:8

The early church fathers taught that just as God created the world in six days and then rested on the seventh, the return of Christ would come after six thousand years, which would usher in the final one-thousand-year sabbath rest, referring to the millennial reign of Christ on the earth. Now, I admit that this is a wild idea. However, let's look again at how the early church father Hippolytus explained it. [*Remember that he was a disciple of Irenaeus, who was a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of the Apostle John.*] Of course, Hippolytus isn't infallible, but his writings preserve some of the earliest known expressions of the end times prophetic beliefs of the church.

²³¹ All the references for this are in chapter 2.

For as the times are noted from the foundation of the world, and reckoned from Adam, they set clearly before us the matter with which our inquiry deals...And 6,000 years must be accomplished, in order that the Sabbath may come, the rest, the holy day "on which God rested from all His works." For the Sabbath is the type and emblem of the future kingdom of the saints, when they "shall reign with Christ," when He comes from heaven, as John says in his Apocalypse: for "a day with the Lord is as a thousand years." Since, then, in six days God made all things, it follows that 6,000 years must be fulfilled. — **Hippolytus of Rome (c. AD 220)**²³²

What does this passage tell us? That Hippolytus believed that the six days of creation would be represented by 6,000 years of world history, and that the age of the earth should be reckoned from Adam. Likewise, the age of the earth and the one-thousand-year reign of Christ are associated ideas. The early church fathers believed there was a connection between those things and the sabbatical model of six days of work and one day of rest.

Clearly, the early church fathers believed in a young earth. Having investigated the question of whether a young earth position is truly rational from a scientific perspective, I can ardently affirm that it is. Secular scientists have often claimed to have proof that the earth must be billions of years old. But most of what are called "scientific proofs" these days are just the opinions, inferences, and conclusions of scientists touted as incontrovertible facts. Most scientists simply assume an old earth position, and then in a circular logic fashion, propose to prove that it is. However, young earth scientists start by giving credence to the testimony of Scripture and then set out to examine the data to see

²³² Coxe. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, "Hippolytus, Fragments from Commentaries." v.5, 179.

if there is anything that contradicts a young earth hypothesis. [*That is a very different approach, even if it may sound like it's basically the same thing.*] In every case, all claims that the old earth hypothesis have been proven rely on assumptions that: 1) really can't be tested or proven and 2) are less reasonable than young earth assumptions.²³³

The Age of the Earth or the Number of Years Since Adam

There is another way to think about the age of the earth, though, based on the gap theory. It posits that there was an age on the earth that was wiped out when Satan and his angels fell.²³⁴ The theory is that in Genesis 1:2, when it says that “*the earth was formless and void*” it could be translated “became formless” implying that it was made formless because God destroyed it and remade it, rather than newly creating it. I don't want to make this chapter about that idea, but I'll just say that 1) I don't believe a gap is necessary to reconcile scientific data with a young earth assertion, 2) the theory is based solely on assumption and “reading between the lines.” It is not found in the explicit teaching of Scripture, placing it in the realm of myths (*1 Timothy 1:4* and *Titus 1:14*), and 3) the formless and void description would also apply to an earth that was newly created with the perfect diameter, rotation, tilt, magnetosphere, ionosphere, orbit, and interior structure with molten core, while being loaded with precious metals, gems, minerals, etc.—but outside it was formless and void, as in a perfect

²³³ For those still wrestling with the idea of a young earth, I recommend looking at these books: Ken Ham and Bodie Hodge. *A Flood of Evidence: 40 Reasons Noah and the Ark Still Matter* (New Leaf Publishing, 2016); Andrew A. Snelling. *Earth's Catastrophic Past: Geology, Creation & the Flood*, 2 vols. (Institute for Creation Research, 2009); Morris, Henry M. *The Genesis record: A scientific and devotional commentary on the book of beginnings* (Baker Book House, 1979); Danny R. Faulkner. *The Created Cosmos: What the Bible Reveals About Astronomy* (Master Books, 2016).

²³⁴ Jack W. Langford. *The Gap is Not a Theory: An Examination of the First Chapter of Genesis* (Xlibris, 2011).

blank canvas. Nevertheless, whether you count a gap of time before Adam or not, the idea in this chapter still applies—in both cases you can count six thousand years from Adam corresponding to the first six days of the creation week.

If one makes a study of the genealogical records and the dates given in Scripture (across both the Old and New Testaments) and takes the accounts literally, the creation of Adam and the world should have been no later than 4004 BC. This date comes from the most often referenced source for a scripture-based calculation of the age of the earth, which was made by James Ussher circa AD 1650.²³⁵ There are a lot of archaeological advancements that have been made since the time when James Ussher made his chronology, so I don't think a date as late as 4004 BC is tenable anymore. However, following a similar method using the dates in Scripture, along with modern archaeological chronologies, and doing the math myself, I get a minimum date for creation of 3959 BC and maximum date of 3980 BC. That means that in 2022, there were between 5,980 and 6,001 years since the creation of Adam, which tells me that we are in the final countdown to the consummation of the age that the early church fathers indicated.

Coming Up with the Numbers

I don't want to bore people here, but in this section, I'm going to show you how I arrived at my numbers. I'll only go through an abridged version of the calculations, but I have included all the references so that you can work completely through the whole process, if you want to. There are a few spots that can be a little perplexing, which I will also discuss. [*If you don't care to work through the calculations, feel free to skim or jump ahead.*]

²³⁵ James Ussher, Larry Pierce, and Marion Pierce. *The Annals of the World* (New Leaf Publishing Group, 2003).

In Genesis 5, we are given the genealogy from Adam to Noah, and we are told their ages when their sons were born and when they died. The longest living man recorded there is Methuselah, who we read died at the age of 969.²³⁶ Such long lives lead some people to conclude that these accounts are not literal, but after the flood life spans immediately began to diminish.²³⁷ We read in Genesis 6 that God declared he would limit man's years to a hundred and twenty, and after the death of Moses, who died when he was a hundred and twenty years old, you don't read about anyone living past 120 in the Bible.²³⁸

Then the Lord said, "My Spirit will not contend with humans forever, for they are mortal; their days will be a hundred and twenty years."

— **Genesis 6:3**

²³⁶ If you do the math, Methuselah died right before the flood, and Noah's father Lamech died at least 5 years before the flood—God waited to flood the earth until the only righteous people left were literally Noah and his family.

²³⁷ Shem died at the age of 600, Arphaxad at 438, Shelah at 433, Eber at 434, Peleg at 239, Reu at 239, Serug at 230, Nahor at 148, Terah at 205, Abraham at 175, Isaac at 180, Jacob at 147, and Joseph at 110.

²³⁸ Some read Genesis 6:3 as only a pronouncement that God would flood the earth in 120 years. However, there aren't any verifiable biblical or extrabiblical accounts of people living longer than 120 years after the Torah was written down and declared to mankind. There are legendary accounts, of course, but nothing truly credible. (The only possible exception is Jeanne Calment (1875-1997), but there are good reasons to doubt that she really lived to be 122 (see: www.lifespan.io/news/valery-novoselov-investigating-jeanne-calments-longevity-record/). In 2021, with nearly 8 billion people living on the planet and a host of advanced medical treatments available, the oldest living person on earth was Kane Tanaka, aged 118. That gives us strong external evidence that human life spans really are limited to 120 years, and it gives us a basis for understanding why they are so much shorter now than before the flood. The limiting of man's life span after the Fall can also be understood through the concept of genetic entropy, because our DNA is continually degrading with each new generation. [See: J.C. Sanford. *Genetic Entropy* (FMS Publications, 2014).]

Therefore, taking these ages as literal and adding up the birth ages of the ten generations listed in Genesis 5, you'll get a total of 1,656 years from the creation of Adam until the flood, when Noah was 600 years old.²³⁹

Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters came on the earth. – **Genesis 7:6**

Then picking up again in Genesis 11, we are told about the genealogies from Shem to Abram, and we are given two pieces of information. First that Shem was one hundred when he had his son Arphaxad, and second, that this was two years after the flood.

This is the account of Shem's family line. Two years after the flood, when Shem was 100 years old, he became the father of Arphaxad. – **Genesis 11:10**

There were another nine generations after the flood to the birth of Terah (*Genesis 11*). When you add up the ages of the patriarchs, at the birth of their sons, using two years after the flood as the number for Arphaxad, you get 222 years.²⁴⁰ But here enters the first challenge. We are not told the age of Terah when Abram was born. Unless Abram, Nahor, and Haran were triplets, we

²³⁹ Adam was 130 at the birth of Seth, who was 105 at the birth of Enosh, who was 90 at the birth of Kenan, who was 70 at the birth of Mahalel, who was 65 at the birth of Jared, who was 162 at the birth of Enoch, who was 65 at the birth of Methuselah, who was 187 at the birth of Lamech, who was 182 at the birth of Noah, who was 600 when the flood waters came on the earth, equals 1,656 years.

²⁴⁰ Two years after the flood, Shem became the father of Arphaxad, who was 35 at the birth of Shelah, who was 30 at the birth of Eber, who was 34 at the birth of Peleg, who was 30 at the birth of Reu, who was 32 at the birth of Serug, who was 30 at the birth of Nahor, who was 29 at the birth of Terah, equals 222 years.

only know that one of them was born when Terah was 70, but we don't know which one. We are also told that Terah died when he was 205 and that he lived in Harran. We would be missing some critical information to nail this down, except that Stephen gives us the key in his speech before the Sanhedrin in Acts 7.

After Terah had lived 70 years, he became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran. — **Genesis 11:26**

Terah lived 205 years, and he died in Harran. — **Genesis 11:32**

So he [Abraham] left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Harran. After the death of his father, God sent him to this land where you are now living. — **Acts 7:4**

Putting those together, God gave the promise to Abram after the death of his father, when Abram was 75 years old, and he was asked by God to leave his country and go to the land of Canaan. This means that Terah, who died when he was 205, was 130 years old when he had Abram. This makes sense, since we know that Haran died early and that his son, Lot, became a traveling companion of Abram. Haran would have been much older than Abram, and therefore his son Lot was more of a contemporary with Abram than a ward, because the two were probably reasonably close in age. Now we have a total of 352 years from the flood to the time when Abram left the land of Harran to travel to Canaan. Then we get to the second challenge. The genealogy trail of counting the ages of the fathers at the births of their sons goes cold by the end of Genesis. So where do we turn? To the book of Exodus. Moses tells us that the total time the Israelites spent in Egypt was 430 years, but counting from when?

Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years. At the end of the 430 years, to the very day, all the Lord's divisions left Egypt.

– Exodus 12:40-41

Paul in Galatians answers the riddle. He tells us that the count begins with Abram (Abraham) when God promised to bless Abram and make him the father of many nations. How do we know that? Because the law was introduced 430 years after the promise. Genesis 12:1-4 tells us that Abram was 75 years old when he was given the promise from God, and he set out from Harran. Then in Genesis 12:10 we read that when Abram got to Canaan there was a famine in the land, so after stopping at Bethel, he kept on going down to Egypt. This means that the count of Exodus 12:40 started with Abram, not Joseph, as some people have assumed.

The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ. What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise.

– Galatians 3:16-17

The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran.

– Genesis 12:1-4

Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe.

– **Genesis 12:10**

Adding all that up, we get 2,513 years to the Exodus, when the “*Lord’s divisions left Egypt*” and set out for the promised land.²⁴¹ Then, the next major date we get from Scripture comes from 1 Kings. We are told that there were 480 years from the Exodus to the start of building Solomon’s temple and that this was in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign. We now have a new total of 2,993 years from Creation.

In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites came out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, the second month, he began to build the temple of the Lord.

– **1 Kings 6:1**

But we haven’t calculated the possible remainder months from the ages or times that are numbered in whole years only. For example, did Adam just turn 130 years old when he had Seth, or was he 130 and a half, or almost 131? Accordingly, every length of time listed was probably with some number of additional months. That means, with the 23 dating events we are using, we could have as many as 20 extra years to account for. Therefore, the range of the number of years from Creation up to the start of building Solomon’s temple could be from 2,993 to 3,013 years.

From here, we can jump to extrabiblical dating sources for the reign of Solomon, which is believed to have been from 971/970

²⁴¹ Starting with 1,656 years to the flood, plus 352 years from the flood to Abram, plus 75 years to Abram’s promise, plus 430 years to the Exodus, equals 2,513 years.

to 931/930 BC.²⁴² These dates are considered reliable, but they could also have a few years of error in them. But taking them at face value, if we subtract four years from the start of Solomon's reign, using the 970 BC date (to account for the length of time already counted to start building the temple), then we can add 966 years to take us to AD 1. This gives a date for Creation between 3959 and 3980 BC.²⁴³ And if we want to then calculate the age of the earth, you just add those numbers to the current year. Hence, in 2022 the earth was between 5,980 and 6,001 years old.²⁴⁴

At this point, some might be wondering why the Jews calculate that 2022 was the year 5782/5783, if the real year from creation should be between 5980 and 6001. The answer is because they base their present dating system on the work of Rabbi Yossi ben Halafta, who calculated the date of creation in his work, *Seder Olam*, which was first written around 160 AD.²⁴⁵ He calculated that the date of creation was October 7, 3761 BC (converted into our present Gregorian calendar). Rabbi Halafta's method was entirely different, though. He attempted to establish a complete chronology all the way from Creation to the destruction of the temple in AD 70. However, this was well after all the records of the temple had been destroyed, so he was bereft of critical resources to aid his calculations through the silent years.²⁴⁶ Since that time, an incredible amount of work has been done by

²⁴² Kenneth Anderson Kitchen. *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006): 83.

²⁴³ 3980 BC comes from using 971 instead of 970 for the second calculation minus 4, plus 3013 years as the presumed maximum number years, including unknown remainder months.

²⁴⁴ Counting from 1 AD, we must subtract one year from the 2021 date, so we add 2020 years to each age range.

²⁴⁵ Heinrich W. Guggenheimer, *Seder Olam: the rabbinic view of biblical chronology* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1998).

²⁴⁶ By "silent years," I am referring to events in the Bible that aren't connected by dating references and the years between the last book of Malachi and the start of the New Testament.

scholars around the world rebuilding the ancient chronologies, which allows us to jump over the years where the Bible is silent on dating references, as you've seen above. The Jewish people continue to use the present dating system, though, because it is settled by more than 1,800 years of tradition. In a similar way, we now know that Jesus was probably born between 5 BC and 4 BC, but we haven't corrected our dating systems to account for the error, either.²⁴⁷ And lastly, based on the dating of the final decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem in 1537 and the 490 years of Daniel's seventy sevens (see chapter 5), we could presume that the world will be 6,000 years old in 2027. In that case, the creation of the world would have been in 3974 BC, meaning that we picked up an additional 15 years from the twenty-three dates due to remainder months and/or that there is a possible small error in the extra-biblical calculation of the start of Solomon's reign in 971/970 BC.

The Days of Creation and Human History

Another possible way to look at the analogy of a thousand years for each day of creation, is to also compare the days of creation with the major events of human history. Now, some might find this a stretch, and that's okay. Nothing in this section makes or breaks the age of the Earth argument presented above. But knowing that the seventh day, the sabbath day, represents a future thousand-year millennium, it seems plausible that the other days of creation may also be metaphorically represented by past events in human history. [*This might need to marinate a bit, but*

²⁴⁷ The dating system, AD (anno domini) and BC (before Christ), were supposed to be synchronized to the year of the birth of Jesus Christ. Since then, there has been an attempt to change dating conventions to BCE (before the common era) and CE (common era), in which case the reference to Christ's birth is no longer meant to be relevant. As you can tell from my use of BC and AD, I have chosen to ignore the new convention.

the more I thought about it, the more I started to see a likely connection. Again, some may not agree with this part, because unlike the other things I've presented, this may seem rather abstract. Nonetheless, I thought it would be worth sharing for people to think about.]

ON DAY ONE, God said, “*Let there be light, and there was light.*” This opening phrase of Genesis 1:3 encapsulates the whole of God’s creation, as well as the making of male and female in the image of God. And still in day one, we read that God separated the light from the darkness and called the light day and the darkness night. In a similar way, it is in the Garden of Eden that Adam and Eve first sinned by eating of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil. Theologically, we are introduced to the idea that the godly must be separated from the ungodly and that sin brings death, just as the darkness was separated from the light. We also read that there are both the wicked on the earth, following the way of Cain, and the righteous, following in the way of Abel and the descendants of Seth. This describes the first thousand years of human history.

ON DAY TWO, God created the expanse of the sky and separated the water above from the water below. In a similar way, in the next thousand years of human history we see God separate the righteous from sinners when he floods the whole earth using water. Once again, the world in this period sees a time when there is only an expanse of water above and an expanse of water below. And just as God separated the expanse of the sky, he also set a limit on man’s years, which could not be surpassed. Later, in the centuries following the flood, God again separated man at the Tower of Babel and spread them out over the face of the earth (*Genesis 11*). Thus, the events of day two once again serve as a fitting metaphor for the age of man over the next thousand years of human history.

ON DAY THREE, God made dry land appear and vegetation to grow upon the earth. In the same way, at the beginning of the third millennium of the earth, God revealed the promised land to Abraham and swore to give it to him and his descendants forever (*Genesis 12*). And just as God caused vegetation to grow and flourish all over the earth, he also tells Abraham that he will be the father of many nations (*Genesis 17*), as numerous as the stars of the sky (*Genesis 15:5*), and that all nations of the earth would be blessed through him (*Genesis 18:18*).

ON DAY FOUR, God created lights in the sky to separate day from night and to mark the seasons and to serve as signs. Likewise, God established the kingdom of David (*2 Samuel 7*) and he set up the temple in Jerusalem (*1 Kings 8*), and it was a sign to the nations of the world from that time forward. The Israelites were also dispersed throughout the world, like stars spread across the heavens, in the First Diaspora. And finally, before the end of this fourth age of the earth, the words of the prophets were fulfilled by the advent of Christ, the Light of the World.

ON DAY FIVE, God created the first living creatures, the fish of the sea and the birds of the air. In a corresponding way, at the opening of the fifth millennium of the earth, God's only begotten son died on the cross to bring life to the world, and the church was born. The sea can be seen to symbolize the nations,²⁴⁸ and the birds of the air can also symbolize a diversity of nations.²⁴⁹ In this time, we see the growth of the early church and the evangelization of the nations. In day five, the first creatures with the breath of life in them appear (*Genesis 1:30 & Job 33:4*). Likewise, the bread of life entered the world through Jesus Christ (*John 6:51 John 14:6, & Acts 17:25*).

²⁴⁸ For scriptures to support this connection see: Psalm 65:7, Isaiah 17:12, Isaiah 60:5, Ezekiel 26:3, and Ezekiel 32:2.

²⁴⁹ This metaphor can be seen in Ezekiel 17:23 & 31:6, and Daniel 4:20-22.

ON DAY SIX, we read that God commanded the land to produce living creatures after their kinds, and that God made man in his own image to rule over the fish of the seas, the birds of the air, and all the creatures that move along the ground. In a parallel fashion, we see the continued growth of the church into a powerful force. The sixth millennium of the earth is defined by the growth of Western Civilization and the advancement of the gospel throughout the whole earth. This culminated with the peaks of the British empire and later the American Era. We also see the earth reaching its fullness with a population of nearly eight billion people as we arrive at the end of the sixth millennium. And yet, as we approach this last day of creation, we also return to the fall of man in the garden. We know that we cannot rebuild Eden on our own, and again the world is descending into sin and darkness. Jesus Christ, the Lord of Lords, and the King of Kings, must soon return with the armies of heaven to execute judgment on the wicked and establish his kingdom over everything that moves on the face of the earth.

ON DAY SEVEN, God rested. Thus, though things look dark and dismal now, we know that there is a promised sabbath rest soon to come. After Christ has defeated the nations, he will establish his rule on the earth for a thousand years. During this time, he will renew the earth and put an end to war and strife, and mankind will enjoy an unprecedented time of peace and prosperity.

Of all the days of creation, the seventh day has the clearest and most defensible metaphorical connection. It may be that rather than looking at each day separately for each millennium, the analogy is only meant to be seen in aggregate—meaning the associations may be valid, but the first six days of creation were meant to be looked at all together, not separated as I’ve tried to do here. Either way, it seems that there are some remarkable parallels when we compare the days of creation with the major events of human history.

Day	Creation Event	Human History Event
1	Let there be light. God separated the light from the darkness.	Adam and Eve begin human history. Adam and Eve sin and learn to distinguish between Good and Evil.
2	God created an expanse (the sky) between the water above and the water below.	God separated the righteous from the unrighteous. He washed the world with water. He separated man and spread them out over the face of the earth.
3	God made dry land appear and vegetation to grow upon the earth.	God promised to give Abraham the Land of Israel and to make him the father of many nations, as numerous as the stars of the sky.
4	Let there be lights in the sky to separate day from night and to mark the seasons and serve as signs.	God established the kingdom of David and set up his temple in Jerusalem, and it was a sign to the nations of the world from that time forward. Jews were dispersed throughout the world in the First Diaspora. The words of the prophets are fulfilled by Christ, the Light of the World.
5	God creates the first living creatures, the fish of the sea and the birds of the air.	God sent his one and only son to bring life to the world. Growth of the early church.
6	Let the land produce living creatures and let us make man in our image to rule over them.	Growth of Western Civilization and the advancement of the gospel throughout the whole earth.
7	God rested.	Christ will reign for a thousand years.

Another Reason to Believe We are at the End of Days

If your mind isn't still spinning from the revelations and math calculations above, you're probably starting to ask the question, so what does this mean? Well, let's look at what we've learned:

- 1) The oldest postapostolic eschatological teaching within the church, as early as AD 100, is that the Lord will return when the world is six thousand years old.

- 2) Six thousand years for man's rule can be equated to the six days of creation that will be followed by a thousand-year sabbath rest under the kingship of Jesus Christ. This gives us a solid foundation for partially understanding why God has ordained an intermediate millennium period, which to some may otherwise seem nonsensical and lead them to believe that it must be figurative, not literal.
- 3) The calculation of the present age of the earth gives us one more reason to believe that we are truly living in the last of the last days before the return of Jesus Christ, because the earth's time is about to run out.
- 4) Based on a literal understanding of the dates given to us in Scripture, the earth was 6,000 years old as early as 2021, or it could be as late as the year 2042. However, using the findings in this book regarding the decrees of Suleiman I to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, then the earth should reach 6,000 years of age in 2027, which fits nicely within our calculated range of possible dates.
- 5) Not only has the present age of the earth now reached nearly 6,000 years, but there are some fascinating metaphorical comparisons that can be made as we look back over human history and associate them with the events of the creation week. This could further strengthen the analogy and an expectation for the Lord's soon return.

When all this evidence is considered together, it suggests that we have now reached the end of the line for man's attempts to find perfection for himself. Only time will tell us if the tradition of six thousand years is a faithful interpretation of the Scriptures or not, but I wouldn't have shared it with you if I didn't think it was true. I hope this chapter has helped make it clear why it certainly could be. Consequently, irrespective of everything else we've learned so far, the age of the earth gives us a completely independent

reason for thinking that the end of this present age is at hand—and it is pointing to the same time frame as Daniel’s seventy sevens—the time which will usher in the millennial kingdom of Christ for a thousand-year sabbath rest on the earth. The church has been waiting to find out the truth of this prediction for nearly two thousand years. Now you, too, can wait and watch expectantly to see whether this early testimony of the church is truly what Peter meant when he said, *“With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.”*

[An Old Testament Vision of the Millennium]

“I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.

Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; the one who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere child; the one who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed.

They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox; and dust will be the serpent’s food. They will do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain,” says the Lord. —Isaiah 65:19-21, 25



An old Jewish Yemenite Man Blowing the Shofar by Kluger Zoltan, in the National Photo Collection of Israel, D827-015, February 1, 1947. {{PD-2018-Israel}}

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THE YEAR OF JUBILEE

IN LOOKING FOR THE CULMINATION OF HUMAN HISTORY, it seems it would be incomplete without considering the divine commandment to observe the Year of Jubilee and its prophetic implications. A jubilee was to be observed every fiftieth year, and the Israelites were to “*proclaim liberty*” to the inhabitants of the land, as recorded in Leviticus 25. This meant that, every fifty years, all indentured Israelite servants would be released, all debts would be canceled, and any land that had been sold would return to the family of its rightful descendants, according to their tribes. It was a year that the Israelites were not to work the land, but they were to live off the supernatural provision of abundance that God promised to give them in the year before the sabbath year. It was a year to rest from their labor. It was a year that, like the manna in the wilderness, they needed to trust that God would make the land produce enough to sustain them.

Count off seven sabbath years—seven times seven years—so that the seven sabbath years amount to a period of forty-nine years. Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to return to your family property and to your own clan. The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; do not sow and do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the untended vines. For it is a jubilee and is to be holy for you; eat only what is taken directly from the fields. In this Year of Jubilee everyone is to return to their own property. — Leviticus 25:8-13

The Prophetic Meaning of the Jubilee

Prophetically, this ancient practice of the jubilee seems to point us to the final perfect Year of Jubilee when Christ returns to fulfill all God's promises and to establish his millennial kingdom.²⁵⁰ All captives will be liberated. All debts will be canceled. The land of Israel will be fully restored to God's people, and the whole earth will be healed. This idea is taught in both the Old and the New Testaments. It will be a time when the Lord himself will settle disputes. There will no longer be a need for weapons or war. The temple of the Lord will be reestablished in Jerusalem, and the law of the Lord will go out from there to all the nations.

For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not

²⁵⁰ For more discussion on why there is likely a prophetic association between the Year of Jubilee and the return of the Lord, also see: Snow. *The 70 Weeks Jubilee*, 18-20 & 26-9.

by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

– **Romans 8:19-21**

As for you, watchtower of the flock, stronghold of Daughter Zion, the former dominion will be restored to you; kingship will come to Daughter Jerusalem.

– **Micah 4:8**

In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

– **Isaiah 2:2-4**

We read specifically that Zion and the land of Israel will not only be restored, but that the land will become like the Garden of Eden! Springs of water will well up in the barren and waste places, and trees and all kinds of vegetation will once again cover the land.

I will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valleys. I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs. I will put in the desert the cedar and the acacia, the myrtle and the olive. I will set junipers in the wasteland, the fir and the cypress together.

– **Isaiah 41:18-19**

The Lord will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing. — **Isaiah 51:3**

While most of the above verses are focused on Zion, the land of Israel, we can assume that God will also heal the rest of the world and the damage that it incurs during the great tribulation. We can infer this from verses like Isaiah 60:5 that tell us that the wealth of the nations will be brought to Israel. Admittedly, the fulfillment of this verse has already begun as we look at the wealth that has been used to restore Israel, beginning in the latter half of the twentieth century, but the greater context of Isaiah 60 is the millennial kingdom. Hence, we can still confidently assert that God will also restore the lands of the other nations, so that they in turn can bless Israel. Similarly, we read in Habakkuk that the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, and God will heal the lands of the nations. We are even told about several specific nations that God has promised to restore one day: Egypt, Assyria, Moab, Ammon, and Elam.

Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy; the wealth on the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come. — **Isaiah 60:5**

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. — **Habakkuk 2:14**

In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. — **Isaiah 19:23-24**

“Yet I will restore the fortunes of Moab in days to come,” declares the Lord. Here ends the judgment on Moab. — **Jeremiah 48:47**

“Yet afterward, I will restore the fortunes of the Ammonites,” declares the Lord. — **Jeremiah 49:6**

“Yet I will restore the fortunes of Elam in days to come,” declares the Lord. — **Jeremiah 49:39**

Thus, the principle of the Year of Jubilee is clearly seen in the promises of God at the end of the age when his judgments have been completed. This means that with such an obvious analogy between the jubilee and the reign of Christ in the millennial kingdom, as a sabbath rest for the earth, we could also expect that the millennial reign of Christ will begin in a Year of Jubilee. At that time, God will fulfill all his promises to the Jewish people. And by faith, those promises have been extended even to the Gentiles who have accepted Jesus as Messiah and Lord. They have been grafted into the true olive tree (*Romans 11:17-24*). By faith, they have become children of Abraham (*Romans 9:6-8*) and fellow citizens with Israel (*Ephesians 2:18-20*)—not to replace them but to join them.

Are There Any Specific Jubilee Years Revealed in Scripture?

There are at least two references in Scripture that we can use to calculate the date of a jubilee year. The rabbis found one by connecting Ezekiel 40:1 with Leviticus 25:9-10. The Talmud records their opinion that in the twenty-fifth year after the first exile there was a jubilee year, because only in the Year of Jubilee does the New Year (*Rosh Hashanah*) begin on the tenth of Tishri,

not the first.²⁵¹ The words *Rosh Hashanah* literally mean: the chief, the first, or the head of the year, meaning at the beginning of the year, or more precisely, New Year's Day. In fact, that's why the Feast of Trumpets—*literally* the day of trumpets (or *Yom Teruah*)—is more often called *Rosh Hashanah*, because the festival coincides with the Jewish New Year. Putting all that together, with the date of the first exile beginning on 2 Adar 597 BC, there was a Year of Jubilee that began on 10 Tishri 574 BC, in the twenty-fifth year of their exile (*Ezekiel 40:1*).

