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Christ's Imminent Return: A Study of End-Times Prophecies and the Timeline of Events

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## Prophetic Timeline Analysis: A Study of End-Times Prophecies and the Timeline of Events

### Introduction

#### Overview and Approach

This is an analysis of the end-times prophecies in the Bible. While this centers primarily on the book of Revelation, supporting scripture from Ezekiel, Matthew, Daniel, and other books in the Bible are used to validate the assertions that are made. Fulfilled prophetic events are also used where applicable to help orient the timeline for future and yet unfulfilled events. When interpreting scripture, especially prophetic scripture, prayerful consideration must be taken to assure that the assertions made are sound, such that not only is scripture interpreted correctly, but that the logic used to correlate scripture with scripture is equally valid. To this end, a literal approach to interpreting scripture is employed unless obvious symbolism is being used.

The approach used was to develop the prophetic timeline based solely on the interpretation of scripture. Commentaries and other outside sources were used during the initial development of the prophetic timeline when interpretation was unclear. The purpose of this approach was to reduce to the extent possible the bias of “conventional wisdom” so that a fresh look at scripture is presented. Once the initial prophetic timeline was developed, additional source material was consulted to either bolster or refute the proposed timeline. In the areas where there was disagreement, the scriptural references were used to reconcile the timeline such that the final timeline, as presented, represents a unified scriptural interpretation.

The seven-year tribulation period is broken up into two three-and-a-half year periods. For clarity, the entire seven-year period will be referenced as the tribulation period. The first three-and-a-half-year period will be referenced as the Tribulation and the second three-and-a-half-year period will be referenced as the Great Tribulation. It is hoped that this analysis is faithful to scripture's teachings.

## **Analysis**

### **Pre-Tribulation**

During the Olivet Discourse, Jesus said that the time leading up to the tribulation period will be like the time of Noah (Matthew 24:37-39) in that the earth will be so full of corruption and violence that He will put an end to it (Genesis 6:5-6,11-13). He further describes the “birth pains” that will be signs that the end of the age is near. These include wars and rumors of wars, famines, and earthquakes (Matthew 24:4-8). As with childbirth, these labor pains will get closer together and more severe as humanity gets closer to the start of the tribulation period. The analysis will show that there are four major events remaining that lead up to the start of the tribulation period. These include the rapture of the church, an Arab-Israeli war, the Gog and Magog war, and the rise of a global government along with the harlot religion.

### **The Rapture**

Several scholars, such as Rhodes (2012), note that scripture portrays Christ's interaction with the church using the imagery of Jewish weddings with Christ as the bridegroom and the church as His bride. There are three phases to a Jewish wedding. First the groom prepares a place for the bride. Jesus stated in John 14:2-3 that he was going to heaven to prepare a place for His bride to live in His father's house. Individuals living in the church age come to salvation and become part of the bride of Christ while Christ (the bridegroom) is in heaven preparing a place for the bride to live in His father's house. Next, the groom comes to claim his bride and it is unknown exactly when the groom will arrive, as noted in the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13). Just as a Jewish bride is unaware of the exact time her groom would come for her, so the church is unaware of the exact time that Jesus will come, though it is an imminent event (Matthew 24:36-51). This is the rapture, where Jesus is seen coming for His bride in the air prior to the tribulation (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Finally, there is a wedding feast. This is seen as the Marriage Supper

of the lamb (Revelation 19:6-9), which takes place just prior to Jesus' return at the end of the tribulation period where Jesus comes with his bride defeat the Antichrist and then to reign for a thousand years (Revelation 19:11-20:6).

As with ancient Jewish grooms, Jesus paid the purchase price to establish the marriage covenant (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Additionally, the church is declared sanctified and set apart for Christ just as a Jewish bride is sanctified waiting for her groom (cf. Ephesians 5:25-27; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Hebrews 10:10, 13:12). Believers that have been raptured will be instantly transformed, given resurrection bodies (cf. Romans 8:22-23; 1 Corinthians 15:51-55; Philippians 3:21; 1 John 3:2-3), and are then judged at the Bema Seat of Christ where "each of us will give an account of himself to God (Romans 14:12, HCSB)" so that "each may be repaid for what he has done in the body, whether good or worthless (2 Corinthians 5:10, HCSB)." This is not a judgment of sins, which have been paid for by faith in Jesus' finished work on the cross (cf. Romans 3:28, 5:1, 5:8, 6:4-5), but rather God rewarding believers for their lives.

There are several theories on when the rapture will occur. One of these theories does not necessarily address the timing of the rapture, but rather who will be involved. This is known as the partial rapture view, which is based on the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13 where five were prepared and five were unprepared. This interpretation indicates that only faithful and watchful Christians will be raptured, while the unfaithful Christians will be left behind to suffer the tribulation period. However, this theory misinterprets the parable by assuming that the bridesmaids left behind were symbolic of believers when they represented unbelievers. GotQuestions ("Will there be a partial rapture?", 2020) notes that this theory fails because it goes against scripture, which teaches that when people believe, they are saved and that the rapture will apply to them universally (1 Corinthians 15:50-57; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), regardless of their maturity or obedience.

The first theory on the timing of the rapture is the pre-wrath rapture theory, which says that the rapture occurs before the “great day of . . . wrath (Revelation 6:17)” and agrees that the church does not face the wrath of God. Since the word wrath does not appear in Revelation until after the sixth seal, this theory contends that God’s wrath must not be poured out until the seventh seal, so the rapture must take place between the sixth and seventh seals. According to GotQuestions (“What are the strengths and weaknesses of the pre-wrath view of the rapture?”, 2020), this theory views the first six seals as the wrath of Satan, while the trumpet and the bowl judgments (Revelation 7–16) are viewed as the wrath of God, from which the church is exempted (1 Thessalonians 5:9). Where this theory fails is that all of the judgments (i.e. seal, trumpet, bowl) are divine judgments from God that are instruments of God’s wrath that increase in intensity and scripture shows that it is Jesus who opens the seals (Revelation 5:5; 6:1) because no other man is found worthy to open them (Revelation 5:3-4).

The second theory is known as the mid-tribulation rapture. The primary reference for this theory is 1 Corinthians 15:51-55 because it references the last trumpet, which is the seventh trumpet judgment, as the timing for the rapture. While the seventh trumpet judgment occurs at the midpoint of the tribulation (Revelation 11:15-19), it is a harbinger of judgment for the wicked, not a call of grace to God’s elect (“What are the strengths and weaknesses of the midtribulation view of the rapture (midtribulationism)?”, 2020). Therefore, it has nothing to do with the rapture, making this theory invalid. Similar to the pre-wrath theory, this theory also assumes that God’s wrath does not begin until the start of the Great Tribulation, which occurs at the midpoint of the tribulation period. Again, this theory fails because the entire tribulation period is characterized by wrath (cf. Zephaniah 1:15,18; Revelation 6:17, 14:7,10, 19:2).

The third theory is the post-tribulation rapture. The primary support for this theory is Jesus stating that He would not return until after the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:21-30). Supporting

scripture for this timing discusses the saints who became believers during the tribulation, were martyred, and then resurrected at the end of the tribulation period (Revelation 13:7, 20:4-6,9). However, scripture is clear that those who believe in Christ are not under condemnation and will never experience the wrath of God (Romans 8:1), but if believers go through the tribulation period, they will experience the wrath of God in contradiction of Romans 8:1 simply because many judgments, such as the earthquakes, falling stars, and famines, will affect the saved and unsaved equally (“What are the strengths and weaknesses of the posttribulational view of the rapture (posttribulationism)?”, 2020). Matthew 24:37-40 also supposedly supports a post-tribulation rapture by referencing how “one will be taken and the other left” at Christ’s second coming, but the previous verse (Matthew 24:36) makes it clear that the time of the rapture is unknown. This theory fails because the timing of the end of the tribulation is certainly known due to the fact that the tribulation period begins with the signing of the peace agreement between the Antichrist and the Jews and ends seven years later (Daniel 9:27). Finally, references for the rapture show Christ coming *for* His saints (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), where at Christ’s second coming, He will come *with* His saints to the earth to reign for a thousand years (Revelation 19:11-14). These are separate events that are conflated with this theory.

Finally, there is the pre-tribulation theory. Scripture assures that the church is not appointed to wrath (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10; Romans 5:9; Revelation 3:10) and that God protects His people before judgment falls (2 Peter 2:5-9; Zephaniah 2:3; Psalm 27:5), which is why a pre-tribulation rapture is best supported by scripture if the Bible is interpreted literally and consistently. Those that oppose this theory cite that there are believers during the tribulation. However, there are several reasons why they will come to Christ after the rapture, such as witnessing the rapture itself, as a result of the ministry of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists (Revelation 7), as a result of the ministry of the two witnesses (Revelation 11), or after reading

Christian literature and Bibles left by those raptured. GotQuestions (“What are the strengths and weaknesses of the pretribulation view of the rapture (pretribulationism)?”, 2020) also notes that scripture does not mention the church in Revelation chapters 4-21, and in fact, never uses the word ‘church’ in a passage relating to the tribulation period, meaning that it is absent from scripture during the entire tribulation period.

The rapture is an event that is imminent, has no signs associated with it, and nothing must be prophetically fulfilled before the rapture can occur (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:7; Philippians 3:20, 4:5; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; Titus 2:11-14). Jesus confirms this by stating in the Olivet Discourse that the day or hour of the rapture event is only known by the Father and that not even the Son nor the angels in heaven know when this will occur (Matthew 24:36-51). A pre-tribulation rapture is the only theory that supports the teaching that the rapture is imminent and that the timing is not known. Additionally, Salus (2018) notes that the account of Noah, referenced by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse, not only supports a pre-tribulation rapture, but that it also supports a time gap between the rapture and the start of the tribulation period. Prior to the flood, Noah’s grandfather Enoch was raptured (Genesis 5:21-24). Years later, Noah went through the flood (Genesis 7).

The chronology of the book of Revelation shows the rapture occurring prior to the tribulation period. The book of Revelation begins with letters that Jesus wrote to seven churches. In addition to being instructive to these specific churches, they are representative of Christianity throughout the church age, and they have prophetic meaning as well. The letters to the churches in chapters 2 and 3 represent the churches throughout the church age and chapters 4 and 5 represent the church in heaven, with Revelation 4:1 representing the rapture event, which occurs prior to the opening of the seals that start the tribulation period in chapter 6. A synopsis of these letters is shown in Figure 1 (LaHaye, 1999). In Jesus’ letter to the church in Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7-13), which represents the evangelical Christian church or the “church Christ loved (LaHaye,

1999)”, He said: “I will also keep you from the hour of testing that is going to come over the whole world to test those who live on the earth (Revelation 3:10, HCSB).” This confirms that the church is not destined to take part of the tribulation.








THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION							
							 RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH
	EPHESUS The Apostolic Church Rev. 2:1-7	SMYRNA The Persecuted Church Rev. 2:8-11	PERGAMUM The Indulged Church Rev. 2:12-17	THYATIRA The Pagan Church Rev. 2:18-29	SARDIS The Dead Church Rev. 3:1-6	PHILADELPHIA The Church Christ Loved Rev. 3:7-13	LAODICEA The Lukewarm Church Rev. 3:14-22
	A.D. 30-100	A.D. 100-312	A.D. 312-606	A.D. 606-Tribulation	A.D. 1520-Tribulation Protestant Reformation	A.D. 1750-Rapture	A.D. 1900-Tribulation
COMMENDATION I know your. . .	Good works, labor, patience. Hated Nicolaitians.	Works, tribulation, poverty.	Works. Held fast my name. Has not denied my faith.	Good works, love, service, faith, patience.	Works. A name that you live.	Works. Missions. Little strength. Kept my word. Not denied my name.	Not one word!
CONDEMNATION	You have left your first love.	Not one word!	You have false teachers of Balaam and the Nicolaitans.	You allow Jezebel to teach idolatry and compromise.	You are dead. Works not complete.	Not one word!	You are lukewarm, wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked.
COUNSEL I counsel you. . .	Remember from where you are fallen and repent.	Fear not. Be faithful.	Repent.	Hold fast what you have until I come.	Watch. Strengthen the things that remain. Remember, hold fast and repent.	Hold fast what you have.	Buy gold tried by fire and white raiment. Anoint your eyes. Be zealous and repent.
CHALLENGE To him that overcomes. . .	Will give to eat of the tree of life	Will not be hurt by the second death.	Will give hidden manna and a white stone.	Will give millennial leadership and the Morning Star.	Will be clothed in white raiment. I will not blot his name out of the book of life.	Will make him a pillar and write upon him the name of God and My new name.	Will grant to sit with me on my throne.

Figure 1: Arab-Israeli War Adversaries

Some scholars argue that Psalm 83:3 indicates that the rapture will occur prior to the Arab-Israeli war described in that psalm, stating: “They have taken crafty counsel against Your people, And consulted together against Your sheltered ones (Psalm 83:3, NKJV).” It does not seem to be likely that the ‘sheltered ones’ (NKJV), ‘hidden ones’ (KJV), or ‘those you protect’ (NRSV) is a reference to the raptured church because the war described in this Psalm is to destroy the Jewish state (Psalm 83:4) and to capture the promised land of Israel (Psalm 83:12), and is not directed against Christians. Salas (2013) believes it is more likely a reference to the faithful remnant of Jews that are protected through the tribulation period. However, since there is nothing that precludes the rapture from happening prior to the Arab-Israeli war, one could argue that it would be a good catalyst to embolden Israel’s immediate neighbors into starting such a conflict. While



this is not a necessary condition to enable a large-scale Middle East conflict, such an event would provide ideal conditions for this conflict to ensue because a rapture event would likely reduce or eliminate United States influence in the Middle East region due to the significant number of Christians in the population.

### The Arab-Israeli War

The next pre-tribulation event to occur is an Arab-Israeli war. Salus (2013) believes that this war is described in Psalm 83 and is the prelude to the Gog and Magog war because it includes all of Israel's immediate neighboring countries and enemies such that "the house of Israel will no longer be hurt by prickly briars or painful thorns from all their neighbors who treat them with contempt (Ezekiel 28:24, HCSB)." According to Asaph the Seer, the psalm's author:

For they have conspired with one mind; they form an alliance against You—the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, Moab and the Hagrites, Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek, Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre. Even Assyria has joined them; they lend support to the sons of Lot (Psalm 83: 5-8, HCSB).

