

THE  
END  
TIMES

A GUIDE TO BIBLE PROPHECY  
AND THE LAST DAYS

BRITT GILLETTE

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*To mom.*



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# INTRODUCTION

Did you know one man saved three billion people?

It was October 1962 – the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis. U.S. spy planes discovered secret Soviet nuclear missile installations on the island of Cuba. President Kennedy demanded their removal, and the showdown that followed threatened to trigger a global nuclear war. To stop the Soviets from shipping nuclear weapons to the tiny Caribbean nation, Kennedy ordered a naval blockade. For several days, the world held its breath. Would Soviet ships run the blockade? Would they consider it an act of war? No one knew.

Meanwhile, as Kennedy and Khrushchev stared each other down, a Soviet sub was under siege. In the waters around Cuba, a U.S. convoy detected the diesel-powered, nuclear-armed Soviet submarine *B-59* and tried to make it surface. Only one problem. The crew of the *B-59* didn't know that. As depth charges exploded all around them, they thought they were under attack. To make matters worse, power ran low. The air conditioning failed. Temperatures exceeded 100 degrees, and dangerously high levels of carbon dioxide filled the submarine. Even worse, the crew lost all contact with Moscow. With no outside communication, the sub's officers had no idea what was happening. Was this a real attack? Had war already broken out? Should they surface and risk enemy capture? Or should they launch a nuclear strike in retaliation?

Cut off from Moscow, the sub's captain feared war had already broken out. He ordered a nuclear strike. Fortunately, the decision wasn't his alone.

Launching a nuclear torpedo required approval from three officers – the captain, the political officer, and the sub's second-in-command. The political officer agreed with the captain. That left the decision in the hands of the third officer, Vasili Arkhipov (who also happened to be the flotilla commander).

The situation was dire. The *B-59*'s extreme heat and low fuel demanded a quick decision. The three officers argued while Arkhipov held the fate of the world in his hands. At his word, the *B-59* would unleash a nuclear strike on the U.S. Navy. And then? Total nuclear war. Cuba, the United States, the Soviet Union, and the whole world would be destroyed. Three billion people would die. Only one man's decision stood between life and death for all mankind. In a moment unknown to much of the world for decades, Arkhipov showed remarkable courage and wisdom. He said no to the launch. His decision saved three billion people.

The *B-59* incident may well be the closest the world has ever come to complete annihilation. But you know what? It wasn't the only time. During the Cold War, such close calls were common.

For example, on November 9, 1979, a false alarm at the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) almost triggered a global nuclear war. That day, command center systems lit up with warnings of a Soviet missile launch. They showed a barrage of missiles heading for America. The U.S. prepared for a counterattack. But the attack wasn't real. A training program designed to simulate Soviet missiles caused a false alarm. In other words, a computer glitch almost set off World War III. Over the next year, hardware failures at NORAD led to three more false alarms.

In case you're wondering, Soviet systems didn't fare much better. In September 1983, the Soviet Union detected the launch of five nuclear missiles from North America. Like the NORAD false alarm, this attack wasn't real either. A Soviet satellite confused sunlight reflecting off a cloud with a real missile launch. Assuming the U.S. wouldn't start a nuclear war with just five missiles, Lt. Col. Stanislav Petrov made a bold gamble. He ignored the alert, betting it was a false alarm, and he too saved the world from nuclear holocaust.

As if all those instances weren't enough, the world once again came to the brink of nuclear war just two months later. In November 1983, NATO



forces ran a European training exercise code-named “Able Archer.” The exercise simulated NATO’s response to a Soviet attack on western Europe. NATO tried to make it as realistic as possible. The U.S. airlifted thousands of troops, moved command posts to new locations, and changed its alert status to DEFCON 1. Unfortunately, this made the exercise *too* realistic. It was so realistic, the Soviet Union feared it was an actual attack. While they knew NATO regularly held training exercises, the unusual nature of Able Archer made them believe it was cover for a real attack. The Soviets prepared to counterattack. Nuclear bombers in Germany and Poland prepared to strike. But when Able Archer ended, the Soviet Union stood down. Only later did the U.S. and NATO realize how close they had come to triggering nuclear war.

## A World of Unending Threats

It’s humbling to study world history since 1945 and realize how close we’ve come to total annihilation. For years, school children ran war drills and ducked underneath desks. People built bomb shelters in their backyards, and fear of nuclear war haunted world leaders.

Today, the Cold War nuclear threat is gone, but threats to humanity have only multiplied. All you need to do is scan the daily headlines, and you’ll encounter one reason after another as to why the world is coming to an end. A renewed Cold War... The spread of nuclear weapons... War in the Middle East... Terrorism... Biological and chemical warfare... Global warming... Ebola... A nuclear armed Iran... Drug resistant superbugs... The threats seem never ending.

Consider just one of those modern day threats – a global pandemic. Could a contagious disease kill a billion people? Yes. History is filled with stories of plagues that kill on a mass scale. The 14th Century Black Plague is probably the best known example. But we’ve had others. For instance, one hundred years ago, the world struggled against a relentless enemy – H1N1, also known as “the Spanish Flu.” Rising from the trenches of World War I, it spread to every corner of the globe in 1918 and 1919 – even remote Pacific islands. What made it especially deadly is more than half its victims were healthy adults between the ages of 20 and 40. The virus turned their

healthy immune systems against them. They died terrible, gruesome deaths. And when the global pandemic finally came to an end, it had taken more lives than the Great War itself. H1N1 killed an estimated 50 to 100 million people – approximately 3% to 6% of the world's population. Today, if a disease killed 3% of the world population, it would leave 230 million people dead. That's almost the entire population of Indonesia – the fourth most populous nation in the world.

Fortunately, we've avoided a similar outbreak in the years since. We've faced scares from bird flu, swine flu, Ebola, and other diseases, but we've avoided a global pandemic. Some of this is because of what we've done. We have better knowledge of how viruses and bacteria spread. We know how to quarantine areas, disinfect treatment centers, and provide more effective medical care. Yet the number one reason we've avoided a global plague is luck. That's right. Since 1918, we've been just plain lucky. But unless we develop a cure for infectious disease, our luck will soon run out.

Need another example? Consider the threat of an electro-magnetic pulse (EMP). An EMP is a rapid, invisible burst of electromagnetic energy. Some believe an EMP attack on the United States could “fry” all of our electronics. In a matter of seconds, it could send a surge of energy through our power grid and electronic devices. The overload from this surge of energy could disrupt or destroy almost anything electronic. This means computers, phones, and cars will stop working. The local power grid? Gone. The local sewage and water treatment plant? A grinding halt. Your smart phone? Won't work. In a society reliant on modern technology, how long until law and order break down? How long before food supplies dwindle and mobs take to the streets? It won't take long at all.

And the scariest part? An enemy attack isn't necessary for this to happen. All it takes is a single solar flare from the sun. In fact, it's happened before. It's called the Carrington Event, and it took place in 1859. Back then, a solar storm destroyed many of the telegraph wires in North America and Europe. Yet, only a few people noticed. After all, it was 1859. Most people lived on farms. They didn't rely on electronics for day-to-day life. Much of the world didn't even realize the Carrington Event took place. Only in modern times do we realize the impact such an event could have on our modern way of life.

Still, despite the threat of disease, EMPs, and other disastrous events, nuclear war remains the greatest threat to humanity. And believe it or not, it's the most overlooked. Why? Complacency. The Cold War ended. The world avoided nuclear war. In the minds of many, this meant the threat of nuclear war ended too. Unfortunately, it didn't. Despite a peaceful end to the Cold War, the threat of nuclear war still exists. In fact, the world today is even more dangerous. Why? Few nations had nuclear weapons during the Cold War, and the Soviets and Americans weren't willing to destroy themselves. But today? More nations have nuclear weapons, and even more nations seek them. And some of those nations *are* willing to risk total destruction.

## The Spread of Nuclear Weapons

When the United States detonated the first atomic bomb over Hiroshima in 1945, the spread of nuclear weapons was the top fear of world leaders. For decades, those fears proved unfounded. The number of nuclear armed nations remained small. When the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty debuted in January 1967, it recognized only five nations as nuclear powers – the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, France, and China. Fifty years later, in 2017, only nine nations were believed to be nuclear powers – the same five nations from 1967, along with India, Pakistan, North Korea, and Israel.

Since 1945, each of these powers has acted rationally. The doctrine of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) kept us from nuclear war. What is MAD? It's the fear of total destruction and the belief no one can win a war between two nuclear powers. For 70 years, it's all that's kept us from World War III. In a nuclear war, no one wins. It's a lose-lose proposition, and every world leader knows it.

The concept of MAD is less than ideal, but so far, it's been a success. Because MAD has worked so well, complacency has set in. Many people think all-out nuclear war will never happen. But is this true? Will MAD continue to prevent a nuclear war? I doubt it. Why? There are many reasons, but the number one reason is clear:

*The original fear of the spread of nuclear weapons is finally becoming a reality.*

More and more nations seek nuclear weapons. And if more nations get nuclear weapons, the odds of just one of them making a bad decision significantly increases.

In 2007, North Korea officially acquired nuclear weapons. Many world leaders label North Korea a rogue nation. They've threatened both their immediate neighbors and the United States. Will they ever launch a nuclear weapon? Who knows. But does it really matter? The mere threat makes it more likely North Korea's neighbors will develop their own nuclear weapons. North Korea has threatened South Korea, Japan, and others. Why wouldn't these nations pursue their own nuclear ambitions?

The same holds true for Iran. If Iran develops nuclear weapons, it's much more likely we'll see a nuclear armed Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and others. If that happens, the world becomes a much more dangerous place. You might think, "Even if that's true, MAD will prevent war. A nuclear strike by any one of those nations will be suicide." Maybe. But even if MAD keeps the peace in a world saturated with nuclear weapons, war is still inevitable. Why? Because MAD won't last forever. In fact, right now the world's major powers are working around the clock to destroy it.

### **The End of MAD**

MAD is based on technology. And the technology it relies on will soon be obsolete. Like all previous military eras, the era of MAD will soon come to an end. If we've learned anything from the past, it's to "never fight the last war." Just because nuclear weapons ended World War II, we shouldn't assume they'll begin World War III. Something new will replace nuclear weapons. Firearms once replaced arrows. Tanks replaced horse mounted troops. And one day soon, new technologies will replace nuclear weapons.

Right now, Russia, China, the United States, and other world powers are in a race to develop these new technologies. They're working to create weapons systems to circumvent or end MAD. These technologies include artificial intelligence, quantum computing, molecular manufacturing, and other technologies we can't yet identify. Once they create them, they'll have new techniques for waging war. For example, with cyber warfare, an attacking

nation could shut down critical enemy networks – including early warning systems. Even worse, new manufacturing technologies will enable legions of tiny swarming drones, capable of destroying any conventional weapon. If nuclear weapons can't be launched or detonated, they can't destroy anything. When these new weapons arrive, MAD will become obsolete. When it does, the world peace built on MAD will fall apart. Why? Because the certainty of total destruction will disappear. When that happens, World War III is inevitable.

## Does This Mean All Hope Is Lost?

Faced with all these threats, it's no wonder some people feel hopeless. Maybe you feel hopeless. Maybe you live in fear of the future. If so, I don't blame you. Each day brings a constant drumbeat of negative news coverage. It seems like the world is out-of-control. Many say catastrophe is right around the corner. They say it's only a matter of time before the human race destroys itself. They wonder how much longer we can last. They speculate on how the world will end. Will it be biological warfare? Comets? Asteroids? Nuclear war? In the minds of such people, it's not a matter of *whether* the human race will end, it's a matter of *when*.

If that's what you think, I've got good news. The world won't end in nuclear annihilation. Global warming won't destroy the planet, and human beings won't go extinct. In fact, *nothing* will destroy humanity. Despite what most people think, the world isn't a runaway train jumping its track. The world we live in isn't a giant powder keg waiting to explode. And the human race is not on the verge of extinction. Far from it. In reality, it's just the opposite. Why do I say this? Because everything happening in the world today is part of a grand plan and purpose.

The Creator of the universe is in complete control, and through the Bible, He describes our future. He's told us what's coming. So what's coming next? The world is heading toward a period God calls "the end times." This book focuses on the people, events, and nations pivotal to those times. You'll learn about God's purpose for the end times, the major events set to take place, and what the future holds.

Learn what the Bible says, and you'll have a better understanding of what's going on in the world today. You'll know which headlines herald the end and which ones are just part of the ongoing story of a lost and fallen world. Most of all, you'll learn why the future offers great hope for you and everyone else on planet earth.

## 2

# THE ONE WHO KNOWS ALL THINGS

More than 2,600 years ago, one of the world's most powerful kings had a problem (*Daniel 2:1*). A strange dream disturbed him. Unsure of its meaning, he called the royal astrologers and magicians. He demanded they interpret his dream. "No problem," they said. "Simply tell us your dream, and we'll tell you what it means." But Nebuchadnezzar knew better. He knew if he told them the dream, they could make up its meaning. How would he know if they were right? He wouldn't. So the king hatched a plan. He demanded they tell him his dream *and* its meaning. If they couldn't, he would put them all to death. Panicked, the king's advisors protested. "This is impossible!" they said. "How could anyone know the king's dream?"

But it wasn't impossible. While none of Nebuchadnezzar's wise men could reveal the dream, one man in Babylon could. His name was Daniel. A slave from the conquered nation of Israel, Daniel worshipped the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. "I can tell you your dream and its meaning," Daniel told the king. "Not because I'm wise, but because there's a God in heaven who reveals such things" (*Daniel 2:28*). Then, just as Daniel promised, he revealed the king's dream.

## God's Word

We can all learn a lesson from what Daniel taught Nebuchadnezzar. The most important takeaway is this:

*“There’s a God in heaven who reveals such things.”*

God knows everything. Nothing is hidden from His eyes (**Hebrews 4:13**). If you need proof, look no further than the Bible. The Bible features the work of approximately forty authors who wrote over the course of more than a thousand years. Yet despite their diversity in time, education, social status, and ability, their collective works fit together in a consistent and reliable text. This is nothing less than a miracle. Despite what critics say, the Bible isn’t a flawed collection of ancient superstitions. It isn’t irrelevant to today’s world. Just the opposite is true. For those who take the time to read it, the Bible is a book with remarkable insight into the inner workings of the universe.

For example, over 2,000 years before Copernicus, the Bible revealed the earth is a sphere (**Isaiah 40:22**). Isaiah proclaimed this truth in the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Yet, when Columbus set sail in 1492 – again, over 2,000 years later – most of the world still believed the earth was flat. The Bible also revealed the earth floats in space (**Job 26:7**). The Book of Job was written over 2,500 years ago. Yet humans didn’t widely acknowledge or prove the earth floats in space until centuries later.

The Bible also contains simple steps to prevent disease. Only in modern times have people realized how ingenious they are. God promised the Israelites if they followed these rules, they wouldn’t suffer from any of the diseases He sent on the Egyptians (**Exodus 15:26**).

Need an example? More than 3,000 years before doctors took up the practice of washing hands and sterilizing instruments, God instructed the Israelites to wash their hands under running water (**Leviticus 15:13**). God knew this would protect His people from disease. But the modern world didn’t understand this until much later. When Hungarian physician Ignaz Semmelweis first proposed washing hands with chlorinated lime solutions, the medical community ridiculed him. Only decades later did Sir Joseph Lister popularize the use of antiseptics to reduce infections. How did the



Bible know the importance of good hygiene 3,000 years before the modern medical community? Simple. The Bible is God's Word. And God knows more than we do.

Additional instructions from God also help to stop the spread of infectious diseases. For example, God said to avoid touching a dead animal carcass (***Leviticus 11:39***). If you do, He said to wash your clothes (***Leviticus 11:40***). Today, we know dead animal carcasses carry disease. God said to avoid eating any animal that has died a natural death (***Deuteronomy 14:21***). Animals can die from poisoning, disease, parasites, and other natural causes. If you don't know why an animal has died, you risk getting sick if you eat it. Even today, some people in economically disadvantaged countries learn this lesson the hard way.

God also told the Israelites how to practice good sanitation. He told them to create a designated area outside of where they live to relieve themselves (***Deuteronomy 23:12***). He told them to bury human waste (***Deuteronomy 23:13***). Proper sanitation prevents bacteria, viruses, and parasites in human waste from contaminating food, soil, and drinking water. This type of contamination gives rise to serious diseases.

When it comes to contagious diseases, God said to avoid contact with the bodily fluids of others (***Leviticus 15***). Those who come into contact with such fluids should wash their clothes and bathe themselves (***Leviticus 15:5-11***). He instructed sick people to cover their mouths and keep their distance from others (***Leviticus 13:45***). God also said people with certain diseases should be quarantined (***Leviticus 13:21***).

Only in recent times have these practices received widespread acceptance when it comes to avoiding disease. Today, we understand the benefits of throwing out infected clothing (***Leviticus 13:47-59***), placing the sick in isolation (***Leviticus 13:31-33***), and washing yourself in fresh water (***Leviticus 15:13***).

Need some more examples of the Bible's advanced insight? How about the description Jesus gives of His Second Coming? Jesus said it will be both day and night at the moment of His return. This shows knowledge of a revolving earth 1,400 years before Copernicus (***Luke 17:34-35***). The Book of Genesis said God spoke and created light (***Genesis 1:3***). Yet only in recent years did physicists prove sound could create light. The Book of Amos says

God draws up water from the oceans and sends it down as rain (***Amos 9:6***). This showed knowledge of the hydrologic cycle 2,700 years ago. How does the Bible contain these amazing facts? Simple. *There's a God in heaven who reveals such things.*

Nebuchadnezzar learned this lesson firsthand. But he also learned something else. Daniel did more than tell the king his dream. He also told him what the dream meant. And you know what? The king's dream provided a glimpse into the future. Through Nebuchadnezzar's dream, God foretold a series of future events, and everything He said would happen to this point in time has taken place.

## God Foresees the Future

Nebuchadnezzar dreamed about world empires, and Daniel later had a vision regarding those same empires. Through these dreams and visions, God foretold the future. He predicted Babylon's fall to the Medes and Persians (***Daniel 2:39***). He predicted the Medo-Persian Empire's demise at the hands of the Greek Empire (***Daniel 2:39; Daniel 8:20***). He said Alexander the Great would die young and see his empire divided into four parts (***Daniel 8:21-22***), and He foretold Rome's conquering of the last remnants of the Greek Empire (***Daniel 2:40***).

How did God do this? Easy. God exists in the past, present, and future at all times (***Revelation 1:4***). He's in complete control (***Isaiah 14:26-27***). He arranges world events to suit His own purpose (***Ecclesiastes 3:1; Romans 8:28***), and He knows what thoughts are in human minds (***1 Chronicles 28:9***). God isn't guessing. He *knows*. The future doesn't surprise Him the way it surprises us. He's already seen it.