But isn't it written in a verse that Ezekiel experienced a prophecy "in the twenty-fifth year of our captivity, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was smitten" (*Ezekiel 40:1*)? Which is the year when the beginning of the year is on the tenth of the month? You must say that this is referring to the Jubilee, which begins on Yom Kippur, the tenth of Tishrei. – **Arakhin 12a:7**, *The William Davidson Talmud*²⁵²

In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was taken, on that same day the hand of the Lord was upon me and He brought me there. – **Ezekiel 40:1 NASB**

Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you... – **Leviticus 25:9-10a**

²⁵¹ Rodger Young. "The talmud's two jubilees and their relevance to the date of the exodus." *The Westminster Theological Journal* 68, no. 1 (2006): 71-83.

²⁵² Arakhin 12a:7, *The William Davidson digital edition of the Koren Noé Talmud*, with commentary by Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz, korenpub.com, CC-BY-NC.

And there is another candidate for a Year of Jubilee, found in the New Testament, that fell in AD 27. The account comes from Luke 4. After Jesus was baptized by John (*Luke 3:21-23*), he immediately went into the wilderness for forty days (*Luke 4:1-13*). After returning from the wilderness, he went back to Nazareth and visited the synagogue on the Sabbath. Jesus was asked to read from the scroll of Isaiah. He began at the place in the scroll we now call chapter 61 and he read: “*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor – (Luke 4:18-19).*” This is interesting because, in a jubilee year, the Jews were to “*proclaim liberty*” (*gara deror* in Hebrew) for those working as slaves in the land (*Leviticus 25:54-55*), which matches what we read in Isaiah 61:1, “*proclaim freedom*” (*gara deror*) for the prisoners. Then, following immediately in verse 2, Isaiah says to “*proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor*” affirming that the proclamation of liberty is to be part of the Year of Jubilee, which was the only time such a proclamation was mandated. Then Jesus just stopped reading and said, “*Today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.*” What he had just read included proclaiming the Year of the Lord’s favor (meaning a Year of Jubilee), which he said was fulfilled *Today* in their hearing. Thus, we can conclude that AD 27 must have been a Year of Jubilee!

Furthermore, counting backwards from AD 27 by fifties (subtracting one year as you cross from AD to BC) lands exactly on 574 BC! The odds of that happening by accident are only 1 in 50. In other words, there is only a 2 percent chance it’s a coincidence—and I don’t believe in purely random chance. [*The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord. – Proverbs 16:33*] But that’s not all, because we already learned that, in 1537, Suleiman I decreed that the walls and other parts of Jerusalem would be restored. Counting forward 490 years (seventy sevens) from there brings us to 2027, which is exactly forty jubilees from

Christ’s pronouncement of the Year of Jubilee in AD 27. The odds of another independent event happening on the same fifty-year cycle is even less likely—the odds are 1 in 2500 (or a 0.04 percent chance). In other words, it’s very unlikely that this is just some incredible happenstance.

Another major “coincidence” is that the decree of Suleiman was issued at a time that was 490 years from the 6,000-year window for the age of the earth. This is also a very unlikely occurrence. The odds are 1 in 57.14 (or a 1.75 percent chance) against this also being an accident.²⁵³ Combined with the independent events of the jubilee years, this yields odds of 1 in 142,850 (0.0007 percent) against these things happening together by chance.²⁵⁴

It is also amazing to consider that the number of jubilees between Christ’s two appearances may work out to be exactly forty. Why? Well, maybe there was another reason that Christ spent exactly forty days in the wilderness after his baptism. Think about Numbers 14:34, the pronouncement that the Israelites would wander in the wilderness for 40 years, as foreshadowing that Jesus would go away for forty jubilee years—one for each day he spent in the wilderness.

For forty years—one year for each of the forty days you explored the land—you will suffer for your sins and know what it is like to have me against you.
 — Numbers 14:34

And here’s a final thought. Remember that Leviticus 25:20 tells us that every fifty years, in the Year of Jubilee, the New Year (*Rosh Hashanah*) is sounded on Yom Kippur (the tenth of the

²⁵³ To land on a specific day out of 6,000 is 1/6,000. The window for 6,000 years runs from 2021 to 2042, or 21 years, and there were also five historic decrees. The odds then are (21 x 5)/6,000 or 1 in 57.14 against such a convergence.

²⁵⁴ Multiplying 2,500 by 57.14 equals 142,850.

month of Tishri). If the determination of the jubilee cycle is correct, then in 2027, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur will be on the same day, which is an intriguing idea to consider that we will discuss more in Chapter 10.

Counting Jubilee Years from Genesis

Considering the early church tradition that each day of creation represents a thousand years, meaning that man's government has been limited to 6,000 years, there emerges an additional meaning to God's statement in Genesis 6:3—when he said that he would limit the days of man to 120 years. Well, 120 jubilee years, which happen every 50 years, equal 6,000 years! This idea has been around a long time, and it may have been derived from the Jewish Essene sect teachings, found in the Book of Jubilees, who counted jubilee years since creation.²⁵⁵ But the beauty of the math here provides additional support for the early church belief that the Lord would return to restore all things when man reaches six thousand years on the earth. [*And it gives us one more reason to believe that our time is now very short until his Return.*]

The church father Hippolytus also expressed the idea that the Lord's return would coincide with the completion of the Hebrew jubilee. Likewise, he affirmed that the count for the jubilee year should be fifty years, not forty-nine.

That the number fifty is sacred, is manifest from the days of the celebrated festival of Pentecost, which indicates release from labours, and (the possession of) joy. For which reason neither fasting nor bending the knee is decreed for those days. For this is a symbol of the great assembly that is reserved for future times. Of which times there was a shadow in the land of Israel in the year called among the

²⁵⁵ Tim Warner. *The Time of the End* (Self-published, 2012): 225-38.

Hebrews “Jobel” (Jubilee), which is the fiftieth year in number, and brings with it liberty for the slave, and release from debt, and the like. – **Hippolytus**, *On the Psalms*²⁵⁶

Saint Jerome (c. AD 342-420) also connected the creation week with the future of man, noting that we will be in bondage “during the six days of this world.” He, too, connected the Year of Jubilee with the final sabbath. Taken together, the jubilee cycle confirms that the sands are about to run out on the 6,000 years that man was given to govern himself here on earth.

... and that at Jubilee, that is the fiftieth year, Leviticus 25:13, every possession returns to its owner, all this refers not to the present, but to the future; for being in bondage during the six days of this world, on the seventh day, the true and eternal Sabbath, we shall be free...
– **St. Jerome**, *Against Jovinianus*²⁵⁷

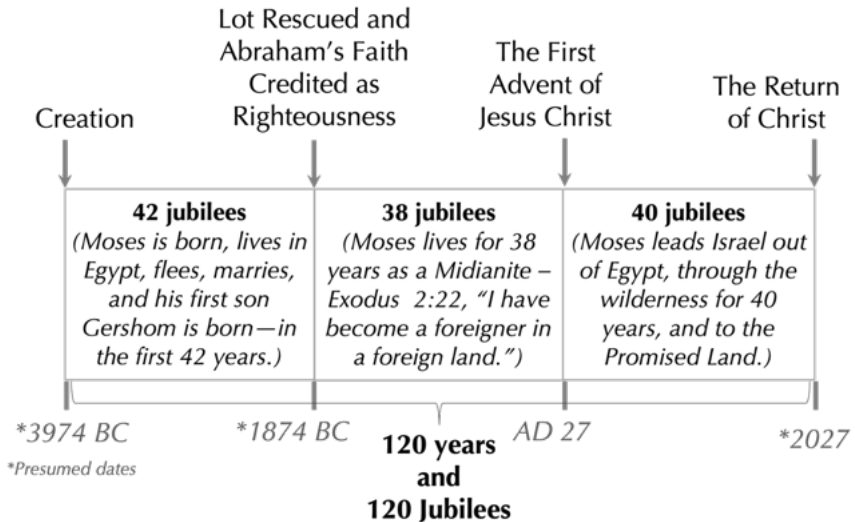
Another possible confirmation of the 120-jubilee countdown comes from the life of Moses, who died when he was 120 years old (*Deuteronomy 34:7*). The similarity with his life begins when he led the Israelites out of Egypt, at the age of 80 (*Exodus 7:7*). Eighty jubilees equal four thousand years, which is exactly the length of time from 3974 BC to AD 27. The children of Israel were delivered from their bondage at that time, but Moses didn’t lead them to the promised land until he was 120 years old, 40 years later. In the same way, Jesus Christ died for our sins almost 2,000 years ago and set us free from sin and death. If the Lord returns to rule and reign on the earth in 2027, then he likewise will be leading mankind into the promised land of the millennium, after

²⁵⁶ Coxe. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. “Hippolytus: On the Psalms, I. 3.,” v.5, 199.

²⁵⁷ Jerome. *Against Jovinianus*, b. II, 25.

40 jubilee years. Now I can't promise that this is the pattern that God has ordained, but I find it compelling.

Using the Life of Moses as a Model for the Advents of Christ



The only real hiccup in this assessment is that Acts 7:23-30 says that Moses was forty when he killed an Egyptian and fled Egypt and that God then appeared to him in a burning bush forty years later. However, there isn't a definitive event in scripture that coincides with exactly 40 jubilees (c. 1974 BC, by my calculation). The closest event is Abraham's birth (which I place in 1954 BC); however, the rescue of Lot, the offering of a sacrifice and giving ten percent to Melchizedek, God's reaffirmation of his promise to Abraham, and the crediting of Abraham's faith as righteousness all took place at the same time (*Genesis 14 & 15*), between 1879-1869 BC. The dramatic rescue scene where Abraham defeats the armies of four kings—recovering all the goods that were stolen and bringing back Lot and all the people kidnapped with him (*Genesis 14:16*)—is a miraculous event that sounds like a proper jubilee. Plus, this is the same time (*Genesis 15:1*) we are told that Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as

righteousness (*Genesis 15:6*). Hence, it is reasonable to presume that this could have happened during the jubilee year of 1874 BC. This date equates to forty-two jubilees after creation, instead of forty. It's close but not a perfect match. That would seem to disqualify the metaphor or force us to assume that Luke was approximating when he said "forty." However, there is a better option. Moses would have been about forty-two by the time he completed traveling to the land of Midian, marrying Zipporah, and having his first son Gershom—when he uttered the words recorded in Exodus 2:22, "*I have become a foreigner in a foreign land.*" He then lived as a Midianite for thirty-eight years until God called him into service to deliver Israel from Egypt, at the age of eighty.

Prophetic Support for Christ's Return After Forty Jubilees

¹ *Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds.* ² *After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence.* ³ *Let us acknowledge the Lord; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth.*

— **Hosea 6:1-3** (emphasis added)

There may also be a hint that the Lord would return after two thousand years (i.e., forty jubilees) in the prophecy of Hosea 6. If the two days of verse 2 are taken as two thousand years (based on *2 Peter 3:8* & *Psalms 90:4*), then the third day could represent the millennial reign of Christ.²⁵⁸ Plus, the reference in Hosea 6:1

²⁵⁸ Ted Slawinski, "After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up," Blog, *Maranatha - Because He came. Because He's coming.* 1-6-22, <https://slawinski.ca/blog/index.php?post/2022/01/06/After-two-days-He-will-revive-us%3B-on-the-third-day-He-will-raise-us-up>

to the Lord binding their wounds, “*after two days*” (v. 2), sounds like an allusion to the messianic language of Isaiah 30:26, when the Lord will heal “*the wounds he inflicted.*”

²⁵ *In the day of great slaughter, when the towers fall, streams of water will flow on every high mountain and every lofty hill. ²⁶ The moon will shine like the sun, and the sunlight will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven full days, **when the Lord binds up the bruises of his people and heals the wounds he inflicted.***

– Isaiah 30:25-26 (emphasis added)

Verses 27-33 that follow in Isaiah 30 make it clear that the context is the Day of Lord. Therefore, when we read, “*after two days he will revive us, on the third day he will restore us,*” this sounds like another promise of the restoration of the Jewish people. Then in verse 3, we are told that “*as surely as the sun rises*” the Lord will appear, alluding to his glorious return. Since this verse is clearly about the Messiah, though, we can also read verse 2 as metaphorically referring to the death and resurrection of Christ “*on the third day,*” so that we can live in his presence eternally.²⁵⁹ But there is no contradiction with also seeing these verses as applying to his return and the restoration of Israel.

Determining the Year of Jubilee

Many have sought to determine the dates of these jubilee years. One of the most popular was published by Jonathan Cahn, showing a pattern of possible jubilee years in modern times going back to 1867.²⁶⁰ The roots of Zionism sowed in 1867 led to the

²⁵⁹ Some might see the use of “us” as referring only to the Jewish people in the plural sense, but remember that God also uses “us” when speaking of himself (“*Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image...’*” – Genesis 1:26).

²⁶⁰ Jonathan Cahn. *The Oracle: The Jubilean Mysteries Unveiled* (Charisma, 2019).

Balfour Declaration in 1917, then U.N. Resolution 181 in 1947 allowed for the creation of the State of Israel. This was followed by the reunification of Jerusalem in 1967. Finally, there was a formal declaration signed in 2017 by President Donald Trump that recognized Jerusalem as the official capital of Israel. All of these were amazing miracles of God, separated each time by a period of fifty years. However, if that was the true jubilee cycle, and if the end of this present age has been ordained to fall on a Year of Jubilee, then we would be waiting until 2067 for the next jubilee and the next possible time for the redemption of the world. I don't want to diminish the significance of those events, and maybe we just aren't meant to know the timing of the jubilees, but there are a lot of reasons to consider that 2027 might really be the next true jubilee date on God's calendar.

According to Jewish tradition, you don't count the jubilee years when the tribes are not united in the land. Consequently, there is also the possibility that, just as there are two New Year dates on the Jewish calendar, there could also be two or even more jubilee cycle counts running simultaneously, triggered by different events. I say that because I really do find the fifty-year cycle from 1867 to 2017 to be rather noteworthy. However, I thought that if 2027 is truly a jubilee cycle, then maybe there would be other events worth considering on a fifty-year cycle synched to that year. Here is what I found that may further confirm that the year 2027 is the culmination of Daniel's prophecy of seventy sevens.

Possible Timeline of Modern Jubilee Years

1977 – For the first time in Israeli history, a right-wing party is elected with a controlling majority to the Israeli Knesset on May 17, 1977. Menachem Begin leads the Likud party and begins a revolution in Israeli conservative politics,

standing up against Land for Peace.²⁶¹ Also, Anwar Sadat visits Israel to begin making peace between Egypt and Israel and speaks before the Knesset on November 20, 1977. Seventeen months later, the peace efforts that began that year were formally signed on March 23, 1979.

1927 – Jericho Earthquake (M-6.3) July 11, 1927. The earthquake stopped the flow of the Jordan River for twenty-one-and-a-half hours.²⁶² It also may have created land purchasing opportunities for Jews, because by 1929, the amount of land owned by Jews in Israel nearly doubled.²⁶³ November 1, 1927, the first coins for Eretz Yisrael (The Land of Israel) are minted for British Palestine under the 1927 Palestine Currency Order.²⁶⁴ At that time, the Jewish parliament, the Assembly of Representatives (*Asefat HaNivharim*), was officially recognized by the British government and they were authorized to collect taxes from the Jewish community, and became responsible for education, health and social welfare within the Jewish sector.²⁶⁵

1877 – Benjamin Disraeli (Earl of Beaconsfield), while Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, writes, “*The Jewish Question is the Oriental Quest*” (1877), and it included a plan for the creation of a Jewish state.²⁶⁶ Disraeli was a Christian Jew of tremendous influence in the nineteenth century who wrote influential novels that advocated for returning the Jewish people to their homeland.²⁶⁷ His work helped

²⁶¹ <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1977-1980/camp-david>

²⁶² John Garstang. *Joshua - Judges* (London, 1931): 137.

²⁶³ [//unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/16B8C7CC809B7E5B8525694B0071F3BD](http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/16B8C7CC809B7E5B8525694B0071F3BD)

²⁶⁴ [//israelforever.org/programs/balfourinitiative/international_connections/](http://israelforever.org/programs/balfourinitiative/international_connections/)

²⁶⁵ [//history-of-israel.org/history/chronological_presentation22.php](http://history-of-israel.org/history/chronological_presentation22.php)

²⁶⁶ *Unknown Documents on the Jewish Question: Disraeli's Plan for a Jewish State* (1877), ed. N.H. Frankel, trans. Theodore Gaster (Baltimore, Md., 1947).

²⁶⁷ Benjamin Jaffe. “A Reassessment of Benjamin Disraeli’s Jewish Aspects.” *Transactions & Misc., Jewish Historical Society of England*, 27 (1978): 115–23.

develop Christian Zionism in England, which ultimately led to the Balfour Declaration. After the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878, the Treaty of San Stefano (March 3rd, 1878), in Article XXII, protected the rights of pilgrims in the Holy Land, which led to securing the rights of Jews to purchase land in Palestine.²⁶⁸ The treaty was followed in June by the Berlin Conference where the Ottomans agreed to allow Jews to buy land in Palestine.²⁶⁹ This created the conditions for the First Aliyah (return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel) from 1882–1903.²⁷⁰ Many of those first returning Jews came to Petah Tikva, which was founded in 1878 near Tel Aviv by a mixed group of ultra-orthodox Jews.

Now, these events alone can't prove that 1877-1927-1977-2027 is the true jubilee cycle—but they should show that the cycle is just as plausible as an 1867-1917-1967-2017 cycle. There's no specific verse in the Bible that says that something amazing must happen every fifty years for it to be a part of the jubilee cycle, either, but it does seem reasonable to look for the pattern. And who knows? There could be multiple fifty-year cycles running at the same time—like vocalists singing in harmony... but only one is singing the melody. It calls to mind the wonderful song “Days of Elijah” by Robin Mark. As sung in the chorus, there is a prophetic connection between the return of the Lord, who is described as “riding on the clouds,” and the final Year of Jubilee, when Christ will return to “Zion's hill,” to rule and reign from Jerusalem.²⁷¹

²⁶⁸ “The Preliminary Treaty of Peace Signed at San Stefano,” Online at: <https://pages.uoregon.edu/kimball/1878mr17.SanStef.trt.htm#pilgrims>

²⁶⁹ David Taylor. *21 Signs of His Coming: Major Biblical Prophecies Being Fulfilled in Our Generation* (Taylor Publishing Group, 2009): 33

²⁷⁰ “Immigration to Israel: The First Aliyah (1882 - 1903),” *Jewish Virtual Library*, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-first-aliyah-1882-1903>

²⁷¹ Robin Mark. “The Story Behind Days of Elijah,” <https://robinmark.com/the-story-behind-days-of-elijah/>

Were There Fifty or Forty-Nine Years in a Jubilee Cycle?

Since the Year of Jubilee offers such a beautiful prophetic picture of the millennium, it is natural to try and figure out its cycle, as we've done here. But some may try and object that the jubilees were not really on a fifty-year cycle. Some Christian scholars and rabbis have taken the position that the jubilee cycle was only forty-nine years long, not fifty. [*For those who want to understand the details about defending the full fifty-year view, I've added these last few sections to address that question and some other nuts-and-bolts items on the details of counting the jubilee years. The short answer? It was definitely fifty but proving that will require getting a little technical.*]

There are two main arguments against the fifty-year view. First, if there was a fiftieth year, then that means there would have been two sabbatical years in a row, which some believe was too long to go without sowing and reaping. Since the Bible doesn't record any jubilee years or intermediate sabbath (*shemittah*) years that were faithfully observed, there aren't any examples to which we can refer. We also read in multiple places in the Old Testament that the Jews stopped honoring even the weekly sabbaths at many points in their history. So, they would have also had a hard time honoring the required rest of an entire year for the land, not to mention two in a row! That is one reason it has been suggested that the sabbath years just continued to cycle year after year with no "leap year" inserted every fifty years. The way I read the text (*Leviticus 25:8-12*) though, I don't see any way around the insertion of a fiftieth year as a second sabbath year. For one, Scripture says it was on the fiftieth year, which can't be said of the forty-ninth year. For another, later in the same passage (v. 20-22), it describes God providing for two sabbath years in a row by providing three years' worth of food in the last year before the seventh sabbath year started. Moses wrote that God would bless their sixth year with the abundance of three years. We know that this sixth year is the sixth year of a seven-year

sabbath cycle, or year number forty-eight as they approached the jubilee. Leviticus 25:20-22 talks about four specific years: six, seven, eight, and nine. This was not talking about years forty-six, forty-seven, forty-eight, and forty-nine because only year forty-nine would be a sabbath year in that case. Consequently, we are talking about the end of a jubilee cycle, starting the count at the beginning of the seventh sabbath cycle (see row A in the table on the following page). This means that years six, seven, eight, and nine are years forty-eight, forty-nine, fifty, and fifty-one (the first year of the next jubilee cycle), where forty-nine is a normal sabbath year and the fiftieth is the second one and the Year of Jubilee (see row B in the table).

You may ask, “What will we eat in the seventh year if we do not plant or harvest our crops?” I will send you such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years. While you plant during the eighth year, you will eat from the old crop and will continue to eat from it until the harvest of the ninth year comes in.

– Leviticus 25:20-22

	Counting Years for the Jubilee						sabbath years		
A	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
B	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	1
C	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	1	2

However, some have contended that the fiftieth year also counted as the first year of the next forty-nine-year cycle (shown as row C in the table above).²⁷² But counting the fiftieth year as both one and fifty simultaneously is a tenuous suggestion, at best, and is without scriptural support or logical derivation from a

²⁷² For arguments in favor of this view, see: Snow. *The 70 Weeks Jubilee*, 29-31; Nelson Walters. *70 Times 7* (Ready for Jesus Pub., 2018): 52-3.

natural precedent.²⁷³ The view that there were two sabbath years in a row in the jubilee year was affirmed by the Jewish sage Nachmanides (c. AD 1194–1270), also called Ramban.

... this being an additional blessing [to that of every Sabbatical year, when the sixth year brings forth sufficient produce for the seventh and eighth years; and when in addition there is a Jubilee year, it will bring forth enough for three years] so that it should suffice also for the Sabbatical year and the Jubilee. – **Nachmanides**, *Ramban on Leviticus 25:20*²⁷⁴

In the Babylonian Talmud, we read that there was disagreement among the Jewish sages about whether the jubilee year was the first year in the next sabbatical cycle or not. We also know that the Essenes believed the jubilee cycle was only forty-nine years long, based on the non-canonical Book of Jubilees.²⁷⁵ Hence, it is not surprising that the question of whether the cycle totaled forty-nine or fifty years has been debated for so long.

²⁷³ It would be like saying that a week is only six days long because the seventh day of the week is also the first day of the next week, making Saturday and Sunday the same day.

²⁷⁴ *Commentary on the Torah by Ramban* (Nachmanides). “Ramban on Leviticus 25:20.” Trans. by Charles B. Chavel. New York, Shilo Pub. House, 1971-1976.

²⁷⁵ The Book of Jubilees, found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, is not Scripture; it tries to imitate it, but its questionable origins and purpose places it among the pseudepigrapha. It cannot be taken as a reliable witness. Furthermore, the Essenes were not even mentioned directly in the Gospels. We can only guess why not, but the silence of the Scriptures in their regard is certainly not in their favor. Consequently, there is better reason to reject its testimony on this point than to accept it. Plus, you must still have one extra sabbath year in the Year of Jubilee, so there would still be eight sabbath years per jubilee cycle, Years 1, 7, 14, 21, 28, 35, 42, and 49.

The Gemara answers: Come and hear, as it is taught in a *baraita* that there is a dispute between Rabbi Yehuda and the Rabbis: The verse states: “And you shall sanctify the fiftieth year” (Leviticus 25:10), from which it is derived: You count it as the fiftieth year, i.e., the Jubilee Year, but you do not count it as both the fiftieth year and the first year of the next Sabbatical and Jubilee cycles. From here they stated: The Jubilee Year is not included in the counting of the seven-year cycle of the Sabbatical Year. Rather, the year following the Jubilee Year is considered the first year of the next seven-year cycle. Rabbi Yehuda says: The Jubilee Year is included in the counting of the following seven-year cycle of the Sabbatical Year. – **Nedarim 61a:4** – *The William Davidson Talmud*²⁷⁶

Based purely on rabbinic or scholarly opinion, this might be an intractable problem, but logically, the default position should be to count the Year of Jubilee as the fiftieth, and then to restart counting the next cycle at one. Any exception to such an obvious normative procedure should require an explicit instruction to do so, which in this case simply does not exist. Plus, a similar cycle of fifty is found in the feast of weeks (Pentecost), which was the day after seven sabbaths (*Leviticus 23:15-16*). Moreover, double sabbath years and a fifty-year cycle is better understood when we examine how the New Year was counted for sabbath and jubilee years, in relation to the annual sowing and harvesting schedule.

The Start of the New Year, Sowing, and Harvesting

In addition to debating the length of the jubilee cycle, the proper start of the New Year has also be questioned, because it can be inferred from Exodus 12:2 that God made Nisan the beginning

²⁷⁶ *The William Davidson Talmud*, Nedarim 61a:4, Online at: www.sefaria.org/Nedarim.61a.4?lang=bi

of the year—in the Spring, instead of Tishri in the Fall. If that was the case, one could try and argue that every seventh (*shemittah*) year you always needed to have three years' worth of produce from the previous year. If the New Year was really in the Spring, then the sowing and harvesting cycle would not have been aligned with the new year cycle. In that case, every sabbath year would prevent two years of sowing and harvesting, not one. Why? Because we know that sowing was done in the late Fall/Winter, after the month of Tishri. Therefore, Jewish years had to start with sowing and end with harvesting, so that in the sabbath and jubilee years, you only skipped one time of sowing and reaping. If not, then what you sowed in the year before the sabbath year you wouldn't be able to harvest. And then, during the sabbath year, you wouldn't be able to sow for the following year, either—causing you to miss two years of food production. But that doesn't make any sense. Especially since the beginning of the Year of Jubilee was declared in Tishri, not Nisan. Thus, we know that the counting for the jubilee year, and every sabbath year, started with the New Year in Tishri. In that case, the land would clearly rest just a single year, not two (except in the case of the Year of Jubilee when there would be two sabbath years in a row).

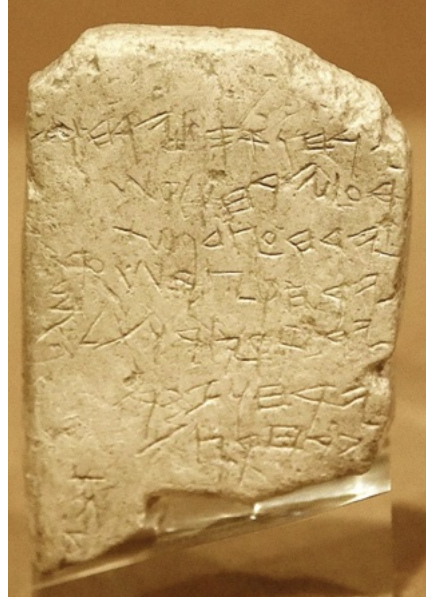
Furthermore, there is a tenth century BC archaeological find that confirms the order of the months for sowing and harvesting. It is a small limestone tablet with an early Hebrew/Phoenician (identical at this time) inscription called the Gezer Calendar. It was found in 1908 in the ancient city of Gezer, near Jerusalem, and it records the basic annual agricultural cycle.²⁷⁷ By comparing the cycles in the calendar with the crops that were in use in ancient Israel, it is possible to have a very good understanding of what their

²⁷⁷ "Agriculture." In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*, edited by Eric M. Meyers, David C. Hopkins. *Oxford Biblical Studies Online*, <http://www.oxfordbiblicalstudies.com/article/opr/t256/e16>

agricultural year looked like.²⁷⁸ The Gezer stone (see photo below²⁷⁹) is presently kept in the Museum of Archaeology in Istanbul, Turkey.

[Gezer Stone Inscription]

Two months of [*olive*] harvest;
 Two months of sowing;
 Two months of late sowing;
 One month of hoeing weeds;
 One month of harvesting barley;
 One month of harvesting and
 [measur]ing (*wheat, oats, peas,*
lentils, etc.);
 Two months of cutting [pruning];
 One month of [collecting] summer
 fruit (*e.g., figs, & pomegranates*).



The calendar is thought to have been something that children learned in school and practiced writing on, so it is admittedly a rudimentary guide to their agricultural schedule in its simplest expression; however, we also see that the calendar is not indexed to specific Hebrew months. This is important, because it reminds us that both sowing and harvesting must follow the solar cycle and the weather. This means that sowing and harvesting would not perfectly follow the Jewish lunar calendar each year, which had to be regularly corrected back to the solar cycle. This also explains why Leviticus 25:11 says that the Israelites must not sow or reap in the fiftieth year, but then in verse 22 of the same chapter, God says that they will plant in the eighth year for food

²⁷⁸ Borowski, Oded. *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel* (Eisenbrauns, 1987): 37.