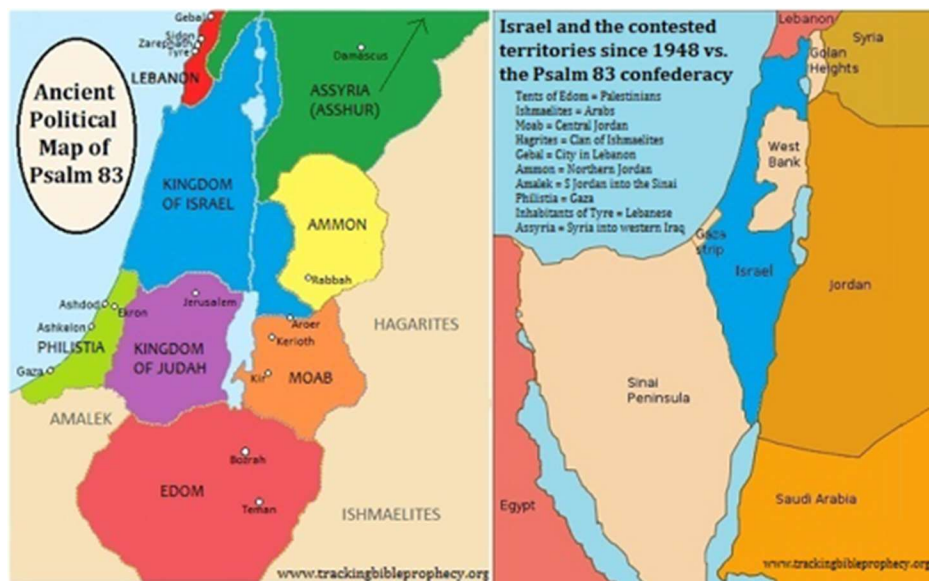


Figure 2: Arab-Israeli War Adversaries

As shown in Figure 2, Salus (2013) notes that the modern names for these adversaries are Jordan, Lebanon, the Negev into the Sinai, Gaza, Syria into western Iraq, the Palestinians, as well as Hamas, and Hezbollah.

Salus (2013) states that the nations that rush mightily like many waters (Isaiah 17:13) are the Arab states listed in Psalm 83:6-8 and that Isaiah 17 further describes the destruction caused by this war. Isaiah states:

Look, Damascus is no longer a city. It has become a ruined heap. The cities of Aroer are forsaken; they will be places for flocks. They will lie down without fear. The fortress disappears from Ephraim, and a kingdom from Damascus. The remnant of Aram will be like the splendor of the Israelites (Isaiah 17:1-3, HCSB).

In addition to God's judgments against Israel's adversaries, Israel will also be punished for their disobedience: "On that day their strong cities will be like the abandoned woods and mountaintops that were abandoned because of the Israelites; there will be desolation (Isaiah 17:9, HCSB)." Based on this description, there will be severe loss of life, but little structural damage.

This may indicate that Israel will be attacked with chemical or biological weapons, which Syria is known to possess. At that time the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) will be "a vast army (Ezekiel 37:10, HCSB)" and God will use that army to divinely judge those that attack Israel per His promise to curse those that curse Israel (Genesis 12:3). In addition to Isaiah, Salus (2013) identified Obadiah and Ezekiel as referencing God's judgments in this war. Obadiah describes the judgment against Israel's enemies:

Then the house of Jacob will be a blazing fire, and the house of Joseph, a burning flame, but the house of Esau will be stubble; Jacob will set them on fire and consume Edom. Therefore no survivor will remain of the house of Esau (Obadiah 1:15-18, HCSB).

Ezekiel also proclaims God's declaration of judgment:

I will make it a wasteland; they will fall by the sword from Teman to Dedan. I will take My vengeance on Edom through My people Israel, and they will deal with Edom according to My anger and wrath. So they will know My vengeance (Ezekiel 25:13-14, HCSB).

It could be that Israel, after being attacked with chemical or biological weapons, responds with nuclear weapons. These descriptions of the utter devastation would fit this scenario and Jeremiah captures the sheer magnitude of this victory stating that “at the sound of their fall the earth will quake; the sound of her cry will be heard at the Red Sea (Jeremiah 49:21, HCSB).” In defeating these enemies, God fulfills his oath “that the nations all around you will endure their own insults (Ezekiel 36:7, HCSB).”



Figure 3: Israel's Borders after the Arab-Israeli War

Figure 3 shows that at the conclusion of the Arab-Israeli war, Israel will have defeated the enemies bordering her land and, for the first time as a single unified country since the time of Joshua, they will have expanded the country's borders back to what God had promised Abraham (cf. Genesis 15:18-21; Joshua 1:4; Obadiah 1:19-21; Ezekiel 47:13-48:35). One result of this war is that Egypt will be desolate for 40 years (Ezekiel 29:12-14). Additionally, with her enemies defeated, it appears that Israel will feel safe, live peacefully, and allow themselves to drop their

guard and disarm (Ezekiel 28:24-26), which is a requirement for the Gog and Magog war (Ezekiel 38:8,11,14). Most importantly, there will be a spiritual awakening for the Jews in the wake of this war (Isaiah 17:8; Ezekiel 37:9-10) that will cause them to rebuild the temple and allow the sacrificial system to resume. This spiritual awakening does not include an understanding that Jesus is their Messiah. That revelation will not occur until the end of the Great Tribulation.

This spiritual awakening also provides further evidence that the rapture occurs in close proximity to the Arab-Israeli war because Paul wrote that “a partial hardening has come to Israel until the full number of the Gentiles has come in (Romans 11:26, HCSB),” meaning that such a spiritual awakening would not begin until after the rapture of the church, providing an upper boundary for the rapture. Several facts point to the conclusion that the spiritual awakening occurs before the Gog and Magog war. First, God divinely defeats Israel’s enemies in the Gog and Magog war, indicating that Israel has turned back to God. Second, Israel’s desire to rebuild the temple also indicates a return to God. This construction will likely take several years to complete. It is unclear whether the temple construction will begin before or after the Gog and Magog war, but it must be completed, and the sacrificial system must begin, with the start of the tribulation period because scripture states that the temple will only exist for 42 months (Revelation 11:1-2) and then it will be destroyed at the midpoint of the tribulation period (Daniel 9:27).

### **The Gog and Magog War**

The events following the Arab-Israeli war set the stage for the Gog and Magog war (Ezekiel 38-39). The participants in this war include Magog, Meshech, Tubal, Persia, Cush, Put, Gomer, and Beth-Togarmah (Ezekiel 38:1-6). According to Salus (2013), the modern equivalents to these are Russia, the former Soviet states (Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia), Iran, Sudan, Ethiopia and Libya, eastern Europe, Armenia, western Asia, and Turkey. This confederacy is shown in Figure 4. Evidence that supports a separate Arab-Israeli war prior to the Gog and Magog

war is the absence of Israel's immediate neighbors as participants in this war (Salus, 2013). The most logical conclusion is that Israel has defeated these adversaries in a prior war and has expanded her borders to encompass that land as noted in Ezekiel 47:13-48:35.



Figure 4: Gog and Magog War Adversaries

Ezekiel 38:13 indicates that Yemen (Sheba) and Saudi Arabia (Dedan) do not participate in this war. Additionally, Ezekiel 38:13 includes “the merchants of Tarshish and all her rulers (HCSB)” in this coalition. Salus (2016) believes that Tarshish is Great Britain and that her rulers (HCSB) or villages (NIV) are her colonies, or specifically, the United States, Canada, and Australia. This verse asks: “Have you come to seize spoil? Have you assembled your hordes to carry off plunder, to make off with silver and gold, to take cattle and possessions, to seize great spoil (HCSB)?” Based on the wording of this verse and the fact that that this coalition includes countries that support Israel, their absence in the Gog and Magog war indicate that these nations limit their support for Israel to political or economic sanctions rather than providing military support.

One of the chief reasons the Gog and Magog coalition comes against Israel is to “seize spoil and carry off plunder, to turn your hand against ruins now inhabited and against a people gathered from the nations, who have been acquiring cattle and possessions and who live at the center of the world (Ezekiel 38:12, HCSB).” While it is man’s hatred toward God’s chosen people that drives the Arab-Israeli war and it is the Israeli IDF that defeats Israel’s enemies as divine judgment against those enemies, it is God that persuades Gog into starting the Gog and Magog war (Ezekiel 38:4, 39:2) and then defeats them divinely (Ezekiel 39:3-5) without the IDF “so that the nations may know Me, when I show Myself holy through you in their sight (Ezekiel 38:16, HCSB).” Another major difference between these two wars is that in the Arab-Israeli war, both Israel and her enemies will be punished and there will be widespread devastation (cf. Isaiah 17:1-3,9; Obadiah 1:15-18; Ezekiel 25:13-14, 29:12-14, 36:7; Jeremiah 49:21), but with the Gog and Magog war, only Israel’s enemies are punished and the devastation is limited to just the attacking forces.

The Gog and Magog war is yet another example that proves that God’s command to curse those that curse Israel (Genesis 12:3) is still in effect. This has already been seen with the Arab-Israeli war, but there are other examples from scripture as well. First, Joseph’s brothers attempted to harm him by selling him into slavery, but it turned out to be a blessing (Genesis 50:20). Next, Egypt attempted to kill the Hebrews by trapping them at the Red Sea, but the sea parted, letting the Hebrews escape and then closing on the advancing Egyptian army (Exodus 14). Finally, during the time of Queen Esther, Haman plotted to kill the Jews living in Persia and hang Esther’s adopted father Mordechai, but the Jews fought back, survived, and instead of Mordechai getting hung in the gallows, Haman did (Esther 7:9-10). God knows how to convert bad things into good (Romans 8:28), giving Israel the ability to plunder and pillage these enemies in retaliation for invading them (Ezekiel 39:9-10).

Many scholars place the Gog and Magog war in the first half of the tribulation period. However, it is through this war that God will make His holy name known among His people Israel and will no longer allow it to be profaned (Ezekiel 39:7), so that people have the opportunity to believe in God before being deceived by the Antichrist (Salus 2018). Also, Ezekiel 39:9 states that it will take Israel seven years to burn the weapons from the war. If the Gog and Magog war were to occur during the tribulation period, there would not be seven years left for this cleanup to take place, especially if this war were to occur at a point significantly after the start of the Tribulation. Additionally, the sheer magnitude of this war would be the perfect catalyst to bring forward the Antichrist, who would then establish the seven-year peace agreement that begins the tribulation period as described in Daniel 9:27. Finally, scripture indicates that the Antichrist does not break the peace treaty that he establishes at the beginning of the Tribulation until the start of the Great Tribulation three-and-a-half years later (Daniel 9:27), so it would be highly unlikely that he could allow the Gog and Magog war to occur during the Tribulation and keep the peace treaty intact. This is especially true if the Gog and Magog war were to occur at the beginning of the Tribulation, and just after signing the peace treaty, as would be required to allow for the maximum amount of time for cleanup to occur.

It is more likely that the Gog and Magog war precedes the tribulation period and that the war, famine, and death described in the seal judgments (Revelation 6:3-8) are representative of other conflicts throughout the world. Additionally, Salus (2013) believes that the Gog and Magog war must start three-and-a-half years before the start of the tribulation period and asserts that this timing is required to complete the seven-year period for Israel to burn the weapons from the war before they need to flee at the start of the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:15-22).

### **Rise of a Global Government**

Several prophecies in scripture assert that a global government will be established in the last days. There are currently no preconditions that would preclude this government from developing, so while it could happen anywhere along this pre-tribulation timeline, the assumption is that it will occur in the wake of the Gog and Magog war. According to scripture, this government will rise before the Antichrist (Daniel 7:24) and be a multinational alliance of ten nations (Daniel 2:33,41-43, 7:7,24; Revelation 13:1, 17:3). Historically, multinational alliances have arisen after large conflicts. For example, the League of Nations was formed after World War I and the United Nations and NATO were formed after World War II. It would stand to reason, then, that this new alliance would be a result of the Gog and Magog war. Scripture also indicates that this alliance will have authority only for a short time before the Antichrist takes over (Revelation 17:12).

There is evidence in scripture that indicates that this alliance reforms the old Roman Empire. Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2:31-45) and Daniel's vision of the four beasts (Daniel 7:1-48) both represent the same kingdoms of the world but differ dramatically in their imagery based on how man views these kingdoms versus how God views them. Nebuchadnezzar saw an impressive statue that consisted of a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, a belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of iron mixed with clay. These represent Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and a yet-to-exist alliance of ten nations that consists of both weak and strong nations where "the peoples will mix with one another but will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with fired clay (Daniel 2:43, HCSB)."

God, on the other hand, depicted horrible beasts that included a lion with eagle's wings, a bear, a leopard with four wings of a bird, and one that was indescribable other than it had teeth of iron and ten horns. The first three beasts correspond to the head of gold, the chest and arms of silver, and the belly and thighs of bronze from Nebuchadnezzar's statue. However, this last beast



represents both the legs of iron and the feet mixed with iron and clay of Nebuchadnezzar's statue, indicating that the Roman Empire will rise again as a ten-member alliance in the last days. This comparison is shown in Figure 5.

<b>Comparisons between Daniel 2 (the statue) and Daniel 7 (the beasts)</b>		
<b>DANIEL 2 (the statue)</b>	<b>DANIEL 7 (the beasts)</b>	<b>Power symbolized</b>
Head of gold	↔ Lion with eagle's wings	↔ Babylon
Chest and arms of silver	↔ Bear with three ribs	↔ Medo-Persia
Belly and thighs of bronze	↔ Leopard with four heads	↔ Greece
Legs of iron	↔ Beast with iron teeth	↔ Rome
Feet of iron and of clay	↔ 10 horns of the beast	↔ The 10 nations
—————	↔ Little horn	↔ Identity to come...
Stone breaking the statue and becoming a mountain	↔ Destruction of nations, reign of God's people	↔ Kingdom of God established forever

Figure 5: Comparison Between Daniel 2 and Daniel 7

Further corresponding scripture comes from the descriptions of the beast in the book of Revelation:

I saw a beast coming up out of the sea. He had 10 horns and seven heads...The beast I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like a bear's, and his mouth was like a lion's mouth...One of his heads appeared to be fatally wounded, but his fatal wound was healed (Revelation 13:1-3, HCSB).