The Bible is filled with countless examples where God foretold the future. For instance, God told Abraham He would make him a great nation and make the name of Abraham famous throughout the world (***Genesis 12:2***). God made this promise thousands of years ago. Today, the world's three largest monotheistic religions – Christianity, Judaism, and Islam – revere Abraham. God also told Abraham he would have a son (***Genesis 15:4***). This is despite the fact Abraham was 100 years old and his wife was 90 years old. Soon thereafter, his wife Sarah gave birth to Isaac (***Genesis 21:1-2***). God

also used Joseph to reveal the future seven year famine to Pharaoh (**Genesis 41:25-32**). The famine arrived just as God said (**Genesis 41:54**). Through Micaiah, He revealed King Ahab would die in battle against the king of Aram (**2 Chronicles 18:22-27**). He did (**1 Kings 22:37-38**). And through Agabus, God revealed a worldwide famine later fulfilled during the reign of Claudius (**Acts 11:28**).

These acts prove the God of the Bible is the one true God. Why? Because the ability to foresee the future is something only God can do. Now, I realize many people will disagree. They think mediums, psychics, and seers can predict the future. But can they? Any objective analysis shows they cannot. Others believe economists, analysts, and forecasters can predict the future. Yet their predictions don't fare much better than fortune tellers. But God? Again, He *knows*. He's the creator of all things. There is no other.

In fact, God Himself says the ability to foretell the future proves He's God (**Isaiah 41:21-23**). When God makes a prediction, it's 100% accurate (**Deuteronomy 18:21-22**). Who else can say that? No one.

As God says: *"Who is like me? Step forward and prove your power. Do as I have done since ancient times when I established a people and explained its future."* (**Isaiah 44:6-7**).

God issued that challenge over twenty-six centuries ago. Since then, no one has stepped forward to prove they have the same awesome power.

## Proof of God's Identity

These accurate predictions from God are called fulfilled prophecy. Fulfilled prophecy verifies the Bible as God's Word. It's God's watermark – His royal seal. It proves the Bible comes from Him.

In the Bible, you'll find hundreds of specific, fulfilled prophecies. Many of these were made hundreds or even thousands of years in advance. These aren't vague phrases reinterpreted after the event. They're specific, detailed descriptions of future events foretold in advance. These prophecies include details about Alexander the Great and the breakup of his empire (**Daniel 8:5-22**) and the liberation of the Israelites by the Persian King Cyrus (**Isaiah 45:13**). Through Jeremiah, He foretold Israel's fall to the Babylonians

(*Jeremiah 25:11*). The Bible even foretold Israel's 1,800 year dispersion and exile (*Jeremiah 29:17-19; Luke 21:23-24*). Taken together, these prophecies prove the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the one true God. They also prove the Bible is exactly what it claims to be – God's Word.

Need some more examples? Let's look at the Messianic prophecies.

## The Messianic Prophecies

The Messianic prophecies are some of the most incredible prophecies in the Bible. They detail the birth, life, and death of a coming Savior – a Messiah destined to redeem Israel. Dozens upon dozens of Old Testament prophecies foretold the Messiah's arrival. And Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled each one. There's not enough space in this book to list them all, but here are just a few:

**The Time of His Appearance** – Six hundred years before Jesus, the prophet Daniel said the Messiah will appear exactly 483 years after the command is given to rebuild the Temple (*Daniel 9:25*). In 457 B.C., King Artaxerxes of Persia issued a decree to rebuild the Temple (*Ezra 7:11-26*). 483 years later, in the year A.D. 27, Jesus began His ministry.

**The Place of His Appearance** – More than 700 years before Jesus, the prophet Isaiah said glory will fill all of Galilee. A light will shine for those who walk in darkness. A child will be born, and His name will be "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace" (*Isaiah 9:1-7*). In other words, Galilee is where the Messiah will first appear. The tiny town of Nazareth is located in Galilee. Raised in Nazareth, Jesus began His ministry there, preaching first in Galilee and Capernaum (*Mark 1:21*).

**The Price of His Betrayal** – Five hundred years before it happened, the prophet Zechariah foretold the exact price of the Messiah's betrayal – 30 pieces of silver (*Zechariah 11:12*). At the last supper, Jesus dipped His bread in a bowl, handed it to Judas, and said "Hurry and do what you're going to do" (*John 13:26-27*). Judas then went to see the Jewish priests and elders. He agreed to betray Jesus for the exact sum of 30 pieces of silver (*Matthew 26:14-15*).

**The Crucifixion** – A thousand years before the Romans crucified Jesus, King David said the Messiah's hands and feet will be pierced (*Psalms 22:16*).

This happened to Jesus. During the crucifixion, Roman soldiers drove nails through His hands and feet. But when King David recorded this prophecy, crucifixion didn't exist. Historians say it didn't appear until several hundred years later.

**Gambling for His Clothes** – A thousand years before the crucifixion, King David said others will gamble for the Messiah's clothes (*Psalms 22:17-18*). This happened to Jesus. When the Romans crucified Him, they divided His clothes among themselves. But they couldn't divide His robe. It was a single garment, woven from top to bottom, and they didn't want to tear it. Instead, they threw dice to see who got it (*John 19:23-24*).

**His Burial** – Seven hundred years before Jesus, the prophet Isaiah said the Messiah will be treated like a common criminal and buried in a rich man's tomb (*Isaiah 53:9*). After the crucifixion, this is what happened to Jesus. As evening approached, a rich man named Joseph of Arimathea (a follower of Jesus) asked Pilate for Jesus's body. Pilate agreed, and Joseph wrapped the body in a clean sheet of linen cloth. Then he put Jesus in a tomb he had prepared for himself, rolling a boulder into the entrance to seal it (*Matthew 27:59-60*).

**Events After His Death** – Daniel said the Messiah would be killed, "appearing to have accomplished nothing." Then, armies would come and destroy the city and the Temple (*Daniel 9:26*). This prophecy was fulfilled nearly 2,000 years ago when the Romans crucified Jesus. For those who thought the Messiah would be a conquering king, Jesus "appeared to have accomplished nothing." Then, after a Jewish insurrection less than 40 years later, the Roman legions destroyed both the Temple and the city of Jerusalem.

Now, detractors will scan this list of fulfilled prophecies and claim they're not really fulfilled prophecies. They'll say the authors of the Bible either wrote these prophecies after the fact or Christians later changed the historical record to match them. I disagree, but it doesn't really matter what I think. Why? Because you, me, and everyone else in the world is an eyewitness to fulfilled bible prophecy in *our day and time*. That's right. One recent historical event fulfilled several centuries-old bible prophecies. And it took place in our generation. It's undeniable proof of God's existence and the Bible's divine authorship.

## The Rebirth of Israel

On May 14, 1948, David Ben-Gurion and the World Zionist Organization issued the Israeli Declaration of Independence. In effect, they declared the rebirth of the ancient nation of Israel. Within one day, both the United States and the United Nations officially recognized the new nation. And just like that, the modern day nation of Israel was born.

Few people realize both Jesus and the Hebrew prophets foretold the worldwide exile of the Jewish people and their eventual return to Israel. These prophecies alone authenticate the Bible as God's Word.

While talking to His followers, Jesus said a day will come when the Temple will be destroyed and the Jewish people will be carried away as slaves. Then, the Gentiles will rule over Jerusalem until “the times of the Gentiles come to an end” (***Luke 21:24***). All these things happened just as He said. In A.D. 70, Titus and the Roman legions attacked Jerusalem. They destroyed the Temple and took the surviving Israelites to every corner of the Roman Empire to serve as slaves. Then, just as Jesus said, the Gentiles ruled Jerusalem through the centuries until 1967. In that year, the Jewish people once again took control of the city.

More than 3,000 years ago, God made this promise to Moses and the Israelites: “Even though you are banished to the ends of the earth, the Lord your God will gather you from there and bring you back again. The Lord your God will return you to the land that belonged to your ancestors, and you will possess that land again” ***Deuteronomy 30:4-5*** (NLT).

Throughout Israel's history, prophet after prophet said the same thing. Through them, God promised to bring the Jewish people back into the land despite the hardships they faced (***Isaiah 43:1-13***). He promised to call them from “among the nations” (***Ezekiel 39:28***), from “the farthest corners of the earth” (***Isaiah 11:12***), and from “north, south, east, and west” (***Psalms 107:3***). He promised to bring them home and display His holiness to the nations (***Ezekiel 20:41-42***). He promised to welcome them home from “the lands where they were scattered” (***Ezekiel 20:34***). He said He would restore them to the land of Israel from distant lands (***Jeremiah 30:2, 10***). And God promised, though scattered among the nations, His people would

never forget Him, and He would bring them back into the land of Israel (***Zechariah 10:9***). God kept His promise. The proof is modern day Israel.

These promises were made centuries before the crucifixion, and every single one came true. Could anything less than a miracle of God explain that? Think about it. Foreign invaders conquered Israel over 2,000 years ago. The Romans destroyed the entire nation and sold the Jewish people into slavery. As a people, they were carried to the farthest corners of the Roman Empire. History shows similarly conquered nations disappeared forever. Their people assimilate. They forget their national identity. They adapt new cultures and new religious practices. They intermarry with locals. Within a generation or two, conquered peoples and the nations they once formed are nothing more than a footnote of history.

*But this didn't happen to Israel.*

True to God's promise, the Jewish people never forgot Him. They kept their distinct racial, cultural, and religious identity. And after 1,878 years in exile, they returned to the land of Israel and re-established themselves as a nation.

Who else but God could foretell such a thing? Can we even begin to imagine what will happen 2,000 years from now? Yet God can. It all happened exactly as He said it would. Thousands of years ago, He promised a day will come when the world will refer to Him as the one who brought His people back into the land of Israel from ***all the nations in the world*** where He had exiled them (***Jeremiah 16:14-15***). In 1948, He did it.

If it wasn't clear before, it should be now – “*There's a God in heaven who reveals such things*” (***Daniel 2:27-28***). God foretold these events. He explained Nebuchadnezzar's dream. He foretold the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. He proclaimed the rebirth of Israel. When it comes to foretelling the future, God has no rival. No one is like Him. But you know what? He's not finished. That's right. God still has a lot to say. The Bible still contains unfulfilled prophecies.

“Now wait a minute,” you might say. “Didn't you just say God's track record is perfect? If so, why does the Bible contain unfulfilled prophecies?” That's a great question, but these aren't prophecies God got wrong. Far from it. They're simply ***yet-to-be-fulfilled*** prophecies. Am I making excuses? No. These prophecies aren't supposed to be fulfilled yet. Why? Because they

take place at a specific time that clearly hasn't come – the end times and beyond. The only bible prophecies left to be fulfilled concern the end times, the Millennial Kingdom of Jesus Christ, and the eternity that follows both.

In fact, the Bible features more prophecies about the end times than any other subject. So if you've ever wondered about the future of the human race, or whether or not the world will go out with a bang or a whimper, you've come to the right place. *There's a God in heaven who reveals such things.* If He says it's going to happen, you can count on it. And He's told us exactly how the world will end.

## God and the Last Days

The last seven years before the Second Coming of Jesus is the most talked about time period in the entire Bible. It's mentioned more than the first coming of Jesus, more than the Hebrew exodus from Egypt, and more than the life and times of David and Solomon combined. Yet, surprisingly, many Christians ignore bible verses about the end times and the Second Coming. Why? Many reasons. Some people find bible prophecy hard to understand. Others think prophecies of future events are irrelevant to the here and now.

But whatever the reasons, if you ignore bible prophecy, you're making a big mistake. Never has it been more important for Christians to study bible prophecy. ***Never.*** Why do I say this? Because Jesus and the Hebrew prophets said to look for specific signs. They said these signs will signal the end of the age and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. For centuries, Christians couldn't point to one of these signs. But today? Our generation is witness to ***all*** of them. Don't believe me? Here's a few of the signs we see today:

**Israel Back in the Land** – Without question, the rebirth of Israel is the single most significant event of the past 1,900 years. Why do I say that? Not only is it an event the Bible foretold thousands of years in advance, it's also a sign of things to come. Jesus and the Hebrew prophets said once the Jewish people come back to the land of Israel, the end of the age is near.

God promised to bring the Jewish people back into the land of Israel before He returned (***Jeremiah 23:7-8***). He said He would call them from "among the nations" (***Ezekiel 39:28***), from "the farthest corners of the earth"



(*Isaiah 11:12*), and from “north, south, east, and west” (*Psalms 107:3*). He promised to welcome them home from the lands where they were scattered (*Ezekiel 20:34*). When they did, He promised to return and establish His everlasting kingdom (*Isaiah 11:11-12*).

**The Jewish People Back in Jerusalem** – Jesus said armies would surround Jerusalem, destroy the city, and enslave its citizens. This happened in A.D. 70 when the Roman legions did exactly that. Jesus then said foreigners would control Jerusalem for a time. Then, the Jewish people would once again gain control of Jerusalem. When they did, Jesus promised to return (*Luke 21:24-28*). The Six Day War in June 1967 ended with Israel in control of Jerusalem.

**The Gospel Preached Throughout the World** – When asked about the end of the age and the signs of His coming, Jesus said to look for a specific sign. He said the Gospel will reach the entire world. Every nation will hear it. And then? And then, the end will come (*Matthew 24:14*). For centuries after the crucifixion, only a small area around the Mediterranean Sea heard the Gospel. In the past two centuries, Christians have brought the Gospel to every nation in the world. Today, missionaries live in every country. The Bible is translated in hundreds of languages, and the message of Jesus is sent around the world by radio, TV, satellite, and the Internet. For the first time in history, Christians are on the verge of spreading the Gospel to every last person on earth.

**An Increase in Travel and Knowledge** – Six hundred years before Jesus, an angel revealed a special message to Daniel. He said “travel and knowledge” will increase in the end times (*Daniel 12:4*). For centuries of human history, dramatic gains in travel and knowledge did NOT take place. But today? The speed and frequency of travel, as well as the amount and availability of knowledge, has exploded in the past two hundred years.

**Arrival of the Exponential Curve** – Jesus said a variety of global signs will come before His return and the end of the age. These signs will be spiritual, natural, societal, and political in nature. And He said they will appear in a distinct way – “like birth pains” (*Matthew 24:3-8*). This means the frequency and intensity of these signs will increase as we near His return. Our generation has seen the exponential increase in war and famine Jesus

said to look for. In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century alone, more people died from war and famine than lived on the earth when Jesus spoke these words.

**Israel Surrounded by Enemies** – The scriptures say enemies will surround Israel in the end times. Those enemies will say “Come, let us wipe away the nation of Israel. Let’s destroy the memory of its existence” (*Psalm 83:4*) and “Let us take for ourselves these pasturelands of God” (*Psalm 83:12*). Ezekiel said Israel’s neighbors will say “God has given their land to us” (*Ezekiel 11:14-17*), and “Israel and Judah are ours. We will take possession of them. What do we care if their God is there?” (*Ezekiel 35:10*). Ever since the rebirth of Israel in 1948, these bible verses jump from the daily headlines. Israel’s Muslim neighbors claim the land of Israel for themselves, and they have no regard for the God of Israel.

**Israel’s Exceedingly Great Army** – Ezekiel said, in the last days, Israel will field “an exceedingly great army” (*Ezekiel 37:10*). Zechariah said Israel will be like a fire among sheaves of grain, burning up the neighboring nations (*Zechariah 12:6*) and even the weakest Israeli soldier will be like David (*Zechariah 12:8*). Since 1948, Israel has fought no less than four conventional wars against its neighbors. Despite being outnumbered more than 50 to 1, Israel has achieved overwhelming victory every time.

**Rise of the Gog of Magog Alliance** – Ezekiel said a military alliance that includes Russia, Iran, Turkey, and a number of Muslim nations will attack Israel “in the latter days” (*Ezekiel 38:8*). This will happen when God brings His people home from among the enemy nations (*Ezekiel 39:27*). Ezekiel said they will attack Israel from the north (*Ezekiel 38:15; Ezekiel 39:2*). Today, Russia, Iran, and Turkey all have military forces stationed in Syria. All three reside on Israel’s northern border, and they’re engaged in a variety of coordinated activities. Together, they form the core of the Gog of Magog Alliance – an alliance that has never existed until now.

**The Rise of a United Europe** – The Bible says a revived Roman Empire will come to power in the end times (*Daniel 2, Daniel 7, Revelation 17*). According to Daniel, it will be a ten nation alliance of weak and strong nations. Some parts will be as strong as iron. Other parts will be as weak as clay (*Daniel 2:42*). We see the beginning of this alliance in the European Union – a coalition of weak and strong nations struggling to stay together.

**The Rise of Global Government** – In the last days, a single government will rule the world politically (*Revelation 13:7*), religiously (*Revelation 13:8*), and economically (*Revelation 13:16-17*). It will rule over “all people, tribes, and languages” on the face of the earth (*Revelation 13:7*). Its authority will be so complete no one will be able to buy or sell anything without its permission (*Revelation 13:16-17*). For centuries, a true global government was impossible. Today, world leaders openly discuss it.

**Denial of the Signs** – Almost two thousand years ago, Peter issued a warning. He said in the last days people will mock the idea of Jesus returning. They’ll make fun of those who believe in the Second Coming and say things like, “I thought Jesus was coming back? What happened to His promise? Generation after generation has said He’s coming. Yet, since the beginning of the world, everything has remained the same!” (*2 Peter 3:3-4*). Today, we hear those same complaints. Unfortunately, even Christians sometimes mock the idea of the Second Coming.

However, Jesus said one sign above all others points to the end of the age. It’s the #1 prophetic sign of the end times. What is it? Convergence. That’s right. The #1 sign isn’t a single sign. It’s the convergence of all the signs Jesus and the prophets said to look for. For the first eighteen centuries of Christianity, not one of the previous signs was present. Today, they all are. And Jesus said, “When you see all these things begin to happen, look up. For your salvation is near!” (*Luke 21:28*).

Can you see now why it’s never been more important to study bible prophecy? If the events of the end times are near, you need to know what the world can expect so you can tell others what’s going to happen.

People often ask me, “Are we living in the end times?” Given the list of signs we just went through, it’s clear we’re living in the last days (*1 John 2:18*). But keep in mind, this is different from living in the end times. The phrase “end times” only refers to the last seven years before Jesus returns. If you have to ask if we’re living in the end times, you can be sure we’re not. Why do I say that? Because when the end times arrive, you’ll know it. You won’t have to ask anyone. You’ll simply look around. Why? Because the end times will be more terrible than any time in human history. They’ll be so terrible, they’ll be worse than any time “since nations first came into existence” (*Daniel 12:1*).



