

In the Last Days

A Study of the Return of Jesus in Glory and Power

By Brendan Murphy

The Lord is righteous in all His ways and kind in all His deeds. The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth. (Psalms 145:17-18)



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Information

This book combines the books “In the Last Days” and “Antichrist - The Hour of Testing” which were originally separate books.

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Antichrist - The Hour of Testing

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Introduction

Conforming

This writing is a study of the return of Jesus to earth in glory and power which is one of the deeper mysteries of the Bible. The focus of this book is to communicate what the scripture says happens in the last days. Many books have been written on this subject, but due to incomplete or malformed understandings many of these works fail to reflect the scriptures. Given the many conflicting interpretations leading to completely different doctrinal statements for the last days, one has to conclude that there are errors in these works. Piecing together a deeper understanding is difficult because one has to sort through all the contradictions and malformed doctrines. It is like picking strawberries in a field of land mines. The goal of this study is to bring into focus all the scriptures concerning the second coming of Jesus in a consistent and cohesive manner so that our lives are transformed and we are ready for His return.

There are plenty of misconceptions floating around in the church and they have taken on a life of their own because they get repeated over and over without people doing the basic research on the validity of the statements made when measured against the Bible. When the assumption that what the pastor says must be true overrides personal responsibility to search out what the scripture says, it becomes a breeding ground for errors. Sometimes people defend misconceptions with statements like, that is what my church has always taught or that's what my pastor says. The truth is they may be wrong. The apostle Paul was chosen by God to preach the Gospel and wrote half the New Testament, but even what he said was subject to examination. An example of this is in Acts chapter 17 where the Bereans studied the scripture to see if what Paul said was true.

Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. (Acts 17:11)

We should always be like minded.

The Scriptures

In this writing, I will inject the full text of the scriptures for the concept being presented. This saves time and makes it easy for you to follow along without the jarring experience of finding the passage in the Bible, reading it and then returning to this book. In your own time, I encourage you to go back and read the whole context of the scripture like reading the whole book of Revelation. This will aid in your understanding.

Scripture quoted within this book is from the New American Standard Bible (NASB) 1995 version which is a word for word translation and thus a more accurate translation for the purpose of this writing. Points of emphasis will be done by bolding the specific scripture. Shown below is an example.

Then the LORD said to me, “Go again, love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes.” So I bought her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a half of barley. Then I said to her, “You shall stay with me for many days. You shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man; so I will also be toward you.” For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar and without ephod or household idols. **Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days.** (Hosea 3)

Getting Started

The study of the last days can be both terrifying and exhilarating. For example, from the book of Revelation it says the following.

The second angel sounded, and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood, and a third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed. (Revelation 8:8–9)

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Consider the magnitude of this one single event of something like a great mountain burning being cast into the sea and the devastating physical effects. More important, consider why God does this. One could speculate that this is a huge attention getter that the whole earth will notice, but I am sure it is even more.

This study is exhilarating because Jesus is coming back and when you start seeing the events written in the scriptures come to pass you know the end is near. True peace in the thousand year reign of Jesus and the end of sin and death is at hand. Soon we will pass into eternal life where there is no more suffering and sorrow for those in Jesus, and that is something to rejoice about.

In the study of the end time events, people have come up with terminology to describe various aspects of this field of study. There is nothing wrong with creating terms to encapsulate complex ideas, but over the years this terminology has turned into an idol. If one uses complex terms to describe something, it can be used to make a distinction between those who do know the terminology and those who don't. In essence, the terminology becomes a club people use to negatively label other people as ignorant. Another way to improperly use terminology is to too negatively label those who do know the terminology as different from what you believe. For example, calling someone a "pre-tribber" can be a derogatory statement and is sinful. Even if a person is using such terminology correctly, it still promotes unneeded division. Truth is not decided on the number of people who believe a certain point of view on the end times, but by what God has spoken. The core problem is pride where people are unwilling to say, "I don't know." Not desiring to appear ignorant, we attempt to fill in the blanks with our own assertions that seem right in our own eyes and over time terminology has evolved around our pride.

In this book, I have purposefully steered away from the use of technical terminology. The goal is to present a clear understanding of what is written in everyday language without leaving out any detail. I recommend you read this book multiple times where the first time you read it to just gain a familiarity with the material so your mind has a context in which to digest the details. For the second and subsequent readings, gain a depth of understanding and compare what is said to the scriptures.

The Bible

This chapter is for those who have never read or know very little about the Bible. Some basic facts will be presented so that you may understand certain conventions used throughout this book.

The Books

The Bible is a collection of 66 books and letters which are divided into the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament contains 39 books which were written before Jesus appeared. The New Testament contains 27 books written after Jesus died and rose from the dead. The Bible was written by 40 different authors.

The term “Scriptures” and “Bible” can be used interchangeably since they refer to the same 66 books of the Old and New testaments. The New Testament was collated before the year 375 and the Old Testament was previously brought together before Jesus appeared.

Here is a list of the Old Testament books.

The Law

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

Narrative

Joshua, Judges, Ruth, First Samuel, Second Samuel, First Kings, Second Kings, First Chronicles, Second Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther

Wisdom Literature

Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

Major Prophets

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel

Minor Prophets

Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum,
Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

The Old Testament is the history of God interacting with man on this earth and the books are loosely grouped together as shown above. The first five books of the Bible under the category of “The Law” were written by Moses. They are categorized as the law because under Moses the laws of God were established. This is not to say that those books were exclusively focused on the law because you will find plenty of historical narrative within them. The same can be said of the rest of the books in the Bible where they may be focused on certain aspects of God’s plan, but may not be exclusively restricted to that area of topic. Having said that, if you wish to read about the history of Israel as a nation you would read the “narrative” books. If you wish to increase in wisdom, reading from the “wisdom literature” would be wise.

From time to time God has sent prophets to Israel to deliver a message to His people. In the Old Testament they are divided into major and minor prophets. This distinction is not because the major prophets are more important than the minor prophets, but by the size of the books. What is said by the minor prophets is as equally important as anything said by the major prophets.

Here is a list of the New Testament books.

Narrative

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts

Epistles of Paul

Romans, First Corinthians, Second Corinthians,
Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, First
Thessalonians, Second Thessalonians, First Timothy,
Second Timothy, Titus, Philemon

General Epistles

Hebrews, James, First Peter, Second Peter, First John,
Second John, Third John, Jude

Apocalyptic Epistle

Revelation

The New Testament opens with the four Gospels which document what Jesus said and did. The book of “Acts” covers the time from the ascension of Jesus into heaven to the beginning of the church and the spread of the gospel to the earth. The bulk of the rest of the New Testament are epistles from the original apostles. The term “epistle” is just a fancy way of saying a “letter.” The apostles wrote and sent letters to the churches to communicate instructions and teachings and then they were passed around. Eventually they were collated into the what we call the New Testament. The epistles follow the didactic form which again is just a way of saying they were meant to be tools for teaching. Again, like the Old Testament, within the epistles you will find historical narrative and prophetic statements so it is not a strict expectation that the epistles only contain teaching. The book of Revelation follows more along the line of prophecy.

It is important to grasp that you can't interpret the New Testament without the Old Testament. It is likewise a valid statement to say the Old Testament is incomplete without the New Testament. There are prophecies in the Old Testament which had their fulfillment in Jesus and many statements in the New Testament are directly quoted from the Old Testament. The Old and New Testaments are irrevocably tied to each other and seeking to interpret one without the other is a fool's errand. If you reject the Old Testament, then nothing about Jesus can be established or verified and reading the New Testament becomes an empty exercise. Judaism and Christianity are not really separate religions, but Judaism is the foundation of Christianity. The bottom line is you have to study both the Old and New Testaments and this is especially true for the study of the end times.

Citations

In a modern Bible, you will see chapter and verse numbers. These did not exist in the original texts, but were added as a way to quickly locate and specify passages. The chapter divisions used today were developed by Stephen Langton around the year 1227. Note, the original scriptures were written as continuous text and

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one must be aware that chapter divisions do not necessarily mean the end of one thought and the beginning of another in the text. The Old Testament was divided into verses by the Jewish Rabbi Nathan in 1448 and the New Testament by Robert Stephanus in 1551. The entire Bible divided into chapters and verses first appeared in the Geneva Bible of 1560.

A reference to scripture will follow a specific format. Here is a sample pointing to the 24th chapter of the Gospel of Luke ranging from verses 13 to 27.

(Luke 24:13–27)

Here is the general layout for creating a scripture citation.

Specific Book and Chapter:

<book name> <chapter number>

Example: (Luke 24)

Range of Chapters From a Book:

<book name> <chapter number> - <chapter number>

Example: (Luke 23-24)

Specific Verse From a Book:

<book name> <chapter number> : <verse number>

Example: (Luke 24:13)

Range of Verses From a Book:

<book name> <chapter number> : <verse number> - <verse number>

Example: (Luke 24:13–27)

Multiple Disjoint Verses:

<book name> <chapter number> : <verse number> , <verse number> , ...

Example: (Luke 24:13, 27, 44)

You will see slight variations on these formats, but they follow the general convention of book name, chapter and verse numbers. For example, the book name may be abbreviated where “Genesis” becomes “Gen” for the sake of brevity. Placing parentheses around a scripture reference is purely a convention and depends on the context in which the reference is written where you want the reference to stand out as a reference and not part of the text itself.

God's Word Is Power

One aspect of the Bible is that this is the word of God. God has spoken through the Old and New Testaments and those words are supported by God through His power. If there is no God, then the Bible and all who follow it are fools wasting their lives. If there is a God, then the Bible is the greatest book ever assembled! The existence of God can be personally tested by what it says in the book of Deuteronomy.

But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and **you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul.** (Deuteronomy 4:29)

This is a simple if-then statement. If you seek God with all your heart, then God will reveal Himself to you. A lot of people only give a half hearted effort and when God does not reveal Himself they say, “See, I knew it wasn’t true.” God knows your motivations and whether you are being sincere or not. Don’t expect God to reveal Himself to you if you are being hypocritical in saying you are seeking God, but are just only giving a token effort. Following God requires forsaking evil and crying out to God to be saved. Implicit in this statement from Deuteronomy is that you have your part to seek God and God has His part to reveal Himself. This means you don’t set the timetable of when or how He should reveal himself to you. You seek God “until” He reveals Himself to you as He pleases for God knows what He is doing! When God reveals Himself, then the Bible will suddenly carry more weight and meaning than you could have possibly imagined.

Logic

There are three fundamental laws of logic that we must adhere to when we study the scriptures. The laws include the Law of Identity, the Law of Non-contradiction, and the Law of the Excluded Middle. The fundamental laws of logic act like a fence keeping us within the boundaries of truth. When someone is walking in error, you can usually trace it back to some fundamental breakdown in the use of the laws of logic. Let's define the fundamental laws.

The Fundamental Laws of Logic

1) The Law of Identity

An object is identical to itself.

The fact that a thing is itself, establishes a common base from which to speak on a subject. You recognize the words I am saying because of the law of identity. If every word I spoke had to be qualified a thousand times, we would be here a very long time. When I speak of an apple and you say, "What is an apple?" because you refuse to recognize an apple, then it becomes impossible to speak of an apple.

2) The Law of Non-Contradiction

Two contradictory statements cannot be true in the same sense at the same time.

This can be expressed simply that truth cannot contradict itself. If scripture was inspired from God and it is the truth, then when you come across what appears to be a contradiction, then we must dig further. This is where the common statement of "letting scripture interpret scripture" comes from. In general, for studying the scriptures it means any theories about the last days must include the whole counsel of God (the Bible) and not just cherry picked scriptures that support a theory. There is no room for excluding scriptures contrary to the theory. If such a case happens, then it is the theory that is in error and not the scriptures.

3) The Law of the Excluded Middle

Just because two things have one thing in common does not mean they have everything in common.

The proposition form “A is B” is either true or false. This means that something has to be one thing or another and cannot be both true and false. A common example is, elephants have ears, you have ears therefore you are an elephant. This statement is illogical because there is no direct connection between elephants and you.

Syllogism

Syllogism, in logic, a valid deductive argument having two premises and a conclusion. If the premises A and B are valid, then conclusion C follows. Here is an example.

Premise A: All men are mortal.

Premise B: Joe is a man.

Conclusion C: Joe is mortal.

Assumptive Reasoning

One thing we must be careful to avoid is assumptive reasoning. Statements may contain assumptive reasoning based on false premises. For example, a scientist who assumes evolution is true and then bases the rest of his work on that false premise is setting himself up for confusion. In Christian thinking, we can fall into assumptive reasoning by filling in doctrinal holes with our own perceptions.

Another subtle form of assumptive reasoning is feelings. Sometimes people will say they can feel in their heart that something is right or wrong, but what is the foundation for feelings? A fact is an indisputable reflection of reality and feelings are reactions we have to a statement or situation. When we substitute our feelings for facts, we are immediately drawn down a path of deception of circular logic.

In this book, we want to look at what the Bible says and not what we want it to say. Assumptive reasoning is a subtle form of

deception that can be difficult to shed since the assumptions are shaped to fit our desires.

Applying Logic

Sometimes logic can become like a club when used improperly and in doing so we stray from the truth, so we must remember it is the truth that we are seeking and not the defeat of an opponent. Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." (John 14:6) He essentially equates the way, truth and life into a common root in Himself. So we know when we have the truth when it bears the fruit of God in its application and it leads to Jesus. Truth and lies are mutually exclusive and logic is a concept based on truth that we can use to filter out lies. So utilize logic, but don't make the mistake of making logic an idol where truth then becomes relative to one's own perspective.

Biblical Interpretation

Finding the True Meaning

Have you been asked or asked someone if they interpret the Bible “literally” or “liberally”? This question implies an either/or mentality with no room for any other answers and this shows a lack of understanding of the process of interpreting the scriptures. The ultimate goal of interpreting the scriptures is to come to the true meaning of what is written. To support that goal, we must recognize the authors of the scriptures had certain meanings they wanted to set forth with their words. The ultimate author of the scriptures is God and God transcends all of the scriptures. This means God’s intentions are woven through the Bible in a consistent manner and we can follow God’s thoughts across the books of the Bible.

Logic

Logic is the foundation of interpreting scriptures. If we violate the laws of logic when we render a meaning of a scripture, we will drift off into error. For example, if we violate the Law of Identity by taking a metaphor and interpret it as a literal statement, we are asking for trouble. A more complex example of violating the Law of Non-Contradiction is to “cherry pick” scriptures to form a theory without regard to the whole context of the scriptures and ignore the contradictions it creates elsewhere. So logic must be carefully observed because God is not illogical in His thoughts or ways.

Subjectivism

One way to violate the laws of logic is through subjectivism. The Law of Non-Contradiction says truth can’t conflict with itself. When we say truth is relative, like you have your truth and I have my truth, there is no basis for interpreting the scriptures. Even if you could prove to yourself what you are saying to yourself is true, there could be a contradictory point of view from someone else of whom you could not convince and there would be no way to

resolve who is right. Subjectivism is a tricky thing too discern since it is difficult to recognize in ourselves because pride blinds. When subjectivism is combined with a form of group think within a denomination, bad doctrine can be infused into the doctrinal statements of that denomination. This can lead to circular logic by saying this is our doctrinal statement and our church fathers came up with this hundreds of years ago. So how could they be wrong because this is what we have always believed. The possible fault here is the church fathers of a denomination could have been wrong and so faulty doctrine gets propagated through ignorance to each successive generation. Truth itself is absolute and it is we who must act in conformity with the truth.

When God speaks, His words have meaning and intension. There is only one correct meaning of any biblical text, but there may be many ways to apply a passage to our lives. Having difficulty discovering what the meaning and intensions of God's words is not a license to interject personal bias into the text. When we read a text the goal is to draw out the meaning. The other way to approach a text is to come to the text with a preconceived idea and attempt to inject that idea into the text. In other words, reading something into a passage that does not exist in the text. What we want is an objective reading of the text and then apply it to our lives in the proper context.

The Bible as Literature

We must recognize the Bible is literature and literature can take many forms and each form of literature has its own set of rules for interpretation. For example, historical narrative is treated different from poetry. We must also recognize that there are certain constructs used in language such as hyperbole, metaphor, anthropomorphic language and personification. Again we must treat each construct with its own set of rules. For instance a metaphor is to not be treated literally, but as a way to enhance the meaning of a thought. There is also language of appearances which describes matters as it appears to the naked eye and this is a matter of description and not matters of fact. An example is saying one looked "up." Technically, how does one define what is "up" when standing on the earth? "Up" on one side is actually "down" on the opposite side of the earth. If we use the technical definition of up and down when the author was just really saying he looked

up to heaven, he is just describing the matter as it appears to the naked eye. We must take care to treat passages in the scriptures in their proper literary forms.

Historical Narrative

The Bible is full of historical narrative which is just the sequential description of events and we can interpret historical narrative literally. The Bible records both the good and evil deeds of its characters and we should be careful to discern what is evil lest we misquote a particular act as a good one. For example, sometimes people will quote from one of Job's friends from the book of Job. According to God, Job's friends did not speak what is right as Job went through his time of testing. We also shouldn't draw conclusions from historical narratives only. We should consult the teaching literature like the New Testament epistles that can shed light on the historical narrative in question.

Explicit and Implicit

The Bible like any other piece of literature has both explicit and implicit statements. Explicit statements are direct and clear statements. Implicit statements require deduction and reasoning. The implicit should be interpreted in the context of the explicit if it exists. If you build a theory purely off the implicit, you risk falling into error. If you make an inference on an implicit statement and that inference is off from the true meaning of the passage, any further inferences you build on that first inference will have compounded the error.

Parallelisms

One construct that is utilized often in the scriptures is parallelism. There are three basic types of parallelisms including synonymous, antithetic and synthetic. Synonymous parallelism says the same thing twice in slightly different ways. Antithetic parallelism brings contrasting ideas together. Synthetic parallelism builds like a crescendo. Here are examples of these three types of parallelism.

Synonymous:

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A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who tells lies will not escape. (Proverbs 19:5)

Antithetic:

Through insolence comes nothing but strife, but wisdom is with those who receive counsel. (Proverbs 13:10)

Synthetic:

For, behold, Your enemies, O LORD, for, behold, Your enemies will perish; all who do iniquity will be scattered. (Psalms 92:9)

You can also have parallelism occurring across different books of the Bible where God repeats prophecies and statements concerning a particular subject. In this way God gives us a multi-angled view of what He is trying to communicate.

Culture, Custom, Principle

One aspect of the scriptures that must be observed is the culture of the authors. Consider trying to explain the “internet” to people who lived three thousand years ago. We have a single word to express the notion of a worldwide network of interconnected computers, but how would one explain such a concept to the ancient world? The same is also true when going from the ancient to the modern world or in a transcultural fashion. Sometimes there are not direct translations of words or concepts of what is being expressed. Jesus said the following.

I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep. (John 10:11–13)

Here Jesus is using the imagery of a shepherd and sheep. For the people who directly heard Jesus in that day knew exactly what He was talking about for sheep and shepherding was well integrated into their society. For most people today, sheep and farm animals are not part of our daily lives so we need to dig deeper to understand the imagery. As we read the Bible, we need to take

extra effort to understand the cultural significance of a statement so that we can arrive at the full meaning of the text.

There are certain statements in the Bible that transcend cultural distinctions. A good example is the ten commandments given to Moses. They transcend cultural differences because they are communicating principles like moral law. The commandment to not steal applies everywhere and not just to the ancient Hebrews. As a society moves along in time, people will create or adopt customs. The same is true at the time the Bible was written where certain styles of language, dress and monetary systems existed. Discerning what is merely a custom of the authors and what is a principle can be a tricky problem. Taking a cultural custom and interpreting it as a transcultural principle can lead to a form of legalism. Also, taking a principle and interpreting it as merely a custom saying it doesn't apply to us opens the door to sin.

Real People Real Lives

What is written in the Bible is about real people. There is a tendency to mentally abstract ourselves from the reality of the lives these people lived. Here is an example from the life of King David.

Then David and all Israel went to Jerusalem (that is, Jebus); and the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, were there. The inhabitants of Jebus said to David, "You shall not enter here." Nevertheless David captured the stronghold of Zion (that is, the city of David). Now David had said, "Whoever strikes down a Jebusite first shall be chief and commander." Joab the son of Zeruiah went up first, so he became chief. Then David dwelt in the stronghold; therefore it was called the city of David. He built the city all around, from the Millo even to the surrounding area; and Joab repaired the rest of the city. David became greater and greater, for the LORD of hosts was with him. (1 Chronicles 11:4–9)

David captured Jerusalem through a battle. The battle was one of destruction for the Jebusites, but glory for David. Unless one takes the time to discern the different levels of meaning, it is easy to pass over the emotional content of what happened.

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Different forms of communication carry subtle differences in the information that is being communicated. In comparison to speech, written text cannot transmit information provided by the intonation of the voice. Another example is music where music can pack a lot more emotional punch to a message. Since the Bible is recorded as text, we need to take the time to dig deeper into the reality of what is being said and not just treat what is written as an academic exercise.

In this study of the last days before Jesus returns consider the following statement from the book of Revelation.

The second angel sounded, and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood, and a third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed. (Revelation 8:8-9)

Consider the destructive power of what is being described here! How would news organizations describe such an event? When studying the events of the last days before Jesus returns we need to be careful to understand that the events to come will affect us on a very personal level. We can look back on the days of Moses and the exodus from Egypt and distance ourselves from the magnitude of that experience, but consider that the events described in the book of Revelation are ahead of us at the time of this writing and as each day passes by, we are one day closer to their fulfillment. Consider what Jesus said about these last days.

There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, **men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world**; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. (Luke 21:25-26)

We live in a world that says there is no God and therefore no consequences. Jesus is saying this attitude is going to change when He says men fainting from fear of what is coming. So when we read the Bible, it is important to understand the drama of what is being said.

Fisheye Lens

When studying the scriptures it is possible to make an idol out of the Bible, biblical topics or even passages. In the days when Jesus first walked on the earth, the Pharisees and Sadducees made the law their idol and violated the very precepts they studied! They had a distorted fisheye lens view of the word of God and lost sight of what God really was saying to them. Here is an example from the prophet Micah.

With what shall I come to the LORD and bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, with yearling calves? Does the LORD take delight in thousands of rams, in ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my firstborn for my rebellious acts, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:6-8)

The Pharisees and Sadducees became fixated on the minutia of the law and the power and status it gave them. They lost sight of God's true intent to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly.

In the study of the last days, various camps of doctrinal differences have developed over certain aspects of the events to come. For example, when does the rapture occur? It is not an issue for people to seek out the truth and explore what different people have said, but it is another thing altogether to wildly make accusations at others. This form of accusation is rampant throughout the church concerning the topics of the end days. I have seen people create "centers" (like a social society or forum) dedicated to a specific point of view of when the rapture occurs. This is insane and shows how far we, as the church, have drifted from God! If one wants to understand what God is saying about the last days, one has to lay down the constructs of pride. Having a distorted fisheye lens view of the things to come is often manifested when one has a fixation on a particular doctrinal point of view which springs forth from a cornucopia of man centered invented terminology intended to make distinctions between different groups of people studying the topic. In other words, an "us" versus "them" attitude. With this kind of attitude, interpretation of the scripture will be laced with bias injected into

the text in order to sustain a theory instead of drawing out from the text what it really says.

Further Study

Biblical interpretation has been intensely studied for centuries and this chapter only covers some essential concepts you need to know to successfully navigate through the scriptures. Teaching a complete course on interpreting the Bible is beyond the scope of this book and there are a number of resources available for you to study. I highly recommend researching biblical interpretation so that you can correctly draw the meaning from the text.

The Plan of God

There Is a Plan

In the scriptures, there are many passages that talk about the end times and the second coming of Jesus. Most of these scriptures overlap each other, but tell the story from different points of view. One passage will explain it from the historical and political perspective while another passage covers the same events in an allegorical form using fanciful imagery. If you just read it from a historical perspective, you would not gain the insight God is trying to communicate on all levels. It would be like going to a play and watching the actors speak their parts in an unwavering monotone voice. A lot of the communication is lost without the subtle intonations. This retelling of the events from multiple perspectives provides a deeper understanding of the events to come.

In order to fully appreciate what the Bible says about the events before the second coming of Jesus, you need to grasp the intricate threads of God's plan woven throughout the Bible. At the very core of God's plan is the crucifixion of Jesus on the cross. Without Jesus on the cross, there is no plan, no salvation and no glorious second coming. With the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, God's plan unfolds as a flower of exquisite beauty blooming in the first light of morning. The conclusion of God's plan is when He says the following.

Behold, I am making all things new. (Revelation 21:5)

To provide a framework and context for the scripture concerning the second coming of Jesus, we can look at scriptures concerning the life of Jesus in the Old Testament. We can look at things that point to Jesus and the cross and see a pattern and how God arranged them to bring out various aspects of meaning. So in a sense, we learn God's way of communication with something that we know is true and apply it to the threads of God's plan concerning the second coming of Jesus.

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After Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead, two disciples were on the road traveling away from Jerusalem talking about the things Jesus had done and all the events surrounding them. Here is the scripture that describes this encounter.

And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began traveling with them. But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him. And He said to them, "What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?" And they stood still, looking sad. One of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, "Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?" And He said to them, "What things?" And they said to Him, "The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened. But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see." And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" **Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.** (Luke 24:13–27)

Imagine being those two disciples and hearing Jesus teach on those scriptures about Himself. After they heard all that Jesus said, they recognize Him and then He vanishes.

And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He were going farther. But they urged Him,

saying, “Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over.” So He went in to stay with them. When He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. They said to one another, **“Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?”** And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, saying, “The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon.” They began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread. (Luke 24:28–35)

It says their hearts were burning within which means the Holy Spirit was bearing witness to the truth to them as they heard Jesus’ words. With this in mind, let’s look at some scriptures from the Old Testament that point to Jesus and learn how God communicated His message. The following scriptures are only a small sample.

Covering the Shame

After Adam and Eve fell in the garden of Eden, God comes down and calls out to them saying, “Where are you?” God then asked Adam and Eve what happened. It wasn’t that God didn’t know exactly what happened, but in this moment of great tragedy God was showing His love for them. After tracing the trail of what happened through Adam and Eve and finally Satan, God makes the following declaration.

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel. (Genesis 3:15)

This is the first promise of a savior in the scriptures.

Starting in the garden of Gethsemane Jesus began to be in agony before he was to be crucified.

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And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground. (Luke 22:44)

This was the fulfillment of what is written by Isaiah the prophet.

But the LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. **As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied;** by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities. (Isaiah 53:10–11)

The culmination of this is Jesus hanging on a cross suspended between heaven and earth after being mocked, beaten and whipped. This is what is being pictured in Genesis 3:15 where it says, “He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.” Satan having Jesus crucified on the cross actually accomplished God’s will in providing the sacrifice for our salvation. I hope you appreciate the irony of the worst possible thing that happened to Jesus with His death on a cross, becomes the greatest triumph ever!

With that in mind, consider the meaning of what God did when He clothed Adam and Eve in the garden.

Now the man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living. **The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.** (Genesis 3:20–21)

God covered the shame of their nakedness. This is a foreshadow of how God covered the shame of our sins when Jesus hanged naked on the cross taking the shame of our sins and clothed us with His righteousness so that we could stand before God in eternal life. God not only took the guilt of our sin away, but also the shame.

The Ark of Salvation

One of the most famous stories in the Bible is the story of Noah and the ark. There is a depth of meaning contained within the story pointing towards God’s plan of salvation. We can look at

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what happened where God wiped out all life that had breath and assume God is arbitrary in what He chooses to do. Others scoff that such a thing could never happen because in their eyes it seems impossible that a flood could cover the entire earth. Through Noah and the flood, God answers both points of view and it has very specific warnings for those living on the earth this very day!

The story starts out with God looking down from heaven and observing what is happening on the earth.

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. The LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them." But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. (Genesis 6:5–8)

The wickedness of man was great and their thoughts were fixated on evil. This speaks of the evil that exists in the heart of men where they have no interest at all in doing what is right. The apostle Paul wrote we are dead in our sins.

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. (Ephesians 2:1–2)

Because of sin, we are destined for destruction. The flood foreshadows the coming wrath of God for all sin. As a God of justice, He has no choice but to wipe out all sin and those who produce it. Since the judgement of God is coming upon all mankind, God tells Noah to build an ark.

Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth. Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch. This is how you shall make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits,

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and its height thirty cubits. You shall make a window for the ark, and finish it to a cubit from the top; and set the door of the ark in the side of it; you shall make it with lower, second, and third decks. Behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish. But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark — you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the birds after their kind, and of the animals after their kind, of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every kind will come to you to keep them alive. As for you, take for yourself some of all food which is edible, and gather it to yourself; and it shall be for food for you and for them." Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did. (Genesis 6:13–22)

Here we see God making a covenant with Noah. Literally, God says their lives will be saved from the flood when they enter the ark.

So they went into the ark to Noah, by twos of all flesh in which was the breath of life. Those that entered, male and female of all flesh, entered as God had commanded him; and the LORD closed it behind him. (Genesis 7:15–16)

Notice that it was God who shut the door on the ark. When God shuts a door, who can open it? The answer is nothing can open that door. Here God is showing that even though He is patient, long suffering and kind, there will come a point where the door is shut. It is like driving a car towards a cliff and at any point along the way one can stop the car. If we keep going, the edge of the cliff will suddenly be behind us which leads to a tragedy.

Then the flood came upon the earth for forty days, and the water increased and lifted up the ark, so that it rose above the earth. The water prevailed and increased greatly upon the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. The water prevailed more and more upon the earth, so that all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were covered. The water prevailed fifteen cubits

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higher, and the mountains were covered. All flesh that moved on the earth perished, birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, and all mankind; of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died. Thus He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the earth; and only Noah was left, together with those that were with him in the ark. The water prevailed upon the earth one hundred and fifty days. (Genesis 7:17–24)

The flood came and no one escaped its destruction except those in the ark. The ark represents God's salvation from God's own judgement for sin. The ark is a representation of God's plan of salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. The flood is a mere shadow of the judgement to come which is the last day where we all stand before God to be judged for our thoughts, words and deeds. The only way to pass into eternal life is to have your sins forgiven by allowing Jesus to pay for them. God is telling us that if we want to survive the coming day of judgement, we need to step into the "ark" of God's salvation which is Jesus on the cross.

Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." (Genesis 8:20–22)

God's acceptance of Noah's burnt offering is also a foreshadow of the sacrifice of Jesus. God requires a penalty to be paid for our sin which is why God received it as a soothing aroma.

Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, "Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth.

I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth." God said, "This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations; I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow will be seen in the cloud, and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." And God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth." (Genesis 9:8–17)

God blesses Noah and makes a covenant with him. The covenant is again a foreshadow of the covenant we have through the blood of Jesus that God has forgiven our sins forever.

God Will Provide

Another famous story in the Old Testament is Abraham taking his son Isaac to be sacrificed as a burnt offering before God.

Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "**Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.**" So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you." Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. Isaac

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spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together. (Genesis 22:1-8)

Can you imagine how Abraham felt knowing God had told him to sacrifice his son Isaac? It was not a question of if God told him to do it, but overcoming the natural compulsion to not let any harm come to his son. Abraham believed and trusted God and did as He said.

Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. **Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."** (Genesis 22:9-12)

Here we have a picture of God the Father sacrificing His own son Jesus for our forgiveness. The penalty for sin is the complete separation from God covered by the His eternal wrath. God the Father poured out all of His wrath upon Jesus and then turned His face away completely cutting Him off from His presence. On the cross, Jesus made the following statement.

Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:45-46)

Through the testing of Abraham, God is letting us see what it was like for Him to sacrifice Jesus for our sins. The Kingdom of God is based on freewill and Jesus chose to be the sacrifice. From this passage, God wants us to understand the price He paid which was His beloved son. Jesus understood the power and intensity of the wrath of an infinite God and still chose to go to the cross.

Forsaken to the Right Hand of Pharaoh

Abraham had a son named Isaac and Isaac had a son named Jacob. God renamed Jacob to “Israel” when God finally broke his rebellious spirit. Israel had twelve sons which eventually became the twelve tribes of Israel. One of his sons was named Joseph and Israel really loved Joseph.

Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a varicolored tunic. His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms.

Then Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. He said to them, “Please listen to this dream which I have had; for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf rose up and also stood erect; and behold, your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf.” Then his brothers said to him, **“Are you actually going to reign over us? Or are you really going to rule over us?” So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.**

Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, “Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.” He related it to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, **“What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?”** His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind. (Genesis 37:3–11)

As a young man Joseph has dreams from God and his family didn’t react well. Remember the story of Joseph is a foreshadowing of the life of Jesus and at this point God is saying Joseph is the chosen one to rule and they hated him for it. Jesus gave the following parable.

“Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a wine press in it, and built a tower, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a

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journey. When the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce. The vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them. But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.' They took him, and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?" They said to Him, "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons."

Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures, 'The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief corner stone; this came about from the LORD, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it. And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust."

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them. When they sought to seize Him, they feared the people, because they considered Him to be a prophet. (Matthew 21:33–46)

We see the spirit of hatred and murder reflected again in the story of Joseph.

When they saw him from a distance and before he came close to them, they plotted against him to put him to death. They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer! Now then, come and let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; and we will say, 'A wild beast devoured him.' Then let us see what will become of his dreams!" But Reuben heard this and rescued him out of their hands and said, "Let us not take his life." Reuben further said to them, "Shed no blood. Throw him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but do not lay hands on him" — that he might rescue him out of their hands, to restore him to his father. So it came

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about, when Joseph reached his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the varicolored tunic that was on him; and they took him and threw him into the pit. Now the pit was empty, without any water in it. (Genesis 37:18–24)

Throwing Joseph in a pit is a foreshadow of Jesus being crucified on a cross. What happened to Joseph ultimately saved his entire family, but it also saved the nation of Israel yet to be! God took that which was meant for evil and created something beautiful. To continue the story, Joseph gets rescued from the pit and is taken to Egypt.

Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the bodyguard, bought him from the Ishmaelites, who had taken him down there. The LORD was with Joseph, so he became a successful man. And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian. Now his master saw that the LORD was with him and how the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hand. **So Joseph found favor in his sight and became his personal servant; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge. It came about that from the time he made him overseer in his house and over all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; thus the LORD'S blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field. So he left everything he owned in Joseph's charge; and with him there he did not concern himself with anything except the food which he ate.** (Genesis 39:1–6)

A pattern begins to emerge in the life of Joseph where whatever Joseph puts his hand, God blesses him. Joseph had dreams from God and he is partially seeing the dream come to pass as being in charge of Potiphar's house. Next, Joseph is harassed by Potiphar's wife.

Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. It came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me." But he refused and said to his master's wife, **"Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all**

that he owns in my charge. There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:6–9)

Joseph recognizes that God has placed him in charge of Potiphar's house and there is no one greater in Potiphar's house. Then out of evil desire, Potiphar's wife kept pursuing Joseph. Eventually the circumstances were set up to falsely accuse Joseph of attempting to sleep with her and Potiphar's wife laid all the blame at the feet of Joseph.

Now when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spoke to him, saying, "This is what your slave did to me," his anger burned. So Joseph's master took him and put him into the jail, the place where the king's prisoners were confined; and he was there in the jail. **But the LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer. The chief jailer committed to Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in the jail; so that whatever was done there, he was responsible for it. The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph's charge because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made to prosper.** (Genesis 39:19–23)

Imagine having a comfortable job in Potiphar's house and then being thrown in prison for doing what is right! Joseph understood the meaning of the dreams he had from God, but he did not understand the depth of the dreams. So it is like God said the canvas on which He is painting in the life of Joseph was not big enough for the story He wanted to tell. With a bigger canvas and fresh paint, God paints a much deeper story in the prison. God uses the much darker blacks of prison so the light that He wants to bring forth outshines everything.

Again, God blesses Joseph just like He did in Potiphar's house and Joseph was placed in charge of the prison! This irony was not lost on Joseph. Consider Joseph seeing all that was done in Potiphar's house and then seeing it repeated in prison! We can see how he would begin to have hope that God would rescue him from that place. Then two officials from Pharaoh's court were thrown in

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the same prison as Joseph. After some time they both had dreams and Joseph interpreted the dreams for them and we have the following statement from Joseph.

Only keep me in mind when it goes well with you, and please do me a kindness by mentioning me to Pharaoh and get me out of this house. For I was in fact kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing that they should have put me into the dungeon. (Genesis 40:14–15)

You can hear the desperation in the voice of Joseph. Again, it is like God looked down and said, “Let’s paint the painting even bigger!”

Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him. (Genesis 40:23)

Joseph wanted to be rescued and the one who had access to Pharaoh forgot him! Imagine what it was like for Joseph waiting in prison with no hope of rescue. Each day would go by just like the previous day like the ones that were to follow. So instead of rescue, Joseph’s hopes were ground to dust. Two years pass by and then Pharaoh had a dream and the chief cupbearer official who had been in prison with Joseph was now in the right place and time to speak to Pharaoh about Joseph.

Then the chief cupbearer spoke to Pharaoh, saying, “I would make mention today of my own offenses. Pharaoh was furious with his servants, and he put me in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, both me and the chief baker. We had a dream on the same night, he and I; each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his own dream. Now a Hebrew youth was with us there, a servant of the captain of the bodyguard, and we related them to him, and he interpreted our dreams for us. To each one he interpreted according to his own dream. And just as he interpreted for us, so it happened; he restored me in my office, but he hanged him.”

Then Pharaoh sent and called for Joseph, and they hurriedly brought him out of the dungeon; and when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came to Pharaoh. (Genesis 41:9–14)

One day Joseph is sitting in prison and then suddenly is standing before Pharaoh. Now the picture that God is painting in Joseph comes to life.