²⁷⁹ Photo by Osama Shukir Muhammed Amin, April 24, 2018, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Gezer_Calendar_tablet,_early_iron_age,_10th_century_BCE,_Museum_of_Archaeology,_Istanbul,_Turkey.jpg

in the ninth year. But the eighth year would be the Year of Jubilee, so how could they sow for the ninth year, which would be year one of the next jubilee cycle? The answer is found in the fact that they were only commanded to skip one cycle of sowing and reaping per sabbath year. Consequently, if the time for sowing happened to come early, just before the end of the sabbath year, then the Israelites were still allowed to sow seed for food for the coming non-sabbath year. The rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra (c. AD 1089 – 1164) explained that sowing was allowed in the autumn of the eighth year, which would ensure that the sabbath year only missed one cycle of sowing and reaping.²⁸⁰ The Pulpit Commentary also supports this view and a fifty-year cycle.

"Not only the Year of Jubilee, but the sabbatical year also, commenced in the autumn, when the farmers first began to sow for the coming year; so that the sowing was suspended from the autumn of the sixth year till the autumn of the seventh, and even till the autumn of the eighth whenever the Jubilee year came round, in which case both sowing and reaping were omitted for two years in succession, and consequently the produce of the sixth year, which was harvested in the seventh month of that year, must have sufficed for three years, not merely till the sowing in the autumn of the eighth or fiftieth year, but till the harvest of the ninth or fifty-first year, as the Talmud and rabbins of every age have understood the law" (Keil).
 – *The Pulpit Commentary, Leviticus 25:20* ²⁸¹

²⁸⁰ *Ibn Ezra's commentary on the Pentateuch*, "Ibn Ezra on Exodus 12:2:1," Trans. & Annot. by H.N. Strickman and A.M. Silver, Menorah Publications, 1988-2004.

²⁸¹ Spence, H. D. M. *The Pulpit Commentary*, "The Book of Leviticus, Exposition, Chapter XXV, Verses 18-22," v. 4 (Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1899): 395.

Then Why Did God Say That Nisan was the First Month?

Some might be wondering, though, why God commanded Nisan to become the “first” month in Exodus 12:2, if his command didn’t mean that the timing of the New Year was to be changed. Well, there isn’t a perfect answer for it besides, “Because God said so,” but the opinion expressed by the rabbi Nachmanides provides a good explanation. He affirmed that the new year remained in Tishri, at the feast of the ingathering of the harvest, but clarified that the months were numbered starting with Nisan after the Exodus, as a remembrance only, to recognize their place in importance.²⁸² It did not reorder their civil calendar.

Just as in counting the weekdays we always remember the Sabbath-day since the weekdays have no specific name of their own, but instead are called “one day in the Sabbath,” “the second day in the Sabbath,” as I will explain, so we remember the exodus from Egypt in our counting “the first month,” “the second month,” “the third month,” etc., to our redemption. This order of the counting of the months is not in regard to the years, for the beginning of our years is from Tishri, [the seventh month], as it is written, And the feast of ingathering at the turn of the year, and it is further written, And the feast of ingathering, at the end of the year. If so, when we call the month of Nisan the first of the months and Tishri the seventh, the meaning thereof is “the first [month] to the redemption” and “the seventh month” thereto. This then is the intent of the expression, it shall be the first month to you, meaning that it is not the first in regard to the year but it is the first “to you,” i.e., that it be called “the first” for the purpose of remembering our redemption. – **Nachmanides**, “Ramban on Exodus 12:2”

²⁸² *Commentary on the Torah by Ramban* (Nachmanides). “Ramban on Exodus 12:2:1,” Trans. & Annot. by C.B. Chavel. New York, Shilo Pub. House, 1971-1976.

And like two “first” months, there were also two covenants, two births (for the redeemed), two deaths (for names not written in the Lamb’s Book of Life), two visitations by our savior, etc. Just like our rebirth through the Holy Spirit, by faith, doesn’t cancel or invalidate our preceding physical birth, the recognition of Nisan as the first month didn’t invalidate the original ordering of the year. This means the Jewish New Year was always in Tishri, in the Fall. Therefore, the meaning of Exodus 12:2, to make Nisan the “first month,” was that God wanted Nisan to be held as the highest or most important month, with all other months numbered from it.

Seventy Sabbath Years After the Destruction of Jerusalem

Finally, all this work on the jubilee years unlocks one final mystery regarding the seventy sabbath year rests that the land received after the destruction of the Temple of Solomon in 586 BC. To begin with, God told the Israelites, through Moses, how much he would bless them if they listened to him and obeyed all his commands (*Leviticus 26*); but he also warned the people what he would do if they did not. In verses 34-35, he promised that the land would enjoy the sabbath rests they failed to keep, when he later brought destruction on their cities for their disobedience. Many years later, God sent the prophet Jeremiah to warn them to repent and turn back to him, but they would not. So, the sworn judgment was delivered; but God also promised he would return the people to Jerusalem and end its desolation after seventy years (*Jeremiah 29:10*). We then read in 2 Chronicles 36:21 that after the destruction of Jerusalem the land finally did enjoy its sabbath rests—seventy of them. The implication is that (besides their other sins) the Jews hadn’t been keeping the sabbath years, either.

Then the land will enjoy its sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate and you are in the country of your enemies; then the land

will rest and enjoy its sabbaths. All the time that it lies desolate, the land will have the rest it did not have during the sabbaths you lived in it.
 – **Leviticus 26:34-35**

This is what the Lord says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place.”
 – **Jeremiah 29:10**

The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah.
 – **2 Chronicles 36:21**

The implication is that the Israelites failed to observe a total of seventy sabbath years while they were living in the land. But we don't know which ones they missed, or even when God started counting. But he was counting, and he held them responsible for those years. Some have argued that the seventy years represented seventy jubilee cycles, or 490 years, but the Scriptures don't say that.²⁸³ We only know that God declared that the land enjoyed seventy years of rest. Logically, the only way 490 years could be represented by ten jubilee cycles is, 1) if the cycles were only forty-nine years long, and 2) there were no double sabbath years in the Year of Jubilee. Since we've already explained how we know that there was a commandment to celebrate a second sabbath year during the Year of Jubilee, we can confidently reject the idea that 490 years could represent ten jubilee cycles.²⁸⁴

²⁸³ It is also assumed that the jubilee cycle should be forty-nine and not fifty years because of the seventy sevens, or 490 years of Daniel 9:24-27, noting that 490 could represent ten periods of forty-nine years or ten jubilees (see: Snow. *The 70 Weeks Jubilee*, 20-4.); however, again, there is no affirmation in scripture to confirm this, and there are plenty of other possible explanations besides reckoning them as ten jubilees.

²⁸⁴ Even if the jubilee cycle was forty-nine years long and not fifty, there would have to be eight sabbath years per forty-nine years, or eighty sabbath years over 490 years.

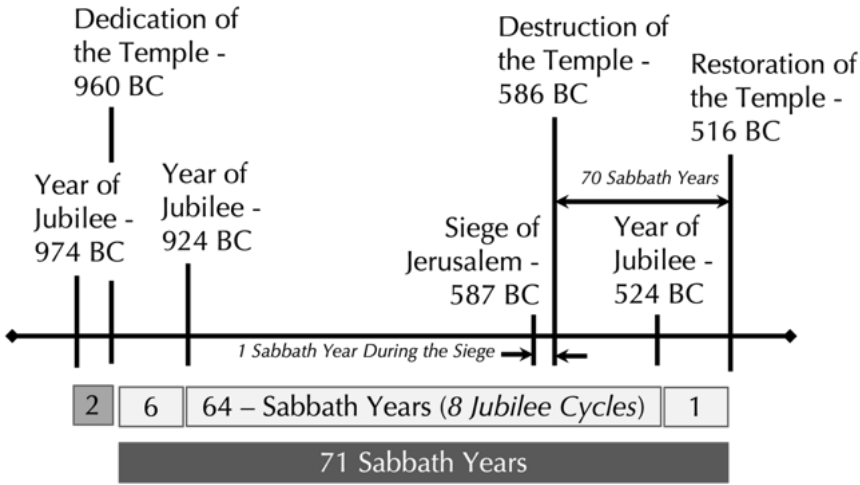
To figure out which years God may have been holding them accountable for, though, we have to make some assumptions. To begin with, the count should start from end of the seventy-year sabbath rest period (in 516 BC), not from Jerusalem's destruction in 586 BC, because the seventy sabbath years would be part of the total count of years. Next, the count couldn't have gone all the way back to the time when Joshua led the Israelites into the promised land (c. 1408 BC), because that was 892 years (unless they were keeping some and missing some, but only God would know that). The next possibility is 490 years before 516 BC, or 1006 BC; this is close to the time when David became king over the full kingdom of Israel (c. 1004 BC), but it would be hard to associate that event with the start of some special accountability. But when we include jubilee sabbath years every fifty years in the count, though, then the seventy missed sabbath years would amount to between 436 and 447 years, depending on exactly when the jubilees fell within the cycle. Counting back from the beginning of the restoration of Jerusalem (c. 516 BC) to the dedication of the Temple of Solomon (c. 960 BC) gives us 444 years. That equates to seventy sabbaths, if the Temple was dedicated on a jubilee year, and seventy-one sabbath years if it wasn't.

The new jubilee year cycle didn't start in 960 BC, though, so there would have been seventy-one sabbath years required from 960 to 516 BC.²⁸⁵ This would make the sabbath count off by one from the seventy mentioned in Scripture, except that I think we can assume that the siege year from 587 to 586 BC was also in

²⁸⁵ Every fifty years, there should have been eight sabbath rest years (one every seven years plus the fiftieth). So, four hundred years means sixty-four sabbath years. But if you don't start counting at the beginning of a jubilee cycle, you could end up with an extra sabbath year in the required count. Assuming that the jubilee year was 974 BC, then 960 BC was a sabbath year at the end of a second sabbath year in the cycle. Correspondingly, there were six additional sabbath years up to 924 BC, sixty-four sabbath years to 524 BC, and one more to 516 BC, for a total of seventy-one.

essence a sabbath year because the whole land was under attack and the people were starving by the end of the siege in 586 BC (*2 Kings 25:3*)—meaning that they weren’t able to plant and harvest. Therefore, the conflict is resolved because there was a total of seventy-one sabbath years of rest for the land. There was one year during the destruction, followed by the seventy years the Bible says came after the destruction of Jerusalem.

Counting Seventy Sabbath Years After the Fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC



Year (B.C.)	Event	Years from Restoration	Sabbath Years to Restoration
c. 516	Restoration of Jerusalem Begins	-	-
c. 586	Destruction of Jerusalem	70	70
c. 587	Siege of Jerusalem	71	71
c. 960	Dedication of the Temple by Solomon	444	71
c. 1004	Kingdoms United under King David	488	77
c. 1051	Start of Saul’s Reign	535	85
c. 1408	Israel Enters the Promised Land	892	142

Then Moses commanded them, saying, “At the end of every seven years, at the time of the year of remission of debts, at the Feast of Booths, when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God at the place which He will choose, you shall read this law in front of all Israel in their hearing. — **Deuteronomy 31:10-11**

There are no records of the sabbath, or jubilee years, being kept prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. There is only the promise to begin doing so after their return to the land (*Nehemiah 10:31*). But interestingly, Deuteronomy 31 implies that God would start holding them accountable for keeping the sabbath years once they began annually assembling at the place that he would show them in the future. That place, 444 years later, was the Temple Mount. Hence, it is not unreasonable to assume that God began holding the Israelites responsible for keeping the sabbath years from that point forward. Therefore, God began to hold the Israelites accountable for keeping the sabbath years once the Temple was set up at the place he chose—Mount Moriah in Jerusalem.

Summarized Findings Regarding the Year of Jubilee

Let’s review what we’ve learned about the Year of Jubilee and its prophetic association with the return of the Lord.

1. The Year of Jubilee is a time to set the captives free and to restore the land to each family in the nation of Israel, according to their tribes. Prophetically, this points us to the millennial kingdom when Christ will restore all things and fulfill his promises to the Jewish nation, and to all true believers in Jesus who have been grafted in by faith.
2. There are two jubilee years revealed in Scripture. The first is found in Ezekiel 40:1 and gives us a date of 574 BC. The second comes from Luke 4:18-19 and yields a date of 27 AD.

Both dates are on the same jubilee cycle, six hundred years apart. Furthermore, a third jubilee date can be derived from Daniel's prophecy of seventy weeks and the decree of Sultan Suleiman to rebuild Jerusalem in AD 1537. With the addition of 490 years to 1537, we arrive at 2027 for the final jubilee. The odds of these three independent dates aligning on the same fifty-year cycle, by chance alone is 1 in 2500 (0.04%).

3. The six thousand years of human history can be related to 120 jubilee year cycles ($50 \times 120 = 6,000$), which points us to God's statement that he would limit man to a hundred and twenty years in Genesis 6:3.
4. The life of Moses, who lived 120 years, provides a model for the two advents of Christ. The first advent came after eighty jubilees, which parallels Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt when he was eighty years old. If the second advent comes in 2027, it will complete forty jubilees since the beginning of Christ's ministry in AD 27, matching Moses leading the Israelites to the Promised Land when he was 120 years old, led by Joshua (a derivative of the name *Yeshuab*, i.e., Jesus).
5. The promise of the return of Christ after two thousand years (forty jubilees), may also be seen prophetically in Hosea 6:2. The promise that "*on the third day*" we will live in his presence could refer to the millennial reign of Christ on the Earth.
6. There is also evidence for a jubilee cycle for the dates 1877, 1927, and 1977, pointing to another jubilee year in 2027.
7. While some have argued that the jubilee cycle was only forty-nine years, not fifty, there is overwhelming evidence that it was and had to be a full fifty years.
8. Furthermore, the sowing and harvesting schedule of Israel began in the Fall, following the New Year in Tishri. This means that the sabbath years, the Israelites only missed one

growing season per sabbath year, because the year began with sowing, not reaping. The only time the Israelites missed two years in a row was during the Year of Jubilee.

9. In Exodus 12:2, where God commanded the Israelites to recognize Nisan as the “first” month, it was in name and importance, but not in terms of changing counting of the New Year, which remained in the Fall in Tishri.
10. In the case of the seventy sabbath rest years that Jerusalem experienced after its destruction in 586 BC, we understand that God held the Hebrews accountable for not keeping the sabbath year rests. Based on Deuteronomy 31:10-11, it can be inferred that their accountability for keeping them started once Solomon dedicated the Temple.
11. The seventy sabbaths cannot represent ten jubilee cycles. Whether the cycle was forty-nine years long or fifty, there were always eight sabbath years per jubilee cycle. Hence, ten jubilee cycles represent eighty sabbath years, not seventy.
12. Considered together, there is good reason to believe that Christ’s return and the final jubilee are close at hand...



David Ben-Gurion declaring independence beneath a large portrait of Theodor Herzl, founder of modern Zionism, May 14, 1948. {{PD-2019-Israel}}

10

ALL EYES ON ISRAEL—GOD’S PROPHETIC TIMEPIECE

WE ARE IN THE FINAL COUNTDOWN. Prophecy is being fulfilled before our eyes. The fig tree has budded. Now our gaze should be fixed on Israel because it is center stage for the last days drama that is unfolding before us. The events that happen there are revealing where we are on God’s prophetic calendar. It’s like checking the town’s clock tower to see what time it is. And each new prophesied event that happens there moves the hands of the clock forward. It shows us how close we are to the impending judgment... and our soon rescue. We don’t know exactly when that rescue is coming, though, so what are the major signs and events regarding Israel for which we need to be watching? We don’t want to miss them when they happen. We can’t assume that whenever a major event in Bible prophecy occurs, everyone will immediately know about it. Remember that many people didn’t recognize the signs that Jesus performed to show that he was the Messiah during his first coming. If most of the Pharisees and teachers of the law, who knew the Scriptures

so well, missed their fulfillments in their day, then so can we. That's why we need to keep an open mind and keep monitoring events in Israel so that we can hopefully avoid making the same mistake. In this chapter, we'll talk about some of the specific prophecies about Israel that I think warrant close attention.

In the next two chapters, we will also begin speculating about what the remaining prophecies might mean. [*This will help us think about what we should be watching for.*] Speculation is the forming of a theory or conjecture without firm evidence. That means it can easily be wrong because it is just an educated guess. The things in these final chapters could be starting to materialize but haven't happened yet. We need to keep in mind that God may fulfill his Word in a way that we just can't imagine before it happens.

“Look at the nations and watch— and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told.”
 – **Habakkuk 1:5**

Thus, we are now moving from things that have happened, which are fixed, to things that haven't yet transpired. Looking forward from here is like playing a game of Sudoku, the puzzle game of filling in the missing numbers (or colors, if you've played ColorKu). The proper way to fill the puzzle is to logically reduce the number of possible numbers or colors for any empty square to just one possibility. Then you can confidently fill it in, knowing that you can safely move forward from there. In this analogy, it is akin to an event occurring. Until something happens, there is almost always more than one way it could have conceivably been fulfilled, so until it does happen, you can't reduce it down to just one possibility and fill the square. When you get stuck, or impatient, though, it can be very tempting to start guessing which number or color should be next, even when you know that there are multiple possibilities. And if you do start guessing, you will

invariably reach a point where you realize that you made a mistake and you must go back and start the puzzle all over (unless you remember at exactly what point in the puzzle you started guessing and can reset the board to that point). Accordingly, what we are doing in the next sections is just considering the possibilities for how these areas might be fulfilled in the future. We are not trying to determine definitively what will happen. We are looking at what might happen so that hopefully we will more easily recognize them when they do. Let’s begin!

The Gog and Magog War

Ezekiel 38 and 39 describe a series of wars with Israel’s enemies. They are some of the most prophetically anticipated battles of the last days. Many assume that the Gog-Magog war will occur before the tribulation begins or at the beginning of it, setting the stage for the Antichrist’s peace treaty. However, there are prophetic markers in the text that reveal that it won’t begin until later in the tribulation timeline. The first marker comes from the events of the sixth seal (*Revelation 6:12-17*) and the first trumpet (*Revelation 8:7*). Interestingly, this is also the first window for the gathering of the saints (*Matthew 24:31*) that we talked about in Chapter 6.

¹² I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake... ¹⁵ Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. ¹⁶ They called to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! ¹⁷ For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?”

– **Revelation 6:12,15-17**

The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down on the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up. — Revelation 8:7

These verses look like a prophetic timestamp because of such similar events that we read about in Ezekiel 38. After the invasion, we read that God will send a great earthquake and that all life on the face of the earth will quake at God's presence. This sounds very similar to some of the events at the sixth seal. But that's not all. The next thing that will happen at this part of the battle is that God will rain down hailstones and burning sulfur, which is again very similar to the first trumpet (*hail and fire mixed with blood*).

¹⁸ *“This is what will happen in that day: When Gog attacks the land of Israel, my hot anger will be aroused, declares the Sovereign Lord. ¹⁹ In my zeal and fiery wrath I declare that **at that time there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel.** ²⁰ The fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the beasts of the field, every creature that moves along the ground, **and all the people on the face of the earth will tremble at my presence.** The mountains will be overturned, the cliffs will crumble and every wall will fall to the ground. ²¹ I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Sovereign Lord. Every man's sword will be against his brother. ²² **I will execute judgment on him with plague and bloodshed; I will pour down torrents of rain, hailstones and burning sulfur on him and on his troops and on the many nations with him.**”*

— Ezekiel 38:18-22 (emphasis added)

The reason the Gog-Magog war is more likely two wars, or a series of wars, is because of the second prophetic marker. This

second marker places the end of the conflict at the return of Christ with his armies (*Revelation 19*) to defeat the Antichrist (Gog) at the battle of Armageddon. After the destruction of the ungodly, we are told that there will be a great sacrifice and a great supper for all the carrion birds and wild animals of the earth. It is a truly horrific scene, and yet, for those who refuse to repent and obey God, there can ultimately be no other outcome. Taken together, these verses imply that, while the events of Ezekiel 38 and 39 are related, the Gog-Magog war will be fought in two stages, and it will begin in the second half of the tribulation.

⁴ *On the mountains of Israel you will fall, you and all your troops and the nations with you. **I will give you as food to all kinds of carrion birds and to the wild animals.***

¹⁷ *“Son of man, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: Call out to every kind of bird and all the wild animals: ‘**Assemble and come together from all around to the sacrifice I am preparing for you, the great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel. There you will eat flesh and drink blood.**’¹⁸ You will eat the flesh of mighty men and drink the blood of the princes of the earth as if they were rams and lambs, goats and bulls—all of them fattened animals from Bashan.¹⁹ At the sacrifice I am preparing for you, you will eat fat till you are gluttoned and drink blood till you are drunk.²⁰ **At my table you will eat your fill of horses and riders, mighty men and soldiers of every kind,**’ declares the Sovereign Lord. — Ezekiel 39:4,17-20 (emphasis added)*

¹⁷ *And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, “**Come, gather together for the great supper of God,**”¹⁸ so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and the mighty, of horses and their riders, and the*

flesh of all people, free and slave, great and small.” ¹⁹ **Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to wage war against the rider on the horse and his army.** ²⁰ *But the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed the signs on its behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.* ²¹ *The rest were killed with the sword coming out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.*

– Revelation 19:17-21 (emphasis added)

Ezekiel also tells us the names of the ancient nations that will be involved. If we connect those names with the names of their modern locations, it is possible to infer that the nations of Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, Sudan, and possibly Russia (in the “far north”) could all be there. And even though so many thousands of years have passed since that time, the verses in Ezekiel 38 line up with the contemporary political landscape.

“Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshek and Tubal; prophesy against him and say: ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am against you, Gog, chief prince of Meshek and Tubal. I will turn you around, put hooks in your jaws and bring you out with your whole army—your horses, your horsemen fully armed, and a great horde with large and small shields, all of them brandishing their swords. Persia, Cush and Put will be with them, all with shields and helmets, also Gomer with all its troops, and Beth Togarmah from the far north with all its troops—the many nations with you.’”

– Ezekiel 38:2-6

MODERN TURKEY & IRAN

Half of the named countries in Ezekiel 38 could reasonably be associated with ancient lands now occupied by modern Turkey, which makes it difficult to imagine that they will not be involved. Ever since Turkey first broke diplomatic ties with Israel in September 2011, it has been evident that the new administration, led by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, was intent on moving in a direction away from constructive ties with Israel. They also began secretly supporting ISIS and coordinating with Iran, which is the modern name for Persia.²⁸⁶ Since that time, a northern alliance of nations has been developing, with Iran and Turkey as the lead actors, and they have been very open regarding their hostile intentions toward Israel. They have also made “liberating” the al-Aqsa mosque and the Temple Mount one of their primary stated goals.²⁸⁷ Turkey did start softening their posture toward Israel after the UAE and Bahrain signed the Abraham Accords, and they could even one day join the Accords with Israel themselves, but their ambitions toward Israel and the warnings from this prophecy make them highly suspect. Turkey has also clearly shown that they want to re-establish the Ottoman Empire, which could make them a candidate for the little horn of the book of Daniel chapter 7 that is associated with the kingdom of the Beast in Revelation 13. We need to exercise caution, though, because there are still many places the Antichrist could arise from.

²⁸⁶ Adam Eliyahu Berkowitz. “Iran, Turkey Could Unite to Wage War Against Israel Warns Mid-East Experts,” *Israel365 News*, June 28, 2020, www.israel365news.com/153822/iran-turkey-could-unite-wage-war-against-israel-warns-middle-east-experts/

²⁸⁷ Seth J. Frantzman. “Turkey vows to ‘liberate Al-Aqsa’ after turning Hagia Sophia to mosque.” *Jerusalem Post*, July 11, 2020, www.jpost.com/middle-east/turkey-vows-to-liberate-al-aqsa-after-turning-hagia-sophia-to-mosque-634700

WHAT ABOUT AFGHANISTAN?

Afghanistan was a part of ancient Persia. With the US withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021, another potential piece of the puzzle came into play. The Taliban have strong ties to Turkey and Iran, so their involvement would not be a surprise.²⁸⁸ Nevertheless, we know that God loves the people of Afghanistan, and during the time that the U.S. was there, there were a lot of Afghans who heard and received the gospel. I trust that God will continue the work he began there, as he did in so many other places, such as China and the former Soviet nations who became very hostile towards the gospel and persecuted believers. [*May God bless and protect them through all their trials (Romans 8:36). Amen.*]

WILL SYRIA ALSO BE THERE?

Perhaps Syria will also oppose Israel in this prophesied battle. As an ancient empire, it was one of the northern empires that ruled the regions that, like modern Turkey, could be included in the names Magog, Meshek and Tubal, Gomer, and Beth-Togarmah. Syria has had many dealings with both Russia and Iran, but they have had a tenuous relationship with Turkey, who has made numerous airstrikes within Syria on its northern Kurdish towns. Allegedly, the attacks have been to dissuade Syrian Kurds from supporting the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) rebel groups within Turkey. In addition, Turkey has been supporting anti-government jihadist groups within Syria since 2011.²⁸⁹ And

²⁸⁸ Tom Bateman. "Afghanistan: Qatar and Turkey become Taliban's lifeline to the outside world," *BBC News*, September 2, 2021, www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-58394438 ; Shelly Kittleson. "Why Iran Will Welcome the Taliban Takeover in Afghanistan," *FP News*, 8-18-21, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/08/18/why-iran-will-welcome-the-taliban-takeover-in-afghanistan/>

²⁸⁹ Ahmet S. Yayla and Colin P. Clarke. "What's Turkey Trying to Achieve in Syria?" *National Interest*, April 1, 2018, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/whats-turkey-trying-achieve-syria-25162>

because of the Syrian refugee crisis (2011-2016) three-and-a-half million pro-Turkey Sunni Muslim Syrians began living in Turkey as refugees who want to see “Turkey save Syria.” All of this has created a volatile situation that makes it difficult to predict what Syria’s role may or may not be. Certainly, Syria was involved in most of the wars against Israel up through the 1973 Yom Kippur War, so it seems likely that they will also have a role in the Gog-Magog war. If so, that may be the time when we see the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy of the complete destruction of Damascus.²⁹⁰

A prophecy against Damascus: “See, Damascus will no longer be a city but will become a heap of ruins. The cities of Aroer will be deserted and left to flocks, which will lie down, with no one to make them afraid. The fortified city will disappear from Ephraim, and royal power from Damascus; the remnant of Aram will be like the glory of the Israelites,” declares the Lord Almighty.

– Isaiah 17:1-3

THE LAND OF PUT

According to the ancient Jewish historian Josephus, the country of Libya occupies at least part of what was known as Put (Phut) in ancient times.²⁹¹ And therefore, we may expect that Libya will also be involved in the Gog-Magog invasion of Israel. Not surprisingly, we see that Turkey is active in Libya, further supporting the conjecture.²⁹²

²⁹⁰ Since the time that Isaiah wrote this prophecy (circa 742-686 BC), Damascus has never been completely destroyed. While control of the city has changed many times since then, as different empires conquered the region, it was never made a “heap of ruins” and left desolate. Consequently, this fulfillment of this prophecy is probably still looking to the future.

²⁹¹ Flavius Josephus. *Antiquities of the Jews*, book 1, ch. 6, s. 2.

²⁹² Staff. “Turkey to continue supporting Libya’s GNA even if al-Sarraj quits,” *Al-Jazeera News*, September 21, 2020, www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/9/21/turkey-to-continue-supporting-libyas-gna-even-if-al-sarraj-quits

THE LAND OF CUSH

The modern countries that most closely square with Cush are Sudan and South Sudan. And what do we find there? That Turkey is also at work in Sudan and in the surrounding Horn of Africa.²⁹³

WHAT ABOUT RUSSIA?

Russia seems to also be in view because of the name Rosh, Magog, or from the mention of “*the utter most parts of the north.*” Russians are descended from the Scythians, who Josephus says were the descendants of Magog (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 1.6.1). Russia is also a well-known supporter of Turkey, Iran, and Syria, so their connection in some fashion should be expected. The status of Russia as a world power, their influence in Israel, and their invasion of Ukraine in 2022 make their presence very likely.²⁹⁴

The Daniel 9 Peace Treaty

A major sign and prophetic requirement for marking the beginning of the final seven years of man’s government and the time of tribulation, is the confirmation of the covenant spoken of in Daniel 9:27. We already talked about the broad implications of this verse in chapter 5: *Seventy Weeks Have Been Decreed*. Now we’ll take a closer look at it.

²⁹³ Staff. “South Sudan, Turkey to escalate military dealings – Angelia Teny,” *Sudans Post*, August 25, 2021, www.sudanspost.com/south-sudan-turkey-to-escalate-military-dealings-angelia-teny/ ; Zach Vertin. “Turkey and the new scramble for Africa: Ottoman designs or unfounded fears?” *Brookings*, May 19, 2019, www.brookings.edu/research/turkey-and-the-new-scramble-for-africa-ottoman-designs-or-unfounded-fears/

²⁹⁴ Speaking of Ukraine, it is also a former land of the Scythians (and thus Magog). Furthermore, the Scythians were allied to the Assyrians by marriage and vassal treaty under the reign of Esarhaddon (c. 681-669 BC), making it part of the Neo-Assyrian empire, too.