## THE TIME OF JACOB'S TROUBLE

On September 2, 1945, General Douglas MacArthur and representatives of the Japanese government met aboard the battleship *Missouri*. They signed an agreement formalizing the unconditional surrender of Japan. World War II ended. As the ink dried, poverty and starvation ran rampant. Europe lay in ruin. Devastation haunted islands throughout the Pacific, and the dead totaled fifty million people. Twenty million in the Soviet Union alone. The ashes of six million European Jews filled crematoriums in places with names like Auschwitz, Dachau, and Treblinka.

The suffering and death of World War II is difficult to imagine. Survivors recount stories of unspeakable terror and unchecked evil. Never has the whole world suffered on such a mass scale at the same time. How could the world survive another war like it, much less endure such suffering again? Yet, sadly, Jesus said another time will be worse. He described it this way, “For there will be greater anguish than at any time since the world began. And it will never be so great again” (*Matthew 24:21*).

Take a moment to think about that.

All the horrors of World War II. Death camps. Atomic bombs. Millions dead. Cities reduced to rubble. Women, children, and infants executed in mass. Starved. Shot. Gassed. Thrown into raging fires. Tossed into mass graves. What could possibly be worse? Yet Jesus said a coming time *will* be

worse. Jeremiah called it “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (*Jeremiah 30:7*), but the Bible uses many names to describe it. These include:

- The Day of Calamity (*Deuteronomy 32:35*)
- The Day of the Lord (*Isaiah 2:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:2*)
- The Terror of the Lord (*Isaiah 2:19*)
- A Day of Reckoning (*Isaiah 2:12*)
- The Day of the Lord’s Vengeance (*Isaiah 34:8*)
- A Day of Wrath (*Zephaniah 1:15*)
- A Day of Trouble and Distress (*Zephaniah 1:15*)
- A Day of Destruction and Desolation (*Zephaniah 1:15*)
- A Time of Trouble (*Daniel 12:1*)
- The Great and Terrible Day of the Lord (*Joel 2:11,31*)
- A Day of Darkness (*Joel 2:2*)
- The Wrath to Come (*1 Thessalonians 1:10*)
- The Hour of Temptation (*Revelation 3:10*)
- The Great Day of the Wrath of the Lamb (*Revelation 6:16-17*)
- The Hour of Judgment (*Revelation 14:7*)
- The Wrath of God (*Revelation 15:1*)

Moses gave it another name. He called it “the Tribulation” (*Deuteronomy 4:30*). The Tribulation, also known as “the end times,” is what this book is all about.

## What Happens During the Tribulation?

So what is the Tribulation, and what happens in this unique time period? The Tribulation is a time of extreme physical and spiritual turmoil among the nations. It’s a time of God’s wrath (*Zephaniah 1:15*) – a time when God will pour out His judgment on the world (*Joel 3:2*). Unlike God’s past judgments, the Tribulation isn’t reserved for only one nation or a few nations. It

impacts “all the nations” (*Isaiah 2:10-17*), “all the earth” (*Zephaniah 1:18*), and “all the wicked” (*Psalms 75:8*).

Two-thirds of the Jewish people will die (*Zechariah 13:8-9*). One-half of all humanity will die, starting with the death of one-fourth of the world's population (*Revelation 6:8*) and followed later by the death of one-third of those who remain (*Revelation 9:18*). Millions will face martyrdom for their belief in Jesus Christ (*Revelation 6:11; Revelation 7:14*). It will be a time of global war, global government, and a global dictator. People will live in open rebellion against God, and their unrestrained wickedness will provoke a series of divine judgments. These start with “the seal judgments”:

***The Seal Judgments*** – Some people think the early days of the Tribulation are a time of relative peace. They're not. The Tribulation begins with the seal judgments, and these judgments plunge the world into global war and chaos. They launch the Tribulation and the career of a great conqueror (*Revelation 6:1-2*). They bring global war. The Bible describes this as a time of “war and slaughter everywhere” (*Revelation 6:3-4*). Widespread famine follows this global war (*Revelation 6:5-6*) and one-fourth of humanity dies (*Revelation 6:7-8*). Does any of this sound calm or peaceful? The remaining seal judgments bring more suffering and terrible events. These include the widespread martyrdom of Christians (*Revelation 6:9-11*), a great earthquake (*Revelation 6:12*), stars falling to the earth (*Revelation 6:13*), and mountains and islands moved from their places (*Revelation 6:14*). Unfortunately, all these terrible events are just the start of what's to come.

***The Trumpet Judgments*** – The seal judgments unleash some of the greatest suffering in human history, but it only gets worse. The trumpet judgments come next. These judgments unleash a storm of hail and fire mixed with blood. One-third of the earth is set on fire, one-third of the trees are burned, and all the green grass is burned (*Revelation 8:7*). Then a great mountain of fire is thrown into the oceans. One-third of the oceans become blood. One-third of the creatures in the oceans die, and one-third of all the ocean-faring ships are destroyed (*Revelation 8:8-9*). As the trumpet judgments continue, a great star falls from the sky. It falls on a third of the rivers and springs of water. One third of the water becomes bitter, and many of

those who drink it, die (**Revelation 8:10-11**). Then, one-third of the sun, moon, and stars turn to darkness (**Revelation 8:12**).

Next, a bottomless pit opens and smoke pours out. The sunlight is blocked and the air turns dark from the smoke (**Revelation 9:1-2**). Does this describe a massive volcanic eruption? It might. But what comes next isn't typical of a volcanic eruption. Locusts emerge from the smoke and descend on the earth. These locusts have power to sting like scorpions (**Revelation 9:3**). They don't attack plants or trees. They only attack people, but they spare the followers of Jesus. Everyone else endures five months of painful torture. The stings of these locusts are so bad people long for death as an escape (**Revelation 9:6**).

As if that weren't enough, the next trumpet judgment brings even more terror. An army of 200 million horse-mounted troops descends on the earth. These horses have heads like lions. They spit fire, smoke, and burning sulfur from their mouths. Their tails have heads like snakes with the power to injure people. This army kills one-third of all the people on the earth (**Revelation 9:13-19**). Yet despite the horror of it all, there's still more to come. The final trumpet judgment announces the arrival of a new series of terrors – the bowl judgments.

**The Bowl Judgments** – It's a miracle anyone survives the seal and trumpet judgments, yet they do. Based on current world population figures, several billion people will still be alive. Those who remain will endure seven more judgments. These are just as terrible, if not worse, than the previous judgments. They begin when horrible sores break out on everyone who accepts the mark of the beast and worships the Antichrist's statue (**Revelation 16:2**). Later, we'll discuss what that means, but for now, just know it's the majority of the world's population. The next bowl of God's wrath is poured out on the oceans. The oceans become like the blood of a corpse, and everything in them dies (**Revelation 16:3**). Shortly thereafter, all the world's rivers and springs become blood (**Revelation 16:4**). Then, the sun scorches everyone with its fire. This blast of heat burns everyone in the world, yet they still refuse to turn to God (**Revelation 16:8-9**).

Afterward, the world is plunged into darkness. People grind their teeth in anguish. They curse God for all their pain and sores (**Revelation 16:10-11**).



Then, the Euphrates River dries up, and “the kings from the east” march their armies west without any obstacle (**Revelation 16:12**). Their purpose? To gather with all the rulers of the world to battle against the Lord Himself (**Revelation 16:14**). The seventh and final bowl judgment brings massive destruction. A great earthquake strikes. The Bible calls it the greatest earthquake in human history (**Revelation 16:18**). It levels all the mountains of the world, and all the islands disappear (**Revelation 16:20**). A terrible hailstorm follows. Hailstones weighing as much as seventy-five pounds fall from the sky onto the people below, and once again, the people curse God (**Revelation 16:21**).

While all these judgments take place, a global dictator will rule the earth (**Revelation 13:7**). He'll demand worship (**Revelation 13:15**), and he'll gain complete control over every transaction in the global economy (**Revelation 13:17**). The Tribulation will also feature two witnesses who speak on God's behalf. Each will have power to send fire from his mouth, shut the sky so it won't rain, turn the rivers and oceans to blood, and strike the earth with plagues (**Revelation 11:5-6**).

Can you see now why the Tribulation is one of the most talked about time periods in the Bible? Like birth pains (**Matthew 24:8**), all these epic events will lead up to the greatest event in human history – the return of Jesus Christ. At the end of the Tribulation, Jesus will come to earth, conquer His enemies, judge the nations, and reign as king for a thousand years.

## How Long is the Tribulation?

Believe it or not, all these events take place in a single seven year period. How do we know this? Because the Book of Daniel says so. It says the Tribulation will last seven years (**Daniel 9:27**). This seven year period will be divided into two halves. The first half lasts 1,260 days (**Revelation 11:3**). This is equal to 42 thirty-day months or 3½ lunar years. The second half will also last 42 lunar months (**Daniel 7:25; Daniel 12:7; Revelation 12:14; Revelation 13:5**). The first and second half of the Tribulation will be separated by a detestable act Jesus called “the abomination of desolation” (**Matthew 24:15**). Daniel says this desecration of the Jewish Temple (**Daniel 9:27**) will launch the second half of the Tribulation. This is a time period known as “the Great Tribulation.”

The seven year Tribulation is the last seven years of a 490-year period found in the Book of Daniel. In it, the angel Gabriel brings a message from God (*Daniel 9:20-27*). He informs Daniel that God has decreed a period of 490 years for the Jewish people to:

- 1) **“Finish their rebellion against God”** – This means Israel will accept Jesus as the Messiah.
- 2) **“Put an end to their sin”** – This means Israel will make a conscious decision to stop sinning.
- 3) **“Atone for their guilt”** – This means Israel will accept the blood of Jesus Christ as payment for their sin.
- 4) **“Bring in everlasting righteousness”** – This means Israel will witness and usher in the Millennial Kingdom of Jesus Christ.
- 5) **“Confirm the prophetic vision”** – This means Israel will witness the final fulfillment of all the Messianic prophecies.
- 6) **“Anoint the most Holy place”** – This means Israel will witness the anointing of the Temple through the arrival of the glorified Messiah, Jesus Christ.

According to God, Israel has 490 years to achieve these six objectives. The countdown started with the decree to rebuild Jerusalem (*Daniel 9:25*). This decree came from King Artaxerxes of Persia in 457 B.C. (*Ezra 7:11-26*). Since the 490-year countdown started in 457 B.C., it should have ended in A.D. 34. But it didn't. Why? Because Gabriel had something else to say. He said 483 years would pass from the time the decree is given to rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One – the Messiah – arrives (*Daniel 9:25*). This happened when Jesus appeared in the year A.D. 27.

When Jesus appeared, Israel's countdown paused. The crucifixion led to the Age of Grace, and the Tribulation (the final seven years) moved to a future time. That time is reserved for the last days. It's why the Tribulation is also called “the end times.” When it concludes, the nation of Israel will come to believe in Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah.

## What's the Purpose of the Tribulation?

Some people ask, "How could a God of love and mercy allow such things to happen?" That's a common question during normal times, but it's especially significant when it comes to the Tribulation. Why? Because not only are the events of the Tribulation especially terrible, but they come directly from God. Global turmoil is part of His plan and purpose. So the question remains. Why would a loving God allow these things to happen? The answer varies, because the Tribulation has more than one purpose. But I believe these are the four main reasons:

**1) Judgment** – The first reason for the Tribulation is to bring judgment on a rebellious world. The Bible calls the Tribulation "a day of wrath" (*Zephaniah 1:15*), "a day of reckoning" (*Isaiah 2:12*), and "the hour of judgment" (*Revelation 14:7*). The sin of the world demands a response from God. By His nature, God is just. He cannot let sin go unpunished (*Proverbs 11:21*). The scriptures say God is "slow to anger, but His power is great, and He never lets the guilty go unpunished" (*Nahum 1:3*). They also say "God has set a day for judging the world" (*Acts 17:31*). Eventually, the people of the world will pay the price for their sin. The Tribulation is that time. It's the time God has set aside to judge the world.

Those who think God is harsh don't understand just how wicked the world is. Every person is justified in his own eyes (*Proverbs 16:2*), but God sees the heart (*Proverbs 21:2*). The Bible says *all* have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (*Romans 3:10*). Only the blood of Jesus Christ can forgive sin (*Ephesians 1:7*). Everyone who rejects Jesus remains under God's judgment (*John 3:18-19*), but there is no judgment for those who remain in Him (*Romans 8:1*).

The end times generation will remain under God's judgment. They'll reject Jesus. They'll curse God (*Revelation 16:9-11*). Paul says they'll love only themselves and their money. They'll be boastful, proud, disobedient, ungrateful, cruel, undisciplined, unloving, unforgiving, and a whole host of terrible things (*2 Timothy 3:2-4*). The end times generation will deserve every bit of God's wrath, and history shows us His wrath is certain to come.

In Noah's day, God destroyed the earth with a great flood. His reason? The earth was filled with violence (*Genesis 6:11*), and the thoughts

of its people “were continuously evil” (**Genesis 6:5**). So God judged the world. He destroyed everyone on earth except Noah and his family. Since the flood, God has passed judgment on individual cities and nations. He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah in judgment (**Genesis 19:24-25**). He used Nebuchadnezzar to bring judgment on Israel for the worship of false gods and idols (**Jeremiah 32-28-35**). He brought judgment on King Belshazzar of Babylon (**Daniel 5**), and He will bring judgment on the end times generation.

Yet, even when God pours out His wrath, His primary purpose is not to destroy, but to save. The Tribulation will have one of two impacts – people will either harden their hearts or they’ll turn to God for mercy. The first reaction means God’s judgment becomes a punishment. The second means God’s judgment becomes a blessing. As the Bible says, “When the people of the earth experience judgment, the world will learn righteousness” (**Isaiah 26:9**). It’s up to you whether God’s judgment is a curse or a blessing.

**2) Bringing Israel to Jesus** – As noted earlier, the Tribulation is the final “week” of the seventy weeks God gave Israel to “finish their rebellion against God, put an end to their sin, atone for their guilt, bring in everlasting righteousness, confirm the prophetic vision, and anoint the most Holy place” (**Daniel 9:24-27**). God will use this time period to fulfill His purposes for the Jewish people and the nation of Israel. He will use this time to bring the nation of Israel to Jesus. He will pour out a spirit of grace and prayer on the Jewish people, and they will look on Him whom they have pierced (Jesus) and mourn for Him as an only son (**Zechariah 12:10**). This means after almost two thousand years of rejecting Jesus as the Messiah, the Jewish people will embrace Him as Savior. God will then give them one heart and one purpose – to worship Him forever (**Jeremiah 32:39**).

**3) To Save the Lost** – God wants everyone to come to Jesus, not just the Jewish people. He doesn’t want a single person to be lost (**John 6:39**). As Peter said, “Jesus isn’t being slow in returning as some people think. He’s being patient for our sake. He doesn’t want anyone to perish, but wants everyone to repent” (**2 Peter 3:9**). The shocking events of the Tribulation are just what the world needs to awaken from its slumber. God will use the

Tribulation to grab the world's attention. When tragedy strikes, people often turn to God. The people of Nineveh did. When Job warned them of God's impending judgment, they believed his message and turned from their evil ways (*Jonah 3:5-10*).

It's sad, but true. When times are good, people often forget God (*Deuteronomy 8:10-11*). They think they don't need Him. But when they experience calamity, they seek Him out. When you're shaken, when your world is turned upside down, you're more likely to look at how you're living your life and focus on what's most important.

Think about it. Can you recall a time when a tragic event changed the life of someone you know? Maybe they had a car accident, a plane crash, or a dire medical diagnosis? Events like these force people to focus on what's really important. Afterward, people often vow to live life differently – to live life to its fullest. The Tribulation will be no different.

Jesus once told a parable about two men. One built his house on solid rock. The other built his house on shifting sand. When a storm came, the house on solid rock stood firm, but the house on shifting sand came crashing down. The Tribulation will be a massive storm for everyone who lives through it. Those who place their trust in knowledge, skills, money, people, idols, or false gods will find they've built their lives on shifting sand. When the Tribulation comes, many of them will cry out for Jesus.

The result will be one of the greatest periods of revival in human history. A "vast crowd" of people too numerous to count from every people, language, and nation will commit themselves to Jesus (*Revelation 7:9,14*). Whether Jew or Gentile, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob wants people to put their trust in Him rather than the things of this world.

**4) Birth Pains** – The fourth purpose of the Tribulation is to announce the coming of the King. The end times are the last stage in our present world system before Jesus returns to set up His Millennial Kingdom. Jesus said the time before His arrival will be like birth pains (*Matthew 24:8*). This means the events leading up to the Tribulation, and the events of the Tribulation itself, will increase in both frequency and intensity as the Second Coming draws near. This makes sense. Satan knows his time is short (*Revelation 12:12*). He's a destroyer (*John 10:10*), and he'll set out to cause as much

destruction as possible. Also, as the end draws near, God will send increasingly severe judgments in His attempts to awaken the lost. Is it any wonder Jesus said the Tribulation will be a time of “greater anguish” than the world has ever known before?

## When is the Tribulation?

When will all these things take place? No one knows, and Jesus said we can't know (*Matthew 24:36*). At least when it comes to the specific day or hour, we can't know. But Jesus said we *can* know the general season of His return. As mentioned in the previous chapter, both Jesus and the prophets said to look for specific signs. Jesus said when you see them all appear, you should look up because He's coming soon (*Luke 21:28*).

Like the Tribulation itself, each prophetic sign is a warning siren from God. They tell us the end of the age is near. One of those signs appeared on a specific day in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. A monumental historical event, it's central to the Tribulation. Neither the end times nor the Second Coming can occur without it. The appearance of this sign should have been a wake-up call to everyone on earth. Instead, it's gone largely unnoticed. What is this great sign? It's nothing less than a modern day miracle. In fact, it might be the greatest miracle since the resurrection of Jesus Himself.

## THE PROMISED LAND

A day after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (*Matthew 21:1-11*), Jesus encountered a fig tree outside the city. Hungry, He searched its branches for something to eat. When He didn't find any figs, He cursed the tree. He said, "May you never bear fruit again!" Instantly, the tree withered (*Matthew 21:18-22*).

Why did Jesus do this? Was He simply upset he couldn't eat any figs? No. As God in the flesh, Jesus knew the tree had no figs long before He saw it. This story has a deeper meaning. It's about more than a tree without figs. It's about the nation of Israel. The fig tree is a symbol of Israel.

In the Old Testament, God compared the people of Israel to figs, both good and bad (*Jeremiah 24*). Jesus also compared Israel to a fig tree in the parable of the barren fig tree (*Luke 13:6-9*). When Jesus cursed the fig tree, it had a deeper meaning. Symbolically, He placed a curse on Israel. Why? Because just as the fig tree failed to bear fruit, Israel failed to recognize the time of the Messiah's coming (*Luke 19:44*). Israel rejected Jesus as Messiah. The leaves of the fig tree indicated it was in season. Yet, it failed to bear fruit. Likewise, the signs of the times indicated Israel was in season to receive its Messiah. Instead, the nation rejected Him.