Now the proposal seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his servants. Then Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is a divine spirit?" So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are. You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you." **Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt."** Then Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put the gold necklace around his neck. He had him ride in his second chariot; and they proclaimed before him, "Bow the knee!" And he set him over all the land of Egypt. Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Though I am Pharaoh, yet without your permission no one shall raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." (Genesis 41:37-44)

God repeats the previous pattern in that God raises Joseph up to second in command in all of Egypt! What God painted in the life of Joseph is the image of what God has done with Jesus in exalting Him to second in command subject only to the authority of God the Father. The apostle Paul speaks of this to the Philippians.

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. **For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.** (Philippians 2:5-11)

Here is the scripture from Isaiah from which Paul speaks.

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I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance. (Isaiah 45:23)

Passover Meal

When the Hebrews were led out of Egypt by Moses, the Passover meal was instituted by God to commemorate the deliverance from slavery in Egypt.

Moses said to the people, “**Remember this day in which you went out from Egypt, from the house of slavery; for by a powerful hand the LORD brought you out from this place.** And nothing leavened shall be eaten. On this day in the month of Abib, you are about to go forth. It shall be when the LORD brings you to the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall observe this rite in this month. **For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the LORD. Unleavened bread shall be eaten throughout the seven days; and nothing leavened shall be seen among you, nor shall any leaven be seen among you in all your borders. You shall tell your son on that day, saying, ‘It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.’** And it shall serve as a sign to you on your hand, and as a reminder on your forehead, that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth; for with a powerful hand the LORD brought you out of Egypt. Therefore, you shall keep this ordinance at its appointed time from year to year.” (Exodus 13:3–10)

For the last plague on Egypt, God commands the Hebrews to put blood of an unblemished lamb on the doorposts and lintel of the house where they ate the Passover meal.

Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. (Exodus 12:7)

The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall

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you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. (Exodus 12:13)

In the time of Jesus before He was to be crucified, He sent his disciples to set up a Passover meal. Then while eating the Passover meal Jesus spoke to His disciples.

While they were eating, He took some bread, and after a blessing He broke it, and gave it to them, and said, "Take it; this is My body." And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I say to you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." (Mark 14:22–25)

The deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt commemorated by the Passover meal was a foreshadow of the real Passover which was Jesus' death on the cross where He shed His blood. The unblemished lamb is a representation of Jesus. The blood put on the doorposts and lintel is representative of God's salvation through a sacrifice. In essence, God's eternal wrath "passed over" when Jesus died on the cross. In the time of Moses only those who had put the blood on the doorposts and lintel did God pass over with His judgement and so it is today that only those who have had their sins forgiven through the sacrificed blood of Jesus may enter into eternal life.

Parting the Red Sea

When God delivered the Hebrews from Egypt, He brought them to the edge of the Red Sea. Once again Pharaoh had a change of heart and took his army and followed them with the intent of bringing them back to Egypt. When the Hebrews saw Pharaoh's army, they panicked.

But Moses said to the people, "**Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent.**"

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Then the LORD said to Moses, “Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the sons of Israel to go forward. **As for you, lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, and the sons of Israel shall go through the midst of the sea on dry land.** As for Me, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. Then the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD, when I am honored through Pharaoh, through his chariots and his horsemen.” (Exodus 14:13–18)

The sons of Israel passing through the Red Sea on dry ground to the other side is a representation of God’s salvation where a path is created to pass through to the other side. Notice how God tells Moses to lift up his staff and stretch out his hand over the sea. This is a foreshadow of Jesus on the cross making a way for us to return to God. Even Jesus said He was the “way.”

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” (John 14:6)

There was no traveling around the Red Sea and there was no turning back, so God did the impossible and had them walk through the midst of the sea. This was God’s work and there was nothing the Hebrews could do. We don’t read of the Hebrews getting buckets and attempting to empty the Red Sea, but God tells them to stand by and see the salvation of the Lord. God fought for them and they were to keep silent. In this story, God destroys all of Pharaoh’s army in the sea and God told them they would never see them again forever. Our enemy is the devil of which came pride, sin and death and Egypt represents the world and its way of thinking which is controlled by the devil.

The Red Sea represents the judgment and wrath of God for which we could not pass through on our own. When the walls of water fell upon the Egyptians, it represents the execution of God’s judgement and wrath and not one of the Egyptians survived! This is a foreshadow of the day of judgement that is to come where there will be only two destinies which are eternal life or death. Eternal death is not a momentary affliction, but a never ending state of death enforced by the judgment of God filled with His wrath for sin.

God could have taken the Son's of Israel by any other route to the promised land, but God specifically took them to the edge of the Red Sea so that they may see the glory of God in their midst and that nothing is impossible for God. In the greater context, salvation bought for us through Jesus on the cross is sufficient to get us to heaven and the enemies of God will be utterly destroyed in the lake of fire. For those who receive salvation, they will see all that God has done and glorify His name forever.

Striking the Rock

While the Israelites were traveling in the wilderness after being delivered from Egypt, the people complained to Moses that they had no water to drink.

Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel journeyed by stages from the wilderness of Sin, according to the command of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink. Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water that we may drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" But the people thirsted there for water; and they grumbled against Moses and said, "Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me." Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. **Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.**" And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. He named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us, or not?" (Exodus 17:1-7)

The striking of the rock represents the crucifixion of Jesus and the water coming forth is the life of God as a result of Jesus giving up His life. We see this reflected in the following scriptures.

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Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" (John 7:37–38)

Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. (Revelation 22:1–2)

Here God is showing another aspect of His salvation where our thirst will be satisfied with living water. The Israelites had their physical thirst satisfied with the water that came from the rock, but the thirst Jesus satisfied on the cross was for eternal life.

Enemy Defeated

On the heels of the rock being struck and water pouring forth, the people of Israel were attacked.

Then Amalek came and fought against Israel at Rephidim. So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose men for us and go out, fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will station myself on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand." Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought against Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. **So it came about when Moses held his hand up, that Israel prevailed, and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed.** But Moses' hands were heavy. Then they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other. Thus his hands were steady until the sun set. So Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. (Exodus 17:8–13)

Again, we have an image of Jesus being crucified. Moses' arms were held up by Aaron and Hur on either side just like the arms of Jesus were stretched and nailed to a cross. When Moses' arms were held up the battle was won and when he let his hands down the enemy prevailed. Here God is showing us that the victory over sin and the devil only occurred when Jesus went through death on the cross. Another aspect for us to consider is that the Israelites still had to physically fight Amalek. Jesus guaranteed the victory,

but it is manifested in our daily lives and it is the will of God that it be so.

In our day, it is common to see people worship God with their hands raised in the air. What happened with Amalek at Rephidim was forward looking to the cross. Likewise, when we raise our hands today, we are looking back in remembrance of Calvary. This is an act of God setting up a sign of remembrance in our worship. It is similar to God setting His rainbow in the clouds as a remembrance of His covenant in the days of Noah.

The Ten Commandments

When God gave the ten commandments to Moses he went to the top of the mountain. The people at the bottom of the mountain started to worship a golden calf because Moses was a long time coming down from the mountain.

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, "Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it and have sacrificed to it and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!'" The LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people. Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation."

Then Moses entreated the LORD his God, and said, "O LORD, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, 'With evil intent He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your burning anger and change Your mind about doing harm to Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'" So the LORD changed His mind about

the harm which He said He would do to His people. (Exodus 32:7–14)

Let's recap what happened. Moses goes up the mountain to receive the ten commandments and the people toss aside all that God has done and begin worshipping a golden calf. God is angered and tells Moses that He is about to destroy these people and make a great nation out of Moses. Moses pleads with God to not destroy them and God listens to him. The point where God listens to Moses is a reflection of Jesus intervening on our behalf. We are a people who are faithless before God and God has good reason to be angry and destroy us. Yet Jesus intervened for us and we see this in the words He spoke to God on the cross.

When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. But Jesus was saying, **“Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”** (Luke 23:33–34)

That prayer on the cross is probably the most powerful prayer ever spoken because we know God always heard and answered His prayers.

Burnt Offerings

Throughout the Old Testament, we see laws concerning burnt offerings. Here is a sample scripture that speaks of the burnt offering.

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Command Aaron and his sons, saying, ‘This is the law for the burnt offering: the burnt offering itself shall remain on the hearth on the altar all night until the morning, and the fire on the altar is to be kept burning on it. The priest is to put on his linen robe, and he shall put on undergarments next to his flesh; and he shall take up the ashes to which the fire reduces the burnt offering on the altar and place them beside the altar. Then he shall take off his garments and put on other garments, and carry the ashes outside the camp to a clean place. The fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it. It shall not go out, but the priest shall burn wood on it every morning; and he shall lay out the burnt offering on it, and offer up in smoke the fat

portions of the peace offerings on it. Fire shall be kept burning continually on the altar; it is not to go out.” (Leviticus 6:8–13)

God instituted sacrifices to bring forth the idea that forgiveness requires a payment for the debt of sin. If we are to be forgiven, someone has to pay the price and that is the implied meaning of offering a sacrifice. There are a lot of scriptures in the Old Testament that describe the laws of the sacrifice and many examples of the sacrifices being given which tell us how important this concept is to God. If someone repeats a statement a thousand times, then it becomes apparent that they are trying to communicate something really important. How much more so is it with God who is perfect in all of His ways! All of the scriptures that speak of making a sacrifice are pointing to the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

Scapegoat

One of the variations on the theme of the sacrifice is the concept of a “scapegoat.”

“Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats, one lot for the LORD and the other lot for the scapegoat. Then Aaron shall offer the goat on which the lot for the LORD fell, and make it a sin offering. But the goat on which the lot for the scapegoat fell shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make atonement upon it, to send it into the wilderness as the scapegoat.” (Leviticus 16:8–10)

“When he finishes atoning for the holy place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall offer the live goat. Then Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and he shall lay them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who stands in readiness. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness.” (Leviticus 16:20–22)

The scapegoat is a reflection of Jesus on the cross. God is showing another aspect of the sacrifice where Aaron lays his hands on the scapegoat and transfers the sins of the people to the goat and the

goat is driven from the camp. When Jesus was crucified, he was crucified outside of the city which parallels the goat being driven from the camp. Even Jesus being crucified outside of the city is really a shadow of what was really happening in that God placed the sin of man on Jesus and then turned His face away from Him and thus suffering total separation from God.

Bronze Snake

While the sons of Israel were traveling in the wilderness with Moses, they complained against God and Moses.

Then they set out from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the people became impatient because of the journey. The people spoke against God and Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food." The LORD sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. So the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, because we have spoken against the LORD and you; intercede with the LORD, that He may remove the serpents from us." And Moses interceded for the people. Then the LORD said to Moses, "**Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live.**" And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived. (Numbers 21:4-9)

The bronze snake being lifted up is a picture of those who look to the cross of Jesus to be saved from sin. Being bit by a serpent means a poison was running through their body and they only had a short time to live. The poison of the snake represents pride and sin where the end result is fatal. The judgement for sin is eternal death and if you lived on this earth a thousand years, it is nothing compared to eternity.

To look upon the bronze snake and be healed was a freewill choice each individual had to make for themselves and this is true today. This concept of looking at the bronze snake translates to our day in that we must look to the sacrifice of Jesus in order to be

saved from God's wrath or we will perish in the lake of fire. If we keep delaying that action, suddenly our choice will become permanent to our astonishment in the pit of hell.

Samson and the Pillars

Samson was a man whom God blessed with great physical strength. The secret to his strength was he was a Nazirite and one of the vows of a Nazirite was to not let his hair be cut. After killing many Philistines, Samson met a woman named Delilah and fell in love with her. The Philistines saw this and asked Delilah to entice him and find out his secret. After being pressed daily about the secret of his strength to the point where his soul was annoyed to death, he told Delilah. Once his hair was cut, the Philistines were able to seize him and afflict him and gouged out his eyes. Then the Philistines gathered together to celebrate the capture of Samson and offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god. Then they called for Samson so he may amuse them and they made him stand between the pillars of the house.

Then Samson called to the LORD and said, "O Lord GOD, please remember me and please strengthen me just this time, O God, that I may at once be avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes." **Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and braced himself against them, the one with his right hand and the other with his left.** And Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" And he bent with all his might so that the house fell on the lords and all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he killed in his life. (Judges 16:28–30)

When Jesus came to earth as a child, He laid down His divine power and became a man. This is reflected in the story of Samson when he lost his strength when his hair was cut and resulting in his eyes being gouged out. When Samson stood between the pillars and stretched out his hands to the right and left, this is an image of Jesus spreading His arms on the cross. Samson killing the Philistines in the house of their god Dagon parallels what the apostle John wrote.

The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. (1 John 3:8)

In one single act of dying on the cross Jesus destroyed the works of the devil for a complete victory.

The Signature of God

Throughout the Old Testament, many more examples could be shown pointing towards the cross. Through these examples look at how God painted the different aspects of His plan as He used people as His canvas. When we combine these different angles together, we end up with a richer image of what Jesus did on the cross. It is the way God left His signature throughout history.

The same could be said about the second coming of Jesus where God left clues to various aspects embedded across all of the Bible. It is like a web of interconnected dependencies that transcends any single earthly author thus showing that God did indeed divinely inspire the scriptures. In other words, the Bible itself is a miracle!

There is a dialog that occurs between God and His people in the end times. After you get a good picture of what is to come, you will want to ask “why” God is communicating in this fashion. The events that are to come before Jesus returns are meant to prepare God’s people. Thus God communicates in certain ways as to make known what is to come, yet hides them until the proper time in order to have the greatest impact when it is needed most. There is an attention to detail in God’s communication that most people miss. As we approach the second coming of Jesus, the scriptures will take on greater importance as people realize that it is actually coming to pass. God has a plan that is rich and deep and now is the time to understand that plan.

The Basics

To better understand what is to come before the second coming of Jesus, we must first cover some basic terminology and timelines. This will build a framework that will become a context for building a correct understanding of the events laid out in the scriptures.

Terminology

Listed below are some basic terms that you need to be familiar with in order to understand what is being said in the scriptures.

End Times: The time before the second coming of Christ. You will see this term used in two different ways. The first is to talk about the time from when Jesus ascended into heaven until His second coming which so far has lasted more than two thousand years. The second is the specific time that is covered by the events written in the book of Revelation that occur just before Jesus returns. Another term that could be substituted for “end times” is “last days.”

Christ: Christ is a title given to Jesus. The origin of the term Christ is from the Greek translation of the Hebrew term “Messiah.” The terms Christ and Messiah means the anointed one.

The Antichrist: The man who follows Satan’s leading and believes himself to be God and in doing so carries out the devil’s will and thus the term “anti” in front of the title “christ.”

The False Prophet: The companion of the antichrist. Similar in role as Aaron was to Moses.

The First Coming of Christ: The time when Jesus was born and lived on the earth and suffered and died on the cross and then was resurrected from the dead and ascended into heaven.

The Second Coming of Christ: The future return of Jesus from heaven to destroy the kingdom of the antichrist.

The Great Tribulation: The period of time when the antichrist enters the temple before the second coming of Jesus. The antichrist will cause tribulation for the peoples of the earth and this is also the time of God's vengeance where His wrath is poured out.

Day of Judgement: This is the day where God calls all to stand before His throne to be judged for the words and deeds they have done. Another term used to describe this in the scriptures is, "the last day" or the "great white throne judgement." On that day, the eternal destiny of all men is revealed whether to be thrown into the lake of fire to eternal death or enter into the kingdom of God to eternal life.

Eternity: Existence without end.

Heaven: Heaven can be used in a generic sense as what exists above us. More specifically, in the Bible it describes three heavens. The first heaven is the sky in our physical world known as the atmosphere. The second heaven is what we can physically see as the stars and galaxies that make up the physical universe. The third heaven is where God dwells. We cannot see the third heaven from earth, but those in the third heaven can see us on earth.

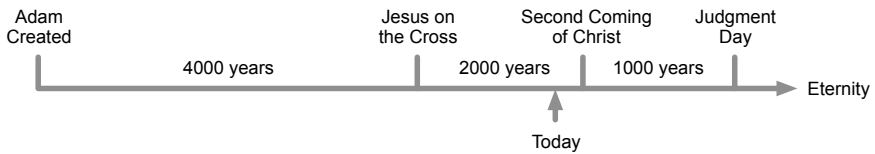
Hell: Hell is the place where Satan and his demons dwell and is the place where the unsaved are sent to await the day of judgement. Sometimes hell is referred to as "outer darkness." Think of it as a temporary holding cell. It is possible that a person can be sent to hell and then redeemed out of there by the grace of God. But one must consider why they were sent there in the first place.

The Lake of Fire: The lake of fire is the eternal dwelling place for God's anger against sin and for those who refuse to repent. It was originally created for Satan and his demons. Once one is sent to the lake of fire, there is no possibility of redemption. If hell is compared to the local jail, then the lake of fire is the penitentiary.

Timelines

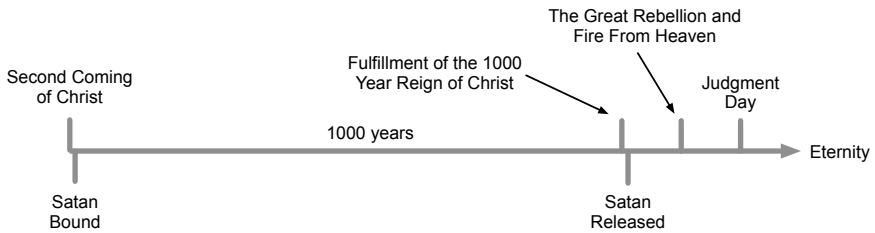
To gain a better understanding of how all the various parts of the scriptures concerning the end times fit together in this study, we need to discuss timelines of past and future events. The timelines provided here are not intended to be proportionally accurate but meant to provide a logical order and approximate spacing of events. Understanding of how things fit together is the goal. Let's first look at where we are at today in the scheme of events. As time progresses forward and events are fulfilled, "Today" will move to the right on the timeline.

Where We are Today



It has been approximately two thousand years since Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead. This study is primarily focused on what happens between today and the second coming of Jesus, but before we jump into that portion of the study, we need to cover what happens after Jesus returns in order to give a complete picture.

After Christ Returns



When Jesus returns, he will bring an end to the antichrist and throw him and the false prophet into the lake of fire and Satan will be bound and thrown into the abyss. Then Jesus will begin a thousand year reign of uninterrupted peace over the entire earth. After the thousand year reign of Jesus, Satan will be released and will go out and deceive people to attack Israel, Jerusalem, and the Lord himself. The Lord will respond and fire will come down to devour His enemies. Here are the scriptures that show these events.

The Return of Christ

And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "King of kings, and Lord of lords." (Revelation 19:11–16)

Satan Bound

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound

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him for a thousand years; and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time. (Revelation 20:1–3)

Fulfillment of the Thousand Year Reign of Christ

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. (Revelation 20:6)

Satan Released and the Great Rebellion

When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. (Revelation 20:7–8)

The Great Rebellion and Fire from Heaven

And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. (Revelation 20:9)

Judgement Day

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found

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written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.
(Revelation 20:11–15)

The Day of the Lord

Let's examine the scriptures concerning the actual second coming of Jesus. The bulk of these scriptures focuses on the terrifying aspects of His coming since it is meant to destroy the reign of the antichrist and bring to conclusion God's vengeance.

What Jesus Said

But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the son of man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. (Matthew 24:29–31)

This statement of Jesus is the most succinct summary of what happens when He returns. It gives us a framework in which we can place the rest of the scriptures concerning the day of the Lord.

General Descriptions

And all the host of heaven will wear away, and the sky will be rolled up like a scroll; all their hosts will also wither away as a leaf withers from the vine, or as one withers from the fig tree. (Isaiah 34:4)

The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. (Joel 2:31)

Nothing is impossible for God and when the sun and moon are darkened, every person on earth will know that Jesus is Lord. Just the sheer magnitude of darkening the sun, moon and stars is a revelation of God's power and authority.

Jesus Will Return From Above

How Jesus returns to earth is important and in the following passage this specific point is emphasized.

So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:6-11)

When the antichrist appears, he will "walk" onto the scene as any other man. Knowing that Jesus will return from above helps one understand the origin of the miracles from the antichrist is of Satan. Jesus Himself addresses this very issue of how He will return.

For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. (Matthew 24:27)

Joy For The Saved

The day of the Lord consists of two sides. One side is the great joy in its arrival and the other side is the destruction of the wicked. Provoking God to wage war is a terrible and foolish path to follow, because God will have the final word in His vengeance. Part of God's response is to demonstrate that which is right and true and the first resurrection is a response to the antichrist killing the people of God.

Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." (Revelation 19:6–7)

For the redeemed, being resurrected or raptured on the day of His return will be a day of exceedingly great joy. When sounds like many waters and mighty peals of thunder are heard in heaven from a great multitude, it is a definite indication that this is a moment of great joy.

Destruction For The Wicked

The destruction of the wicked on the day of the Lord will be a day of utter terror. No one destined to be killed on that day will escape. To be part of the antichrist's armies and see Jesus coming on a cloud of glory means you only have minutes left to live before one is sent to hell.

Wail, for the day of the LORD is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. Therefore all hands will fall limp, and every man's heart will melt. They will be terrified, pains and anguish will take hold of them; they will writhe like a woman in labor, they will look at one another in astonishment, their faces aflame. Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, cruel, with fury and burning anger, to make the land a desolation; and He will exterminate its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not flash forth their light; the sun will be dark when it rises and the moon will not shed its light. (Isaiah 13:6–10)

The main theme of this passage is that hearts will melt in fear. All the strength they thought they had, is suddenly worthless. All that was told to them through the two witnesses is now coming to pass before their very eyes and they are now the object of that terror and they know they are soon to be exterminated.

So it will happen in that day, that the LORD will punish the host of heaven on high, and the kings of the earth on earth. They will be gathered together Like prisoners in the dungeon, and will be

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confined in prison; and after many days they will be punished. Then the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed, for the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and His glory will be before His elders. (Isaiah 24:21–23)

The imagery of being gathered together like prisoners infers forethought that the moment someone gives allegiance to the antichrist, it is the equivalent of becoming a prisoner awaiting execution. It is a proposition stating that the fate of the antichrist is sealed and if you join him, you will share the same fate.

Draw near, O nations, to hear; and listen, O peoples! Let the earth and all it contains hear, and the world and all that springs from it. For the LORD'S indignation is against all the nations, and His wrath against all their armies; He has utterly destroyed them, He has given them over to slaughter. So their slain will be thrown out, and their corpses will give off their stench, and the mountains will be drenched with their blood. And all the host of heaven will wear away, and the sky will be rolled up like a scroll; all their hosts will also wither away as a leaf withers from the vine, or as one withers from the fig tree. For My sword is satiated in heaven, behold it shall descend for judgment upon Edom and upon the people whom I have devoted to destruction. The sword of the LORD is filled with blood, it is sated with fat, with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams. For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah and a great slaughter in the land of Edom. Wild oxen will also fall with them and young bulls with strong ones; thus their land will be soaked with blood, and their dust become greasy with fat. For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion. (Isaiah 34:1–8)

This passage depicts how one sided and bloody the slaughter will be when Jesus returns. The magnitude of the statement, “He has given them over to slaughter” shows the vengeance God has planned for those who follow the antichrist.

Thus says the Lord GOD, “Now I will spread My net over you with a company of many peoples, and they shall lift you up in My net. I will leave you on the land; I will cast you on the open field. And I will cause all the birds of the heavens to dwell on you, and I

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will satisfy the beasts of the whole earth with you. I will lay your flesh on the mountains and fill the valleys with your refuse. I will also make the land drink the discharge of your blood as far as the mountains, and the ravines will be full of you. And when I extinguish you, I will cover the heavens and darken their stars; I will cover the sun with a cloud and the moon will not give its light. All the shining lights in the heavens I will darken over you and will set darkness on your land," Declares the Lord GOD. "I will also trouble the hearts of many peoples when I bring your destruction among the nations, into lands which you have not known. I will make many peoples appalled at you, and their kings will be horribly afraid of you when I brandish My sword before them; and they will tremble every moment, every man for his own life, on the day of your fall." (Ezekiel 32:3-10)

God is pointing out the indignity the kingdom of the antichrist will suffer in its fall. The image of catching fish in a net and then throwing the fish on the land so the birds can have their fill is a very stark statement. Then God restates the idea as scattering their bodies on the mountains and in the valleys among their own garbage. This is saying that what these people did was so utterly despicable before God, that God is taking a significant step to point this out after their deaths for the generations to come.

Blow a trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming; surely it is near, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, so there is a great and mighty people; there has never been anything like it, nor will there be again after it to the years of many generations. A fire consumes before them and behind them a flame burns. The land is like the garden of Eden before them but a desolate wilderness behind them, and nothing at all escapes them. Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; and like war horses, so they run. With a noise as of chariots they leap on the tops of the mountains, like the crackling of a flame of fire consuming the stubble, like a mighty people arranged for battle. Before them the people are in anguish; all faces turn pale. They run like mighty men, they climb the wall like soldiers; and they each march in line, nor do they deviate from their paths. They

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do not crowd each other, they march everyone in his path; when they burst through the defenses, they do not break ranks. They rush on the city, they run on the wall; they climb into the houses, they enter through the windows like a thief. Before them the earth quakes, the heavens tremble, the sun and the moon grow dark and the stars lose their brightness. The LORD utters His voice before His army; surely His camp is very great, for strong is he who carries out His word. The day of the LORD is indeed great and very awesome, and who can endure it? (Joel 2:1–11)

Here we get a description of the armies of heaven that will descend and utterly decimate the kingdom of the antichrist. Since those who return with Jesus will live through the entire thousand year reign of Jesus, we know not one of them will be killed in this battle. What is being described is an awesome sight to behold!

Put yourself in the shoes of a soldier of the antichrist and you see this army descending from heaven. The words, “let all the inhabitants of the land tremble” and “a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness” takes on a much deeper meaning.

Alas, you who are longing for the day of the LORD, for what purpose will the day of the LORD be to you? It will be darkness and not light; as when a man flees from a lion and a bear meets him, or goes home, leans his hand against the wall and a snake bites him. Will not the day of the LORD be darkness instead of light, even gloom with no brightness in it? (Amos 5:18–20)

For those who embrace evil and simultaneously long for the day of the Lord, God gives a stern warning that it will not work out according to one’s expectations. It is implied here that the fruit of one’s life had better line up with the fruit of God or you hope in vain for the day of the Lord.

“It will come about in that day,” declares the Lord GOD, “That I will make the sun go down at noon and make the earth dark in broad daylight. Then I will turn your festivals into mourning and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring sackcloth on everyone’s loins and baldness on every head. And I will make it

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like a time of mourning for an only son, and the end of it will be like a bitter day.” (Amos 8:9–10)

Here, everyone and everything will be affected by the return of the Lord. God will cause mourning and lamenting for all those left alive on the earth. The global nature of this event cannot be ignored.

Near is the great day of the LORD, near and coming very quickly; listen, the day of the LORD! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. A day of wrath is that day, a day of trouble and distress, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet and battle cry against the fortified cities and the high corner towers. I will bring distress on men so that they will walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the LORD; and their blood will be poured out like dust and their flesh like dung. Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to deliver them on the day of the LORD’S wrath; and all the earth will be devoured in the fire of His jealousy, for He will make a complete end, indeed a terrifying one, of all the inhabitants of the earth. (Zephaniah 1:14–18)

When God says, “indeed a terrifying one” when referring to the destruction to come, it emphasizes the power and finality displayed against those who sinned against God. Imagine the two witnesses speaking forth this scripture in the midst of the antichrist’s reign.

I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the

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wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (Revelation 6:12–17)

Here we get a description of Jesus returning from the perspective of those dwelling on the earth. There is sheer terror in their hearts which can be seen when they say, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne."

And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "King of kings, and Lord of lords." (Revelation 19:11–16)

It says in righteousness He judges and wages war. He has a sharp sword in His mouth which is the word of God and is the instrument of God the Father's wrath when it says He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God. The potency of these words can be lost if one is not paying attention to the details of the imagery. A wine press crushing the grapes to squeeze out every last drop of juice from the grapes, speaks of an unrelenting anger from God that will only be satisfied when all those who stood with the antichrist are killed and their bodies are strewn about as refuse.

Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread, for the wine press is full; the vats overflow, for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon grow dark and the stars lose their brightness. The LORD roars from Zion and utters His voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth tremble. But the LORD is a refuge for His people and a stronghold to the sons of Israel. (Joel 3:13–16)

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Again we see the imagery of the wine press being repeated.

Behold, a day is coming for the LORD when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you. For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south. You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him!

In that day there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle. For it will be a unique day which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light.

And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter.

And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one. (Zechariah 14:1-9)

In this passage, we see the role of Jesus on that day where He personally leads the battle and takes back Jerusalem and the whole earth. Consider that at evening time on that day there will be light, but not the light of the sun. It also says the Lord will be King over all the earth and His name will be the only one. There will be no competing power that can challenge His authority and power.

Summary of the Day

Here is a summary of what happens when Jesus returns. Many of these events occur simultaneously.

- There will be a trumpet blast.
- The Lord roars from heaven.
- The dead will waken (first resurrection).
- Those who remain will be taken up.
- The clouds will be rolled back like a scroll.
- The stars will stop shining.
- The sun and moon will be darkened.
- The sign of the Son of Man will appear.
- A great earthquake shakes the whole earth.
- The antichrist and all of his armies and all those gathered for war will be terrified.
- Jesus touches down on the Mount of Olives.
- All the wicked are killed.

After the battle is completed, the following events happen.

- The great supper of God is called where the birds of the air come and eat the flesh of the dead.
- The tribes of the earth mourn in bitterness.

From all these descriptions, it is clear to see that the second coming of Jesus is not something to be taken lightly. You do not want to be caught serving the antichrist when Jesus returns. Given God's mercy and lovingkindness, for God to express such vengeance when Jesus returns gives us insight into how horrific are the acts of the antichrist and his kingdom.

The Book of Revelation

The last book of the New Testament is called “Revelation” and when studying the end times, you will spend a fair amount of time in this book. A lot of people find it a difficult book to read because of some of the imagery. The book of Revelation is not as hard as it seems for most of the book is in the literary form of historical narrative. If you bear this in mind, the book of Revelation is manageable. So let's walk through the book of Revelation.

Chapter 1: Appearance of Christ to John

The book starts out with John setting the context for what is in the rest of the book. John hears a voice speaking to him and he turns around to see Jesus in His glorified form. John is terrified to the point where he falls down at the feet of Jesus and then Jesus comforts him telling him to not be afraid.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood — and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father — to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.

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“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet, saying, “Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.”

Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.

When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things. As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.” (Revelation 1:1–20)

Chapters 2-3: Message to the Churches

The first thing Jesus does after appearing to John is to deliver messages to the seven churches including Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. These messages don't contribute significantly to understanding the order of events in the last days, but they do give insight on how to get through them and this may be the most important part of the book of Revelation. It is clear that these messages are targeted at those living through the last days because of some specific references, but it is also true that these messages apply to us today and to the countless generations who have heard it since Jesus spoke to John. We would be well advised to heed them. Here are the seven messages.

Ephesus

“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: ‘I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name’s sake, and have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place — unless you repent. Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.’” (Revelation 2:1–7)

Smyrna

“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this: ‘I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be

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tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.” (Revelation 2:8–11)

Pergamum

“And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this: ‘I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.’” (Revelation 2:12–17)

Thyatira

“And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this: ‘I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first. But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.

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But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them — I place no other burden on you. Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come. He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father; and I will give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (Revelation 2:18–29)

Sardis

“To the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: ‘I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you. But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’” (Revelation 3:1–6)

Philadelphia

“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this: ‘I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name. Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie — I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you. Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown. He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’” (Revelation 3:7–13)

Laodicea

“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: ‘I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. He

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who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (Revelation 3:14–22)

Praise, Warning and Repentance

One thing to note when you read these messages is that Jesus gives both praise and warning where it is due. You will also notice the theme of repentance is repeated often which speaks of the importance of repentance to God for His people. Consider that five out of the seven churches are told to repent. Later on in this book the significance of Jesus telling the churches to repent will become readily apparent. When the events written of in Revelation begin to come to pass and we see the time is fast approaching and God has given testimony and abundant proof that the second coming is near at hand, there still exists in the hearts of the people the darkness of pride!

Repenting leads to forgiveness and removes the separation between you and God. To repent means to turn around and go the way you should have gone. God’s mercy is greater than our darkest sin and when the weight of sin is lifted, the joy of the Lord enters. Repentance is an act of one’s will that gives God permission to restore the one who repents.

Choosing to not repent for one’s sin is the worst mistake someone could ever commit. To throw oneself in the path of God’s eternal wrath when He has so graciously and freely offered salvation is foolish. On the final day when the eternal destinies of everyone is revealed, if your name is not found in the Lamb’s book of life then a terror, which cannot be comprehended, will seize you as the angels pick you up and throw you into the lake of fire which is the place of God’s eternal anger for sin. An unending torment will engulf every part of your being forever. It is difficult for us to wrap our minds around the concepts of “forever” and the depth of God’s anger. There are no words in human languages to describe the full power of God’s wrath when it is made manifest within one’s spirit. When you combine eternity with God’s wrath, it is a fate that should instill terror within the deepest part of our soul and we should do whatever it takes to take part in God’s plan of salvation. In the context of the book of Revelation, receiving the

mark of the beast (666 - Revelation 13:17) is an “eternal” death sentence. Therefore we should banish the thought of “not repenting” from our thinking. When we play with sin, we are playing with eternal death. A passage from proverbs frames the issue of ignoring God’s call to salvation.

Wisdom shouts in the street, she lifts her voice in the square; at the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the gates in the city she utters her sayings: “How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing and fools hate knowledge? Turn to my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you. Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention; and you neglected all my counsel and did not want my reproof; I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your dread comes, when your dread comes like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but they will not find me, because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD. They would not accept my counsel, they spurned all my reproof. So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way and be satiated with their own devices. For the waywardness of the naive will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them. But he who listens to me shall live securely and will be at ease from the dread of evil.” (Proverbs 1:20–33)

Suffering

The church of Smyrna is one of the churches that receives praise from the Lord. Jesus says that in this life they have tribulation and poverty, but are rich with the true riches which has eternal value. In comparison, Jesus says the Laodicea church is wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. Sometimes we suffer as a result of sin in our lives and we should examine ourselves and repent. Other times we can be suffering and God is using it to shape our character or even as a witness to others of God’s Spirit working within.

Here is a specific reference to events in the time of the antichrist because Jesus names a specific time period of ten days.

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Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. (Revelation 2:10)

In this context, the antichrist has been revealed and demons are performing miracles through him in order to deceive the world and the people of God resist this deception even unto death. This is an example of where God uses suffering as a witness during the time of the antichrist.

Choosing a Side

Jesus makes a specific reference to His second coming and its consequences.

Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. (Revelation 2:16)

With the church of Thyatira Jesus gives high praise, but then points out a deep darkness within. If we work backwards from the darkness, it starts with the fruits which are acts of immorality and eating things sacrificed to idols. Acts of immorality are fairly obvious to define, but eating things sacrificed to idols can have many manifestations. Eating things sacrificed to an idol is the equivalent of taking the side of the devil. It is opening the doors and embracing all that which the devil stands which is wickedness and all manner of evil. Jesus defined that which defiles a man.

After Jesus called the crowd to Him, He said to them, "Hear and understand. It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man."

Then the disciples came and said to Him, "Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?" But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted. Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit."

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Peter said to Him, “Explain the parable to us.” Jesus said, “Are you still lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated? But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.” (Matthew 15:10–20)

So the act of eating food does not defile a person, but when you sacrifice food to an idol and then eat it with that purpose in mind you then defile yourself. There are more subtle ways in which people sacrifice to idols by embracing the world’s system of thinking. Listen to what James wrote.

You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (James 4:4)

Where do you seek wisdom on how to run your life? One may say they get their wisdom from God, but the fruit is in the deeds that follow. Are these deeds acts of immorality? This is why Jesus ties these two concepts, acts of immorality and eating things sacrificed to idols, together. If you defile yourself by embracing the world, it will show up in your deeds because your deeds will follow your thought life.

Jesus says, “But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel.” This is a reference to King Ahab’s wife Jezebel who greatly influenced Ahab to commit evil.

Now Ahab the son of Omri became king over Israel in the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD more than all who were before him.

It came about, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went to serve

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Baal and worshiped him. So he erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal which he built in Samaria. Ahab also made the Asherah. Thus Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel than all the kings of Israel who were before him. (1 Kings 16:29–33)

In the context of the church of Thyatira in which Jesus gives high praise, there is this contrast of a dark stain within. The wisdom we can learn is that we must examine our own fruit and see if it lines up with the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said the following to the church of Thyatira.

Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds. (Revelation 2:22–23)

This is a direct reference to the events that occur when the antichrist shows up and the wrath of God is poured out in the time of vengeance which is referred to as the great tribulation that comes before Jesus returns.

Conclusion

Many more books could be written on these messages to the churches. The goal here is to be familiar with the content of the messages and apply them to your life. We need to heed these messages since God thought it was important for us to hear them. Don't take for granted the grace He pours out on us, but take the time to meditate on the meaning of His words to the churches.

There is a prophetic element to these messages in that they give a glimpse into the mindset of the church in the days of the antichrist. God's goal is to prepare the church for the second coming of Jesus. In figurative terms, it is like a bride preparing for her wedding day and the church is refined and strengthened as a thing of beauty before God. God is preparing His people to meet their savior Jesus who has all power and authority.

Chapters 4-5: The Book of Life

The next thing that follows in the book of Revelation is the breaking of the seals on the Lamb's book of life. The Lamb's book of life is a book in heaven that contains all the names of those who will enter into eternal life. On the last day when we appear before God to be judged, those who have their name written in this book will enter into eternal life. If one's name is not found, then they will be judged according to their deeds and thrown into the lake of fire. The Lamb's book of life is a focal point of God's plan of salvation. In the face of how horrific all sin is in the sight of God, the fact the book of life exists shouts God is love. The book of life could not exist without the sacrifice of Jesus, so in essence the book of life and Jesus are one.