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

The mention of confirming the covenant does not necessarily mean that the Antichrist is the one who drafts the treaty or declaration. He just must somehow lend his support to it. The statement, “*with the many*” is likely an allusion to the many nations that will likewise support it in a collective peace deal or agreement. In the process, they will acknowledge Israel’s right to exist as a nation—and that their right to the land comes from God, through the Abrahamic Covenant. Also, the Antichrist will just be one of the participants in the whole affair, and it may not be obvious that he soon will be the Beast that begins to rule the nations of the earth three and a half years later in the great tribulation. Furthermore, since there will only be seven years left for human government until the return of Christ, this means that any “confirmation of the covenant” will be *de facto* for seven years, so the treaty doesn’t have to specify seven years in its terms.

Because of the association with the Antichrist and the end times, however, not everyone will be celebrating that Israel is making peace deals. Nevertheless, we are commanded to seek the peace of Jerusalem. We are encouraged by David in the Psalms to continually pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Also notice the connection of that peace with the house of the Lord (the temple) and that God is pleased that men want to go there.

I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the Lord.” Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem.... Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: “May they prosper who love you. May peace be within your walls, and prosperity within your

palaces.” For the sake of my brothers and my friends, I will now say, “May peace be within you.” For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good. — **Psalm 122:1-2, 6-9 NASB**

When President Trump released his “Peace to Prosperity” plan for Israel and the Palestinians in January of 2020, many people may have at first mistaken it for another failed attempt at finding a real solution to the intractable Palestinian problem—just another senseless swing at the seemingly impossible goal of peace in the Middle East between Jews and Arabs. But then later that same year, the Abraham Accords emerged and presented a viable candidate for the fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy. Many wondered whether the accords would survive the transition to a new democratic administration in the U.S. under President Biden; however, when the Abraham Accords passed their one-year anniversary, not only were they still in place, but they were also bearing fruit! The accords were then embraced by the Biden administration and have continued to flourish. Indeed, it was soon evident that they were not just another peace deal fiasco, but instead were potentially something prophetically significant.

So how did it all happen? First, when the Israel-Palestinian deal was first put forward, it was approved by both Israel and the United States. Second, it was developed in quiet coordination with moderate Arab states (Bahrain, UAE, Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia) and with the involvement of some evangelical Christian influencers like Joel Rosenberg, starting as early as 2018.²⁹⁵ While those Arab nations didn’t publicly approve the plan, many avoided completely condemning it and instead endorsed or applauded the effort.²⁹⁶ By remaining neutral on the

²⁹⁵ Joel Rosenberg. *Enemies and Allies: An Unforgettable Journey inside the Fast-Moving & Immensely Turbulent Modern Middle East* (Tyndale House, 2021).

²⁹⁶ J. Hincks, “Trump’s Plan for Middle East Peace Hinges on Support from Arab Leaders,” *TIME*, 1-29-20, //time.com/5773814/middle-east-peace-plan-response/

subject, these Arab countries signaled their private approval. True, it was rejected by the Palestinians, but Jared Kushner, one of the architects of the plan, announced that unlike other peace attempts in the past, Palestinian approval would not necessarily be required to move forward,²⁹⁷ and it set an interesting precedent for future negotiations.

Then came the Abraham Accords,²⁹⁸ which included official recognition of the State of Israel by the Arab countries who signed it, and it began opening a new era of peace in the region.²⁹⁹ Securing peace with Israel’s neighbors is a big step toward securing peace with the Palestinians, since their cause has usually been universally supported by the Muslim nations. The more they lose that support, though, the more pressure they have to actually negotiate a resolution to the conflict.

Thus, considering the current progress toward peace in the Middle East, are we seeing something simply in line with what David said we should seek continually, or have we entered the time of peace that Daniel spoke about? And either way, how will this affect Jewish aspirations for things like rebuilding the temple and reinstating some form of sacrifices? To truly confirm that we are moving into Daniel’s peace and not simply hoping and praying

²⁹⁷ Aaron Reich, “Kushner: US to approve annexation if Palestinians don’t negotiate,” *Jerusalem Post*, March 8, 2020, www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Kushner-US-to-approve-Israeli-annexation-if-Palestinians-dont-negotiate-620135

²⁹⁸ www.cnn.com/2020/09/15/politics/israel-uae-abraham-accords-documents/index.html

²⁹⁹ Helen Raleigh, “What Corporate Media Won’t Tell You About Trump’s Historic Middle East Peace Deal,” *The Federalist*, August 19, 2020, <https://thefederalist.com/2020/08/19/what-corporate-media-wont-tell-you-about-trumps-historic-middle-east-peace-deal/>; Emily Jones, “The Dawn of a New Middle East: Israel Signs Historic ‘Abraham Accord’ With UAE, Bahrain at White House,” *CBN News*, 09-15-2020, www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/israel/2020/september/israel-set-to-sign-historic-lsquo-abraham-accord-rsquo-with-uae-bahrain-tuesday

for peace in general, it seems that there should be the reinstatement of sacrifices on the Temple Mount and even a rebuilt temple within three and a half years of confirming the covenant.

Reinstating Prayer and Sacrifices on the Temple Mount

In 1967, after the Six-Day War, Israel had full control of the Temple Mount... for ten days. Moshe Dayan, after reuniting Jerusalem and restoring the whole of Jerusalem to Israeli control, unilaterally decided it would be best to surrender the control of Judaism's holiest site to their enemies, the Jordanians.³⁰⁰ Dayan gave control of the Temple Mount back to the country that had just invaded them and tried to wipe them out. [*Inconceivable!*] And yet, this is exactly what God said would happen, plain as day, through the prophet Ezekiel.

Instead of carrying out your duty in regard to my holy things, you put others in charge of my sanctuary. — Ezekiel 44:8

And ever since that time, Dayan's decision has been a thorn in the flesh for the Jewish people. The Jordanian Waqf has jealously guarded access to the Temple Mount, regularly expressing the opinion that only Muslims should have free access to the site and be able to pray there. Under the traditional "status quo" of Muslim Waqf control, Jewish access to their holiest site has been severely limited. They have been routinely denied the ability to pray there or even to carry copies of the Bible (Tanakh) or prayer books with them during their visit. Despite periodic Jewish protests, the situation has persisted with little hope for change. However, slowly, Jews were quietly allowed to pray on the Temple Mount. In fact, since 2016, Jews have increasingly been allowed

³⁰⁰ Rivka Gonen. *Contested Holiness: Jewish, Muslim, and Christian Perspectives on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem* (KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 2003): 149-150.

to pray on the Temple Mount.³⁰¹ Then, after the Abraham Accords were inaugurated in 2020, people started asking the question whether it was time to normalize the Temple Mount, meaning to allow equal access to the site that is held to be holy by Muslims, Jews, and Christians.³⁰² This would mean recognizing that all faiths should be allowed to have access to and pray on the Temple Mount, as well as allowing them to celebrate their respective religious festivals and observances. This is exactly what was called for in the *Peace to Prosperity* plan that was approved by both the U.S. and Israel.³⁰³ Soon after, Jews began to be allowed to pray openly and to be given access through gates that normally were only open to Muslims.³⁰⁴ This was followed up by the first legal decision of the courts declaring that it was not illegal for Jews to pray on the Temple Mount.³⁰⁵ While not explicit in Scripture, one of the necessary preconditions for restoring sacrifices is the ability to pray openly on the Temple Mount.

We are told in Daniel that sacrifices would again take place before the time of the abomination of desolation. This tells us that there will be a restoration of at least some parts of the sacrificial system. One might imagine instead that this will be

³⁰¹ Abra Forman. “For First Time Ever, Jews Allowed to Pray on Temple Mount as Thousands Ascend for Holidays,” *Israel 365 News*, October 26, 2016, <https://www.israel365news.com/77582/first-police-allow-limited-prayers-temple-mountain-record-amount-jews-ascend-holidays/>

³⁰² N. Dromi, “Is it time to ‘normalize’ the Temple Mount?” *Jerusalem Post*, 9-13-20, www.jpost.com/opinion/its-time-to-normalize-the-temple-mountain-642055

³⁰³ Adam Eliyahu Berkowitz, “Thanks To Trump: Pascal Lamb Could Be Sacrificed on Temple Mount for First Time in 2,000 Years,” FEB 27, 2020, *Israel 365 News*, www.israel365news.com/145899/thanks-to-trump-pascal-lamb-could-be-sacrificed-on-temple-mountain-for-first-time-in-2000-years/

³⁰⁴ TOI Staff. “Israel quietly letting Jews pray on Temple Mount, in break with status quo,” *Times of Israel*, July 17, 2021, www.timesofisrael.com/israel-quietly-letting-jews-pray-on-temple-mountain-in-break-with-status-quo-tv/

³⁰⁵ Ryan Jones. “Judge Confirms: It’s Not Illegal for Jews to Pray on the Temple Mount.” *Israel Today*, October 7, 2021, www.israeltoday.co.il/read/judge-confirms-its-not-illegal-for-jews-to-pray-on-the-temple-mountain/

something figurative, rather than a restoration of actual animal sacrifices; but with all the preparations that have been made, there is good reason to believe that this prophecy will soon be fulfilled literally. It may not be a return to full sacrificial services, with the slaughter of thousands of animals, but some form of priestly sacrifice could once again be seen in Israel.

As for the present ability of Israel to restart the sacrificial system, it looks like everything is truly in place, except for the will of the people and the government to allow it. Most likely, the Jews would begin by reinstating the Passover sacrifice, also called the *Korban Pesach*.³⁰⁶ According to Jewish law (based on *Numbers 9:10*), the Passover sacrifice can be made even when full ritual purity has not been restored. To that point, some Jews in Israel have already been conducting practice Passover sacrifices.³⁰⁷ This has been happening annually since 2012.³⁰⁸ The approval to perform an official sacrifice could come at any time, since the Nascent Sanhedrin has been petitioning the government every year for permission to conduct a true Passover sacrifice, instead of just practicing. It may even happen without getting official permission.³⁰⁹ The Temple Institute, which is involved in many of the efforts to rebuild the temple, also has a school that has been training priests (*kohanim*) since 2016.³¹⁰

³⁰⁶ Y. Shurpin. "Can We Sacrifice a Paschal Lamb Nowadays?" *Chabad.org*, www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/pesach_cdo/aid/3288556/jewish/Can-We-Sacrifice-a-Paschal-Lamb-Nowadays.htm

³⁰⁷ Staff. "Live: Passover sacrifice at foot at Temple Mount," *Israel National News*, March 23, 2021, www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/299065

³⁰⁸ A.E. Berkowitz. "Stones For Altar of Pascal Lamb Sacrifice Now Being Collected," *Israel 365 News*, March 31, 2020, www.israel365news.com/147935/stones-for-altar-of-pascal-lamb-sacrifice-now-being-collected/

³⁰⁹ "Activists seek to offer Passover sacrifice at Temple Mount," *Israel National News*, April 11, 2022, <https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/325645>

³¹⁰ Staff. "Temple Institute announces school to train Kohanim," *Israel National News*, August 03, 2016, www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/215910

A major obstacle to performing any sacrifices on the Temple Mount, however, is that doing so would be seen as violating the false status quo that the Jordanian Waqf would like to maintain. It is false because it is only enforced against Israel, not the Palestinians, and it is inequitably and capriciously administered against both Jews and foreign visitors to the Temple Mount. It means that only Muslims are free to access it and worship there, because they think non-Muslims defile the holiness of the site. This condition must be changed if the Jews are to restore any type of sacrificial service. There are a few options for solving this dilemma, though. First, Israel could just tell Jordan they’re out and then assert total sovereignty over the Temple Mount. That would risk war, but Jordan’s options for a war against Israel are limited, so it is unlikely they would be able to do anything to significantly harm Israel. Hamas and radical Palestinians would likely respond very negatively, though. Israel would certainly have to deal with a response from them, but they are having to do that regularly anyway, so it may not be such a big problem.

A second option would be to establish sovereignty in just the northern one-third of the Temple Mount complex. This would leave the area with the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa mosque under the same “status quo,” but would just reduce the size of the area under their control. A third option is to transfer the Waqf administration of the Temple Mount from Jordan to Saudi Arabia. Scholars in Saudi Arabia have begun to express supportive opinions regarding allowing the Jews to restore their worship practices on the Temple Mount, denying that Jerusalem is the location of the “farthest mosque” or Islam’s third most holy site.³¹¹ If that became the official Saudi position on the matter, then it would open the door for a compromise solution

³¹¹ Bob Ryan. “‘Furthest mosque’ not a reference to Jerusalem,” *Times of Israel*, July 22, 2021, <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/furthest-mosque-not-a-reference-to-jerusalem/>

of shared control over separate Jewish and Muslim areas. Under any of those options, though, the Jews would likely need to establish a sanctified Jewish zone and then define shared areas, like the southern portion with the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa mosque, as a shared space, called a *carmelit*.³¹² This would create a special designation under Jewish law that would allow separation of the area and the opportunity to restore ritual purity to the place where sacrifices were to be performed without removing the Islamic structures on the Temple Mount. Any of those options could allow the reinstatement of sacrifices.

With the growing conflict between the Islamic powers of Turkey and Iran in the north, and Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, UAE, and Bahrain as the moderate countries in the south, allowing open access to the Temple Mount is becoming a point of leverage that may actually be favorable in the eyes of Israel's new southern peace partners.³¹³ If Jews and Christians were allowed open access to the Temple Mount, it would lessen the importance of Jerusalem and elevate the importance of Mecca and Medina. This could aid the current struggle with Turkey and Iran because it increases the religious supremacy of the Gulf States allied around Saudi Arabia by denying Turkey and Iran an alternative Islamic holy site to support their efforts to reestablish themselves as the leaders of the next caliphate. Consequently, allowing the Jews to restore their worship on the Temple Mount would communicate that only Mecca and Medina are of supreme holiness, and thus it is the moderate southern nations that are following the more legitimate form of Islam.

³¹² Catherine Hezser. "Between Public and Private: The Significance of the Neutral Domain (Carmelit) in Late Antique Rabbinic Literature." In Clifford Ando and Jörg Rüpke. *Public and Private in Ancient Mediterranean Law and Religion* (de Gruyter, 2015): 217-236.

³¹³ Douglas Altabef, "All eyes might be on the Temple Mount after the UAE-Israel deal," *Jerusalem Post*, Sept. 26, 2020, www.jpost.com/opinion/all-eyes-might-be-on-the-temple-mountain-after-the-uae-israel-deal-643672

Rebuilding the Temple

One of the main reasons I wrote my first book, *The Temple Revealed*, was because I think that Scripture teaches that a temple will be rebuilt before the middle of the seven-year tribulation, Daniel’s seventieth week. I consider this one of the next major signs that will be coming out of the land of Israel. Let’s look at the Scriptures that set up this expectation.

So when you see standing in the holy place “the abomination that causes desolation,” spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand.

– Matthew 24:15

*Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that **he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.***

– 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 (emphasis added)

These two New Testament witnesses indicate that the Antichrist will commit the final abomination of desolation spoken about in Daniel 9:27 in “*the holy place*” and “*God’s temple*.” Now it is conceivable that this is simply an allusion to a declaration that the Antichrist will make while he is standing on the Temple Mount, but there is another verse that makes me think that the rebuilding of the temple will be a sign to the nations before the full judgment of God is poured out in the tribulation.

Then the nations will know that I the Lord make Israel holy, when my sanctuary is among them forever.

– Ezekiel 37:28

This verse comes at the end of a two-chapter sequence (*Ezekiel 36 & 37*) that describes the restoration of Israel from a valley of dry bones. I think it must be a reference to a time before the Lord's return because it seems that it would be the Lord's presence, not a rebuilt temple, that would prove that he makes Israel holy. Hence, it would make more sense if this were to happen prior to his return, when rebuilding the temple would certainly be a sign to the nations. Amos 9:11 also says that David's fallen shelter (*sukkah*) will be rebuilt, with its ruins and walls restored. The mention of its walls and ruins strongly suggests that this is a reference to the temple building, not a temporary tabernacle. The prophecy will certainly be fulfilled during the millennial kingdom, but there is good reason to suspect that this prophecy is also pointing to the rebuilding of a temple before the middle of the tribulation, as a sign to the nations.

“In that day I will restore David’s fallen shelter—I will repair its broken walls and restore its ruins—and will rebuild it as it used to be.”

– Amos 9:11

When the temple is rebuilt, we already know that God has ordained it to be “*a house of prayer for all nations*,” and this is exactly what the Jews in Israel are talking about today, when they talk about their plans to rebuild the temple.³¹⁴ Therefore, their efforts are aligning to potentially bring this prophecy to pass as well.

These I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.”

– Isaiah 56:7

³¹⁴ Joel Rosenberg. “Shouldn’t Jews have freedom to worship on the site of the Temple? Interview with Yehudah Glick,” *All Israel News*, Oct 22, 2020, posted on *YouTube*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AsFEBphnQdY>

The truth will be revealed in time, but whether the temple is rebuilt before the millennium or not, we need to be watching the Temple Mount closely. This is where sacrifices must be offered again, and it is where, if the temple is rebuilt, it must be located. In recent years, some have tried to develop arguments for locations outside of the Temple Mount, but they just don’t stand up to the scriptural, historical, and archaeological evidence that exists for the Temple Mount—specifically the area in the north that is in line with the Golden Gate.³¹⁵ There is just too much supporting evidence for the Temple Mount area as a whole, though, and at the same time a surprising lack of evidence for any areas outside of it. In every case, proposals for areas outside of the Temple Mount rest entirely on presumption and conjecture. Recognizing that the present Golden Gate preserves the remains of Solomon’s eastern gate of the temple, and that the Dome of Spirits covers the remains of the threshing floor of Araunah, the question of the former location of the temple should already be settled beyond a reasonable doubt.³¹⁶ Unfortunately, until rebuilding is allowed, and excavations can be made to confirm its former location, it may be impossible to develop sufficient consensus on the subject.

We might consider, however, that the references to the Antichrist standing in the “temple” and causing the abomination of desolation, mentioned in Matthew 24 and 2 Thessalonians 2, might simply refer to the Temple Mount area and not a rebuilt structure. In the book of Acts, we read that the disciples were meeting daily in the temple (*hieron* - Strong's G2411). This word applies broadly to mean a temple and its entire designated area, so it is often translated “temple courts” because the context

³¹⁵ Christian Widener. “The Temple Revealed 2 –The Jewish Temple in Jerusalem—Where it Was and Where it Wasn’t,” June 6, 2021, Posted on *YouTube*, www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJH1bJ2iWkQ&t=1s

³¹⁶ Widener. *The Temple Revealed*, 23-99.

makes it clear that they were not in the temple building itself, but in the Temple Mount complex, or the courts of the temple.

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts (hieron). They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts. — Acts 2:46

Then someone came and said, “Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts (hieron) teaching the people.” — Acts 5:25

When we read these passages in Acts that describe believers in the temple (*hieron*) it is understood that the whole area, including the courts and the temple building, was included. However, when Paul wrote in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 that the man of lawlessness would set “*himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God,*” he used a different word, *naos* (Strong’s G3485), which specifically refers to the innermost holy place of a temple building itself. Some may see this, too, as metaphorical—a reference to believers in Christ who are the temple of the Holy Spirit (*1 Corinthians 6:19*) who will somehow be desecrated. But Daniel counts 1,290 and 1,335 days from this act (*Daniel 12:11-12*), which makes it difficult to see this as something other than a literal event.

However, the Dome of the Spirits stands over the area that was once the threshing floor of Araunah, where the holy of holies of the temple once sat.³¹⁷ If the Antichrist made his declaration of being God while standing at or near this spot on the Temple Mount, then I would say that this could also satisfy the grammatical usage of the word *naos*, without a building. So, who knows how this will all really happen; but when the dam finally does break on the Temple Mount, it will probably happen in a rush.

³¹⁷ Ibid., 23-56.



Open area north of the Dome of the Rock where the temple will be rebuilt, or a press conference or other declaration will be made publicly. [Photo taken looking SE on January 12, 2020.]

The Two Wings of a Great Eagle

Another mystery of prophecy in the last days is understanding the sequence of judgments and deliverances for the state of Israel and the Jewish people. There are dozens of passages promising both judgment and deliverance for Israel. Discerning which of those passages have already been fulfilled and which ones yet pertain to the future is no easy task. In fact, I would argue that it cannot be done reliably, at least overall, because there are so many periods of judgment and blessing in Israel’s history, along with just as many texts to try and sort out. So where does that leave us? In a place of humility, further study, and watchfulness while we ponder the question of what we should expect to happen in the state of Israel. We should avoid pronouncing evil and destruction over Israel in the future, based on assumptions regarding when the prophecies of Israel’s promised judgments will apply. Why? Because our God is gracious, full of loving kindness and compassion, he is slow to anger, and he will relent from the evil he has promised when people truly repent.

At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy it; if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it. Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant it; if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it. So now then, speak to the men of Judah and against the inhabitants of Jerusalem saying, ‘Thus says the Lord, “Behold, I am fashioning calamity against you and devising a plan against you. Oh turn back, each of you from his evil way, and reform your ways and your deeds.”’ – Jeremiah 18:7-11

Even during the Day of Lord, when God has promised to pour out his wrath on the whole earth, he also said “*yet even now*” if people would repent, then he would show them compassion. So especially for God’s people, who he has called by his name, should we not rather be praying for their national repentance and hoping for better things for them, just as we would for ourselves?

The day of the Lord is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it? “Even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.” Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. Who knows? He may turn and relent and leave behind a blessing. – Joel 2:11b-14a

There is another reason we should hope for and even expect better things for Israel, particularly during the time of the great tribulation. We are told in Revelation 12 about the vision of a

woman being given the two wings of a great eagle to carry her away into the wilderness. We should understand that the woman represents the Jewish people, because she gave birth to the male child who “*will rule the nations with a rod of iron,*” which is an allusion to Jesus Christ. It’s not a reference to Mary the mother of Jesus, because Christ’s birth was long before this prophecy. She can’t be identified as the Church, either, because we are told that it will be the offspring of the woman who “*keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.*” Thus, logically, the woman must represent the people of Israel in some way.³¹⁸ The image of her being given wings and sheltered in the wilderness is a prophecy about her being rescued.

And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child. But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood. But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth. So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

— **Revelation 12:13-17** NASB

This generates two additional questions. When will this happen and where is she taken? The first question is the easiest to answer. Since the time of her protection is 1,260 days (*Revelation 12:6*),

³¹⁸ This may only refer to a remnant of Israel, meaning the true Israel (Romans 9:6 – “*For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.*”), or it may be a full rescue of the nation of Israel, which will lead to their national repentance.

which equates roughly to forty-two months or three and a half years, the most logical conclusion is that this happens during the second half of Daniel's seventieth week (the great tribulation). Accordingly, this is also something to be watching for, in addition to the rebuilding of the temple and the restarting of sacrifices. The second question, though, is more difficult. The number of Jewish people living in Israel in 2021 was approximately 6,829,000. That is a lot of people to fly off somewhere! Even if there was a calamity that caused the deaths of a significant part of the populace, there would still be an awful lot of people to shelter. Using numbers from 2019, Ben Gurion Airport was serving an average of 68,000 passengers per day. During peak days, it may have been more than twice that number, but to fully evacuate Israel by plane could still take over a month. Of course, ships could be used as well, but you get the idea. It's no easy task.

Conceivably, the reference could also be to another Syrian-scale refugee crisis, where the world saw 6.5 million people flee to the surrounding nations over a period of a few years; however, Jews fleeing into neighboring Arab countries would be much more problematic than it was for the Syrians. Plus, would the Jews in Israel really flee? They didn't in the past, and they have faced almost certain annihilation on more than one occasion. Why would they flee in the face of a future invasion? The point is the scenarios for total evacuation of the Jews from Israel doesn't sound feasible. Especially if we consider the verses where God says that, when he restores the Jews to their land in the last days, they will never be uprooted again.³¹⁹

I will bring back my exiled people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink

³¹⁹ See also Zechariah 12:2-6 and Micah 4:6-7.

their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them, says the LORD your God.” – Amos 9:14-15

So, this begs the question, are we misunderstanding the vision of the woman being given the two wings of a great eagle? Instead, could we be talking about the supernatural preservation and continued protection of Israel—right where they already are? If so, what is meant by saying that the woman is sheltered in the wilderness “*in her place?*” The Greek words are “*eis autos topos*” literally “to her place.” The word *topos* (Strong’s G5117) means a place, or any portion or space that is marked off (separate from a surrounding space). It can refer to an inhabited place, such as a city, village, or district, and I would suggest that this word also applies to any modern country with defined borders.

Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days. – Revelation 12:6 NASB

Therefore, what may be in view is the continued migration of Jews to Israel for their protection, not the mass exodus of Jews from the land that God has just returned them to. In the face of a global pandemic and a major resurgence of antisemitism that began in 2020, immigration to Israel was up 30 percent in 2021, with more than twenty thousand Jews returning to Israel.³²⁰ As things get worse, it is likely that Jewish people will continue to return to the land, especially as their sense of security in their

³²⁰ There were 27,050 new immigrants to Israel in 2021, a 30 percent increase from the previous year’s 21,820 immigrants. See: “Immigration to Israel surges in 2021 by 30 percent .” *Jewish News Syndicate*, December 22, 2021, <https://www.jns.org/immigration-to-israel-surges-in-2021-by-30-percent/>

present countries diminishes.³²¹ Consequently, when we read that the woman will flee into the wilderness to the place prepared for her by God, I think we should consider that the reborn state of Israel could be that place. That means the fleeing woman would represent Jewish people who are presently living outside of the land of Israel. It also means that the Antichrist kingdom may not hold sway over the Beautiful Land. One of the assumptions made, based on a prophecy in the book of Daniel, is that the Antichrist will conquer Israel. This comes from the statement that the Antichrist will invade the Beautiful Land and pitch his tents between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain.

He will also enter the Beautiful Land, and many countries will fall; but these will be rescued out of his hand: Edom, Moab and the foremost of the sons of Ammon. — **Daniel 11:41 NASB**

He will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain; yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him. — **Daniel 11:45 NASB**

At first blush, these verses seem to indicate that Israel will be conquered by an evil ruler in the last days, which is understood to be the Antichrist. But what if the invasion of a ruler into the beautiful land is pointing to the Gog-Magog war? Furthermore, invaded doesn't necessarily mean Israel is conquered. They were invaded in 1948, 1967, and 1973, with enemy troops crossing into Israeli territory, but the invaders were ultimately defeated.

³²¹ Rea Bochner. "America is over. I'm moving to Israel." *Times of Israel*, June 1, 2021, <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/america-is-over-im-moving-to-israel/>. In this opinion post, the author expresses, "I don't know if another Holocaust is possible in the US, but after what I've seen lately, I do believe that at some point Jews will no longer be welcome here." As that kind of feeling increases in Jews living outside of Israel, one can only expect that immigration to Israel will continue to rise.

The reference to pitching his tents between the seas and the beautiful holy mountain can also be taken two ways. Most commonly, it is understood to mean that he will camp at the holy mountain (Mount Moriah, which is the Temple Mount) between the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea. But there is another way to read that verse—

The ruler will set up his camp between the Mediterranean Sea and Jerusalem, which could be alluding to the area of the Gaza Strip, or not far beyond it. [*I’m not saying that this is what it will be; I’m pointing out another way that the passage might be understood.*]



That’s not the only passage to deal with, though. There is also a verse in the book of Revelation that suggests that the holy city will be trampled underfoot by the Antichrist for forty-two months. Because we know that the Antichrist will commit the abomination of desolation and will begin to rule the nations from that time forward, it is assumed that he will control Jerusalem throughout his entire forty-two-month reign, which suggests that he will have conquered it and all of Israel.

But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.
– Revelation 11:2

But it’s not that cut-and-dried. Luke tells us that Jesus said that Jerusalem would be trampled (*pateo* –Strong’s G3961) “*until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.*” That means we are living right

now in those days. So, when John wrote that Jerusalem would be trampled (also *pateo*) by the Gentiles for forty-two months, what did he mean? Will it be a worse kind of trampling than Jerusalem was experiencing before, or is it simply a reference to the fact that it will now only be for forty-two **more** months? And there are questions that come from the account of the two witnesses. Namely, if Jerusalem is not fully controlled by the Antichrist, then how are the two witnesses killed in Jerusalem by the Beast from the Abyss; and how do the nations prevent their bodies from being buried?

They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. — Luke 21:24

I can't answer those questions definitively, but I can suggest some possibilities. First, it sounds like the two witnesses are killed in a direct confrontation with the Beast—it doesn't sound like two armies are facing off. The Antichrist will be a world leader, and he would likely be aligned with the Palestinians. In that case, he may not have any trouble entering Jerusalem, which would allow for his meeting with the two witnesses. Second, the fact that those representing the nations "*won't allow their dead bodies to be buried*" suggests that there are two groups. One would like to bury them, but the other prevents it. That scenario could possibly be fulfilled today if there was a large Palestinian protest staged to stop anyone from burying the bodies. It is not uncommon for jihadists to refuse to bury dead enemies immediately and instead to leave their dead bodies on display for as long as three days or more, as an extreme form of punishment and desecration for truly hated enemies.³²² Lastly, there will be an earthquake, seven

³²² Salma Abdelaziz. "Death and desecration in Syria: Jihadist group 'crucifies' bodies to send message." *CNN*, May 2, 2014, www.cnn.com/2014/05/01/world/meast/syria-bodies-crucifixions/index.html

thousand will be killed, and we read that the rest will give “*glory to the God of heaven.*” This could be hinting at the repentance of God’s enemies or telling us that it will be the remaining Jewish inhabitants who will give glory to God, or both. Either way, there are multiple possibilities hidden within these prophecies.