This description of the last kingdom of man shows that it will have aspects of all of the previous kingdoms because it incorporates the leopard (Greece), bear (Medo-Persia), and lion (Babylon). Revelation 17:9-10 further identifies the seven heads as seven kings, which have been identified as the kingdoms that ruled over Israel. Rhodes (2012) states that these kingdoms are Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the revived Roman Empire. Since the heads represent kingdoms, the fact that "one of his heads appeared to be fatally wounded, but his fatal wound was healed (Revelation 13:3, HCSB)" provides additional evidence supporting the conclusion that the fourth beast in Daniel's vision represents a revived Roman Empire.

Given that this ten-member alliance will form from the old Roman Empire, it is possible that this alliance will be formed from the current European Union (EU) or be its successor. The EU currently consists of 27 member states, of which some are strong, and some are weak. However, in its current form, it does not appear to be the final ruling empire as described in the Bible. The EU could take a page from the United Nations (UN) and form a ruling council similar to the UN Security Council in which there are five permanent members to form the ten-nation ruling alliance. Salus (2020) notes that the Club of Rome published a report in 1974 entitled “Mankind at the Turning Point” that provided a listing of ten recommended governmental zones. These include:

- (1) Canada and the United States
- (2) the European Union
- (3) Japan, North and South Korea
- (4) Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa
- (5) Russia
- (6) Mexico, Central and South America
- (7) North Africa and the Middle East
- (8) Central Africa
- (9) India, Pakistan, and Southeast Asia
- (10) China and Central Asia.

At this point in the timeline, this alliance does not have global control, but it is within this context that the Antichrist emerges (Daniel 7:24). Scripture is clear that the Antichrist comes from this alliance, stating: “The people of the coming prince will destroy the city and the sanctuary (Daniel 9:26, HCSB).” The Roman Empire destroyed the temple in 70 AD, which means that the Antichrist must come from the reconstituted Roman Empire. One can only speculate as to how

the Antichrist gains power within this alliance. It could be purely political, or he could gain power by possessing new technological advances, such as artificial intelligence (AI), quantum computing, biomedical, nanotechnology, or other advances that either have significant military implications or drive humanity significantly closer to the singularity with technology (Toumey, 2016). With the rise of the Antichrist, the tribulation period begins.

### **Rise of the Harlot False Religion**

Revelation 17 shows that intertwined with the rise of the global government is the rise of the harlot false religion. According to LaHaye (1999), three of the prophetic churches to which Jesus wrote letters in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 will continue through the tribulation period (see Figure 1). These include Thyatira, Sardis, and Laodicea. The harlot religion most likely rises from the remnants of Christianity that was left behind as an amalgamation of these remaining churches. John said that he was astonished when he saw this prostitute (Revelation 17:3-6).

It is possible that John was astonished because he saw how pagan idols were adopted into Christianity. This is prophetically represented in the letters to Pergamum (Revelation 2:12-17) and Thyatira (Revelation 2:18-29). The church in Pergamum is where “Satan has his throne...[and] where Satan lives (Revelation 2:13, HCSB).” The church in Thyatira tolerated “the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and teaches and deceives My slaves to commit sexual immorality and to eat meat sacrificed to idols (Revelation 2:20, HCSB).” This indicates that the harlot church of the tribulation period will be deceived by supernatural visions of a prophetess that will become prevalent, which most likely causes the worship of a new incarnation of Asherah that plagued the ancient Jews during the time of the kings (cf. Deuteronomy 16:21-22; Judges 3:7; 1 Kings 14:15,22-23, 16:30-33; 2 Kings 17:7-17, 21:1-7; Jeremiah 17:1-3). Some scholars believe this references the visions of Mary, such as the visions in Fatima, Portugal in 1917 (“Are apparitions of Mary, such as Lady Fatima, true messages from God?”, 2020). However, this

figure will need more wide-ranging appeal to coalesce the remaining religions, including those represented by the three remaining churches through syncretism. Whatever the form, these visions will preach a gospel that is at odds with the true gospel of Christ (cf. 2 Peter 3:3; Galatians 1:6-9; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4) and deceive people into believing in false doctrines that draw people away from a personal relationship with God.

Next, it is possible that the mystery of Babylon represents pagan Rome because Babylon is held guilty of killing all the martyrs who have been slain on earth (Revelation 18:24) and because the saints, apostles, and prophets rejoice when God executes judgment on her (Revelation 18:20). Mecca or the actual city of Babylon would not fit because no apostle was martyred in these cities. However, Peter, Paul, and possibly Andrew were martyred near Rome. Pergamum was the seat of the government for the Roman empire as it began its decline and began to embrace Christianity as the state religion, so Satan's throne would have moved to Rome with the government as the empire amalgamated into Papal Rome as described in the letter to Thyatira (Salus, 2020). Also, Revelation 17:9 states that the beast upon which this harlot rides has seven heads, and these are representative of seven hills or mountains. Rome is known as the city of seven hills, indicating that this references Rome. Additionally, Revelation 17:18 states that "the woman you saw is the great city that has an empire over the kings of the earth." Because of the use of present tense (*is* the great city), Babylon must be a great city in John's time that has a vast empire. Rome is the only city of that time period that fits this description. Finally, Babylon was a common reference to Rome in John's day.

Last, John sees "that the woman was drunk on the blood of the saints and on the blood of the witnesses to Jesus (Revelation 17:6, HCSB)." This indicates that the harlot religion will have persecuted the church-age saints as well as those that come to Christ in the post-rapture time period, persecuting anyone that holds views that are heretical to their dogma. While many

religions have persecuted Christians in the church age, Salus (2018) notes that Papal Rome famously persecuted Christians during the Spanish Inquisition. The persecution of the witnesses to Jesus after the church age will be rampant because the harlot church will be emboldened due of the rapture, arguing that the wicked were removed by God, leaving the true church whose mission it is to shepherd the soles of those remaining (cf. Proverbs 10:30; Psalm 37:10-11). Therefore, the leaders of the harlot church will not likely feel the need, nor consider it wise, to be religiously tolerant. Satan will bolster this view and further deceive the population through the visions of the prophetess.

### **The Tribulation (1<sup>st</sup> 3½ Years)**

After describing the “birth pains” in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24:4-8), Jesus continues His discourse with a description of events during the first half of the seven-year tribulation period. Here Jesus notes that people will be persecuted and killed for their faith (Matthew 24:10). Also, many people will turn away from faith, be deceived by false prophets, will betray and hate each other, and because of this, love will grow cold (Matthew 24:10-14). The Tribulation can be broken down into two phases, consisting of the seal judgments and the trumpet judgments. This section of the Olivet Discourse appears to describe the effects seen in the seal judgments.

#### **The Seal Judgments**

The Tribulation begins with the breaking of the first seal (Revelation 6:1-2). According to scripture, this judgment brings forth the Antichrist, who is represented as the rider on a white horse and with a bow, but no arrows. Therefore, the Antichrist will have victory through diplomacy as the emerging leader of the newly formed ten-nation Roman alliance (Daniel 7:24). Daniel 9:27 states that the Antichrist will establish a covenant with Israel for seven years, which marks the beginning of the Tribulation. The Antichrist will rise from the sea (Revelation 13:1) of humanity

prior to the Tribulation, but he will not be identified until he establishes a covenant with the Jews to allow them to resume sacrifices in the newly built temple. The process of establishing this covenant may take a significant portion of the three-and-a-half-year period between the end of the Gog and Magog war and the start of the Tribulation. Isaiah 28:15 states that Israel signs onto this covenant to avoid an “overwhelming scourge.” With the rise of wars and religious persecution described in the next three seal judgments, it appears that the Antichrist promises to allow Israel to build their temple unhindered by establishing this agreement with him, the harlot religion (Revelation 17:3-6), and his newly formed Roman alliance.

The temple is also completed when the Tribulation begins and the sacrificial system is now able to resume for the first time since the last temple was destroyed in 70 AD by the Romans. According to Revelation 11:1-2, the people will be able to worship at the temple for 42 months. Also during this time, God empowers two witnesses, as required by Mosaic Law to confirm testimony (cf. Deuteronomy 17:6; John 8:17; Hebrews 10:28), to prophesy for 1,260 days and gives them the ability to prevent it from raining during their time of prophecy, turn water into blood, strike the earth with plagues, and kill anyone that attempts to harm them by consuming with fire that comes from their mouths (Revelation 11:3-6). Both of these events are coincident with the three-and-a-half-year Tribulation.

Many scholars believe that these two witnesses are Moses (Exodus 7-11) and Elijah (1 Kings 17) because the powers given to these witnesses closely mirror those given to both of these men and because they were both with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration (Matthew 17:1–8; Mark 9:2–8; Luke 9:28–36; John 1:14). Additionally, God promises to raise up a prophet like Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15,18) and also says: “I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome Day of the Lord comes (Malachi 4:5, HCSB).” Other scholars believe that it is Enoch that witnesses with Elijah, not Moses, because they are the only two known individuals

that have been taken to heaven directly without experiencing death (Genesis 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11), noting that scripture states: “it is appointed for people to die once—and after this, judgment (Hebrews 9:27, HCSB)” and that a second death is only reserved for those unbelievers destined for the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8). GotQuestions (“Who are the two witnesses in the book of Revelation?”, 2020) also states that a third possibility is that these two witnesses are not famous historical figures, but ordinary believers because of the lack of specificity in Revelation 11.

The next three seal judgments round out the four horsemen of the apocalypse and include a rider on a red horse (Revelation 6:3-4), a rider on a black horse (Revelation 6:5-6), and a rider on a pale horse (Revelation 6:7-8). These judgments represent war, famine, and death, respectively. Given the nature of these judgments, they most likely occur in quick succession of each other. Since the Antichrist has made a peace agreement with Israel, which started the Tribulation, these judgments are most likely centered on the Gentiles rather than specifically on the Jews, but many Jews will most likely also be affected. These judgments also likely occur very early in the Tribulation because the remaining seal judgments as well as the trumpet judgments must also occur within the first half of the seven-year tribulation period. During this period, people will slaughter one another (Revelation 6:4), food will become scarce (Revelation 6:6), and those that are not outright killed by war or starvation, are subjected to plagues and attacks by wild animals (Revelation 6:8). Through these judgments, “Death and Hades” will have authority to kill a quarter of the earth’s population (Revelation 6:8). Death and Hades appear to be references to the world government and harlot religion as physical death and spiritual death respectively. It will be with the opening of the fourth seal judgment that the Antichrist will, through diplomacy, become the leader of the ten-member Roman alliance that forms the world government and turning it and the harlot world religion into the instruments of death described in Revelation 6:8. The

global religious war represented by the second seal will most likely be the process by which this is accomplished.

It could be that much of this conflict occurs over increased religious persecution. There will be many that did not truly have faith in Christ prior to the rapture but have since become believers. These new Christians will be persecuted and martyred by followers of the harlot religion, which not only has tacit approval by the world government, but the government may also provide the legal legitimacy by sentencing capital punishment through the court system. The opening of the fifth seal judgment (Revelation 6:9-11) shows a scene in the spiritual realm where the people who were “slaughtered because of God’s word and the testimony they had (Revelation 6:9, HCSB)” cry out for justice. Unfortunately, more are yet to be martyred during the tribulation period as people come to know Christ and turn to Him for salvation (Matthew 24:9), so they must wait a little longer for justice to be meted out (Romans 12:19).

When the sixth seal is opened, the physical realm is rocked with a massive earthquake that is so devastating that “every mountain and island was moved from its place (Revelation 6:14, HCSB).” Additionally, there are unusual astronomical events that occur, such as what appears to be lunar and solar eclipses and a major meteor shower. Scripture indicates that people realize that God is judging them because they “said to the mountains and to the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of the One seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, because the great day of Their wrath has come! And who is able to stand?’ (Revelation 6:16-17).”

Before the seventh seal can be opened, the remnant of Israel needs to be sealed from harm from both divine judgments and from the wrath of the Antichrist (Revelation 7:1-8). This group consists of twelve thousand people from each of the twelve tribes of Israel (Judah, Reuben, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin) and total 144,000 people. These will be the first fruits (Revelation 14:4) of Israel that will repent and accept



Jesus as their Messiah (cf. Zechariah 12:10; Romans 11:26-27). A great multitude that cannot be counted will be saved during the Great Tribulation through the ministry of these 144,000 witnesses (Revelation 7:9-17).

The opening of the seventh seal introduces the trumpet judgments (Revelation 8:1-5). There is no timing associated with this, but based on the length of time needed to complete the fifth and sixth trumpet judgments, it seems reasonable that this could occur somewhere around 16 months into the Tribulation. The magnitude of this judgment is seen by silence in heaven for about a half an hour (Zephaniah 1:7; Revelation 8:1). When the censer full of the prayers of God's people is hurled to the earth, "there were rumblings of thunder, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake (Revelation 8:5, HCSB)." This begins the trumpet judgments.

### **The Trumpet Judgments**

The second phase of the Tribulation opens with a series of environmental disasters. The sounding of the first trumpet judgment causes a third of the earth, a third of the trees, and all the green grass to be burned up by a storm of hail and fire, mixed with blood (Revelation 8:7). This could be a reference to an eruption of a super volcano, such as the one at Yellowstone National Park. The sounding of the second trumpet judgment heralds what appears to be an asteroid strike in the ocean when "something like a great mountain ablaze with fire was hurled into the sea (Revelation 8:8, HCSB)," which caused a third of the sea to become blood, a third of the creatures in the sea to die, and a third of the ships to be destroyed (Revelation 8:9). The sounding of the third trumpet judgment announces the Wormwood meteor, which could break up upon entry, resulting in multiple air-burst impacts that causes a third of the rivers and springs to become bitter and poisonous (Revelation 8:10-11). The sounding of the fourth trumpet heralds a calamity that causes a third of the sun, the moon, and the stars to become darkened (Revelation 8:12). This could be the result of atmospheric changes caused by the first three trumpets.

The final three trumpet judgements, also known as the three woes (Revelation 8:13), take place during roughly the second half of the Tribulation, based on the time required for them to be completed. With the sounding of the fifth trumpet judgment, a demon is permitted to open the abyss, which releases smoke that darkens the sun and air as well as a host of locusts that stings anyone that does not have God's seal on their foreheads. People are tormented for five months and while the stings are so painful that people seek death, death will not come (Revelation 9:1-12).