To sketch out the scene that John saw in its simplest terms, first there is God the Father sitting on His throne. He is surrounded by angels, elders and a myriad of people and the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne which are the seven Spirits of God. God has the book of life in His hand and an angel speaks out the question who is worthy to open the book? No one is found worthy to open the book except the Lamb as if slain, which is Jesus. Then all of heaven begins to worship.

After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things." Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance. Around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads. Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God; and before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. The first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third

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creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come." And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created."

I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?" And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it. Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it; and one of the elders said to me, "Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals."

And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

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Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever." And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshiped. (Revelation 4:1–5:14)

This is a glimpse into heaven and there is a certain distance between what we read and what John experienced first hand. The exquisite beauty and depth in all of one's senses of these events far exceed the words John used to express what he saw.

Those who accept God's offer of salvation will personally see and experience the things written here and it is not like anything that can be experienced on earth. On earth we are subject to decay and death and all that is around us turns to dust because we are subject to futility. Yet through the sacrifice of Jesus we have hope, even in the shadow of death, of life everlasting with unending joy and love. Put yourself in God the Father's shoes and imagine the joy it brings to Him when that which was destined to die an eternal death in the path of His fearsome wrath is now restored to Him. Jesus suffered the cup of God's wrath for our sins to free us and we can never know the full depth of the price Jesus paid. One thing we can do is offer thanksgiving for God's infinite mercy which is what we read in this passage.

Chapter 6: Breaking of the Seals

The breaking of the seals on the Lamb's book of life signals the beginning of the end and that the second coming of Jesus is close at hand. The first four seals come as a set and are sequential in nature. We know they are a set because they are represented by the common element of a horse in each seal. Here are the first four seals.

First Seal: White Horse

Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, "Come." I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer. (Revelation 6:1-2)

Second Seal: Red Horse

When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come." And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him. (Revelation 6:3-4)

Third Seal: Black Horse

When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come." I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard something like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine." (Revelation 6:5-6)

Fourth Seal: Ashen Horse

When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come." I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth

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of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth. (Revelation 6:7–8)

These four seals represent four periods of time before the second coming of Jesus. We also know the time periods are sequential because of the relationship between the first and second seals where the second seal states it was granted to take peace from the earth and the color of the seals. There are two levels of interlocking logic that must be pieced together in order to see the sequential nature of these seals.

First we must acknowledge that God is not a God of confusion. For if God were trying to obfuscate the meaning, then we would have no chance of deciphering what is written given that God is infinite in wisdom and knowledge. In other words, God is not out to confuse us with really tricky imagery. The color of each horse has a specific meaning which can be derived from the passage.

The color of the second horse is red which represents war which is shown by the phrase that says, “men should slay one another.” The third horse is black which represents famine and it talks about food being weighed out and rationed as indicated by the scales and the price put on the food. The fourth horse is ashen which by definition of the color is defined as drained of color, pallid consisting of or resembling ashes. The fourth horseman is associated with death when it says Death and Hades were following with him and this is the antichrist. Since God is not a God of confusion and given the colors and meanings of the red, black and ashen horses, then the white horse represents revival or life. But it says the white horseman “went out conquering, and to conquer” and on the surface this seems contradictory. We know the fruit of the first seal results in peace since the second seal says it was granted to take peace from the earth. You can’t take peace where there is no peace and this is where the white color of the first horseman points to the peace taken by the second horseman. We will cover the first horseman in greater detail later.

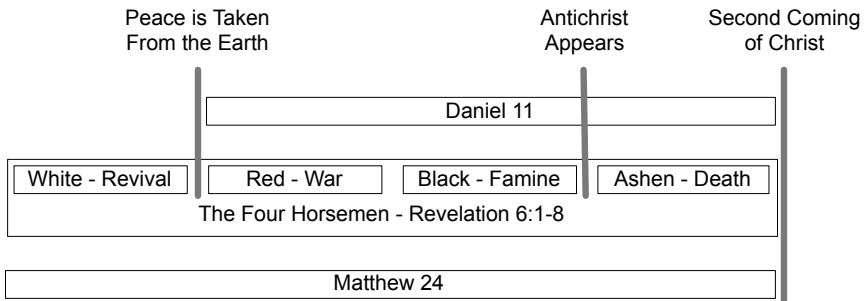
To understand the significance of the first four seals, let’s start with basic anchor points in time from the scriptures which includes the following.

- Peace is taken from the earth.
- The antichrist appears.

- The second coming of Christ.

Let's overlay Daniel 11, Revelation 6:1-8 and Matthew 24 upon these anchors.

Base Anchor Points



Matthew 24 lays out a map of the last days in Jesus' own words and will give as an overall framework.

Matthew 24

As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs."

"Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. This gospel

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of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.”

“Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath. For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. Then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ,’ or ‘There He is,’ do not believe him. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you in advance. So if they say to you, ‘Behold, He is in the wilderness,’ do not go out, or, ‘Behold, He is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe them. For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.”

“But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.” (Matthew 24:3–31)

Daniel 11

Daniel chapter 11 is a historical narrative of the future describing the political and historical events leading up to the second coming of Christ. If you read Daniel 11 in reverse order, you will notice each verse is linked to the preceding verse in time. There are no temporal gaps in the narrative like a gap of a few hundred years. It is a continuous future history of events to come and this is important to recognize since it sets the context for the chapter. Daniel 11:21 describes the appearance of the antichrist.

In his place a despicable person will arise, on whom the honor of kingship has not been conferred, but he will come in a time of tranquility and seize the kingdom by intrigue. The overflowing forces will be flooded away before him and shattered, and also the prince of the covenant. (Daniel 11:21–22)

If we back up a bit and look at the dream given to king Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel chapter 2, we can logically tie the end of the reign of the antichrist with the second coming of Jesus.

You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. **You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them.** Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. **But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.**

This was the dream; now we will tell its interpretation before the king. You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory; and wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given them into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold.

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After you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth. Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces. In that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. As the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle. And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery. **In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.** (Daniel 2:31–45)

The stone that strikes the feet of the statue made of iron and clay is the second coming of Jesus. In Matthew 21:33–44 Jesus refers to himself as the chief cornerstone on which the kingdom of God is built which is the same imagery used in Daniel chapters 11 and 2. Here Jesus is speaking to the chief priests and the Pharisees.

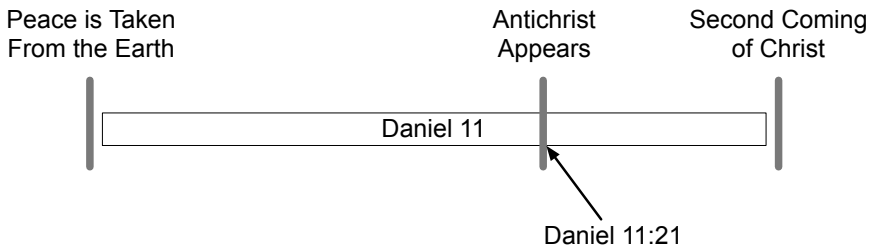
“Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a wine press in it, and built a tower, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. When the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce. The vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them. But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But when the vine-growers saw

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the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.' They took him, and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?" They said to Him, "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons."

Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures, 'The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief corner stone; this came about from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it. **And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust.**" (Matthew 21:33–44)

Daniel 11:21 is the point where the antichrist walks onto the scene and is revealed. In the diagram, it is as follows.



One interesting thing to note in Daniel 11 is where the violent ones will rise up to fulfill the vision.

Now in those times many will rise up against the king of the South; the violent ones among your people will also lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision, but they will fall down. (Daniel 11:14)

This tells us that at the time this prophecy is fulfilled, people will have noticed that the word of God is coming to pass before their very eyes and they will take it seriously. Even the wicked, will give it attention. Consider that the antichrist can't do what he does without the foundation of God's word for what is to come. The

antichrist does not appear out of some religious vacuum. One can surmise that God will perform some miracles to catch everyone's attention which will cause the wicked to try to fulfill the vision.

There have been many incorrect explanations of Daniel 11 which basically fall into the trap of trying to fit it into past events. Since the chapter reads as continuous history, then where is the antichrist? Think of it like a chain composed of links. If you pull on the first link, the last link will feel the tension. If you say some of the events in Daniel 11 have come to pass in the past and the final link is the appearance of the antichrist, then where is he? What we can conclude about Daniel 11 is it will have its fulfillment in the future. When it comes to pass, it will be exactly as it is written since the text reads as historical narrative. Playing hopscotch through time with various verses in this chapter is simply illogical and cannot be seriously defended in any shape or form.

Since we know the second coming of Jesus brings the end of the antichrist, we can attach the end of Daniel 11 to the anchor in time of the second coming of Jesus. The interesting question is where do we attach the beginning of the chapter? Consider what is set out in this chapter is a succession of wars. Since Revelation 6:3–4 states that peace will be taken from the earth, this can best be described as the beginning of a time of war.

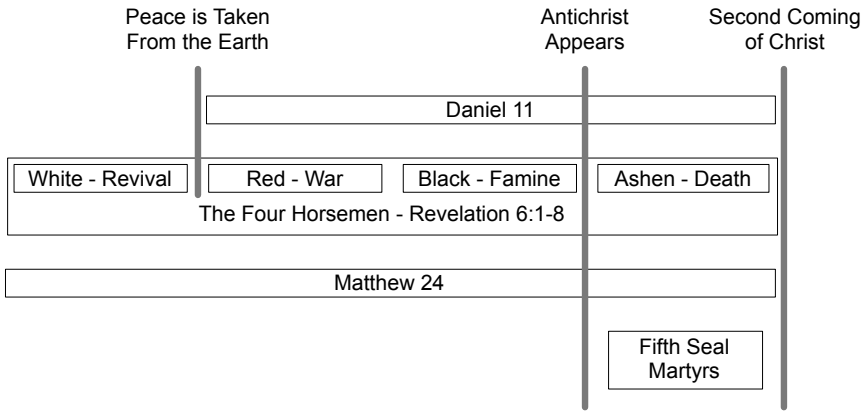
So the beginning of Daniel 11 can be attached to the breaking of the second seal. If it proceeded the second seal, it would conflict with the meaning of the first seal in Revelation 6:1–2 which results in peace being brought to the earth since the second seal's purpose is to take peace from the earth.

In Matthew 24, Jesus gives us a time frame for all of the end time events once you see them start to come to pass.

Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. (Matthew 24:34–35)

If we overlay this on the diagram, we end up with the following relationship between the scriptures.

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Sixth Seal: Great earthquake, sun becomes black and the moon becomes like blood.

I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (Revelation 6:12-17)

The sixth seal describes the second coming of Jesus in his full power and glory. The second coming of Christ is an exhilarating and terrifying event. In this passage, it is described from the point of view of terror for those who choose to reject the truth when they had a chance to receive it. To make it clear, those who sided with the antichrist are to be physically killed and their spirits sent to hell to await the day of judgment where they will be judged and cast into the lake of fire.

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The words of this passage clearly state what will happen and what these people will say when Jesus comes, but there is an emotional component of terror which words can only describe as a mere shadow. This terror is unlike any terror that can be experienced in normal every day life. It is a terror that goes straight through the very core of one's spirit with such an intensity that doesn't end. It is the realization that all hope is lost and there is no redemption, but only eternal destruction. When we read over this passage, it is easy to move on without considering the implications even if we are born again or will not live through those specific days. If we live our lives in a manner that ignores the truth of God, how will we escape the same destiny of those killed at the second coming of Jesus? We may die quietly in an obscure place thinking we are OK, but the terror of hell awaits us if we refuse His call of salvation.

Chapter 7: The People of God

The sealing of the bond-servants of God on their foreheads.

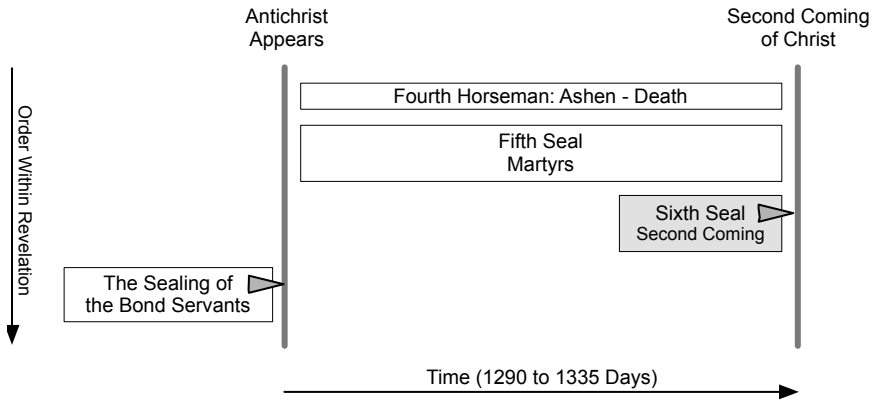
After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads."

And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel: from the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand, from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand, from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand, from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand, from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand, from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand, from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand, from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand, from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand, from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand were sealed. (Revelation 7:1–8)

An angel is sent out having the seal of God to seal His servants before the wrath of God is poured out on the earth. In a sense, it is like a "do not touch" sign to the enemy. It is logically implied that these people will walk through the reign of the antichrist and not be harmed.

Here is the diagram of events we have covered so far. Note, the arrow on the sixth seal and the sealing of the bond servants indicate it is locked to the time anchor. The shaded events indicate it is a description of the second coming of Jesus.

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A multitude stands before God and the Lamb.

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen."

Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?" I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes." (Revelation 7:9-17)

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God is showing the results of His work in that even in the worst tribulation, God brought forth His people. There is a principle to be learned here in that it is God's character to lead us through trial and tribulation and not bypass it. Consider that Jesus had to go through the cross to accomplish God's will and it is no different with us. Many look at the great tribulation and say God would never send His people through such a terrible time. To rationalize that line of thinking, it is usually said that God will rapture the church before the tribulation. Nothing could be further from the truth. Those who go through the great tribulation will become witnesses even unto death that Jesus is Lord which stands contrary to the claims of the antichrist where he says he is God. When the elder states, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation," it is clear that they were killed for the name of Jesus. Also note that God puts this passage in the book of Revelation as a message of comfort to those who are about to enter those times and that they don't have to be afraid and have courage.

Chapters 8-9: Seventh Seal and the First Six Trumpets

Beginning with the seventh seal is the start of what is called the great tribulation. Jesus talks about it in the Gospel of Matthew.

Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath. **For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.** Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. (Matthew 24:15–22)

The “abomination of desolation” is the antichrist. Here are three scriptures from Daniel that talk about the abomination of desolation.

And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate. (Daniel 9:27)

Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation. By smooth words he will turn to godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant, but the people who know their God will display strength and take action. (Daniel 11:31–32)

From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. (Daniel 12:11)

When the antichrist stands in the temple, the trumpets in heaven will begin to sound and the wrath of God will begin to be poured out on the earth.

When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. (Revelation 8:1–2)

Given the joyful singing and rejoicing that goes on continually in heaven, to have an extended moment of silence underscores the gravity of the moment. Many are about to lose their lives as martyrs for the name of Jesus and those who side with the antichrist are condemning themselves to eternal death in the lake of fire.

Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar, and threw it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them. (Revelation 8:3–6)

Let's consider why this period of time is known as the great tribulation. The antichrist will cause his share of suffering, but it pales in comparison to what God will pour out on the earth. This is the wrath of an infinite God who is angry at the wickedness. The purpose of this anger is for those who dwell on the earth so they may reconsider and repent. In other words, God is firing a warning shot across their path.

The trumpets and woes written in Revelation is the ministry of the two witnesses. They will be God's mouth pieces on the earth and will be covered in greater detail later in this book. One thing to note is that when you read these passages it is like hearing only one side of a phone conversation where it is not written specifically what conversations take place between the antichrist

and the two witnesses. With that in mind one can deduce certain things. For example, a common theme of a “third” is portrayed in the first four trumpets. If we jump ahead in the book of Revelation, we see the following scripture.

Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. (Revelation 12:3–4)

The dragon is Satan and a third of the angels followed him and became demons. So the theme of the “third” is referring to the fall of Satan and his demons. If we inject that into the conversations between the antichrist and the two witnesses, then they will be saying to the antichrist you are following the devil and here is the evidence.

First Trumpet: Hail and fire mixed with blood.

The first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up. (Revelation 8:7)

Second Trumpet: Something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea.

The second angel sounded, and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood, and a third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed. (Revelation 8:8–9)

Third Trumpet: A great star fell from heaven.

The third angel sounded, and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters. The name of the star is called Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter. (Revelation 8:10–11)

Fourth Trumpet: Sun, moon and stars smitten.

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The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way. (Revelation 8:12)

A tremendous amount of destruction occurs in the first four trumpets.

- A third of the earth was burned up and all the green grass.
- A third of the sea becomes blood and a third of the life dies in the sea.
- A third of the fresh water is made bitter and many men die.
- A third of the sun, moon and stars are smitten.

Consider the magnitude of these first four trumpets. The ecological consequences by themselves are mind boggling, but when you throw in the sun, moon and stars being smitten it must be utterly terrifying! The antichrist is saying he is God, but on the other side the two witnesses demonstrate Jesus is Lord. Yet many who follow the antichrist are not convinced, but consider that this is only the opening salvo.

Then I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!" (Revelation 8:13)

God now injects a point of emphasis for the coming trumpet blasts. When you see the word "woe" in scripture, it is something one should pay great attention. The first four trumpets are powerful in their own regard and irrefutable in their message. When a third of the sun, moon and stars stop shining who would not consider it an act of God? Yet those who follow the antichrist are unconvinced which makes one wonder what kind of lies they are believing that causes them to disregard God.

Fifth Trumpet: Torment men who did not have the seal of God on them.

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Then the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him. He opened the bottomless pit, and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit. Then out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth, and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. They were told not to hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. And they were not permitted to kill anyone, but to torment for five months; and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man. And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death flees from them.

The appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle; and on their heads appeared to be crowns like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men. They had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were like the teeth of lions. They had breastplates like breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle. They have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months. They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon. (Revelation 9:1–11)

The fifth trumpet is an especially potent act of God. The first four trumpets lay a foundation for the fifth in that they set the context. If one disregards God's message that the antichrist is Satan's agent, then the next logical step is to let them taste what is in store for them.

The idiom "hell on earth" is used to describe a bad situation or a set of circumstances. It is a dramatic hyperbole of what it was like for the person by saying it was really bad. The reality of hell itself is beyond the description of words. You can think of hell as a local jail where one awaits trial before a judge. Hell is a place for the punishment of sin and if you end up in the pit of hell, you are there for a reason. There is also the lake of fire which is the place of God's eternal wrath for all sin. It is possible to be plucked from hell by the mercy of God, but the lake of fire is eternal and there is

no possibility of return. In hell, Satan reigns and has a fairly unrestricted hand to do whatever he desires to you. This is not a place you want to experience.

In the fifth trumpet, God lets those who dwell on the earth have a taste of what it will be like in hell. Hell is opened up and demons are allowed to come out and torment men for five months. It is no coincidence that this is the “fifth” trumpet and the torment will last for “five” months. In every possible way God is trying to get their attention so that they may repent and be saved.

From the fifth trumpet, we can deduce certain attributes of hell. When one is sent to hell, one’s consciousness is preserved. In other words, in hell one has full access to their senses and can fully experience pain and suffering without pause or interruption with no dulling of the senses. So in the fifth trumpet, God suspends death on earth for five months so that they may have a taste of what unending torment will be like. It will not matter what injury is suffered, death simply will not happen. So severe is the torment of the demons, people try to commit suicide to end it. There is no remedy, comfort or means of rest from the torment. This is literally hell made manifest on earth.

The first woe is past; behold, two woes are still coming after these things. (Revelation 9:12)

Again another point of emphasis is given to the first woe and the woes to come. Consider the context in which this is spoken in that the first woe consisted of experiencing hell on earth and its severity. The experience of tasting what everlasting torment would be like will undoubtedly shroud their minds like a dark storm cloud.

Sixth Trumpet: Four angels released so that they might kill a third of mankind.

Then the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.” And the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released, **so that they would kill a third of mankind.** The number

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of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. And this is how I saw in the vision the horses and those who sat on them: the riders had breastplates the color of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone; and the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceed fire and smoke and brimstone. A third of mankind was killed by these three plagues, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which proceeded out of their mouths. For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents and have heads, and with them they do harm.

The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts. (Revelation 9:13–21)

There are two ideas associated together in the sixth trumpet. The first is that a third of mankind is destroyed through warfare and the second is repentance. This is the fulfillment where it says there will be wars and desolations unto the end in the book of Daniel.

And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. (Daniel 9:26)

In the midst of the antichrist's reign, wars and desolation continually occur. In other words, the antichrist is incapable of bringing about peace thus countering his claim he is God. God is showing them their hypocrisy through overt and obvious means so that they may repent.

Chapter 10: Seven Peals of Thunder and the Witnesses

What happens next is one of the most intriguing passages in the Bible.

I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire; and he had in his hand a little book which was open. He placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land; and he cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars; and when he had cried out, the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices. When the seven peals of thunder had spoken, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken and do not write them." Then the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it, that there will be delay no longer, but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets. (Revelation 10:1–7)

From our perspective, the seven peals of thunder could be described as a "wildcard" in that it is an unknown element to our understanding of God and His nature. Obviously there is no way for us to discern what these seven peals of thunder say, but we can observe some facts about them.

First, they speak of the mystery of God. This directly infers that there is a mystery surrounding God which we cannot pierce with our own intellect. It is like trying to imagine that which is literally unimaginable.

Second, it is certainly within God's power and authority to keep the seven peals of thunder completely secret until the day they were revealed and thus not mention them here at all. Yet God chose to make it known that there are seven peals of thunder coming. It gives us a perspective that with an infinite God, there is always more to learn.

Third, this is done in the midst of the reign of the antichrist. It wasn't done at any time in the past, but at this specific time and place in the history of the world. We don't know the content of the conversations between the antichrist and the two witnesses, but we can be sure that the seven peals of thunder will figure in prominently. Remember that the antichrist uses the scriptures and twists them for his own purposes of deception. The seven peals of thunder turn into a real road block for him in showing the hypocrisy of his words since he claims to be God, but does not even know the content of the seven peals of thunder.

A stern warning needs to be given here that some will through their own vain imagination or by being deceived by the devil think have been given insight into things like the seven peals of thunder. Jesus refers to such individuals in the Gospel of Matthew.

For many will come in My name, saying, "I am the Christ," and will mislead many. (Matthew 24:5)

Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. (Matthew 24:11)

What is astounding about such false prophets is that they will know what Jesus has said in Matthew and still persist misleading many. For those being misled, a lie does not take root in the one telling the lie, but by those who receive the lie as if it were truth. We, as individuals, are responsible for learning what the scriptures actually say if we are following Jesus. To not spend time learning the scriptures is like buying a new car and forgetting to put gas in the tank.

The apostle John is now given the rest of the message God wants him to write down.

Then the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard again speaking with me, and saying, "Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land." So I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he said to me, "Take it and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey." I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and in my mouth it was sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter. And they

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said to me, "You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings." (Revelation 10:8–11)

Next the temple and the two witnesses are mentioned.

Then there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, "Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it. Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months. And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. And if anyone wants to harm them, fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way. These have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.

When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them. And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. Those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and celebrate; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were watching them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." Then they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them. And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest

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were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. (Revelation 11:1–13)

The temple is the place where Jesus will dwell on earth. You can read about the temple's construction, laws and customs in the book of Ezekiel chapters 40 through 48. It will take 69 weeks (approximately 1.3 years) to build the temple and this is detailed in Daniel chapter 9.

Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place. **So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.** Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. (Daniel 9:24–26)

One thing to note about the temple and its laws and customs is that it doesn't quite follow the Old Testament law. It is more like a hybrid of the old law and something else. Consider how amazing this is when the New Testament did not exist when Ezekiel described the temple. So the Jews in the day of Ezekiel had no reference to the other half of this hybrid worship! The concept is pointed at in Ezekiel 37.

The word of the LORD came again to me saying, "And you, son of man, take for yourself one stick and write on it, 'For Judah and for the sons of Israel, his companions'; then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel, his companions.' Then join them for yourself one to another into one stick, that they may become one in your hand. When the sons of your people speak to you saying, 'Will you not declare to us what you mean by these?' say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I will put them with it, with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick,

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and they will be one in My hand.” The sticks on which you write will be in your hand before their eyes. Say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, **“Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms.** They will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God.” (Ezekiel 37:15–23)

In the scriptures, there are examples that are shadows of what is to come. God is using the split kingdom in Ezekiel’s day as an example of what is to come when God will bring his people together. It has its direct meaning of uniting the tribes of Israel, the Jews, but even more the uniting of the Jews and Gentiles. We can substitute the term Christians when we talk about Gentiles. Because one is born a Jew does not necessarily mean they will enter eternal life in heaven. Likewise, being a Christian by name or tradition alone does not necessarily mean they will enter eternal life in heaven either. Listen to what the apostle Paul wrote.

But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham’s descendants, but: “through Isaac your descendants will be named.” That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. (Romans 9:6–8)

It is ultimately the promise of God that brings salvation. So we have the Jews who were given the Law and prophets which convicts of sin and points the way to salvation in the cross in prophetic references and examples. Yet Christians have seen the salvation in Jesus who fulfilled the Law and the prophets by dying on the cross. Yet we have a division between Jew and Christians where the Jews reject Jesus as the Messiah. Paul refers to this situation.

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I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! (Romans 11:11–12)

Paul is talking about how God plans and uses everything to spread salvation to all peoples. God is going to take the Jews and Gentiles and make them one stick in His hand. So the hybrid laws and customs of the temple described in Ezekiel chapters 40 through 48 is a combination of the Old Testament Laws and the new covenant through the blood of Jesus.

The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly. (Revelation 11:14)

The third woe to come is the final woe which leads to the destruction of the antichrist kingdom.

Chapter 11: Seventh Trumpet

The following passage describes the second coming of Jesus from the view point of heaven.

Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever." And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, "We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign. And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth." (Revelation 11:15–18)

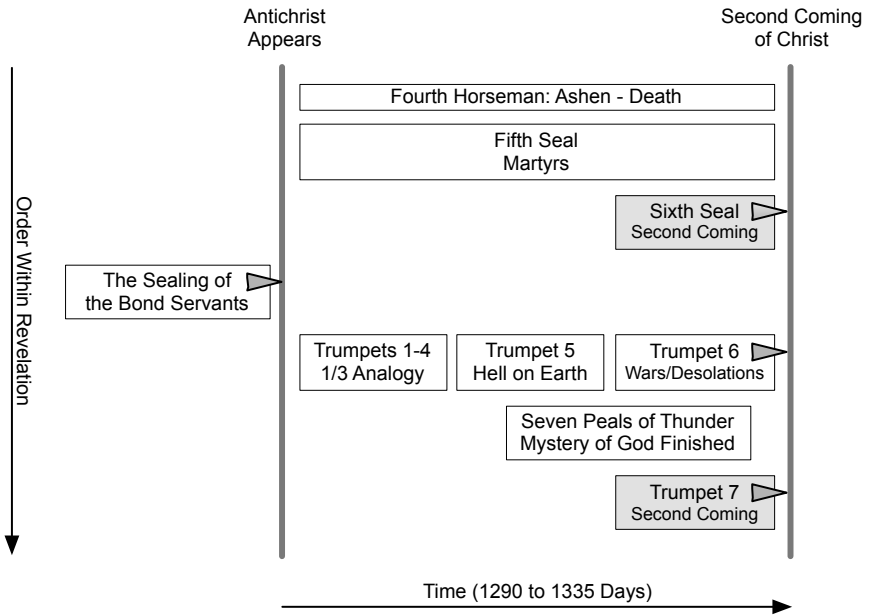
For those on the earth who would not repent this is the third woe in that they will be physically killed and their spirits sent to hell to await the great white throne judgement where they will then be cast into the lake of fire.

In the next verse, we flash forward in terms of order in the book of Revelation to chapter 16:17-20 which is the seventh plague.

And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm. (Revelation 11:19)

This is tied into the seventh trumpet because the seven plagues in chapters 15 and 16 lead up to the second coming of Jesus. This lays the foundation for God's judgement in that those who dwelt on the earth would not repent. Here is our updated diagram of the events.

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Chapter 12: Battle of the Ages

This chapter is a historical narrative draped with figurative language and one must be careful to discern the meaning of what is being said. This figurative language gives a more emotional feel to what is being described for a greater depth of understanding.

A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; and she was with child; and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth. Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child. And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne. Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days. (Revelation 12:1–6)

The woman clothed with the sun is the nation of Israel where the crown of twelve stars is the twelve tribes of Israel. Israel as a nation is a shadow of the true intent of God in that they represent the people of God everywhere, Jew or Gentile. Israel exists in a world surrounded by its enemies because it is where God chose to place His marker in mankind to be the place where Jesus was to be born and die on a cross for our salvation.

God separating Israel from the rest of the world is a shadow of the separation between the people of God and those of the devil. Much of the Old Testament deals with drawing a distinction between the holy and the profane and understanding this provides profound insight into the law, ceremonial sacrifices and cleansing. The Old Testament law is a shadow of God's greater intent to show the purity of Jesus versus a sin infected world. Jesus became the high priest who made the ultimate sacrifice to appease God's wrath and therefore only by the shedding of His blood can we be made clean before God.

When the antichrist does away with the daily sacrifice, it is an extremely significant insult to God and His plan for salvation especially as it is done in the temple built for Jesus' return. Here is the scripture that pertains to the temple itself that prescribes the daily sacrifice.

And you shall provide a lamb a year old without blemish for a burnt offering to the LORD daily; morning by morning you shall provide it. Also you shall provide a grain offering with it morning by morning, a sixth of an ephah and a third of a hin of oil to moisten the fine flour, a grain offering to the LORD continually by a perpetual ordinance. Thus they shall provide the lamb, the grain offering and the oil, morning by morning, for a continual burnt offering. (Ezekiel 46:13–15)

Where it says, “a woman clothed with the sun” can be taken from the blessing given to Moses for the people.

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, ‘Thus you shall bless the sons of Israel. You shall say to them: The LORD bless you, and keep you; **the LORD make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace.**’ So they shall invoke My name on the sons of Israel, and I then will bless them.” (Numbers 6:22–27)

To give a more direct definition to the description of the woman, we can see the various parts as they are described in a dream Joseph had from God.

Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, “Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.” He related it to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, “What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?” (Genesis 37:9–10)

The woman clothed with the sun is the people of God clothed with the Holy Spirit where the stars refer to the tribes of Israel. The moon indicates the relationship of the people of God to Jesus just

as the bride is to the groom. This also extends in proxy to the relationship between Jesus and God the Father. There is an order of submission that God has set in place and this is one means God knows if you want salvation in your willingness to submit to Jesus as Lord. Jesus submitted to God when He became a man even to death on a cross. Listen to the apostle Paul's description.

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5–11)

The child the woman is giving birth to is Jesus the first time He came to earth to die on a cross for our salvation. The dragon is Satan and the third of the stars he swept away with his tail are the angels that followed him and became demons. The dragon standing before the woman to devour the child is Satan trying to kill Jesus as an infant. Here is the scripture that describes this event.

Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its vicinity, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the magi. Then what had been spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; and she refused to be comforted, because they were no more." (Matthew 2:16–18)

Then we jump forward in time to the ascension of Jesus where it says, "and her child was caught up to God and to His throne." This is described in the book of Acts.

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And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:9–11)

When it says, "who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron" it is talking about the thousand year reign of Jesus after His second coming. The rod of iron is a figurative way of saying His word will be the law on earth and no one will be able to countermand His orders.

Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days. (Revelation 12:6)

We are now jumping to the reign of the antichrist. A very specific number of days, 1260 which is 42 months or 3.5 years, are given for the antichrist to reign and the ministry of God's two witnesses which can be seen in the previous chapter of Revelation.

Then there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, "Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it. Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months. And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." (Revelation 11:1–3)

God is going to provide for His people in this time of great tribulation which is why Jesus says the following.

Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to

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get the things out that are in his house. Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. (Matthew 24:15–18)

As it has been demonstrated, the abomination of desolation is the antichrist and Jesus is telling us to run away from the antichrist and hide in the wilderness for God's wrath is about to be poured out. To stay in the cities when the antichrist appears is to say to God your warning is not worthy of concern. Consider a similar situation when Lot's wife turned back to look at Sodom and Gomorrah as God destroyed those cities and they were warned to not look behind them.

When they had brought them outside, one said, "Escape for your life! **Do not look behind you**, and do not stay anywhere in the valley; escape to the mountains, or you will be swept away." (Genesis 19:17)

The sun had risen over the earth when Lot came to Zoar. Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven, and He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. **But his wife, from behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.** (Genesis 19:23–26)

For those facing that decision when the antichrist appears, God's warning to flee is in your best interest. Staying behind to see what is happening is tempting eternal death in that you will be tempted and what if you fall to that temptation? With the young or inexperienced, they could be swayed by the antichrist's use of smooth words as it says in Daniel.

By smooth words he will turn to godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant (Daniel 11:32)

But there will also be miracles enacted by demons!

For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. (Matthew 24:24)

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So the combination of smooth words and miracles will make for a deadly trap. The only ones authorized by God to be there at that time are the two witnesses because they speak for God.

The next section of scripture describes a higher level view of the events in the last days.

And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time."

And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child. But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood. But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth. So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. (Revelation 12:7–17)

There was war in heaven and Satan was cast down and now occupies hell. The battlefield is currently upon the earth and those who dwell there are on the front line. Jesus mentions Satan falling from heaven in the Gospel of Luke.

The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." And He said to them, "**I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.** Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven." (Luke 10:17–20)

One of the main things to glean from this section of Revelation is, "Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time." This means we are living in a war zone beginning in the garden of Eden where Adam and Eve were deceived and fell into sin. The manifestation of Satan's wrath is where it says, "he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child." This has been seen throughout the centuries as people have been persecuted and killed for following God.

In the last paragraph of this section, it focuses on the time of the antichrist where the woman is given great wings of an eagle to fly off to safety for a time and times and half a time. The phrase "time and times and half a time" is an idiom that means 3.5 years and this refers to the time the antichrist reigns.

And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood. But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth. (Revelation 12:15–16)

This passage describes the manifestation of Satan's wrath in those days in that it will be like a flood. This is figurative language to describe historical events to come and gives a perspective on what it will be like. Think of a devastating flood that wipes out an entire city with all of its buildings and those who live there. Satan's wrath is countered by God when it says the earth opened its mouth

and drank up the river. Again in figurative language, God is saying He will counter Satan's wrath and preserve a remnant unto Himself through his grace.

So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. (Revelation 12:17)

In the days of the antichrist, this means many people of God will be killed by the forces of the antichrist. Combine what has been described with the fifth seal in the Lamb's book of life and you can begin to grasp why God devotes the entire seal to the martyrs.

When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also. (Revelation 6:9–11)

With the suffering and killing of God's people in those days, the commandment to flee now takes on a more urgent tone because Satan is going to come after the people of God with a vengeance. Psalm 91 provides insight when it is set in this context.

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!" For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark.

You will not be afraid of the terror by night, or of the arrow that flies by day; of the pestilence that stalks in darkness, or of the destruction that lays waste at noon. A thousand may fall at your side and ten thousand at your right hand, but it shall not approach you. You will only look on with your eyes and see the recompense

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of the wicked. For you have made the LORD, my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place. No evil will befall you, nor will any plague come near your tent.

For He will give His angels charge concerning you, to guard you in all your ways. They will bear you up in their hands, that you do not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread upon the lion and cobra, the young lion and the serpent you will trample down.

“Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him securely on high, because he has known My name. He will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. With a long life I will satisfy him and let him see My salvation.” (Psalms 91:1–16)

Chapter 13: Rise of the Antichrist and False Prophet

From the beginning, God has been weaving His plan for salvation throughout creation. On the other side, Satan has also been executing his plan for the destruction of God's people. In order to get some perspective on Satan's ways, it is useful to know where Satan came from and his destiny. In Ezekiel chapter 28, is a word portrait of Satan's origin and destiny.

Again the word of the LORD came to me saying, "Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz and the diamond; the beryl, the onyx and the jasper; the lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald; and the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, was in you. On the day that you were created they were prepared. You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire. You were blameless in your ways From the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you. By the abundance of your trade you were internally filled with violence, and you sinned; therefore I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I put you before kings, that they may see you. By the multitude of your iniquities, in the unrighteousness of your trade you profaned your sanctuaries. Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you; it has consumed you, and I have turned you to ashes on the earth In the eyes of all who see you. All who know you among the peoples are appalled at you; you have become terrified and you will cease to be forever.'" (Ezekiel 28:11-19)

In Revelation chapter 12, it talks about Satan having great wrath because he was cast down and only has a short time left before he is thrown into the lake of fire.

Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time. (Revelation 12:12)

This imagery flows into this chapter which describes the rise of the antichrist and false prophet. There are several levels of meaning wrapped up into the following descriptions which we will examine.

The Rise of the Antichrist

And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names. And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority. I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast; they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?" There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him. And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven.

It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. If anyone has an ear, let him hear. If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints. (Revelation 13:1–10)

The Rise of the False Prophet

Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon. He exercises all

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the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life. And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed. And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six. (Revelation 13:11–18)

The first level of meaning is the origin of the antichrist and false prophet in terms of what kingdoms they will originate from and their time. This will be important to those living in those days because it will signify the time and place for the rise of the antichrist. The temple described in Ezekiel and Daniel is to be built just before the antichrist appears. It is not built a hundred years early or after the antichrist shows up, but it is built at a specific time of God's own choosing. One of the markers indicating the time to build the temple is this prophecy which describes the originating kingdoms.

Another level of meaning is the imagery of beasts. When one thinks of a beast, one usually thinks of a dangerous wild animal and that is what is being portrayed. This chapter starts out with, "And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore" where God uses the imagery of a dragon to describe Satan making his appearance which is directly reflected in the kingdoms he manifests on the earth and in antichrist and false prophet.