When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them. And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. Those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and celebrate; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were watching them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” Then they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them. And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

— Revelation 11:7-13 NASB

Hopefully, this will help keep us from making pronouncements about what will happen regarding Israel in the future. We need to keep an open mind and not presume how these verses must be fulfilled. This is especially true when other assumptions could lead to radically different scenarios playing out. I also want to encourage Christians to continue to pray for and seek the best

for the Jewish people and the land of Israel. Who knows what God will do when his people, who are called by his name, will humble themselves and seek his face?

[To Solomon, after the Dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem]
*“I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a temple for sacrifices. When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place. I have chosen and consecrated this temple so that my Name may be there forever. **My eyes and my heart will always be there.**”*

– 2 Chronicles 7:12-16 (emphasis added)

The Feast Days of Israel

Another prophetic puzzle in the last days is found in the enigma of the Lord’s appointed feast days. In Leviticus 23, God declared seven festival days, or feasts, that were to be perpetually observed throughout the generations to come. In the spring, the Jews were told to celebrate Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of First Fruits. Then the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot or Pentecost) came fifty days later in the summer at the time of the wheat harvest. Finally, in the fall, there were the Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah), the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), and the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot). The reason we should be watching the fall feasts is because they seem to be prophetic of Christ’s second coming. We know the first four feasts were prophetic, so it seems logical that the remaining three will be as well. If you’ve not heard of this idea before, we see that the first three feasts

foreshadowed the death (Passover), burial (Unleavened Bread), and resurrection (First Fruits) of Jesus Christ.

But what is truly mind-blowing is that all those events in Jesus’ life literally happened on the days of the feast that they represented. Jesus was crucified at the start of the Passover feast, as the lamb that was slain to take away the sins of the world (*John 1:29*). He was buried and lay in the tomb at the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, as the bread of life (*John 6:51*) and the one who had no sin (*2 Corinthians 5:21*). Jesus then literally rose from the dead on the Feast of First Fruits, as the first fruits of all those God had come to redeem (*1 Corinthians 15:20*).

This was then followed by the gift of the Holy Spirit on the appointed day for the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost). As part of the festival, there was an offering of the first fruits of the wheat harvest given to the Lord at the Temple, which was fulfilled by the gift of the Holy Spirit as a first fruit of salvation (*Romans 8:23*). It happened on the very day of the first Pentecost after Christ’s resurrection, when tongues of fire appeared over the heads of the apostles and those gathered with them, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit (*Acts 2:1-4*). There is also some reason to suspect that Shavuot may prophetically foreshadow both the birth and rapture of the church.³²³ The feast celebrated the first fruits of the wheat harvest, which is a fitting analogy for the gathering (or harvest) of the church in the rapture (*Revelation 14:14-16*). Jewish tradition also teaches that Enoch was both born and “taken” by God at the time of Shavuot. If that is an accurate tradition, then it could foreshadow that the church likewise was begun and will be raptured at Pentecost. It is at least an

³²³ Shari Abbott. “Will the Rapture Occur at Pentecost (Shavuot)?” *Reasons for Hope* Jesus*, May 25, 2020, <https://reasonsforhopejesus.com/the-rapture-occur-at-pentecost-shavuot/>; Jack W. Langford. *The Pentecostal Rapture of the Church of Jesus Christ* (Xulon Press, 2014).

idea that is worth considering, as we wait and watch for the Lord's return.

Feast of Lord	Date	Represents	Fulfillment
Passover ³²⁴	Nisan 14	Death of Christ – Lamb of God	✓Nisan 14, AD 33
Unleavened Bread ³²⁵	Nisan 15	The Bread of Life	✓Nisan 15, AD 33
First Fruits ³²⁶	Nisan 16	Resurrection and New Life	✓Nisan 16, AD 33
Pentecost	Sivan 6	The Gift of the Holy Spirit (<i>may also allude to the Rapture</i>)	✓Sivan 6, AD 33 (2 nd time - ?)
Feast of Trumpets	Tishri 1-2, or 10—Year of Jubilee	<i>The Rapture or Christ's Second Coming?</i>	<i>Tishri 1-2 (or 10), Year?</i>
Day of Atonement	Tishri 10	<i>A Trumpet or Bowl Judgment?</i>	<i>Tishri 10, Year?</i>
Feast of Booths	Tishri 15-22	<i>Millennium & Marriage Supper of the Lamb?</i>	<i>Tishri 15-22, (2027)?</i>

The spring feasts were associated with Christ's first visitation. It is also possible that they will again have a role in foreshadowing events that will occur during Christ's second visitation (to rule and reign). And it could be a reference to the rapture of the

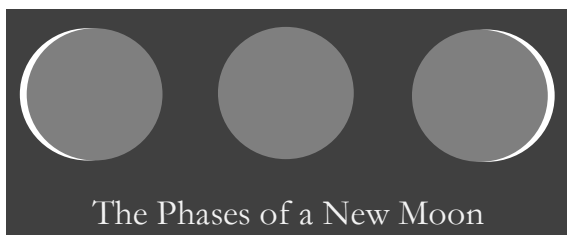
³²⁴ Christ died around three in the afternoon, on Friday, Nisan 14, and was laid in the tomb just before sunset and the start of the sabbath. [See: "The Date of the Crucifixion" in Chapter 5.]

³²⁵ This feast is for seven days, but the first day it starts is the day after Passover. Christ's body being broken and laid in a tomb, so that we could have eternal life, fits the typology of the breaking of the unleavened bread.

³²⁶ The Feast of First Fruits was to be offered commemorating the day the Israelites entered the promised land and harvested grain. They were to make a wave offering with it on the day after the sabbath (*Leviticus 23:9-11*). The specific day is not stated in Scripture, but the oral tradition became that it was to be on the day after the Sabbath that falls during the week of The Feast of Unleavened Bread. In AD 33 that was Nisan 16, a Sunday.

Church when Jesus said that he would not drink from the fruit of the vine again until that day when he drinks it anew with us in the Father’s kingdom (*Matthew 26:29*).³²⁷ However, since the fall feasts did not play an obvious role in the first coming of Christ, the main pattern strongly suggests that the fall feasts will mark the primary fulfillment of his second visitation.

Interestingly, most Jews celebrate at least two major feasts, and both include a meal—Passover and Rosh Hashanah. The first, in the Spring, is somber (*Exodus 12:6-11*), but the other, in the Fall, is festive (*Nehemiah 8:10*). If the somber feast foreshadowed Christ’s death, then could the festive one represent his future return to gather us? Also, Rosh Hashanah, or the Feast of Trumpets, is a feast when “no man knows the day or hour,” because the start of the feast is timed with the arrival of the new moon. When the light of the crescent moon vanished entirely, a priest would sound the shofar marking the start of the beginning of a new moon. Then, when the light of the new moon crescent was observed on the other side by two or three witnesses, a second shofar was sounded and the day of the festival was declared.³²⁸ If the new moon was not observed until the next day, when the crescent was already on the other side, then the feast was announced the following day.



Thus, it can be said of Rosh Hashanah that no man knows the day or hour of the feast (it can be either the first or second day [Tishri 1 or 2]), because no one knew precisely when the new moon would be observed and the feast day declared. There were also two trumpets blown on Rosh Hashanah,

³²⁷ For more information on the possible future significance of the Passover, see: Snow. *The Passover King* (2020).

³²⁸ See: *Mishnah*, “Rosh Hashanah,” chapters 1&3.

in addition to animal horn shofars. Another intriguing fact is that the traditional greeting of the feast is: May your name be inscribed in the Book of Life.³²⁹ Such a reference may indicate that this feast will be associated with the salvation or rescue of God’s people. Lastly, the feast ends with a *tekiah gedolah*, a final extended blast of the shofar that lasts as long as possible.³³⁰ Could the last trumpet before the gathering of the saints (*1 Corinthians 15:52*) be hinting at the *tekiah gedolah* of Rosh Hashanah? The sounding of a horn at the festivals is also recorded in the Psalms, so looking to one of the feasts for the “*last trumpet*” makes sense.

Sound the ram’s horn at the New Moon, and when the moon is full, on the day of our festival; this is a decree for Israel, an ordinance of the God of Jacob.

– Psalm 81:3-4

Next, there is Yom Kippur—the Day of Atonement—a day of fasting and repentance on the tenth of Tishri. This feast day may foreshadow the promised Day of the Lord and Christ returning with his heavenly armies at the seventh bowl (*Revelation 19:11-21* and *Jude 1:14-15*). Conversely, it may mark the beginning of God’s wrath at the sixth seal, when all the tribes of the earth see the Son of Man coming on the clouds, with power and great glory, and they call out to the hills and the mountains to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of Lamb. A third option is that it will coincide with the sounding the seventh trumpet. What the feast of Yom Kippur truly signifies, though, we must wait and see—all these options are possible. We also need to remember that in the Year of Jubilee, Rosh Hashanah falls on the same day as Yom Kippur, the tenth of Tishri. I’m thinking the next jubilee

³²⁹ Steve Herzig. “Tekiah, Shevarim, Teruah: A look at Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.” *Israel My Glory*, September/October 2021, <https://israelmyglory.org/article/tekiah-shevarim-teruah/>

³³⁰ “The Sound of the Shofar.” *Israel My Glory*, September/October 2012, <https://israelmyglory.org/article/the-sound-of-the-shofar/>

could be in 2027, so that may suggest that these feasts will be fulfilled on the same day at the end of the great tribulation. That might also mean that a rapture of the saints is not one of the prophetically foreshadowed events of these last three feasts, in which case I would lean toward the idea that a future Pentecost may also see the promised rescue of God’s people. Or it might mean that the concept of an early rapture is mistaken, or that it simply will not be on a feast day. We just can’t expect to be able to know exactly how and when God will gather his elect before it happens. And if we acknowledge that there are too many possibilities to be able to know the precise timing of the rapture, then we maintain a “*no man knows the day or hour*” position.³³¹

Finally, there is the Feast of Booths, Sukkot. It lasts for seven days, and it is meant to be celebrated underneath temporary shelters, or booths. Historically, this time looked back to the Exodus, but prophetically, might it not look forward to the start of Christ’s millennial reign and the marriage supper of the Lamb? After the seventh bowl of God’s wrath, there will be a great earthquake and the world will be devastated (*Revelation 16:18-20*). It will be so severe that the cities of the earth will collapse, and the islands and the mountains will be moved or changed.

Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since mankind has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. – Revelation 16:18-20

³³¹ Another option is that there may be two raptures, the first at the harvest of the barley for the Feast of First Fruits, and the second at the harvest of the wheat at Pentecost, but again, we just have to wait and see.

In a practical sense, it seems that people will need to live for a time in temporary shelters (*sukkahs*) until things can be rebuilt. The Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot), when Israel was commanded to spend a week every Fall living in outdoor *sukkahs*, is traditionally a happy time, meant to be spent with friends and family. This feast offers us a compelling vision of what we might expect for our first days under the reign of Jesus Christ, as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, celebrating together at the wedding supper of the Lamb.

Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God’s holy people.) – **Revelation 19:7-8**

To be clear, though, we can only guess at what these final three feasts point to. Not until their fulfillment will we truly understand all that these feasts are meant to symbolize.³³² We can be sure, though, that whatever they represent, they will be fulfilled on the actual days of their corresponding feast in the days ahead. But we don’t know if the remaining three feasts will be fulfilled in rapid succession like the first four, or not, which brings up one final observation. If the rapture is part of the fall feasts and they are meant to be fulfilled in immediate succession, then a primarily posttribulation rapture would be in view. On the other hand, if the rapture is not represented by any of the fall feasts, or if Rosh

³³² For example, the argument can be made that the primary feasts that represent both the advents of Jesus Christ will be related to the spring feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and the First Fruits, and that Pentecost and the fall feasts will be represented by the outpouring of God’s Spirit, the teaching of his ways, and the renewal of the land, when Christ is establishing his millennial kingdom. I think that overemphasizes the significance of Passover while minimizing the significance of the fall feasts, so that is not a view I’ve presented here, but for more information, see: Snow. *The Passover King*, 244-5.

Hashanah is fulfilled one or more years prior to the final judgment represented by Yom Kippur, then an earlier gathering of the saints would still be possible (for example, after the sixth seal).

In the table of the feasts, the last feast, the Feast of Tabernacles, is shown with the possible date of 2027, which comes from my reading of Daniel 9:24-27 and the decree of Sultan Suleiman I in 1537.³³³ The date still has a question mark, because only when these things happen can we truly be certain that we have understood them correctly. However, based on what looks like a clear match between the prophecy in Daniel and the very real decrees that were carved in stone and placed at the plaza and moat in Jerusalem, we could finally witness the end of this present “*time of the Gentiles*,” and the end of the trampling of Jerusalem, by October 16, 2027 (Tishri 15, 5788 on the Jewish calendar) when Jesus begins to rule and reign from there.

“We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign.”

– **Revelation 11:17**

But, if not, it will not be God fulfilling his Word that is in question. It will only be the validity of my interpretation that can be in doubt. You’ll notice, though, that I didn’t guess at the dates for the Feast of Trumpets or the Day of Atonement in the table. If the present chronology is correct, though, their fulfillments could be seen in the years 2024-2027.

³³³ See chapter 5: Seventy Weeks Have Been Decreed.



The Four Horsemen by Albrecht Dürer, woodcut, c. 1498.

THE TRIBULATION AND THE MAN OF LAWLESSNESS

THE BEGINNING OF THE JUDGMENTS described in the book of Revelation are initiated by the opening of a heavenly scroll with seven seals, and the effects are global. The Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, is the only one who is worthy to break the seals of the scroll and look inside, because he is the only one worthy to both redeem mankind and execute judgment on those who refuse to repent. It is generally assumed that the opening of the first seal will also coincide with the beginning of Daniel's seventieth week; however, there are no specific Scripture references to prove that this will be the case. Nevertheless, it is logical and therefore presumed to be a true statement. So, we now turn our attention away from Israel and toward the broad and global context of the end times events that the Bible warns us will fall on "*all those who dwell on the face of the earth*" (Luke 21:35). And again, we will speculate about how these things might take place—so that we can be prepared and able to recognize the fulfillments of the things God has promised "*must soon take place*" (Revelation 22:6).

However, I believe that the opening of the seals has already begun, so these sections are a mixture of prophetic comparisons to real events and educated guesses. [*While the guesses may prove to be wrong, their purpose is to help you think broadly about the possibilities, not to focus and constrain your expectations to my limited imagination.*]

A Rider on a White Horse

The opening of the first four seals of the scroll of God’s judgment and redemption describes the release of four horsemen—the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (*Revelation 6:1-8*). They are four fearsome icons of God’s judgment beginning to unfold. Together they will bring about the death of one quarter of the world’s population. Considering the world’s population in 2021, that would be just under two billion people! That means that by the time the last rider, Death, arrives on the scene, there will be millions of people dying every day. Some people have assumed that the riders may represent real people who will visibly and actively bring about these catastrophes. That may be, but I think it is more likely they represent specific events or conditions, moved by the power and influence of Satan, through which the things prophesied will come to pass. The first seal will release a rider on a white horse.

I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, “Come!” I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest. — **Revelation 6:1-2**

Let’s look closely at the rider on the white horse. The expectation from the scene that is unfolding, as the Lamb of God opens the seals of the scroll, is that the effects of the horsemen will be

global and unprecedented. We are told that the first horseman will ride out to conquer and subdue the world, but without war.³³⁴ In today's context, it could be understood that his efforts to conquer will be through "peaceful" means, like politics, treaties, legislation, or even using technology. The rider is said to carry a bow. As in English, the Greek term for bow (*toxon* – Strong's G5115) does not specifically include arrows, and no arrows are mentioned. A bow clearly represents a threat, but the lack of arrows may imply that it is not a deadly threat. A bow is also a long-distance weapon that travels through the air—so the range of the threat could be global. We are also told that the rider is given a crown. The Latin word for crown is "*corona*."



A White Corona Horse Locks Down the Planet by Elena Widener

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that COVID-19, commonly called the coronavirus, had become a global pandemic, and the world suddenly began to change.³³⁵ Unlike pandemics of the past, it seemed that this virus had a power behind it that moved all the countries of the world

³³⁴ Since the second rider, on the red horse, is given power to take peace from the earth, then this first horse must be conquering without war (i.e., through deception and political moves, etc.).

³³⁵ J. Gumbrecht and J. Howard. "WHO declares novel coronavirus outbreak a pandemic," *CNN*, March 11, 2020, www.cnn.com/2020/03/11/health/coronavirus-pandemic-world-health-organization/index.html

to respond in the same way. This “crown-virus” began to affect people around the globe. Markets crashed more spectacularly than at any time since 1929 in the U.S. and similarly around the world. Global travel ground to a halt. Businesses laid off more people than ever before in the U.S., and businesses that were deemed to be “non-essential” were ordered to close. Mass shelter-in-place quarantines were implemented in almost every country in the world, allegedly to “slow the advance” of the virus.

While some relaxation of restrictions followed the approval and release of the first vaccines for the coronavirus, the lockdowns were quickly replaced by vaccine mandates. Personal freedoms were brazenly stripped by governments all over the world for the “greater good” of the public. Global governance agendas also made huge advancements through the pandemic, like The Great Reset agenda put forward by the World Economic Forum in June of 2020.³³⁶ The architect of the plan was Klaus Schwab. He began developing it, and training world leaders who would embrace it, long before the pandemic, though.³³⁷ The plan champions global stakeholder capitalism, which is the new label for economic fascism. Other movements, like Black Lives Matter, Climate Change, Critical Race Theory, and Wokeness, became part of the growing global delusion and a powerful force in world politics, making the metaphor of a rider going out to conquer and conquering seem fitting.

³³⁶ www.weforum.org/press/2020/06/the-great-reset-a-unique-twin-summit-to-begin-2021

³³⁷ Joseph Mercola and Ronnie Cummins. *The Truth About COVID-19: Exposing the Great Reset, lockdowns, vaccine passports, and the new normal* (Chelsea Green Publishing, 2021): 33-51; Mary Fanning and Alan Jones. “Klaus Schwab Brags That Trudeau, Merkel, Putin Are Former World Economic Forum Young Global Leaders; “We penetrate the cabinets,” *The American Report*, January 30, 2022, <https://theamericanreport.org/2022/01/30/klaus-schwab-brags-that-trudeau-merkel-putin-are-former-world-economic-forum-young-global-leaders-we-penetrate-the-cabinets/>

And while the news regularly reported on the dangers of the coronavirus and the tragic deaths that were piling up due to the “deadly virus,” the reality was that the death rate for the virus was relatively low overall. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), 375,000 people died in the US from COVID-19 in 2020.³³⁸ This means COVID claimed one life per thousand in 2020.³³⁹ And the CDC admitted that only 6 percent of all the COVID-19 deaths had no underlying conditions.³⁴⁰ According to WHO estimates, 1.8 million people died from the coronavirus globally in 2020.³⁴¹ But worldwide deaths from influenza and pneumonia were nearly 3.6 million in 2018.³⁴² In context, the coronavirus represented an airborne threat that circled the globe, but it wasn’t exceptionally deadly; making it consistent with the metaphor of a rider with a bow but no arrows.³⁴³

In many ways, the coronavirus “conquered the world.” Under the guise of safety, freedoms were aggressively seized and tossed to the wind. Censorship was seen for the first time on a global scale. Any information that was counter to WHO or CDC findings was called fake news (or given warning labels) and was cause for suspending or canceling social media accounts. This

³³⁸ www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7014e1.htm

³³⁹ This was supported by an increase in the overall national death rate in the US from 715.2 to 828.7 deaths per 100,000 population, in 2019 and 2020 respectively.

³⁴⁰ www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/health_policy/covid19-comorbidity-expanded-12092020-508.pdf

³⁴¹ www.who.int/data/stories/the-true-death-toll-of-covid-19-estimating-global-excess-mortality

³⁴² Using WHO death rate data per 100,000 from influenza and pneumonia by country and public data for the population of each country, there was an estimated total of 3,579,581 deaths around the world due to pneumonia and influenza in 2018 (www.worldlifeexpectancy.com/cause-of-death/influenza-pneumonia/by-country).

³⁴³ Also, the white color of the horse may be significant because it is the recognized color of the medical community, who largely controlled the response to the virus.

happened regardless of one's medical credentials, or the pedigree of the information being shared. Not only that, but the lockdowns, quarantines, social distancing, reduced personnel capacities, and widespread procedural changes for just about everything led to major shortages of essential goods, job losses, business closures, decimated tourist industries around the globe, all of which made a massive impact on the global economy. There was a total loss of 7 percent in the global GDP (gross domestic product), as compared to the projected GDP for 2020.³⁴⁴ This equates to a global loss of three trillion dollars compared to 2019, and about six trillion compared to what 2020 was otherwise likely to achieve. Those kinds of losses and impacts have long-term consequences.

Looking at all those effects could be compared to watching the tide go out before a massive tsunami strikes a coastline. We instinctively know that when the ocean withdraws to such a dramatic degree, a tidal wave is coming next. Similarly, for all those events to be truly associated with the white horse of Revelation, those events must be followed by three even more terrible horsemen, bringing war, famine, and death at a scale that hasn't been seen since the Great Flood.

A Rider on a Red Horse

When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make people kill each other. To him was given a large sword.

– **Revelation 6:3-4**

³⁴⁴ Eduardo Levy Yeyati and Federico Filippini. "Social and economic impact of COVID-19," *Brookings*, June 8, 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/social-and-economic-impact-of-covid-19/>

Sometime after the white horse rides out, he is followed by a red horse whose rider is given the power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay one another. The conquering of the rider on the white horse, by intrigue and non-violent means quickly leads to violence when he is joined by the red horse. Under the attempts of the global elites to transform societies worldwide, war and strife are logical, even planned, outcomes.

When the global pandemic broke out, there was a call from the UN secretary general on March 23, 2020 for a cessation of war and a call for global peace because of the coronavirus pandemic.³⁴⁵ And eerily, for a short time, nearly every major conflict on the planet took a pause.³⁴⁶ Altogether, at least 170 nations joined the call for peace and a total cessation of global conflicts.³⁴⁷ Those calls for peace remind me of another call for peace that was prophesied nearly two thousand years ago.

While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

– 1 Thessalonians 5:3

But after the initial shock of the coronavirus pandemic wore off and the potential for the release of a COVID-19 vaccine was announced, global conflicts restarted where they had left off, new conflicts began to arise, and civil unrest began popping up all

³⁴⁵ Daniel Dickinson. "COVID-19: UN chief calls for global ceasefire to focus on 'the true fight of our lives.'" *UN News*, March 23, 2020, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1059972>

³⁴⁶ Deirdre Shesgreen. "War and disease travel together': Why the pandemic push for a global cease-fire is gaining ground," *USA Today*, April 28, 2020, www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2020/04/28/coronavirus-un-secretary-wants-global-cess-fire-amid-pandemic/5163972002/

³⁴⁷ Sahem Rababah. "170 signatories endorse UN ceasefire appeal during COVID crisis," *UN News*, June 24, 2020, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/06/1066982>

over the globe. By 2021, there was every expectation that global tensions were reaching a flash point, and conflicts were arising all over the world at an alarming rate. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, who tracks protests worldwide, reported that in 2021 there were 110 countries experiencing significant protests, with more than 230 major anti-government protests erupting worldwide.³⁴⁸ In 2022, the prime minister in Canada invoked emergency powers and ordered a crackdown on the peaceful protests of Canadian truck drivers, revealing just how far down the road Canada had moved toward tyranny.³⁴⁹ At the same time, violent crime rates increased alarmingly after the start of the coronavirus pandemic. Murder rates rose dramatically in 2020 in major cities across the U.S.³⁵⁰ And there were many indications that they would continue to rise into the foreseeable future.³⁵¹ Similarly, the Council on Foreign Relations has a Global Conflict Tracker website that in 2021 listed twenty-seven regional conflicts that were unchanged or worsening (none were improving).³⁵²

Council on Foreign Relations Tracked Conflicts (2021)

- War in Afghanistan
- Instability in Lebanon
- War in Yemen
- Crisis in Myanmar
- Conflict in Ethiopia
- Criminal violence in Mexico
- Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
- Boko Haram in Nigeria
- Civil War in Libya
- Conflict – India & Pakistan

³⁴⁸ <https://carnegieendowment.org/publications/interactive/protest-tracker>

³⁴⁹ “Tucker: Trudeau has declared Canada a dictatorship,” *Fox News*, 2-16-22, www.foxnews.com/transcript/tucker-trudeau-has-declared-canada-a-dictatorship

³⁵⁰ C. Corley, “Massive 1-Year Rise in Homicide Rates Collided with the Pandemic in 2020,” *NPR*, 1-6-21, www.npr.org/2021/01/06/953254623/massive-1-year-rise-in-homicide-rates-collided-with-the-pandemic-in-2020

³⁵¹ “U.S.: The Rise in Violent Crime Could Continue in 2021,” *Global Guardian News*, 4-16-21, www.globalguardian.com/newsroom/violence_in_us2021

³⁵² <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/?category=usConflictStatus>

- Civil War in Syria
- Territorial Disputes in the South China Sea
- Tensions – East China Sea
- North Korea Crisis
- Political Instability in Iraq
- Conflict between Turkey and armed Kurdish Groups
- Instability in Egypt
- Islamists in Pakistan
- Confrontation between the United States and Iran
- Instability in Venezuela
- Violence in the Central African Republic
- Civil War in South Sudan
- Al-Shabab in Somalia
- Destabilization of Mali
- Violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo
- Nagorno Conflict
- Conflict in Ukraine

By 2022, the world stage was ready to ignite into World War III. Perhaps history will one day record that it began on February 24, 2022, when Russia began its full invasion of Ukraine.³⁵³ After that tragic day, it became harder to imagine that peace would be returning to the world anytime soon. Altogether, there is ample support for a conclusion that, by 2022, a red horse was already riding, too.

A Rider on a Black Horse

When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come!” I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, “Two pounds of wheat for a day’s wages, and six pounds of barley for a day’s wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!”

– Revelation 6:5-6

³⁵³ Joel C. Rosenberg, “INVASION BEGINS,” *All Israel News*, February 24, 2022, www.allisrael.com/invasion-begins

The white and red horses are followed by a rider on a black horse. The rider holds a pair of scales in his hand, and he calls out, “*Two pounds of wheat for a day’s wages, and six pounds of barley for a day’s wages!*” The image implies that there will be famine in the land, a scarcity of food, and/or that there will be a dramatic increase in the price of food. The entire day’s wages of a laborer will just be enough to buy his bread, which will result in a famine for the poor. The effects will be dire in places like Africa and India—but much less so in wealthier nations. Because a voice says, “*Do not damage the oil and the wine!*”, it may only be an inconvenience for the rich.

Once the pandemic lockdowns were in full swing in 2020, UN officials began warning of impending “famines of biblical proportions” and declared that “the global spread of COVID-19 this year has sparked ‘the worst humanitarian crisis since World War Two.’”³⁵⁴ By 2021, global famines and food shortages were at crisis stage and showed every indication that they would continue to get worse. World leaders were urged to act by representatives of the World Food Programme (WFP), who wrote an open letter saying that 34 million people were on the brink of starvation and 270 million people were suffering from a lack of food.³⁵⁵ They noted that multiple famines were breaking out globally due to the combination of the coronavirus pandemic with “conflicts, climate crisis, and inequality.” The letter specifically named Yemen, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Honduras, Venezuela, Haiti, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Central African Republic, Uganda, and Sudan, stating that millions of people were in urgent

³⁵⁴ Michael Tewelde. “As famines of ‘biblical proportion’ loom, Security Council urged to ‘act fast.’” *UN News*, April 21, 2020, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/04/1062272>

³⁵⁵ Sarah Johnson. “‘People are not starving, they’re being starved’: millions at risk of famine, NGOs warn,” *The Guardian*, April 20, 2021, www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/apr/20/millions-at-risk-of-famine-without-urgent-help-governments-warned

need. By late 2021, it was clear that food prices were getting set for dramatic increases.³⁵⁶

And it has been understood for a long time that starvation is not as much a function of a lack of food globally, but rather that the poorest people simply can't afford it.³⁵⁷ In countries like Nigeria, for example, some people are spending sixty to eighty percent of their income just on food.³⁵⁸ Or in some cases, due to active conflicts and supply chain disruptions, food is simply not being made available to the people who need it. As food prices continue to rise, however, it is expected that poverty will cause an increasing number of people to go without food. Consequently, we see that the events that began in 2020 set the stage for the rider on the black horse, too. The events of 2023-2025 will reveal how bad the global famines may become, but the seeds of famine that were sown in 2020-2022 are already alarming.