God told Israel the Messiah will appear 483 years after the decree to rebuild the Temple (*Daniel 9:25*). This 483 year period ended in A.D. 27 – the precise time when Jesus began His ministry. At the time, everyone in Israel was eagerly awaiting the Messiah. Messianic fever was at its height.

Even the religious leaders were on the lookout for the Messiah (*John 1:19-28*). After all, Daniel said the Messiah would appear at that exact moment in time. When Jesus arrived, He fulfilled this prophecy. Yet most of Israel, and the religious leaders in particular, failed to notice. Jesus criticized them for their failure to recognize the signs of the times (*Luke 12:54-56*). The whole nation should have embraced Him. Instead, they crucified Him.

The fig tree withered because it lacked fruit. Israel also withered because it rejected the Messiah. In A.D. 70, less than four decades after the crucifixion, Rome destroyed Jerusalem. The Romans toppled every stone in the Temple and forced the Jewish people to serve as slaves in the farthest corners of the Roman Empire. Decades before it happened, Jesus predicted the destruction of Jerusalem (*Luke 21:5-6; Matthew 24:1-2*). He said it would happen because Israel “failed to recognize the time of its visitation” (*Luke 19:43-44*). But you know what? Jesus said the nation of Israel will come back.

When asked to describe the events that will signal His return and the establishment of His Kingdom, Jesus said this: “Learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its leaves begin to sprout, you know summer is near. Likewise, when you see all these events, know my return is near” (*Matthew 24:33*). What did Jesus mean?

Jesus knew Israel wasn’t finished. He knew the nation of Israel would be restored. He predicted its destruction (*Matthew 24:2; Luke 21:6*). He predicted the plight of the Jewish people as slaves among the nations (*Luke 21:24*). But He also knew God’s ultimate plan. He knew God promised to restore the nation of Israel. And He knew when it would happen (*Luke 21:25-28*).

## Israel Today

On May 14, 1948, a number of Jewish leaders met in the Tel Aviv Museum of Art. There, an overflow crowd heard David Ben-Gurion read the Israeli Declaration of Independence. That same day, President Truman officially recognized the new nation. In an instant, the modern day nation of Israel came into existence. To most historians, the rebirth of Israel pales in comparison to other 20<sup>th</sup> Century events such as World War I, World War II,



the Cold War, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the Apollo moon landing. But God has a different point of view. He says it's one of the most notable events of *all time*.

God said a day will come when He will no longer be known as the God who brought Israel out of Egypt. Instead, He'll be known as the God who brought Israel back into the land from the nations of the world and restored them (***Jeremiah 16:14-15***). This is quite a statement. The Jewish people view the Hebrew exodus from Egypt as the greatest miracle in history. But, God says the modern day nation of Israel is a greater miracle (***Jeremiah 23:7-8***).

It's easy to understand why. The Roman legions sacked Jerusalem. They destroyed the Temple and burned the city. They enslaved every Israelite in the land and sent them to the farthest edges of their vast empire. No other nation in history survived such an event. Take Carthage for instance. After Rome defeated Carthage in 146 B.C., they destroyed every last pillar of Carthaginian society and culture. They killed or enslaved every citizen and erased the nation from the face of the earth. Those who survived assimilated into the Roman Empire. Carthage as a nation disappeared forever. It wasn't alone. Countless ancient empires met the same fate. But not Israel. Israel survived.

Despite centuries of persecution, the Jewish people thrive. Despite centuries of wandering with no homeland to call their own, the Jewish people never assimilated. They remained devoted to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They retained their unique racial, cultural, and religious identity. And in 1948, they formed a nation once again.

Who's ever heard of such a thing? When in human history has anything like this happened? Never. Israel is alone among all the nations when it comes to pulling off this miraculous feat. Yet, as unlikely as it was, it should come as no surprise to anyone. Why? Because long before it happened, God claimed He would do it.

Centuries before Jesus first appeared in Galilee, God promised to "open the graves of the exiles and cause them to rise again, bringing them back into the land of Israel" (***Ezekiel 37:11-13***). This is exactly what happened. After centuries of persecution, the Holocaust systematically murdered two-thirds of the European Jewish population. Of those who remained, many made

their way to the land of Israel. They became some of the first citizens of the new nation state, and God foretold it all.

He said He would gather “the people of Judah from the ends of the earth” (*Isaiah 11:12*). He said He would gather “them and their children from east and west and north and south, bringing them back to Israel from the distant corners of the earth” (*Isaiah 43:5-7*). He said He would bring “the remnant of His flock back into Israel from all the countries where He had exiled them” (*Jeremiah 23:3-8*). He also said He would restore Israel’s fortunes and gather them back from all the nations where He scattered them (*Deuteronomy 30:3*). Like a shepherd looking for His flock, God said He would find His sheep and rescue them from all the places where they were scattered. Then, He would bring them back to the land of Israel from among the peoples and nations (*Ezekiel 34:12-13*).

After centuries in foreign lands, God promised to “restore the fortunes of Israel and Judah, bringing them home to the land of their ancestors” (*Jeremiah 30:3*). On numerous occasions, He repeated His promise to bring a scattered remnant of the Jewish people back into the land of Israel. In the Book of Jeremiah, He promised to bring them back into the land from all the countries in the world where He had exiled them (*Jeremiah 16:14-15*). In the Book of Ezekiel, He promised to welcome them home from the lands where they were scattered (*Ezekiel 20:34*). And in the Book of Zechariah, God promised, though living among the nations for so long, His people would never forget Him (*Zechariah 10:9*). God kept His promise. The evidence is modern day Israel.

## How God Would Restore Israel

By itself, the restoration of Israel is a miraculous event. But God promised more than to simply bring His people back. He told us *how* He would do it.

Over 2,600 years in advance, the prophet Isaiah said the nation of Israel will be born in a single day (*Isaiah 66:8*). It happened just as he said. The people of Israel declared themselves an independent nation on May 14, 1948. *That same day*, the United States recognized Israel. Half a dozen nations quickly followed suit.

In ancient Israel, a dispute divided the nation into two kingdoms – the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. For generations, separate kings ruled the divided kingdoms. But God promised to bring the exiled people back into the land of Israel as a united kingdom, no longer divided (***Isaiah 11:13***). Once again, He kept His promise. The modern day nation of Israel is a single, unified state.

The prophets also said when Israel comes back into the land, enemies will surround them on every side. For example, more than three thousand years ago, Asaph said the surrounding nations will be unanimous in their contempt for Israel. They'll say "Come, let us wipe away the nation of Israel. Let's destroy the memory of its existence" (***Psalms 83:4***), and "Let's take for ourselves these pasturelands of God" (***Psalms 83:12***). Ezekiel said Israel's neighbors will claim "God has given Israel's land to us" (***Ezekiel 11:14-17***), and "Israel and Judah are ours. We'll take them. What do we care if their God is there?" (***Ezekiel 35:10***). Since 1948, these precise claims are what we read in the headlines every day. Israel's Muslim neighbors say the land of Israel belongs to them, that "the mountains of Israel have been given to us" (***Ezekiel 35:12-13***) and "the Golan Heights belong to us" (***Ezekiel 36:2***).

God also said the reborn nation of Israel will become a lush garden of fruit. He promised when He brought the people back into the land, the desert will bloom (***Isaiah 35:1***). He promised Israel will thrive agriculturally and fill the whole world with its fruit (***Isaiah 27:6***). All this happened just as God promised. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Israel was a desert wasteland. Today, it's an agricultural powerhouse. Once a barren land where no one lived, the tiny nation of Israel is one of the world's leading fresh citrus producers and a net exporter of more than forty varieties of fruit.

Jesus said the Temple will be destroyed, Jerusalem sacked, and the people of Israel carried away to serve as slaves (***Luke 21:23-24***). All of this happened in A.D. 70. But Jesus said this captivity wouldn't last forever. He said the Gentiles would trample Jerusalem until the times of the Gentiles come to an end (***Luke 21:24***). In other words, non-Jewish people will control Jerusalem, but their control wouldn't last forever. When the Six Day War ended in June 1967, the Jewish people regained control of Jerusalem. This fulfilled other ancient prophecies as well.

For instance, the prophet Zechariah said God would bring His people back from the east, west, north, and south and plant them safely in the City of Jerusalem (***Zechariah 8:7-8***). He promised to fill the city squares with men and women and fill the streets with children (***Zechariah 8:4-5***). When Israel retook control of Jerusalem, this fulfilled the prophecies of both Jesus and Zechariah.

Think about these events, and you'll understand why the nation of Israel is a true modern day miracle. Again, where are the other ancient conquered peoples and cultures? Where are the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites (***Dueteronomy 7:1***)? You can't find them. They no longer exist. But you can find the Israelites. Why? Only one reason – the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Jewish people survive and thrive to this day because of God.

## Israel and the End Times

While all this is interesting, why does this matter for your life? It matters because the same God who promised to bring His people back into the land, make them a unified nation in a single day, and make the desert bloom also revealed exactly ***when*** He would do it. Jesus said Israel will return right before He does (***Luke 21; Matthew 24***). All the Hebrew prophets who said God will bring the people back from many lands said it will happen in “the last days.” Out of all the individual signs Jesus and the prophets said to look for, Israel is the most important. Why? Because Israel is the key to all end times events. Without Israel, neither the Tribulation nor the end times can take place.

During World War I and World War II, many people thought the end times had arrived. It's easy to understand why. The world had never experienced death and destruction on such a mass scale. But anyone who knew bible prophecy knew for sure those days were ***not*** the end times. Why? Because a key piece of the end times puzzle was missing. That key piece was Israel.

## The Key to the End Times

The Bible chronicles dozens of end times events, and Israel is central to almost all of them. For example, the Bible explicitly states the end times can't begin without the Jewish nation. It says the Tribulation begins when Israel agrees to a covenant or treaty (*Daniel 9:27*). Again, God's primary purpose in the Tribulation is to fulfill His promises to the nation of Israel (*Daniel 9:24*). For that to happen, Israel must exist.

But there are other reasons Israel must exist before the Tribulation begins. Here are just a few:

**The Jewish People Must Control Jerusalem** – Again, Jesus said the Jewish people will lose control of Jerusalem, but later, they will regain control (*Luke 21:24*). Only then will the end times events He described take place. So the Tribulation cannot occur unless the Jewish people control Jerusalem.

**A Massive Coalition Will Invade Israel in the Last Days** – In the last days, when God has brought the Jewish people back into the land (*Ezekiel 38:8*), a massive coalition of armies will invade Israel. This is known as the Gog of Magog invasion (*Ezekiel 38-39*), and it can't occur if Israel doesn't exist.

**Israel Must Have an “Exceedingly Great” Army** – Ezekiel says Israel will have an “exceedingly great army” in the last days (*Ezekiel 37:10*). God says Israel will be like a fire among sheaves of grain, burning up the neighboring nations (*Zechariah 12:6*). He says even the weakest soldier among them will be like David (*Zechariah 12:8*). How could this happen if Israel doesn't exist?

**A Third Jewish Temple Must Be Built** – In the middle of the Tribulation, the Temple sacrifices and offerings will be put to an end (*Daniel 9:27*). This implies they're happening up to that point in time. Otherwise, they couldn't be put to an end. For this to happen, the Temple must exist. Since the Roman legions destroyed the Temple in A.D. 70, a new Jewish Temple must be built. That means the Jewish people must be back in the land, and they must control Jerusalem.

How can any of these events take place if Israel doesn't exist? They can't. Not one of them can occur unless the Jewish people are back in the land of Israel. Without Israel, the end times can't happen.

It's at the center of all end times events. And when the Tribulation arrives, Israel will once again contend with an ancient enemy. Why? Because Israel isn't the only ancient power slated for resurrection in the end times. The Bible foretold the restoration of another. And this ancient superpower will conquer the entire earth.

## THE NEW PAX ROMANA

In 47 B.C., Julius Caesar faced down Pharnaces II of Pontus in the Battle of Zela. Earlier, Pharnaces and his army defeated Gnaeus Domitius Calvinus, a Roman general and friend of Caesar. Pharnaces mistreated the captured Roman soldiers and local Roman citizens. This made him a marked man. Caesar met Pharnaces and his army in what is today northern Turkey. It was no contest. Caesar won the day with a swift victory. Describing the battle in a letter to the Senate, he wrote his famous line, “Veni, Vidi, Vici” – “I came. I saw. I conquered.” This statement embodied the power of ancient Rome.

With immense military might, Rome’s dominion stretched across most of the known world in its time. No nation or people could match its military discipline or fighting skill. Its vast empire paid tribute to its ruling emperors, and many of its citizens lived to worship the glory of Rome. Its riches and power exceeded all previous empires. Nevertheless, Rome’s power waned.

In A.D. 330, the capital of the ancient Roman Empire moved to Constantinople. In A.D. 410, the Visigoths sacked Rome. A thousand years later, the Ottoman Turks conquered Constantinople. When they did, the ancient Roman Empire disappeared. Its vast power was lost to the pages of history.

## The New Roman Empire

But that's about to change. The Roman Empire will return. How can I be so sure? Because the Bible says so. Many people think the idea is ridiculous. The Roman Empire is long gone. How could it simply reappear? But remember, many people thought the same thing about Israel. They said the idea of a reborn nation of Israel was absurd. They said it would never happen. Yet today, Israel exists. The Bible said it would come back in the last days, and it did. Why wouldn't we expect the same thing when it comes to a revived Roman Empire?

After all, the Bible says Rome will reappear in the end times. Does this mean everyone will wear togas and drive chariots? No. It means the legal, cultural, and imperial influence of Rome will come back in the form of a new empire. This revived Rome will be more powerful than the ancient version. The ancient Roman Empire conquered the Mediterranean and Western Europe. The new Roman Empire will conquer the entire world. Where does this idea come from? Let's look at some of the passages where the Bible outlines this future kingdom.

### Daniel's Vision

During the reign of King Belshazzar of Babylon, the prophet Daniel had a vision (***Daniel 7:1***). He saw four beasts – a lion with eagle's wings, a bear, a four-headed leopard, and a terrifying beast with ten horns. At first, the vision confused Daniel. He didn't know what to think. Then, an angel explained the vision. He said the four beasts represent four kingdoms (***Daniel 7:17***). We know from the benefit of hindsight these kingdoms were Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

Daniel paid particular attention to the fourth beast. He described it as different from all the others. Terrifying, it devoured and crushed its victims with iron teeth and bronze claws (***Daniel 7:19***). The angel told Daniel it will rule the earth (***Daniel 7:23***) and its ruler will change Israel's sacred festivals during the second half of the Tribulation (***Daniel 7:25***). In the end, only the Second Coming of Jesus Christ Himself will put an end to this empire's rule (***Daniel 7:26-27***).



History reveals this fourth beast was Rome. Only one problem. Rome *didn't* devour the whole world. It only conquered part of it. Furthermore, the Second Coming didn't put an end to the ancient Roman Empire. Was the Bible in error? No. Because the Roman Empire isn't finished. It's set to make a comeback in the end times. And in case you have any doubt, God confirmed it in a king's dream over 2,600 years ago.

## Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

More than 600 years before Jesus, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had a dream (***Daniel 2***). The dream left him deeply disturbed. Anxious to learn its meaning, he called for his royal astrologers and magicians. He demanded they tell him the dream's meaning. "We can do that," they said. "Simply tell us your dream."

But Nebuchadnezzar wasn't so easily fooled. He knew it was a mistake to reveal his dream. After all, if the wise men in his court were so wise, they would know the meaning of the dream *and* what the dream was about. So he refused to tell them his dream. "Tell me what I dreamed and what the dream means, and I will give you wonderful gifts and honors," he said. "But if you don't, you'll all be put to death." Just as the king suspected, not one of his advisors could reveal the dream or its meaning.

But while none of the royal astrologers or magicians could perform this feat, one man in Babylon could. His name was Daniel. A slave from the conquered nation of Israel, Daniel worshipped the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. "I can tell you your dream and its meaning," Daniel told the king. "Not because I'm wise, but because there's a God in heaven who reveals such things" (***Daniel 2:28***). Daniel went on to describe the king's dream.

"You dreamed of a beautiful statue of a man," he said. "It had a head of gold, a chest and arms of silver, a belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet made from a combination of iron and clay. A rock supernaturally cut from a mountain crushed the statue, and that rock became a great mountain covering the whole earth" (***Daniel 2:31-35***).

Next, Daniel explained the meaning of the dream. He said the statue symbolizes a series of kingdoms. The first is Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon. The

statue's head of gold stands for Babylon. Another great kingdom will replace it. The chest and arms of silver represent this kingdom's power. In turn, a third kingdom will destroy the second. The bronze stomach and thighs symbolize this third kingdom.

Finally, a fourth kingdom will replace the third. This fourth kingdom will be as strong as iron. It will smash and destroy all the previous empires. The legs of iron symbolize this empire. This fourth kingdom will take on a new form in the last days. The feet and toes made of iron and clay represent its final phase. It will be an alliance of ten kingdoms. Some will be as strong as iron. Some will be as weak as clay. They will form an alliance to strengthen themselves, but they will fail – just as iron and clay do not mix (*Daniel 2:38-43*).

Daniel's prophecy is more than twenty-six centuries old, and history shows all but one of these kingdoms (the last) appeared and disappeared just as he said. Below is a list of the kingdoms in Nebuchadnezzar's dream:

- 1) Babylon**
- 2) Medo-Persia**
- 3) Greece**
- 4) Rome**
- 5) The Ten Nation Alliance**

Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon was the first kingdom (the head of gold). The Medo-Persian Empire was the second kingdom (the chest and arms of silver). In 539 B.C., the Medo-Persian Empire conquered Babylon. The Greek Empire was the third kingdom (the bronze stomach and thighs). In 331 B.C., Alexander the Great defeated the Medo-Persian Empire. Rome was the fourth kingdom (the legs of iron). In 168 B.C., the Roman Empire defeated the Greek Empire.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century, the Roman Empire split in two. Rome remained the center of power in the west, and Constantinople became the center of power in the east. The statue's two legs of iron symbolize this split. In A.D. 476, Rome fell to Germanic invaders. Constantinople held out until A.D. 1453, when the Ottoman Turks conquered that city.

This leaves one kingdom remaining – the feet and toes of iron and clay. This kingdom hasn't appeared yet. But it will. It will appear in the end times as a ten nation alliance of strong and weak nations. The feet with ten toes of iron and clay symbolize this kingdom. And just as the two legs represent the Roman Empire's split between east and west, the feet and toes represent the final phase of the Roman Empire. This final kingdom will conquer and crush the entire world. John tells us more in the Book of Revelation.