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What Satan sets in motion is ultimately destined for destruction in two ways. God is going to completely destroy the works of the devil as written by the apostle John.

The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. (1 John 3:8)

Through Jesus' sacrifice God removed the works of pride in those who are destined to be saved. When Adam and Eve fell into sin in the garden of Eden, God speaks to Satan the following prediction.

The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you will go, and dust you will eat all the days of your life; and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; **He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.**" (Genesis 3:14–15)

Where it says, "He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel" is describing the crucifixion of Jesus and is the cutting edge of God's plan. The cross is the central anchor and is manifested in the affairs of men on earth as described in the book of Daniel when Nebuchadnezzar has a dream from God.

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream:

Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. (Daniel 2:35)

Interpretation by Daniel:

In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. (Daniel 2:44)

Through Nebuchadnezzar's dream God is saying He will crush all other kingdoms through the second coming of Jesus. Ezekiel 28 gives us insight as to why God unfolds the events as He does.

Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you; it has consumed you, and I have turned you to ashes on the earth in the eyes of all who see you. All who know you among the peoples are appalled at you; you have become terrified and you will cease to be forever. (Ezekiel 28:18–19)

The second way Satan's works are destined for destruction is that Satan wishes to inflict as much pain and suffering as he can. Satan wants to destroy that which God holds as beloved. The motivation for this can be observed in the warning in Revelation 12:12 where Satan knows he is defeated and his time is short. With the emptiness within being filled with hatred and rage, he will move with a vengeance against the people of God. Satan's original rebellion and everything that resulted from it will be turned to ash before God in the lake of fire.

The third layer of meaning in this chapter is the relationship between the antichrist and the false prophet. Satan gives his authority to the antichrist and the false prophet is subservient. We see this relationship where it says of the false prophet, "He exercises all the authority of the first beast **in his presence.**" One can see the perversion of the scriptures in that the antichrist and false prophet follow the established pattern of God sending a pair like Moses and Aaron, Elijah and Elisha, and the two witnesses. Even with Jesus, God sent John the Baptist before Him. The antichrist and false prophet can't do what they do without the scriptures as their foundation and all that God has done before they arrive on the scene. Satan is usurping the biblical pattern in order to get a foot in the door and provide a context for the false miracles and justification for the blasphemous that will be spoken.

One topic of intense speculation from the Bible is the number of the antichrist which is 666.

Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six. (Revelation 13:18)

Even the secular world uses references to 666 as a dismissive slap against the authority of the scriptures when spoken with the assumptive reasoning that the Bible is mythological. In a lot of Christian circles people fixate on 666 without regard to the context in which it is given which leads to all sorts of sinful behavior. For example, saying a certain person is the antichrist like a Catholic pope or a politician. This is sinful since it ignores the scriptures, is based on wild assumptions and is a reflection of one's distaste for the person in question. It is really just a facade for making accusations and Satan is the one who day and night makes accusations against the people who dwell on the earth. Wildly pointing a finger at someone and calling them the antichrist reflects the will of Satan and is hypocritical.

The big question here is why does God let us know this particular fact? Does knowing 666 help one identify the antichrist? The answer is a qualified no. The definitive moment when the antichrist is revealed is when it says the antichrist recovers from a fatal wound.

I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. (Revelation 13:3)

The other key to identifying the antichrist is from Daniel.

Then in his place one will arise who will send an oppressor through the Jewel of his kingdom; yet within a few days he will be shattered, though not in anger nor in battle. **In his place a despicable person will arise, on whom the honor of kingship has not been conferred, but he will come in a time of tranquility and seize the kingdom by intrigue. The overflowing forces will be flooded away before him and shattered, and also the prince of the covenant.** (Daniel 11:20–22)

When the “oppressor” is shattered, it is a warning signal that the antichrist is about to appear on the scene. Then the prince of the covenant and his forces will be shattered and the antichrist then walks into the temple. At this point, 666 is not needed to identify the antichrist because of all the scriptures that will be fulfilled. So who then is 666 really for? It does act like icing on a cake in identifying the antichrist, but it is really for those who are considering taking the mark of the beast. They see all the

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scriptures being fulfilled and now they see Revelation 13:18 coming to pass. This is similar in purpose to the first four trumpets. The trumpets are used to signify that the kingdom of the antichrist is of the devil and so likewise 666 is used to further demonstrate he is the antichrist and of the devil. Those who take the mark of the beast will be without excuse before God. The time when 666 is useful is when the antichrist appears and the above scriptures have been fulfilled.

Consider even if you could guess the exact name of the antichrist which derives to 666, you would be wrong to speculate. It is like adding two numbers that have a sum of 10 and then have you guess which two numbers were used to make that sum. There is no way to know if you are correct in your guess. The other aspect of this issue is if you had that knowledge, what could you do with it? At the time of this writing, there is nothing you could do other than to note that it is coming. 666 is not for the purpose of primary identification of the antichrist, but as a warning to those who live in those days that this is the antichrist. To usurp the scriptures foretelling of 666 and apply it to individuals you don't like is a horrific dark sin before God. It is insulting to God because God provided this information to help people in those days too repent and not for one's selfish agenda.

Chapter 14: Blessings on the Martyrs

In the next couple of passages, we begin to see God making a separation between the wicked and the righteous. One thing you will notice is that there is no middle ground where a person has one foot in heaven and another in hell.

The lamb and the 144,000

Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps. And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth. These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb. And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless. (Revelation 14:1–5)

This describes the reward of those who chose to follow God with all of their heart in both word and deed in spite of all that happened on the earth. As it says, “These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste.” God is honoring them for their faithfulness. We should meditate on how we can align our priorities with God’s and walk blameless as they do.

Judgment

And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; and he said with a loud voice, “Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters.”

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And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality.”

Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.” Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. (Revelation 14:6–12)

There are three parts in this section of scripture. First is the proclamation that the hour of judgement has come and we should choose to follow God. Second, Babylon has fallen which refers to the kingdom of the antichrist in this context. Through deceptive miracles and smooth words, the world is dragged off to its own destruction which is characterized by a passion for immorality. The third is a straight up warning that those who follow the antichrist will suffer eternal death. When it says, “and the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, ” you could not have the consequences more clearly explained. This is not a form of poetry or figurative language, but a historical narrative that is to be taken literally as this is exactly what will happen. Sometimes we become dull in our minds as to the severity of what it will mean to suffer the full force of God’s wrath and therefore we become careless and think it won’t be that bad or think it is of no consequence. That is a horrific mistake and this is why the first angel in this passage says, “Fear God.” We should fear the one who has the authority to cast our spirit into hell.

Blessings the Martyrs

And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, “Write, ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “so

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that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.” (Revelation 14:13)

A blessing is proclaimed for those who die in the Lord in that they enter into rest. One thing to note given the context of this statement is that those who think God will spare His people from the events of the great tribulation, are greatly mistaken. This is a fundamental misrepresentation of God’s character and purposes. The ironic thing is such thinking will not exist in those days since they are going through the fulfillment of the scriptures. So it is mainly an issue at the time of this writing where people have a sense of entitlement that God should spare us because we say in our hearts that God is just like us and we would never allow it. This is foolish thinking.

The Harvest

Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, “Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.” Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped. (Revelation 14:14–16)

What we are seeing in this section is the second coming of Jesus from a figurative point of view showing the Lord gathering the harvest. This is reflected in the Gospel of Matthew where it says the following.

And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. (Matthew 24:30–31)

God’s Wrath

And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle. Then another angel, the one who has

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power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe." So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles. (Revelation 14:17–20)

There is a parallel between Revelation 14:14–16 and Revelation 14:17–20 where they are showing two sides of the second coming of Jesus. Jesus will gather His elect to Himself through the first resurrection. The other side is the destruction of the wicked in God's wine press of wrath. God resurrecting His people is a fulfillment of what is written in Ezekiel.

Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say, '**Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.**' Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves, My people. I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken and done it," declares the LORD.'" (Ezekiel 37:11–14)

Is death a stumbling block that God cannot overcome? In their eyes, all hope was lost because of a lack of confidence in God's ability to perform what He said He would do. In the book of Joel, we see the following promise.

So rejoice, O sons of Zion, and be glad in the LORD your God; for He has given you the early rain for your vindication. And He has poured down for you the rain, the early and latter rain as before. The threshing floors will be full of grain, and the vats will overflow with the new wine and oil. "**Then I will make up to you for the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the creeping**

locust, the stripping locust and the gnawing locust, My great army which I sent among you. You will have plenty to eat and be satisfied and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you; then My people will never be put to shame. Thus you will know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God, and there is no other; and My people will never be put to shame.” (Joel 2:23–27)

The second coming of Jesus is one of God’s signature moments where God demonstrates that His promises are trustworthy and true. Yet because the tribulation will be so great and the false miracles so intense, it will appear that there is no hope. Jesus addressed this situation with the parable of the unjust judge.

Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, saying, “In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, ‘Give me legal protection from my opponent.’ For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, ‘Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.’” And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge said; now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. **However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?**” (Luke 18:1–8)

Chapters 15-16: The Seven Bowls of Wrath

Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished. (Revelation 15:1)

Now begins the final plagues which brings to a conclusion the wrath of God. These final plagues will be the pinnacle of the judgements because they involve bringing pain and suffering to a very intense personal level. You see a ramping up of the intensity where God is again giving them a chance to repent. If after these plagues they persist in following the antichrist, then eternal destruction will be their fate.

And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God.

And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; for all the nations will come and worship before You, for Your righteous acts have been revealed." (Revelation 15:2-4)

Again God mentions the martyrs and describes the place of honor they are given. Given the number of times the martyrs are mentioned in the book of Revelation, emphasizes the importance of what they did in being victorious in overcoming the antichrist even to the point of laying down their lives as a testimony that Jesus is Lord.

The seven bowls are prepared.

After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened, and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in linen, clean and bright, and girded around their chests with golden sashes. Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven

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golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished. (Revelation 15:5–8)

First Bowl: Loathsome and malignant sore.

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.”

So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth; and it became a loathsome and malignant sore on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image. (Revelation 16:1–2)

Second Bowl: The sea becomes blood.

The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like that of a dead man; and every living thing in the sea died. (Revelation 16:3)

Third Bowl: The rivers and the springs become blood.

Then the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters saying, “Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things; for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it.” And I heard the altar saying, “Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.” (Revelation 16:4–7)

Fourth Bowl: The sun scorches men with fire.

The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory. (Revelation 16:8–9)

Fifth Bowl: Darkness and pain.

Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds. (Revelation 16:10–11)

Sixth Bowl: The great river Euphrates dried up.

The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east. And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. (“Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.”) And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-magedon. (Revelation 16:12–16)

The sixth bowl marks the beginning of the gathering of the people to the valley of Har-Magedon. In the book of Zephaniah God provides some context for the gathering of all the peoples before the second coming of Jesus.

“Therefore wait for Me,” declares the LORD, “For the day when I rise up as a witness. Indeed, My decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out on them My indignation, all My burning anger; for all the earth will be devoured By the fire of My zeal. For then I will give to the peoples purified lips, that all of them may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him shoulder to shoulder. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, My dispersed ones, will bring My offerings. In that day you will feel no shame Because of all your deeds by which you have rebelled against Me; for then I will remove from your midst your proud, exulting ones, and you will never again be haughty On My holy mountain. But I will leave among you a humble and lowly people,

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and they will take refuge in the name of the LORD. The remnant of Israel will do no wrong and tell no lies, nor will a deceitful tongue be found in their mouths; for they will feed and lie down with no one to make them tremble.” (Zephaniah 3:8–13)

In Micah God describes the same events from a slightly different perspective.

“Now, why do you cry out loudly? Is there no king among you, or has your counselor perished, that agony has gripped you like a woman in childbirth? Writhe and labor to give birth, daughter of Zion, like a woman in childbirth; for now you will go out of the city, dwell in the field, and go to Babylon. There you will be rescued; there the LORD will redeem you from the hand of your enemies. And now many nations have been assembled against you Who say, ‘Let her be polluted, and let our eyes gloat over Zion.’ But they do not know the thoughts of the LORD, and they do not understand His purpose; for He has gathered them like sheaves to the threshing floor. Arise and thresh, daughter of Zion, for your horn I will make iron and your hoofs I will make bronze, that you may pulverize many peoples, that you may devote to the LORD their unjust gain and their wealth to the Lord of all the earth.” (Micah 4:9–13)

Again in Joel we see the same events described.

Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare a war; rouse the mighty men! Let all the soldiers draw near, let them come up! Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, “I am a mighty man.” Hasten and come, all you surrounding nations, and gather yourselves there. Bring down, O LORD, Your mighty ones. Let the nations be aroused and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread, for the wine press is full; the vats overflow, for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon grow dark and the stars lose their brightness. The LORD roars from Zion and utters His voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth tremble. But the LORD

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is a refuge for His people and a stronghold to the sons of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain. So Jerusalem will be holy, and strangers will pass through it no more. (Joel 3:9–17)

You need to overlay these three scriptures together to get a well rounded picture of why God gathers all these people together in one spot for the coming of Jesus. It is fairly obvious why the antichrist and his forces are there, but bringing the armies from the east involves a little deduction. In Zephaniah God says, “For then I will remove from your midst your proud, exulting ones, and you will never again be haughty on My holy mountain.”

Inherent in pride is the core thought that one is in charge and knows more than God. At this time in future history God pours out abundant evidence in the form of miracles and plagues that can't be mistaken for anything else but being from God. To see these things happen and reject the truth creates a shroud of darkness around one's mind. So God gathers all who reject the truth for judgement.

Now in their minds they may believe that it is to their advantage to gather together. They will have the scriptures available to them and know what is written, but they will pursue a course straight to Har-Magedon. A similar example from the Old Testament would be the people crossing through the midst of the Red Sea and the armies of Pharaoh chasing after them. One would think the armies of Pharaoh would have a second thought about chasing the Hebrews as they see the water piled up on the right and left of them, but they proceed. The same could be said for the armies from the east in that they will cross over on the dried up Euphrates riverbed just as it was foretold in the scriptures. Again like Pharaoh's army, will they consider what they are doing? Obviously the answer is yes they will know what they are doing, but do it anyway. That is the nature of pride which is described in Zephaniah as the proud, exulting ones who are haughty.

Now let's step back for a minute and look at the broader perspective of these events. Back in the time of the prophet Daniel, king Nebuchadnezzar had a dream from God. In the following passage, Daniel describes the dream to Nebuchadnezzar and thus

Nebuchadnezzar knew the interpretation of the dream would be true from the one who could tell him the dream.

You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. (Daniel 2:31–35)

Daniel gives the interpretation of the dream.

This was the dream; now we will tell its interpretation before the king. You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory; and wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given them into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold. After you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth. Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces. In that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. As the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle. And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery. In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will

never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy. (Daniel 2:36–45)

The fourth kingdom composed of iron and clay is the reign of the antichrist and the stone made without hands is Jesus. The return of Jesus ends the reign of the antichrist and all other kingdoms of the earth. So in the greater picture of gathering together all the wicked ones is not only a practical matter but also a fulfillment of Nebuchadnezzar's dream where God removes all other authorities on the earth and makes Jesus the King of kings. This will fulfill what is written in Psalm 110.

The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet." The LORD will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, saying, "Rule in the midst of Your enemies." (Psalms 110:1–2)

Seventh Bowl: Great earthquake and hail.

Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done." And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty. The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe. (Revelation 16:17–21)

Saying, "It is done" refers to the wrath of God. Since we know the second coming of Jesus destroys the kingdom of the antichrist, we can logically conclude the seventh bowl is the second coming of

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Jesus since God's wrath is finished at this point. The seventh bowl adds some new details to Jesus' second coming like one hundred pound hail stones being cast down.

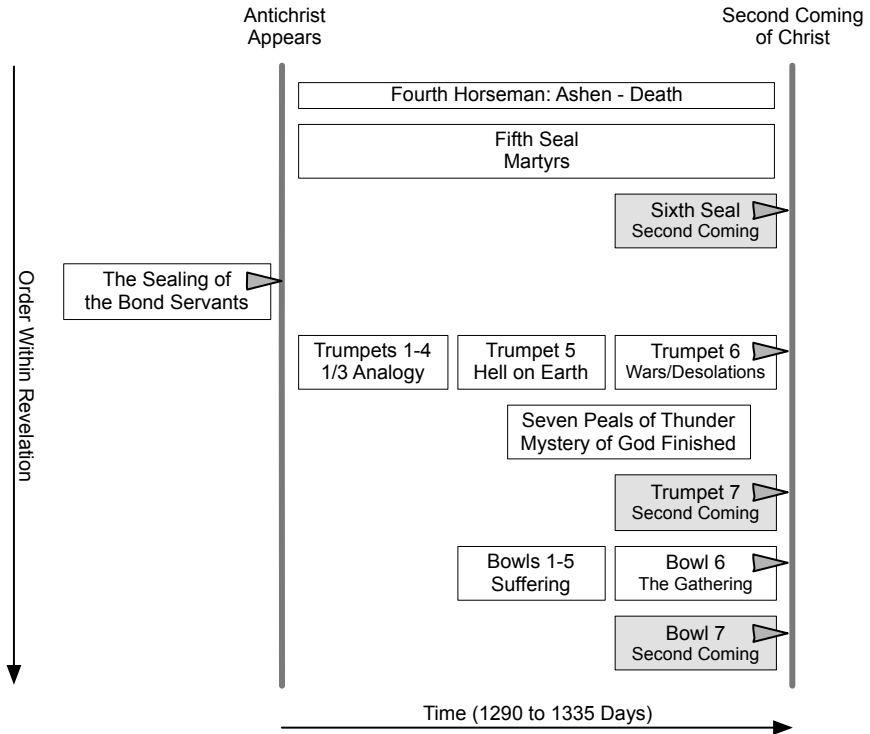
The breaking of the sixth seal is also a description of the second coming of Jesus.

I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (Revelation 6:12-17)

Notice the common event between the seventh plague and the sixth seal is the great earthquake and this ties these two scriptures together. So by combining these scriptures, you get a more complete picture of what will happen when Jesus returns.

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Here is the completed diagram showing the order of events between the time the antichrist comes on the scene and the return of Jesus.



Chapter 17: The Great Harlot of Babylon

The next section describes a vision of a great harlot which represents the manifestation of Satan's plan for the earth.

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality." And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns. The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality, and on her forehead a name was written, a mystery, "Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth." And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. When I saw her, I wondered greatly. And the angel said to me, "Why do you wonder? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns." (Revelation 17:1-7)

The angel then explains the vision to John.

"The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come. Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits, and they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while. The beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction. The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast. These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb

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will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.”

And he said to me, “The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues. And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire. For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled. The woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth.” (Revelation 17:8–18)

The image of a woman as a harlot is a specific image that is in contrast with Revelation 12 which describes another woman representing the people of God. The harlot is clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls which are the riches of this world. This is reflected in Revelation 18 where it says the following.

And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes any more — cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and every kind of citron wood and every article of ivory and every article made from very costly wood and bronze and iron and marble, and cinnamon and spice and incense and perfume and frankincense and wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and cargoes of horses and chariots and slaves and human lives. The fruit you long for has gone from you, and all things that were luxurious and splendid have passed away from you and men will no longer find them. (Revelation 18:11–14)

In contrast, God specifically tells His people to flee the harlot which is the reign of the antichrist.

Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days. (Revelation 12:6)

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In the book of Proverbs is a section dealing with harlotry and temptation.

My son, keep my words and treasure my commandments within you. Keep my commandments and live, and my teaching as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart. Say to wisdom, "You are my sister," And call understanding your intimate friend; that they may keep you from an adulteress, from the foreigner who flatters with her words.

For at the window of my house I looked out through my lattice, and I saw among the naive, and discerned among the youths a young man lacking sense, passing through the street near her corner; and he takes the way to her house, in the twilight, in the evening, in the middle of the night and in the darkness. And behold, a woman comes to meet him, dressed as a harlot and cunning of heart. She is boisterous and rebellious, her feet do not remain at home; she is now in the streets, now in the squares, and lurks by every corner. So she seizes him and kisses him and with a brazen face she says to him: "I was due to offer peace offerings; today I have paid my vows. Therefore I have come out to meet you, to seek your presence earnestly, and I have found you. I have spread my couch with coverings, with colored linens of Egypt. I have sprinkled my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon. Come, let us drink our fill of love until morning; let us delight ourselves with caresses. For my husband is not at home, he has gone on a long journey; he has taken a bag of money with him, at the full moon he will come home." With her many persuasions she entices him; with her flattering lips she seduces him. Suddenly he follows her as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as one in fetters to the discipline of a fool, until an arrow pierces through his liver; as a bird hastens to the snare, so he does not know that it will cost him his life. (Proverbs 7:1-23)

Even though this is written in the book of Proverbs which is considered one of the wisdom books, this particular scripture is really a prophetic reference to the reign of the antichrist. There are parallels between the harlot of Revelation 17 and Proverbs 7 and when brought together provide great insight.

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Now therefore, my sons, listen to me, and pay attention to the words of my mouth. Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways, do not stray into her paths. **For many are the victims she has cast down, and numerous are all her slain. Her house is the way to Sheol, descending to the chambers of death.** (Proverbs 7:24–27)

Given the context of the harlot in Revelation 17, this scripture in Proverbs echoes out a serious warning of the consequences of following the antichrist in that it will lead to eternal death. Looking ahead to Revelation chapter 18 we see the following statement.

I heard another voice from heaven, saying, “Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues; for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.” (Revelation 18:4–5)

It is God’s command to run from the harlot and the act of running from the harlot is associated with the deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt in the time of Moses and with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah as Lot’s family walked away from Sodom. This link is established in Revelation 11 in the description of the two witnesses being killed by the antichrist.

When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them. And their dead bodies **will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.** (Revelation 11:7–8)

With Moses and the exodus from Egypt we read of the ten plagues which parallels the ministry of the two witnesses in terms of the power of God being manifested. From Sodom, we see the wickedness and the complete destruction of the city and its inhabitants with fire which parallels the second coming of Jesus and its destruction.

Chapter 18: The Fall of Babylon

The proclamation of the fall of Babylon is given by an angel.

After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory. And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird. For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality." (Revelation 18:1–3)

In ancient times, Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylon. In those days, Babylon was a very great city and Nebuchadnezzar's heart became lifted up because of the greatness of the city that surrounded him. Nebuchadnezzar then had a dream from God.

Now these were the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed: I was looking, and behold, there was a tree in the midst of the earth and its height was great. The tree grew large and became strong and its height reached to the sky, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth. Its foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, and the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches, and all living creatures fed themselves from it.

I was looking in the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed, and behold, an angelic watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven. He shouted out and spoke as follows: "Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit; let the beasts flee from under it and the birds from its branches. Yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground, but with a band of iron and bronze around it In the new grass of the field; and let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth. Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let a beast's mind be given to him, and let seven periods of time pass over him." (Daniel 4:10–16)

Daniel then interpreted the dream for Nebuchadnezzar telling him that God was going to strip the kingdom from him until he recognized that it is Heaven that rules. One year later, this came to pass.

Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon. The king reflected and said, “Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?” (Daniel 4:29–30)

This expression of pride by Nebuchadnezzar reflects the essence of what it says here in Revelation, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!” Babylon in this context of the book of Revelation is the kingdom of the antichrist and is reflected in that the antichrist exalts himself saying he is God. The apostle Paul speaks of this in his letter to the Thessalonians.

who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. (2 Thessalonians 2:4)

Because of pride, the kingdom of the antichrist “has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird.” (Revelation 18:2) This is the proof text that the fourth horseman, the ashen horse which is the fourth seal on the book of life, is the antichrist because it says, “he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him.” (Revelation 6:8)

Demons are the most hateful and treacherous beings in existence. What a lot of people envision what a demon is like does not even come close to the reality of their nature. There is the reason that the lake of fire was created for Satan and his demons because the punishment that fits the crimes they have committed is eternal death through eternal torment. Through deception, the world will cast its lot with the antichrist which is really choosing to follow Satan because they did not love the truth as Paul wrote.

For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. (2 Thessalonians 2:11–12)

Demons are the ones doing the miracles through the antichrist and false prophet. This leads us to the imagery written here in chapter 18.

For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality. (Revelation 18:3)

If this were restated more loosely in everyday terms, it would be like finding a prostitute, getting drunk and then sell illegal drugs to make money. Selfishness is the corner stone of such behavior which is the fuel that creates wickedness. If you are one who takes pleasure in wickedness, you are in great danger of falling into hell when you die.

Now we get a warning and further explanation.

I heard another voice from heaven, saying, "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues; for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. Pay her back even as she has paid, and give back to her double according to her deeds; in the cup which she has mixed, mix twice as much for her. To the degree that she glorified herself and lived sensuously, to the same degree give her torment and mourning; for she says in her heart, 'I sit as a queen and I am not a widow, and will never see mourning.' For this reason in one day her plagues will come, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for the Lord God who judges her is strong." (Revelation 18:4-8)

We can sometimes take an aloof approach to what it says in the scriptures and state that it is for a long time off in the future. When the time of fulfillment comes, God will have provided what is needed in order to discern who is the antichrist. There will be no lack of knowledge because from the breaking of the first seal on the book of life (Revelation 6:2) to the breaking of the forth seal (Revelation 6:8), there will be an out pouring of the Holy Spirit which will result in the greatest revival ever seen on the earth. We will explore the revival that is to come later in this book. Suffice it to say, nobody is going to say how did this come about or scratch

their head and say nobody told us! Once the first seal is broken, the world is going to know it. Whether we believe God is another matter altogether. So when it says, “come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins,” it will carry far more weight than we give it credit today because we underestimate God and what He will do in those days to express His authority in these matters.

The core attitude of the kingdom of the antichrist is displayed when it says, “I sit as a queen and I am not a widow, and will never see mourning.” In other words, they think they control their own destinies. The apostle Paul writes of the actual fall of the antichrist kingdom.

For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. (1 Thessalonians 5:2–3)

Next we have a description of the mourning that will occur after Jesus returns.

And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment, saying, “Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment has come.”

And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes any more — cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and every kind of citron wood and every article of ivory and every article made from very costly wood and bronze and iron and marble, and cinnamon and spice and incense and perfume and frankincense and wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and cargoes of horses and chariots and slaves and human lives. The fruit you long for has gone from you, and all things that were luxurious and splendid have passed away from you and men will no longer find them. The merchants of

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these things, who became rich from her, will stand at a distance because of the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning, saying, "Woe, woe, the great city, she who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls; for in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste!" And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance, and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, "What city is like the great city?" And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, "Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste!" Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her. (Revelation 18:9–20)

We see this mourning spoken of in a couple of places in the scriptures.

And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. (Matthew 24:30)

Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. (Revelation 1:7)

These scriptures have their root in the Old Testament book of Zechariah.

I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn. In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo. The land will mourn, every family by itself; the family of the house of David by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself

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and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Levi by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself and their wives by themselves; all the families that remain, every family by itself and their wives by themselves. (Zechariah 12:10–14)

One reason it is a day of mourning is because millions upon millions will be physically killed and sent to hell within the period of an hour. Anyone who is destined to be killed on that day will not escape. They chose eternal destruction and God does not rejoice over the death of the wicked as God said in the book of Ezekiel.

“Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked,” declares the Lord GOD, “rather than that he should turn from his ways and live?” (Ezekiel 18:23)

Those who were not taken up in the first resurrection or rapture and were not killed when Jesus returns are given a second chance. They will mourn out of the sorrow of repentance.

A description is given of the fall of Babylon like a great millstone being thrown down.

Then a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “So will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer. And the sound of harpists and musicians and flute-players and trumpeters will not be heard in you any longer; and no craftsman of any craft will be found in you any longer; and the sound of a mill will not be heard in you any longer; and the light of a lamp will not shine in you any longer; and the voice of the bridegroom and bride will not be heard in you any longer; for your merchants were the great men of the earth, because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery. And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth.” (Revelation 18:21–24)

This echoes king Nebuchadnezzar’s dream.

You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed

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them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. (Daniel 2:34–35)

God is emphasizing to us that the second coming of Jesus will be violent. This fact needs to penetrate our thinking because we pass over such statements without considering what it really means. In Joel, it speaks of the Lord roaring from Zion.

For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon grow dark and the stars lose their brightness. **The LORD roars from Zion** and utters His voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth tremble. (Joel 3:14–16)

Again this is describing the second coming of Jesus. If you have ever experienced a near by lightning strike that induces an adrenaline rush and total terror as the whole house shakes, then you have a taste of what it will be like except you need to multiply that by several orders of magnitude. The wrath of God is being poured out with great indignation which is emphasized in the Lord roaring from Zion. This gives us a reference as to the violence displayed in the destruction of the kingdom of the antichrist.

Chapter 19: The second coming of Christ

In this chapter of Revelation, the second coming of Jesus is described from Heaven's point of view.

After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; because His judgments are true and righteous; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and He has avenged the blood of his bond-servants on her." And a second time they said, "Hallelujah! her smoke rises up forever and ever." And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!" And a voice came from the throne, saying, "Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great." Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. (Revelation 19:1–8)

Here we see praise rise up from heaven for God because of His judgements being executed upon the earth. The harlot mentioned here is the same harlot as described in Revelation chapters 17 and 18.

When it says, "His bride has made herself ready," it is specifically referring to those who passed through the great tribulation given the context in which it is written. They persisted in their testimony that Jesus is Lord even unto death.

Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God." Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." (Revelation 19:9–10)

The marriage supper of the Lamb is the first resurrection that occurs when Jesus comes. The apostle Paul describes this resurrection.

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17)

If one is resurrected on that day, God is saying their names are written in the book of life and they are blessed because the second death has no power over them. If we jump to Revelation chapter 20, we see this explicitly stated.

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. (Revelation 20:6)

Now we get a more explicit description of the coming of Jesus from heaven's point of view.

And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "King of kings, and Lord of lords." (Revelation 19:11–16)

As part of the second coming of Jesus, birds are called to assemble for the great supper of God in order to eat the flesh of those on the earth. This is an indignity the followers of the

antichrist will suffer after being killed on that day as their spirits descend into hell.

Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, "Come, assemble for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great." (Revelation 19:17–18)

The same events are now described from the point of view of those dwelling on the earth with details of the antichrist kingdom being destroyed.

And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh. (Revelation 19:19–21)

Jesus can return at any moment!

Since this chapter in Revelation talks about the second coming of Jesus, let's explore certain timeline issues concerning His return. It is often said that Jesus could return at any moment meaning it could happen five minutes from now based on what Jesus said Matthew 24.

But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then there will be

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two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left.

Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. **For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.** (Matthew 24:36–44)

The first thing to note is there is a big difference in saying, “Jesus can return at any moment” and “but of that day and hour no one knows.” Saying Jesus can come at any time completely ignores the context in which He was speaking. Consider all the scriptures that must be fulfilled before Jesus returns. For example, the antichrist must show up and take residence in the temple. Before the antichrist can do that, the temple must be built! That alone shows that saying Jesus can come at any time is false. The truth is many scriptures must be fulfilled first and finally ending with the two witnesses being killed and taken up to heaven.

And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” Then they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them. And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. (Revelation 11:12–13)

From this point in time, is when what Jesus said applies. To say Jesus can return at any moment without the context in which Jesus spoke is to use a misrepresentation in an attempt to inspire righteousness. In other words, using a lie to wake people up and this is not a good thing to do.

A case can be made through the scriptures that we should live with the expectation that we are accountable to God. For example in first Peter, it says the following.

The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. (1 Peter 4:7)

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It is usually not known to a person when and where they will die. If we are living carelessly in regard to God's commands and death comes upon us, we could suddenly find ourselves in the pit of hell and that is a valid and truthful message.

Timelines

There are a few very specific time frames God has given us in the scriptures concerning the antichrist and the second coming. It is worth noting that God gives us accuracy expressed in days. Here are the scriptures that specify these time frames.

From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be **1,290 days**. How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the **1,335 days!** (Daniel 12:11–12)

Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for **forty-two months**. And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for **twelve hundred and sixty days**, clothed in sackcloth. (Revelation 11:2–3)

It is important to put these in context with each other. Again like the previous diagrams we need to set some anchors in time and build on those anchors. The first aspect to consider is the length of time the two witnesses ministry which is 1260 days. We know their ministry ends on the day they are resurrected after being killed by the antichrist.

When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them. And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. Those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and celebrate; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

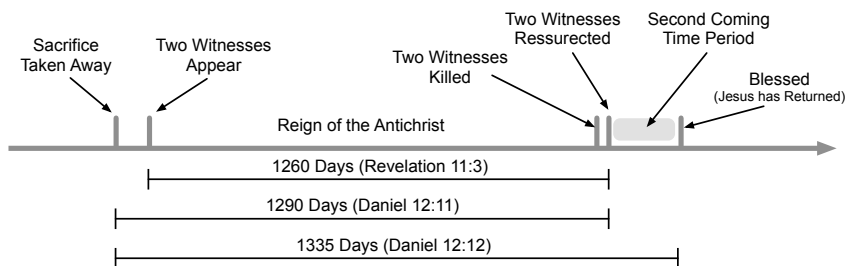
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But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were watching them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." Then they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them. And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. (Revelation 11:7–13)

We can extrapolate backwards to when their ministry starts. The next piece of the puzzle is to calculate where to place the 1290 days. We know from Daniel 12:11 it starts with the regular sacrifice being taken away. The same can be said for the 1335 days since it is spoken of in the same context. As for the ending point of the 1290 days, that can be attached to the end of the ministry of the two witnesses because after their ministry is complete, there are no more events to be fulfilled other than the return of Jesus. It is at that point the period of time where Jesus spoke the following comes into effect when speaking of his second coming.

But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. (Matthew 24:36)

Daniel 12:12 says blessed are those who make it to 1335 days. This is because Jesus will have returned and if they weren't killed by His actual coming, then they are blessed because God has given them a second chance. So God has given a time frame from 1290 to 1335 days after the regular sacrifice is taken away as the period when Jesus returns. The following timeline illustrates the relationships.



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Here are some additional scriptures referring to the 1260 days. Note, the phrase “time, times, and half a time” is an idiom that means three and a half years.

There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act **for forty-two months** was given to him. (Revelation 13:5)

He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for **a time, times, and half a time**. (Daniel 7:25)

I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for **a time, times, and half a time**; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed. (Daniel 12:7)

But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a **time and times and half a time**, from the presence of the serpent. (Revelation 12:14)

Another time frame given in Daniel is the 2300 evenings and mornings.

Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to that particular one who was speaking, “How long will the vision about the regular sacrifice apply, while the transgression causes horror, so as to allow both the holy place and the host to be trampled?” He said to me, “**For 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the holy place will be properly restored.**” (Daniel 8:13–14)

What is being stated here is how long it will take to restore the temple after Jesus returns with the starting point being the regular sacrifice taken away by the antichrist. If we back up to Daniel 8:11 it states the following.

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It even magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host; and it removed the regular sacrifice from Him, **and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down.** (Daniel 8:11)

Consider the destruction that will be wrought by the wicked in those three and a half years. On top of that, add the destruction because of the wrath of God that was poured out. For example, 100 pound hail stones when Jesus returns will do incredible damage. It will take between two and three years (conservatively $2300 - 1335 = 965$ days) to fully restore everything after Jesus returns.

Chapter 20: Thousand Year Reign

Now begins the description of what happens after Jesus returns.

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time. (Revelation 20:1–3)

Satan is bound with chains and is thrown in the abyss for a thousand years and he is not allowed to deceive the nations. Consider the ramifications of this event for today and in the time of the thousand year reign of Jesus. At the time of the writing of this book, suffering exists for all mankind and no one is exempt. Think of hospitals filled with those suffering from all sorts of diseases. Much of that disease process is due to demons. When the demonic influence is removed, what will that do to the occupancy rate of hospitals? Those who were a part of the first resurrection will live through the entire thousand year reign of Jesus. People in general will begin living hundreds of years. In the book of Isaiah, it describes what the thousand year reign will be like.

“No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his days; for the youth will die at the age of one hundred And the one who does not reach the age of one hundred will be thought accursed. They will build houses and inhabit them; they will also plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They will not build and another inhabit, they will not plant and another eat; for as the lifetime of a tree, so will be the days of My people, and My chosen ones will wear out the work of their hands. They will not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they are the offspring of those blessed by the LORD, and their descendants with them. It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox; and dust will be the serpent’s food. They will do

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no evil or harm in all My holy mountain," says the LORD. (Isaiah 65:20–25)

Next we get a more specific description of those resurrected when Jesus returns.

Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. (Revelation 20:4–6)

For those resurrected or taken up when Jesus returns is an honor God has bestowed on those individuals for they have proven themselves before God. Contrast and compare that to the wicked who are killed when Jesus returns and specifically the birds feed on the flesh of their dead bodies. It is like punctuation at the end of a sentence where the exclamation point adds a lot more weight.

After the thousand year reign of Jesus, Satan is released and he goes out to deceive the nations to gather them together to make war against the saints and the beloved city.

When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Revelation 20:7–10)

During the thousand year reign, countless generations will be born who never experienced the days of suffering from the great tribulation. Even though Jesus is sitting in the temple and they have all the eye witnesses they could ever need to understand what those days were like, yet they will gather to make war against God! What kind of lie will Satan speak into the minds of these people that would make them forsake the plain and obvious truth? One thing that this tells us is we sometimes underestimate the power of Satan to create convincing lies. We look forward and say how could those people be so deceived? The same could be said when looking back at past events like when the Pharisees were opposing Jesus two thousand years ago and we say we would not be like the Pharisees. In this day, we must examine ourselves and see if we are opposing God. If we don't, we may be one of those whom the Lord casts into the lake of fire.

After the thousand year reign of Jesus followed by the great rebellion will come the last day or sometimes referred to as the day of judgement.

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11–15)

On the day of judgement, everyone who has ever lived will be resurrected and be judged. Listen to the description Jesus gives concerning that day.

Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock

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on the door, saying, “Lord, open up to us!” then He will answer and say to you, “I do not know where you are from.” Then you will begin to say, “We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets”; and He will say, “I tell you, I do not know where you are from; depart from Me, all you evildoers.” In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out. And they will come from east and west and from north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God. And behold, some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last. (Luke 13:24–30)

When Jesus says there will be “weeping and gnashing of teeth,” He is not talking about having a good cry and then getting over it, but a sorrow and terror that goes to the very core of one’s being. This will be an unending torment as one experiences the full power of God’s wrath for sin in the lake of fire. On that day, if you are not absolutely perfect before God, you will be cast into the lake of fire and the only way to be perfect on that day is to have your sins forgiven through Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. Some people are dismissive of such teachings and call it “fire and brimstone preaching” meaning it is over the top and excessive and there is no concern to listen to such words about the day of judgement. On that day, you will count yourself as a fool if you ignore the warning given in the scriptures. Today is the day you can stop being a fool because tomorrow may be too late.

Chapter 21: God Makes All Things New

After the execution of judgement is complete, the city of God will come down from heaven and dwell among men.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (Revelation 21:1–8)

God says, "Behold, I am making all things new." The apostle Peter describes this event of restoring the creation.

Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. (2 Peter 3:11–13)

All sin will be completely wiped from creation and the lake of fire will be the final resting place for all of the devil's works. All the fruits of sin will no longer exist including mourning, crying, pain

and death itself and never again will the people of God suffer such things. God will give us glorified bodies and we will become like the angels able to experience the full measure of God's eternal love. The apostle Paul speaks of the transformation of our mortal bodies into immortal glorified bodies.

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. (Philippians 3:20–21)

Paul speaks of the mortal putting on the immortal in his first letter to the Corinthians.

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So also it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly. (1 Corinthians 15:42–49)

Next we have a description of the city of God.

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper. It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. There were three gates on the east and three

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gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements. The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. (Revelation 21:9–21)

I would suggest looking at pictures of stones that make up the city in order to get a visual sense of their appearance. Next we get a description of the city of God in relationship to the nations.

I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; and **nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.** (Revelation 21:22–27)

God says only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life shall enter the city. We see this repeated as a theme in the scriptures that there are only two destinies from which we may

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choose. When God repeats a matter, He is trying to impress upon us the importance of what He is saying. This description of the city of God points to the magnificent beauty and love that await us. In contrast, the lake of fire is a place of horrific torment and darkness. God wants us to choose Him and live which is why He gives us so many warnings of what is to come.

Chapter 22: Admonishment and Invitation

A description of inside the city of God is given.

Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever. (Revelation 22:1–5)

From this description, we see God is the God of the living. This is the manifest victory that Jesus won for us on the cross by dying in our place. The depth of this victory by Jesus cannot be praised enough given He saved us from the very wrath of God. Great is the mercy of God who sent Jesus to save us.

And he said to me, “These words are faithful and true”; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must soon take place.

“And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.”

I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things. But he said to me, “Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God.” (Revelation 22:6–9)

An admonishment is given twice to heed the words of the prophecy. This implies that there will be those who will toss aside God’s admonishments and walk carelessly into destruction.

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And he said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy.”

“Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying. (Revelation 22:10–15)

Again we get another repetition of the two destiny theme. One thing to note here is that God could reveal Himself in such a way that everyone would be saved. The problem is that the kingdom of God is based on freewill and God will not violate our freewill. God will not save us if we choose to not be saved. This is why God will reveal Himself to those who seek Him because they are exercising their freewill to choose God. That understanding is the basis for the statement, “Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong.” Their eyes are shut because they have chosen to not seek God’s salvation. We see this when Jesus says in the Gospels, “If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.” This has its root meaning in what God said to the prophet Isaiah.

He said, “Go, and tell this people: ‘Keep on listening, but do not perceive; keep on looking, but do not understand.’ Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, and their eyes dim, otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and return and be healed.” (Isaiah 6:9–10)

If you seek after God, you will find Him just as it says in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah.

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But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul. (Deuteronomy 4:29)

You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you (Jeremiah 29:13–14)

Again an invitation is given for salvation.

I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.

The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost. (Revelation 22:16–17)

Next we have a warning against changing the words of this prophecy.

I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book. (Revelation 22:18–19)

Let's put this in context. The antichrist shows up and calls himself God. If he is God, then he has the right to do whatever he pleases. Yet the antichrist has used the scriptures to walk in and claim the temple and continue with the sacrifice for a week and then cut it off. So with one foot he claims he stands on the scripture and on the other foot he blasphemes God and heaven. The book of Revelation stands in his way because it directly points out that he is the antichrist and the testimony of the two witnesses is coming to pass just as it is written in the book of Revelation. In Daniel, it speaks of the dilemma the antichrist faces and how he chooses to deal with it.

He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, **and he will intend to make alterations in**

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times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. (Daniel 7:25)

Facing an undeniable hypocrisy, the antichrist's solution is to change the scriptures. The prophecies in Revelation become moot and the laws against sin become of no consequence. This warning about changing the scriptures is also meant for those who see it happening so they can take heed. It is similar in concept to pointing out the number of the beast is 666 so those who see this can know who is the antichrist just as the scriptures prophesied. This trap of hypocrisy is the basis for what the apostle John wrote in a couple of his letters.

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. (2 John 1:7)

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. (1 John 4:1-3)

In order for the antichrist to do what he does, he is forced to change the scriptures and deny that Jesus came in the flesh. John is also saying the spirit of antichrist is already in the world causing false prophets to come forth. So we see the mind of Satan at work in implementing his plan in setting up the world for its greatest fall.

Finally, we have the concluding remarks of the Book of Revelation.

He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen. (Revelation 22:20-21)

The Prince of the Covenant

Let's switch gears and study a related subject. In the Bible the term "prince of the covenant" is used in several places, but seemingly in a disjointed manner like randomly placed jigsaw puzzle pieces. Understanding what the scriptures say about the prince of the covenant is critical to understanding how God's plan for the last days fits together.

Paul was an apostle chosen by God and God revealed things to Paul about the future and the second coming of Jesus. This is seen in Paul's remarks to the Corinthians.

Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me — to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. (2 Corinthians 12:7–9)

To summarize, God gave Paul an intense revelation and used a demon spirit to inflict suffering upon Paul to suppress his pride. Then Paul goes out preaching the gospel revealing what he has seen to various churches. The people listening to him were probably wide eyed at his preaching given the nature of the revelation Paul was communicating. We see in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians where he was reiterating what he had told them.

Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so

that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. **Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.** Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming (2 Thessalonians 2:1–8)

If only Paul had written a little more detail to explain what he was talking about, he could have saved us so much time and effort in trying to figure out the meaning of his words. You will see later that the lack of detail was a conscious decision by God to present something in plain sight and yet have it completely concealed. This is the first piece of the jigsaw puzzle.

The Scriptures

Remember, in Paul's day all he had for teaching materials was mainly the Old Testament. Since he was very skilled in the study of the scriptures, it would make sense if he used the scriptures to teach the people so they didn't think he was making these things out of thin air. If we accept the premise that he was teaching from the Old Testament, then in theory we could find the scriptures he was teaching from. When we find this scripture, then we can discern the true context of what he wrote in his letter to the Thessalonians.

We know he was talking about future events, so it needs to be an unfulfilled prophecy. We also know it needs to be connected to the antichrist. Combining these two facts, we can greatly narrow down our search. The scripture in the Old Testament that matches these criteria is in Daniel chapter 11. In Daniel 11:21, we see the rise of the antichrist.

In his place a despicable person will arise, on whom the honor of kingship has not been conferred, but he will come in a time of tranquility and seize the kingdom by intrigue. (Daniel 11:21)

In the very next verse, we see the key to the identity of the one who restrains until he is taken out of the way.

The overflowing forces will be flooded away before him and shattered, and also the prince of the covenant. (Daniel 11:22)

The identity of the one who restrains is the "prince of the covenant." We see a parallel prophecy in Daniel 9:26 where the Messiah will be cut off.

So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. Then after the sixty-two weeks **the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing**, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. (Daniel 9:25–26)

The term "Messiah" means "anointed one." Some have proposed that this passage is talking about Jesus because when the term Messiah is used it is usually associated with Jesus. If we examine the literary form of Daniel 11:22 and Daniel 9:25–26, it follows the historical narrative which means we can take it literally that this is what will happen. Given the context surrounding the passage is speaking directly about the events surrounding the antichrist, we have to interpret the Messiah being cut off in that context. Also, when we cross reference these two passages in Daniel, it locks the meanings together in that if you try to insert Jesus as the Messiah (the prince of the covenant), it reads as nonsense. Does the antichrist show up and defeat Jesus on day one? This makes no sense since it is the second coming of Jesus that destroys the kingdom of the antichrist. So the primary meaning of these passages has to do with the prince of the covenant and not Jesus.

The question that remains is, who is the prince of the covenant? To figure out who is the prince, we must identify the covenant for which he is named. The answer is there are three basic covenants listed in the scriptures.

- 1st: The covenant of the law (Old Testament).
- 2nd: The covenant of grace (salvation through Jesus' death on the cross).

- 3rd: The covenant of peace (begins with the second coming of Jesus).

Don't think of these covenants as sequential, but rather stacked where the covenant of peace has its foundation in the first and second covenants. You can find more covenants in the scriptures, but these are the major ones. The prince of the covenant is the prince of the third covenant which is the covenant of peace. This covenant of peace is prophesied in Ezekiel 34:25.

“I will make a covenant of peace with them and eliminate harmful beasts from the land so that they may live securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. I will make them and the places around My hill a blessing. And I will cause showers to come down in their season; they will be showers of blessing. Also the tree of the field will yield its fruit and the earth will yield its increase, and they will be secure on their land. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bars of their yoke and have delivered them from the hand of those who enslaved them. They will no longer be a prey to the nations, and the beasts of the earth will not devour them; but they will live securely, and no one will make them afraid. I will establish for them a renowned planting place, and they will not again be victims of famine in the land, and they will not endure the insults of the nations anymore. Then they will know that I, the LORD their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are My people,” declares the Lord GOD. “As for you, My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, you are men, and I am your God,” declares the Lord GOD. (Ezekiel 34:25–31)

The Prince

Now that we know the covenant is the covenant of peace, it becomes easy to identify who is the prince. By reading Ezekiel 34:23-24, we see that David is the prince of the covenant.

Then I will set over them one shepherd, **My servant David**, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. **And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I the LORD have spoken.** (Ezekiel 34:23–24)

This is also confirmed in Ezekiel 37:24-26.

My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them. They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons' sons, forever; and **David My servant will be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them**; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. (Ezekiel 37:24–26)

Again God repeats himself in Jeremiah 30:8-9.

“It shall come about on that day,” declares the LORD of hosts, “that I will break his yoke from off their neck and will tear off their bonds; and strangers will no longer make them their slaves. **But they shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.**” (Jeremiah 30:8–9)

In Hosea chapter 3, God repeats the matter again.

Then the LORD said to me, “Go again, love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes.” So I bought her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a half of barley. Then I said to her, “You shall stay with me for many days. You shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man; so I will also be toward you.” For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar and without ephod or household idols. **Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days.** (Hosea 3:1–5)

So we have a scriptural connection between the prince of the covenant and king David of old. Therefore David is the prince of the covenant who is the restrainer of whom Paul spoke.

There are various explanations out there as to the identity of the prince, but none of them fit all of the scriptures. One such

explanation is that the prince is a figurative term that really refers to Jesus. There is a figurative relational component tied to the prince of the covenant that in certain contexts provides insight, but not in the primary context. It is similar to saying, just as the relationship between Jesus and God the Father so is the relationship between the prince and Jesus. So just as Jesus reflects the Father, the prince reflects Jesus.

Say What

The question that begs to be asked is, how can this be? The implication of these scriptures is that God will somehow send king David back in the last days. Will God resurrect him from the dust? Will he come down from heaven? Will his spirit be reborn in a new body? Many theologians have taught over the years that reincarnation is evil and a lie of the enemy. Yet if we take the scriptures presented so far, it simply refutes such a position that reincarnation doesn't happen. Such arguments against reincarnation usually come from the following scripture.

And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment (Hebrews 9:27)

There are two categories of death which include what the Bible calls the first and second death. The first death is physical death and the second death occurs when one is cast into the lake of fire. Hebrews 9:27 is not saying when a person dies then the next thing is the great white throne judgment for the purpose of excluding the possibility of reincarnation, but that the one sacrifice has been paid before God through Jesus. The phrase "it is appointed for men to die once" refers to the fact that because of salvation, you need not have to suffer the second death. When we look at Hebrews 9:27 in the context of the surrounding statements, the intention of the author becomes apparent.

Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time

for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. (Hebrews 9:26–28)

Hebrews 9:26 and 28 is a parallelism that explains Hebrews 9:27. To usurp this scripture as an argument against reincarnation is to do violence against this scripture by reading into the scripture something that it simply does not say.

Another example of God sending someone back is John the baptist. Jesus said the following about John.

As these men were going away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ palaces! But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, ‘Behold, I send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’ Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force. For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, **John himself is Elijah** who was to come.” (Matthew 11:7–14)

Jesus is specifically saying John is Elijah. There is no way to interpret this statement than to take it at face value because Jesus isn’t using figurative language. Yet we have the following statement from John.

This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.” They asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” And he said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” and he answered, “No.” Then they said to him, “Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?” **He said, “I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘make straight the way of the Lord,’ as Isaiah the prophet said.”** (John 1:19–23)

So what is going on here? First we must consider Jesus' own ministry.

And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, **"The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord."** And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4:16-21)

Jesus is quoting from Isaiah 61 where it says the following.

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners; to proclaim the favorable year of the LORD and the day of vengeance of our God (Isaiah 61:1-2)

Notice He leaves off the statement, "and the day of vengeance of our God." This statement is referring to His second coming when He will come in power. Since Jesus' interaction with this world is a two part affair, He only quotes the first part. Now let's look at the scripture concerning Elijah and John the Baptist.

Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet **before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD.** He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse. (Malachi 4:5-6)

A voice is calling, "Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. Let every valley be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; and let the rough ground become a plain, and the rugged terrain a broad valley; then the glory of the LORD will be

revealed, and all flesh will see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." A voice says, "Call out." Then he answered, "What shall I call out?" All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever. (Isaiah 40:3–8)

Malachi deals strictly with the second coming of Jesus because it says, "before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD." When they asked John are you Elijah and are you the Prophet, he answered "no" to both questions because those who were asking these questions were speaking in the context of the prophecy in Malachi 4:5–6. To this day, Jewish Seders include an empty chair at the table in anticipation that Elijah will return to herald the Messiah in fulfillment of Malachi's word. If John answered yes to the questions, he would have invalidated Malachi 4:5–6 since that was not his mission when he appeared. So for John to say yes to these questions would be a lie because "the great and terrible day of the Lord" was not here! So like Jesus quoting only the first part of Isaiah 61:1–2, it is so with John quoting Isaiah 40:3 and not from Malachi.

Let's look at what was prophesied by an angel before John was born.

But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, **to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children**, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:13–17)

The angel is definitely referring to Malachi 4:5–6! Some have taken the phrase, "in the spirit and power of Elijah" to mean that John wasn't Elijah, but was functioning like Elijah. You can't take

the context of the angel's testimony where he is quoting Malachi and contort it to say John really isn't Elijah in the same breath. It is simply illogical considering Jesus directly confirmed the fact that John is Elijah.

Another argument that is given against reincarnation is the comparison between Buddhism and Hinduism. Such arguments fail because of the law of the excluded middle through guilt by association. Just because Buddhism and Hinduism are completely wrong in their assertions, doesn't invalidate what is written in the Bible. So given this set up, it is reasonable to assume that such a teaching against reincarnation has its origins in the thoughts of Satan as an effort to oppose God. Satan created parasite religions like Buddhism and Hinduism in order to cast confusion on the plan of God.

There is a chess game of strategies going on between God and Satan and this issue of reincarnation is one of those areas of contention where Satan is trying to cast doubt in order to cause further conflict. Satan wants people to say the prince of the covenant is a fraud so they won't believe his message. It is also reasonable to assume that God will use this conflict as a means to bring humility to His people.

The fact that God has sent people back to accomplish His purposes does not give us license to assume that God is doing wholesale reincarnations. We need to remain within the boundaries of only what the scriptures has said and avoid projecting possibilities that we can't verify. There will undoubtedly be people who will read this book and assume God has done such a thing with them either through their own vain imagination, through inspiration of the devil or both. This will lead to error and people who will become false prophets. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and should be strictly adhered to in this case.

The more astounding proof that reincarnation does happen is if we can show multiple accounts of it happening in the scriptures. So let us examine another example by examining connective elements in the scriptures.

The Double Portion

Joseph in the Old Testament was another man of God who was reincarnated. We read in Ezekiel that God gives Joseph two portions.

Thus says the Lord GOD, "This shall be the boundary by which you shall divide the land for an inheritance among the twelve tribes of Israel; **Joseph shall have two portions.**" (Ezekiel 47:13)

The interesting thing about this double portion is that it is the same double portion that the prince receives and the prince is a real man like us.

The remainder shall be for the prince, **on the one side and on the other of the holy allotment and of the property of the city**; in front of the 25,000 cubits of the allotment toward the east border and westward in front of the 25,000 toward the west border, alongside the portions, it shall be for the prince. And the holy allotment and the sanctuary of the house shall be in the middle of it. Exclusive of the property of the Levites and the property of the city, which are in the middle of that which belongs to the prince, everything between the border of Judah and the border of Benjamin shall be for the prince. (Ezekiel 48:21–22)

Therefore if David is the prince and the prince receives a double portion and it is Joseph who receives the double portion, then David and Joseph must be the same man. We know that they both were born of women, lived out their lives and then died. Then the conclusion must be that God reincarnated the spirit of Joseph in David.

The Joseph Connection

This connection between Joseph and David is a very important connection. Let us look at a prophecy about Joseph given by his father.

Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a spring; its branches run over a wall. The archers bitterly attacked him, and shot at him and harassed him; but his bow remained firm, and his arms were agile, from the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob

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(From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel), from the God of your father who helps you, and by the Almighty who blesses you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb. The blessings of your father have surpassed the blessings of my ancestors up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills; may they be on the head of Joseph, **and on the crown of the head of the one distinguished among his brothers.** (Genesis 49:22–26)

By its general characterization, we can say it definitely fits the description of the prince of the covenant by the sheer blessing that God pours out on Joseph. What is more revealing is this is a prophecy about the future since these things did not happen to Joseph in his lifetime. Also consider that we have not yet seen the fulfillment of these words, so it is yet meant for the future. Therefore logic dictates Joseph must be reincarnated once again before the second coming of Jesus since the prince of the covenant walks on the earth before Jesus returns.

Let us break this prophecy down into its components.

Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a spring; its branches run over a wall. (Genesis 49:22)

In general, we can restate this passage as saying God has really blessed Joseph. In the very next sentence, God says he is attacked.

The archers bitterly attacked him, and shot at him and harassed him (Genesis 49:23)

This contrast between Joseph being blessed by God and then being bitterly attacked is no coincidence that they are placed next to each other. God is making a point here that the blessing of God will be construed as a curse by others. The question here is, who are the others spoken of here?

But his bow remained firm, and his arms were agile (Genesis 49:24)

Notice that God uses the same analogy of the archers and bows to describe those who attack Joseph and how Joseph responds. It is a comparison between arrows in war and words spoken over a

contentious issue. In an argument, words are exchanged back and forth where each side tries to score a hit and thus wound the opponent. In this prophecy, we see an argument takes place between Joseph and another group. The conclusion here is that God is saying He has put His hand upon Joseph's head and blessed him and this scripture infers that God will speak through Joseph and there will be those who bitterly oppose him and his words. Consider the imagery spoken of in the book of Jeremiah.

“They bend their tongue like their bow; lies and not truth prevail in the land; For they proceed from evil to evil, and they do not know Me,” declares the LORD. (Jeremiah 9:3)

To understand the context of what is being spoken of in Genesis 49, consider when a man builds a house in the woods where there are no neighbors for miles around. Does anyone care that he built his house in the woods? The answer is no one would care since their interests are not affected. If that same man built his house in your back yard without your permission, then a dispute would arise over who owns and has the right to build on that land. The idea here is that common territory is being fought over. Since we know Joseph is blessed by God and we are currently dwelling in the church age, we know the territory to be fought over must be those things which concern the church. The archers that bitterly attack Joseph are those who call themselves men of God. Other terms that could apply here are pastors, preachers, popes, evangelists, prophets, apostles, etc. The meaning here is the leadership of the church will oppose Joseph when he speaks what God has told him to speak. The same thing happened when Jesus ministered and the Pharisees and Sadducees opposed Him.

Who Speaks for God

When God stirs His finger to reveal the prince of the covenant, a conflict will ensue with the established church. The established church will not want to give up its power and authority to one that claims he speaks for God. If such a conflict arises, then it will be the most heated conflict ever seen by the church. If this is true, then it is likely that this conflict has been written in the scriptures as a prophecy. Such a scripture exists in Ezekiel chapter 34.

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Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat sheep without feeding the flock. Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them. They were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered. My flock wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill; My flock was scattered over all the surface of the earth, and there was no one to search or seek for them.'"

Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: "As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "surely because My flock has become a prey, My flock has even become food for all the beasts of the field for lack of a shepherd, and My shepherds did not search for My flock, but rather the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock; therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will demand My sheep from them and make them cease from feeding sheep. So the shepherds will not feed themselves anymore, but I will deliver My flock from their mouth, so that they will not be food for them.'"

For thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day. I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and bring them to their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams, and in all the inhabited places of the land. I will feed them in a good pasture, and their grazing ground will be on the mountain heights of Israel. There they will lie down on good grazing ground and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.

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I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest,” declares the Lord GOD. “I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken and strengthen the sick; but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with judgment.”

“As for you, My flock, thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, I will judge between one sheep and another, between the rams and the male goats. Is it too slight a thing for you that you should feed in the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pastures? Or that you should drink of the clear waters, that you must foul the rest with your feet? As for My flock, they must eat what you tread down with your feet and drink what you foul with your feet!’”

Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them, “Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. Because you push with side and with shoulder, and thrust at all the weak with your horns until you have scattered them abroad, therefore, I will deliver My flock, and they will no longer be a prey; and I will judge between one sheep and another.”

“Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I the LORD have spoken.”

“I will make a covenant of peace with them and eliminate harmful beasts from the land so that they may live securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. I will make them and the places around My hill a blessing. And I will cause showers to come down in their season; they will be showers of blessing. Also the tree of the field will yield its fruit and the earth will yield its increase, and they will be secure on their land. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bars of their yoke and have delivered them from the hand of those who enslaved them. They will no longer be a prey to the nations, and the beasts of the earth will not devour them; but they will live securely, and no one will make them afraid. I will establish for them a renowned planting place, and they will not again be victims of famine in the land, and they will not endure the insults of the nations anymore. Then they

will know that I, the LORD their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are My people,” declares the Lord GOD. “As for you, My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, you are men, and I am your God,” declares the Lord GOD. (Ezekiel 34:1–31)

This scripture proves that the church will come in conflict with the prince of the covenant. We know that this scripture has not yet been fulfilled, because we would have seen such a conflict of this magnitude! It is hard to ignore God rebuking the church as a whole which is what Ezekiel 34 describes.

The overall structure of Ezekiel 34 can be broken down into three parts.

- A rebuke.
- David is my servant.
- A blessing.

The rebuke is the main message God wants to communicate to His people. Then God ties the message to David His servant so that the message and servant become bonded together. Afterwards, God promises a blessing as a result of the first two parts. You cannot skip the first two parts of the message and jump to the blessing because there is an implied cycle of events. First, it is implied that the church has become prideful, second there will occur a humbling of the church and third a blessing is bestowed.

Again, let’s look at Hosea chapter 3.

Then the LORD said to me, “Go again, love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes.” So I bought her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a half of barley. Then I said to her, “You shall stay with me for many days. You shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man; so I will also be toward you.” For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar and without ephod or household idols. Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days. (Hosea 3:1–5)

Without Hosea, one could argue in mystical terms about the meaning of all that has been presented so far. In the first half of Hosea 3, we see an analogy. An analogy is a comparison between two things, typically on the basis of their structure and for the purpose of explanation or clarification. The first half of Hosea 3 is the allegorical part where God tells Hosea to go out and marry a woman who will eventually leave him. It provides an emotional context so we can understand God's point of view. Therefore the second part must be the straight up truth God wants us to hear and it is illogical to apply mystical terms to the part that talks about David. To do so would be purposefully making up lies to make the passage say what one wants it to say instead of taking it at face value in context with the other scriptures.

Like the famous Rosetta stone which had three languages written on it thus opening the door to modern understanding of Egyptian hieroglyphics, Hosea 3 provides a clarification of the meaning of the prince of the covenant. Without this passage, there is no binding principle that one can lock onto as an unmovable anchor. With this passage, everything becomes concrete and well defined.

Another thing to notice about Hosea chapter 3 is that it is like a little island by itself in the scriptures. Hosea 3 itself has no context unless presented with the rest of the Old and New Testaments. So this statement about David is rather odd since David was already physically dead. This again illustrates how God has concealed something in plain sight for all to see!

The Temple

Starting in Ezekiel chapter 40 we see a description of the temple that is to be built for Jesus' second coming including construction details and rules for the running of the temple. The "prince," which is the prince of the covenant, and his duties in the temple are mentioned several times in the following scriptures.

As for the prince, he shall sit in it as prince to eat bread before the LORD; he shall enter by way of the porch of the gate and shall go out by the same way. (Ezekiel 44:3)

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The prince shall have land on either side of the holy allotment and the property of the city, adjacent to the holy allotment and the property of the city, on the west side toward the west and on the east side toward the east, and in length comparable to one of the portions, from the west border to the east border. This shall be his land for a possession in Israel; so My princes shall no longer oppress My people, but they shall give the rest of the land to the house of Israel according to their tribes. (Ezekiel 45:7–8)

All the people of the land shall give to this offering for the prince in Israel. It shall be **the prince's part** to provide the burnt offerings, the grain offerings and the drink offerings, at the feasts, on the new moons and on the sabbaths, at all the appointed feasts of the house of Israel; he shall provide the sin offering, the grain offering, the burnt offering and the peace offerings, to make atonement for the house of Israel. (Ezekiel 45:16–17)

In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, you shall have the Passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten. On that day **the prince** shall provide for himself and all the people of the land a bull for a sin offering. During the seven days of the feast he shall provide as a burnt offering to the LORD seven bulls and seven rams without blemish on every day of the seven days, and a male goat daily for a sin offering. He shall provide as a grain offering an ephah with a bull, an ephah with a ram and a hin of oil with an ephah. In the seventh month, on the fifteenth day of the month, at the feast, he shall provide like this, seven days for the sin offering, the burnt offering, the grain offering and the oil. (Ezekiel 45:21–25)

The burnt offering which **the prince** shall offer to the LORD on the sabbath day shall be six lambs without blemish and a ram without blemish; and the grain offering shall be an ephah with the ram, and the grain offering with the lambs as much as he is able to give, and a hin of oil with an ephah. (Ezekiel 46:4–5)

Finally we have the connection between Joseph and the two portions which is the prince's portion.

Thus says the Lord GOD, "This shall be the boundary by which you shall divide the land for an inheritance among the twelve tribes of Israel; **Joseph shall have two portions.**" (Ezekiel 47:13)

Given the duties and allotments given to the prince, this is an exalted position to occupy. It also comes with great responsibility as explained in Ezekiel. One has to ask the question why the prince is the prince of the covenant? Jesus was exalted to a position of all power and authority second only to God the Father because He laid his life down at the cross. What did the prince do that God would exalt him to such a position of honor as described in Ezekiel?

The White Horseman

Since all of these prophecies were written after David's death, they are yet to be fulfilled. Fulfillment of these passages begins with the first horseman and the breaking of the first seal in Revelation. Now that we have established David as the prince of the covenant which is tied to the second coming of Jesus, let's examine the meaning of the first horseman and how it fits in.

Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, "Come." I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer. (Revelation 6:1-2)

The meaning of the bow comes from the blessing of Joseph.

Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a spring; its branches run over a wall. **The archers bitterly attacked him, and shot at him and harassed him; but his bow remained firm, and his arms were agile, from the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob (From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel),** from the God of your father who helps you, and by the Almighty who blesses you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb. The blessings of your father Have surpassed the blessings of my ancestors up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills; may they be on the head of

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Joseph, and on the crown of the head of the one distinguished among his brothers. (Genesis 49:22–26)

Verses 23 and 24 are the particular verses which pertain to the bow of Revelation 6:2. We know this is related to the prince of the covenant because of the scripture in Ezekiel which associates Joseph as having a double portion in the land of Israel when Jesus returns. We know this double portion is also the prince's portion which in turn is David's portion. These are the exact same double portions for Joseph and the prince which gives us a context for the blessing spoken of Joseph.

So who are the archers that bitterly attacked him in Genesis 49? To get a context for the answer, we must examine a portion of scripture from Ezekiel 34. Notice in verse 6 where it says, “My flock wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill, and My flock was scattered over all the surface of the earth; and there was no one to search or seek for them.” It delineates the condition of the time when this scripture is to be fulfilled in that the people of God are scattered over the face of the earth. That scattering began after Jesus ascended to heaven and the church in Jerusalem was eventually dispersed. The fullness of that scripture can be seen in our current day as we see how the church has spread across the earth.

We can see throughout the world how fragmented the church has become. If we were to get all the major church leaders in a single location and told them to come up with a single doctrinal statement, the likely outcome would be a series of fist fights followed by bloody noses. If they did agree on something, it would be far from what Jesus taught for the sake of compromise. This can be clearly seen in the many attempts at ecumenical movements throughout history. So God declares that He is against the shepherds who have not taken care of His people.

In Ezekiel 34:17, God also names the sheep themselves as being as guilty as the shepherds for treading down the clear waters so that the rest must drink fouled waters. If we look at various resources on the internet that are focused on christian topics where comment sections are provided for people to leave opinions, we see samples of this "fouling up" with the feet. It can be as vicious as anything the world without God can come up with. If

one person points out a truth to another, the second one just says, "That's your opinion and it means nothing to me." This is done because there are no consequences for rejecting the truth. If it costs something to ignore someone's word, many would think twice before doing so. This perceived lack of consequences leads to pride and arrogance running unchecked throughout the church, which is the state of the church today.

So God is stating in this passage that He is going to do something about this situation and bring order and truth. Specifically, God says He will judge the shepherds by saying, "I will feed them with judgment" and He will judge the sheep with, "Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep." This means there will be consequences that can't be ignored, for they will be from God. In verse 23, God states that the vehicle for this judgement will be that He will set David over them as their shepherd, the prince of the covenant. This will be an act of God which men cannot deny. God is very emphatic about this when He ends this passage by saying, "I, the Lord, have spoken."

As you could imagine, given the existing conditions of shepherds who feed themselves and sheep who push and shove each other, there will be great resistance to the one whom God will set over them, David. This is where the verses from Joseph's blessing from Genesis 49 come into play.

The archers bitterly attacked him, and shot at him and harassed him; but his bow remained firm, and his arms were agile, from the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob (From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel) (Genesis 49:23–24)

David will come and the church leadership will reject him bitterly because he pronounces the judgement from Ezekiel 34 and points a finger and says you are the ones of whom this scripture speaks. Consider what would happen if someone did such a thing, people would simply ignore him. So what will be the thing that will turn heads and make them listen? It will be the power of God being made manifest. Because of this manifestation of power, it is not a far leap in imagination to consider that some will even call the one God sends to them the antichrist. According to Genesis 49, this will be a real intense conflict when it uses the words, "bitterly

attacked him, and shot at him and harassed him.” In this conflict, will come to pass the words of Isaiah.

Woe to those who drag iniquity with the cords of falsehood, and sin as if with cart ropes; who say, “Let Him make speed, let Him hasten His work, that we may see it; and let the purpose of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come to pass, that we may know it!” **Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight!** Woe to those who are heroes in drinking wine and valiant men in mixing strong drink, who justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away the rights of the ones who are in the right! (Isaiah 5:18–23)

The outcome of this situation is shown in Hosea 3 when it says, "and they will come trembling to the Lord and to His goodness in the last days." The word trembling is a very potent word in this context. It means God will forgive the arrogant sins of bitterly attacking David whom God sent to them. It means there will be an extreme humbling that will take place.

Let's look at the first horseman passage a little closer.

I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer. (Revelation 6:2)

If we break it down, it has three basic parts.

1) “he who sat on it had a bow”: Presented in the past tense in that he already possessed this before the seal is broken. The bow represents the wisdom of God where he is given the words of God to speak to the people with power.

2) “a crown was given to him”: This is presented in the present tense at the time of the breaking of the seal. The crown comes from the fact that he is the one whom God has set as the leader of the church, the shepherd, the prince of the covenant.

3) “he went out conquering, and to conquer”: This represents the future work of the prince of the covenant after the seal is

broken. You can see this implied in Daniel when the antichrist shows up.

The overflowing forces will be flooded away before him and shattered, and also the prince of the covenant. (Daniel 11:22)

The question to ask here is who commands the forces that will be flooded away and shattered? The answer is the forces of the prince of the covenant. To shatter the forces of the prince of the covenant will be a big deal when it happens and is part of the reason the antichrist rises to power.

The "giving" of the crown comes from the establishment, by God's hand, that he is David the prince of the covenant and he has spoken what God told him to speak. It goes hand in hand with the "trembling" from Hosea 3. If we examine Psalm 3, we gain insight into these matters.

O LORD, how my adversaries have increased! Many are rising up against me. Many are saying of my soul, "There is no deliverance for him in God." Selah.

But You, O LORD, are a shield about me, My glory, and the One who lifts my head. I was crying to the LORD with my voice, and He answered me from His holy mountain. Selah. I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the LORD sustains me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me round about.

Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God! For You have smitten all my enemies on the cheek; You have shattered the teeth of the wicked. Salvation belongs to the LORD; Your blessing be upon Your people! Selah. (Psalms 3:1-8)

Here is a prophetic psalm written by David and in verses 1 and 2 it gives a flavor of the archers who bitterly attack him from Genesis 49. These verses speak of what the confrontation between the first horseman and the church will be like.

So where is, "he went out conquering, and to conquer" spoken of in the scriptures? If we look at Isaiah 43:1-7, we will see the answer.

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But now, thus says the LORD, your Creator, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel, “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine! When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I have given Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in your place. Since you are precious in My sight, since you are honored and I love you, I will give other men in your place and other peoples in exchange for your life. **Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ and to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’ Bring My sons from afar and My daughters from the ends of the earth, everyone who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory, whom I have formed, even whom I have made.**” (Isaiah 43:1–7)

We can corroborate this with a couple of passages from Ezekiel 34.

They were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered. My flock wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill; My flock was scattered over all the surface of the earth, and there was no one to search or seek for them. (Ezekiel 34:5–6)

For thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day.” (Ezekiel 34:11–12)

To state what is being said here in simpler terms, the job of the prince of the covenant is to lead the greatest revival that will ever be on earth. His job is to be God’s shepherd for preparing God’s people for the second coming of Jesus. We see this in Ezekiel 34 where God has charged David to feed His people and to be their shepherd.

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Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and **he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd.** And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I the LORD have spoken. (Ezekiel 34:23–24)

Given the context laid out for the bow and crown, the stage is now set for a revival that will sweep across the face of the earth. After the breaking of the first seal, millions upon millions will enter the kingdom of God. As revival breaks out, peace will sweep across the earth resulting in people forsaking their sins and doing what is right before God. This sets the stage for the second horseman.

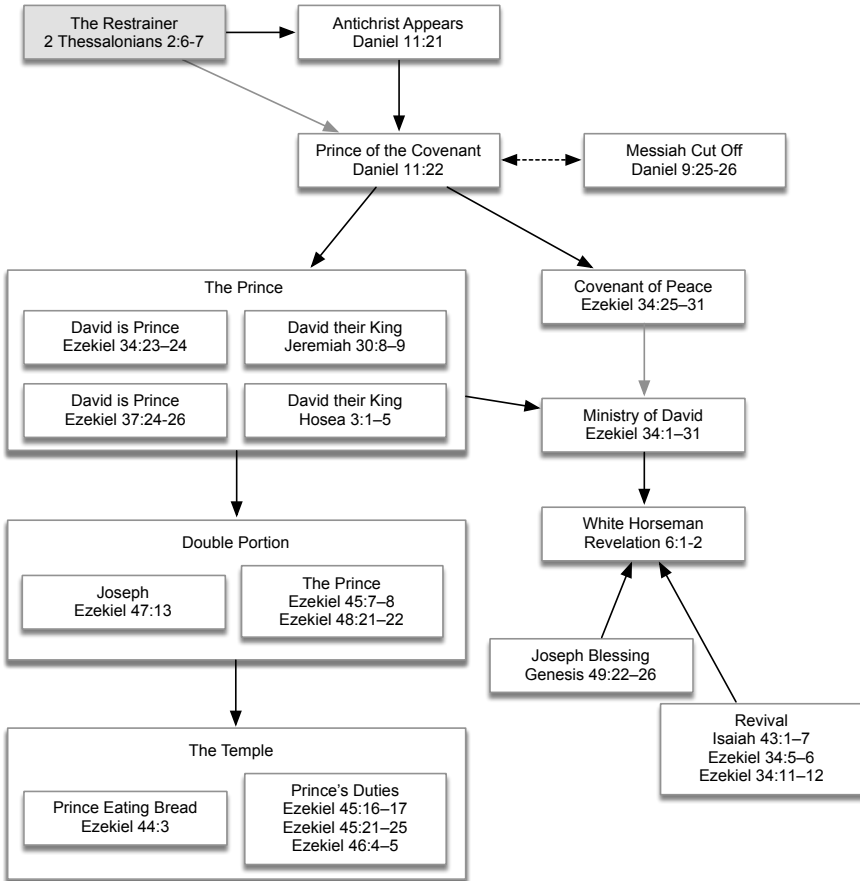
Hell will not stand idly by as this revival moves forward. They will use every means possible to thwart the revival including war. This is where the "he went out conquering, and to conquer" comes into play. Verses 5 through 7 are direct fulfillment of this conquering.

Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, "Give them up!" and to the south, "Do not hold them back." Bring My sons from afar and My daughters from the ends of the earth, everyone who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory, whom I have formed, even whom I have made. (Isaiah 43:5–7)

There will be nations and governments that will say to the first horseman, "You may not come here and preach the gospel; we will not give up our people!" But it is written that God says give them up and let them go, so there will be no alternative but to go to war. It is very similar to Moses going to Pharaoh and saying, "Let my people go!" Pharaoh's army ended up in ruin.

Scripture Graph

Presented below is a scripture graph so that you can visualize the relationships between the scriptures about the prince of the covenant.



The Two Witnesses

Who are They

One question that is on the minds of a lot of people is who are the two witnesses? First let's examine the basic meaning of being a witness and why there are two. In Deuteronomy, it states the following.

A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed. (Deuteronomy 19:15)

God is sending two witnesses in order to fulfill this scripture. In reality, there are really three witnesses where God is the third witness through the power that is demonstrated by the two witnesses on earth. The following passage from Revelation describes the ministry of the two witnesses.

Then there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, "Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it. Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months. And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. And if anyone wants to harm them, fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way. These have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire."

When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and

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kill them. And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. Those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and celebrate; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were watching them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." Then they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them. And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. (Revelation 11:1-13)

God has the two witnesses put on sackcloth as a visible sign because sackcloth is a sign of mourning. Those who are following the antichrist are heading for eternal destruction.

In the center of the antichrist's kingdom, these two witnesses walk about freely prophesying that the antichrist is of Satan. If the antichrist is God as he claims, then how is it he can't kill them during the 1260 days of their ministry? It is a huge thorn in the antichrist's side that these two witnesses can't be touched. From the view point of those following the antichrist, they view the two witnesses as tormentors because of all the plagues they unleashed. At the end of their ministry, the antichrist is then allowed to personally kill them. This in itself is the final act of their testimony where they are killed by the antichrist who claims to be God and then three and a half days later they are resurrected and taken up into heaven for all to see and the fullness of the antichrist's hypocrisy is revealed.

So who are the two witnesses? First we must look at a passage from the book of Zechariah.

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Then I said to him, “What are these two olive trees on the right of the lampstand and on its left?” And I answered the second time and said to him, “What are the two olive branches which are beside the two golden pipes, which empty the golden oil from themselves?” So he answered me, saying, “Do you not know what these are?” And I said, “No, my lord.” Then he said, “These are the two anointed ones who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth.” (Zechariah 4:11–14)

This prophecy is describing the two witnesses. Next if we look at Malachi we see the following.

“For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze,” says the LORD of hosts, “so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall. You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing,” says the LORD of hosts.

“Remember the law of Moses My servant, even the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel.”

“Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.” (Malachi 4:1–6)

Here God is explicitly stating He is going to send Elijah before the second coming of Jesus. So Elijah is one of the two witnesses.

Notice that the opening verses of this prophecy is talking about the second coming of Jesus when it says, “For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff.” So in between talking about the great and terrible day of the Lord and sending Elijah back sits this little reference to remember the law of Moses His servant. This is a rather abnormal statement to make in this context unless God is

packing meaning in here with a specific intent. Why mention Moses if God wants us to remember the law of the Old Testament?

Let's look at the transfiguration of Jesus in the New Testament.

Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!" When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground and were terrified. And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, "Get up, and do not be afraid." And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone.

As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead." And His disciples asked Him, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" And He answered and said, "Elijah is coming and will restore all things; but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist. (Matthew 17:1-13)

The two who were standing and talking with Jesus were Moses and Elijah. This was no accident where God would say to Peter, James and John, "Hey guys, sorry about that! You weren't supposed to see that." No, the opposite is the truth in that God was revealing to them the identities of the two witnesses. To be more specific, this event was literally the fulfillment of the words spoken to Zechariah saying, "These are the two anointed ones who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth."

Since Moses and Elijah are the two witnesses, this has ramifications. One of the two witnesses is the prince of the covenant. Let's look again at Daniel 11:22.

The overflowing forces will be flooded away before him and shattered, and also the prince of the covenant. (Daniel 11:22)

Does the prince of the covenant sit around and sulk that his forces were shattered? Does he go into therapy and discuss his "feelings" about how he was wronged as he stomps his feet like a small child? Considering all these things have been written down in the scriptures and he will know what these prophecies say about what is to come. The prince will put on sackcloth with Elijah and begin their ministry as the two witnesses after the antichrist sets himself up as god in the temple. So the implication here is that the prince of the covenant is Moses who was also David and Joseph. When you study the lives of the prince of the covenant, David, Moses and Joseph, they had the same ministry as God's anointed ruler of God's people.

Since the ministry of the prince of the covenant begins with the breaking of the first seal on the Lamb's book of life (Revelation 6:2), Elijah doesn't just sit around and twiddle his thumbs waiting for the forces of the prince of the covenant to be shattered and then says, "OK, I am here. Let's put on some sackcloth." We see in Malachi where it says, "He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers." This description of Elijah's ministry does not reflect the ministry of the two witnesses because they are calling down plagues at will! This is saying that Elijah will serve and work with the prince of the covenant from day one when the first seal is broken as revival spreads across the whole earth. God will knit together the lives of these two men in the entire scope in the last days. We also get a glimpse into the nature of the revival associated with the first seal from God's stated ministry for Elijah.

The Gospel is Preached Everywhere

There is a theory in the church that says Jesus will come when the gospel is preached everywhere. The concept is when the gospel is preached to every nation, tribe and people group, then that

signals Jesus will come. This notion comes from what Jesus said when describing the last days.

This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:14)

This thinking is erroneously used to say we must hurry up and spread the gospel and should increase our missionary budget. It is true we should spread the gospel and increase the missionary budget according to what Jesus said in the great commission.

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18–20)

But it is not true that Matthew 24:14 links these two concepts together and this violates the law of the excluded middle. Context is important, so let's examine the context of Matthew 24:14.

And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. "But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.

"Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. "Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. **This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.** (Matthew 24:4–14)

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Jesus describes what is to come as a series of linked events that leads up to the end which culminates in “this gospel” being preached in the whole world “as a testimony.” The key phrase here is “as a testimony.” It is not a declaration of spread or breath, but of “intensity.”

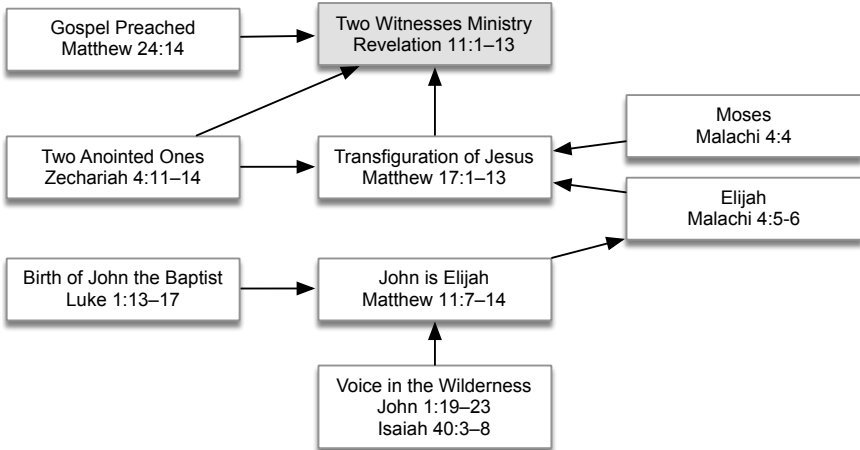
Again, consider the two witnesses and why they are called witnesses. In a more general definition you could say they are witnesses of the gospel and their job is to witness to the whole world that Jesus is Lord. Remember the two witnesses are witnessing when the antichrist is walking around saying he is god and demons are assisting him in performing miracles like making a statue to speak. So God pulls out all the stops and grants His two witnesses unprecedented authority (intensity) to witness in those times. In Revelation 11:7, it says the following.

When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them. (Revelation 11:7)

Revelation 11:7 is the last thing written in the scriptures as an event that must be fulfilled before Jesus returns. So what Jesus is referring to in Matthew 24:14 is the testimony of the two witnesses and not a generalized movement.

Scripture Graph

Here is a scripture graph showing the relationship between the scriptures about the two witnesses.



Succession

Elisha

Another individual who God has used in the past was the prophet Elisha. Elisha was the companion and protege of the prophet Elijah. In the following passage, Elijah is about to be taken to heaven.

And it came about when the LORD was about to take up Elijah by a whirlwind to heaven, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here please, for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel. Then the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?" And he said, "Yes, I know; be still."

Elijah said to him, "Elisha, please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to Jericho." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they came to Jericho. The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho approached Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?" And he answered, "Yes, I know; be still." Then Elijah said to him, "Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan." And he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on.

Now fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood opposite them at a distance, while the two of them stood by the Jordan. Elijah took his mantle and folded it together and struck the waters, and they were divided here and there, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

When they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you." And Elisha said,

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“Please, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me.” He said, “You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so.” As they were going along and talking, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven. Elisha saw it and cried out, “My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” And he saw Elijah no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces. He also took up the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and returned and stood by the bank of the Jordan. He took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and struck the waters and said, “Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?” And when he also had struck the waters, they were divided here and there; and Elisha crossed over. (2 Kings 2:1–14)

All along the way God tested Elisha with Elijah asking Elisha to stay in a certain place, but Elisha responded, “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” Three times this happened! Interspersed with those testings, other prophets came up and said to Elisha, “Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?” It happens a third time to Elisha after Elijah was taken up in the next verses.

Now when the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho opposite him saw him, they said, “The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.” And they came to meet him and bowed themselves to the ground before him. They said to him, “Behold now, there are with your servants fifty strong men, please let them go and search for your master; perhaps the Spirit of the LORD has taken him up and cast him on some mountain or into some valley.” And he said, “You shall not send.” But when they urged him until he was ashamed, he said, “Send.” They sent therefore fifty men; and they searched three days but did not find him. They returned to him while he was staying at Jericho; and he said to them, “Did I not say to you, ‘Do not go’?” (2 Kings 2:15–18)

Again Elisha was tested. God was building confidence in Elisha that the mantle had passed from Elijah to himself and he would receive what he asked. Consider what an odd request it was to ask for a double portion. It is stated in these texts that both Elijah and

Elisha knew the time was at hand for Elijah to go to heaven. In that context, Elisha would have thought of what he wanted from God so asking for a double portion was not a random thought. Elisha knew what he was asking and by his diligence he stayed by the side of Elijah until the very end.

But why a double portion? There is a deeper subtext being displayed by God in that Elisha asking for a double portion is a link to the prince of the covenant where the prince receives a double portion. Elisha is also the prince of the covenant. In essence, the two witnesses walked together on the earth.

From Beginning to End

If we review what God has done we see Joseph, Moses, David, Elisha and the prince of the covenant are all the same man that God has sent back. There is a pattern emerging from these acts of God and one may ask, is this the full extent of what God has done? Are there any others in the succession of the prince of the covenant? To answer that question, we need to look back to the beginning. God created Adam and set him over the creation He just created.

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, **"Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."** (Genesis 1:26–28)

God's command to him was, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." Essentially God set Adam as the first king over the earth. When Adam and Eve fell, they tossed aside God's command. Even though they fell into sin, God's command was still in effect. God does not give us commands that we cannot fulfill. In this case, God provided a way for Adam to fulfill the command.

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And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel. (Genesis 3:15)

This is a promise of the savior who was to come which Jesus fulfilled on the cross. The apostle Paul refers to Jesus as the second Adam.

So also it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. (1 Corinthians 15:45)

In Jesus, the command to rule over the earth and subdue it is fulfilled. When the second coming of Jesus is accomplished and Jesus is ruling over the whole earth, then the command is fulfilled. The question is, did God forget about the first Adam He created in the garden of Eden? God did not forget Adam because Adam is the prince of the covenant! God has been sending Adam back throughout history to accomplish His purposes.

Adam lived 930 years and when we examine what life was like before the flood of Noah's time, we see a certain morality of right and wrong. Where did this morality come from? Adam and Eve were the only two people on the earth that had experienced a sinless state and walked with God in the garden. We can see the effects of Adam walking with God in the garden echoed in the generations that followed. Adam was trying to fulfill the commandment he received back in the garden which is teaching between right and wrong. If you have ever wondered what Adam was like as a person, you can see it in the lives of Joseph, Moses, David, Elisha and the prince of the covenant.

Because of sin, Adam died just as God said. Since God did not forget about Adam and the commandment He gave him, we see its fulfillment in the following passage.

Then He brought me back by the way of the outer gate of the sanctuary, which faces the east; and it was shut. The LORD said to me, "This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it, for the LORD God of Israel has entered by it; therefore it shall be shut. As for the prince, he shall sit in it as prince to eat bread before the LORD; he shall enter by way of the

porch of the gate and shall go out by the same way.” (Ezekiel 44:1–3)

In the temple, the prince is allowed to walk through the porch of the eastern gate and eat his bread before Jesus and the depth of this honor is immeasurable! In this, God has expressed His love for Adam. It also fulfills the command to subdue the earth which Adam did in the lifetimes God sent him back and finally culminating as the prince of the covenant in the preparation of the church for the second coming of Jesus.

The order of subjection from heaven to earth is God the Father (The Almighty), Jesus (King of Kings) and then Adam (The Prince). This brings full circle God’s will to restore mankind to Himself. What Adam and Eve lost in the garden is now restored through Jesus where Adam is set as the prince of the covenant subject to Jesus.

Throughout the scriptures concerning the prince of the covenant is the theme of a double portion. Why has God woven this theme of the double portion throughout the scriptures? The answer lies in the interaction between Jesus and God the Father as spoke of in the Gospel of John.

“Father, glorify Your name.” Then a voice came out of heaven: **“I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.”** (John 12:28)

Here is the ultimate double portion that comes from the very throne of God. In essence, the prince of the covenant is a shadow of Jesus. Just as the other scriptures described in the chapter “The Plan of God,” the double portion theme is also a pointer towards Jesus. It is another means by which God has applied His signature to the work of salvation because God has given Jesus a double portion.

With God Nothing is Impossible

After reading all of this, one might be overwhelmed by the scope and depth of what God has done. We know that with God nothing is impossible for an angel spoke to Mary the mother of Jesus and said, “For nothing will be impossible with God.” (Luke 1:37) Ask yourself which is more difficult for God to accomplish, send a being of such immense glory and power to be born in the

likeness of sinful flesh and die on a cross or God sending His servants back to accomplish His purposes? As Christians, we don't have a problem with Jesus being born of a virgin, but God sending people back causes us to strain and say how can this be? We need to look beyond the mechanics of what God has done and ask the question why? In Isaiah God says the following.

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:8–9)

We have a tendency to think God is just like us and if we wouldn't do such a thing, then God wouldn't do it. This is one of the reasons God has done this is so men could not boast. We either acknowledge the word of God and fall on our faces before Him or we become rigid in pride and resist Him with our hearts while we speak empty words. Because of our pride, God set forth a plan to bring His people to a place of humility for the second coming of Jesus and that is the essence of mercy and a blessing. With God, nothing is impossible.

Resurrections

The Bible describes two major resurrections that are to take place. The first resurrection occurs when Jesus returns and the second will occur on the last day which is called the great white throne judgement.

Second Resurrection

The second resurrection is the final resurrection and all of mankind is resurrected and stands before God to be judged. Here is a description of this event.

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11–15)

On that day, death itself will be cast into the lake of fire as the apostle Paul wrote.

The last enemy that will be abolished is death. (1 Corinthians 15:26)

Then Paul goes on to describe the final resurrection.

Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be

changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory." (1 Corinthians 15:50–54)

Here is the verse from Isaiah that is referenced from Revelation 20:14 and 1 Corinthians 15:26, 54 where death itself is destroyed.

He will swallow up death for all time, and the Lord GOD will wipe tears away from all faces, and He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken. (Isaiah 25:8)

The second resurrection is where we will become like the angels as Jesus spoke to the Sadducees as they tried to catch Him in a hypothetical trap where they state a woman is married and widowed several times.

"In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had married her." But Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, **but are like angels in heaven.**" (Matthew 22:28–30)

It is at the second resurrection where we receive glorified bodies. Those who are cast into the lake of fire will have natural bodies as we do today, but since the gifts of God are irrevocable their bodies will exist forever in the lake of fire. So eternal death is the state of eternal existence accompanied by the everlasting wrath of God.

First Resurrection

The first resurrection is tied directly to the events of the second coming of Jesus where it talks about the mark of the beast and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years as shown in the following passage from Revelation.

Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; **and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.** The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. (Revelation 20:4–6)

The first resurrection is a resurrection of natural bodies as we have today. In the thousand year reign, Jesus has attendants (priests) who serve Him in the temple as described in Ezekiel chapters 40 through 48. Here is a particular ordinance concerning these priests from Ezekiel.

And they shall not marry a widow or a divorced woman but shall take virgins from the offspring of the house of Israel, or a widow who is the widow of a priest. (Ezekiel 44:22)

As it says in Revelation 20:6, “they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.” The question is where do these priests come from? Are they chosen from those not taken up in the first resurrection and were not killed when Jesus returns? The answer is that the priests come from those who were resurrected or raptured. If those who are resurrected and serve as priests in the temple can marry and have children, then their bodies are natural bodies and not glorified bodies like the angels since angels do not marry as stated in Matthew 22:28–30.

Restoration

Another view of the first resurrection is the “valley of dry bones” as shown to Ezekiel.

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and He brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones. He caused me to pass among them

round about, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley; and lo, they were very dry. He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord GOD, You know." Again He said to me, "Prophecy over these bones and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.' Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones, 'Behold, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life. I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin and put breath in you that you may come alive; and you will know that I am the LORD.'"

So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold, a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And I looked, and behold, sinews were on them, and flesh grew and skin covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then He said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they come to life.'"" So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they came to life and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.' Therefore prophecy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves, My people. I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken and done it,' declares the LORD." (Ezekiel 37:1-14)

In this view of the first resurrection, God shows us the scope and some of the "whys" behind the resurrection. Throughout history the people of God have suffered loss and devastation and those who are resurrected said, "Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off." God responds and says He will raise us up out of our graves and place us on our own land. We see God's response repeated also in the book of Isaiah.

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But Zion said, “The LORD has forsaken me, and the Lord has forgotten me.” “Can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you. Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before Me. Your builders hurry; your destroyers and devastators will depart from you. Lift up your eyes and look around; all of them gather together, they come to you. As I live,” declares the LORD, “You will surely put on all of them as jewels and bind them on as a bride. For your waste and desolate places and your destroyed land — Surely now you will be too cramped for the inhabitants, and those who swallowed you will be far away. The children of whom you were bereaved will yet say in your ears, ‘The place is too cramped for me; make room for me that I may live here.’ Then you will say in your heart, ‘Who has begotten these for me, since I have been bereaved of my children and am barren, an exile and a wanderer? And who has reared these? Behold, I was left alone; from where did these come?’” (Isaiah 49:14–21)

Later on in Isaiah God details what life will be like in the thousand year reign of Jesus.

“No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his days; for the youth will die at the age of one hundred and the one who does not reach the age of one hundred Will be thought accursed. They will build houses and inhabit them; they will also plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They will not build and another inhabit, they will not plant and another eat; for as the lifetime of a tree, so will be the days of My people, and My chosen ones will wear out the work of their hands. They will not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they are the offspring of those blessed by the LORD, and their descendants with them. It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox; and dust will be the serpent’s food. They will do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain,” says the LORD. (Isaiah 65:20–25)

We get another view of this from the book of Joel.

Do not fear, O land, rejoice and be glad, for the LORD has done great things. Do not fear, beasts of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness have turned green, for the tree has borne its fruit, the fig tree and the vine have yielded in full. So rejoice, O sons of Zion, and be glad in the LORD your God; for He has given you the early rain for your vindication. And He has poured down for you the rain, the early and latter rain as before. The threshing floors will be full of grain, and the vats will overflow with the new wine and oil. **Then I will make up to you for the years That the swarming locust has eaten, the creeping locust, the stripping locust and the gnawing locust, My great army which I sent among you. You will have plenty to eat and be satisfied and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you;** then My people will never be put to shame. Thus you will know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God, and there is no other; and My people will never be put to shame. (Joel 2:21–27)

God is going to restore to us what was stripped from us through oppression, injustice and sacrifice. All those who gave up the things of this world for the sake of Jesus will be blessed. Those who gave up their lives for His name sake will be honored. This includes Jew, Gentile and all those who came before beginning with Adam and Eve. As far as it is possible, God is going to restore life as it should have been before the fall into sin. To that end, Satan will be bound in the abyss and not allowed to affect anyone in the thousand year reign and the same can be applied to all of Satan's demons. Imagine what life will be like if there aren't demons whispering lies into the minds of people and causing all sorts of diseases, disorder and rebellion. If there is sin, it will come from the mind of man alone and no one will be able to blame the devil.

People in general will live hundreds of years and those who are resurrected will live through the entire thousand year reign. Consider what it says in Isaiah about life spans in those days.

No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his days; for the youth will die at

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the age of one hundred and the one who does not reach the age of one hundred Will be thought accursed. (Isaiah 65:20)

They will live their lives and be satisfied and have children and no one will lack its mate just as it says in Isaiah.

Seek from the book of the LORD, and read: Not one of these will be missing; none will lack its mate. For His mouth has commanded, and His Spirit has gathered them. He has cast the lot for them, and His hand has divided it to them by line. They shall possess it forever; from generation to generation they will dwell in it. (Isaiah 34:16–17)

Living through the thousand year reign is a unique opportunity where God demonstrates His love for His people. When God made man in the garden of Eden, He had a purpose and He will fulfill His purpose in those days.

When Will It Happen

Many have speculated when the first resurrection will happen. Some say it will happen before the great tribulation because God has not appointed us unto wrath and therefore God is going to remove us from the earth just before He pours out His wrath. This is reading into the scriptures an idea that the text simply does not support. Here are Jesus' own words stating when the resurrection will happen.

But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. **And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.** (Matthew 24:29–31)

What Jesus is describing are the events of His second coming and part of those events is the first resurrection of the dead followed by the rapture of those who are alive on the earth. The apostle Paul also describes the first resurrection.

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But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:13–17)

The first resurrection is also the beginning of the marriage supper of the Lamb as spoke of in Revelation 19.

Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write, **'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'**" And he said to me, "These are true words of God." (Revelation 19:6–9)

Again it is spoke of in chapter 20.

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. (Revelation 20:6)

If you are resurrected or raptured when Jesus returns, the sentence of eternal death at the great white throne judgement will have no power over you!

When studying the first and second resurrections it is natural to look at it from a mechanical view of what happens, but we need to remember that our focus should be we live our lives in a worthy

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manner so that we will be invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb and personally experience these events. When the trumpet blast occurs and the dead are raised it is going to be such an exhilarating experience that words only offer a poor description.

The Divided Church

If you look at the church as a whole at the time of this writing, it is clear to say the church is divided. It is filled with fractures based on doctrinal differences leading to all sorts of scriptural errors. These divisions separate people with a subtext of animosity. For example, there are those who say the gifts of the Holy Spirit like speaking in tongues ceased with the original apostles and others who say the gifts of the Holy Spirit are still in operation today. In this example, we have a division in the church where they cannot be reconciled. It is a clear either/or situation (the law of non-contradiction) because either the gifts of the Holy Spirit ceased or they are still being manifested today and it can't be both. What I am pointing at here is not the gifts of the Spirit, but the division that arises when two sides form opposing points of view. Which one is right and who decides what is right?

There are certain divisions that are valid like geographic divisions. Obviously someone in India will attend a church within their region and not get on a jet every Sunday to fly to Canada. There may also be cultural divisions, but such cultural divisions are a matter of style or tradition and these divisions are to be respected unless they violate the scriptures. So there are certain divisions that don't cause strife or consternation and I am not talking about such divisions here. I am focusing on the different characterizations of God which drive behaviors.

The fruit that shows the church is divided is the manifestation of a myriad of denominations that exist based on irreconcilable doctrinal differences. What would happen if one could magically cross denomination boundaries and cause one denomination to walk in the way of another denomination? For example, cause those of the charismatic way to adopt the Catholic mass. What would happen? How about the Catholic denomination following the Baptist way of doing things? Would not people be upset at such changes because each denomination thinks their way of doing things is the correct approach? These examples are just surface issues in the style of how each denomination conducts themselves, but what about the deeper issues of actual doctrine

where things become even more intractable? In the past there have been attempts at ecumenical movements, but they have all failed miserably. Why is this?

One reason is Satan and his demons have been meddling with the church by whispering lies into the ears of the congregation and leadership. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy about this very problem.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. (2 Timothy 4:3–4)

Instead of conforming doctrine to the Bible, doctrine is shaped to fit the desires of the listener. This is a slippery slope which leads to destruction! This mindset of shaping doctrine to the listener is the foundation of all the division we see today in the church. Yet, Jesus says he came to bring fire and division and wished it was already kindled!

I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished! **Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division;** for from now on five members in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law. (Luke 12:49–53)

Here Jesus is speaking about family relationships, but the church is just a reflection of a broader family. Jesus knew the church would fragment into many pieces according to the desires of the people. The question to ask is why would God allow and desire this division to occur? The answer to that question can be seen in the man who was blind from birth.

As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?” Jesus answered, “**It was neither**

that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him. We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world." (John 9:1–5)

The answer is so the works of God might be displayed. We see this same principle displayed in the time of Moses and the exodus.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Rise up early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, Let My people go, that they may serve Me. For this time I will send all My plagues on you and your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is no one like Me in all the earth. For if by now I had put forth My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, you would then have been cut off from the earth. **But, indeed, for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth.**" (Exodus 9:13–16)

Notice what Jesus said in Luke 12:52–53 about the division and how it folds into the description of Elijah's ministry.

He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse. (Malachi 4:6)

Elijah's ministry is no accident and is part of God's overall plan to show His works on the earth. If there are no broken relationships, then what is there to do? So God allowed Satan to infiltrate the church and cause divisions. This is the reason why all the events written about in the book of Revelation exists is so that every person on earth can see the works of God and then answer the question of where they want to spend eternity. Hence the white horseman of Revelation 6:2 is the coming of the prince of the covenant to restore order and bring revival and thus show God's works.

At the time of this writing the church is boastful. Pride has slipped in the backdoor and is now being proclaimed out the front

door and the church doesn't even realize what is going on! In their own context of doctrine everything seems right, but in reality humility is the first casualty. When someone who just gets saved looks for a church, what do they see and ask themselves? They see the division between the denominations and then they ask themselves which doctrinal package they want. Is the divided church a reflection of how God runs the kingdom of heaven? The answer is clearly a resounding no! The reason God is bringing this is so that no one can boast. Consider what would happen if God pointed His finger at a particular denomination and said, "Yep, you guys got it right and all you other denominations should follow their example." They would have reason to boast in a prideful way, so God has allowed the division to enter the church to fulfill what it says in Hosea 3.

Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and **they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days.** (Hosea 3:5)

One of the main themes of the book of Revelation is making the bride, the people of God, ready for His return. The church as it exists today is not prepared for Jesus to return and many would be destroyed for the grievous sins within the church. No denomination is blameless before God in this matter.

After pointing out the divided church, there exists a remnant of people scattered about that knows God's word, is full of the Holy Spirit in power and does what is right. Consider the story of Elijah where God passes by him on a mountain.

So He said, "Go forth and stand on the mountain before the LORD." And behold, the LORD was passing by! And a great and strong wind was rending the mountains and breaking in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of a gentle blowing. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. And behold, a voice came to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" Then he said, "**I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the sons**

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of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.”

The LORD said to him, “Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus, and when you have arrived, you shall anoint Hazael king over Aram; and Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place. “It shall come about, the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall put to death. **“Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him.”** (1 Kings 19:11–18)

Elijah thought he was the only one left who served God. Even though it was a very dark time for Israel, God still had a remnant of 7,000 who had not served the false god Baal. This incident with Elijah is a shadow of what is happening in the church today.

Good and Evil

Making a Choice

The kingdom of God is based on freewill and the church is at a crossroads facing a choice of whether or not to obey the voice of God. Obeying the voice of God is the one thing we as the people of God must do. To not obey the voice of God is to cut ourselves off and cast ourselves into judgement. Moses gave the children of Israel a similar choice between life and death.

See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity; in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the LORD your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it. But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you today that you shall surely perish. You will not prolong your days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them. (Deuteronomy 30:15–20)

In Malachi God gives us a warning about a potential curse headed in our direction and the reason for Elijah's ministry.

Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, **so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.** (Malachi 4:5–6)

Given the context that Malachi 4:5–6 is speaking about the second coming of Jesus, this squarely places the blame upon our heads in our time. Also consider that God sent us a warning of the coming curse hundreds of years before Jesus was even born. This implies the curse is not going to be a minor correction but a potentially catastrophic chastening from which no one will escape.

So why would God smite the land with a curse in our day? It is easy to understand when those who do not know God and act wickedly, but what about the church? Is the church piling up sins too heaven and thus forcing God to bring judgement? The answer is yes! The name of Jesus has been dishonored by the very ones chosen to uphold His name and commandments. The question to be asked is what could be so horrific that God would send a curse if He didn't send Elijah first to correct the situation? The simple answer is the church is embracing evil! Let's look at a few examples.

God is Less Than Priority One

In our daily lives, God is not our first priority. When we face a problem, we turn to other solutions and God becomes an afterthought if we even give Him any thought whatsoever. God is not some far off being who is incapable of helping us, but God is intimately knowledgeable about every aspect of our lives better than we know the details ourselves. We act as if God is powerless and even those who know better push God down the priority list. Think about how God feels after sacrificing Jesus so that we may be forgiven and we treat it as a low priority. Remember, I am talking about the church here and not the unsaved world. There is an absence of appreciation of who God is and what He has done and there is one word that which describes the fruit of this mindset and that word is "apathy." Consider that God created all the stars we can see in the night sky with a word and with a word instantly raises the dead. We need to reconsider our priorities and put God at the top of everything we think, say and do.

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (Matthew 6:33)

Not making God priority one in our lives is like opening a door to the demonic and letting them create havoc. How can the church be

an example to the unsaved world if it doesn't make God a priority? The rest of the examples I give here come from this root of apathy and allowing darkness to govern our thoughts.

The Homosexual Movement

In recent years, homosexuals have worked to gain rights in the societies in which they live. They are entitled to pursue their agenda since they have the gift of freewill from God. The problem for the church is that the church is embracing the homosexual movement. Some churches teach that homosexuality is equal to heterosexuality in God's eyes and this opens the door for demonic forces to dominate that church.

Very large denominations have voted on whether to accept homosexuality as a valid lifestyle. This very act of "voting" makes the word of God subject to the votes of men. Shall God erase words from the Bible because men choose an opposite opinion than God's own word? The big question is who sets the rules, God or man? What is even worse is that after "voting" on this matter, denominations choose to reject the biblical teaching that homosexuality is a sin and embrace it as a lifestyle and even fill their pulpits with practicing homosexuals. No matter how many votes occur, the word of God has not or will not change. Yet these churches are brazenly offering strange fire before God just as Nadab and Abihu did in the time of Moses.

Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting. When they came out and blessed the people, the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people. Then fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the portions of fat on the altar; and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.

Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. Then Moses said to Aaron, "It is what the LORD spoke, saying, 'By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, and before

all the people I will be honored.” So Aaron, therefore, kept silent. (Leviticus 9:23–10:3)

The implication here is that these churches are presenting sin to God as if it were righteousness. Asking God to accept sin is insane and if it continues, God will feed them with judgement as He did with Nadab and Abihu. This is a very serious matter to reject God to satisfy the sinful appetites of men.

Catholic Sex Scandals

Within the Roman Catholic church, sex scandals have erupted as a blight. All sin in the church is like the blackness of death, but these sex scandals are playing out in the public eye. It is written that fornicators and adulterers will be judged and that is what we are seeing today as the covers are pulled back and the shame is being revealed. Listen to the following scripture from Isaiah.

Come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon; sit on the ground without a throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans! For you shall no longer be called tender and delicate. Take the millstones and grind meal. Remove your veil, strip off the skirt, uncover the leg, cross the rivers. Your nakedness will be uncovered, **your shame also will be exposed**; I will take vengeance and will not spare a man. (Isaiah 47:1–3)

The worse part of these sex scandals is the cover up. Did men of God think God would not see? Do you see the irony in this statement? The Catholic church is now plagued by lawsuits and derision. The apostle Paul warned of sowing to the flesh.

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. (Galatians 6:7–8)

The seeds for this shame were sown year after year as God’s voice was ignored. Jesus stood before Jerusalem and spoke the following words.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children

together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it! Behold, your house is left to you desolate; and I say to you, you will not see Me until the time comes when you say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Luke 13:34–35)

How often did God want to correct the situation in the Catholic church and leave a blessing, but the church would not have it! Such a church is not ready for the return of Jesus.

Fallen Ministries

The Roman Catholic church isn't the only one to have such problems of this magnitude. There have been prominent ministries that have fallen because they embraced wickedness just as evil as the sex scandals in the Roman Catholic church. We see the name of Jesus dragged through the mud of unrighteousness because their ministries became a gravy train for their pride. When we look back at the times God judged the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, we can see the same roots of rebellion that existed then in our time. Sin is no respecter of the name on the church door.

There are many churches that chase money as the means to ministry. I have heard stories of churches choosing who speaks before their congregation based on how much money they will bring in that week.

But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. (1 Timothy 6:9–10)

The "love" of money in the church is a very serious problem because those who do so become unteachable before God and soon wander off after vain pursuits thinking they are doing God a favor! The PTL Club hosted by Jim and Tammy Bakker was a prime example of not listening to the voice of God and choosing the love of money over God's righteousness. When we forsake God, what is left to us? Again this played out in the public eye and God has exposed their shame for all to see.

Whitewashed Tombs

In the days Jesus walked the earth, He called the scribes and Pharisees hypocrites.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. (Matthew 23:27–28)

Today, there are ministers in churches who are not even born again or filled with the Holy Spirit. There are also ministers who are born again, but bring no fire of God or conviction to the table. You can see the fruits of this in the congregations that they lead. Such churches become man centered and rely on the cleverness of their own thoughts to sustain themselves. Repentance may even be preached, but is rarely done because righteousness is reduced to the lowest common denominator. Sin is tolerated as an alternative lifestyle or swept under the carpet and ignored.

From this seedbed of man centered religion emerges all manner of false gospels which only whitewash over the dangers that are just ahead for the listeners. If you have cancer, do you want your doctor to tell you it is nothing and walk away? If sin is present in a congregation and they are being told what they are doing is not a problem, they are encouraging rebellion against God. Being cast into hell after one dies is not something to view as a game of political correctness. The truth is never a compromise between good and evil. At the great white throne judgement, there are only two destinies and there is no third destiny that combines good and evil into a mishmash of moral relativism. Such relativism will be counted as dirty rags and be cast off into the lake of fire.

Demonic Inspired Offshoots

As the church has divided into many denominations, there have also been demonic inspired offshoots that draw people off into grave deception. Sometimes people will take a scripture out of context and build an entire theology around an erroneous hypothesis. One such movement is the “snake handlers” who take the following verse out of context.

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These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; **they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them**; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. (Mark 16:17–18)

They bring in poisonous snakes and handle them as a way to prove they are following Jesus. They ignore what Jesus said to the devil during his time of temptation.

Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you’; and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’” Jesus said to him, “On the other hand, it is written, ‘**You shall not put the lord your god to the test.**’” (Matthew 4:5–7)

By purposefully handling poisonous snakes, they are putting God to the test and this is sin. Thankfully this sect is a small group of people, but it shows the power of the demonic can have if allowed to reign.

Another large denomination is the Latter-day Saints or more commonly called the “Mormons.” Here is a denomination that is built on a form of divination that even the least skeptical could spot as hypocrisy. Mormonism draws people away from God and has been carefully crafted by the devil to seduce. Detailing the history and falsehoods of Mormonism is beyond the scope of this book and plenty of resources are available that layout the arguments against Mormonism. Mormonism exists because people fail to ask the tough questions!

As homosexuality is being embraced by denominations, consider what will happen if this is permitted to continue to its conclusion. If a church opens the door to the demonic, demons will come in and push the doctrines even further off track. If such relativism is driving the church, then God is not guiding that church and the devil will have a free hand to do whatever he pleases and that is a terrifying thought! That which had a solid start is now a trap to drag people off to hell through doctrine based

on emotion and human reasoning which is easily manipulated by the devil. Consider what it says in the book of James.

This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. (James 3:15–18)

The Bible says, “woe to those who call evil good, and good evil.” (Isaiah 5:20) Woe is a really strong warning meaning that this behavior can lead one to the lake of fire and eternal death. Churches that continually harden their hearts and refuse to repent will eventually be cut off and become a dwelling place of demons.

The World is Embraced

James wrote the following.

You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (James 4:4)

The apostle Paul wrote a similar statement.

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2)

What is the world that is opposed to God? This is a question that is rarely asked in churches because the answer would bring the conviction of guilt. When churches seek answers from the societies that surround them, it is like saying to God that His answers are not sufficient or outdated. Seeking substitutes for the things of God will lead to a crumbling of morality within a church. If one can substitute a way of the world for God’s way, then why can’t the church seek even more substitutes for God’s ways. Error upon error compounds until it becomes a lifestyle. Those who live in

that lifestyle arrived at that position one inch at a time and didn't even realize it.