At the sound of the sixth trumpet judgment, an army of 200 million demonic mounted troops kill one third of the human race through plagues of fire, smoke, and sulfur (Revelation 9:13-19; Joel 2:1-11). In spite of this devastating judgment, those remaining still refuse to repent (Revelation 9:20-21). According to scripture, "the four angels who were prepared for the hour, day, month, and year were released to kill a third of the human race (Revelation 9:15, HCSB)." LaHaye & Parker (2014) state that the hour, day, month, and year represent a 13-month period in which this judgment takes place. Between this judgment and the first four seal judgments, fully one half of the human population will be killed. With a current world population estimated to be 7.8 billion people, this represents the deaths of 3.9 billion people.

During this second woe, a mighty angel reads a small scroll that describes the judgments of the Great Tribulation and the seven thunders speak, but the details of this are hidden (Revelation 10). The second woe ends with the martyrdom, resurrection, and rapture of the two witnesses. The Antichrist will kill the two witnesses and their bodies will lie in the public square for everyone to see (Revelation 11:7-8). For the next three-and-a-half days, all the people of the world will see them lying dead in the street and they will celebrate by giving each other gifts like it were Christmas (Revelation 11:9-10). Next, they will be resurrected, and everyone will see them taken

up to heaven (Revelation 11:11-12). At the conclusion of the second woe there will be a violent earthquake that destroys a tenth of Jerusalem and kills 7,000 people (Revelation 11:13-14).

Immediately after the completion of the second woe, the seventh trumpet judgment is sounded (Revelation 11:15-19). With this, a great war in heaven is heralded and “God’s sanctuary in heaven was opened, and the ark of His covenant appeared in His sanctuary. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings of thunder, an earthquake, and severe hail (Revelation 11:19, HCSB).” This war is an inflection point that begins the transition from the Tribulation to the Great Tribulation, and several significant events happen at this time both in heaven and on earth. During this war, Michael and his angels fight against Satan and his demons. Satan loses this war and is thrown out of heaven (Revelation 12:7-9). This is the third woe because while heaven rejoices over this, it means that Satan turns his wrath on humanity (Revelation 12:10-12). Revelation 12:13-17 makes it clear that Satan is thrown out of heaven at the midpoint of the Tribulation because he persecutes the Jews for the remaining three-and-a-half years of the Great Tribulation.

Some scholars, including LaHaye & Parker (2014), believe that one of the physical outcomes of this spiritual war is that the Antichrist is killed and resurrected as described in Revelation 13:3. The imagery of this prophecy as described in Revelation 13:1-2 is consistent with other prophecies in Revelation 17 as well as in Daniel 2 and Daniel 7, which indicates that the entity being resurrected is the Roman Empire, not an individual. Another possibility is that during the political struggle in which the Antichrist destroys three of the leaders of the ten-nation alliance, he appears defeated and this resurrection implies a political resurrection with the Antichrist assuming total control. However, Revelation 11:7 states that “the beast that comes up out of the abyss” will kill the two witnesses and Revelation 17:8 describes the Antichrist as “the beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and yet will come up out of the Abyss and go to its destruction.” A governmental or political resurrection does not address the concept of the beast

returning from the abyss. Therefore, while the Antichrist's resurrection occurs after he kills the two witnesses, this description about the two witnesses' killer indicates that this prophecy regarding the Antichrist's death and resurrection may also have dual fulfillment with the resurrection of the Roman Empire and with Satan attempting to mimic the resurrection of Christ as a way to deceive people into worshiping the Antichrist. This resurrection could be an illusion and not a true resurrection (2 Thessalonians 2:11) or God could allow Satan to perform a true resurrection (Job 1:8-12) as part of a larger deception.

### **The Great Tribulation (2<sup>nd</sup> 3½ Years)**

After describing the signs of the first half of the tribulation period in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24:9-14), Jesus continues His description of the abomination that causes desolation (Matthew 24:15-21). These are events that occur during the second half of the seven-year tribulation period, which is known as the Great Tribulation. Satan being thrown out of heaven (Revelation 12:7-12) marks the beginning of this period.

#### **The Abomination that Causes Desolation**

At this point Satan has resurrected the Antichrist and indwells him (Revelation 13:1-10). The Antichrist then breaks the seven-year covenant with Israel (Isaiah 28:18) and begins the three-and-a-half-year persecution of the Jews (Revelation 12:13-18). It is also at this point that the Antichrist replaces the ten-nation Roman alliance and expands his authority by creating a new global kingdom (cf. Daniel 7:23, Revelation 17:11) in which he is the sole ruler (Revelation 13:7) for the next three-and-a-half years (cf. Daniel 7:25, Revelation 13:5). This new kingdom will have global control politically (Revelation 13:7), religiously (Revelation 13:8), and economically (Revelation 13:16-17). Dr. Jeremiah (2019) states that the Antichrist will "assassinate the leaders of three countries and all other nations will immediately relinquish their power to him" as prophesied in Daniel 7:8,24.

One of the Antichrist's first acts after assuming global power is to destroy the temple, which brings sacrifices to an end (Revelation 11:1-2) and is noted by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse as the abomination that causes desolation (Matthew 24:15). Jesus also states that the Jews will need to flee Jerusalem and hide from Satan's wrath (Matthew 24:16-21). Throughout this period, the Antichrist will kill two thirds of the remaining Jews (Zechariah 13:7-9). Additionally, when Gentiles that have come to believe in Jesus as their savior help to save the Jews, Satan turns his wrath on them as well (Revelation 12:16-17).

Many scholars, including Rhodes (2012), believe that the fleeing Jews will possibly hide in Petra, 80 miles to the south of Jerusalem, citing the superior defensive capabilities offered by the terrain and Old Testament prophetic scripture that seems to indicate that Jesus will return to the mountain wilderness of Bozrah (Isaiah 34:1-7, 63:1-6; Habakkuk 3:3; Micah 2:12-13). This is shown in Figure 6.



Figure 6: Location of Petra

However, Petra has been judged as was Sodom and Gomorrah such that “no one will live there; no people will dwell in it (Jeremiah 49:18, HCSB).” Also, the final battle of the Great Tribulation is the Battle of Armageddon, which occurs in the plains around Megiddo, so it is much more likely that the Jewish remnant flees to a defensible location around the ancient city of Megiddo, which is also the location of a modern-day kibbutz, than an abandoned fortress that is located in Jordan over 200 miles to the south. The most logical location would be the ancient fortress at Masada, which is only 35 miles northeast of Megiddo, as shown in Figure 7.



Figure 7: Location of Masada

According to GotQuestions (“What is the history of Masada?”, 2020), Masada was built in 31 BC by Herod the Great as a ‘place of refuge’ in case there was a revolt against him and, following the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD during the Roman conquest of Israel, it was also the last holdout of a group of Jewish Zealots who hid there, finally falling itself in 73 AD. GotQuestions (“What is the history of Masada?”, 2020) describes how the design allows this fortress to be easily defended:

Masada is built on a high elevation. The fortress contains a number of barracks, armories, and defensive structures. It also has huge storehouses and cisterns, which contained months’ worth of food and water. The primary defense of Masada was a single-file “snake

path” up the 1,300-foot mountain. The path was extremely easy to defend from vantage points above.

Another factor that favors Masada over Petra is that Masada still plays an important role in Israeli culture in that new IDF soldiers climb the ‘snake path’ up the mountain to the fortress at night upon the completion of basic training where they are sworn in, declaring “Masada shall not fall again (‘What is the history of Masada?’, 2020).” Petra, on the other hand, is abandoned today and its ruins have remained uninhabited for centuries, in fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecy (“What is the significance of the city of Petra in the Bible?”, 2020).

It appears that it is at this point that the fate of people that have not turned to Jesus as their savior is sealed. Paul states:

The coming of the lawless one is based on Satan’s working, with all kinds of false miracles, signs, and wonders, and with every unrighteous deception among those who are perishing. They perish because they did not accept the love of the truth in order to be saved. For this reason God sends them a strong delusion so that they will believe what is false, so that all will be condemned—those who did not believe the truth but enjoyed unrighteousness (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12, HCSB).

This prophecy is manifest at this time with the False Prophet being raised up to perform signs and wonders in an attempt to give credibility to the Antichrist, who has exalted himself above all gods (Daniel 11:36-37), and to force people to worship him (Revelation 13:11-18). The result, though, will be that anyone following any other religion will be killed and the harlot destroyed (Revelation 17:16). Scripture states that the False Prophet has “two horns like a lamb (Revelation 13:11, HCSB),” which indicates that, just like the 10 kings of the Roman alliance provided power and authority to the Antichrist (Revelation 17:13), two religious leaders will provide authority to the False Prophet to help spread this new false religion. The leader of the harlot will be one of these

horns and the other would most likely be a leader of Islam because even though Islam will likely be in decline after the defeats in the Arab-Israeli war and the Gog and Magog war, it will still have a large following. The False Prophet will compel “the earth and those who live on it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed (Revelation 13:12, HCSB)” and tell “those who live on the earth to make an image of the beast who had the sword wound and yet lived (Revelation 13:14, HCSB).” These phrases also indicate that the resurrection of the Antichrist will occur and be used effectively to deceive the people into worshipping him. Dr. Jeremiah (2019) also notes that it is at this time that the False Prophet sets up an economic system that “requires everyone—small and great, rich and poor, free and slave—to be given a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark (Revelation 13:16-17, HCSB).”

Another possible aspect of the great deception described in 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 could be a result of Satan and his demons being cast down to earth after their defeat in the war in heaven (Revelation 12:7-12). It is possible that these demons could manifest themselves as extraterrestrials. They would promote the lie that they created life on earth and that the account in Genesis 1-2 that God created the universe is false. Their appearance would hasten the destruction of the harlot religion and they would promote the False Prophet's plans to compel mankind to worship the Antichrist. This, in turn, would also aid the Antichrist in his plans to overthrow the last vestiges of the Roman alliance, leaving the Antichrist in total control of the government.

At this point, the 144,000 witnesses that had been sealed and protected by God (Revelation 7) are now “redeemed from the human race as the firstfruits for God and the Lamb (Revelation 14:4, HCSB).” Scripture is silent as to whether these witnesses are raptured or martyred by the Antichrist for their testimony. It would stand to reason that they would then stand before the Bema Seat of Christ at this point. Again, scripture is silent on this point, but this fact is supported in that they are seen in heaven with Christ and are referenced as the ‘firstfruits’ (Revelation 14:1-4).



Interestingly, LaHaye & Parker (2014) believe that this group of 144,000 believers is different from those referenced in Revelation 7 because this scene is in heaven, not earth, and they have both the Father and Son written on their foreheads, rather than just the Father as stated in Revelation 7. However, Revelation 14:3 states that they had already been redeemed. Also, having come to Christ during the Tribulation, they would also be sealed with the names of both the Father and the Son at this point. Therefore, the interpretation by LaHaye & Parker (2014) does not seem necessary, nor correct. It also does not seem reasonable to introduce a new group of witnesses through an obscure reference to what was written on their foreheads, which could be easily misinterpreted. Additionally, having this be the same group of 144,000 witnesses makes more logical sense in the grand scheme of the prophetic timeline because the work of spreading the gospel that had been performed by these 144,000 witnesses is now open to be performed by three angels (Revelation 14:6-13) that bring even greater authority to the message, and therefore more condemnation on those that reject it.

### **The Bowl Judgments**

As with the seal judgments, the sounding of the seventh trumpet judgment brings forth the bowl judgments. However, given the extreme nature of these judgments and the impacts to life on earth, it is likely that the bowl judgments do not occur until the second half of the Great Tribulation, with the majority of them occurring at very end of the Great Tribulation. Additional justification for this view is that the 144,000 witnesses must first be redeemed (Revelation 14:1-5) and the three angels need time to spread the gospel (Revelation 14:6-7), declare the destruction of the harlot religion (Revelation 14:8, 17:16), and warn of the repercussions for taking the mark of the beast throughout the world (Revelation 14:9-11). With these proclamations, God provides comfort to those that reject the Antichrist and keep God's commands and remain faithful to Jesus even though

they know that martyrdom will be the result of that decision (Revelation 14:12-13, 20:4). During this time the bowl judgments are also prepared (Revelation 15).

With these assumptions, the first bowl judgment most likely occurs sometime early in the second half of the Great Tribulation while the three angels are still spreading the gospel as a final warning to repent. When the first bowl judgment is poured out, “severely painful sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image (Revelation 16:2, HCSB),” which covers the entire body and are incurable (Deuteronomy 28:35). It is possible that these sores are a reference to a viral pandemic because other sources, such as chemical or nuclear, would be seen as being caused by man, not God. Since this judgment only affects those that accepted the mark of the beast, it would appear that this virus or infection is linked to either how the mark is applied, its composition, or to the universal healthcare services afforded the bearer. At some point after the first bowl judgment is poured out and before the second bowl judgment is poured out, the harvest of the earth (Revelation 14:14-20) begins. This harvest concludes in the final days of the Great Tribulation after the three angels complete their work of spreading the gospel. It is during this time when the remaining bowl judgments are poured out.

The remaining bowl judgments are so devastating that they can only occur during the last days of the Great Tribulation. When the second bowl judgment is poured out into the sea, it will turn to blood like a dead man's, and all life in the sea will die (Revelation 16:3). When the third bowl judgment is poured out into the rivers and springs of water, they will become blood (Revelation 16:4-7). One possible way that these judgments manifest is through volcanic activities, such as the eruption of an underwater super volcano. When the fourth bowl judgment is poured out onto the sun, people will be burned by the intense heat (Revelation 16:8-9). It is likely that at this point the earth's protective ozone layer has been destroyed. This type of judgement would then be seen if the sun enters an active phase with large solar flares. Sustaining

life will now be extremely difficult with all of the water on earth poisoned and intense solar radiation burning everything.

When the fifth bowl judgment is poured out onto Babylon, which is the throne of the Antichrist, his kingdom will be plunged into darkness. Since the Antichrist's kingdom is global by this time, this judgment is also global. This judgment may be caused by a coronal mass ejection (CME) from the fourth bowl judgment's solar flare that would have effects similar to a massive electromagnetic pulse (EMP) that destroys all electronics. So, in addition to the continuing pain from the boils of the first bowl judgment, people are now tormented by having the global economy shut down because the means to execute transactions has been removed. (Revelation 16:10-11). When the sixth bowl judgment is poured out on the Euphrates river, it is dried up to prepare for the final battle of Armageddon and allow the kings of the east, coming from countries in Asia such as Korea and China, to cross unhindered (Revelation 16:12; Isaiah 11:15). Along with this, three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouths of Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet (Revelation 16:13) to rally the Antichrist's forces and assemble them for war. They are "spirits of demons performing signs, who travel to the kings of the whole world to assemble them for the battle of the great day of God, the Almighty...at the place called in Hebrew, Armagedon (Revelation 16:14,16, HCSB)."