## John's Vision

While exiled on the island of Patmos, the apostle John received a heavenly vision. Today, we know it as the Book of Revelation. Much of what John saw and heard concerned the end times. One part of his vision revealed a coming world empire.

John saw a beast with seven heads (*Revelation 17*). Daniel had a similar vision. The beasts he saw symbolized governments (*Daniel 7*). The beast in John's vision also symbolizes government. If that's true, what's the meaning of a beast with seven heads? The seven heads represent seven kingdoms. These seven kingdoms either ruled or will rule over the nation of Israel. In order, they are:

- Egypt
- Assyria
- Babylon
- Medo-Persia
- Greece
- Rome, and
- The revived Roman Empire

John said of them, "Five are past, one is, and the other is yet to come" (*Revelation 17:10*). Knowing what the seven heads represent, this makes sense. John recorded Revelation in the late first century. At that time, Israel had already been ruled by Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece. These were the five "past kingdoms." However, Israel still lived under the iron fist of Rome. This is what John meant when he said, "one is." This left

only the seventh kingdom. John described it as “one still to come.” This is the global empire of the end times – the revived Roman Empire.

Why am I so sure? Several reasons. First, both Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (*Daniel 2*) and Daniel’s vision (*Daniel 7*) describe the empires that will rule over Israel from the time of Babylon until the return of the Messiah. Both have the final empire as Rome. Second, John says one of the heads of the beast he sees will appear to be mortally wounded, but it will come back to life (*Revelation 13:3*). Remember, the heads of this beast symbolize kingdoms. This verse is telling us one of the kingdoms will die. But later, it will come back to life. In the eyes of the world, Rome is dead. Yet its governmental, legal, linguistic, and cultural influence remain. In the end times, Rome will spring back to life.

## Where Will It Be Centered?

In recent years, the location of the revived Roman Empire has generated much debate. Geographically, the ancient Roman Empire dominated the entire Mediterranean. Will the end times empire have the exact same geographic boundaries? If not, where will it be located?

An event in A.D. 286 further complicates the matter. That year, the Emperor Diocletian divided the ancient Roman Empire in two. Rome ruled the western part of the empire. This area included western Europe and north-west Africa. Constantinople ruled the eastern part of the empire. This area included Asia Minor, the Balkan peninsula, northeast Africa, and areas of the Middle East. Will the revived Roman Empire include all of these areas? Or will it only include the western or eastern portions of the empire?

Some believe the revived Roman Empire will only include the areas of the eastern portion mentioned in Daniel 11. These areas include the modern day nations of Greece, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, and Libya. If this is true, the revived Roman Empire will be centered in the Middle East. Those who believe this also point to the end times revival of Babylon as a great city (*Revelation 17-18*). They say this proves the revived Roman Empire will rise out of the eastern portion of the ancient Roman Empire.

Others believe the revived Roman Empire will rise from the western part of the ancient Roman Empire. This area includes the modern day nations of Italy, France, Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, and the United Kingdom. Which one is right? Evidence suggests the revived Roman Empire will be centered in western Europe with its capital in Rome. Why? The Book of Daniel says the same people who destroyed the Temple will rule the final empire (*Daniel 9:27*). The Roman legions destroyed the Temple in A.D. 70. So the power center of the revived Roman Empire will be the actual city of Rome.

## Rome Revived

What then will the revived Roman Empire look like? We don't know every detail. But between Daniel and Revelation, we get a clear picture of what this global empire will *initially* look like. It will be an empire:

**1) Of Ten Nations** – The revived Roman Empire will be an alliance of ten nations. In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the statue's ten toes represent these ten nations (*Daniel 2:41*). We see the same alliance in both Daniel's vision (*Daniel 7:7*) and John's vision (*Revelation 13:1*). In those visions, horns represent the ten nations instead of toes.

**2) From Ancient Rome** – These ten nations will rise from the ashes of the ancient Roman Empire. The ruler of the revived Roman Empire will come from among the people whose armies destroyed the Temple (*Daniel 9:26*). History shows the Roman Empire destroyed the Temple in A.D. 70. In that year, the future emperor Titus led a Roman legion against Jerusalem. The Romans crushed all opposition and burned the Temple to the ground. So the leader of the revived Roman Empire will come from among the descendants of ancient Rome – those who live on the Italian peninsula today.

**3) Composed of Weak and Strong Nations** – The ten nations that form the revived Roman Empire will be a mix of weak and strong nations (*Daniel 2:42*). When God revealed the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, he compared them to iron and clay. That means some of these nations will be large, and some will be small. Some will have large economies, and some will have small. Some will have powerful armed forces, and some will have weak. We don't know the exact number of each type of nation. But we know the ten nation alliance will be a mix.

**4) Formed from an Alliance** – The purpose of these ten weak and strong nations coming together is clear. They'll try to strengthen themselves through an alliance (*Daniel 2:43*). Apart, they're just individual kingdoms. Together, they're a world superpower. However, their path to strength will not be a smooth transition.

**5) Volatile in Nature** – The ten nation revived Roman Empire will be a volatile, unstable mix. In describing these nations, God said just as iron and clay don't stick together, these nations will not hold together (*Daniel 2:43*). He also said the feet and toes of Nebuchadnezzar's statue indicate the kingdoms will be divided (*Daniel 2:41*). This means the revived Roman Empire will be an unstable confederation of nations.

**6) That Rules the Entire World** – The revived Roman Empire will rule the whole world. Despite the friction between its weak and strong members, the ten nation alliance will emerge as a global empire. It will consolidate power over itself, its neighbors, and the whole world. Exactly how this happens is unknown. The Bible mentions campaigns of diplomacy (*Revelation 6:2*), intrigue (*Daniel 8:23*), and war (*Revelation 6:4*). In all likelihood, it will be a combination of these. But regardless of *how* it comes to power, you can be sure it will. It will crush and devour every nation in the world (*Daniel 7:23*). It will rule over "every people, nation, tribe, and language" (*Revelation 13:7*). Its power will be so immense, no one will be able to buy or sell without its permission (*Revelation 13:17*). The people of the world will openly wonder who could possibly make war against it (*Revelation 13:4*), and it will be more powerful than any empire in human history.

## One King Will Emerge

A king or ruler will lead each of the ten kingdoms in the ten nation alliance. But a new king, who is not one of the ten, will emerge from them (*Daniel 7:20*). He'll oppose three of the ten kings and take control for himself. When this happens, the volatile, ten nation alliance will become the greatest superpower the world has ever known. It will rule the world, and a single man will rule over it. He'll be the most powerful dictator the world has ever known. You've probably heard his name before. It's one of the most infamous in human history. His name is the Antichrist.

## ALL HAIL CAESAR

Just a few years after the crucifixion, Rome was aghast at the latest decree from the Emperor. Caligula vowed to make his favorite horse, Incitatus, a consul. For those who saw Caligula as a madman, the proposal came as no surprise. According to the ancient historian Suetonius, the emperor showered Incitatus with lavish gifts. The horse enjoyed a marble stall, an ivory manger, and a jeweled collar. Attendants fed him oats mixed with flakes of gold. Incitatus often hosted Roman dignitaries at dinner parties. All this was bad enough. But now the emperor wanted to appoint his horse to the position of consul – the highest elected office in ancient Rome. Some said it proved he was insane. Others said it was all show – a message for his political opponents. In the end, his reason didn't matter. As emperor, Caligula ruled Rome. He had complete and total power. No one could stop him.

In the years before Jesus returns, a man like Caligula will rise to power once again. However, this man will be far more powerful. Unlike Caligula, the new emperor won't simply rule the ancient Roman Empire, he'll rule *the entire world*. The Bible calls him:

- The Little Horn (*Daniel 7:8*)
- The Fierce King (*Daniel 8:23*)
- A Master of Intrigue (*Daniel 8:23*)
- The Prince Who is to Come (*Daniel 9:26*)
- The Worthless Shepherd (*Zechariah 11:17*)

- The Man of Lawlessness (*2 Thessalonians 2:3*)
- The Son of Destruction (*2 Thessalonians 2:3*)
- The Despicable Person (*Daniel 11:21*)
- The Willful King (*Daniel 11:36*)
- The Abomination (*Matthew 24:15*)
- The Beast (*Revelation 13:11*)

But the name he's best known for is also his most infamous. This man is known throughout the world as "the Antichrist" (*1 John 2:18*).

Great mystery surrounds the Antichrist. What will he look like? What will he be like? Where will he come from? What will he do? Through the centuries, millions have asked these same questions. But we don't have to guess. The Bible tells us a lot about his background, origins, and personality. Let's take a look at what we know, starting with his rise to power.

## How Does the Antichrist Come to Power?

In 1789, Napoleon was an artillery officer in the French army. In 1807, he ruled most of Europe. In 1909, Adolph Hitler was a vagabond, painting watercolors in Vienna. In 1933, he was dictator of Germany. Seven years later, he ruled almost all of continental Europe. Napoleon, Hitler, and countless others from the pages of history rose from obscurity to positions of immense power. The Antichrist will do the same. He'll be a military leader and a world conqueror, but he'll initially come to power through politics. Here's what we know:

**He'll Come From Among 10 Kings** – The Antichrist will emerge from a group of ten kings (*Daniel 7:7-8*). Who are these kings? They're the leaders of the ten nations described in the last chapter. These ten nations will form an alliance that eventually becomes the revived Roman Empire. As this new Roman Empire comes to power, the Antichrist will burst onto the scene. He will **not** be one of the ten kings. However, he will rise in stature among them. The Bible doesn't say why, but it says these ten kings will give their power to him (*Revelation 17:12-13*). They'll agree to put the Antichrist in charge.



**Political Positioning** – Once the Antichrist appears among the ten kings, he'll use politics to grab power. The Bible says he'll be "skilled in intrigue" (*Daniel 8:24-25*). It describes him as a "worker of deceit" (*Psalms 52:2*), a man of "bloodshed and deceit" (*Psalms 5:6*), and a "deceitful and unjust" man (*Psalms 43:1*). Steeped in ambition and with a lust for power, he'll use political positioning and backroom deals to get what he wants. He'll rise through the ranks of the revived Roman Empire and take the power of the ten kings for himself.

We've seen this happen before. Despite what many people believe, Germany never elected Adolph Hitler as Chancellor. In fact, a majority of the German people rejected Hitler in a high profile presidential election in 1932. Hitler received only 36.8% of the vote. The Nazi Party was on the verge of bankruptcy when a small group of German politicians *appointed* Hitler Chancellor. They thought they could control him. They thought wrong. We could see the same dynamic play out between these ten kings and the Antichrist.

**He'll Subdue 3 of the 10 Kings** – Not all of the ten kings will willingly cede their power. Three will oppose the Antichrist (*Daniel 7:8*). Unfortunately, they'll fail to stop him. He'll defeat them, remove them from power, and strengthen his grip over the revived Roman Empire. As a man of "bloodshed and deceit," he'll take by force what he can't achieve through flattery and sheer ambition.

## What Will He Be Like?

What else do we know about this dark figure? Does the Bible say anything about his personality? Yes. Several passages give insight into the character, motivations, and desires of the most notorious man in human history. Let's look at those as well:

**He'll Be Enormously Powerful** – The Antichrist will be strong, but not of his own power (*Daniel 8:24*). Where does his power come from? It comes from Satan (*Revelation 13:2*). This satanic power will include the ability to perform counterfeit miracles (*2 Thessalonians 2:9-10*). For example, he'll make fire come down from heaven (*Revelation 13:13*). Armed with Satan's power, the Antichrist will be the greatest conqueror the world has ever seen.

He'll cause "a shocking amount of destruction" and "succeed in everything he does" (*Daniel 8:24*). He'll be so powerful he'll attack heavenly beings and trample them (*Daniel 8:10*). He'll even try to take on Jesus Christ in battle (*Daniel 8:25*).

As ruler of the revived Roman Empire, the Antichrist will hold unprecedented power. He'll rule over "every tribe and people and language and nation" (*Revelation 13:7*). He'll control the ability to buy and sell everything on earth (*Revelation 13:16-17*). The people of the world will think he's invincible. They'll ask, "Who is as powerful as he is? Who can make war against him?" (*Revelation 13:4*).

**He'll Be Arrogant and Prideful** – Given his immense power and where it comes from, is it any wonder the Antichrist will be arrogant? The Bible describes him as "boasting arrogantly" (*Daniel 7:8*). He'll claim he's greater than God (*Daniel 11:36*). John says he's "a beast who speaks great blasphemies against God" (*Revelation 13:5*).

When asked about the end times, Jesus told His disciples, "The time will come when you see what Daniel the prophet spoke about – the sacrilegious object that causes desecration standing in the Holy Place" (*Matthew 24:16*). The Antichrist will fulfill this prophecy. He'll stand in the Jewish Temple and proclaim himself to be God (*2 Thessalonians 2:4*). He'll set up an image in the Holy Place and demand the world worship it (*Daniel 9:27*). A mere man will claim to be God, and the world will worship him (*Revelation 13:4*).

**His Ethnicity and Nationality** – Where will the Antichrist come from? Will he be American? Will he come from a Muslim country? The Bible doesn't tell us every last detail of the Antichrist's ethnicity and nationality. But it does have a lot to say. And from what it says, we can know for sure where he *won't* come from.

For instance, we know the Antichrist will come from among the people who live on the Italian peninsula. The Book of Daniel says these are the people who destroy the Temple (*Daniel 9:26*). The Romans destroyed the Temple in A.D. 70. This means the Antichrist will rise from among the descendants of the Roman people. This makes sense. After all, the revived Roman Empire will rule the world in the end times.

However, does this mean the Antichrist will be a full-blooded Italian? Not necessarily. He could be a foreign national, but rise to power in Italy. Once again, Napoleon and Hitler provide historical examples. Napoleon came from the island of Corsica. He was Italian. Yet he rose in the ranks of the French army to become dictator of France. From there, he conquered almost all of Europe. A century later, Hitler followed a similar path. Born and raised in Linz, Austria, Hitler was *not* a German. He was Austrian. Yet he climbed to great heights in Depression-era Germany and became the undisputed dictator of the Third Reich. He too almost conquered Europe.

Is it possible the Antichrist will do something similar? Yes. Some people believe he'll be Assyrian. After Alexander the Great died, the Greek Empire split into four kingdoms. The Book of Daniel says the Antichrist will come from the Assyrian portion of those four kingdoms (*Daniel 8:9*). Some believe the Book of Isaiah refers to the Antichrist as "the Assyrian king" (*Isaiah 10:12*).

Despite this, others say the Antichrist will be full-blooded Italian because of Daniel 9:26. They say the Antichrist must be of Roman ancestry. So which one is it? Is the Antichrist Assyrian or Italian? Perhaps he'll be both. Remember, many religious teachers had a similar debate about the Messiah. Before Jesus was born, some said the Messiah would come from Bethlehem (*Micah 5:2*). Others said He would come out of Egypt (*Hosea 11:1*). Still others said He would come from Galilee (*Isaiah 9:1-2*). Which one was it? It was all of the above. Jesus was born in Bethlehem (*Matthew 2:1*), called out of Egypt (*Matthew 2:14-15*), and raised in Nazareth which is in Galilee (*Matthew 4:12-17*). All three were true.

Could the Antichrist fulfill prophecies about his life in the same way? Yes. In fact, prophecy experts can't agree on the Antichrist's religion either. Some say he'll be Jewish. Why? They point to two prophecies in Genesis. One says the Antichrist will strike the Messiah's heel (*Genesis 3:15*). The other says Dan will be a roadside snake who bites the horse's heel (*Genesis 49:16-17*). Some people believe this means the Antichrist will come from the tribe of Dan.

Others cite what Jesus told the people of Israel. He said, "I come in my Father's name and you don't accept me. Someone else will come in his own name, and him you will accept" (*John 5:43*). Was Jesus talking about the

Antichrist? If he was, why would the Jewish people accept a Gentile as the Messiah? They wouldn't. This leads some people to believe the Antichrist will be Jewish.

However, others completely reject the idea of a Jewish Antichrist. They insist he'll be a Gentile. Why? First, the Bible describes the Antichrist as a beast who rises "out of the sea" (**Revelation 13:1**). The Bible consistently uses "the sea" as a symbol for the Gentile nations (**Daniel 7:2-3; Luke 21:25; Revelation 17:1**). If this interpretation is correct, the Antichrist will *not* be Jewish.

## Is the Antichrist Muslim?

In fact, some people insist he's a Muslim. This idea became popular after the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks. What's this based on?

First, it's said the Bible refers to the Antichrist as "the Assyrian" (**Isaiah 14:25-26; Micah 5:5**). If true, this means the Antichrist will come from among the people to the north and northeast of Israel. Assyria took up parts of modern day Syria, Iraq, Kuwait, Israel, Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. In other words, the modern day Middle East. The Bible also says the Antichrist will come from among the four kingdoms that split from Alexander the Great's empire (**Daniel 8:9**). Historically, Antiochus Epiphanes fulfilled this passage. He was an Assyrian king who rose to power in the Seleucid Empire. Antiochus Epiphanes persecuted the Jewish people and served as a prophetic type of Antichrist. His career foreshadowed the rise of the global dictator.

Second, Daniel called the Antichrist "the king of the north" (**Daniel 11**). Again, this described the career of Antiochus Epiphanes. But if the Antichrist rules over the same geographical lands, his empire will be in modern day Iraq, Kuwait, Iran, Afghanistan, and parts of Pakistan and Turkmenistan. These nations are majority Muslim nations today. Because of this, many people believe any ruler from these nations will be a Muslim.

But that's not all. Those who believe in a Muslim Antichrist cite other verses as well. They point out that the Antichrist will behead those who oppose him (**Revelation 20:4**). Beheading is a common form of capital punishment in Islam. This, they say, supports the case for a Muslim Antichrist.

The Bible also says the Antichrist will change the laws and the times (*Daniel 7:25*). Supporters of the Muslim Antichrist theory say this means he will institute Sharia law and the Islamic calendar.

Supporters of this theory claim even more evidence is found in Islamic prophecies about “the Mahdi.” The Mahdi is an Islamic Messianic figure who will rule the earth for seven years before Judgment Day. Muslim beliefs differ as to exactly what the Mahdi will do. However, most teachings say he will return with Jesus and defeat a false Messiah known as “the Dajjal.” He’ll unite the world for Islam and rid the world of evil. Islamic prophecies about the Mahdi are similar to Christian prophecies about the Antichrist. Supporters of the Muslim Antichrist theory point to these similarities as proof of the Antichrist’s origins and religion.

But that’s a weak argument. Prophecies in the hadith (a collection of Muhammad’s teachings) are not equal in authority to prophecies in the Bible. The Bible proved its divine inspiration through fulfilled prophecy. No Islamic writings can make the same claim. Islamic teachings should have **zero** influence on how we interpret the Bible. Does this mean the Antichrist is not a Muslim? No. It’s unlikely he is, but it’s not impossible.