James calls those who embrace the world "adulteresses." Consider the destruction when adultery occurs in a marriage resulting in anger and weeping that is devastating. The world's way of thinking and systems of behavior has their origins in Satan and Satan hates God. Satan dresses his constructs in the world with pernicious lies designed to entice and seduce those who take the bait into a spirit of lethargy so they coast gently along to hell. Satan doesn't care how you arrive in hell, but that you end up there. Listen to what Peter wrote.

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8)

Satan is trying to kill everyone on the planet including those in the church. The world has no answers and the answers they put forth create even greater destruction. If a nation embraces evil and the judgment of God falls on that nation and their shame is laid bare, do not all who pass by cringe at the sight of the devastation? So why do we in the church wish to embrace that which brings the judgement of God so that others will walk by us and cringe?

Traditions That Displace God

Man has a tendency to take something and add to it. The next person comes along and adds and changes it a little bit more. This continues until the original thing being modified is almost unrecognizable. This happens all the time in churches where small traditions and conventions over time morph into full blown prescribed and ordained methods of service to God. In the end, it is perceived as the proper way to worship God and these traditions then become idols. This actually has the opposite effect by putting a barrier between God and the people and the church is then reduced to the empty traditions of men.

Consider having a birthday party and everyone invited is handed a script of what and when to do everything at the party. How enjoyable would that birthday party be for the one who is celebrating their birthday? Many church services today are precisely scripted on what and when to say in the service thinking

God is pleased by a formulaic presentation. Because of the scripted nature of the service, I have seen people who know when the end of the service is coming and begin reaching for their coats and you see a sea of arms in the air. Their minds are not focused on God, but the Sunday brunch to come. The fruit of this is no one is edified before God and it becomes a useless spectacle serving no one. The unsaved world looks at such heavy man centered traditions and does not see the salvation or life of God because it is grossly suppressed.

Another way to look at this problem is through churches that have become museums. People have built towering edifices out of grand stones and stained glass with ornate carvings and exquisitely painted scenes on the ceilings and walls. Tour guides will bring you through such buildings and describe in great detail the meaning and history of the church building and its decorations. After the tour is over, one looks back at the sanctuary to see that it is completely empty of people. The actual church that once attended there is gone and the only thing that remains is the empty shell of the building. The kingdom of God is made up of people and not empty buildings built for the glorification of the traditions of men. Traditions can provide a framework for context, but once it crosses over to the ritualistic it begins to suppress the moving of the Holy Spirit in that church. If it continues long enough, the hand of God will lift from that place and it either becomes rubble or a museum.

Rampant Sin

A church that doesn't warn its members about sin and its consequences is like a garden that is never weeded. In a short period of time sin will be rampant in that church. Let's examine a straightforward topic like having sex before marriage. Here are two passages that speak into this topic.

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)

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Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge. (Hebrews 13:4)

The world has no problem with having sex outside of marriage. As a new generation grows up surrounded by the constant message from the world that sex outside of marriage is a good thing, that becomes a part of their thinking and they bring that into the church. Either through ignorance or rebellion they continue to do such things and that becomes the new normal for the church.

What ends up happening is the word of God becomes a semi-myth to them thinking they can choose to obey what they want to obey and ignore the rest. So hypocrisy grows like a cancer and can have devastating effects. Consider the divorce rate for people who call themselves Christians is about the same as the world. This can be traced back to the sense of permissible disobedience that people allow themselves to feed upon and ignoring the horrible consequences down the road. If you are willing to disobey God on having sex outside of marriage because it can be done without your fellow parishioners having a clue that it is happening, then the hypocrisy can be justified in your mind. When such sin takes root in a church, it can be difficult to purge because it is well hidden and people desire to do it. God sees all of this and though He is long suffering and kind, eventually discipline will come and no one will be able to turn His hand away.

Consider what the apostle Paul wrote.

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. (2 Corinthians 3:17)

The kingdom of God is based on freedom, but sin brings bondage. When a church turns a blind eye to sin out of fear of losing members, it is like pouring gasoline on a fire and bondage to sin increases.

Worthless Things

In Psalm 101, it says the following.

In the Last Days

I will set no worthless thing before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not fasten its grip on me. A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will know no evil. Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, him I will destroy; no one who has a haughty look and an arrogant heart will I endure. (Psalms 101:3–5)

There is a saying, “You are what you eat.” The body takes in food and breaks it down into molecules so it can replenish itself and over time, your body literally becomes what you eat. The same is mostly true for our spirit. If we consume things that are contrary to the ways of God with our eyes and ears, they will become a part of our thought process and begin to dominate our thinking. As our thoughts go down a certain path, our actions begin to follow along.

On television, there are comedies completely centered on overt sexual acts. Everything revolves around the lead characters having sex and the writers inserting jokes so that we can be entertained. So one ends up finding enjoyment in those things which God hates! Being constantly bombarded with this type of material can lead to a form of spiritual bondage. How many churches are filled with men who are addicted to pornography? Again, it begins with little things like bringing worthless things before our eyes. No matter what the enclosing package is around the sin, sin is still just as deadly. The entertainment of this world is probably the biggest sewer pipe in which sin enters the church. Here is a statement about a typical day of a man coming home from work.

You have had a hard day at work and you just want to sit down and be entertained.

Let’s restate that so it reflects the reality of what happens.

You have had a hard day at work and you sit down and demonic inspired television shows designed to sear your consciousness and make you more receptive to sin by getting you to laugh at behaviors that lead to the lake of fire are presented to entertain you.

I am not against television, but the programming that comes to us that we so casually consume thinking it is not that bad when in reality it is hardening our hearts to the Spirit of God.

The Lukewarm Church

At the time of the writing of this book, the one thing that concisely describes the church of our age is the Laodicea church spoken of in Revelation by Jesus.

“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: ‘I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (Revelation 3:14–22)

We are entangled in the things of this world and we don't think our need for God is that great or urgent. We don't hate evil as God does, but embrace it since we perceive no imminent consequences. The continuing decay within the church is like turning off the safety mechanism for the world. Demons work freely because they are not opposed through prayer and the church pours its efforts into worthless endeavors. This is leading to what Paul wrote about the last days in which we are living.

But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure

rather than lovers of God, **holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power**; avoid such men as these. For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith. But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, just as Jannes's and Jambres's folly was also. (2 Timothy 3:1–9)

Listen to what Paul is saying when he says, “Holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power.” There are vast swaths of churches who have never seen a supernatural miracle and this is because they don't cultivate behavior that God finds pleasing so that He would come into their midst. Paul speaks of those holding to a form of godliness at the end of a long list of sinful behaviors. Such churches are churches in name only.

What I have described as the divided church and the rampant sin within the church is just scratching the surface. Whole books could be written on these topics alone. These problems didn't suddenly just happen yesterday and we, the church, caught it before it got out of control, but it has been developing for centuries to a crescendo in our time. It doesn't take a biblical scholar to observe that judgements are coming because of the disregard of God's word and the resultant gross sin. Consider what the apostle Peter wrote about the execution of God's judgement.

For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? (1 Peter 4:17)

When judgement begins, it will begin with the household of God first and that is the church. A passage in Malachi encapsulates the situation we find ourselves.

But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that

In the Last Days

they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years. (Malachi 3:2–4)

God is going to apply the refiner's fire to the church and scrub it clean so that it will be ready for the coming of Jesus. The church both corporately and as individuals faces a choice of whether to listen to God or not. If the church listens and obeys, God will avert His judgement. From Ezekiel 34 (woe to the shepherds), we know there will be those who will not listen and the judgement will come.

Conclusion

Perspective

When studying the end times, we need perspective about the real cost of what we are studying. The unfolding events of these last days will be the most exciting and terrifying times one could live through. All those full of pride will be brought low and even those in the church. Millions upon millions will physically die in a short period of time and many will descend into the pit of hell. Many others will be born again and enter the kingdom of God. It will also be a time when many will be martyred for the name of Jesus. We should never forget that fact and treat the scriptures and the events described about the end times with the fear of God.

People argue over the minutia about when the rapture occurs or the events surrounding the antichrist. Consider what it says in Daniel.

Those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many. (Daniel 11:33)

By the time the antichrist appears, understanding of what the scriptures say appears to be resolved. Those who have insight have a single message to communicate and we don't see any mention of pre, mid and post tribulation rapture proponents arguing about who is right as the antichrist walks into the temple. Something before that time will occur to resolve all the arguments. The myriad of theories about the end times is just another pointer to the truth that the church is full of division and thus currently not ready for Jesus to return. Much of what appears as intellectual debate about the end times is shameful because many use the opportunity to exalt themselves by the knowledge they think they possess.

The Church

If the extraordinary decay that has already occurred in the church is left to its own devices, it will get much worse. It is not

God's intention to wipe the church from the face of the earth for its sins, but perform a transformation. Through the cross there is forgiveness and that includes the sins within the church. The fear of God will be restored to its proper place and God will respond by pouring out His gracious power in signs, wonders and miracles.

There is no way any single denomination or group of denominations can bring together the whole church. It will take an act of God through the breaking of the first seal to bring together all of the churches. Also note, this coming revival will provoke the Jews to jealousy. The apostle Paul speaks of this subject.

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery — so that you will not be wise in your own estimation — that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will remove ungodliness from Jacob.” (Romans 11:25–26)

Consider what the Jews who reject Jesus as the Messiah will think when those in the name of Jesus are granted miracles like in the days of Moses or Elijah. They will see these things and ask questions like, “Did not God first choose Israel? How can these things be?” They will not be able to deny the power of God and will finally understand the revelation of Jesus as the Messiah. We see the result of this in Ezekiel chapters 40 through 48 with the Jewish sacrifices being restored in the temple where Jesus reigns.

What Can We Do

A rebuke to the church is coming as spoken in Ezekiel 34 and it will be impossible to avoid the consequences if churches or individuals ignore God when it comes. At the time of this writing, you have a unique opportunity to get right with God before the rebuke comes. You can't do the task of uniting the churches and provoking the Jews to jealousy because that is reserved for the prince of the covenant and Elijah, but that which you have control over can be revived today. The solution is so simple and it is called repenting. Jesus said the following.

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Matthew 4:17)

To repent is to turn around and go the way you should have gone before God. There is a verbal component where you tell God you are sorry for your sins and there is an action component where you actually do the thing you were supposed to do or stop doing the sinful behavior. You can't fool God with halfhearted attempts at repentance. God is never an afterthought in any situation so you should make following God your first priority in all things. Stop embracing the world and its lies for God is real and there are serious consequences for living a lie before God.

If you are a minister, guide your church into repentance as individuals and corporately. Remove those things which God hates from the church. If it is excessive traditions, false gospels, horrific acts of judging God's word with a vote or a million other manifestations of provoking God to anger, stop doing it. There is no benefit for a church in upsetting God. If you lose members because they refuse to repent, then let them go their way and leave. It is better to have the favor of God with fewer people than to have the curse of God with a large congregation.

Everyone should be diligently searching the scriptures. What I have presented in this book has many pieces to it and it will take time to see and understand all of the connections that have been made. I have presented a framework and filled in many parts of the puzzle, but there are a few more scripture pieces to be placed. There are prophecies, references, and acts of God in people's lives in the scriptures that will begin to make sense as you study them.

Lift Up Your Heads

There is an urgency about the times in which we live. The events that will occur before Jesus returns will be a source of great distress and the minds and hearts of many will be tested, refined and purged. As we see rampant evil spreading across the earth like never before, people will search for answers for the problems they face. The church as we know it today is not up to the challenge, but God is about to make His people ready to be a shining light in the darkness and a revival of unprecedented proportions will encompass the world. Then the church will declare the one true path to salvation in word and power which is Jesus Christ crucified.

In the Last Days

The time of the end is at hand and it is time to prepare for the return of Jesus. Jesus made the following statements about His return.

But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near. (Luke 21:28)

Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. Even so, you too, when you see these things happening, recognize that He is near, right at the door. (Mark 13:28–29)

These are the days we should begin to straighten up and lift our heads. If your life is not in order before God, do whatever it takes to put it in order. A stiff neck towards God leads to discipline and sorrow, but repentance leads to eternal life and everlasting joy. You have the freewill to choose your destiny so don't be one of those who refuse to listen to God and then end up in hell crying, "Why did I not listen!" The gracious love of God is here today and today is the day of salvation.

The song "Days of Elijah" by Robin Mark aptly describes what is to come. The chorus of the song captures in music the essence of the second coming of Jesus in His glory.

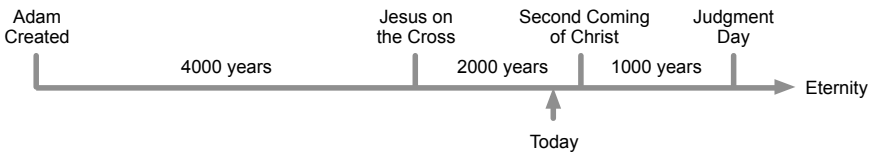
*Behold He comes riding on the clouds,
Shining like the sun at the trumpet call;
Lift your voice, it's the year of jubilee,
And out of Zion's hill salvation comes.*

Appendix - Diagrams

The diagrams shown here are spread throughout this book. You can use this chapter as a reference map when studying the scriptures. The timelines provided here are not meant to be proportionally accurate but meant to provide a logical order and approximate spacing of events. Understanding of how things fit together is the goal.

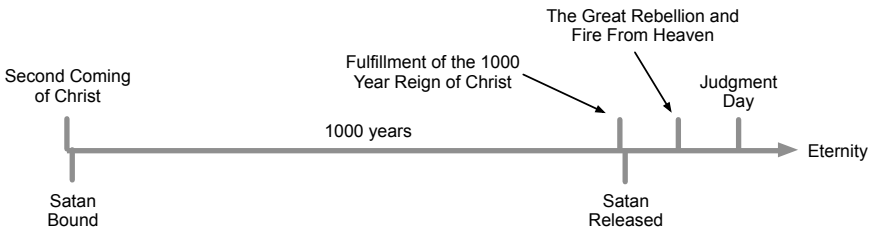
Where We are Today

Here is a general overview of where we are today.



What Happens After Christ Comes

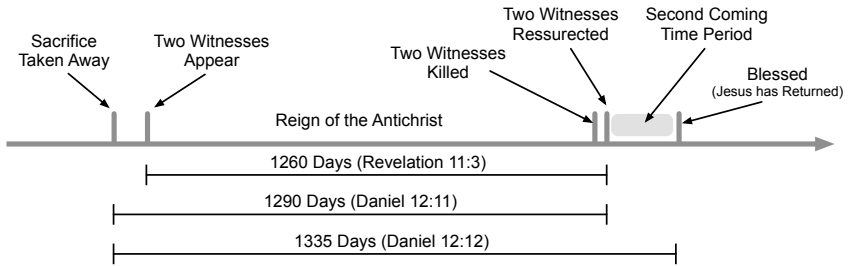
This timeline lays out the general events that happen after Jesus returns.



Antichrist Time Frames

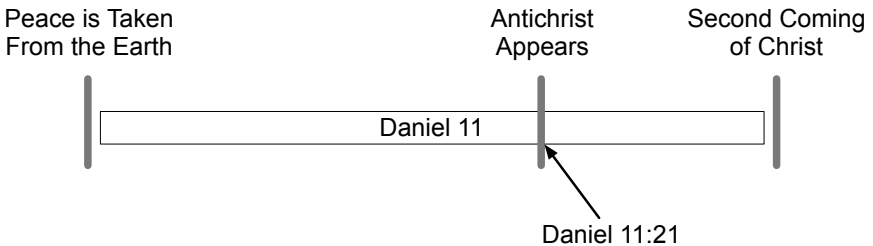
This timeline shows the time frames concerning the reign of the antichrist.

In the Last Days



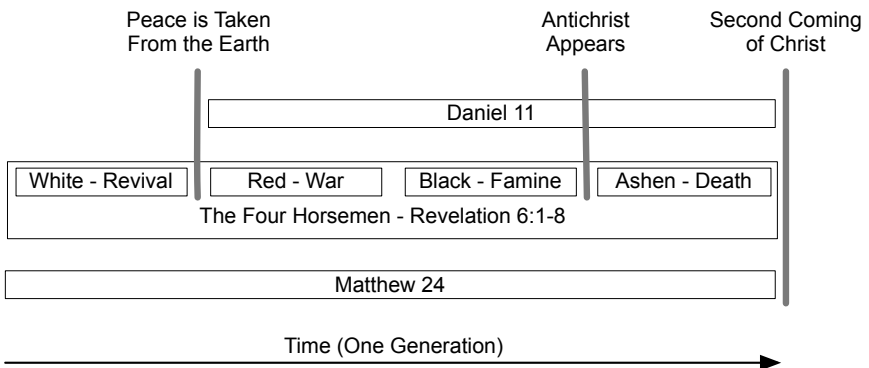
Establishing Anchor Points

This diagram shows where we can establish anchor points for certain events.



First Four Seals

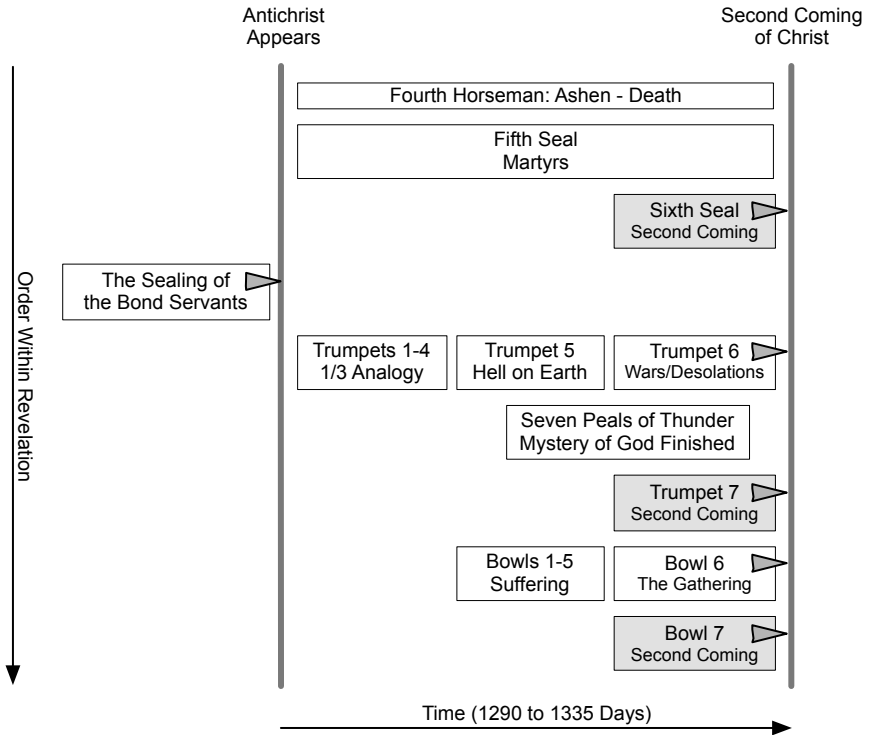
Shown here are the relationships between Daniel 11, Revelation 6:1-8 and Matthew 24.



Reign of the Antichrist

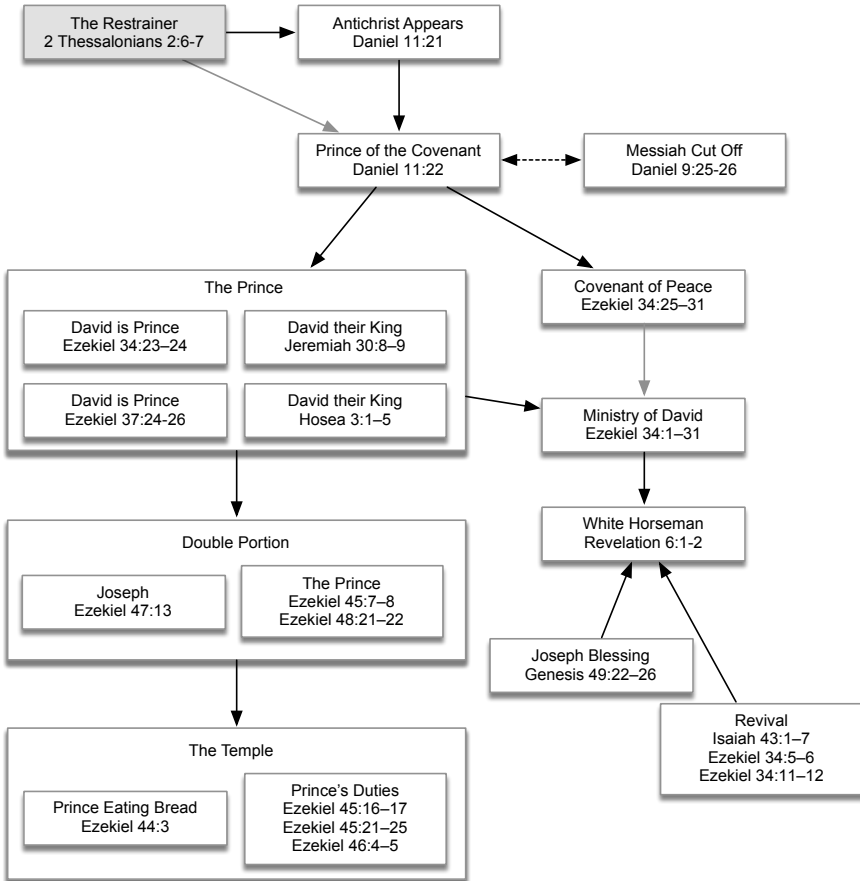
The following diagram shows the events that will happen from the time the antichrist arrives on the scene to the second coming of Jesus.

The arrow on some of the boxes indicates it is tied to the time anchor. The shaded boxes indicate it is a description of the second coming of Jesus. From top to bottom is the order it is written in the book of Revelation and from left to right is the order in time.



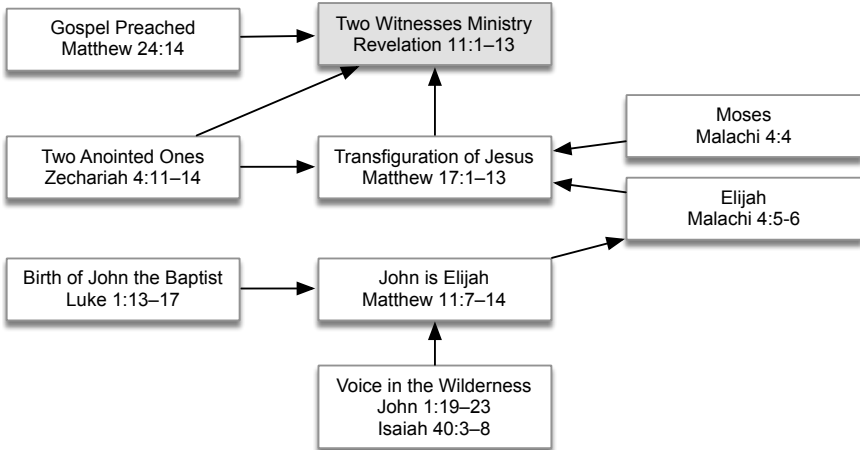
The Prince of the Covenant

Presented below is a scripture graph so that you can visualize the relationships between the scriptures about the prince of the covenant.



The Two Witnesses

Here is a scripture graph showing the relationship between the scriptures about the two witnesses.



Antichrist

The Hour of Testing

By Brendan Murphy

Preface

This book is a companion to the book called "In the Last Days" and details what the scriptures say about the one who will be called "antichrist" just before Jesus returns. There are a number of pieces that must be put together to fully understand the subject matter. One such piece is understanding the role of the "prince of the covenant." The prince of the covenant is the protagonist from God and the antichrist is the antagonist from the devil, and knowing how they relate to each other will open the door to understanding this subject on a much deeper level.

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Introduction

When one hears the word antichrist, many images can be recalled in the mind because of the many references that have floated around in society. Many teachings on the antichrist are based on assumption and speculation that draw from base sensualities. If we can point to someone and say, they are the antichrist, it gives us gratification supporting a sense of self justification. This kind of approach is evil because it rejoices in unrighteousness and is replacing truth with desires. Numerous other approaches are based on faulty or incomplete logic. We will look at the scriptures and examine what they say about the antichrist who is to come.

What does the word antichrist mean? It means to be against Christ. Jesus said that He was the way, and the truth, and the life (John 14:6). To be against Jesus infers the opposite which is the road to hell, lies, and eternal death. These are diametrically opposing paths, and there is no path in life where you can have one foot on the path to hell and one foot on the path to heaven. Jesus taught us to pick up our cross and follow him, and through this we would find eternal life (Matthew 16:24–25). The opposite is to choose the quick and easy way out that serves our own momentary comfort and this leads to everlasting death (Matthew 7:13). So the word antichrist represents eternal death which means if one follows the antichrist, one is choosing death.

In the scriptures, there are three different ways the term antichrist is used. It is important to understand the different usages. Some have blurred the different usages and built false doctrines upon this misunderstanding. Here are the three basic usages of the term antichrist.

1) The spirit of antichrist.

In simplified terms, this would be referred to as the spirit of lawlessness. It is that which reflects the will of the devil in thought, word, and deed. All sin comes from this spirit of lawlessness and without Jesus' death on the cross we were all slaves to this

lawlessness and were powerless to escape its grip. The Apostle John presents a method for detecting the spirit of antichrist.

“By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.” (1 John 4:2–3)

The Apostle Paul also alludes to this concept.

“For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work.” (2 Thessalonians 2:7)

When John says, “This is the spirit of the antichrist...and now is in the world already,” he is saying that a spirit of lawlessness is working in and through people. Pride is at the core of lawlessness and its fruit are lies and evil.

2) Those who walk in the path of an antichrist.

The “spirit of antichrist” can be thought of as a definition of lawlessness. When this definition is applied to people it becomes a manifest reality in this world. Those who embrace lawlessness can be known as antichrists since they are opposing God and His ways through their behaviors. They are the vessels through whom the devil is working.

“Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.” (1 John 2:18)

“For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.” (2 John 1:7)

If you have run into people who speak and act against God, Jesus, Scriptures, and His people, you are seeing antichrists carrying out the devil’s will. Just as John spoke, “so now many antichrists have come” refers to the antichrist in the generic form of describing people who oppose God.

3) The antichrist “person” who claims to be God and will be cast into the lake of fire when Jesus returns.

There is coming a man who will be called "antichrist" and the devil will manifest his supernatural power and authority through him. He is the devil's chosen vessel to deceive the world, and his end will come when Jesus returns. The Apostle Paul provides a description of this man.

“For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.” (2 Thessalonians 2:3–4)

The end of the antichrist is described in the book of Revelation.

“And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.” (Revelation 19:20)

From these two scriptures we see that there is a man who walks in the spirit of antichrist, has the attributes of an antichrist, and is named as the pinnacle of all antichrists.

It is important to provide context when you use the term antichrist to distinguish if you are talking about the spirit of lawlessness, people who behave lawlessly, or the one who will be called "antichrist" just before Jesus returns. We all deal with the first two on a daily basis, the spirit of lawlessness and people who act lawlessly, but the coming of the antichrist is a one time event in history. At the time of this writing, the antichrist who is to come has not appeared. There are very specific events and signs that will mark his arrival, and it is important to wait for those signs to occur before saying who is the antichrist. To jump to conclusions on his identity is foolish and reckless given God has already told us the signs of his coming. The key here is to be patient and arm yourself with a proper understanding of what is to come from the Scriptures.

Character

The antichrist is a person with his own freewill, personal desires, and ambitions. The Bible says to flee to the wilderness when the antichrist is revealed and by examining his character traits we get a clearer picture of why we should flee. We will also get insight into God's plan of why He allows the antichrist to do what he does and his role in the last days.

Let's examine a scripture from Daniel describing the antichrist to get the general sense of his character.

“And at the latter end of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their limit, a king of bold face, one who understands riddles, shall arise. His power shall be great—but not by his own power; and he shall cause fearful destruction and shall succeed in what he does, and destroy mighty men and the people who are the saints. By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand, and in his own mind he shall become great. Without warning he shall destroy many.” (Daniel 8:23–25)

From this scripture, we see the following character traits.

- A king of bold face
- One who understands riddles
- Cunning
- In his own mind he shall become great

These attributes speak of his leadership ability to accomplish his desires. The antichrist is bold, and he is not afraid to act when it says, "Without warning he shall destroy many." He also possesses a form of understanding that allows him to speak into riddles which means that he can appear to be wise, and people will fall for such words. When the understanding of riddles is combined with cunning, the result is deceit will prosper under his hand. The antichrist will become puffed up with his own lies and pride so that he believes what he says about himself and thus becomes great in his own mind.

Deceitfulness

Here are a few more verses that exemplify the characteristics of deceitfulness and flattery within the antichrist.

“He shall come in without warning and obtain the kingdom by flatteries.” (Daniel 11:21)

“And from the time that an alliance is made with him he shall act deceitfully” (Daniel 11:23)

“He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant” (Daniel 11:32)

These verses demonstrate that the antichrist will be an expert in lying and flattery in that he will succeed in seducing many into believing lies and acting on the lies. When the antichrist comes to power, truth will be the first victim.

“And the regular burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown. And a host will be given over to it together with the regular burnt offering because of transgression, and it will throw truth to the ground, and it will act and prosper.” (Daniel 8:11–12)

The result is the truth will be thrown to the ground which means the antichrist will show great contempt towards God, God’s words, and the evidence of God’s power. As a consequence, he will hunt down and kill many saints of God. Consider the nature of the lies it takes to convince people to kill God’s people.

Blaspheming

Another aspect of the antichrist’s character is his nature for blaspheming.

“...and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings. He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.” (Daniel 7:24–25)

Antichrist - The Hour of Testing

“And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them.” (Revelation 13:5–7)

These verses clearly show that the antichrist will speak haughty and blasphemous words. Since the Bible stands in his way as identifying him as the antichrist, he will toss out the Scriptures and deny Jesus came in the flesh. With that restraint of the Bible removed from his mind, all manner of horrendous blasphemies will come forth from him.

Magnify Himself

Tied to his blasphemous nature is the self magnification of himself as being God.

“And the king shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished; for what is decreed shall be done. He shall pay no attention to the gods of his fathers, or to the one beloved by women. He shall not pay attention to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all.” (Daniel 11:36–37)

“For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.” (2 Thessalonians 2:3–4)

Exalting himself to be God with utter disregard is the very depth of pride and this mimics what happened when Satan fell. The following scripture speaks of the fall of Satan.

“How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in

the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.” (Isaiah 14:12–14)

When one thinks they are God, they will do as they please and commit all sorts of evil. In the case of the antichrist, this results in unbounded lawlessness upon the earth.

Fear and Anger

Though the antichrist exalts himself as being God, he is subject to fear and anger.

“For ships of Kittim shall come against him, and he shall be afraid and withdraw, and shall turn back and be enraged and take action against the holy covenant. He shall turn back and pay attention to those who forsake the holy covenant.” (Daniel 11:30)

“But news from the east and the north shall alarm him, and he shall go out with great fury to destroy and devote many to destruction.” (Daniel 11:44)

If one is God, then how is it he suffers from fear and anger? This will be an undeniable proof for the antichrist that he is not God since he suffers from fear and outbursts of anger. Yet, we know he will not yield to this evidence and continue to exalt himself as being God to the end (the second coming of Jesus).

A Beast

In the following scripture, the antichrist is described as a "contemptible person."

“In his place shall arise a contemptible person to whom royal majesty has not been given.” (Daniel 11:21)

When this is combined with the description from Revelation 13, calling the antichrist a beast, we get a clear picture of the character of the antichrist.

“One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast. And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who

Antichrist - The Hour of Testing

is like the beast, and who can fight against it?” And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.” (Revelation 13:3–8)

A beast is an animal described as large and dangerous. If you are walking in the woods and you come across a hungry wild beast, your life would be at risk. Another aspect of being a beast is to be ugly in spirit and specifically for the antichrist to be a proxy of the devil and reflect his desires. The character traits described here give you the parameters of his character, but the terms contemptible and beast describe the depth and nature of his inner character. This is not a person you want to be associated with. God is so angry with the antichrist and false prophet that when Jesus returns, they will be captured and thrown directly into the lake of fire alive.

“And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.” (Revelation 19:20)

Grasping the significance and depth of this scripture is important for understanding God's perspective on how horrific what these two did. They could have suffered physical death and be cast into hell to await the day of judgement and then be cast into the lake of fire, but God chooses to bypass all that for the antichrist and false prophet and directly cast them into the lake of fire alive! When we work these events back into the antichrist's character, we understand that his character is without any redeeming quality and is considered by God as reprehensible. The antichrist is one who will commit blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

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“Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.” (Matthew 12:31–32)

Signs and Wonders

We know the antichrist can be characterized as intelligent, cunning, deceitful, magnifying himself, speaking blasphemies, and acting on fits of anger. God summarizes the character of the antichrist as a beast. When these characteristics are combined with signs and wonders, it makes for a potent combination. Jesus spoke of false christs and prophets arising in the last days performing great signs and wonders.

“For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.”
(Matthew 24:24)

False signs and wonders are not generally something the church, at the time of this writing, considers as a possibility of happening within the church. Much is accepted without regard to its veracity and therefore many are led astray. Jesus spoke of "great" signs and wonders being performed which means miracles of note would be performed that would deceive, if possible, God's chosen people. Consider what is being said, intense miracles will be performed that are meant to look as if they came from God though they are full of hypocrisy. The beginning of this is already happening in the church because people don't know how to test or worse, refuse to test to see whether a miraculous event is really from God.

When the antichrist appears, Satan will pour his power through the antichrist with great false signs and wonders.

“The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.” (2 Thessalonians 2:9–10)

In the next verses, we see a sampling of the false signs and wonders that will be performed by the antichrist and false prophet.

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“Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived. And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain.” (Revelation 13:11–15)

The false signs that are listed in this passage are as follows.

- The mortal wound of the antichrist was healed.
- Causes fire to come down from heaven.
- Causes a statue of the antichrist to speak.

Many Christians have not considered the possibility that Satan can raise people from the dead. In fact, it happens often today under a different disguise. This usually occurs when someone has a near death experience and they meet spiritual beings who claim to be angels of God, Jesus, and God the Father. Since no testing of the spirits occurs, the devil gets away with infusing demonic doctrines into these people and they become puppets of the devil spreading lies and confusion in the name of Jesus. The stories of “Angie Fenimore” and “Howard Storm” succinctly demonstrate the devil's ability to deceive and perform miracles such as raising people from the dead. Note, you can't just depend on the videos of their near death experiences because they are carefully edited to hide the outright hypocrisies. When you read their books, you quickly see the hand of the devil throughout what happened to them because the details reveal major contradictions with the Bible. In a similar manner, the antichrist is mortally wounded and then Satan heals his body and the world marvels after the antichrist.

In the next verse, evidence is given for who is performing the signs through the antichrist and false prophet.

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“And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs. For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty.” (Revelation 16:13–14)

Demonic spirits are the ones performing the false signs and wonders, and they are just using the antichrist and false prophet as pawns in their plans to deceive people. It is important to realize that a miraculous event does not necessarily mean it is from God. Truth is the cornerstone of the miraculous from God and will always lead to Jesus for He is our advocate who is seated at the right hand of God the Father. When Satan performs miracles, they will be infused with hypocrisy designed to seduce and ensnare the unsuspecting with the end goal of drawing one away from God leading to eternal death.

Portentous Arrival

The signs of the arrival of the antichrist are well documented in the scriptures. These signs have been given by God so that we may know when the time is at hand and to correctly identify the antichrist. For a long time many have been guessing at who is the antichrist and point fingers at individuals and leaders like politicians and popes etc. This type of finger pointing activity is evil and completely ignores the scriptures. To say someone is the antichrist is to say they are destined for eternal destruction, and this is the ultimate form of unforgiveness one can show and this type of activity will stir the anger of God. Identifying who is the antichrist is a straightforward task that only requires the matching of events and characteristics in the scriptures to see whether the individual is fulfilling the prophecies of the antichrist. A disciplined examination of facts is required.

“So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.” (Matthew 24:15–16)

This scripture is very simple in that it says when you "see" this thing happen, then run! The abomination of desolation is another term for the antichrist that will be covered in another chapter. The holy place described here is the temple that is detailed in Ezekiel chapters 40-48. Before Jesus returns, the temple will be rebuilt by the people of God and just as it goes into service, the antichrist appears and walks into the temple proclaiming to be God. So one big sign for the appearance of the antichrist is the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. Unless you see that work being done, it is premature to conclude a person is the antichrist. There will be other signs that occur in the world before that work is started that will be exactly fulfilled leading up to that moment.

Spiritual

In this next scripture is a basic characteristic of the antichrist in that he denies Jesus came in the flesh.

“By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.” (1 John 4:2–3)

Probably very few will be able to ask that question directly to the antichrist, but his answer will be heard by many when he is asked. So the denial of Jesus coming in the flesh is one of the signs of confirmation as being the antichrist.

Kingdoms

Another avenue for identifying the time and circumstances of the antichrist’s arrival is through geopolitical events. The following scripture describes such events that lead up to the appearance of the antichrist.

“After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back. And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.” (Daniel 7:6–8)

Later, the meaning of the vision was explained to Daniel.

“As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings.” (Daniel 7:23–24)

This is an explicit explanation of what will happen prior to the antichrist's arrival. Many have tried to prematurely assign the ten

kingdoms to current conditions instead of waiting for the events to reveal themselves in their time. To assign this scripture out of speculation is pride. Those who are wise will be patient and wait for these signs to appear. It says the antichrist will arise and conquer three of the kingdoms. The thing about wars is that they are kind of difficult to go by unnoticed. God is giving us this detail so that we won't be confused on what is happening when the time comes.

In the next scripture, we get another view of the events that lead up to the antichrist's appearance. Since this scripture describes the rise of the antichrist means we need to layer this scripture with the previous scripture to get a fuller picture. Think of the following scripture as zooming in on some of the details that are to come.