As the Antichrist gathers his armies to destroy Israel (cf. Daniel 11:40-45; Joel 3:2,9-14; Zechariah 14:1-2), God laughs at them (Psalm 2:1-6) and pours out the seventh bowl judgment into the air, which causes flashes of lightning and rumblings of thunder. There will also be a severe earthquake like no other since man has been on the earth, such that islands and mountains will disappear, and every city will be leveled. Additionally, one hundred-pound hailstones will fall from the sky (Revelation 16:17-21; Job 38:22-23). It appears that the epicenter of the earthquake is centered on Rome because "the great city split into three parts...Babylon the Great was

remembered in God's presence; He gave her the cup filled with the wine of His fierce anger (Revelation 16:19, HCSB).” These are extinction level events and it is almost impossible to imagine the utter devastation wrought by these judgments.

Given the state of the earth and humanity after the bowl judgments, it is hard to believe that there is any fight left in those that rebel against God, yet the Antichrist and all the people of the earth are still intent upon waging war with Jesus and His army. This also does not stop the Antichrist from pursuing the first phase of his campaign, which is to destroy Israel in an attempt to prevent Jesus from returning. As the Antichrist advances on Jerusalem, the Antichrist's armies are thrown into chaos (Zechariah 12:1-9). This chaos either causes orders to be confused such that part of the Antichrist's army believes that the enemy is now located in Babylon or they believe that the Antichrist has double-crossed them and attacked them. Due to this confusion, a coalition from the north destroys Babylon (cf. Jeremiah 50:9,41-43,51:31-32; Revelation 18:1-8) such that it will be desolate like Sodom and Gomorrah (Isaiah 13:19) and all the nations mourn (Revelation 18:9-19). This is in accordance with the prophecy that “Babylon the great city will be thrown down violently and never be found again (Revelation 18:21, HCSB).” With the destruction of Babylon there is rejoicing in heaven (Revelation 18:20,19:1-5).

### **The Marriage Supper of the Lamb**

As these events are occurring on earth, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:6-10) takes place in heaven. As noted earlier, Jesus frequently referred to Himself as a bridegroom (cf. Matthew 9:15, 22:2-14, 25:1-13; Mark 2:19-20; Luke 5:34-35, 14:15-24; John 3:29), with the church portrayed as His virgin bride (2 Corinthians 11:2). This is the third and final phase of the wedding between Christ and His church. The marriage takes place in heaven sometime between the rapture and Jesus' return at the end of the tribulation period. As illustrated by the wedding in Cana (John 2:1-2), the marriage supper may go on for days. Attendees will include the Old

Testament saints who have yet to be resurrected, but whose souls are in heaven (Revelation 19:9). The first phase was completed when Jesus paid the dowry to God the Father through His crucifixion on the cross and each individual became betrothed by accepting Jesus as their savior. The second phase will be completed when Jesus returns for His bride with the rapture.

### **The Judgment of Israel**

While the Marriage Supper of the Lamb is taking place in heaven, the war on earth continues and God concludes His judgment of Israel (Ezekiel 20:34-38). The Antichrist regroups his forces after having been thrown into chaos by God and defeats Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:2). He then moves against the Jewish remnant that had fled at the midpoint of the tribulation period (Matthew 24:15-22), most likely to Masada. With the Antichrist and his forces advancing on the remnant of the Jews, God lifts the spiritual blindness from them (cf. Joel 2:28-29; Romans 11:25-27). The Jewish leaders will then call for the nation to repent (Hosea 6:1-3), and with that, the Jews will realize their error in attempting to earn righteousness through the law instead of building a faith relationship with Christ (Galatians 2:15-16, 3:2,5,10) because failure through the law is inevitable (James 2:10; Romans 9:31-32). They will realize that Jesus was their Messiah (Isaiah 53:1-9) and they will mourn (Zechariah 12:10-14) because they rejected Him when he did not fit their preconceived ideas of what He should be (Matthew 12:9-14,22-24). Israel will confess her national sin (cf. Leviticus 26:40-42; Jeremiah 3:11-25) and they will cry out for Christ to save them (cf. Hosea 5:15; Matthew 23:37-39), who will deliver them (Romans 10:13-14; Joel 3:18-21). Jesus then returns to earth in glory as he had ascended by arriving on the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:9-11; Zechariah 14:3-4) for all to see (cf. Revelation 1:7; Matthew 24:30) and accompanied by great signs in the heavens (Matthew 24:29). With His second coming, the stage is set for the Battle of Armageddon.

### The Battle of Armageddon

GotQuestions (“What is the battle of Armageddon?”, 2020) states that the word ‘Armageddon’ comes from a Hebrew word Har-Magedone, which means ‘Mount Megiddo,’ but the exact location of the valley of Armageddon is unclear because there is no mountain called Megiddo. However, since ‘Har’ can also mean hill, GotQuestions (“What is the battle of Armageddon?”, 2020) believes that the most likely location for this battle is the hill country surrounding the plain of Megiddo, which is 60 miles north of Jerusalem and 18 miles southeast of Haifa, as shown in Figure 8.

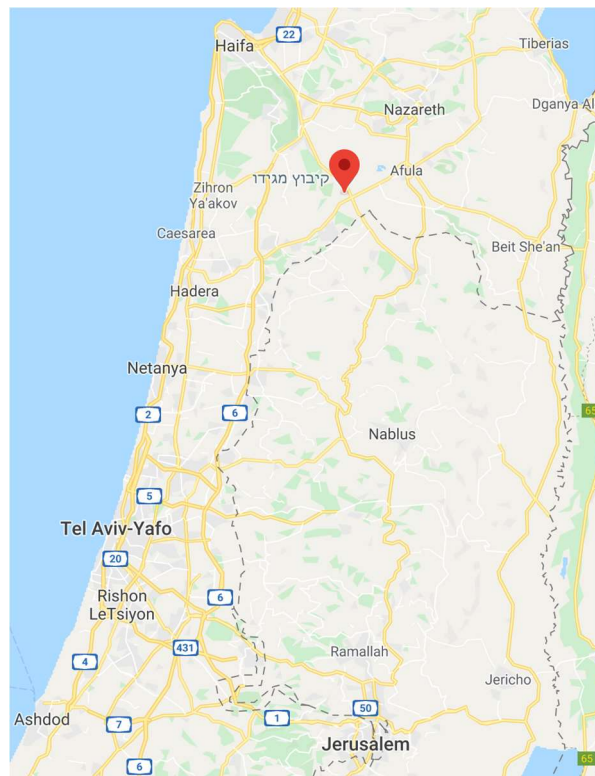


Figure 8: Location of Megiddo

GotQuestions (“What is the battle of Armageddon?”, 2020) notes that Megiddo is the location of more than 200 battles, including Barak’s victory over Canaanites (Judges 4:15), Gideon’s victory over the Midianites (Judges 7), where Saul and his sons were killed (1 Samuel 31:8), and where King Josiah was killed (2 Kings 23:29-30; 2 Chronicles 35:22). This site’s military significance

comes from its strategic location at the crossing of two military and trade routes, controlling a commonly used pass between Egypt and Mesopotamia (“Megiddo”, 2020). In modern times, Megiddo was also the site of an important battle as part of the final Allied offensive in the Sinai and Palestine Campaign against the Ottoman Empire, which led to the final defeat of the Turks in the Middle East in World War I (“Megiddo”, 2020). Rhodes (2012) notes that “Napoleon is reported to have once commented that this site perhaps the greatest battlefield he had ever witnessed.”

Jesus will return (Acts 1:9-11) to lead His army, comprised of His bride (Revelation 7:9, 17:14, 19:14), riding on a white horse for the final battle to defeat the Antichrist (Revelation 19:11-16) and save remnant of Israel. This battle is so terrible that an angel calls all the birds to feast on the dead (Revelation 19:17-18) and if Jesus does not end it and defeat the Antichrist once and for all, nobody would survive (Matthew 24:22). In the end, the Antichrist and the False Prophet are captured and thrown into the lake of fire, while their armies are killed (Revelation 19:19-21; Joel 3:12-17). The conclusion of the Battle of Armageddon marks the transition from the Great Tribulation to the millennial reign of Christ.

## **The Millennial Kingdom**

### **The Transitional Period**

Several events occur between the conclusion of the tribulation period and the beginning of the Millennial Reign of Christ. Daniel states that the “one who waits for and reaches 1,335 days is blessed (Daniel 12:12, HCSB).” Here, Daniel is referencing the length of time between the start of the Great Tribulation and the start of the Millennial Reign. Since the Great Tribulation is 1,260 days, it appears that this period is 75 days. One of the first events to take place during this period is to eliminate the influence of Satan, who is bound by an angel with a great chain and thrown into the abyss for one thousand years so that he will not be able to deceive anyone during the Millennial

Reign of Christ (Revelation 20:1-3). The next event to take place is the judgment of the nations. At this point, anyone left alive “will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats (Matthew 25:32, HCSB).” Those that accepted the mark of the beast and rejected Jesus are sent away to eternal punishment (Matthew 25:41-46). The Gentiles that did not accept the mark of the beast and remained faithful to Jesus as well as the Jewish remnant that turned to Christ at the end remain living, are given their inheritance, and are allowed to enter the Millennial Kingdom in their mortal bodies (Matthew 25:34-40) where they will continue to age, die, and have children (Isaiah 65:20) to repopulate the world. The Old Testament saints are then resurrected from the dead (Isaiah 26:19), judged at the Bema Seat of Christ (cf. Daniel 12:2), and are also given their inheritance and allowed to enter the Millennial Kingdom in their glorified bodies (Daniel 12:11-13).

Next, the temple is rebuilt for the Millennial Kingdom. Daniel states there will be 1,290 days from “the time the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up (Daniel 12:11, HCSB).” Therefore, it appears that the image of the Antichrist is removed from the temple and construction of the millennial temple (Ezekiel 40-48) begins after the first 30 days. This temple will be built by Christ (Zechariah 6:12-13), redeemed Jews (Ezekiel 43:10-11), and representatives from the Gentile nations (cf. Haggai 2:7; Zechariah 6:15) and will be the dwelling place for God (Ezekiel 37:26-28). Everyone, both Gentile and Jew, will worship at this temple (cf. Isaiah 60:6, 66:23; Zephaniah 3:10; Zechariah 2:11) and Jesus will be the focus of this worship (cf. Jeremiah 33:15-22; Zechariah 14:16-21).

Even though Mosaic law has been abolished (cf. Romans 6:14-15, 7:1-6; 1 Corinthians 9:20-21; 2 Corinthians 3:13-16; Galatians 4:1-7, 5:18; Hebrews 7-10), sacrifices will continue (cf. Isaiah 56:7, 60:7; Jeremiah 33:17-18; Zechariah 14:19-21; Malachi 3:3-4). Rhodes (2012) notes that there are two possible reasons for this. First, sacrifices could be used as a Jewish memorial to



the price Christ paid, similar to the Lord's Supper for the church (1 Corinthians 11:25-28) because scripture states that "in the sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year (Hebrews 10:3, HCSB)." One issue raised with this interpretation is that scripture also states that sacrifices are "to make atonement (Ezekiel 45:15,17,20, HCSB)" for sin. The second possibility is that sacrifices are used to remove ceremonial uncleanness and prevent defilement from polluting the purity of the temple (Ezekiel 43:18-27, 45:13-46:24). It is possible that both of these reasons could be true with the acknowledgement that atonement is no longer required.

Finally, the establishment of the governmental structure for the Millennial Kingdom takes place. Those that had died during the tribulation period are now resurrected and stand before the Bema Seat of Christ to be judged (Revelation 20:4). They, along with everyone else that died in Christ prior to the tribulation period, will then be priests and reign with Jesus over these survivors for the next one thousand years (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:2-3; Revelation 3:21, 5:9-10, 20:4-6, 22:5; 2 Timothy 2:12), thus establishing the Millennial Kingdom (cf. Isaiah 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-7).

### **The Millennial Reign**

With the start of the Millennial Reign, the groups that enter are the mortal and living saved (cf. Isaiah 1:19-20, 26:2, 60:21, 65:13-16; Malachi 3:16-18), which includes both the Jewish remnant (cf. Zechariah 13:9; Ezekiel 20:34-48) and those remaining from the Gentile nations (Matthew 25:34,46), as well as the resurrected saints that rule with Christ (Daniel 7:18,22) in their glorified bodies. The wicked have been judged and are barred from entering the kingdom (cf. Isaiah 1:19-28; 65:11-12, 66:15-16; Jeremiah 25:27-33, 30:23-24; Ezekiel 11:21, 20:33-44; Micah 5:9-15; Malachi 3:2-6,18, 4:3). Israel is restored and possesses the land promised to them (cf. Jeremiah 16:14-18, 31:31-34; Deuteronomy 29-30; Isaiah 43:5-7). Like the church in the previous age, every Jew will personally know the Lord (cf. Isaiah 29:22-24, 30:18-22, 44:1-5, 45:17;

Jeremiah 24:7, 50:19-20; Ezekiel 11:19-20, 36:25-27; Hosea 1:10-2:1, 14:4-8; Joel 2:28-32; Micah 7:8-20; Zephaniah 3:9-13; Romans 11:25-27), as do the Gentiles, through the Holy Spirit.