Remember, many experts held opposing views on the Messiah’s origins. Then Jesus arrived. The events of His life proved many of those views correct. The same could prove true with the Antichrist. Regardless, the Bible is clear when it comes to the Antichrist’s religion. He may be **culturally** Jewish, Muslim, or some other religion. But his true religion will be humanism – a philosophy that emphasizes the power of human beings over the power of the divine. The Antichrist will place his faith in a god of fortresses (*Daniel 11:38*). He’ll also demand worship (*Revelation 13:12-15*), setting himself up in the Temple of God and proclaiming himself to be God (*2 Thessalonians 2:4*).

## What Will He Do?

The Antichrist will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped (*2 Thessalonians 2:4*). He’ll reside over the most terrible time period in human history. He’ll succeed in everything he does and cause a shocking amount of destruction (*Daniel 8:24*). Yet, despite all of this, a

large part of the world will not only follow the Antichrist, they'll worship him (***Revelation 13:4***). Why? One reason is because he'll be seen as a "political redeemer." This is how the first century Jewish people envisioned the Messiah. They weren't looking for someone to save their souls. They were looking for someone to deliver them from the cruel hands of the Romans. They wanted a new Moses. This is who His followers thought Jesus would be. They ignored Him when He said He would suffer and die (***Matthew 16:21-23***). They mourned His death, thinking He had failed (***John 16:20; John 20:9***). Only after the resurrection did they realize the true purpose of His coming. Jesus came as a spiritual Savior, not a worldly conquer.

But what Jesus didn't do, the Antichrist will. He'll fulfill the human ideal of "a political redeemer." He'll arrive on the world stage as a great political leader. He'll be a dazzling orator (***Daniel 7:8***). He'll mesmerize the world (***Revelation 13:3***). He'll broker treaties, conquer nations, change laws, and reshape the world to fit his vision.

But when? Will the Antichrist simply show up one day and take over the world? How will those who are alive when he appears know who he is? The Bible tells us. It says no one will know who he is until he performs a specific act.

**He'll Sign a Covenant** – When he rises to power, the Antichrist will broker a treaty with Israel. This treaty will last for seven years, and its signing will kick off the Tribulation (***Daniel 9:27***). The Bible doesn't provide any details of the treaty (other than its length), nor does it say why Israel enters into the agreement.

But if this treaty is for protection or military support from the Antichrist, it will be like a slap in the face to God. Why? Because it will show a lack of faith in God's ability to protect Israel. Remember, this covenant marks the start of the Tribulation. Sometime before it's signed, a Russian-led military alliance will invade Israel (***Ezekiel 38:2-6***). Does Israel save itself through its own military strength? No. God saves Israel. In full view of the world, He destroys the invaders with fire, hail, and friendly-fire (***Ezekiel 38:21-22***). The world will know without a doubt God was behind Israel's victory (***Ezekiel 38:23***). If Israel then confirms a mutual protection treaty with the

Antichrist, it will show a clear lack of faith in God. After all, if God is your protector, why look to anyone else?

**He'll Change the Calendar** – The Antichrist will “change the sacred laws and festivals” (*Daniel 7:25*). We already know he'll enter the Temple and declare himself God (*2 Thessalonians 2:4*). If he'll commit this blasphemy, it shouldn't surprise anyone he'll try to change the Jewish laws and festivals too. The terrible rule of Antiochus Epiphanes foreshadowed the coming of the Antichrist. Antiochus Epiphanes outlawed Jewish rites and traditions and slaughtered thousands of Jewish people. As a blasphemer (*Revelation 13:6*) and a man of lawlessness (*2 Thessalonians 2:3*), we should expect the Antichrist to do something similar. His push to change the calendar, the laws, and the festivals shows his general disregard for the law – both God's law and the authority of human institutions.

**He'll Be a Conqueror** – If anything, the Antichrist will be known as a conqueror. His actions will set off World War III. He'll go out to conquer the world (*Revelation 6*), and he'll wield a “mighty sword” (*Revelation 6:4*). One-fourth of humanity will die – either by sword, famine, disease, or wild beasts (*Revelation 6:8*). His global war of conquest will result in a worldwide famine. Food will be so expensive, a day's wages will only buy enough food to survive (*Revelation 6:5-6*).

As for disease, it makes sense for it to run rampant in the midst of World War III. After all, we've seen it happen before. In World War I, the unsanitary conditions of trench warfare and masses of unburied dead spread disease all over the world. The 1918 Spanish Flu alone killed 50 to 100 million people. Six to twelve times more people died from the flu than died in combat.

But while famine and disease take many lives, war will be the leading cause of death in the end times. The Antichrist will “destroy to an extraordinary degree” (*Daniel 8:24*). As his war of conquest escalates, another one-fourth of humanity will die (*Revelation 8-9*). To put this in perspective, as I write this book, the world population is 7.6 billion. If the Antichrist began his war today, one-fourth of the world's population would be 1.9 billion people. If another one-fourth of the 5.7 billion left also died, it would mean another 1.425 billion people killed. That's a total of 3.325 billion people killed in World War III. Contrast that figure with World War II – to

date, the greatest period of turmoil in human history. In World War II, 50 million people died. That means sixty-six times as many people will die in World War III as died in World War II. And that's assuming the world population doesn't grow between now and the Antichrist's global power grab.

While it comes at great expense, the Antichrist will succeed in his goal of global conquest. When the dust settles from World War III, he's the victor. He'll rule over every people, tribe, language, and nation (*Revelation 13:7*). He'll have undisputed power, and the world will ask, "Who can possibly oppose him? Who can make war against him?" (*Revelation 13:4*).

**He'll Declare War on the Saints** – The Antichrist will wage war on God's holy people (*Revelation 13:7*). What does this mean? Who are God's holy people? Anyone who says Jesus is Lord and believes in his heart He rose from the dead (*Romans 10:9*) is one of God's holy people. In other words, the Antichrist's main target is the Christian community. He'll launch a devastating campaign of persecution against them (*Daniel 8:24*). He'll demand worship (*Revelation 13:4*) and behead those who don't comply (*Revelation 20:4*). This is one of Satan's primary goals, and the Antichrist will have the same desire. He'll declare war on all who keep God's commandments and give testimony for Jesus (*Revelation 12:17*).

**He'll Kill Two-Thirds of the Jewish People** – The Antichrist's war against God's holy people includes the Jewish people. During the Tribulation, Satan will seek to destroy Israel (*Revelation 12:13*). The Book of Zechariah says the Antichrist will kill two-thirds of the Jewish people (*Zechariah 13:8*). But a remnant will escape (*Romans 9:27*). God will prepare a place in the wilderness to protect those who survive for the last 3½ years of the Tribulation (*Revelation 12:14*). The remaining one-third of the Jewish people will become followers of Jesus (*Zechariah 13:8-9*). God says He will "pour out a spirit of grace and prayer" on them, and they will mourn for Jesus as for an only son (*Zechariah 12:10*). This will fulfill a prophecy Paul made when he said, "Some of the people of Israel will have hard hearts, but this will last only until the full number of Gentiles comes to Christ" (*Romans 11:25*).

**He'll Wage War Against Jesus** – Ultimately, the Antichrist will wage war against the King of kings. He'll be more powerful than any dictator



or conqueror in human history. He'll be so powerful he'll be able to throw angels to the ground and trample them (***Daniel 8:10***). It's difficult to imagine a human being with this type of power, but the Bible says it will happen.

But that's not all he'll do. The Antichrist will attack the Lord's anointed one – Jesus (***Daniel 8:25***). He'll gather the kings of the earth at Armageddon to wage war against God (***Revelation 19:19***). Yet as powerful as he is, the Antichrist will be no match for Jesus Christ. Jesus will destroy him with a single breath (***2 Thessalonians 2:8***).

## Will the Antichrist Be Resurrected?

One popular belief says the Antichrist will be resurrected. This idea comes from the Book of Revelation. There, we read, “one of the heads of the beast had a fatal wound and the wound was healed, and the whole world marveled” (***Revelation 13:3***). Many people believe this means the Antichrist will receive a fatal head injury, then come back to life. If so, this explains why the world so readily worships him (***Revelation 13:4***). After all, imagine if John F. Kennedy had suddenly come back to life at his funeral and jumped out of his casket. Think that would get the world's attention? You bet.

But will this really happen? No. Only Jesus has power over death and Hades (***Revelation 1:18***). When you study this verse, it refers to the resurrection of the ancient Roman Empire – not the Antichrist. Why do I say that? First of all, the word “beast” in this context means world empire or human government. In the Book of Daniel, God described some of these same world empires as “beasts” (***Daniel 7***). John's beast has seven “heads” (***Revelation 13:1***). Each of these heads represents an empire that either had, or one day will, rule over Israel. John said five have been, one is, and the last is still to come (***Revelation 17:9-10***). Remember, John recorded Revelation in the first century when the Roman Empire controlled Israel. This explains why he said “five have been” (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece), “one is” (Rome), and “the last is still to come” (the future revived Roman Empire).

How can we be so sure the seventh head is the revived Roman Empire? Because John says the seven heads feature “ten horns” (***Revelation 13:1***). These horns represent ten kings. In both Daniel and Revelation, horns

represent kings and royal power (*Daniel 7:7; Jeremiah 48:25; Zechariah 1:18-21; Daniel 8:21-22*). These ten horns symbolize the ten kings who will give their authority to the Antichrist in the end times (*Revelation 17:12-13*). This means the seventh head John describes is a government (the revived Roman Empire), not a person.

This makes sense and fits with the rest of what the Bible says. Daniel says the Roman Empire will come back to life in the end times. The statue Nebuchadnezzar dreamed about featured only four empires. God said those empires were Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome (*Daniel 2:39-40*). The feet of the statue symbolize the final phase of the Roman Empire, and the ten toes are the ten kingdoms which try to strengthen themselves through an alliance (*Daniel 2:41-43*). Ancient Rome never took the form of a ten kingdom alliance, so this vision was of a still future phase of Rome. It isn't a brand new empire. It's a revived version of the ancient Roman Empire. God confirms this once again in Daniel's vision of four beasts (*Daniel 7*). These beasts represent Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome (*Daniel 7:16-26*). Again, a new empire is not mentioned. Rome is the final empire, and the Bible says its "fatal wound" will be healed in the last days.

## Who Is the Antichrist?

So who is the Antichrist? Throughout history, his identity has been the subject of great speculation. The early church suspected Nero, Trajan, or other Roman emperors. In modern times, people accused Napoleon and Hitler, as well as various kings, popes, and presidents of being the Antichrist.

But any attempt to identify the Antichrist ahead of time is pointless. The Antichrist can't be revealed until "the restrainer" is taken out of the way (*2 Thessalonians 2:7*). Who is the restrainer? The restrainer is the Holy Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit resides in the hearts of all believers (*1 Corinthians 3:16*), the Antichrist can't be revealed until all Christians are gone. So it makes no sense for Christians (other than those who become followers of Jesus *during* the Tribulation) to focus on the coming of the Antichrist. It's impossible to know who he is ahead of time. Instead, we should fix our eyes on the coming of the Lord Jesus (*Hebrews 12:2*).

## When is the Antichrist Coming?

Whether or not Christians are around, how will the world know when the Antichrist has finally appeared? He'll come in tandem with the start of the Tribulation. So how do we know when the Tribulation has started? The scriptures say to look for a sign. When you see this sign, you can know the Tribulation is here. What's the sign? As mentioned before, the Antichrist will make a covenant with Israel for "one seven" (***Daniel 9:27***). This means he'll sign a seven-year treaty with Israel. This agreement will kick off the Tribulation. Once it's signed, the world will enter a period of time Jesus calls "worse than any time since the world began and worse than any time that will ever come." But it will also mark the beginning something else. The signing of this treaty will launch the greatest explosion of Gospel preaching in all of human history.



## THE GOSPEL EXPLOSION

A few weeks after the resurrection, Peter preached to a large crowd in Jerusalem. He spoke about the history of Israel and God's promise to send a Messiah. Then he explained why Jesus is the Messiah they were waiting for, how He fulfilled the Messianic prophecies, and what Jesus did when He died on the cross. This single speech from Peter converted 3,000 people (*Acts 2:41*). Later, he gave a second speech, and the number of new believers totaled 5,000 (*Acts 4:4*). In the years since Peter first preached, the Gospel has spread from the tiny nation of Israel to every corner of the world.

When His disciples asked Jesus to describe the signs of His coming and the end of the age, He pointed to the following sign. He said, "The Good News will be preached to the whole world so all the nations will hear it, and then the end will come" (*Matthew 24:14*). Think about that. A first century carpenter on the outskirts of the Roman Empire said His message would spread to the ends of the earth. He said "the whole world" and "all nations" will hear it. That's a bold claim. Remember, Jesus only had a few followers at the time. He had no great wealth. He didn't hold a high government position, and He wasn't a conquering hero. He was a poor wandering preacher in an all but forgotten province of the mighty Roman Empire. He lived in a time when TV, radio, the Internet, and the printing press didn't exist.

When Jesus made His bold claim, His followers didn't even understand what "the whole world" was. Perhaps they had heard of India and China, but Japan? Australia? North and South America? All these places were unknown

to the disciples. No one at the time knew how large the world was or even how many nations existed. The idea of reaching them all was absurd. Yet Jesus knew. As God in the flesh, He knew how big the world was. And He knew one day the Gospel would explode all over the globe.

Following the crucifixion, the Good News spread throughout Israel. But it took several decades to reach the rest of the Roman Empire. For the first thousand years of Christianity, the Gospel rarely left western Europe and the Mediterranean region. Then, something happened. The Gospel went global.

## **The Gospel in Modern Times**

Today, the message of Jesus circles the globe on a daily basis. Missionaries take it to the most remote corners of the world. Radio and television transmit the Word of God into nations hostile to Christianity, and the Internet brings the Gospel to everyone with an electronic device. This is exactly what Jesus said would happen. Satellite and cable television programs, websites, podcasts, mobile apps, physical books, ebooks, movies, emails, and dozens of other tools take the message of Jesus all over the world.

With these tools, a single evangelist can reach more people than all the first century Christians combined. Think that's an overstatement? Consider the Reverend Billy Graham. In 1949, Billy Graham began a career preaching the Gospel that spanned seven decades. He embraced every technology, media channel, and avenue he could find to tell others about Jesus. By some estimates, he spoke to over 215 million people in 185 countries – more than any other man in history. And his archived TV sermons impact people to this day.

Yet the Bible says Billy Graham's work will pale in comparison to what's coming. During the Tribulation, the Gospel will reach every person in the world. More people will come to Jesus than in any time in human history. Why? Many reasons. The first reason is technology. It will continue to create new ways to reach vast numbers of people all over the world. The second reason is the impact of the Tribulation events themselves. These traumatic events will throw accelerant on the Gospel. They'll force people to examine their lives and choose between God's way or their own way. The third reason,

and perhaps the most important, is the Tribulation will herald the arrival of thousands of powerful and influential evangelists.

## The Gospel in the Tribulation

The number of people preaching the Gospel will dramatically increase in the end times. These people will complete the missionary work of prior generations. They'll fulfill a command Jesus gave when He said, "Go into the nations and make disciples of men" (**Matthew 28:19**). These Tribulation evangelists will take the Gospel to every corner of the earth. And it will all start in a single nation – Israel.

God promised to pour out His Spirit on Israel in the end times. He said, "Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams. Your young men will see visions. In those days, I will pour out my Spirit even on servants, both men and women alike" (**Joel 2:28-29**). When this happens, God will raise up 144,000 witnesses – 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel (**Revelation 7:4-8**). These witnesses will be like 144,000 Pauls. That's enough to fill an Olympic arena. They'll preach the Gospel with great enthusiasm, and they'll spread the Good News of Jesus Christ throughout Israel and across the planet. But they won't be alone. God will send two more evangelists. These two preachers will have unusual powers. If the 144,000 witnesses fail to grab the world's attention, the testimony of these two will be impossible to ignore. In the Bible, they're simply known as "the two witnesses."

## The Two Witnesses

The two witnesses will come with supernatural authority from God. Like the 144,000, they'll preach the Gospel to the world, and the world will hate them for it. Why will the world hate them? They'll hate them *because* they preach the Word of God. The end times generation will hate God. They'll curse Him (**Revelation 16:11**). They'll despise Him. Why? Because of the judgments He'll bring on the world.

The Book of Revelation says God will pour out His wrath on a rebellious world (**Revelation 6:17**). He'll pass judgment on the people of earth the same

way He passed judgment on the earth in Noah's day. Some of the judgments He'll bring include war (*Revelation 6:4*), famine (*Revelation 6:6*), death (*Revelation 6:8; Revelation 9:15; Revelation 16:3*), hail (*Revelation 8:7; Revelation 16:21*), plagues (*Revelation 9:3-5; Revelation 16:2*), drought (*Revelation 11:6*), and earthquakes (*Revelation 11:13; Revelation 16:20*).

The end times generation will know these judgments come from God (*Revelation 6:15-17; 18:10*), and they'll despise Him for it. They'll realize He has control over everything that's happening. Nevertheless, they won't repent. Instead of turning to God, they'll curse Him (*Revelation 16:9*). They'll curse Him because of their pains and sores (*Revelation 16:11*) and because of the terrible hailstorm (*Revelation 16:21*).

Again, because the end times world will hate God, they'll hate His two witnesses. This is in part because of the judgments they'll bring on God's behalf. The two witnesses will have the power to shut the sky so no rain falls (*Revelation 11:6*). They'll have the power to turn rivers and oceans into blood, and they'll have the power to send every kind of plague as often as they wish (*Revelation 11:6*). Is it any wonder the world will despise them?

As a source of further frustration for the world, no one will be able to harm these two witnesses. Fire will come from their mouths and destroy anyone who tries to hurt them (*Revelation 11:5*).

## Who Are the Two Witnesses?

Who are these men with the power to perform such miraculous signs? The Bible doesn't tell us their names. It doesn't say where they come from. It only describes their supernatural powers. Because of these powers, many people to believe they'll be Old Testament prophets.

Some think Elijah and Moses are the most likely candidates. Why? Two reasons. First, during the transfiguration (*Matthew 17:1-8*), Jesus appeared with both Moses and Elijah. Of all the Old Testament figures who could have appeared with Jesus, these two in particular were given this honor – an honor John and James wanted for themselves (*Mark 10:35-37*). The Bible calls these two men “the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand



before the Lord of the earth” (*Revelation 11:4*). So these two prophets are prominent not just in the end times, but in all of history.