And Then Comes a Pale Horse

When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

– Revelation 6:7-8

³⁵⁶ Megan Durisin. "Food Inflation Heats Up and Energy Crisis May Make It Worse," *Bloomberg*, October 07, 2021, www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-10-07/food-inflation-heats-up-as-global-prices-return-to-decade-high

³⁵⁷ J. Latham, "There's enough food for everyone, but the poor can't afford to buy it." *Nature*, 404(222) 2000, <https://doi.org/10.1038/35005264>

³⁵⁸ Staff. "Nigeria: Families struggle to survive as food prices soar." *Africa News*, April 7, 2021, www.africanews.com/2021/07/03/nigeria-families-struggle-to-survive-as-food-prices-soar/

The Scriptures indicate that there is a relationship and causality between the events initiated by the white horse, the red horse, and the black horse that will lead to the final arrival of the pale horse, on whom rides Death. We can surmise this because John writes that, “*they were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.*” Therefore, a reasonable understanding of this sequence is that the white horse starts something that leads to war, famine, and finally mass death. In addition to deaths caused by war and famine, it’s not hard to imagine that a new virus could emerge, killing a much larger number of people in the future. Or, even more deadly complications could arise from the rushed coronavirus vaccines and endless booster shots—both of which have been the deadliest ever administered, according to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) database.³⁵⁹ The CDC reported that there were over a million excess deaths recorded in the U.S. by the end of 2021 (the majority of which were linked to COVID); but worldwide the number of excess deaths was 18 million.³⁶⁰ It is likely, that almost all the excess deaths were, in one way or another, caused by the coronavirus pandemic or its vaccines. No one knows what the full long-term outcomes of this virus will be, but it could easily contribute to the effects of the pale horse.

Since the four horsemen together will wipe out a quarter of the earth, these signs should be impossible to miss. The events begun by the red horse will likely explode into World War III, once

³⁵⁹ <https://vaers.hhs.gov>

³⁶⁰ J. Achenbach. “U.S. ‘excess deaths’ during pandemic surpassed 1 million, with covid killing most but other diseases adding to the toll, CDC says,” *The Washington Post*, 2-15-22, www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/02/15/1-million-excess-deaths-in-pandemic/ ; A. Planas. “Global excess deaths due to pandemic are 3 times higher than official Covid toll, study finds,” NBC News, 3-10-22, www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/excess-pandemic-deaths-are-3-higher-official-covid-toll-study-rcna19497

Death arrives on the scene riding a pale horse. But those who don't understand what's really happening will mistake all this for just another terrible but conventional event. They will connect everything to an agenda, like Climate Change, and will pick someone to blame, which—as in the days of the Roman emperor Nero—will probably be the Jews and the Christians.

The days of the pale horse seem to have also been foretold by the prophets of the Old Testament. Their dire predictions may have been fulfilled at other times in the past judgments of Israel or the nations—but a day is coming when they will be fulfilled in a way unlike any seen before. Nahum tells us that this will also be part of the judgment of the great prostitute who deceives the kings of the earth (the Mystery Babylon of John's Apocalypse). The prophet Jeremiah seems to have described these times, too.

Many casualties, piles of dead, bodies without number, people stumbling over the corpses—all because of the wanton lust of a prostitute, alluring, the mistress of sorceries, who enslaved nations by her prostitution and peoples by her witchcraft. – Nahum 3:3b-4

This is what the Lord declares: “Dead bodies will lie like dung on the open field, like cut grain behind the reaper, with no one to gather them.”
– Jeremiah 9:22

Isaiah also recounted a vision of this period, which very closely parallels Matthew 24 and the sixth seal. We see the stars in the sky dissolving and the heavens rolling up like a scroll, and late figs dropping from a tree. The parallels of such a unique vision should be unmistakable and confirm that Matthew and John were speaking about the same time that Isaiah was writing about. These verses are difficult to contemplate, but they help us comprehend how seriously God takes sin. We know that his patience with men will not last forever; but mankind does not

seem willing to simply turn and repent from their wicked ways—to fear God and give him glory. Isaiah describes the dead bodies of the slain being “*thrown out.*” This tells us that there will be so many bodies that it won’t be possible to properly dispose of them all. Parts of the vision match the signs of the sixth seal (*stars dissolving, heavens rolled up like a scroll, and the fall of the starry host like figs or withered leaves—Revelation 6:13*). Thus, it’s reasonable to associate this time with either the global deaths resulting from the fourth seal or the Gog-Magog war in Israel.

The Lord is angry with all nations; his wrath is on all their armies. He will totally destroy them, he will give them over to slaughter. Their slain will be thrown out, their dead bodies will stink; the mountains will be soaked with their blood. All the stars in the sky will be dissolved and the heavens rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shriveled figs from the fig tree.

— Isaiah 34:2-4

The Timing of the Seals

One question, which isn’t answered directly in the text, is when will all these things take place? There are three possibilities. First, the seals are opened (or begin to open) long before the start of Daniel’s seventieth week. The challenge for that view is identifying the four horsemen over a period that lasts for decades or centuries but specifically kills a quarter of the earth. The judgments of the horsemen, while broad in scope, are specific in action and so massive that they obviously must be part of the final seven years of tribulation. The second option is that they don’t begin to open until the second half of the final week. However, that option is no good either. The abomination of desolation must be both within the time of the seals (based on *Matthew 24*) and followed by a period of 1290 days (*Daniel 12:11*), so the seals must start

opening before that. This leaves us only the logical third option, which is to assume that the first seal opens at (or near) the beginning of the last seven years.

However, beyond knowing the approximate starting time, we don't know when each individual seal will be opened. We have discussed, though, the evidence that the first seal may have opened in 2020 with the coronavirus pandemic, followed by the second horse in 2021 or 2022; but that doesn't help us to know exactly when the other seals will be opened. Furthermore, when a seal is opened, its effects may take several years to complete. For example, the first seal will set up the next three seals and is still acting when the fourth seal is opened. In fact, you could argue that its effects may be felt throughout the whole seven years of the tribulation. What that means is that the fourth seal could be opened on a certain date but still take a year (or more) to achieve its full effect. In other words, even if all four seals are opened in the first half of the tribulation, the death of a full quarter of the earth might not be observed until somewhere in the second half. This is something to keep in mind while watching for these fulfillments.

There is also a mystery regarding when the Beast will begin his forty-two-month reign (*Revelation 13:5*) with respect to the seal judgments, but perhaps the answer is found in the opening of the fifth seal. When the lamb opens the fifth seal, we are shown the martyred souls of the saints under the altar of God. All the seals seem to represent some way that God is beginning to exercise his judgment against man. And yet, we are only told about the murder of God's people at the fifth seal (*Revelation 6:9-11*). One way to resolve that dilemma is to understand that the fifth seal signals the beginning of the reign of the Antichrist for the forty-two months he has been allotted. This is a good fit because we are told that when the Beast begins his reign, he is “*given power to wage war against God's holy people and to conquer them*”—*Revelation 13:7a*). That

would explain the martyred souls of believers under the altar mentioned at the fifth seal. If so, then it could mean that the fifth seal will be opened at the middle of Daniel's seventieth week.

The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. – Revelation 13:5-6

As for the timing of sixth and seventh seals, however, those are for anyone to guess. We do know that the seventh seal will be marked by “*silence in heaven for about half an hour*” (Revelation 8:1), and it is logical that it follows closely on the heels of the sixth seal (as we discussed related to *Luke 17:29* back in chapter 6). They must also be somewhere in a *postmidtribulational* position.

The Antichrist and the Two Beasts

With the opening of the seals, if not before, it can be assumed that the Antichrist will begin plotting and executing his plans to take the position that he will be divinely granted for forty-two months. But what we really want to know is, when will believers be able to securely identify the Antichrist? Some think he will be clearly recognizable at the beginning of the seven-year tribulation, believing that he is represented by the rider on the white horse of the first seal. Contrarily, the Antichrist may be an elusive figure until the tribulation is well underway. If the Antichrist is just one person among many who confirm the covenant with Israel, or his support is not public, then the next prophetically recognizable moment would not be until he halts the sacrifice and the grain offering and commits the abomination of desolation in the middle of the seven years—at the beginning of his forty-two-

month reign of terror on the earth.³⁶¹ That's when he will arise as the Beast from the Sea (*Revelation 13:1-10*) and will begin to “*wage war against God's holy people and to conquer them*” (*Revelation 13:7*). When that day comes, we must remember that, while the Beast has temporarily been given power over some of the saints, he will not overcome the Church.

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. – Matthew 16:18

After the rise of a beast from the sea, another beast arises from the earth (*Revelation 13:11-18*), who is also called the False Prophet (*Revelation 19:20*). This implies that there is a mystery about the identity of the Antichrist with respect to these descriptions.³⁶² What is the mystery? Either the term “Antichrist” is a composite of both characters, because the Antichrist seems like both the Beast and the False Prophet, or it is a title that should more properly be applied to only one of them. Clearly, one person cannot be both figures, so there is some question as to which one the title of Antichrist best applies. Is the Antichrist the beast from the sea that makes war with the earth, or is he the false prophet who performs signs and wonders and forces everyone to get a mark on their right hand or their forehead? Either way, Satan, as the dragon, is ultimately behind and directing both the Beast and the False Prophet, and we should keep in mind that we are really looking for two bad actors, not just one.

There are also multiple allusions to the Antichrist in the Old Testament. He is sometimes called the “Prince” (*Daniel 9:24-27*), the “Assyrian” (*Micah 5:5-6*), and “Gog” (*Ezekiel 38*). Including descriptions from these Old Testament passages gives us a lot more to look out for. With so many warnings, he is one figure

³⁶¹ As we read in *Daniel 9:27* and *2 Thessalonians 2:4*.

³⁶² They are introduced in *Revelation* chapter 13, with additional details given in verses 16:13-14, 17:7-17, 19:19-21, 20:4, and 20:10.

about whom we must remain vigilant; or, as we just discussed, these titles may be mixed between the two beasts.

This One will be our peace. When the Assyrian invades our land, when he tramples on our citadels, then we will raise against him seven shepherds and eight leaders of men. They will shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword, the land of Nimrod at its entrances; and He will deliver us from the Assyrian when he attacks our land and when he tramples our territory. — **Micah 5:5-6 NASB**

Strong cases have been made that the Beast kingdom will come out of the Middle East and will involve radical Islamic forces, or even a revived Muslim Caliphate.³⁶³ Yet, others have argued that the Beast kingdom could come out of communism or the vestiges of Nazism, again claiming a descentance from the Roman empire, like the Nazis did—who claimed they were the Third Reich.³⁶⁴ It may even be a combination of the two.³⁶⁵ Some combination of the two certainly looks plausible. The form of Neo-Marxism that has been transforming the twenty-first century can be described by Wokeness, Critical Race Theory, and Social Justice.³⁶⁶ It is being enacted systematically, from elementary schools to universities, into the workplace through government-sponsored employee education programs, and even into some churches.

The image of two disparate ideologies, like Neo-Marxism and Jihadism working together, could even be interpreted from

³⁶³ Joel Richardson. *Mideast Beast: the scriptural case for an Islamic antichrist* (WND Books, 2012); Walid Shoebat. *God's War on Terror* (Top Exec. Media, 2008).

³⁶⁴ Hal Lindsey and C. Carlson. *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Zondervan, 1970): 98-110.

³⁶⁵ Dave Hunt. *Judgment Day!: Islam, Israel and the Nations* (Berean Call, 2006): 27-46.

³⁶⁶ Scott David Allen. *Why Social Justice Is Not Biblical Justice: An Urgent Appeal to Fellow Christians in a Time of Social Crisis* (Credo House, 2020).

Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a statue, representing the kingdoms of the world. Nebuchadnezzar was the head, and the statues' feet signified the last empire. We are told that the toes will be a mix of iron and clay, implying that the final phase of the last kingdom will be made of two completely different peoples or worldviews. Wherever the Antichrist comes from, though, the Bible tells us how to identify him; we will know him by his fruit (*Matthew 7:20*).

Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. — **Daniel 2:40-42**

Another suggestion for where we should look for the identity of the Antichrist comes from Irenaeus.³⁶⁷ He associated the prophecy of Jeremiah 4 with the fact that Dan is not named among the tribes of Israel chosen in the 144,000 of Revelation 7.

Look! He advances like the clouds, his chariots come like a whirlwind, his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe to us! We are ruined! Jerusalem, wash the evil from your heart and be saved. How long will you harbor wicked thoughts?

A voice is announcing from Dan, proclaiming disaster from the hills of Ephraim. "Tell this to the nations, proclaim concerning Jerusalem: 'A besieging army is coming from a distant land,

³⁶⁷ Coxe. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, "Irenaeus Against Heresies, b. V, ch. XXX," v. 1, 559 ; Hal Lindsey also supported this view in *The Late Great Planet Earth*, 112.

raising a war cry against the cities of Judah. They surround her like men guarding a field, because she has rebelled against me,”
declares the Lord. — **Jeremiah 4:13-17**

I think this is an interesting idea to consider, but the mention of Dan might only be a geographic indication of where the attack against Jerusalem will come from. If the association of Dan with the Antichrist is correct, though, then we may best understand it in the context of the first diaspora when the northern tribes of Israel, including Dan, were conquered, and dispersed throughout the empire. At that time, many Israelites were also assimilated by the Assyrians. Based on the location of the Tel Dan archaeological site in the far north of Israel,³⁶⁸ they would have been the first to be conquered and would have already been intermarrying and assimilating with the Assyrians.³⁶⁹ This also fits with the prophecy regarding Dan given by Jacob in Genesis 49, if we consider more closely the meaning of “will judge,” *din* (Strong's H1777), which means to judge or execute judgment, which is followed by God's salvation (*yeshuah*), the Hebrew name for Jesus.

Dan will judge (din) his people as one of the tribes of Israel. He will be a snake by the road, a viper beside the path, that bites the horses' heels so that its rider falls backward. I wait for Your salvation (yeshuah), Lord. — **Genesis 49:16-18 HCSB**

The NIV translates Genesis 49:16 as “*Dan will provide justice,*” but that’s in sharp contrast with the next line where Dan is called “*a snake by the road.*” Add to that the overall context of God’s judgment against the disobedient Israelites in Jeremiah chapter

³⁶⁸ <https://en.parks.org.il/reserve-park/tel-dan-nature-reserve/>

³⁶⁹ The tribe of Dan was originally located on the coast, between Jaffa and Gaza, but Joshua 19:40-48 tells us that they had to move north after losing their territory to the Philistines.

4, and a more likely meaning could be that God will use Dan to punish his people to bring them to repentance. We see the same idea in Deuteronomy in the words that Moses spoke over the tribe of Dan before he died. Dan is compared to a young lion out of Bashan (Golan Heights), which could be like the lion of Judah, but could also be like the Devil who goes around “*like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour*” (1 Peter 5:8).

He said about Dan: Dan is a young lion, leaping out of Bashan.

– Deuteronomy 33:22

Jeremiah again called out Dan when describing a threat emerging from the north, one that would sound like mighty horses and make the whole land tremble. This second mention of Dan may again just be geographic, but it could also mean that the Antichrist will have Jewish ancestry. And it could be purely historic, but the church father Irenaeus identified it as a last days prophecy connected to the Antichrist. So, it’s something to keep in mind.

From Dan the snorting of horses is heard. At the sound of the neighing of mighty steeds, the whole land quakes. They come to devour the land and everything in it, the city and all its residents. Indeed, I am about to send snakes among you, poisonous vipers that cannot be charmed. They will bite you. This is the Lord’s declaration.

– Jeremiah 8:16-17

The Mystery of the Little Horn

Another mystery regarding the identity of the Antichrist and his rise to power comes from the identification of the three horns that Daniel tells us will be uprooted by the little horn. The overall vision informs us that the little horn represents the Antichrist

and that the three horns are rulers of nations that he will overthrow, supplant, or gain control over.³⁷⁰

While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted (aqar) before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a human being and a mouth that spoke boastfully. – Daniel 7:8

The fall of three horns may be something that will only be seen at the beginning of the Antichrist's forty-two-month reign, or it may have already started happening. Either way, it seems best to view this prophecy through the lens of the nations that surround Israel in the Middle East. In that case, the first horn “uprooted” might have been Saddam Hussein in Iraq, who was deposed in 2003 and executed in 2006. Turkey supported the U.S. invasion of Iraq from their airbases in Ankara. The deal was struck with the newly elected AKP party, led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan,³⁷¹ but after the initial invasion the relationship degraded.³⁷² A possibility for the second horn was Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, who was executed in 2011. Turkey was again involved in and supported the overthrow of Libya by recognizing and financially backing the Libyan rebels.³⁷³ After the overthrow of Gaddafi, Turkey began securing their interests there and made Libya a part of their regional strategy.³⁷⁴

³⁷⁰ The word *aqar* (Strong's H6132) only occurs once, here in Daniel 7:8, thus the sense of “uprooting” might be more nuanced than just conquering or killing.

³⁷¹ Rosenberg. *Enemies and Allies*, 37.

³⁷² Soner Cagaptay and Mark Parris. “Turkey after the Iraq War: Still a U.S. Ally?” *Washington Institute*, September 19, 2003, www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/turkey-after-iraq-war-still-us-ally

³⁷³ Reuters. “Turkey cuts diplomatic ties with Gaddafi's Libyan gov't.” *Jerusalem Post*, July 4, 2011, www.jpost.com/International/Turkey-cuts-diplomatic-ties-with-Gaddafis-Libyan-govt

³⁷⁴ E. Sahinkaya. “Why Is Turkey Involved in Libyan Conflict?” *VOA*, 6-4-20, www.voanews.com/a/extremism-watch_why-turkey-involved-libyan-conflict/6190551.html

If those identifications are correct, who might be the third horn? We'll have to wait and see, but one candidate is Turkey itself. President Erdogan rose from mayor of Istanbul to president and *de facto* dictator over the whole nation through intrigue (*Daniel 11:21*), beginning just before the invasion of Iraq. Turkey has also been involved in Syria, though, so President Bashar al-Assad is another possibility. Syria has been in trouble since the initiation of their civil war in 2011, but Assad has so far managed to remain in control of his country. Russia, who has been operating behind-the-scenes in the region for decades, could also be a horn. Or perhaps, the Antichrist will emerge from an axis of Russia, Turkey, and Iran, who could also fit the description of three horns. At this point, the identities of the horns are still unknown, and the little horn could arise from somewhere completely unexpected. [*It's like a murder mystery with lots of suspects, but no one knows whodunnit...*] Whoever the little horn is, seven other nations will also hand over their power to the Beast—via treaties, bribery, or surrender.

The Number of His Name

This calls for wisdom. Let the person who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. That number is 666.

– Revelation 13:18

Known as the number of the Beast, people have been attempting to guess what the number 666 really means since John first wrote the book of Revelation. Over the years, many have attempted to calculate the number of the Beast for every suspect imaginable. Irenaeus discussed at length the topic of the number of the Beast in *Against Heresies*, which he wrote between AD 182-187. The first point he addresses is the copyist error in some manuscripts changing the number 666 into 616. Although Irenaeus attempted to correct the record, you will still find people considering the

possibility that the variant 616 was the true intent of Scripture.³⁷⁵ Irenaeus wrote at length about the number of the beast, and even though his words were written well over a thousand years ago, I think they still bear our serious consideration.

Such, then, being the state of the case, and this number being found in all the most approved and ancient copies [of the Apocalypse], and those men who saw John face to face bearing their testimony [to it]; while reason also leads us to conclude that the number of the name of the beast, [if reckoned] according to the Greek mode of calculation by the [value of] the letters contained in it, will amount to six hundred and sixty six...

I do not know how it is that some have erred following the ordinary mode of speech, and have vitiated the middle number in the name, deducting the amount of fifty from it, so that instead of six decads they will have it that there is but one. [I am inclined to think that this occurred through the fault of the copyists, as is wont to happen, since numbers also are expressed by letters; so that the Greek letter which expresses the number sixty was easily expanded into the letter Iota of the Greeks.] Others then received this reading without examination...

These men, therefore, ought to learn [what really is the state of the case], and go back to the true number of the name, that they not be reckoned among the false prophets. But, knowing the sure number declared by Scripture, that is, six hundred sixty and six. – **Irenaeus**, *Against Heresies*³⁷⁶

³⁷⁵ Shoebat. *God's War on Terror*, 368-369.

³⁷⁶ Coxe. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, "Irenaeus Against Heresies, b. V, ch. XXX," v. 1, 558-9.

Irenaeus wrote to correct this scribal error within ninety years or so of the writing of John's Apocalypse. He said that he had access to the "most ancient copies," and we know that he was taught by Polycarp, who was a disciple of John himself. Irenaeus would have not only had access to the original manuscripts, but his teacher Polycarp would have heard the number directly from the mouth of John. Numbers are so important in daily life. It is virtually impossible to confuse a number that has been both written down and taught orally. Consequently, Irenaeus had everything he needed to definitively answer this question and rightly pronounce that the variant 616 was spurious and false. Based on his testimony, it seems prudent to accept that the true number must be unquestioningly 666. Now, let's look at what else Irenaeus taught about the number of the Beast.

For starters, notice in the previous quote how Irenaeus affirms that the proper method for calculating the number of the Beast will come from the "Greek mode of calculation by the value of the letters contained in it," which makes it sound like using Greek would be the correct method.³⁷⁷ This would have been a very clear statement at the time, because people were still using Greek regularly. But in the modern world, it begs a question: Does that mean that the name of the Antichrist will have to be translated into Greek before it can be calculated? If so, that introduces additional questions, because there are many ways to transliterate a name into another language. Could he have also just been referring to the fact that the letters of the name must be summed, as in the Greek method, but using the system of the language from which the name is derived? Perhaps, but we just don't know. Furthermore, Irenaeus goes on to say that the number of the Beast cannot be reliably calculated until the Antichrist performs the signs that Scripture indicates we are to watch for. He also warns believers that many names can be calculated that add up to 666,

³⁷⁷ For a gematria calculator in Greek, try: www.greekgematria.epizy.com

and hence we should wait on the Lord to reveal him at the proper time.

Let them wait in the first place, the division of the kingdom into ten; then, in the next place, when these kings are reigning, and beginning to set their affairs in order, and advance their kingdom, [let them learn] to acknowledge that he who shall come claiming the kingdom for himself, and shall terrify those men of whom we have been speaking, having a name containing the aforesaid number, is truly the abomination of desolation...

It is therefore more certain, and less hazardous, to await the fulfillment of the prophecy, than to be making surmises, and casting about for any names that may present themselves, inasmuch as many names can be found possessing the number mentioned; and the same question will, after all, remain unsolved. For if there are many names found possessing this number, it will be asked which among them shall the coming man bear. It is not through a want of names containing the number of that name that I say this, but on account of the fear of God, and zeal for the truth...

We will not, however, incur the risk of pronouncing positively as to the name of the Antichrist; for if it were necessary that this name should be distinctly revealed in the present time, it would have been announced by him who beheld the apocalyptic vision. For that was seen no very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign. But he indicates the number of the name now, that when this man comes we may avoid him, being aware who he is.

– **Irenaeus**, *Against Heresies*³⁷⁸

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 559-600.

As a result, I am uncomfortable with trying to identify the Antichrist by calculating the number of his name before he has revealed himself. I could be demure and say that it is because I don't have a mind with enough wisdom, but my discomfiture has two main sources. First, there is no definitive method for calculating a number. Many possible methods have been suggested, but there is no instruction in Scripture to guide us. Second, for any of the methods, there is an absurdly large number of possible name and word combinations that can be made to equal 666. Clearly, Irenaeus expected that the church would be here to see the Antichrist when he arrived. Hence, I think we should heed his warning and wait until the Antichrist is revealed (by causing the abomination of desolation) before we can calculate the number of his name with any certainty.

The Restrainer and the Great Delusion

There's also another mystery regarding the man of lawlessness, i.e., the Antichrist (*2 Thessalonians 2:3*). What restrains him, and when is the restrainer taken out of the way? We know that the Beast will have authority to rule for forty-two months, not seven years, but when is the restrainer removed? And will it be all at once, or gradually over the previous three and half years? Let's look closely at Paul's warning.

⁶ And you know what restrains him now, so that he will be revealed in his time. ⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is removed. ⁸ Then that lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will eliminate with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; ⁹ that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and false signs and wonders, ¹⁰ and with all the deception of wickedness for those

who perish, because they did not accept the love of the truth so as to be saved. ¹¹ For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, ¹² in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

– 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12

Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians makes it clear that we are talking about the Antichrist who will be one of the beasts of Revelation. The phrase “*so that in his time he will be revealed*” implies that the restrainer is removed or begins to be removed well before the Antichrist is revealed “in his time.” It would make sense that the restrainer begins to pull back his hand as soon as the first seal is opened. It is also reasonable to assume the restraining hand will be removed in a measured way, even if it is relatively quickly. I think that we can also assume that this does not mean that all restraint is removed. If that were the case, then the demonic hordes of the Abyss would have no limits on them whatsoever, and surely “*no flesh would be saved.*”

Some have suggested that the Holy Spirit is the restrainer, which does make sense. The Holy Spirit is God, and God is ultimately the one who restrains and sets boundaries on everyone and everything. And yet, God who is omnipresent can never really be removed. So, that sounds more like the restraining arm of the Lord, which in a practical sense is often accomplished through his angelic host who have been restraining evil in the world since the Fall of Man (or even before that depending on when Satan rebelled). We also have the testimony from Daniel that Michael the archangel will “arise” in the last days (i.e., be removed or ordered to stand down).

“Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.” — **Daniel 12:1**

It is true that Daniel’s comment is directed at the Jewish people, which does not necessarily include the future church, but notice that the prophecy also refers to *“everyone who is found written in the book [of Life].”* Therefore, this suggests that what allows the end to come and the world to enter *“a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time”* is the removal or standing down of God’s angelic armies, who are normally fighting against the *“spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places”* (*Ephesians 6:12*). But for a short time, God will allow them to wreak havoc on the Earth.

Also notice that Paul’s warning about the removal of the restrainer is followed by a global deception (*2 Thessalonians 2:11-12*). In that sense, the restraining hand of God began to be removed in 2020, allowing the nations of the world to fall into a global delusion. The delusion began with the fear of the coronavirus pandemic, and quickly gave way to illogical and draconian responses from both individuals and governments. The delusion will continue to grow, leading up to and during the reign of the Antichrist; but it has already begun to destroy the world economy and usher in global governance—setting the stage for his rise to power. There is also evidence that both Christians and Zionist Jews are already being set up to be blamed as the source of the world’s problems. And as frightening as this time may be, we know from Daniel that it will bring the moment when everyone whose name is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life will be rescued. Hallelujah!

The Mark of the Beast

A major sign identifying the Antichrist and confirming that his time has begun will be the mark of the Beast.³⁷⁹ The mark has been the subject of endless speculations [*to which I will now add my own thoughts*], because of the gravity of the punishment for receiving the mark for those who are alive in the days of the great tribulation (*Revelation 14:9-11*). Clearly, it is important to get this right, or there wouldn't be an angelic announcement that warns the inhabitants of the earth not to receive the mark.

The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name.

— **Revelation 13:15-17**

But what could the mark really be? Let's start with a premise. First, if we accept that the Lord's return is truly near, then the technology for the mark of the Beast must already be under development, and therefore we can reasonably think about what its precursors will be. If the Lord's return is not near, then it is futile to attempt to guess at what it will be. For example, could a person from the 1800s have conceived of the technologies that exist today? Absolutely not—just look at this depiction of the mark of the Beast being applied, as imagined by a Russian Christian in the 1800s (see image, opposite page).³⁸⁰

³⁷⁹ See Revelation 13:16-17, 14:9-11, 16:2, 19:20, and 20:4.

³⁸⁰ "Apocalypse by Andrew of Caesarea," Walters Ms. W917, c. 1800, www.thedigitalwalters.org/Data/WaltersManuscripts/html/W917/description.html

Assuming that the time is near, though, what could we be looking for? The Scripture says that the whole world will follow the first beast, and the second beast will cause them to receive a mark, or they will not be able to buy and sell. Since it seems to involve the whole world, we are looking for a transition to a form of global government. Agendas to promote globalism advanced



significantly under the coronavirus lockdowns, but the movement has been building for decades. Its roots date back to at least 1945, with the creation of the United Nations. After the pandemic broke out, a lot of progress was made on agendas like Global Citizen,³⁸¹ sponsored by the World Health Organization, and the idea of global citizenship is supported by the UN.³⁸² The control of buying and selling also implies there will be a new global identification system and world monetary system. The development of digital currencies can be traced back to 1982.³⁸³ But it wasn't until the release of Bitcoin in 2009, using blockchain authentication technology, that digital currencies really started to

³⁸¹ www.globalcitizen.org/en/

³⁸² www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/global-citizenship-new-and-vital-force

³⁸³ David Chaum. "Blind signatures for untraceable payments." In D. Chaum et al. (Eds.). *Advances in Cryptology: Proceedings of Crypto 82* (Springer, 1982): 199-203.

gain traction.³⁸⁴ The pandemic in 2020 created the perfect conditions for the Federal Reserve to begin discussing plans for rolling out a new federal cryptocurrency.³⁸⁵ Dubbed Fedcoin, conservatives almost immediately began warning it could present numerous potential threats to personal liberties.³⁸⁶ Fedcoin, or something like it, could become a new central bank digital currency (CBDC)—or “digital dollar”—to try and maintain the status of the US dollar as the world’s reserve currency.³⁸⁷ There has also been a push for a permanent, universal, and global ID under efforts such as ID2020, sponsored by some big-name tech companies.³⁸⁸ The website discusses some technological concepts that may ultimately also be requirements for the technology of the mark of the Beast. The goal is for the ID to be implantable, uniquely identifying, impossible to copy, issued at birth, and durable after death.