“As I was considering, behold, a male goat came from the west across the face of the whole earth, without touching the ground. And the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes. He came to the ram with the two horns, which I had seen standing on the bank of the canal, and he ran at him in his powerful wrath. I saw him come close to the ram, and he was enraged against him and struck the ram and broke his two horns. And the ram had no power to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled on him. And there was no one who could rescue the ram from his power. Then the goat became exceedingly great, but when he was strong, the great horn was broken, and instead of it there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven. Out of one of them came a little horn, which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the glorious land.” (Daniel 8:5–9)

Again, the meaning of vision was explained to Daniel.

“Behold, I will make known to you what shall be at the latter end of the indignation, for it refers to the appointed time of the end. As for the ram that you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia. And the goat is the king of Greece. And the great horn between his eyes is the first king. As for the horn that was broken, in place of which four others arose, four kingdoms shall arise from his nation, but not with his power. And at the latter end of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their

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limit, a king of bold face, one who understands riddles, shall arise.”
(Daniel 8:19–23)

Here, we are given some specifics. Out of Greece will arise a king who will attack Media and Persia which is roughly Iran and then the king will be broken and his kingdom is split up into four pieces. When this war occurs, you have a definite red flag that the antichrist is soon to come.

The entire chapter of Daniel 11 provides even more historical narrative of future events. It reads as a continuous flow of events leading to the appearance of the antichrist in Daniel 11:21.

“In his place shall arise a contemptible person to whom royal majesty has not been given. He shall come in without warning and obtain the kingdom by flatteries.” (Daniel 11:21)

Many biblical scholars and commentators have been trying to tie these events in Daniel 11 to the distant past. This kind of thinking ignores the context of this scripture in that it is talking about the rise of "the" antichrist. Context is important here and can't be ignored or tossed aside. Ignoring the obvious context that the antichrist is yet to come and proposing wholly unsuitable theories leads to a fruitless exploration of events that happened thousands of years ago. This is the worst form of biblical interpretation since it is done by Bible scholars who should know better! Even worse, there are those who read such commentaries by the biblical scholars and are deceived into believing false doctrines leading to a twisting of the truth that has mushroomed into a cancer of misunderstanding within the church. This is a vicious circle where the biblical scholars get it wrong and plant false seeds in the minds of their readers. The next generation of scholars is influenced to repeat the misrepresentations because they heard someone whom they respect teach such doctrines. Repetition from generation to generation is not proof of veracity.

Consider all the detail that God is giving here to let us know when the prophecy is coming to pass from the perspective of geopolitical events. This completely takes speculation out of the picture. God will provide proper warning when the events begin to come to pass. Our part is to heed those warnings.

Prince of the Covenant

The subject of the “prince of the covenant” from Daniel 11:22 is crucial to understanding the events of the last days.

“Armies shall be utterly swept away before him and broken, even the prince of the covenant.” (Daniel 11:22)

Who is the prince of the covenant? I have covered the details of the prince of the covenant in my book, "In the Last Days." I won't go into the details here but give a quick summary. The prince of the covenant is the one spoken of in Revelation 6:2, the rider on the white horse. It is the beginning of the great revival that will sweep across the earth. He is God's anointed prince charged with bringing back order within the church and preparing the bride of Christ for His return. The prince of the covenant is Adam, the first man created by God. God has been sending Adam back throughout history to accomplish His purposes on the earth. John the baptist is an example of God sending Elijah back. The breaking of the first seal will send a shockwave through the church and the fear of the Lord will be restored. Once the first seal is broken, then that generation will not pass away until all things are accomplished ending with the second coming of Jesus. This is part of what was spoken in Daniel 12:4.

“But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.” (Daniel 12:4)

And again...

“He said, ‘Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand.’” (Daniel 12:9–10)

God sending Adam back through history is a part of what was sealed. It says, "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase" which means when revelations like this are released many will search the scriptures to see whether it is true. Many Bible scholars who have put forth theories of the end times have

been doing so lacking critical pieces of information which God has hidden leading to the current morass of conflicting theories based on pride thinking they could discover the sealed plan of God through their own intellect. They did this knowing God had sealed the vision!

Parts of this were revealed to the Apostle Paul.

“And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.” (2 Thessalonians 2:6–8)

Where it says, “he who now restrains” is referring to the prince of the covenant. We know this is true because Paul was teaching from the Old Testament, specifically Daniel 11:22.

“Armies shall be utterly swept away before him and broken, even the prince of the covenant.” (Daniel 11:22)

There is a direct one-to-one correspondence between these two scriptures. The prince of the covenant stands in the way of the antichrist and the antichrist will not enter the temple and claim to be God unless he defeats the prince of the covenant.

Consider the following scripture.

“Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.” (Daniel 9:25–26)

Many have taken this scripture out of its referential context and twisted its meaning. It has the context of talking about the events just before the second coming of Jesus. Where it says, “an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing” is a direct reference to the prince of the covenant in Daniel 11:22. Where it

says, “And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary,” is a direct reference to the antichrist. Consider who will give the command to rebuild the temple? Given the prominence and role of the prince of the covenant, would he have the responsibility of initiating the building of the temple?

From Revelation 13, it describes the rise of the antichrist.

“One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast. And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, ‘Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?’” (Revelation 13:3–4)

Where this passage speaks about the beast, it is referring to the antichrist. The battle where the antichrist receives a mortal wound is Daniel 11:22. This is the battle between the prince of the covenant and the antichrist. This is a really big deal! To defeat the prince of the covenant is one of the reasons that those who worship the beast say, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?" The prince of the covenant, that led the greatest revival, is defeated! We get a glimpse of the workings of the prince of the covenant in Daniel 11.

“Afterward he shall turn his face to the coastlands and shall capture many of them, but a commander shall put an end to his insolence. Indeed, he shall turn his insolence back upon him.” (Daniel 11:18)

The commander referenced here is the prince of the covenant.

Understanding who is the prince of the covenant and his role in the last days provides a framework for building a proper understanding of the events in the last days before the return of Jesus. Until we see the breaking of the first seal and thus the revealing of the prince of the covenant, you will not see the antichrist appear. Many say the first seal represents the antichrist and because of this, many will be caught in their own wisdom on the day the first seal is broken. A humbling will flood the church, and the fear of God will be restored.

Magnify Himself

One of the most prominent characteristics of the antichrist is pride. He will exceedingly exalt himself as being God. Satan will provide false signs and wonders to strengthen his claim.

“He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods.” (Daniel 11:36)

“For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.” (2 Thessalonians 2:3–4)

These two scriptures explicitly describe the antichrist’s moment of entering the temple and pronouncing that he is God. Many could say they are God, but only the antichrist will be the one who will get past the prince of the covenant and enter the temple. It is a defining moment which God has laid out in precise detail so that we may see that the word of God is true. In that moment, we will be able to confirm the identity of the antichrist.

Mark of the Beast

The mark of the beast, 666, is described in the following passage from the book of Revelation.

“Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666.” (Revelation 13:16–18)

Most people think of the mark of the beast as the one thing that is needed to identify the antichrist, but when the mark of the beast is implemented he will have already defeated the prince of the covenant and walked into the temple. So this says there is a set of specific events that come to pass before the antichrist causes all to

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receive his mark. The mark of the beast is not meant as the first sign of identifying the antichrist, but more like icing on the cake proving that he is the antichrist and exposing his hypocrisy to all the world and that the word of God is coming to pass before their eyes.

Identifying the antichrist is only a valid activity after the first seal is broken and the prince of the covenant is revealed and a great revival sweeps across the earth. Then the wars spoken in the second seal followed by famines in the third seal will come to pass. It is at that point one must be alert and match events to what is written in the scriptures. As I wrote in the beginning of this chapter, it is wicked to point a finger at someone and say they are the antichrist while ignoring the specific signs written in the scriptures that must happen before the antichrist appears. The anger of God will be stirred up against those who ignore the scriptures and do so anyway. Since you have read this chapter, you have become responsible for these scriptures before God.

Abomination of Desolation

Jesus spoke the following regarding the final days before His second coming.

“So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.” (Matthew 24:15–16)

The term "abomination of desolation" is a key to understanding this passage. The following scripture from Daniel speaks of what Jesus was talking about.

“Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate.” (Daniel 11:31)

The "him" in the phrase "Forces from him" is referring to the antichrist. After the prince of the covenant is defeated, there is nothing blocking the antichrist and his forces from entering the temple in Jerusalem and profaning it. The next scripture sets up the context for defining what is meant by the term abomination of desolation.

“And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.” (Daniel 9:27)

We see that the abomination of desolation is a person from where it says, “on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate.” This passage is referring to the antichrist. “The decreed end is poured out on the desolator” is referring to the second coming of Jesus which brings a swift end to the antichrist’s reign where the antichrist is seized and bound and then thrown alive into the lake of fire. We see these events corroborated in Daniel 9:26.

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“And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war.” (Daniel 9:26)

The anointed one who is cut off and having nothing is the prince of the covenant. The prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary is the antichrist. In Daniel 12:11, we again see some of the same events.

“And from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1,290 days.” (Daniel 12:11)

What is the abomination? The answer to that question is found in 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4.

“For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.” (2 Thessalonians 2:3–4)

The antichrist walks into the temple, built by the prince of the covenant for the return of Jesus, and profanes the temple by exalting himself above every god or object of worship and sits on the throne meant for Jesus and proclaims himself to be God! The antichrist proclaiming to be God is the abomination.

The fruit of this abomination is seen in Daniel 7:25.

“He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.” (Daniel 7:25)

We see this again in the book of Revelation.

“And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who

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dwell in heaven. Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain." (Revelation 13:5-8)

The antichrist blasphemes the Holy Spirit of God and has neither forgiveness in this life or in the eternity to come. The antichrist is the prince of the devil and to sit in the temple and claim to be God is a direct affront to God from Satan through the antichrist and thus the antichrist himself is the abomination.

The Great Falling Away

One of the signs of the coming of the antichrist is the great falling away from God that happens just before he appears. Paul describes these events in 2 Thessalonians.

“Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.” (2 Thessalonians 2:3–4)

What most people miss is the context of these events. This passage alone does not provide enough context for drawing out the fullness of its meaning. To fall away from the truth, the truth needs to be firmly established as God would have it established. This means a great revival must happen first and then the falling away will occur which leads to the appearance of the antichrist. If one considers the state of the church at the time of this writing with all of its divisions, irreconcilable differences, false doctrines, and abominable behaviors like approving of the homosexual lifestyle, then how could one recognize a great falling away in the midst of that turmoil? The answer is you could not recognize such a thing. When the first seal is broken, starting God's great revival upon the earth, it will proceed throughout the years led by the prince of the covenant. A form of complacency will develop which will manifest as a forsaking of the fear of the Lord and sinful behavior will abound despite the great revival they had seen and experienced. The Apostle Peter aptly describes the mindset of those who will fall away.

“...knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, ‘Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.’” (2 Peter 3:3–4)

Many have inferred that what we are going through today is the great falling away, this is a lie. The two important attributes of the great falling away are that it immediately precedes the appearance of the antichrist, and it comes near the end of the great revival. Until one sees the great revival, it is foolish to say we are experiencing the great falling away. If today is the fulfillment of the great falling away, then where is the antichrist? Where is the temple? Where is the fulfillment of the events in Daniel 11? To say what we are experiencing today is the great falling away, is taking the scriptures out of context and ignoring the obvious sequence of events written in the scriptures. What we are experiencing today, as bad as it is, could not be called "great" for the scope of the great falling away is worldwide. When the antichrist is healed of his mortal wound, the whole world follows him.

“One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast. And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?”” (Revelation 13:3–4)

We see a little further down in Paul’s letter the explicit consequences of rejecting God’s mercy.

“Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” (2 Thessalonians 2:11–12)

Remember that the antichrist and false prophet perform miracles that could even deceive the people of God if possible. When one calls fire down from heaven and causes a statue to speak, entails a delusion an order of magnitude above being just confused about the truth. The great revival that proceeds the great falling away would have provided many great signs and wonders from God to prove out the word of God. So we find that the great falling away, and the appearance of the antichrist is linked. The defeat of the prince of the covenant and the antichrist being healed from a mortal wound in the battle between these two men is what Paul was speaking of when he said the following.

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“Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed” (2 Thessalonians 2:7–8)

This event is a turning point in the great falling away like falling off a cliff. The prince of the covenant is subsequently one of the two witnesses who then stands as a thorn in the side of the antichrist's reign as an instrument of God preaching the gospel and delivering the plagues that torment all those who follow the antichrist. The fact that the two witnesses torment the antichrist followers for 1,260 days shows the depth of the falling away that is occurring.

The great falling away is like no other apostasy that has occurred formerly or even today. It is a worldwide event in rejection of the revival of God that no man will be able to deny. For taking pleasure in unrighteousness God gives them what they have chosen by allowing the antichrist to appear and do what is written of him. In this day, discussion of the great falling away is often treated like an academic exercise like placing a piece of a jigsaw puzzle. We must remember that those who fall away in those days are risking eternal death. The reality of the torment in the lake of fire is a sobering reminder to not treat the great falling away as a theological puzzle piece or to misuse it in today's context of events when the preceding events written of in the scripture have not occurred.

Martyrs

One prominent trait of the antichrist will be his inclination to kill the saints of God and this is emphasized several times in the scriptures. When God repeats a matter, it means He is drawing special attention to the subject and we should listen carefully. Let's begin with what Jesus spoke.

“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”
(Matthew 24:9–14)

When Jesus said, “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake,” He was referring to the time of the antichrist where he will make martyrs of the saints of God. This is partly a direct result of what Jesus said, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” This gospel being proclaimed is the testimony of the two witnesses of God walking around in the midst of the antichrist's reign who have authority to bring any plague they desire. Since the plagues brought by the two witnesses will torment those in the antichrist's kingdom, this will undoubtedly enrage the antichrist and he may seek even more to kill the people of God because of the two witnesses.

The prophet Daniel sees a terrifying vision in Daniel 7:7–8 of the fourth beast showing the rise of the antichrist and then Daniel expounds upon what he saw.

“Then I desired to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrifying, with its teeth

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of iron and claws of bronze, and which devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet, and about the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn that came up and before which three of them fell, the horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things, and that seemed greater than its companions. As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom." (Daniel 7:19–22)

Daniel says, "As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom." Another way to restate this is to say the antichrist will kill the people of God until Jesus returns and then all the saints will be resurrected and will take over the earth with Jesus. The explanation is confirmed to Daniel.

"He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time." (Daniel 7:25)

Again, we see the phrase, "and shall wear out the saints of the Most High" which means the antichrist will kill the people of God. We see this theme repeated in Daniel 8:24.

"His power shall be great—but not by his own power; and he shall cause fearful destruction and shall succeed in what he does, and destroy mighty men and the people who are the saints." (Daniel 8:24)

We directly also see this proclaimed in the book of Revelation.

"Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them." (Revelation 13:7)

This is such an important subject that God devotes an entire seal on the book of life to the martyrs.

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“When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.” (Revelation 6:9–11)

We again see the importance of how God feels about the subject when the third bowl of wrath is poured out on the earth.

“The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood. And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say, “Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!” (Revelation 16:4–6)

In Revelation 17, we see a broader description of Satan’s manifest kingdoms upon the earth in the image of a prostitute where the woman is drunk with the blood of the saints.

“Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk.” And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality. And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: “Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth’s abominations.” And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (Revelation 17:1–6)

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The pinnacle of this killing spree is the reign of the antichrist. We see this theme repeated in Revelation 18.

“Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “So will Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and will be found no more; and the sound of harpists and musicians, of flute players and trumpeters, will be heard in you no more, and a craftsman of any craft will be found in you no more, and the sound of the mill will be heard in you no more, and the light of a lamp will shine in you no more, and the voice of bridegroom and bride will be heard in you no more, for your merchants were the great ones of the earth, and all nations were deceived by your sorcery. And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth.” (Revelation 18:21–24)

We also see this repeated in Revelation 19.

“Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.” (Revelation 19:1–2)

With the number of times this theme of the martyrs is repeated in the scriptures, we see the importance it has with God. The antichrist is working the will of the devil and his actions will reflect this in that he speaks out against God and the hosts of heaven and demonstrates his intention by killing the saints of God. The antichrist is a murderer without restraint and has no regard for life.

Antichrist Reign

During the reign of the antichrist, many events will happen. Let's look at how Jesus described the events.

“So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.” (Matthew 24:15–22)

The key sentence is "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be." Many horrific wars and events have happened upon the earth, but Jesus is saying this will be the worst of all! It will be so bad, that God will limit the length of the tribulation for the sake of those who shall receive salvation.

The antichrist will be shadowed by constant warfare throughout his days. This can be seen throughout the scriptures we have been studying on this subject. Daniel 11:29–45 details some of these wars.

“At the time appointed he shall return and come into the south, but it shall not be this time as it was before. For ships of Kittim shall come against him, and he shall be afraid and withdraw, and shall turn back and be enraged and take action against the holy covenant. He shall turn back and pay attention to those who forsake the holy covenant. Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes

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desolate. He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant, but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action. And the wise among the people shall make many understand, though for some days they shall stumble by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder. When they stumble, they shall receive a little help. And many shall join themselves to them with flattery, and some of the wise shall stumble, so that they may be refined, purified, and made white, until the time of the end, for it still awaits the appointed time.

“And the king shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished; for what is decreed shall be done. He shall pay no attention to the gods of his fathers, or to the one beloved by women. He shall not pay attention to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all. He shall honor the god of fortresses instead of these. A god whom his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. He shall deal with the strongest fortresses with the help of a foreign god. Those who acknowledge him he shall load with honor. He shall make them rulers over many and shall divide the land for a price.

“At the time of the end, the king of the south shall attack him, but the king of the north shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships. And he shall come into countries and shall overflow and pass through. He shall come into the glorious land. And tens of thousands shall fall, but these shall be delivered out of his hand: Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites. He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the precious things of Egypt, and the Libyans and the Cushites shall follow in his train. But news from the east and the north shall alarm him, and he shall go out with great fury to destroy and devote many to destruction. And he shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the glorious holy mountain. Yet he shall come to his end, with none to help him.” (Daniel 11:23–45)

All the wars are a proof that the antichrist is not God as he proclaims because he would be able, as God, to cause wars to cease.

The antichrist will also speak words against the truth and God and kill God's saints.

“And a host will be given over to it together with the regular burnt offering because of transgression, and it will throw truth to the ground, and it will act and prosper.” (Daniel 8:12)

“He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.” (Daniel 7:25)

We see this mirrored in Daniel 8.

“His power shall be great—but not by his own power; and he shall cause fearful destruction and shall succeed in what he does, and destroy mighty men and the people who are the saints. By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand, and in his own mind he shall become great. Without warning he shall destroy many. And he shall even rise up against the Prince of princes, and he shall be broken—but by no human hand.” (Daniel 8:24–25)

Again, we see this repeated Revelation 13.

And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.” (Revelation 13:3–8)

Revelation 8:1-11:13 details the acts of God in the reign of the antichrist and these events are mirrored in the ministry of the two witnesses. The two witnesses are God's spokesmen in those days

and the fact that the antichrist and his followers cannot kill them during the days of their testimony, is another proof within itself that the antichrist is not God, but a liar. The relationship between the antichrist and the two witnesses is comparable between Pharaoh and Moses and Aaron in the time of the exodus from Egypt. For example, the two witnesses are given authority to turn the waters into blood and bring plagues.

“And they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire.” (Revelation 11:6)

This is a small part of the reason why the scripture says the great city is symbolically called Sodom and Egypt.

“And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them, and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified.” (Revelation 11:7–8)

When the two witnesses begin their testimony and ministry in the midst of the antichrist’s kingdom, no rain will fall.

“They have the power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying” (Revelation 11:6)

Since the length of their ministry is 1,260 days (Revelation 11:3), this will contribute to famines.

The antichrist will be accompanied by a false prophet who is described in Revelation 13.

“Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived. And it was allowed to

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give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain. Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666.” (Revelation 13:11–18)

The false prophet will perform great signs and wonders, and he will cause fire to come down from heaven and give breath to the image of the antichrist so that it may speak. Jesus spoke of false christs and prophets who perform great miracles.

“For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.” (Matthew 24:24)

Considering the level of the miracles that are performed by the false prophet, this qualifies as being in a position to deceive the elect if it were possible. As a side note, this is a warning that the presence of the miraculous does not necessarily mean it is from God, it only means that a supernatural event is occurring and we are responsible to look at the fruit to see whether it is from God. Remember that in the time of Moses and the exodus, Aaron threw down his staff and it became a snake. The magicians of Pharaoh also threw down their staffs, and they also became snakes. In the end, Aaron’s snake ate the other snakes, but Pharaoh’s magicians performed miracles through demon spirits. The enemy can perform miracles and this is a lesson we need to heed today and in the future.

At the end of the antichrist’s reign, God will cause all the armies of the earth to gather in the valley of Armageddon.

“The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east. And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs. For they are demonic spirits,

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performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. ("Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!") And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon." (Revelation 16:12–16)

The purpose of this gathering of all the antichrist's forces is to become the cattle led to slaughter on the day Jesus returns and takes over the earth. The two witnesses have proclaimed the gospel that Jesus will return from above, and those gathered on that day are there to fight Jesus because of the testimony of the two witnesses. The antichrist denies Jesus came in the flesh and then gathers a huge army to battle Jesus! The depth of pride and arrogance being displayed thinking that they can defeat Jesus after seeing the two witnesses killed by the antichrist and then rise from the dead three and a half days later and are taken into heaven is utter hypocrisy. To participate in that gathering, is to choose eternal death given all the evidence God has provided. They will be without excuse. When Jesus returns, the battle will be over in one hour and not one soldier gathered at Armageddon will escape.

Timeline

Let's pull all the different threads together into a timeline that shows the events in their proper context. The events described here will happen in the span of one generation.

“So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.” (Matthew 24:33–34)

The lifespan of a generation may be up to 120 years. More likely the end time events will span 40 to 80 years. What we can say is at least one person will live through the breaking of the first seal to the second coming of Jesus. There is no direct way to say how long end time events will take to be fulfilled, but in Daniel 11 we can gauge part of this time span. Daniel 11 reads as historical narrative of future events, and we can make educated guesses on each of the events described. For example in Daniel 11:5–9, it says the following.

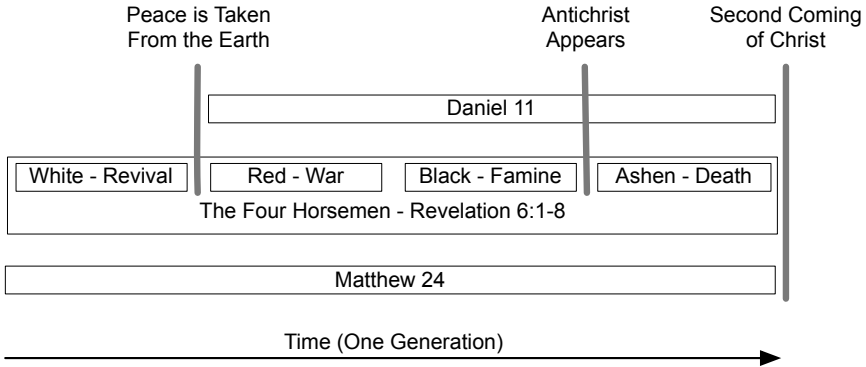
“Then the king of the south shall be strong, but one of his princes shall be stronger than he and shall rule, and his authority shall be a great authority. After some years they shall make an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement. But she shall not retain the strength of her arm, and he and his arm shall not endure, but she shall be given up, and her attendants, he who fathered her, and he who supported her in those times. And from a branch from her roots one shall arise in his place. He shall come against the army and enter the fortress of the king of the north, and he shall deal with them and shall prevail. He shall also carry off to Egypt their gods with their metal images and their precious vessels of silver and gold, and for some years he shall refrain from attacking the king of the north. Then the latter shall come into the realm of the king of the south but shall return to his own land.” (Daniel 11:5–9)

How long will it take to accomplish these events? You see phrases like, “after some years” and “for some years he shall refrain” mixed

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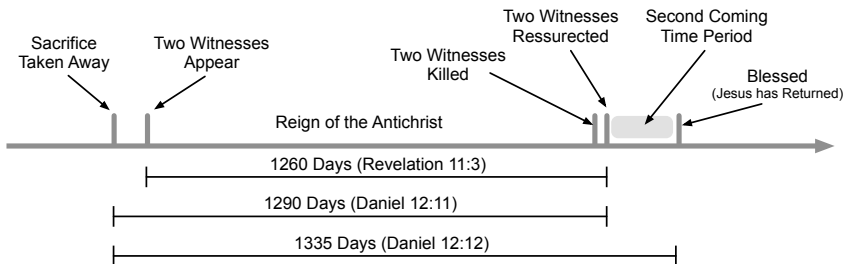
in with the actual events described. Putting this together one could make an educated guess that this passage may take ten to twenty years to complete.

The following graph shows a high level view of the events Jesus spoke of occurring in that generation.



This graph shows the breaking of the first seal (white horse), the appearance of God's prince of the covenant, which initiates the greatest revival to bring in the harvest for God's kingdom. This revival will be so effective that it will bring peace to the earth! Then comes war (red horse) to take this peace from the earth. Eventually, famine comes upon the earth (black horse) followed by the appearance of the antichrist (ashen horse).

If we zoom in on the fourth seal, the reign of the antichrist, we see the following sequence of events.



Once the antichrist takes away the sacrifice from the temple, the days can be counted until the return of Jesus. Jesus will return

between 1,290 to 1,335 days after the sacrifice is taken away. Many quote the following scripture concerning the day and hour of Jesus' return.

“But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.” (Matthew 24:36)

They use this scripture out of context to say Jesus can appear at any time like five minutes from now since no man knows the day or hour. The last scripture that must be fulfilled before Jesus returns is the death and resurrection of the two witnesses in Revelation 11.

“And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them, and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified. For three and a half days some from the peoples and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb, and those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to those who dwell on the earth. But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here!” And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them. And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.” (Revelation 11:7–13)

Jesus will return after the two witnesses are killed in Jerusalem and resurrected three and a half days later when a loud voice calls them up to heaven. God logically lock-stepped these events together so that any other arrangement of these events creates contradictions in the scriptures and does violence to the scriptures because one is trying to force the scriptures to say something simply not found in the text. So to say Jesus can return at any time

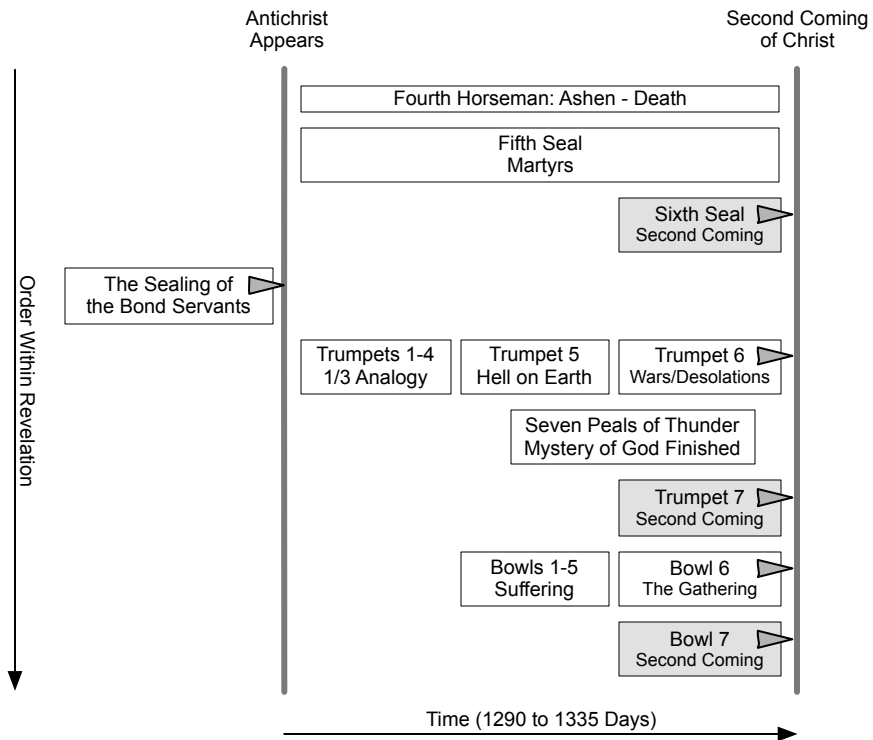
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shows ignorance of the scriptures. Revelation 11:7–13 gives the true context for what Jesus said in Matthew 24:14.

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:14)

Jesus is referring to the testimony of the two witnesses. When the two witnesses are taken up to heaven, then what Jesus said about no one knows the day nor hour when He returns applies. In that forty-five day period, between 1,290 and 1,335 days, Jesus will come at an hour the antichrist and his followers do not expect and they will be terrified with utter horror of their imminent death and destruction knowing they will be cast into hell and the antichrist and false prophet will be thrown directly into the lake of fire.

If we break down the events that occur in the antichrist’s reign, we see the following.



The shaded boxes in this graph all refer to the second coming of Jesus. This is important because it gives us a reference on how to interpret the event ordering. Some have interpreted the events written in Revelation in strict chronological order which leads to illogical conclusions. If we were watching a movie that had three characters that end up in the same place at the end of the movie and the movie simultaneously follows each character's journey, when the scenes switch from one character to another we would not say it is in strict chronological order. In the book of Revelation, the end point is the second coming of Jesus and the failure to recognize the literary form of the book of Revelation is like looking at a movie and assuming flashbacks occur after the current events. This has led to a myriad of diverging theories that shoot off into tangents that cannot be resolved.

One theory says the reign of the antichrist will be seven years based on Daniel 9.

“Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.” (Daniel 9:24–27)

The seven year period comes from the statement, “And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering.” They turn the week into years and this happens because the context of the passage is not properly recognized and this is reinforced by the

translators of many versions imposing a bias upon the text in the choice of words. In other words, ignorance bred ignorance.

To understand the context of this passage, we need to work it in reverse order and start with the explicit so we can interpret the implicit. Daniel 9:26–27 describes the appearance of the antichrist.

“And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.” (Daniel 9:26–27)

This is very explicit in its meaning and is easy to comprehend. This becomes an anchor point for this passage which ties it to the antichrist who is yet to come.

The middle part of this passage is also explicit, but it requires other supporting scriptures to anchor its context.

“Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing.” (Daniel 9:25–26)

Many translations will insert “Messiah” for “anointed one” and capitalize “prince” to indicate that this is speaking of Jesus as the Messiah. Translators are inserting their bias as the implied meaning into the text. This is subtle and is a disservice to the reader. There are two scriptures that describe the exact same event which helps us define the context.

“In his place a despicable person will arise, on whom the honor of kingship has not been conferred, but he will come in a time of tranquility and seize the kingdom by intrigue. The overflowing forces will be flooded away before him and shattered, and also the prince of the covenant.” (Daniel 11:21–22)

Here, we see the "prince" is the "prince of the covenant" and this is not Jesus. It would be completely illogical to say Jesus is the prince of the covenant and say that Jesus is defeated by the antichrist when the scriptures clearly say when Jesus returns He will destroy the antichrist's kingdom in one hour! The Apostle Paul spoke of this event in 2 Thessalonians.

“Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.” (2 Thessalonians 2:3–7)

The one who restrains the antichrist is the prince of the covenant and the antichrist must defeat the prince of the covenant in order to enter the temple and proclaim himself as being God.

Now, we have an explicit context to interpret the implicit in the first part of this passage.

“Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.” (Daniel 9:24)

The first thing to note about this passage (Daniel 9:24–27) is its literary form which is a historical narrative of future events because it talks about the temple and the antichrist. The other thing to note is that it is a continuous thought and Gabriel is not suddenly switching thoughts in mid sentence. It is a single cohesive thought on one subject. Also, Gabriel does not begin speaking once removed language suggesting some even deeper indecipherable mystery. In fact, the opposite is true from Gabriel's testimony to Daniel.

“O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding.” (Daniel 9:22)

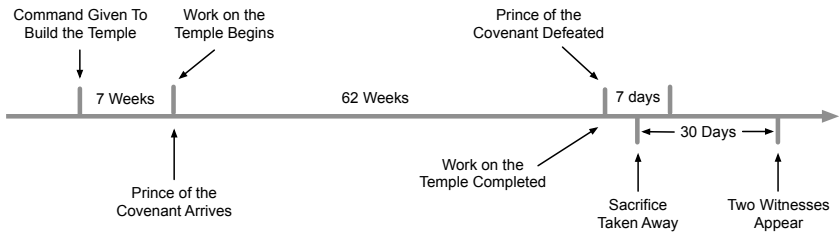
He is telling a simple plain truth to Daniel! So we should interpret this passage as continuous, historical narrative of future events since we have not seen the appearance of the antichrist which logically eliminates the theory that this passage is speaking of the first coming of Jesus. The other constraining factor is the allotted time, one generation, for the fulfillment of the final end time events. Given that God has restricted the lifespan of man to about 120 years, this completely dismantles the 490 year theory since 490 years does not quite fit within 120 years.

The passages quoted here are from the "English Standard Version" (ESV) which does a good job of translating this passage. As an example of the translators inserting bias into the text, here is the "Amplified" version.

“Seventy weeks [of years, or 490 years] are decreed upon your people and upon your holy city [Jerusalem], to finish and put an end to transgression, to seal up and make full the measure of sin, to purge away and make expiation and reconciliation for sin, to bring in everlasting righteousness (permanent moral and spiritual rectitude in every area and relation) to seal up vision and prophecy and prophet, and to anoint a Holy of Holies. Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem until [the coming of] the Anointed One, a Prince, shall be seven weeks [of years] and sixty-two weeks [of years]; it shall be built again with [city] square and moat, but in troublous times. And after the sixty-two weeks [of years] shall the Anointed One be cut off or killed and shall have nothing [and no one] belonging to [and defending] Him. And the people of the [other] prince who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood; and even to the end there shall be war, and desolations are decreed. And he shall enter into a strong and firm covenant with the many for one week [seven years]. And in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and offering to cease [for the remaining three and one-half years]; and upon the wing or pinnacle of abominations [shall come] one who makes desolate, until the full determined end is poured out on the desolator.” (Daniel 9:24–27 Amplified version)

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This passage in Daniel is talking about the appearance of the prince of the covenant to oversee the building of the temple described in Ezekiel 40-48 which is yet to come. It will take sixty-two weeks (not years) to build the temple. When it is finished, the antichrist shows up and defeats the prince of the covenant. This passage is here to show the exact ordering and timing of events even before the antichrist arrives to show forth proof to the world that the scriptures are the word of God and the antichrist is not God as he proclaims. The antichrist fulfills exactly what is spoken of him in the scriptures when he walks into the temple and sits in the Holy of Holies, meant for Jesus, and proclaims himself as being God. These events and ordering being fulfilled cannot be denied! The antichrist fulfilling this scripture is the abomination of desolation spoken of by Jesus for he brings eternal death to himself and his followers as a proxy of Satan. Here is a graph showing the building of the temple and the arrival of the antichrist with the taking away of the sacrifice.



Conclusion

In the study of the antichrist's role in the end times, we see that the scriptures give some very specific signs and events that tell us of the time of his arrival. Therefore, we do not have to speculate on current events and wonder if this is the time of the end. All we need to do is wait for the events to be fulfilled. God wants us to live in peace, and placing unwarranted attention on watching for the antichrist's arrival speaks of a tormenting fear that God is not in control. God will not suddenly throw the world into the great tribulation without preparation. The great revival that happens with the breaking of the first seal revealing God's anointed prince of the covenant is meant to bring in a great harvest of souls into the kingdom of God. As time goes on, hearts are hardened towards God because of unbelief and they eventually fall away. The Apostle Paul speaks of the great apostasy that comes before the appearance of the antichrist.

“Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.” (2 Thessalonians 2:3–4)

This apostasy happens in the face of great signs, wonders, and miracles from God. They will have abundant and overwhelming evidence that the great revival is from God, yet they choose to reject God. It is in this context that the antichrist is allowed to appear. Paul goes on to explain the reason for the antichrist.

“Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. For this reason God will send upon them a deluding

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influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness" (2 Thessalonians 2:8–12)

God will send a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false because they delight in wickedness. This is the lesson for those who follow Jesus, we need to love the truth and obey God's commands showing true love and abstaining from all wickedness. The scriptures say the fear of the Lord is to hate evil and that leads to life.

Even in the midst of the great tribulation God gives them a chance to repent. When the two witnesses are finished with their testimony, they are killed by the antichrist.

"But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were watching them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, 'Come up here.' Then they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them. And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven." (Revelation 11:11–13)

It says, "and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven" which means they turned from their wickedness. Through the great tribulation, God is squeezing every last drop of the revival from the earth for those who are willing to be saved. How thankful will be those who are saved on that day knowing they stood on the thinnest edge of the precipice to eternal death and were pulled back by God's mercy? The great revival is finished when Jesus returns and He utters His mighty voice causing the whole earth to shake. The second coming of Jesus is the most terrifying experience a person could endure. It is a singular and unique event that has no equal. Those who survive the second coming, are given a second chance at eternal life! How thankful will they be knowing they stood on the edge of eternal death and God spared them?

When people speak of the antichrist, they tend to focus on the sensual aspects and miss why God is allowing him to walk the

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earth. While we need to thoroughly know the details of the events to come, it is more important to understand why these things will happen. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but there is rejoicing in heaven forever for even one soul that is saved. The events of the end times are a part of His plan of salvation and the appearance of the antichrist is the hour of testing of which Jesus spoke.

“Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”
(Revelation 3:10)

The hour of testing can be paraphrased as a simple question, where do you wish to spend eternity? God will test those who failed to respond to the great revival by allowing the antichrist to prosper in what he does. The two witnesses will then stand as light posts of hope from God exposing the hypocrisy of the antichrist, thus making the choice clear. Through the hour of testing, God will prove out the true motivations of their hearts. To the end, God extends his hand of mercy up to the moment of the second coming of Jesus when suddenly, destruction will come upon them who made their choice to side with the devil and the antichrist. This will be a moment of utter finality for those who did not listen to God.