Christ reigns from the throne of David (cf. Isaiah 16:5; 2 Samuel 7:12-13,16, 22:51; Micah 4:1-5; Zephaniah 3:14-20; Zechariah 14, 9:10; Psalm 72:8; Isaiah 9:6-7; Daniel 7:13-14; Luke 1:32-33; Revelation 20:4) and His kingdom is characterized by righteousness (Isaiah 51:5, 60:21, 61:11), peace (Isaiah 2:4, 32:17-18), holiness (Isaiah 4:3-4, 35:8-11; Joel 3:17), truth (Psalm 25:10, 89:14, 119:160), justice (Isaiah 9:7, 46:13), obedience (Psalm 22:27-28; Isaiah 45:23; Jeremiah 31:33), and faithfulness (Psalm 85:10-11; Zechariah 8:3). Under Christ's rule, and for the first time ever, the world has a government that is perfect and effective (Isaiah 9:6-7), global (Psalm 2:6-9; Daniel 7:14), and centered in Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-4; Jeremiah 3:17; Ezekiel 48:30-35; Joel 3:16-17; Micah 4:1,6-8; Zechariah 8:2-3). Rhodes (2012) notes that with His reign, Christ brings several physical blessings, including living in a blessed and enhanced environment (Isaiah 35:1-2), having plentiful rain and food (Isaiah 30:23-24), animals living in harmony (Isaiah 11:6-7), no physical illness (Isaiah 29:18), as well as prosperity, joy, and happiness (Jeremiah 31:12-14). Along with that, Rhodes (2012) states that Christ will bestow several spiritual blessings as well. The Holy Spirit will be present and indwell all believers (Isaiah 44:3; Ezekiel 36:27, 37:14; Joel 2:28-29). Therefore, according to Rhodes (2012), everyone will have a knowledge of God (Isaiah 11:9, Habakkuk 2:14), worship Christ (Malachi 1:11; Zephaniah 3:9; Zechariah 8:23), and God's presence will be made manifest (Ezekiel 37:27-28; Zechariah 2:10-13). During this period, lifespans will increase to be like the time before the flood (cf. Genesis 5:1-32) and it will be considered a tragedy if someone dies before reaching one hundred years old (cf. Isaiah 65:20).

At the conclusion of the thousand-year reign of Christ, Satan is released to deceive the nations (Revelation 20:7-8). There is a final war that will consist of a confederation of nations, who are quickly defeated. John calls this a Gog and Magog war as a metaphor to help illustrate

the nature of this war (Rhodes, 2012). Because of the increased lifespans, those that will rebel will be like the sand of the sea, but fire will come down from heaven to consume them (Revelation 20:8-9). They will be sifted like wheat and weeds or fish in a net (cf. Matthew 13:24-30,47-50), destroying the wicked. Satan will then be thrown into the lake of fire with the Antichrist and False Prophet to be tormented for eternity (Revelation 20:10; Matthew 25:41; 2 Peter 2:4). Those that remain alive are the ones faithful to Christ, who are then given their glorified bodies. Those that died during the Millennial Reign and who were faithful to Christ are resurrected and, along with the faithful that lived through the Millennium, face judgment at the Bema Seat of Christ. The final act taken during the Millennial Reign of Christ is to hold the Great White Throne judgment for the unsaved throughout the ages (Revelation 20:11). Here, all that died without believing in Christ as their savior are resurrected (Revelation 20:5), given immortal bodies, judged according to their works (Matthew 12:36-37; Revelation 20:12-13), and thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14-15) for eternity (Matthew 25:46; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9) where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 13:41-42).

### **Eternity**

With all of God's enemies defeated, including death, eternity is then ushered in and the kingdom delivered to God the Father:

Then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to God the Father, when He abolishes all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He puts all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be abolished is death. For God has put everything under His feet. But when it says "everything" is put under Him, it is obvious that He who puts everything under Him is the exception. And when everything is subject to Christ, then the Son Himself will also be subject to the One who subjected everything to Him, so that God may be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:24-28, HCSB).

According to GotQuestions (“What does the Bible teach about the Trinity?”, 2020), it is important to note that even though Jesus is completely equal to the Father as part of the Triune God (cf. John 1:1,14, 8:58, 10:30; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 2:9; 1 John 5:20), Jesus is still under the authority of the Father (cf. Luke 22:42; John 5:36, 14:28, 20:21; 1 John 4:14; 1 Corinthians 11:3) and each have their specific roles (cf. for the Father: 1 Corinthians 8:6; John 3:16-17, 4:42, 5:17, 14:10; Revelation 1:1, 4:11; cf. for the Son: 1 Corinthians 8:6; John 1:1,3, 16:12-15; Matthew 1:21, 11:27; Colossians 1:15-18; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Revelation 1:1; cf. for the Holy Spirit: Genesis 1:2; Job 26:13; Psalm 104:30; Isaiah 61:1; John 3:6, 16:12-15; Acts 10:38; Ephesians 3:5; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Peter 1:21; Titus 3:5) as part of the Trinity. One of Jesus’ roles is to be the mediator between man and God (1 Timothy 2:5) and with this role now complete, Jesus voluntarily surrenders the kingdom to God the Father.

The current universe is cursed (Genesis 3:17-18) and subject to decay (Romans 8:20-22). Therefore, the earth, the first heaven or atmosphere (Job 35:5), and the second heaven or stellar universe (Genesis 1:17; Deuteronomy 17:3) must be renewed (cf. Psalm 102:25-26; Isaiah 51:6; Matthew 24:35; 2 Peter 3:7-13) and purified of all evil, sin, suffering, and death (Matthew 19:28; Acts 3:21; Isaiah 65:17-25; Ezekiel 28:25-26, 34:25-30). With the creation of the new heaven and earth, the sea will no longer exist (Revelation 21:1).

A new Jerusalem, described as a gigantic and brilliant jewel, will then come down from heaven (Revelation 21:2,10-21). Rhodes (2012) states that the 12 angels that guard the gates (Revelation 21:12) are doing so in their role as ministering spirits to those that have received their inheritance (Hebrews 1:14), the names of the 12 tribes of Israel that are written on the gates (Revelation 21:12) are there to remind the inhabitants that “salvation is from the Jews (John 4:22),” and the names of the apostles that are written on the foundations (Revelation 21:14) are there to remind the inhabitants that the church was built upon these Godly men (Ephesians 2:20). Based

on the measurements provided in scripture, Rhodes (2012) notes that the city will measure approximately 1500 miles by 1500 miles and be 1500 miles high, which means that it would measure approximately the distance from Canada to Mexico and from the Atlantic Ocean to the Rocky Mountains, giving it a surface area of 2.25 million square miles. This would give the city the capacity to house 20 billion residents, each having a private 75-acre cube, with plenty of room for parks, streets, and other things found in a typical city. Some scholars prefer to envision the city shaped as a pyramid and others prefer to consider it shaped as a cube because the Holy of Holies in Solomon's Temple was cube-shaped (1 Kings 6:20).

There will not be a sanctuary in the city because God will be its sanctuary (Revelation 21:22). Nor will the city need light because God's glory will illuminate it (Revelation 21:23-25, 22:5; Isaiah 60:19-20). Also, nothing profane will ever enter it (Revelation 21:26-27; Romans 4:11,13,20-24; Hebrews 10:14). Within the city, there will be a river of life that flows from the throne of God (Revelation 22:1-2), which may also be symbolic of the perpetual outpouring of spiritual blessing and the abundance of spiritual life that will characterize those who are living in the city (Rhodes, 2012). The tree of life will also be on both sides of this river, bearing twelve kinds of fruit each month and whose leaves provide healing to the nations (Revelation 22:2-3). Because this is the perfect and eternal state, the idea of healing cannot mean that there is any form of sickness or hurts that need to be renewed. Instead, it means that the tree of life promotes the enjoyment of life (Rhodes, 2012). God will dwell in the city and the people will know and serve Him (Revelation 22:3-4). They will reign forever and ever (Revelation 22:5).

### **Final Admonition**

In conclusion, John stated that he was given the prophecies in the book of Revelation by Jesus while imprisoned on the island of Patmos (Revelation 1:9-20), that those who study them will be blessed (Revelation 1:3, 22:7), that they are true because Jesus sent His angel to attest to

these events (Revelation 22:6, 16), that Jesus is coming soon (Revelation 22:7), and that the time is near for these events to occur (Revelation 1:3, 22:6). Due to the imminence of these events, John was told not to seal up the prophecies described in the book of Revelation, allowing the unrighteous to be unrighteous and the righteous to be righteous in full knowledge of these events, so that when Jesus returns, He will repay each according to their work (Revelation 22:10-12). As a final admonition, John notes that all are welcome to take the water of life freely (Revelation 22:17). However, should anyone add to these prophecies as Eve added to the word of God (Genesis 3:3), God will subject them to the plagues described in the book of Revelation and should anyone take away from these prophecies as Satan took away from the word of God (Genesis 3:4), God will take away their share of the tree of life and the holy city (Revelation 22:18-19).

## **Conclusions**

### **Signs of the Last Generation**

While it is impossible to determine the exact timing of the rapture (Matthew 24:36-51), it may be possible to determine the timing of Christ's glorious return and therefore determine an upper boundary for it. In his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul confirmed that the day and hour of the rapture cannot be known by stating:

For you yourselves know very well that the Day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. When they say, 'Peace and security,' then sudden destruction comes on them, like labor pains come on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. (1 Thessalonians 5:2-3, HCSB).

However, Paul also confirmed that believers would know the season in which Christ's return would occur by also stating: "But you, brothers, are not in the dark, for this day to overtake you like a thief (1 Thessalonians 5:4, HCSB)." Therefore, one must first determine what the signs of Christ's return are.

### **The Rebirth of Israel**

The first set of signs pointing toward Christ's imminent return center around Israel. The first of these states that the nation of Israel will be brought back into existence on a single day (Isaiah 66:7-8) and as a single unified nation with Judah (Isaiah 11:13; Ezekiel 37:22). Ezekiel 37 describes this process with the Valley of Dry Bones prophecy. As Ezekiel prophesied, "there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone (Ezekiel 37:7, HCSB)." Then, "tendons appeared on them, flesh grew, and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them (Ezekiel 37:8, HCSB)." Next he prophesied "Breath, come from the four winds and breathe into these slain so that they may live (Ezekiel 37:9, HCSB)!" Finally, Ezekiel prophesied about the reunification of Israel as one nation within the land that was promised to them (Ezekiel 37:15-28).

One can look at history and see that some of these events have been fulfilled. In 1917 the Balfour Declaration ("Balfour Declaration", 2020) announced British support for the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine (Ezekiel 37:4-8). Then, on May 14, 1948 with the Jewish Agency Chairman David Ben-Gurion declaring Israel to be a nation and the United States recognizing Israel on that same day, "the State of Israel officially came into being upon termination of the British mandate in Palestine ('State of Israel proclaimed', 2010)" as prophesied (Ezekiel 37:15-22; Isaiah 66:7-8). During the Six-Day war in 1967 ("Six-Day War", 2019), the mountains of Israel were returned to them when Israel then won the Golan Heights (Ezekiel 36:1-15). Jerusalem was recognized as Israel's capital by the U.S. in 2017 (Landler, 2017). What remains is for breath to enter them so that they come to life and stand on their feet (Ezekiel 37:9-10). This will occur with the spiritual awakening in the aftermath of the Arab-Israeli war (Isaiah 17:8).

Another sign is that Israel will have a thriving agriculture (cf. Isaiah 27:6, 35:1) and that the Dead Sea will come to life (cf. Ezekiel 47:9-10). According to Breaking Israel News (Bin

Staff, 2020), “scientists have been shocked to discover that the sinkholes appearing around the sea are quickly filling up with fish and other forms of life previously unseen in the inhospitable region.” Israel’s tourist industry also touts the country’s success in shrinking the Negev Desert over the last century, which currently covers 60% of the country, through the use of modern agriculture technology. This has turned the desert into green fields that produce a variety of crops, including cherry tomatoes that are 2-3 times sweeter than those produced elsewhere due to the unique growing conditions. The Negev is also home to fish farms and olive groves. Israel is now also one of the world’s leading citrus producers.

A third sign is that Jerusalem will be the center of world conflict (cf. Zechariah 12:2-3) and there can be no doubt that this is true. Every U.S. president since Jimmy Carter has attempted to broker peace treaties between Israel and her neighbors. While each has had varying success, none have been fully accepted, let alone lasting. One reason for this is that all of the plans require Israel to give up land for peace. Biblically, these are all doomed because the Bible states that once God gives Israel back the land promised to her, it will always remain in her possession (cf. Ezekiel 36:12).

A fourth sign is that the IDF will be a great army (cf. Ezekiel 37:10; Zechariah 12:6,8). Unfortunately, peace with Israel’s neighbors has not been realized. Therefore, Israel has had to rely on their military to ensure their survival. Despite Israel being such a small country and surrounded by vastly larger enemies, Israel has fought many wars against superior forces and has won all of them. This includes the 1948 War of Independence, the 1967 Six-Day War, the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the 1986 and 2006 Lebanon Wars, and the 2008 Gaza War, along with many other smaller skirmishes.

Recent events also indicate that the time horizon is short for the remaining prophetic events to occur. While the rapture would most certainly reduce or eliminate U.S. influence in the Middle



East, several events prior to the rapture could also reduce U.S. influence in the region as well. For example, in the wake of the U.S. drone strike that killed Iran's General Soleimani, Iraq demanded that U.S. forces withdraw (Morgan, 2020), which could have had, and may still have, a destabilizing effect. U.S. influence in the region could also be eliminated prior to the rapture if God raises up a U.S. president that is not supportive of Israel (cf. Daniel 2:21). Also, there appears to be increased interest by Russia to exert control over oil fields in the region (Wolfgang, 2020). As noted in Ezekiel 38:11-12, seizing spoil and plunder is a major factor in Russian involvement in the Gog and Magog war.

Lastly, prophetic events are starting to be seen. For example, Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) just recently signed a peace agreement normalizing relations between the two countries (JNS, 2020). This is the third country to sign such a deal after Egypt and Jordan, with the last agreement being signed by Jordan in 1994. President Trump has hinted that additional Arab states may soon sign similar agreements. While this all sounds positive for peace in the region, it may end up causing further instability with Turkey and Iran because of their backing of the Palestinians and their belief that these peace agreements harm the Palestinian push for an independent state (Sidman, 2020). This increased instability would then lead to the prophesied Arab-Israeli war.

### **The State of the World**

In addition to the signs concerning Israel during the last generation, there are several signs regarding the people, technology, environment, and government leading up to Christ's return. Paul's second letter to Timothy provides a scathing description of the attitude of people during this time:

But know this: Difficult times will come in the last days. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,

unloving, irreconcilable, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, without love for what is good, traitors, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to the form of godliness but denying its power. Avoid these people! For among them are those who worm their way into households and capture idle women burdened down with sins, led along by a variety of passions, always learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth (2 Timothy 3:1-7, HCSB).