Achieving all those things is a challenge, but it may shed some light on the question of why the Bible says that the mark will be “*on the right hand or the forehead.*” One reason may be that for any type of implantable ID it would be better for it to be placed in two different locations. That way, in the case of injury to one area of the body containing the mark, the person would still be identifiable, provided they had a second identifying mark in another area. The fact that it is specifically required on the right hand,

³⁸⁴ Annika Baumann et al. "Exploring the Bitcoin Network." *WEBIST*, 1 (2014): 369-74.

³⁸⁵ Peter Reagan. "Fed Just Revealed Plans for Digital Dollar Replacement," *Newsmax.com*, February 20, 2020, www.newsmax.com/Finance/peterreagan/fed-digital-dollar-replacement/2020/02/20/id/955024/

³⁸⁶ Ron Paul. "Fedcoin: A New Scheme for Tyranny and Poverty," *Ron Paul Weekly Column*, July 27, 2020, www.ronpaulinstitute.org/archives/featured-articles/2020/july/27/fedcoin-a-new-scheme-for-tyranny-and-poverty/

³⁸⁷ "The Digital Dollar Project: Exploring a US CBDC," Digital Dollar Foundation and Accenture, May 2020, www.banking.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Giancarlo%20Testimony%20Addendum%206-30-202.pdf

³⁸⁸ <https://id2020.org>

probably means that this will be used for identification and therefore the location must be standardized. The world is ardently seeking these technologies for purposes that sound reasonable in our current world, but prophetically, they are also leading us inexorably toward what was prophesied thousands of years ago. At this point in history, all the necessary technologies for a mark exist and could be swiftly implemented under the authority of the Antichrist once he begins his reign of terror.

As for global governance, one could reflect on the fact that the UN, WHO, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and other global institutions already form a type of *de facto* global government. Hence, we already have, in effect, a worldwide political system that is operating with some level of authority over almost every country in the world; and it is issuing standards and directives to them, as if they were subordinate states, not sovereign nations. But just how will a new governmental, monetary, and personal ID system become an issue that deserves punishment by fire and brimstone? The simple evolution of technology in our lives will not suddenly become the mark of the Beast, and we won't get it by accident. [*As in, Oops! I got a vaccine shot and didn't know it had an implantable microchip!*]³⁸⁹ It must be something akin to bowing down before Nebuchadnezzar's golden idol (*Daniel 3*). Why? Well, to explain it, let me first tell you about the process of going from being a citizen of another country to a naturalized U.S. citizen. We require that foreigners who desire to become a citizen of the United States entirely renounce all other national allegiances. Here is the oath that all naturalized citizens must take:

³⁸⁹ That doesn't mean I don't suspect that the use of some technologies related to the vaccine are possible precursors for the mark of the Beast, they certainly could be (see: <https://timetofreeamerica.com/revelation>), it's just that I don't think we will know for sure until it is officially rolled out by the Antichrist, during the time when he is given authority to rule for forty-two months.

“I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law; and that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God.”
– **Naturalization Oath of Allegiance to the United States of America**³⁹⁰

Okay, that makes sense. A person shouldn't be acting as an agent of another country while enjoying the rights and privileges of a citizen of the United States. But this recent, invigorated push for global citizenship, along with the U.S. naturalization oath and the push for a new form of implantable, durable digital ID, could suggest something. When the mark of the Beast finally arrives, along with a global governing system, it seems that the issuing of the mark will also have to be accompanied by an oath. The oath will be the main objective, and it will require conscious and sincere acceptance, just like becoming a citizen of the U.S.

The mark will likely also have some very specific actions and uses, but it will also serve as proof that the oath was taken; it will be the reward that allows one to join and participate in the new global system of the Antichrist. Perhaps the oath will contain something

³⁹⁰ www.uscis.gov/citizenship/learn-about-citizenship/the-naturalization-interview-and-test/naturalization-oath-of-allegiance-to-the-united-states-of-america

about renouncing all former allegiances to any foreign prince, potentate, state, sovereignty, **or gods**. It will also have a pledge to obey and worship the Beast, which will be equivalent to bowing down before Nebuchadnezzar's statue of gold.

You probably know the story in Daniel 3. King Nebuchadnezzar set up a giant golden statue of himself for his entire kingdom to worship, but three Jewish young men named Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow down. It was a time when the people of ancient Babylon were given a choice—bow down and worship the idol or die. But instead of giving in, they boldly declined. Their fear of God was greater than their fear of man. And in their famous showdown with King Nebuchadnezzar, they bravely proclaimed their confidence in God's ability to save them; however, then they said, *“But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up”* (Daniel 3:18). In a rage, Nebuchadnezzar heated the furnace seven times hotter than normal, and he had them thrown in to be burned alive. They were ready to die that day, trusting God for their reward in the afterlife. Instead, God performed a great miracle, and not even the hairs of their heads were singed, nor did they smell of smoke.

What an awesome example! Under the reign of the Antichrist, believers will again face this kind of threat. They will be told to worship the Beast and his image and to receive his mark... or die. And that will be where, if not long before, Christians will begin to be imprisoned and killed, because they just won't agree to that.

“Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.” — **Matthew 10:32-33**

For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. — Matthew 16:25

Babylon the Great

Here we have another mystery to watch for, but with a very open mind. First, we are warned that “Mystery Babylon” contains... (drumroll please) ... a mystery! There is a great book with exactly that title as the subject,³⁹¹ so I won’t be able to cover the topic exhaustively in this short section. What I can do, though, is to lay some groundwork for some of the important things that we should understand and be watching for.

The name written on her forehead was a mystery: BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. — Revelation 17:5

We read that she is the “*mother of prostitutes.*” There are a lot of ways that statement could be understood, but her designation as a harlot indicates that she represents false religion. The title “mother” may mean the first, the root of, the largest, or all those things rolled into one. Today, the largest false religion on earth would almost indisputably be Islam, so it’s hard to not imagine it playing a major role in end times events, but atheism, paganism, and apostate Christianity could all also be in view. The label “*and of the abominations of the earth*” may simply refer to the general blasphemous beliefs and practices of the harlot, or it may refer to an aspect of the harlot that embraces and promotes the most wicked forms of sin on the earth. The idea that there is a dual nature found in the harlot, known as Babylon the Great, is heard in the proclamation of the angel saying, “*Fallen! Fallen!*” By using

³⁹¹ Joel Richardson. *Mystery Babylon: Unlocking the Bible’s Greatest Prophetic Mystery* (WND Books, 2017).

“fallen” twice, it suggests that Mystery Babylon has two different aspects, sides, or embodiments; however, it may also simply indicate any of these: That her fall is great, that it is a two-stage fall, or that she will be destroyed at two different times.

A second angel followed and said, “Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great,’ which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.”

– **Revelation 14:8**

We also read she made *the nations* drink of her maddening adulteries; meaning that we are looking for an influence that is not just regional, but global. For decades, Islam has been exporting its jihadist dogma around the world, so that part fits—but the false religion of science and humanism has also been exporting a form of pop culture paganism and sexual perversion around the globe as well, so it is not inconceivable that other things may also be in view in the designation of the harlot. Regarding mysteries like this one, it is probably best to keep an open mind. It’s not likely to be a simple one-dimensional answer and will probably only be fully revealed during the second half of the tribulation.

The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. – **Revelation 16:19**

Later we read about the destruction of Babylon, the great city. This brings up the image of a single location. Some commentators have suggested places like Rome, Jerusalem, New York, and even the ancient city of Babylon. Joel Richardson makes a compelling case for Mecca in Saudi Arabia, and with good reason.³⁹² But we also read that, “*and the cities of the nations collapsed.*” This may indicate that Babylon the Great is not just a single city—it

³⁹² Ibid. p. 195-219.

includes large cities of the world that also act like Babylon. They are “little Babylons,” like little cities of Babel where the people once gathered all together in one place rather than obeying the word of the Lord to spread out, or swarm (*saras* – Strong’s H8317), over the earth. The Hebrew word *saras* is also used to describe fish “teeming” in the sea; it evokes the idea of filling every part, rather than crowding into a single place. When God later confused their language and supernaturally scattered them over the face of the earth (*Genesis 11*), we understand that his command to spread out was not optional.

But you, be fruitful and multiply; spread out over (saras) the earth and multiply on it. – **Genesis 9:7** HCSB

We also read that the great prostitute “*sits by many waters.*” This image fits well with the country of Saudi Arabia that sits on a peninsula surrounded by seas, but it may also suggest that she is in many locations, evoking an image of the cities of the nations. The reference to her influence on the inhabitants of the earth also fits well with including the large cities of the nations.

One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits by many waters. With her the kings of the earth committed adultery, and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries.” – **Revelation 17:1-2**

Arguably, a duality is also implied in the nature of the beast that the woman sits on. We are told that its seven heads are seven hills and that they are also seven kings. This gives us two senses in which to understand the nature of the beast. Unfortunately, to truly understand this, one must have a “*mind with wisdom,*” so I might be out of luck there. But seriously... that clearly means that this is a difficult and complex image.

“This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for only a little while. – **Revelation 17:9-10**

The mysteries continue surrounding Babylon the Great and the image of the woman who rides the beast. She sits on many waters and rules over the kings of the earth. She is a great city. She is ruined and burned with fire by the Beast, and yet Babylon is also destroyed by God himself in Revelation 16:19, with the cup of the fury of his wrath. That isn't necessarily a contradiction, but the two images are drastically different.

Then the angel said to me, “The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages. The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to hand over to the beast their royal authority, until God’s words are fulfilled. The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.”

– **Revelation 17:15-18**

Most of Revelation 18 is also about the judgment of Babylon the Great, but when does it fall? Is it in one single moment, or will it be a progressive and multi-staged event? Revelation 18:10 might give us the impression that it is a single sudden event because of the use of the phrase *“in one hour.”* But consider the use of the same phrase, *“in one hour,”* in the context of the ten horns in Revelation 17:12. In the passage about the ten horns one hour is clearly an expression denoting that it will be for a short time. Consequently, the fall of Babylon could easily be an extended event played out at multiple levels.

Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry: “Woe! Woe to you, great city, you mighty city of Babylon! In one hour your doom has come!”
 – Revelation 18:10

The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast.
 – Revelation 17:12

When all these references are reviewed, it seems more likely that we are looking at a composite image with multiple levels—hence the mystery. Therefore, I want to keep an open mind about what I’m looking for, while considering the following possibilities:

- 1) Things that represent the spirit of Babylon in the world.
- 2) A large global “Babylon” government.
- 3) A false religious system, like Islam or apostate Christianity.
- 4) A specific city that is the focal point for the Beast’s rule.
- 5) Any city that exhibits the spirit of Babylon worldwide.
- 6) A world leader symbolized by the woman who rides the beast.

And finally, I think there is a very important warning for the saints to flee Babylon that is wrapped up in the description of its destruction. The problem is that the usefulness of the warning depends on our understanding of where Babylon is. How can we leave a place we can’t identify? If we look to Jeremiah, we see that John’s warning is a repetition of the same warning he made.

Then I heard another voice from heaven say: “Come out of her, my people,” so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues.
 – Revelation 18:4

Flee from Babylon! Run for your lives! Do not be destroyed because of her sins. It is time for the Lord's vengeance; he will repay her what she deserves.

Babylon was a gold cup in the Lord's hand; she made the whole earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; therefore they have now gone mad. Babylon will suddenly fall and be broken. Wail over her! Get balm for her pain; perhaps she can be healed.

We would have healed Babylon, but she cannot be healed; let us leave her and each go to our own land, for her judgment reaches to the skies, it rises as high as the heavens. — Jeremiah 51:6-9

If we are told to leave a place so that we will “*not share in her sins*” nor “*receive any of her plagues*,” then we should want to know where that is. Based on Revelation 16:19, I think that the title of Babylon can apply to any great collection of people where wickedness abounds. The Babylon spirit permeates our current age. Whether you agree with that or not, I would recommend that anyone living in the middle of a big city, unless they feel that God has specifically told them to stay there, should try to find a less populated place to live. If food and supplies get interrupted for an extended period, large cities are not going to be pleasant places to ride out the judgment that God is already starting to pour out on the earth.

Is America Babylon?

Some have suggested that America could be Mystery Babylon.³⁹³ I know of several people who were so convinced of it that they moved to Costa Rica or New Zealand, etc. The case is made by comparing the worst aspects of America to the description of

³⁹³ John Price. *The End of America: The Role of Islam in the End Times and Biblical Warnings to Flee America* (Christian House Publishers, 2009): 41-86.

Mystery Babylon, and by noting that America doesn't seem to be mentioned with a major role in the last days. The first problem with that reasoning, however, is that America is not the focus of the Bible, Israel is. Second, America didn't even exist as a nation in Bible times—so there is no historically traceable name for it in Scripture. Since all the nations of the earth will experience God's judgment (*Jeremiah 25:15-38*) and he will give them over to the power of the Antichrist for a time, it is logical to assume that America, like the other nations, may somehow be subdued. Nonetheless, there are numerous positive references that might allude to America.³⁹⁴ True, it is a sinful nation that has lived in wealth and luxury and promoted immorality around the world; but America is also the most influential Christian nation on earth. It is responsible for the majority of the humanitarian aid and financial support for evangelism worldwide. It's a terrible dichotomy (*James 3:10-12*), but it doesn't mean that America is the Babylon of the earth or that believers must flee from it to some other nation. On the contrary, America is very blessed. We must not squander the gifts God has given us (*Luke 12:48*). May America keep shining as a light to the nations (*Matthew 5:16*) for as long as God will allow.

From the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water? Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor can salt water produce fresh.

— James 3:10-12 NASB

³⁹⁴ Merchants of Tarshish (*Psalms 72:10, Isaiah 60:9*) and/or young lions (*Ezekiel 38:13*); Islands of the sea (*Isaiah 24:14-15, 51:5*); A great eagle (*Revelation 12:14*); Those from the West (*Hosea 11:10 and Isaiah 59:19*); The western coastlands or the ships of Kittim (*Daniel 11:30*).

From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.
 – Luke 12:48 NASB

Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.
 – Matthew 5:16 NASB

Hopefully, the discussion about Babylon the Great has given you some direction and a broader context for understanding it. Time will reveal the full mystery of how all these things will be fulfilled; until then, we should watch and pray for the wisdom to recognize it when God does bring these things to pass. [*May God guide those who need to leave a city, state, or country that is filled with the spirit of Babylon to find rest in greener pastures. Amen.*]

The Great Apostasy and False Teachings in the Church

One of the most disheartening signs a true Christian can watch for is the Great Apostasy. In fact, when I first began this section, I was planning to show that the apostasy was fast approaching; however, I was mistaken. It's already here. And unfortunately, the verses that warn us about false believers can also be misused by false believers and directed toward the true ones, which will help them “*to betray and hate each other.*” I think that this tells us that the apostate churches will support the antichrist government when it arrives and will assist in the persecution of the true saints. Remembering how some churches supported Hitler's government in Germany, I don't think that's too farfetched.³⁹⁵ Through the power of propaganda, people can be led to follow new doctrines, radically changing the direction of a group or nation.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁵ Eric Metaxas. *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, martyr, prophet, spy* (Thomas Nelson Inc, 2010).

³⁹⁶ Erwin W. Lutzer. *When A Nation Forgets God: 7 Lessons We Must Learn from Nazi Germany* (Moody Publishers, 2010): 75-95.

At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other. Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold.
 – **Matthew 24:10-12**

Jesus gave the first warnings about an apostasy in the last days, but the apostles also warned about this time. Paul specifically reminded the Thessalonian church, who were worried they had been “left behind,” that there were two signs that would precede the return of the Lord: 1) the Apostasy, and 2) the revelation of the Antichrist (remember the discussion on this is Chapter 6). Paul also warned Timothy that, in later times, people would be deceived by doctrines of demons and would abandon the faith.³⁹⁷ Sadly, we can now check the first box—the Apostasy has arrived. If you’re unsure about that, though, I highly recommend watching the documentaries *Enemies Within the Church*, which exposes the acceptance of woke ideology by many Evangelical leaders and core institutions, and *Wide is the Gate*, which exposes how the New Age movement and mysticism have infiltrated the church.³⁹⁸

¹Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to Him...³Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way. For that day will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.

– **2 Thessalonians 2:1a,3 HCSB**

³⁹⁷ Examples of this can be found in the lives of the many Christian pastors and leaders who have suddenly renounced their faith (for a specific instance, see www.foxnews.com/faitth-values/christian-author-joshua-harris-kissed-dating-goodbye-faitth), and in the growth of false teachings in the church, such as Christian mysticism, Contemplative Prayer, Liberation Theology, Progressive Christianity, Universalism, Replacement Theology, and the acceptance of homosexuality.

³⁹⁸ *Enemies Within: The Church* (2021), <https://enemieswithinthechurch.com>; *Wide is the Gate: The Emerging New Christianity, Vol. 1-3* (2012), <https://shop.wideisthegate.com/products/wide-is-the-gate-triple-vol-1-3-pack>

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.

– 1 Timothy 4:1

Another way believers have been placed on a path to depart the faith is through the acceptance of the demonic idea that spiritual growth must be achieved through ancient spiritual formation “disciplines.” The movement has been gaining huge numbers of followers within the church, and it embraces eastern meditative practices that are unbiblical and clearly derived from Buddhism, Hinduism, and mystic Catholic practices.³⁹⁹ Even the proponents of these methods admit that they can lead to contact with demonic spirits and so “prayers of protection” should be made at the beginning.⁴⁰⁰ And yet, they still hold that these “ancient practices,” which were used by monks and mystics, can be redeemed, and will lead people into a deeper and more meaningful connection with God. The movement has advanced rapidly in evangelical circles over the past ten years and their “disciplines” are being passed off as sound Christian practices. Bible college and seminary students in many schools are now being taught repetitive “breath prayers,” to subjectively “experience” God’s Word with the process of “Lectio Divina,” and to seek God in silence by emptying oneself, rather than in heartfelt prayer.

We are also warned that scoffers will be a part of the apostasy and that they will cause divisions. They will follow their own desires and instincts, and they will not have the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit, we can’t understand the things of God. And in their

³⁹⁹ Robert Yungen. *A Time of Departing: How ancient mystical practices are uniting Christians with the world’s religions*, 2nd ed. (Lighthouse Trails Publishing, 2020).

⁴⁰⁰ “Contemplative Prayer,” *Berean Research*, <https://bereanresearch.org/contemplative-prayer/>; “When Study Isn’t Study,” *Grace to You*, September 24, 2012, www.gty.org/library/blog/B120924/; “Dr. Gary Gilley on the Dangers of Spiritual Formation,” *The Narrowing Path*, July 14, 2013, <https://thenarrowingpath.com/2013/07/14/dr-gary-gilley-on-the-dangers-of-spiritual-formation/>

pride, they will scoff at what they do not understand. Otherwise, they might humble themselves and become teachable, as little children (*Matthew 18:3*), leading to repentance and faith.

Yet these people slander whatever they do not understand, and the very things they do understand by instinct—as irrational animals do—will destroy them.
 – **Jude 1:10**

But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, “In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.” These are the people who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.
 – **Jude 1:17-19**

The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.
 – **1 Corinthians 2:14**

Being a divisive person is clearly not a good thing. They stir up disagreements that separate people into opposing groups. Paul strictly cautioned Titus about this.

Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them.
 – **Titus 3:10**

Concerning people who were among the people of God, and yet remained unsaved. Jude called them blemishes, clouds without rain, uprooted trees, twice dead, wild waves, and wandering stars! And what were they missing? True repentance.

These people are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm—shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted—twice dead. They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever. – Jude 1:12-13

Jesus told several parables that described these apostate believers as well. In one, Jesus talked about a farmer who sowed good seed in his field, but at night an enemy came and scattered weeds (tares) among the wheat (*Matthew 13:24-30*). Rather than rip out the weeds, the owner of the field told the servants to leave them among the wheat, lest they accidentally uproot some of the good wheat. Instead, the owner promised to separate them at the end after the harvest. This means there will be unsaved among the truly saved all the way to the end. As Jude warns we must “*contend earnestly for the faith*” (*Jude 1:3*), and remain true to the gospel, utterly rejecting false gospels as accursed (*Galatians 1:8*). And yet, false teachers continue to call for the gospel to be changed.⁴⁰¹

But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!
– **Galatians 1:8**

We also see a vision of the future apostasy in the letter to the church of Laodicea (*Revelation 3:14-22*). John describes the lukewarm believers there, and he gives the terrifying warning that God is about to spit them out of his mouth (v. 16). They are hanging out in the church of God, but they haven’t let Jesus in. They have not responded to the truths they’ve heard, which is

⁴⁰¹ John S. Spong. *Why Christianity Must Change or Die: a bishop speaks to believers in exile; a new reformation of the church's faith and practice* (San Francisco: Harper, 1998).

why they are lukewarm (v. 15-16). They know enough to be comfortable and feel like they do not need a thing; but they do not know that their sins lie uncovered (v. 17). They have been lulled into a false sense of security, and they are blind to it (v. 18). They are on their way to destruction. There is only one hope for them, or anyone, (v. 19) *“Be zealous and repent!”*

¹⁴ *“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Origin of the creation of God, says this: ¹⁵ ‘I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will vomit you out of My mouth. ¹⁷ Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have no need of anything,” and you do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked, ¹⁸ I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to apply to your eyes so that you may see. ¹⁹ Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.* — **Revelation 3:14-19**

Alas, that is not what will happen in the case of many. Instead of hearing *“what the spirit says to the churches,”* they will *“proceed from bad to worse.”* These last days apostates will find the wrong kind of zealousness. Not only will they be deceived, but they will actively attempt to convert others into their same way of thinking. This is exactly what has been going on in many churches and seminaries around the country.

But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. — **2 Timothy 3:13 NASB**

These are sober warnings, and they help us recognize another strong sign that we have reached the last days. The news seems to be ever replete with stories of the fall of ministries and faith leaders. As the divide between the wheat and tares increases, we need to be on watch for the bridegroom, so that we will be found to be wise virgins who have trimmed their wicks and brought an extra supply of oil (*Matthew 25:1-13*). Let us examine ourselves and purify our hearts to make sure we are walking in true faith.

Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.— **James 4:8**

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves.
— **2 Corinthians 13:5a**

But some will not return to the Lord. They will not repent or trim the wicks of their lamps. Instead, they will follow deceiving spirits and will depart from the faith (*1 Timothy 4:1*). John tells us that the falling away of believers in the last hour will be associated with the arrival of the Antichrist (*1 John 2:18-19*), who will bring this present apostasy to a full boil. Because John mentions the Antichrist together with those who “*went out from us,*” we can infer that the Antichrist will draw false believers to himself.

Children, it is the last hour. And as you have heard, “Antichrist is coming,” even now many antichrists have come. We know from this that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they did not belong to us; for if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. However, they went out so that it might be made clear that none of them belongs to us.
— **1 John 2:18-19 HCSB**



Photo of the author at Petra, Jordan on October 4, 2017.

12

DON'T WORRY, HE'S GOT THIS

AS WE STAND HERE NOW, facing the culmination of all God's redemptive work, it would be natural to feel a little worried or anxious about what will happen next. In fact, it might be easy to charge off and start joining the preppers and doomsdayers, building underground bunkers and preparing for the worst. But this is not the time to be afraid; it is the time to lift our eyes toward the heavens in eager anticipation of our Lord's return, committed to persevere until he comes.

Standing in the Storm

We have been warned that all these things must take place. Let us prepare our hearts and minds for enduring whatever trials God may set before us, knowing that light and momentary afflictions (*2 Corinthians 4:17*) are nothing to be compared to the glory that will be revealed at Christ's return (*Romans 8:18*). Not only that, but what can man do to us (*Psalms 56:4*)? Not one hair of our heads will perish (*Luke 21:18*). We cannot fear man, the Antichrist, or even Satan and his minions; but we do fear God,

and if God is for us, who can be against us (*Romans 8:31*)? And who will be able to stand firm in the face of God's coming wrath (*Revelation 6:17*)? Only the righteous, by faith, who God empowers to stand during the evil day (*Ephesians 6:13*), enduring all trials, for the Lord is able to make us stand (*Jude 1:24-25 & Romans 14:4*).

For our momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison. – 2 Corinthians 4:17 NASB

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

– Romans 8:18 NASB

In God, whose word I praise, in God I have put my trust; I shall not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me? – Psalm 56:4 NASB

And yet not a hair of your head will perish. – Luke 21:18 NASB

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

– Romans 8:31 NASB

For the great day of Their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?

– Revelation 6:17 NASB

Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

– Ephesians 6:13 NASB

And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

– Romans 14:4b NASB

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

— **Jude 1:24-25** NASB

Living Without Worry

In these increasingly tumultuous times, we need to remember a lesson that Jesus taught in Luke 12:22-40 about not worrying. I think his words apply in every situation, but especially to the last days. If you've found yourself spending a lot of time and effort trying to prepare for any of the troubles that look like they are hanging out there on the horizon, then I hope you will find some wisdom and comfort here for these days to help steady you.

Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?"

— **Luke 12:22-26**

In this first part of the passage, we read very clearly that not only are we not to worry about food and clothing, but we should also not even worry about our very lives! Jesus tells us we cannot even add a single hour to our lives. But do we believe that? Do we live like that and make decisions that demonstrate that faith? Or do we take worldly advice and make our decisions based on it, like the rest of those who have no hope (*1 Thessalonians 4:13*)?

“Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.”

– Luke 12:27-31

In the next part of the passage, we also find Jesus assuring us that it is not through our own efforts that we will receive the things that we need. Instead, if we will trust and serve him, then God will provide them. This then begs two questions: Are we living a life of worry? Are we currently putting our main efforts where they should be? Our labors should be directed toward serving God and his kingdom, but they can easily shift to simply trying to provide for ourselves and/or prevent any possibility of disaster from harming us. When we worry like that, we are wasting energy and resources that could be put to better use. Let us trust God then with all that he has given us, and let us be found to be good stewards of his gifts when he returns.

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

– Luke 12:32-34

When times get hard, it is only natural to begin hoarding resources for ourselves and our families. But is that what Jesus is

instructing us to do? No, instead he is calling for us to continue to be generous, even in the face of fear. And he promises that he will reward us for it. Also, what makes you think you're going to be able to hold on to and protect your things in the face of the lawlessness and destruction of the last days, anyway?

“Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the middle of the night or toward daybreak. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”

— **Luke 12:35-40**

And more than this, we have the encouragement of David in the Psalms to not be afraid, even when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death. Do we think that doesn't look forward to and include the great tribulation?

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me.

— **Psalms 23:4 NKJV**

But Psalm 23 doesn't give us the only hopeful verses in the Psalms. In fact, one of the most powerful visions of believers walking through days of the Lord's judgment on the earth comes from Psalm 91. God promises to be our shelter (v. 1) and our

fortress (v. 2). He will save us from the deadly pestilence (v. 3), and he will be our shield (v. 4). God tells us not to fear the terror of the night (v. 5), or any plague or pestilence (v. 6). He even tells us not to worry if a thousand die near us, even ten thousand, right by our side, because the disaster will not come near us (v. 7). We will see the punishment of the wicked (v. 8), but if the Lord is our refuge (v. 9), no harm will come to us (v. 10). Why not? Because, while God may have removed his restraining hand over the world, his angels will still be guarding us (v. 11) and protecting us (v. 12). We will overcome the evil one (v. 13) and God will deliver us (v. 14). We will call on Him in our day of trouble and he will answer us (v. 15), and we will see the Lord's salvation (v. 16).

¹Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. ²I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." ³Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. ⁴He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. ⁵You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, ⁶nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. ⁷A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. ⁸You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. ⁹If you say, "The Lord is my refuge," and you make the Most High your dwelling, ¹⁰no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. ¹¹For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; ¹²they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. ¹³You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample

the great lion and the serpent. ¹⁴“Because he loves me,” says the Lord, “I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. ¹⁵He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. ¹⁶With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.” – **Psalm 91:1-16**

Let us face these days of turmoil and uncertainty with confidence and courage—like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who refused to bow down to the statue King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, no matter the consequences. Let us trust the Lord with our possessions and remain generous with those less fortunate. Let us be watchful and ready for our Lord’s return so that we will not be caught unaware and unprepared. Let us not worry. And now that we have seen that all these things are taking place, we must wake up from our slumber, stand up, and lift up our heads—our redemption is drawing near!

When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near. – **Luke 21:28**

Do Not Love the World

We must also especially be on guard in these last days to put our hope in the things to come, not in the things of this world. This world is passing away. Rather than focusing on trying to squeeze in one more ride on the Ferris wheel before the King returns, we need to be diligently getting ready for his arrival.

Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever. — 1 John 2:15-17 NASB

In some ways, this present life is like playing a game of Monopoly. It really doesn't matter whether we were able to finish putting a hotel on Park Place, or if we were able to collect all four railroads. Our holdings or position in this life have nothing to do with our position and status in the age to come. The more we see the financial assets we have as Monopoly money, and our property as plastic houses and paper cards, the easier it will be to turn our attention away from our things and toward the one who has given us everything. In these last days, the love of money, and its associated comforts and pleasures, will be a trap that will cause people to experience many griefs. May we be wise and generous with all that God has given us. May we not be like Demas, who deserted Paul because he "*loved this present age*" (2 Timothy 4:10 NET).