Second, the two witnesses perform miracles similar to those Elijah and Moses performed. They have power “to shut the sky” so no rain will fall as long as they prophesy (*Revelation 11:6*). Elijah displayed this same power when he told Ahab, “There will be no rain or dew for the next few years until I give the word” (*1 Kings 17:1*). The two witnesses also have the power to turn the rivers and the oceans into blood (*Revelation 11:6*). This was a power Moses displayed when he turned the Nile and all the water in Egypt into blood (*Exodus 7:20-21*). This was just one of many plagues that struck Egypt. Other plagues included frogs (*Exodus 8:6*), festering boils (*Exodus 9:10*), and locusts (*Exodus 10:13-14*). Likewise, these two men will be able to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they wish (*Revelation 11:6*). While Revelation 11:6 doesn’t specify what those plagues are, we know Moses did this when standing against Pharaoh. We also know the first half of the Tribulation brings similar plagues of boils (*Revelation 16:2*), water turned to blood (*Revelation 16:3-4*), and darkness (*Revelation 16:10*).

Still, others say the two witnesses will be Elijah and Enoch. Why Elijah and Enoch? Neither of these Old Testament prophets died. Both were taken to heaven while still alive. A fiery chariot carried Elijah to heaven (*2 Kings 2:11*), and God simply called Enoch to heaven (*Genesis 5:24*). Neither man died. Moses, however, did die (*Deuteronomy 34:5*). The Bible says “it is appointed for each man to die once” (*Hebrews 9:27*). This makes it highly unlikely Moses is one of the two witnesses.

But regardless of whether Moses, Enoch, or someone else is one of the two witnesses, we can know for sure Elijah is one of them. Why? Because the Bible says so. The prophet Malachi said, “Look, I am sending you the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the Lord comes” (*Malachi 4:5*). The great and dreadful day of the Lord is the day when Jesus returns to take vengeance on God’s enemies and judge the earth (*Revelation 19:11-21*). Speaking about John the Baptist, Jesus said, “If you are willing to accept what I say, he is Elijah, the one the prophets said would come” (*Matthew 11:14*). But John wasn’t the Elijah mentioned in Malachi. John

himself said so (**John 1:21**). What Jesus meant is John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah (**Luke 1:17**). John was symbolic of Elijah for the First Coming. The Old Testament Elijah will be the Elijah of the Second Coming. After all, how could John the Baptist be the complete fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy? The great and dreadful day of the Lord did not come in the first century. But it will come.

## What Happens to These Witnesses?

After the two witnesses complete their testimony, the Antichrist will kill them. This will happen in the middle of the Tribulation, since their ministry only lasts three and a half years (**Revelation 11:3**). Once the Antichrist kills the two witnesses, their bodies will lie unburied in the main street of Jerusalem (**Revelation 11:8**).

The entire world will look upon them (**Revelation 11:9**), and they'll celebrate. People will give each other gifts (**Revelation 11:10**). It will be a time of great jubilation. The people will declare a worldwide holiday because the two men who tormented them will be dead.

But after three days of celebration, something unexpected happens. These two men will rise to their feet. They'll stand up (**Revelation 11:11**). In full view of the whole world, they'll ascend to heaven (**Revelation 11:12**). Their departure will bring a great earthquake. A tenth of Jerusalem will be destroyed (**Revelation 11:13**). Needless to say, this will end the celebrations. Instead of joy, the people of the world will be filled with terror (**Revelation 11:13**).

All this will happen in the middle of the Tribulation. And it will happen at the same time as another critical event. Jesus said to look for a specific act in the middle of the Tribulation. He said once it happens, those in Judea must flee to the hills (**Matthew 24:16**). Those outside must not go back into their homes. A person in a field shouldn't even return home to get a coat (**Matthew 24:18**). He said there's only one thing you should do – flee. So what is it you should flee? What's the sign you should look for? It's an event that occurs just before the death and resurrection of the two witnesses, and Jesus used a specific name to describe it.

## THE ABOMINATION

When His followers asked Jesus about the time of His return, He gave them a number of signs to look for. One of those signs was a specific event He called “the abomination of desolation.” It’s certainly not a phrase you hear every day. So what does it mean? An “abomination of desolation” is a detestable act that desecrates the Jewish Temple. In this context, “abomination” means idol worship.

Sadly, it’s happened before. In 168 B.C., Antiochus Epiphanes committed such an act. At the time, Jerusalem and all of Judea fell under the rule of the Seleucid Empire. The Jewish people rebelled against his tyrannical rule. In response, Antiochus Epiphanes invaded Judea. He slaughtered thousands and showed no mercy. He outlawed Jewish rites and religious practices, and he ordered the worship of Zeus. As a climax to all his terrible deeds, He entered the Temple and placed a statue of Zeus in the Holy of Holies. Then, he erected an altar to Zeus and sacrificed pigs on it. These acts desecrated the Temple.

Jesus said a similar act will occur before He returns. He told His disciples, “When you see the abomination of desolation *Daniel spoke about*, then those in Judea must flee to the hills” (*Matthew 24:15-16*). Jesus didn’t say to look for just any abomination. He said to look for “the one Daniel spoke about.” What does this mean? Daniel said the Antichrist will make a treaty with Israel for a period of seven years, but in the middle, he will put an end to the sacrifices and offerings. Then, as a climax to all his terrible deeds,

“he will set up a sacrilegious object that causes desecration” (*Daniel 9:27*). He also said the Antichrist will “pollute the sanctuary, put a stop to the daily sacrifices, and set up a sacrilegious object that causes desecration” (*Daniel 11:31*). We don’t know what this object will be, but we do know it’s an idol.

Jesus said the Antichrist will enter the Temple and go into its most sacred area, the Holy of Holies (*Matthew 24:15*). This alone is an affront to God. According to the law, only the high priest can enter this area of the Temple (*Leviticus 16:32-34*). But the Antichrist will. He’ll enter the Holy of Holies and declare himself God (*2 Thessalonians 2:4*). Then, he’ll set up a statue in the Temple and demand the world worship it (*Revelation 13:14-15*). He’ll exalt himself above all else (*2 Thessalonians 2:4*) and demand the world worship him (*Revelation 13:15*).

Some people claim Antiochus Epiphanes fulfilled these prophecies. After all, a good part of Daniel 11 summarizes events in the life of that cruel king. But Jesus said no. He said the abomination of desolation Daniel spoke about is a future event. When Jesus gave His warning, Antiochus Epiphanes was already a historical figure. Jesus told His disciples to look for a future abomination of desolation. He said it will be one of the key events of the end times.

Of course, for all this to happen, something else must happen first. ***The Temple must be rebuilt.*** After all, how can the Antichrist “pollute the sanctuary” and “put a stop to the daily sacrifices” (*Daniel 8:11-12*) if the Temple doesn’t exist? How can he change the “sacred laws and festivals” (*Daniel 7:25*)? How can he set up a sacrilegious object?

Remember, the Romans destroyed the Jewish Temple less than forty years after Jesus said to look for the abomination of desolation. During that time, no such act took place. No man entered the Temple, set up an image of himself, or proclaimed himself to be God. Since the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, all those acts have been impossible. You can’t desecrate a Temple that doesn’t exist. You can’t enter a Temple, set up an image or proclaim yourself to be God in a Temple that no longer stands. So what does this mean? Was Jesus wrong? No. It just means the abomination of desolation is a future event. Before it can happen, the Jewish Temple must be rebuilt. Israel will build a Third Temple.

## The First Temple

Solomon built the First Temple sometime in the mid-10<sup>th</sup> century B.C. This Temple housed the Ark of the Covenant (**1 Kings 6:19**) and dozens of objects used in the ceremonial worship of God. Solomon overlaid the entire Temple with pure gold (**1 Kings 6:22**), and it featured ornately carved cedar from Lebanon (**1 Kings 6:18**). When Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, conquered Jerusalem in 598 B.C. (**2 Kings 24:13**), he looted the Temple. In 587 B.C., he attacked Jerusalem again to put down King Zedekiah's rebellion. After he conquered the city and led Zedekiah away in chains, he burned the Temple, the royal palace, and all the houses in Jerusalem (**2 Kings 25:9**). Solomon's Temple disappeared forever.

## The Second Temple

But the Temple didn't disappear forever. A new Temple rose from the ashes of the first. The Second Temple stood from 516 B.C. to A.D. 70. Jewish exiles returned from Babylon following a decree from King Cyrus of Persia (**Ezra 1:1-4**). When they arrived, they started to build a new Temple. They completed it during the reign of Darius in 516 B.C. (**Ezra 6:6-16**).

In the first century B.C., King Herod launched a massive reconstruction effort. He expanded the Temple Mount and replaced the rebuilt Temple with a magnificent new structure. This is the Temple Jesus taught in. It's the Temple the Roman legions destroyed in A.D. 70. Because Zerubbabel (governor of Judah) and Jeshua (the high priest) initiated the rebuilding of the second Temple (**Haggai 1:14:15**), it's sometimes referred to as Zerubbabel's Temple. Also, because of Herod's massive renovations, it's often called Herod's Temple.

## The Coming Third Temple

Jesus never directly spoke about "a Third Temple." But His teachings reveal a Third Temple must exist. Why? First, Jesus predicted the destruction of the Second Temple. When His disciples marveled at the magnificence of Herod's Temple, Jesus told them "not one stone will be left on another" (**Matthew 24:2**). Then, He told them to look for "the abomination of desolation"

(*Matthew 24:15*). How could this happen without the rebuilding of a Third Temple? Paul said the same thing. He said the Antichrist will “sit in the temple of God, claiming that he himself is God” (*2 Thessalonians 2:4*). To this day, such an event hasn’t happened. That means the abomination of desolation is a future event and the Temple must be rebuilt.

To many people today, the construction of a Third Temple seems like an unlikely event. But remember, prior to 1948, the world thought the rebirth of Israel as a nation was an unlikely event. No one has set a timetable for the rebuilding of the Temple. But organizations devoted to its rebuilding do exist. For decades, they’ve openly called for the construction of a new Temple. They claim they can rebuild a fully operational Temple in a short timeframe. All they need is approval to move forward.

One such organization is The Temple Mount Faithful. Established in 1967, this Orthodox Jewish movement has sought to rebuild the Temple and re-institute the practice of ritual sacrifice. In 1990, they caused riots when they announced their intention to lay a cornerstone for the Third Temple. Because of this, Israel banned their founder from the Temple Mount. But their desire to rebuild the Temple remains as strong as ever.

Another group of Orthodox Jewish leaders revived the Sanhedrin. This religious group supervises legal issues related to the Temple. They’re actively engaged in efforts to bring back Temple services. For example, efforts are underway to breed a red heifer. Described in the Law, the ashes of a red heifer mixed with water are necessary for purification (*Numbers 19*). Efforts like these have one goal in mind – to re-establish Temple worship. And except for the ashes of a red heifer and the existence of the Temple itself, almost everything now exists to re-institute Temple worship.

This is thanks to the Temple Institute. Founded in 1987, the Temple Institute is a non-profit group dedicated to the building of a Third Temple. Its activities include education, research, and preparation for the rebuilding of the Temple and resumption of Temple services. To achieve their goal, they’re already creating the biblically required sacred vessels. These include items such as the golden Menorah (*Exodus 25:31-37*), the musical instruments for the Levitical choir (*2 Chronicles 5:12-13*), and the golden crown of the High Priest (*Exodus 28:36-38*). Other items include the breastplate

(*Exodus 28:15-30*) and sacred uniform of the High Priest (*Exodus 28:31-35*), as well as numerous vessels made of gold, silver, copper, and wood. You can see all these items on their website. They also maintain a public exhibit in Jerusalem. The Institute believes every generation is obligated to do all it can to rebuild the Temple. One generation will. When it does, it's likely the Temple Institute's sacred vessels will become part of the worship services.

## Why Hasn't the Temple Been Rebuilt?

Many organizations are ready to rebuild the Temple, and Israel controls Jerusalem. So why hasn't the Temple been rebuilt? It's true the nation of Israel controls Jerusalem. They retook the city in the Six Day War in 1967. However, they allowed the Jerusalem Islamic Waqf (an Islamic religious trust) to keep control over the Temple Mount. Many believe the Dome of the Rock, a Muslim holy site, is located on the exact spot where the Jewish Temple needs to be. Muslims consider this the third holiest site in all of Islam. They believe it's the place where Muhammad ascended to heaven.

If it's true the Dome of the Rock is where the Temple once sat, then it must be torn down. The Third Temple can't be built on top of it. How will this happen? We don't know. Israel could simply tear down the Dome of the Rock. But that would cause international outrage and spark a holy war. Another possibility is an earthquake could destroy the Dome of the Rock. But again, the world will call for Israel to rebuild the Dome of the Rock, not a Third Temple. Countless scenarios could result in a rebuilt Temple. But what's the most likely? One stands out above all others.

## The Gog of Magog War

In the last days, a massive coalition will invade Israel. Known as the Gog of Magog war, this event will take place either before or at the very beginning of the Tribulation. Why? Because Israel will take seven years to burn the leftover weapons as fuel (*Ezekiel 39:9*). Since the Tribulation only lasts seven years (*Daniel 9:27*), this means the Gog of Magog invasion either comes at the start of the Tribulation or comes before it. After all, Israel won't need to burn weapons for fuel after the Tribulation. Jesus will rule the earth, and

He'll supply everything Israel needs. While we don't know the exact time of this invasion, we know it will occur close to the Tribulation rather than long before it. How do we know this? Because the Bible says it will take place in "the latter days" (*Ezekiel 38:8*) or "the last days" (*Ezekiel 38:16*). Moreover, it will happen when the Jewish exiles are regathered back in the land from the nations where they were scattered (*Ezekiel 38:8*). All this points to the start of the Tribulation or the time just before it.

According to the Bible, the Gog of Magog coalition will invade Israel from the north (*Ezekiel 38:15; Ezekiel 39:2*). Russia will lead them. The invaders include the following nations:

**Rosh** = Russia

**Magog** = Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan

**Persia** = Iran

**Cush** = Sudan, Ethiopia

**Put** = Libya

**Meshech, Tubal, Gomer, and Beth-togarmah** = Turkey

The Bible calls this invading force a "vast horde" (*Ezekiel 38:4*). They surround Israel with an overwhelming military force. Israel stands alone. A few nations ask Gog to explain his intentions (*Ezekiel 38:13*), but no nation comes to Israel's aid. In the eyes of the world, the tiny nation doesn't stand a chance. But the wisdom of this world is often wrong. Israel is *not* alone. God is on her side. As the prophet Elisha prayed about his servant, "God open his eyes and let him see!" His servant looked around and saw a hillside filled with horses and chariots of fire to take on the Arameans (*2 Kings 6:15-17*). It will be the same during the Gog of Magog war.

Gog and his allies will attack Israel. The result will be devastating – not for Israel, but for Gog and his vast horde. God will defend Israel. Fire will rain down on the attacking armies (*Ezekiel 39:6*). They'll become confused and turn their weapons on each other (*Ezekiel 38:21*). Hailstones mixed with fire and burning sulfur will fall from the sky (*Ezekiel 38:22*). Satellites, smartphones, and military surveillance footage will capture it all. These



miraculous events will be broadcast to the whole world and replayed over and over. Everyone will know the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did it (*Ezekiel 38:23*).

## The Aftermath of the Gog of Magog War

No doubt, conspiracy theories will spring up left and right. Many people who reject God will claim Israel destroyed the attacking armies with a new superweapon. But one nation will know for sure whether or not that's true – Israel. Israel's leaders will know for sure who saved them. They'll remember Ezekiel's prophecies, and they'll know they didn't use a secret weapon. What do you think their reaction will be?

The Islamic nations around Israel will be destroyed. God will be the reason for Israel's victory, and they'll know it. Think they'll want to worship Him? Think they'll want to glorify His name and build a new Temple where they can sing His praises? It's likely. We can't know for sure, but the Gog of Magog war is as good a reason as any for Israel to rebuild the Temple.

## The Temple Will Be Rebuilt

All that said, we can't know for sure how or why the Temple will be rebuilt. Until it happens, it's all just speculation. However, we do know one thing for sure. The Temple will be rebuilt.

The Jewish people will reinstitute Old Testament rites of worship. The daily sacrifices will reconvene – at least for a while. Then, in the middle of the Tribulation, the Antichrist will pollute the sanctuary and put an end to those daily sacrifices (*Daniel 11:31*). A mere man, he'll claim he's God (*2 Thessalonians 2:4*). This is difficult to imagine, but it will happen.

Remember, the Antichrist will be arrogant and boastful (*Daniel 7:8*). He'll speak great blasphemies against God (*Revelation 13:5*). Satan himself will indwell the Antichrist (*2 Thessalonians 2:9*). He'll demand the world worship him (*Revelation 13:4*). And this is where events take a strange turn. The Antichrist's demand will come with a specific requirement. He'll call for people to pledge allegiance to him in a personal and unusual way. And anyone who agrees to do so will condemn themselves forever.



## THE MARK OF THE BEAST

In 2012, a Christian coal miner filed suit against CONSOL Energy, Inc. The company owned the coal mine where the man had worked for over thirty years. What led to the lawsuit? Earlier that year, CONSOL installed a biometric hand scanner to track employees. The plaintiff refused to use it. He viewed the technology as part of a system enabling “the mark of the beast” from the Book of Revelation. In 2015, both a jury and an appeals court found in his favor. They awarded him over \$500,000 in damages.

Similar stories pop up in the news from time to time. For example, thousands of people in Sweden have radio-frequency identification (RFID) chips inserted in their hands. They use them in place of keys, credit cards, train tickets, and other items. In the eyes of some people, this is the future for not only Sweden, but the entire world. For instance, in July 2017, more than fifty employees at the vending machine company Three Square Market received chip implants of their own. They use them to unlock doors, access computers, and perform other office tasks.

While these stories might sound creepy, they don’t describe the actual mark of the beast. But that doesn’t mean the mark of the beast isn’t real. One day soon, it will become one of the most recognized insignias on the planet. So what is it? What is the mark of the beast, and what does the Bible say about it?

## What is the Mark?

The mark of the beast will be an outward expression of a person's allegiance to the Antichrist. As global dictator, he'll require it, and the mark will appear on a person's right hand or forehead (*Revelation 13:16*). What will it look like? We don't know for sure.

It could be a tattoo, a microchip, or something else. But whatever it looks like, it won't be concealed. It will be visible to everyone. We don't know the exact form it will take, but it will be a number representing the Antichrist's name. His number is 666 (*Revelation 13:18*).

Those who refuse the mark of the beast will be shut out of the global economy. They'll be unable to buy or sell anything without it (*Revelation 13:17*). Some will even face beheading for their refusal to accept it (*Revelation 20:4*).

## The Meaning of 666

The number 666 will represent "the name of the beast" (*Revelation 13:18*). But what does that mean? Does it mean the Antichrist will be a man named "666"? No. It means the numerical value of his name will add up to 666. This is an alphanumeric process known as gematria. With gematria, you assign a numerical value to a word based on its letters.