It is clear from this description that this generation is self-centered and wants nothing to do with God (2 Timothy 3:1-4). Even though they may profess faith, they are at best hypocrites (2 Timothy 3:5) and at worst professing a false faith (2 Timothy 4:3-4) or occult practices (1 Timothy 4:1-2). Also, though they may be well educated, they have no understanding of truth (2 Timothy 3:6-7). With this, many false messiahs will come to deceive the world (Matthew 24:23-24) and deny the second coming of Christ (2 Peter 3:3-4). It would be impossible to deny that all this is currently seen in the world today, especially in light of the general disregard for unborn human life (Shaw, 2019) and the recent rioting, looting, and gaslighting of history by Marxist and anarchist groups like Black Lives Matter (Park, 2020) and Antifa (Arama, 2020). From a U.S. perspective, this moral decline will have far reaching effects. The impacts caused by the chaos created will affect both believers and nonbelievers alike. Also, it will bring judgment on the country as a whole, removing the U.S. as a superpower. This may be one reason why the U.S. is unable or unwilling to support Israel in the Gog and Magog war (Ezekiel 38:13).

The next sign that this is the last generation is that the technology necessary to fulfill certain prophecies in Revelation currently exist. For example, this is the first generation to have nuclear weapons which allow mankind to destroy the world (cf. Revelation 8:7). Computers are powerful enough now to track all financial transactions and the use of digital currency allows for instantaneous transactions and borderless transfer-of-ownership, but can only be owned and spent

using electronic wallets or designated networks, giving the Antichrist complete control of the economy (Salus, 2019). Additionally, Radio-Frequency Identification (RFID) can be used to create the mark of the beast that controls the ability to buy and sell in a global cashless economy (Revelation 13:16-17). Also, the global Internet as well as cable and satellite news will allow everyone to see the two witnesses martyred, resurrected, and raptured live (cf. Revelation 11:7-14). Dr. Jeremiah (2019) notes that this rapture will be visible for all to see, similar to when Christ ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:9-11), but unlike the rapture of the church which is in the blink of an eye (1 Corinthians 15:52).

Through these technological advances, the gospel is being spread throughout the world in every language through online and electronic versions of the Bible as well as through global broadcasts of Christian programs via the Internet (cf. Revelation 14:6). This will be an ever-increasing method for spreading the gospel as the world gets closer to the tribulation period. Paul has shown that significant events, such as the resurrection of Christ, will lead people to seek information about prophecy (cf. Acts 2:14-42, 8:26-40, 13:27-31, 17:2-3,10-12, 18:5, 26:22-27). The rapture of the church will present another significant opportunity to spread the gospel and the best way to find that information will be through the Internet. However, while many will read the gospel and come to know Christ as their savior, many more will still be deceived and turn away from Christ. Because of this generation's reliance on technology, they will put their faith in science rather than Christ. Demons potentially posing as extraterrestrials will further promote this belief. There are many reports in today's news that is already promoting the idea that extraterrestrials exist, including the declassification of UFO sightings by the U.S. military (Palwyk, 2020).

Another sign that this is the final generation is that there will be major environmental changes, such as famines and earthquakes. The signs of these birth pains as described by Jesus in the Olivet discourse (Matthew 24:7-8) are clearly visible. According to data from the U.S.

National Centers for Environmental Information, as shown in Figure 9, earthquakes are on the rise (NOAA, 2020).

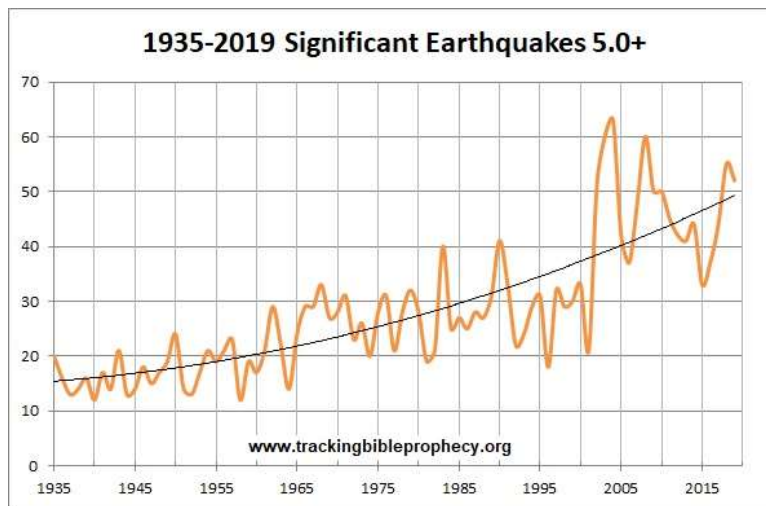


Figure 9: Earthquake Trends

Another prime example of these birth pains is the recent COVID-19 virus scare. The fear of this virus is causing people to panic and hoard supplies (Ryan, 2020), as well as causing markets to tumble (Nguyen, 2020).

There also appears to be direct evidence that the battle of Armageddon is close at hand. As the battle begins, Revelation 19:17-18 states that an angel calls all the birds to feast on the dead. According to CNN (Robertson, 2014), 540 species of birds, including 25 species of raptors, are migrating to Galilee, west of the Golan Heights, in what the author describes as miraculous numbers due to the fact that Israel started restoring the wetlands in the 1990s. Many sources estimate that 500 million birds migrate to the area, with many staying the entire winter, due to the plentiful food, the favorable winds and thermals needed for migration, and Israel's strategic location between Europe and Africa.

One final sign that this is the last generation is the establishment of a one-world government (cf. Daniel 2:31-45, 7:1-48; Revelation 13:1-3, 17:9-10). With the moral decline causing countries such as the United States to lose influence in the world, the Antichrist is able to fill this power void

by establishing a worldwide government. Many people wonder how the Antichrist will establish his one-world government and persuade Israel to sign a peace deal. While the underlying geopolitical conditions that give rise to the Antichrist are unknowable, one must only look at the 2020 COVID-19 virus scare to see how the Antichrist will rise to power. Without faith in God, fear will grip the world due to some global disaster and people will mistakenly flock to anyone that provides a message of hope that can calm the panic and stop the chaos. The Antichrist will masterfully exploit that fear to his advantage and there will be no question about taking the mark of the beast if it means having safety, stability, and necessities such as food, clothing, and shelter. Instead of providing salvation, faith in the Antichrist will only ensure that the war and pestilence that people fear are inflicted upon them. However, if one would only have faith in God, He has promised to protect believers:

He Himself will deliver you from the hunter's net, from the destructive plague. He will cover you with His feathers; you will take refuge under His wings. His faithfulness will be a protective shield. You will not fear the terror of the night, the arrow that flies by day, the plague that stalks in darkness, or the pestilence that ravages at noon. Though a thousand fall at your side and ten thousand at your right hand, the pestilence will not reach you. You will only see it with your eyes and witness the punishment of the wicked. Because you have made the Lord—my refuge, the Most High—your dwelling place, no harm will come to you; no plague will come near your tent. For He will give His angels orders concerning you, to protect you in all your ways. They will support you with their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the young lion and the serpent (Psalm 91:3-13, HCSB).

Not only has God promised to protect believers from the upcoming trials, which include the birth pains prior to the rapture of the church as well as the judgments during the tribulation period for

those that come to know Him after the rapture, but He can also be trusted to fulfill those promises (cf. Genesis 28:15; Numbers 23:19; Joshua 21:45, 23:14; Psalms 119:140, 145:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:24; Hebrews 10:23; 2 Corinthians 1:20) unlike the Antichrist.

### **Proposed Future Timeline**

In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus stated: “This generation will certainly not pass away until all these things take place (Matthew 24:34, HCSB).” In this context ‘all these things’ references everything that He has discussed up to that point, which includes the birth pangs prior to the tribulation period, the tribulation period itself, and His return. Also, ‘this generation’ references the generation that witnesses all of these events. The first question that must be answered, then, is what is the length of a generation? According to Genesis 6:3, God set a generation to be 120 years. The next question that must be answered is when does or did this generation begin? Jesus made this statement in the context of the parable from the fig tree, stating: “As soon as its branch becomes tender and sprouts leaves, you know that summer is near. In the same way, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near—at the door (Matthew 24:32-33, HCSB)!” The reference to a fig tree is a representation of Israel.

It may be possible to more explicitly narrow down the timeframe for these events as noted in Figure 11 in Appendix A. If one takes the Balfour Declaration as the point where the branches of the fig tree become tender and sprouts leaves (Matthew 24:32) and one uses 120 years as the length of the final generation (Genesis 6:3), this generation will start in 1917 and culminate in 2037 with Christ's return. Therefore, the Tribulation would start seven years prior, in 2030. Additionally, if the Gog and Magog war occurs three-and-a-half years before the start of the tribulation period, then this war would need to start around 2026. The maximum upper boundary for the rapture is the spiritual awakening in the wake of the Arab-Israeli war. This puts the upper boundary for the rapture prior to the Gog and Magog war at around 2026. If the rapture does occur

prior to the Arab-Israeli war, the time horizon could be significantly shorter because of the time needed for Israel to feel safe and disarm (Ezekiel 28:24-26, 38:8,11,14) before the Gog and Magog war and for Israel to rebuild the temple prior to the start of the tribulation period.

Some scholars attempt to apply biblical numerology to prophetic timeline events. While it is unclear whether the application of biblical numerology is appropriate in this context, additional support for this timeline is based on this theory. Those that ascribe to this theory point to events such as the 70-year exile of Israel to Babylon (cf. Daniel 9:1-2; Jeremiah 25:11, 29:10; 2 Chronicles 36:20-21). In this example, the seventy years of punishment is based on the seventy sabbath years that Israel ignored due to their disobedience as supported by Leviticus 25:1-7 and 26:33-35 (Treybig, 2020). Cahn (2019) applies this construct in this context by noting that the length of time between the Balfour Declaration in 1917 and the Six-Day War in 1967 is one 50-year jubilee (Leviticus 25:8-12) and that the time between the Six-Day War and the recognition of Jerusalem in 2017 as Israel's capital is one additional jubilee. Using this construct, a reasonable assumption for the timing of the upcoming Arab-Israeli war could be one jubilee following the 1973 Yom Kippur War ("Yom Kippur War", 2019). This would place the Arab-Israeli war in 2023, which would also be one sabbath (Leviticus 25:1-7) prior to the start of the tribulation period. However, this does not appear to be a biblically sound approach.

A more biblically sound use of Jeremiah's prophecy for a 70-year exile of Israel (Jeremiah 25:8-12) might be to apply Ezekiel's prophecy for Israel's punishment along with Jeremiah's prophecy. Ezekiel was commanded by God to lie bound, first for 390 days on his left side and then 40 days on his right, for a period of 430 days with each day representing a year of exile from Israel (Ezekiel 4:4-8). These two prophecies can be correlated through the principles outlined in Leviticus 26:14-43, which states that if Israel did not follow God's laws, then they would be defeated by their enemies who would rule over them (Leviticus 26:17) and that if Israel still

remained disobedient to God, then God would punish them seven times over (Leviticus 26:18,21,23,28). Using this formula, Israel was exiled for 70 years, starting in 606 BC (2 Kings 24:1; Daniel 1:1-7), and ending in 537 BC with Cyrus' decree to allow the Jews to return to their homeland (2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4). This matches Jeremiah's prophecy because biblical years are based on a 360-day year rather than a 365.24-day solar year. At this point the Jews have returned to the land but are not under self-rule. This leaves 360 years remaining on Ezekiel's prophecy, which is now multiplied by seven to give a remaining 2,520 biblical years, or 2,484 solar years, of exile. By adding the remaining time of exile, it is shown that Ezekiel prophesied that Israel would be reborn and be under self-rule in 1948. This also corresponds to Israel's prophesied rebirth in Ezekiel's Valley of the Dry Bones prophecy. (Ezekiel 37:11-14).

Interestingly, as shown in Figure 10, the same calculations regarding Ezekiel's prophecy can be used for the restoration of Jerusalem.

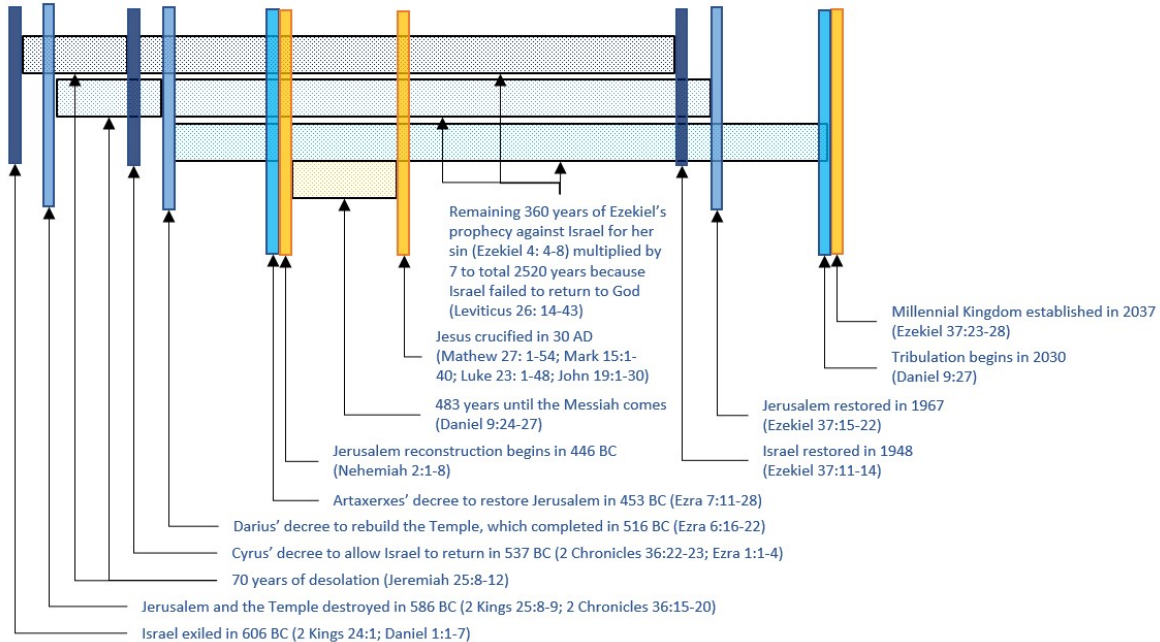


Figure 10: Events Prophesied by Biblical Numerology

Both Jerusalem and temple were destroyed in 586 BC (2 Kings 25:8-9; 2 Chronicles 36:15-20). Darius then decreed that the temple be rebuilt in 516 BC (Ezra 6:16-22), 70 years later, which



means that by using the same formula as with the restoration of Israel, a restoration event was prophesied to occur in 1967. In this case, history shows that Israel reclaimed Jerusalem and the Golan Heights during the Six-Day War in 1967, which corresponds to Ezekiel's prophecy about the reunification of Israel in the Valley of the Dry Bones prophecy (Ezekiel 37:15-22), and that the restoration of the temple is still yet to come. If one starts the first 70 years of punishment for the restoration of the temple with Darius' decree to rebuild it in 516 BC, one sees that this concludes in 446 BC when the reconstruction of Jerusalem begins under Nehemiah (Nehemiah 2:1-8). Again, following the same formula used for the restoration of Israel, it is shown that the restoration of final temple, which is the only remaining divinely sanctioned temple, will occur in 2037 at the proposed start of the Millennial Reign of Christ. This event is also identified in Ezekiel's Valley of the Dry Bones prophecy (Ezekiel 37:23-28). Another interesting correlating series of events shows that if one uses Artaxerxes' decree to restore Jerusalem in 453 BC (Ezra 7:11-28) as the starting point for the 2,520-year period of punishment, then the concluding event matches the proposed beginning of the tribulation period in 2030 (Daniel 9:27).