For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. — 1 Timothy 6:10 NASB

Faithful and Wise Servant

As we enter these last days, it is important for us to be found faithfully discharging the duties God has given us. Now is the time to get up and trim our lamps so that we will be ready for the bridegroom's arrival (Matthew 25:6-7). God has gifted all of us in special ways to serve others. May God help us all to be faithful stewards of his grace, now and in the times of trial.

"Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their

food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. – **Matthew 24:45-46**

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

– **1 Peter 4:10**

May God give you wisdom and insight to understand all these things, and to know what God is leading you to do in the days ahead. We are witnessing the end. More than ever, we need to spend time listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit, who teaches, guides, and directs us. All true wisdom and understanding comes from God. Let us not forget to ask him, because we are all sorely lacking wisdom for navigating these unprecedented days.

Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.

– **2 Timothy 2:7**

Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

– **Isaiah 30:21**

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

– **James 1:5**

Maranatha!

I firmly believe that this is it; we've reached the end. Think about all the signs that we have gone over in the past eight chapters. How much more would you like to see to be sure that the final week of Daniel's seventy weeks has arrived? Two thousand years ago, people saw with their own eyes that Jesus was performing

signs and wonders, and yet many, including the Pharisees and teachers of the law still didn't believe that he was the Messiah. But there were some who did believe, and they wisely asked a very simple question, "*When the Messiah comes, will he perform more signs than this man?*" (John 7:31). So, I ask you to seriously consider what's been presented here and to think about this question: **When the time for Jesus to return has truly arrived, will there be even more signs than all these?** I think not.

And because of these great and precious promises, I want to end this on a hopeful note. I'm excited about these events. I'm excited to see God's Word happening before my eyes and that my King is coming! I'm excited that "*after the tribulation of those days,*" (Matthew 24:29) he is coming on the clouds with power and glory to get me. I hope he is coming to get you, too, because he will come to get everyone who believes in his name and follows Him. And because we have this hope, we should be zealous about readying our hearts to meet the Lord. We must purify ourselves and "*throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles*" so that we can finish the race that has been marked out for us. You were born for such a time as this. We who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord have the special honor of seeing our faith made sight. And because we have this hope, we must purify ourselves (trim our wicks) so that we will be ready with our lamps burning brightly when he arrives.

But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

– 1 John 3:2b-3

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race

marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. – Hebrews 12:1-3

How Can I Be Saved?

Is Jesus Christ your Lord and Savior? If not, now is a very good time to start—Today is the day of salvation. Do not harden your heart against God, but know that he loves you and will turn no one away who calls on Him.

“Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.”

– Hebrews 4:7b

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

– Romans 3:23 NASB

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

– Romans 5:8 NASB

For the wages of sin is death, but the gracious gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

– Romans 6:23 NASB

“What must I do to inherit Eternal life?”

— Mark 10:17b (emphasis added)

If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture

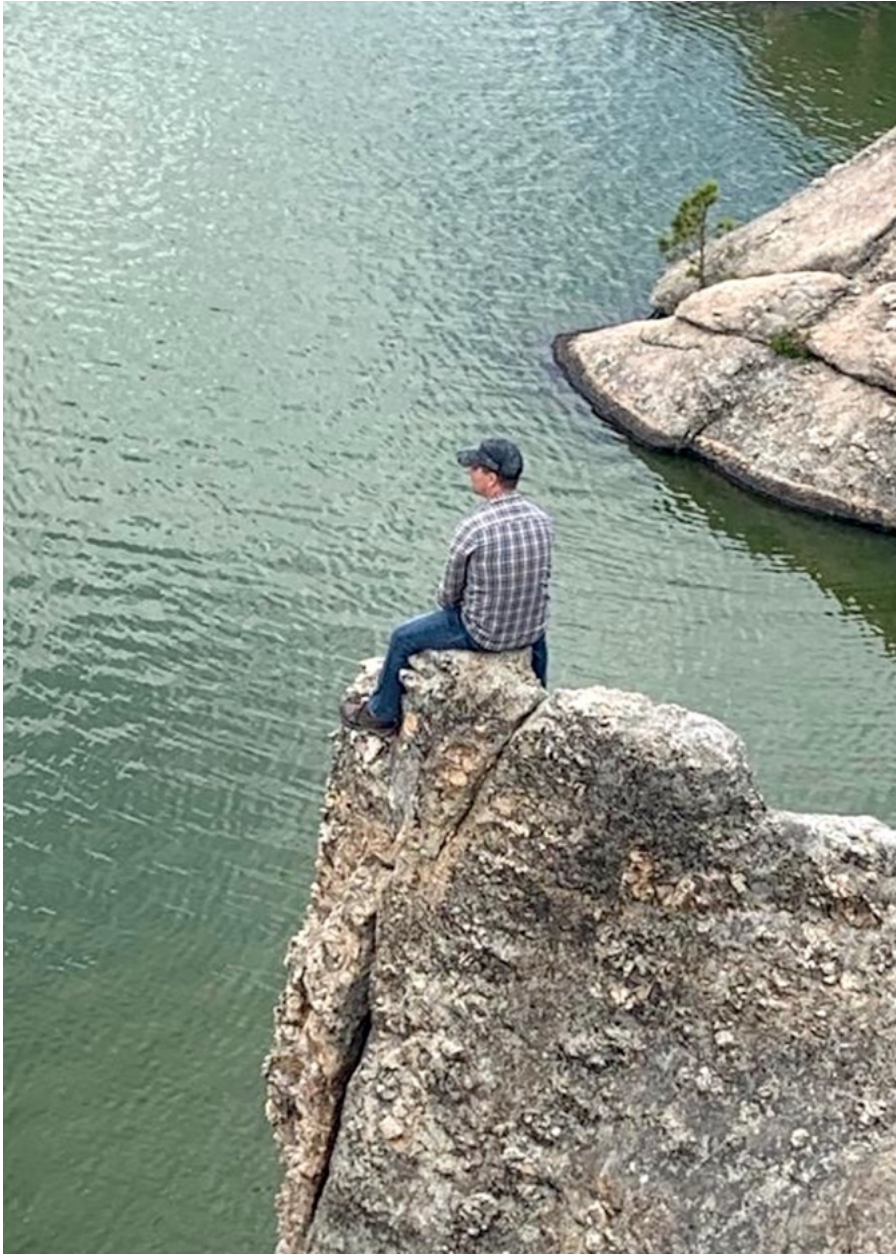
says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”— **Romans 10:9-13**

I urge you to pray in your heart to God and cry out for his help, his love, and his forgiveness. Choose to follow him by reading the Bible and obeying his commandments and teachings. God promises that if we do, his Spirit will immediately begin living inside us, changing our hearts and minds so that we will start to hunger for the truths and ways of God. His Spirit gives us the ability to turn from our sin and obey him. His word, the Bible, teaches us everything we need to know about how to live a godly life. If you’ve made the decision to follow him, know that you have now been adopted as a child of God (*Galatians 4:4-6*), and he will not leave you as an orphan (*John 14:18*). In fact, he’s promised that he’ll be coming very soon (*Revelation 22:7*).

Maranatha!



SOLI DEO GLORIA



Like a Watchman, photo of the author taken at Sylvan Lake, SD on August 4, 2020.

EPILOGUE

CONGRATULATIONS, YOU MADE IT to the end of the book! You understand the gravity of the evidence that has been presented here and are ready to start sharing this information. That is awesome, because the hour is truly late, and people need to be warned. However, you may also find that some are not ready to hear about this kind of evidence. A natural response, when people are faced with truths that they aren't ready to accept, is to look for a way to deny them. We see this response from Porcius Festus, the Roman procurator who took Paul to plead his case before King Agrippa. Paul told them his testimony, and he explained why the Jewish leaders were accusing him. But then Paul started to talk about the Messiah and the fulfillment of prophecy. Uh oh! He pronounced that Jesus of Nazareth, the one crucified by the Romans, was not only the Messiah, but that he had also risen from the dead. And Jesus wasn't just for Jews, he was a light to the Gentiles, too. Paul took them from the theoretical to the practical... and they weren't ready for it.

“But God has helped me to this very day; so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen—that the Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles.”

– Acts 26:22-23

As we see, it wasn't the recitation of what the prophets had declared that pricked Festus. It was the declaration that current events, which had happened before their very eyes, were fulfilling them. Paul was calling them to account for what they had witnessed, and Festus didn't like it.

At this point Festus interrupted Paul's defense. "You are out of your mind, Paul!" he shouted. "Your great learning is driving you insane."

"I am not insane, most excellent Festus," Paul replied. "What I am saying is true and reasonable. The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do."

– Acts 26:24-27

After the incredulity of Festus and his accusing Paul of being insane, Paul answered him plainly, with a resolute but gentle reply, *"I am not insane, most excellent Festus. What I am saying is true and reasonable."* Paul then turned his attention back to King Agrippa and tried to get him to connect the dots between what the prophets had written and what had happened publicly. Paul knew that both King Agrippa and Festus would be aware of them since they were not *"done in a corner."* The parallels between how people faced those days of prophetic fulfillment in the first century and how people are responding to prophecy today should be unmistakable. Not everyone will be able to accept that the things that have been happening in the world around us are in such perfect alignment with God's prophetic word. There have been so many failed attempts in the past to connect real events with what God has divinely ordained in the Bible that such modern prognostication has been deemed unreliable, even by many Christians. But this is what Paul warned us would happen in

the last days. He said that people would scoff at the idea that the return of the Lord could be near—so we should expect this too.

Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

– 2 Peter 3:3-7

Knowing this, I’ve included just over four hundred footnotes to provide deeper explanations and source documents so you can verify everything I’ve been saying here—and so that you will know where to go for additional resources to support deep discussions with your family and friends. Knowing what you now know, it’s important to share this information with as many people as you can.

A Watchman on the Wall

Hosea tells us about a situation similar to Paul’s interview with Festus and Agrippa. He compared the prophet to a watchman and said that “*the prophet is considered a fool, the inspired person a maniac*” when the sins of the people are great. That describes Festus’ response to Paul when he shared that Jesus was the fulfillment of all the messianic prophecies. Because of their sin and hardness of heart, neither Festus nor Agrippa were ready to hear about how God had fulfilled his Word in their sight.

The days of punishment are coming, the days of reckoning are at hand. Let Israel know this. Because your sins are so many and your hostility so great, the prophet is considered a fool, the inspired person a maniac. The prophet, along with my God, is the watchman over Ephraim, yet snares await him on all his paths, and hostility in the house of his God.

– Hosea 9:7-8

The job of the watchman on the wall is to warn the people within the city before the enemy arrives at the gates. Once the enemy is at the gates, anyone can see it, but the people will no longer have any time to prepare for the siege. The watchman analogy is a good one for someone that God has called to stay vigilant regarding prophetic fulfillments.

“Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the people of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me.” – Ezekiel 33:7

Not everyone is called to be a watchman in the same way, but as believers, we are all called to give a warning to those who are under threat of perishing. God even goes so far as to warn the watchmen that if they do not sound a warning when they see “*a sword coming against the land,*” then he will hold them accountable for the blood of the people that they didn’t warn but should have. So let us be faithful to speak the truths of the Lord to those that need to hear them.

The word of the Lord came to me: “Son of man, speak to your people and say to them: ‘When I bring the sword against a land, and the people of the land choose one of their men and make him their watchman, and he sees the sword coming against the land and blows the trumpet to warn the people, then if anyone hears the trumpet but does not heed the warning and the sword comes

and takes their life, their blood will be on their own head. Since they heard the sound of the trumpet but did not heed the warning, their blood will be on their own head. If they had heeded the warning, they would have saved themselves. But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet to warn the people and the sword comes and takes someone's life, that person's life will be taken because of their sin, but I will hold the watchman accountable for their blood.”

– Ezekiel 33:1-6

What If This Isn't Really the End?

The glory for all this work belongs to God, but the criticisms I humbly accept for myself. I have done my utmost to present this work of practical eschatology as faithfully and reliably as I can, like an offering without defect or blemish (*Leviticus 22:21*). The preponderance of evidence that God is fulfilling his Word and setting the stage for Christ's soon return is overwhelming, and it is far more evidence than any previous Christian generation has ever seen. The wise response is to get ready, because “*the prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty (Proverbs 22:3)*.” Even if there is more time left than I'm thinking, the evidence is telling us that we are at another paradigm shift in human history—another “Tower of Babel” moment is upon us. And this time, I don't expect that God will just scatter us again and let us try once more for another few thousand years. But I can't promise that you won't be reading this in 2028; however, if you are, then let the record show that all these things were true and yet it was not the end. But even if that is the case, it will simply prove the admonitions of Solomon, who reminds us in Ecclesiastes that no one, except God, truly knows the future.

Surely no one knows the future, and no one can tell another person what will happen.

– Ecclesiastes 8:7 NET

When I tried to gain wisdom and to observe the activity on earth—even though it prevents anyone from sleeping day or night—then I discerned all that God has done: No one really comprehends what happens on earth. Despite all human efforts to discover it, no one can ever grasp it. Even if a wise person claimed that he understood, he would not really comprehend it.

— Ecclesiastes 8:16-17 NET

That is why I have tried to carefully separate what has actually happened from what I think may happen next. Solomon is right. We don't know the future. We can't know exactly how God is going to fulfill the things that haven't happened yet. But we can see the signs and get ready, saying "*But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*" (*Joshua 24:15*). And knowing the hour is late, we can be ready and standing at the door when he comes (*Luke 12:35-38*). This is the proper expression of the Doctrine of Imminency—to recognize that we must always be ready for his return because we can't have a perfect understanding of all the things we've been told to watch for. Therefore, we watch... and we stay ready. So even if I'm wrong in my conclusions regarding what is coming next, I will still say that it was right to take the chance to share this, knowing what I know now. Because the only choice is, to share or not to share—*that is the question!* And I strongly feel this was worth the risk. Consider, too, the words of Teddy Roosevelt, who knew what it is to brave great things while risking the possibility of a great failure. In his famous quote, often titled, "The Man in the Arena," there is the lesson that it is better to try and fail than to do nothing. And while his faith in God was not well-known, it was a firm foundation in his life.⁴⁰²

⁴⁰² Thomas Kidd. "Lessons from the Faith of Theodore Roosevelt on the Centennial of His Death." *The Gospel Coalition*, January 6, 2019, www.thegospel-coalition.org/blogs/evangelical-history/lessons-faith-theodore-roosevelt-centennial-death/

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat. – **Theodore Roosevelt**⁴⁰³

And if you think about it, the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30 teaches us a similar concept. To the servant who was afraid and hid his talent in the ground, his master called him a wicked and lazy slave. Then the master took away the talent the slave had been given and had him thrown out into the outer darkness. God has not given us his light, gifts, strength, and wisdom for us to sit on the sidelines—burying his talents in the sand while we wait for his return. Indeed, he expects us to use his talents to advance the kingdom of God. [*May God help us all to be brave for the sake of the gospel, using our gifts and living by faith, in the days ahead. Amen.*]

⁴⁰³ Theodore Roosevelt. “Citizenship in a Republic.” Speech at the Sorbonne in Paris, April 23, 1910, www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Learn-About-TR/TR-Encyclopedia/Culture-and-Society/Man-in-the-Arena.aspx



Witnessing the End by Christian Widener, c. 2019.

AFTERWORD

MY PERSONAL JOURNEY TO RELEASE THIS BOOK began in 2008. I was studying end times prophecy and researching what was needed before the Jews in Israel could begin rebuilding a temple and restoring sacrifices. That research eventually led to my first book, *The Temple Revealed*, but early in the process, I made an amazing discovery. The city of Jerusalem and its walls had been rebuilt a second time in the period from 1537 to 1541 by Sultan Suleiman I, which I assumed must have been initiated by a decree. And I reasoned that the decree could have even been issued up to two years before the actual construction began. That gave me a window from 1535 to 1538 for a decree. I also understood that it was commonly taught that the decree in Daniel should be counted with a 360-day year (not 365), which equates to 476.4 years instead of 483 years (six sevens and sixty-two sevens). That gave me an early date range of 2011 to 2014. It was a compelling possibility, but what happened in those days? *Nothing*.

I knew it could also be a 365-day year, which would give a date range of 2018 to 2021, but I wasn't sure if it could be a 360-day year the first time and then a 365-day year the second time, or just a 365-day year both times. Without the ability to fully substantiate the date of the decree or the proper method of counting years at that point, I didn't feel like it was the right time to try and publish my findings—especially for such a potentially controversial new take on Daniel 9—and I had no writing platform to launch from anyway. I just shared the idea with friends and family over the years as we talked about the possibility of being in the end times, and I kept watching and working out the details. Then my life got crazy busy with work, and I set it all to the side for a few years.

However, in April of 2019, I felt that God was speaking to my heart and telling me to write *The Temple Revealed*, and I got to work on it right away. By October of 2019 I had a first draft. Then 2020 happened. The world fell apart, peace treaties were made, and globally, it was obvious that something had changed. And then I finally found a book on the Ottoman Inscriptions in Jerusalem, and it was available in English. In the book, I found decrees at a plaza and a moat that were carved in stone, and a date, the beginning of January 1537. Then I started sharing the idea with friends and family. I got some great questions and directions to go to strengthen my case, but I also felt that it was just too early for most people. Plus, I still had my temple book to get published, which finally happened on October 9th, 2020, and afterwards I went into book publishing mode.

But the fire in my belly to release these findings wouldn't go away. I was pretty sure that God was calling me to write a prophecy book that included the Daniel 9 findings, but I kept feeling like he was telling me, "Not yet." Then in the Fall of 2021, the dam broke. It was time to write. Like the Israelites who were stirred in their hearts to bring gifts for the tabernacle of God at

Mount Sinai, I just knew in my heart that God was calling me to do this.

Everyone whose heart was moved and whose spirit prompted him came and brought an offering to the Lord. . . . – Exodus 35:21a HCSB

The first draft only took about three months, because I realized I had already been writing bits and pieces of it for the past two years. Editing, cover design, and typesetting took almost twice that. I owe a big thanks to my wife and parents for helping me with the first round of edits; to Mary Caudle and Caroline Limbaugh for proofreading the manuscript; to my sister Adrielle for her help with questions over Arabic; to Pastor Derek Walker, Oxford Bible Church, for his critical review which contributed to a revision of my view on the three days and three nights of Christ's death and burial; and to my daughter Elena for the amazing illustrations she contributed. Now that the book is out, I pray that God will use it to warn and equip his church for what lies ahead. Because of the timeliness of these events, the 2020-2027 window is even now being tested. We won't know for certain if all these things really mean we are at the end until we get there, but I wouldn't be much of a watchman if I waited until the enemy was at the gates to sound the alarm.

Already, I feel that I may have waited too long to publish these things, but I trust that God was indeed holding me back from releasing this earlier. Therefore, I don't believe it's late, but rather that it is coming at the appointed time. In the book's subtitle, it says, "*Daniel's Seventy Weeks and the Final Decree Everyone Missed*," but there were a few people out there that started catching on to this idea and tried to make people aware of it.⁴⁰⁴ There can be no

⁴⁰⁴ "A Mirroring of Daniel's 70 Weeks." March 11, 2011, <http://watchfortheday.org/70weeksrepeat.html> ; Speaking Truth in Love. "PROPHECY ALERT! Does 2020 begin Daniels 70th week," *YouTube*, December 1, 2019,

monopoly on truth, and I find it encouraging that God works through all of us in different ways and at different times.

By waiting this long, though, I think the world has reached the point that I can call someone else to the wall and ask them to gaze out into the mist and the distance and tell me if they too see the approaching enemy, and they will say, “Yes! Sound the alarm!” Had I called too soon, I’m afraid they would have come to the wall, gazed out into the mist, and seeing nothing, would have pronounced me a fool and gone back to bed. Similarly, it is like we have all been waiting for a very special delivery. Even though past expectations for its arrival have been disappointed many times, we know with absolute certainty that someday our Lord will come. His arrival cannot be delayed or canceled, but it can be missed. So, we keep watching, and after nearly two millennia, we again see signs of his return on the horizon. We can’t help but hope for the confirmation that he is indeed coming and will bring with Him the long-awaited pearl of great price (*Matthew 13:45-46*). Rest assured that God will fulfill his Word exactly as he has declared and planned, from before the foundation of the world, at exactly the right time.

Are we now truly witnessing the end—when the Lord will finally return to restore all things? I think so, but even if he does not come at this time, I will still be waiting and watching, because his return cannot be delayed or canceled. Indeed, he is coming soon (*Revelation 22:7*).

“And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.” – **Revelation 22:7** *ESV*

<https://youtu.be/8PBCqIGNe9Q> ; Doug. “Daniel’s 70th Week & Fig Tree Generation—Is Our Time Running Out?” Blog, July 30, 2020, <https://wickedprepping.com/daniels-70th-week-fig-tree-generation-is-our-time-running-out/>; T.W. Tramm. *Summer Is Near: Why 2021 Could Be a Pivotal Year in Bible Prophecy* (Lulu, 2021).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DR. CHRISTIAN WIDENER IS A BIBLICAL SCHOLAR, researcher, and engineer. He is the author of *The Temple Revealed: The True Location of the Jewish Temple Hidden in Plain Sight*. His interest in Bible prophecy and biblical archaeology stems from a passion for apologetics and the reliability of the literal and historic accounts of the Bible, as well as its prophetic predictions for the coming tribulation, the last-days temple, and the return of Jesus Christ to bring “*all things in heaven and on earth together under one head*” (*Ephesians 1:10*). While the Scriptures include many things that may be hard to believe or understand, Dr. Widener believes that the Bible is trustworthy, and that it can be tested scientifically and reasoned out logically, providing one separates facts from their interpretations. He believes that the Bible—not external sources or modern secular speculations based on naturalistic assumptions—is the preeminent testimony about the past.

Dr. Widener has a PhD in mechanical engineering, with an emphasis in materials and manufacturing from Wichita State University and was a tenured associate professor at the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology. In his professional career, he was a successful entrepreneur and an internationally recognized expert in the fields of solid-state metals deposition and processing, additive manufacturing, and repair.

He now writes and blogs full-time about Bible prophecy, biblical archaeology, and the scientific defense of the Scriptures. He is the founder and manager of End Times Berean, LLC. You can follow him at his website (www.endtimesberean.com), Facebook (@christianwidenerphd), Twitter (@Dr_C_Widener), or check out his newsletter, *The End Times Berean Watchman Report* (www.getrevue.co/profile/dr_c_widener).

Christian lives in the Black Hills of South Dakota, with his wife and their four children.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY

HOW CAN YOU TAKE ACTION RIGHT NOW? Help warn people, get connected, and stay ahead by:

1. **TELL OTHERS** about this book and how late the hour really is so that they can get ready for the return of Christ
2. **LEAVE A REVIEW ON AMAZON** or any of my social media & tell others how you've been impacted by this book
3. **FOLLOW MY BLOG** and find out the latest updates at my website: EndTimesBerean.com
4. **SIGN UP FOR MY NEWSLETTER:** the *End Times Berean Watchman Report* for up-to-date analysis of current events. — https://www.getrevue.co/profile/dr_c_widener
5. **PICK UP A COPY** of my first book, *The Temple Revealed*
6. **EMAIL ME** at: Christian@EndTimesBerean.com
7. **WATCH FOR UPDATES** on my next book: *Finding Solomon: Rediscovering the Works of Israel's Greatest Builder*. (The building projects of Solomon are real and still exist today—they were just mislabeled and lost. It's time to find them again...)

Thank you for reading my book! I hope you have extra oil ready, and the wick of your lamp trimmed, because the bridegroom is coming soon! Maranatha!

— CHRISTIAN WIDENER



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The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails—given by one shepherd.

Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them.

Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body.

Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter:

Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind.

– Ecclesiastes 12:11-13 (emphasis added)

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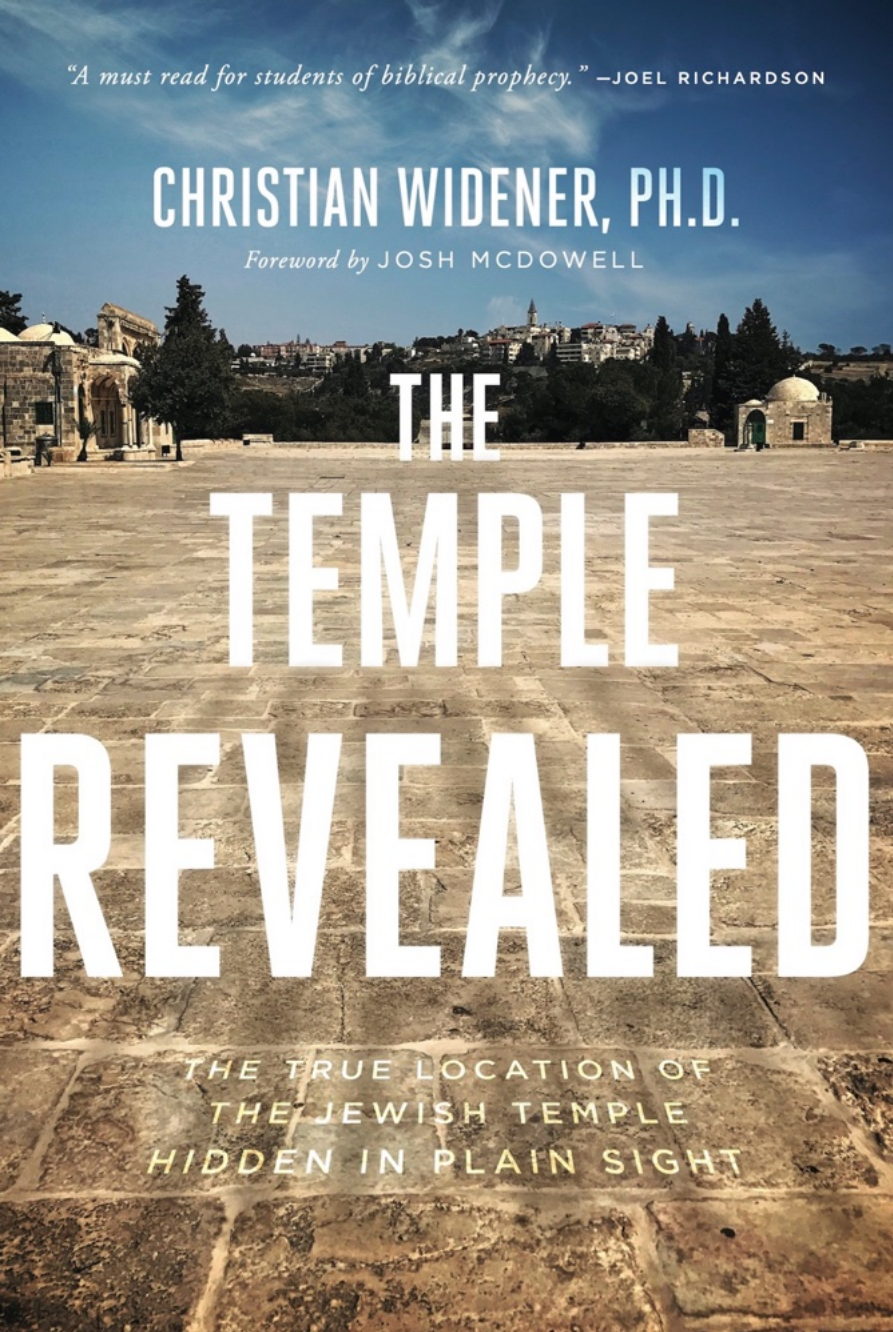
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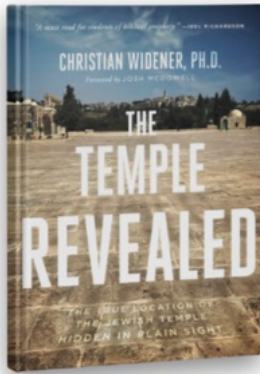
CHRISTIAN WIDENER, PH.D.

Foreword by JOSH MCDOWELL



THE
TEMPLE
REVEALED

THE TRUE LOCATION OF
THE JEWISH TEMPLE
HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT



Everyone Interested
In The Temple Mount Needs To Take This
Study Seriously.



Wow! This Really
Is Excellent Work.
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Me Convinced,
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THE TEMPLE REVEALED

For Truth Seeking
Dot-Connectors,
Looking To Solve An
Ancient Mystery

*Learn How An Engineers Crumbling Faith In
The Scholars Was Used To*

**Uncover The "Prophetic" Secret
To Unraveling 3,000 Years Of
Temple Mount History,
By Exposing Two Hidden
Landmarks...**

Easy To Follow With Clear Photos

- ✓ The "living waters" mistake you don't know you're making
- ✓ Where to build the new temple without disturbing the "Dome of the rock"
- ✓ Why biased researchers just won't change their minds
- ✓ What all doubters should know about the exposed bedrock
- ✓ How we know the Golden Gate is a true landmark from the temple

Rethink Your Interpretation

- ✓ Basic mistakes even smart researchers make
- ✓ Don't believe what you've been told about the Gihon Springs
- ✓ Where evidence for the first Temple is and how to get it
- ✓ For people who want to learn about the Temple but don't know where to get started