Also tied to this series is the prediction of Christ's crucifixion. The rebuilding of Jerusalem in 446 BC (Nehemiah 2:1-8) is the start of Daniel's seventy sevens prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27), where the Messiah was to be put to death at the conclusion of 69 sevens ("What are the seventy sevens in Daniel 9:24-27?", 2020). Adding sixty-nine sevens, or 483 360-day biblical years, from the time Jerusalem was rebuilt, results in the prediction that Christ would be crucified or cut off in 30 AD. Based on the start of John the Baptist's ministry, Emperor Tiberius' reign, and Pontius Pilate's rule, many scholars have also concluded through historical methods that Jesus was crucified in 30 AD ("In what year did Jesus die?", 2020), which would be exactly 2000 years to the start of the proposed tribulation period. However, there is debate regarding the exact date that the decree was given to start Daniel's 483-year prophecy as well as the length of Jesus' ministry,

which leads other scholars believe that Jesus was crucified in 33 AD (“In what year did Jesus die?”, 2020). Given that scriptural support for both the application of numerology and the timing of Jesus’ crucifixion to this context is unclear, it is best to consider these facts to be interesting coincidences rather than evidence either for or against a particular timeline of end-times events.

There is another potentially correlating event involving the Six-Day War. Scripture states: “Our lives last seventy years or, if we are strong, eighty years. Even the best of them are struggle and sorrow; indeed, they pass quickly and we fly away (Psalm 90, HCSB).” If the seventy-year lifespan described in this psalm can be taken to represent the lifespan of Israel in the last days and if the life of Israel began with the reacquisition of Jerusalem and Samaria (i.e. the West Bank) in 1967, then the death of the nation would occur seventy years later in 2037. This matches the time period described for the end of the final generation. Also, if it is valid to apply the seventy-year lifespan to Israel, it would help to explain why seventy years is allocated for punishment before the seven-fold increase is imposed (cf. Jeremiah 25:8-12; Ezekiel 4:4-8; Leviticus 26:14-43) as one lifespan is allocated by God for repentance.

One concern with the proposed timeline is that if the Arab-Israeli war occurs around 2023, the forty years of Egypt’s desolation would extend well into the millennium. It is tempting to view the beginning of the millennium as a hard breakpoint for judgements such as this, but Salus (2019) does not see this as an issue and scripture does not preclude it. Additionally, adjusting the prophetic timeline to allow Egypt’s judgment to conclude at the beginning of the millennium causes more problematic issues with the timeline than it solves.

First, the Arab-Israeli war would need to occur 33 years prior to the beginning of the tribulation period. While the rapture of the church could still occur prior to the Arab-Israeli war, that would also be 33 years prior to the start of the tribulation period, which seems unlikely. This can be resolved by assuming that the spiritual awakening occurs closer to the beginning of the

tribulation period. Here, the rapture could occur after the Arab-Israeli war and within close proximity to the tribulation period, just prior to the Gog and Magog War, and be the catalyst that brings about the spiritual awakening. One additional supporting factor for this scenario is the fact that there is much more time available for Israel to feel safe and disarm (Ezekiel 28:24-26, 38:8,11,14) because there are decades separating the Arab-Israeli war and the Gog and Magog war.

However, one significant argument against this scenario is that the timeline must start with the establishment of Israel as a nation in 1948, which would put Christ's return in 2068, the start of the tribulation period in 2061, the Gog and Magog War in 2057, and the Arab-Israeli war around 2028. If one agrees with the prophetic timeline for Christ's return in 2037 based on Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's prophecies outlined earlier, then this timeline cannot be correct. Additionally, by using the 1917 Balfour Declaration as the starting point, the Arab-Israeli war would have had to have occurred in 1997, which provides further evidence that this interpretation is incorrect. Ezekiel's prophecy on the gathering of the bones (Ezekiel 37) also seems to fit better with the 1917 Balfour Declaration as a starting point as opposed to the establishment of Israel as a nation in 1948. Therefore, allowing Egypt's judgment to continue into the millennium seems more likely to be the correct interpretation.

Salus (2018) offers another unique interpretation of the tribulation period. This theory proposes that the start of the tribulation period does not start with the opening of the first seal because the tribulation period starts with the establishment of the peace agreement between the Antichrist and Israel (Daniel 9:27). This does not necessarily occur when the Antichrist is identified with the opening of the first seal. According to this theory the first five seal judgments occur pre-tribulation. The second, third, and fourth seal judgments still represent war, famine, and death respectively. The fifth seal judgment now represents those that are martyred after the rapture

and before the beginning of the tribulation period by those of the harlot religion, rather than those that are martyred during the tribulation period. According to Salus (2018), it is with the opening of the sixth seal that the tribulation period begins. The scriptural justification for this belief states:

And they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of the One seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, because the great day of Their wrath has come! And who is able to stand (Revelation 6:16-17, HCSB)?"

According to this chronology, the ten-nation alliance that reconstitutes the Roman empire forms after the Gog and Magog war. Shortly after, the Antichrist rises to power with the opening of the first seal and in accordance with Daniel 7:24. There will be religious wars and famine where many are martyred for their beliefs, which will persuade Israel to sign a peace treaty with the Antichrist's world government.

Additional support for this theory comes from Zephaniah: "Be silent in the presence of the Lord God, for the Day of the Lord is near (Zephaniah 1:7, HCSB)." This corresponds to the thirty minutes of silence when the seventh seal is opened (Revelation 8:1) and would seem to indicate that the tribulation period begins with the trumpet judgments after the 144,000 witnesses have been sealed (Revelation 7:1-8). This interpretation is not inconsistent with Salus' (2018) theory and may just be a refinement on it. It could be that with the opening of the sixth seal, humanity realizes that the tribulation period is about to start, and it is with the opening of the seventh seal, which ushers in the trumpet judgments (Revelation 8:2-6), that the tribulation period actually begins.

There are advantages to this chronology. It provides an explanation for why Israel makes this peace treaty and it gives time for the Antichrist to come onto the scene and establish a world government. Also, it explains why the martyrs cry out wondering when judgment avenging their blood would occur because it would still be unknown when the tribulation period would start. However, the phrase 'day of the Lord' identifies events that occur during a period of time at the

end of history (Isaiah 7:18-25) when God's will and purpose for mankind will be fulfilled ("What is the day of the Lord?", 2020), which would include the seal judgments. This theory also does not appear to be a view supported by other biblical scholars, so it should be adopted with caution.

### **Final Remarks**

It is with earnest hope that this analysis reflects the truth of scripture and does not add to nor take away from the word of God. While one must always use extreme caution when attempting to align prophecy with history, and especially when one attempts to assign dates to future events, this timeline seems to fit scripture. Salus (2019) states that interpreting biblical prophecy is like looking through a water glass in that no matter how clear the glass is, the view is always distorted. Because of this, one must be open to making adjustments as new scriptural facts are revealed and not be dogmatic about prophetic interpretation. Over the last two thousand years believers have been told that the return of Christ is imminent. Unfortunately, this has caused people to lose the sense of urgency and more importantly, their preparedness for Christ's return. Peter wrote about this in his second letter:

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" (2 Peter 3:3-4).

Jesus also prophesied this in the parable of the ten virgins: "Since the groom was delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep (Matthew 25:5, HCSB)." The most important takeaway from this analysis is much broader than any of the specifics of the timeline itself. Regardless of whether the assumptions made in determining the prophetic timeline are correct, and especially for those concerning dates, if providing this timeline renews that sense of urgency and preparedness (Matthew 25:6-7), then the goal of this analysis has been achieved.

Jesus commanded this generation to watch for His return (cf. Mark 13:35-37) and used several parables to illustrate this point, including the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13), the thief in the night (Luke 12:39-40), and the master and his servants (Luke 12:35-38,42-46; Matthew 24:42-51). Peter also addressed this in his second letter (2 Peter 3:5-9). He reminded people that God works on His own time:

With the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a day is like a thousand years is like one day. The Lord does not delay His promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:8-9, HCSB).

All the signs pointing to Christ's imminent return are present and this is the first generation for which this is true. So, look up now that these signs are seen (Luke 21:28) because the kingdom is near (Luke 21:29-33). What is most important is that there are no preconditions that preclude the start of the Arab-Israeli war, and with it the rapture of the church. Therefore, it is critical that people realize that the bridegroom is here and rapture is close at hand because being unprepared and missing this condemns one to living through the horrors of the tribulation period. Additionally, without repentance and acceptance of Jesus as one's savior though His completed work on the cross where He paid the price for all of man's sins – past, present, and future (cf. Ephesians 2:8-9; John 14:6; Acts 4:12, 16:31; Galatians 2:16; Hebrews 10:10; 1 John 2:2), the final result will be judgment and being cast into the lake of fire for eternity (cf. Romans 6:23; John 3:36; Revelation 20:11-15). Salvation cannot come from one's works (cf. Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:28, 4:5, 5:1,8; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:4-5). Only time will tell if this interpretation of scripture and the prophetic timeline is correct. However, one fact remains true; while the date of the rapture is unknown and unknowable, the return of Jesus truly is imminent. Therefore, be prepared by having faith in Christ because He will return as a thief in the night (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11).

Appendix A

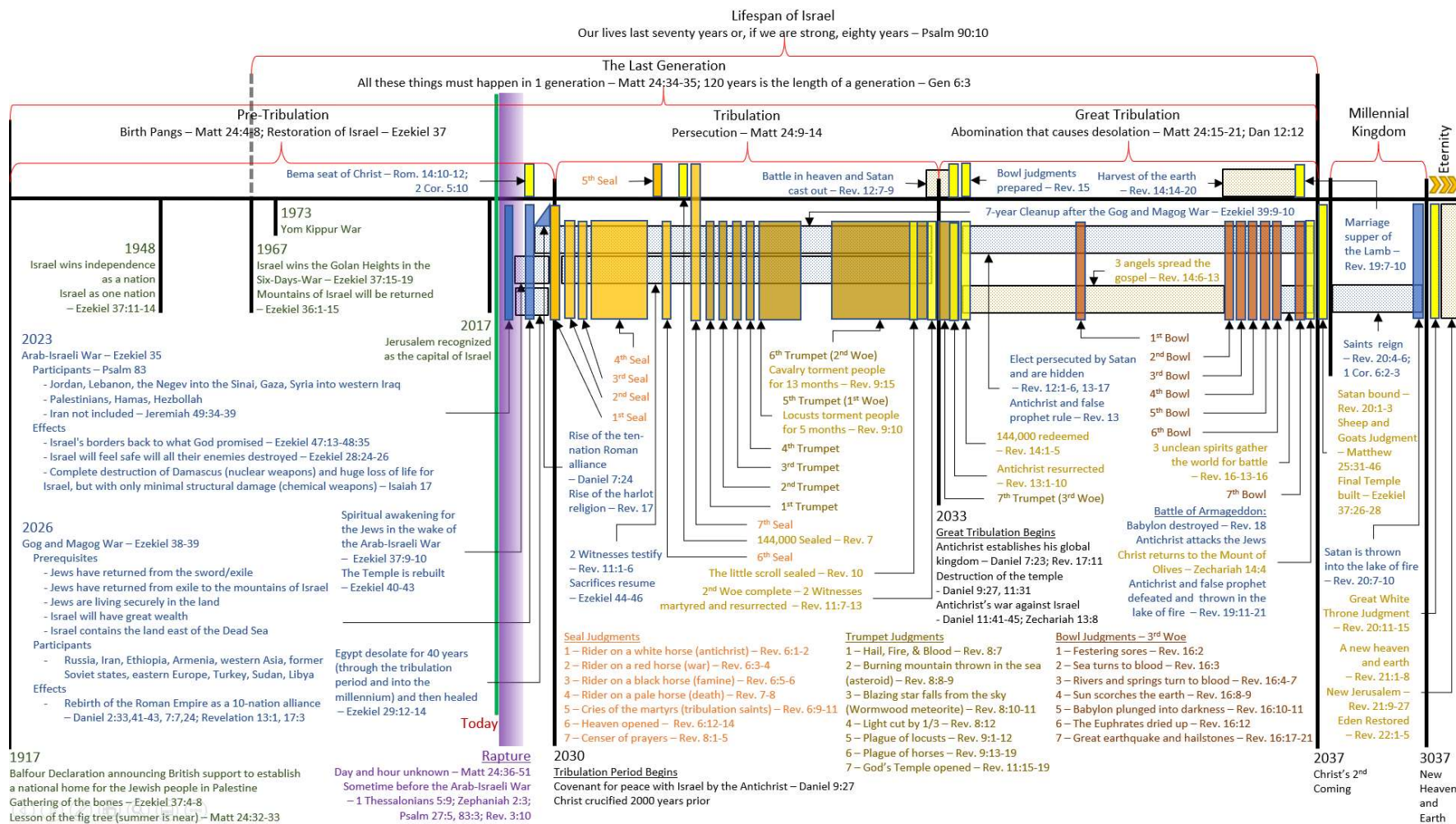


Figure 11: Timeline of End-Times Events

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