Over the years, this has fueled wild speculation about the Antichrist's identity. People have falsely identified others as the Antichrist based on this verse of the Bible alone. For instance, some people claimed Ronald Reagan was the Antichrist. Why? Because his full name was Ronald Wilson Reagan, and each of his three names had six letters.

In the early 1940's, some people claimed Adolf Hitler was the Antichrist. They randomly assigned numerical values to the English alphabet in the following way: A=100, B=101, C=102, etc. With this numbering system, the name "Hitler" adds up to 666 [H=107 + I=108 + T=119 + L=111 + E=104 + R=117].

It's true Hitler's evil is what you would expect from the Antichrist. But calculating his name in this way is wrong. Others have made similar claims.

They invent new and imaginative ways to convert names into numbers. Then, they release a long list of Antichrist candidates. Popular names have included Bill Gates, Prince Charles, George Soros, or whoever happens to be the President of the United States or Pope. But all these claims are wrong. How can I be so sure?

Because the idea of counting letters in a name or using random numerical values based on the English language is not how you calculate the number of the beast. It's a misreading of scripture. If this is true, then what does the Bible mean when it says the Antichrist's name is the number 666? How is his name expected to have a number?

Simple. John recorded the Book of Revelation in Greek. The Greek alphabet is alphanumeric. This means each letter in the Greek alphabet doubles as a specific number. If you take the name of the Antichrist in Greek, then the numerical value of his name will add up to 666. Does this mean Christians should rush out and translate famous people's names into Greek? No. The purpose of the number 666 is to **confirm** the Antichrist's identity. It can't be used to identify him ahead of time. As Paul said, the Antichrist can't be revealed until his time comes (**2 Thessalonians 2:6**), and his time won't come until he signs the seven year treaty with Israel that begins the Tribulation (**Daniel 9:27**).

## Superstitions

The number 666 holds a special place in pop culture. Many misuse it to speculate on celebrity Antichrist candidates, but others have a fear of the number itself. They avoid street numbers, hotel rooms, and license plates with the number 666. I understand their aversion, but coming into contact with this number won't cause any harm. If you go to the grocery store and get \$6.66 in change, you don't need to worry. Nothing bad is going to happen to you. The number 666 doesn't have any power. Even if it did, it pales in comparison to God's power. So don't be superstitious of 666. Remember, Jesus said "fear only God" (**Matthew 10:28**). You have no need to worry (**1 Peter 3:14**).

## What Happens to Those Who Refuse the Mark?

After the Antichrist enters the Temple and declares himself God (**2 Thessalonians 2:4**), he'll require everyone on earth to accept the mark (**Revelation 13:16**). Accepting the mark will be a pledge of allegiance to the Antichrist. Again, this will either be the number 666 or a name that adds up to 666 (**Revelation 13:18**). All who accept the mark will display it on their right hand or their forehead (**Revelation 13:16**). This will make it easy for society to identify them. Society will blacklist anyone who refuses the mark. Every buy/sell transaction will be linked to it. Those without it will be unable to buy or sell anything (**Revelation 13:17**). This will put enormous social pressure on people to accept the mark.

Think about it. Imagine if you couldn't buy or sell *anything*. How would you get food to survive? How would you get shelter, clothes, and the basic necessities of life? The pressure for most people will be too much to bear. They'll give in and accept the mark. It's likely only committed Christians or devoted members of a religion condemning such a practice will refuse the mark. In some cases, the consequences will be worse than economic. Some people will be martyred for their refusal to accept it (**Revelation 20:4**).

## What Happens to Those Who Do Accept the Mark?

The number 666 itself should not be feared, but the actual mark of the beast should be avoided at all costs. Anyone who accepts it is destined for the lake of fire (**Revelation 14:9-11**). The decision to take the mark is irreversible. Once you accept it, you're condemned in God's eyes. Why is God so harsh? Because accepting the mark of the beast is an open act of rebellion. It isn't something you can do by mistake. Anyone who accepts the mark makes a conscious decision to not only pledge allegiance to the Antichrist, but to pledge allegiance *against* God.

The act of taking the mark is a clear display of loyalty. It won't come in the form of something as mundane as a social security number. Even something as invasive as a microchip implanted under the skin is not necessarily the mark. The mark of the beast *could* come in the form of a microchip. But

no one will accept it by accident. No one will take the mark due to an oversight, trickery, or ignorance. Accepting the mark will be a conscious decision.

Consider what this means. Those who accept the mark will have lived through at least three and a half years of the Tribulation. They'll have seen the Antichrist's rise to power, the establishment of his global government, and his desecration of the Temple. They'll have seen God's supernatural destruction of the invading armies of Gog and Magog (***Ezekiel 38:18-23***). They'll have heard the testimony of the two witnesses (***Revelation 11:3***) and seen their resurrection (***Revelation 11:11-12***). They'll have heard the testimony of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists (***Revelation 7; Revelation 14***). They'll have seen all of these events and more.

The battle lines will be drawn. The choice will be clear. Jesus said you're either for Him or against Him (***Matthew 12:30***). Those alive during the Tribulation will either be for Jesus or for the Antichrist. Those who choose Jesus will face temporary hardships on earth. These include economic pain (***Revelation 13:17***) and possible martyrdom (***Revelation 13:15; Revelation 20:4***). Those who choose the Antichrist will receive eternal consequences. Their decision will be made with full knowledge of its meaning. Because of this, God will show no mercy. Those who accept the mark will be thrown into the lake of fire. It's a lake that burns forever (***Revelation 14:9-11***). Hell is their destination.

## Why Do People Accept It?

Why will people willingly accept the mark? Fear is one reason. As stated before, those without the mark will be cut off from the global economy (***Revelation 13:17***). With no ability to buy or sell, those without the mark will face starvation. They'll face the possibility of martyrdom (***Revelation 13:15***). Their very survival will be at stake. For people who love the world more than they love God, accepting the mark won't be a problem. They'll willingly accept it. Others will take the mark because of their reverence for the Antichrist. They'll worship him because of his power (***Revelation 13:4***).

Another group of people will accept the mark and worship the Antichrist because they're true believers in the man and his mission. Remember, the end times will be a period of widespread deception (***2 Timothy 4:3-4***). The

Bible calls the Antichrist a “master of deception” (***Daniel 8:25***). He’ll fool the world, and they’ll believe his lies (***2 Thessalonians 2:10-12***). Because of this, some people will believe he’s the Messiah. They’ll accept the mark and willingly follow him down the road to destruction.



## THE GREAT DECEPTION

On October 30, 1938, the CBS radio network reported the landing of an unusual object on a farm in Grover's Mill, New Jersey. A few minutes later, another news bulletin cut in with live coverage. As police, journalists, and other curious onlookers examined the strange cylindrical item, Martians emerged and used heat rays to kill everyone. For the next thirty minutes, reports of a Martian invasion dominated the airwaves. Panic spread quickly. People flooded the streets of big cities, and switchboards lit up at newspapers, police departments, and radio stations.

For those who tuned in late, the Martian invasion appeared real. But it wasn't. It was nothing more than an Orson Welles adaptation of the H.G. Wells novel *The War of the Worlds*. There were no Martians. No invasion. No death rays. But for a brief moment, thousands of people believed it was real. It wasn't. They were deceived. They believed fiction was reality.

In the end times, a similar deception will take place. But it will happen on a much wider scale, and the consequences will be far more severe. The Antichrist will pass himself off as the world's savior. He'll claim to be the long awaited Messiah. In reality, he'll be nothing more than a fake. All this will happen because of a man the Bible calls "the false prophet." A master propagandist, this man will promote the Antichrist to the world. He'll nurture the Antichrist's public image and turn him into a god-like figure.

## The False Prophet

Revelation 13 introduces us to the man it calls the “second beast” (*Revelation 13:11-18*). The false prophet will be the leader of a false religious system and a demonic prophet. He’ll perform counterfeit miracles and deceive untold numbers of people. His primary aim? To build a cult glorifying the Antichrist. In doing so, he’ll lead millions of people to their destruction.

### What is the False Prophet Like?

The false prophet will serve as the Antichrist’s right-hand man. He’ll demand the whole world worship the Antichrist (*Revelation 13:15*). He’ll cause fire to come down from heaven (*Revelation 13:13*). He’ll even perform counterfeit miracles to deceive the world (*Revelation 13:14*). Let’s take a look at what the Bible reveals about the life of this evil man:

**He Comes “Out of the Earth”** – The Book of Revelation says the false prophet is a beast who “comes out of the earth” (*Revelation 13:11*). This is in contrast to the Antichrist who comes “out of the sea” (*Revelation 13:1*). What do these references mean? Some passages in the Bible use the land and the sea as symbols for nations and people. The sea often refers to the Gentile nations (*Daniel 7:3; Luke 21:25; Revelation 17:1*). The land often refers to Israel and the Jewish people (*Genesis 17:8*). If this is correct, it means the false prophet will come from Israel.

**He’s “Like a Lamb”** – The Bible describes the false prophet as “like a lamb.” Both the Gospels and the Book of Revelation call Jesus “the Lamb of God” (*John 1:29; Revelation 5:12*). He’s history’s greatest example of sacrificial love. In saying the false prophet is “like a lamb,” the Bible suggests he’ll have a gentle and meek appearance. But that’s all it will be – an appearance. As we’ll see, the false prophet is anything but a lamb.

**He “Speaks Like a Dragon”** – Despite his lamb-like appearance, the false prophet will “speak like a dragon” (*Revelation 13:11*). The reference here is clear. The Bible uses the dragon as a symbol of Satan and demonic power. Revelation itself describes Satan as a dragon (*Revelation 12:9*). In saying the false prophet speaks like a dragon, the Bible tells us where his power comes from. His words will be demonic in nature. The Bible says “out

of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks” (*Matthew 12:34*). The false prophet is a perfect example.

**He Has “All the Authority of the Beast”** – The false prophet will “exercise all the authority of the first beast on his behalf” (*Revelation 13:12*). This means the false prophet will act on behalf of the Antichrist. The Antichrist will give his authority to the false prophet, and the false prophet will use this authority to lavish praise on the Antichrist.

**He Forces the World to Worship the Beast** – The false prophet’s promotion of the Antichrist will go so far, he’ll force the whole world to worship him (*Revelation 13:15*). He’ll be the leader of a cult demanding worship of a false messiah – the Antichrist. To enforce this worship, the false prophet will require everyone to accept the mark of the beast on their right hand or their forehead (*Revelation 13:16*). Those who refuse will be unable to buy or sell anything (*Revelation 13:17*). Others will pay with their lives (*Revelation 20:4*).

**He Performs Great and Miraculous Signs** – But the false prophet won’t rely on force alone to gain worship for the Antichrist. He’ll also perform fake miracles and “great and miraculous signs” (*Revelation 13:13*). He’ll call down fire from the sky in full view of the world (*Revelation 13:13*). Where does he get this power? It comes from Satan (*2 Thessalonians 2:9-10*). Nevertheless, he’ll convince many people to follow and worship the Antichrist.

## What Happens to the False Prophet?

In the end, the false prophet will meet the same fate as the Antichrist. When Jesus returns to earth, both men will be thrown in the lake of fire (*Revelation 19:20*). In the fiery lake, they’ll burn in torment forever. This is a just fate for two men who will lead so many down the road to ruin. Together, they’ll give rise to a new religion of idolatry. With worship of the Antichrist at its core, the world will embrace a false religious system the Bible calls “mystery Babylon.”

## The Rise of Mystery Babylon

As the world worships the Antichrist, it's only fitting they'll once again hold a fascination with Babylon. Many consider Babylon the birthplace of idolatry and false religion. Does this mean the city of Babylon will rise again in the end times? Some think it will. Revelation 17 and 18 describe the rise of "mystery Babylon" in the end times. Those who study prophecy hold varied opinions about mystery Babylon. Some think it's the actual city of Babylon. Some think it's a symbol for another city. Still others think it's merely a symbol for a false religious system. Which one is it? I believe a careful study of the scriptures reveals mystery Babylon is a symbol. It's not the literal city of Babylon, but a code name for another city. I'll explain why in just a moment. But first, let's look at why some people believe mystery Babylon is the restored ancient city of Babylon.

### Is Mystery Babylon the Literal Babylon?

Some argue there's no mystery at all to mystery Babylon. They say it's the ancient city of Babylon. In the end times, it will be rebuilt and become the greatest city in the world. They cite two primary reasons to believe this:

**1) The Bible Says So** – The Book of Revelation describes mystery Babylon as an actual city. Few dispute this. The only question is whether or not the city described is ancient Babylon or a symbol pointing to another city. So which is it? Is it the actual city of Babylon? Or merely a symbol for another city? When it comes to interpreting the Bible, you should always assume the Bible means exactly what it says. You should only look for a symbolic meaning when the Bible tells you to.

In almost every case where the Bible uses symbolism, it also provides the meaning. For example, Daniel had a vision of four huge beasts. The first was a lion with eagle's wings. The second was a bear. The third was a leopard with four heads and four wings, and the last had ten horns and iron teeth (*Daniel 7:1-14*). Does this mean he had a vision of literal beasts to come? No. The beasts were symbols of empires. How do we know? Because an angel told Daniel what the vision meant (*Daniel 7:17-27*).

In the case of mystery Babylon, the plain text of the Bible cites the

name of an actual city – Babylon. Should you use symbolism to explain it away? Only if you have a biblical reason to believe you should. Without that reason, you should read the Bible to mean exactly what it says. In this case, it says a city named Babylon will be the center of world commerce and religious worship in the end times.

**2) Is Babylon Destroyed?** – Another reason to believe mystery Babylon points to the actual city of Babylon is this – the Bible says Babylon will be destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah (*Jeremiah 50:40*). It will never be inhabited again (*Isaiah 13:20*). Those who believe the literal city of Babylon will be rebuilt say this hasn't happened. The city of Babylon may not be the important city it was in ancient times, but it still exists. Therefore, this prophecy hasn't yet been fulfilled and Babylon must be rebuilt so it can be destroyed in fulfillment of this prophecy.

This, they say, is the best reason to believe the literal city of Babylon will once again achieve prominence in the end times. God's prophecies are never partially fulfilled. He always fulfills them *to the letter*. He guarantees it (*Isaiah 46:9-10*). So the verdict is in. Case closed, right? Not so fast.

## Is Mystery Babylon Rome?

Despite these arguments, others insist the city of Babylon will not be rebuilt. Instead, they say mystery Babylon is another city – Rome. Why? Here are just a few reasons:

**1) First Century Context** – The use of “mystery” indicates “mystery Babylon” is *not* the literal city of Babylon, but a code name for another city. Otherwise, the Bible would simply say “Babylon.” Remember, you should always assume the Bible means what it says. You should only look for a symbolic meaning when the Bible says to. In this case, it says to.

In the first century, many Christian writers used symbols when discussing certain topics. This is because the Romans outlawed such speech. Calling out Rome as evil and corrupt is the type of speech that could land you in jail. Because of this, many Christians used a code name for Rome. Is there any evidence? Yes. Peter himself used Babylon as a symbol for Rome. In a letter, he wrote, “Your sister church *here in Babylon* sends you

greetings” (**1 Peter 5:13**). Peter wrote these words from the city of Rome. This is a perfect example of how early Christians used Babylon as a symbol for Rome.

**2) The City of Seven Hills** – John referred to mystery Babylon as “the city of seven hills” (**Revelation 17:9**). In the first century, this is a clear reference to the city of Rome. The city was built on seven hills (Aventine, Caelian, Capitoline, Esquiline, Palatine, Quirinal, and Viminal). At the time John recorded the Book of Revelation, Rome was well known throughout the western world as “the city of seven hills.”

**3) The City That Rules the Earth** – John also referred to mystery Babylon as “the great city that rules over the kings of the earth” (**Revelation 17:18**). Again, in the first century, only one nation fit this description. That nation was Rome.

**4) Babylon will not be Rebuilt** – The same prophecies some use as evidence to claim Babylon will be rebuilt are the same prophecies critics use to insist it won’t. God promised to send the Medes against Babylon (**Isaiah 13:7**). He did this in 539 B.C. As recorded in **Daniel 5:30-31**, the Medes and the Persians conquered Babylon, killed King Belshazzar, and ruled over the city. The Bible said after the Medes conquer Babylon, the city will become a heap of ruins (**Isaiah 13:19**) never to be inhabited again (**Isaiah 13:20**). It will remain empty generation after generation (**Isaiah 13:20**).

Those who believe ancient Babylon is mystery Babylon say Isaiah 13 is a reference to the end time destruction of Babylon in Revelation 18. They claim this is why the city will never again be inhabited or why it’s described as “like Sodom and Gomorrah” (**Isaiah 13:19**). However, these verses say the Medes will cause this destruction, and they did. After the Medes conquered Babylon, it became a heap of ruins like Sodom and Gomorrah. And it’s been that way ever since. To this day, no one lives there. People live in nearby communities, and people visit the ancient ruins. But no one lives in the city of Babylon.

The prophet Jeremiah said the same thing. He said the Medes will march against Babylon and destroy her (**Jeremiah 51:11**). He described Babylon as a “city by a great river, a great center of commerce,” but then he said, “Your end has come. The thread of your life is cut” (**Jeremiah 51:13**). God also

said Israel's captivity in Babylon will only last seventy years, and at the end of the seventy years, he will make Babylon a "wasteland forever" (*Jeremiah 25:12*). He said it will lie desolate forever (*Jeremiah 50:39*).

Again, this is what we see today. No one lives in Babylon. In the 1970's and 1980's, Saddam Hussein undertook efforts to rebuild ancient Babylon. He restored mud walls and building facades. He even built one of his presidential palaces on the outskirts of the city. But he didn't rebuild the city as a place for people to live. He rebuilt it to serve as a tourist attraction.

## The Fate of Mystery Babylon

I believe the evidence shows Rome is the end times city the Bible calls "mystery Babylon." But it doesn't matter what I think. Whether mystery Babylon is the literal city of Babylon, the city of Rome, or some other city, its end will be the same. With sins piled "as high as heaven" (*Revelation 18:5*), this rebellious city will be the object of God's judgment. Fire from heaven will come down and destroy it in a single moment (*Revelation 18:8-10*). In the end, this city *will* meet the same fate as Sodom and Gomorrah. God judged both those cities for their wickedness, and He destroyed them in a single hour with fire from heaven (*Genesis 19:24*).

However, unlike Sodom and Gomorrah, the corruption of mystery Babylon won't be confined to the local population. This wicked city will influence the whole world. For much of the Tribulation, it will be the epicenter of global wealth and commerce (*Revelation 18:12-19*). All the nations will become drunk from the "wine of her passionate immorality." Because of her desire for extravagant luxury, the merchants of the world will grow rich (*Revelation 18:3*). God describes the city as sinful, materialistic, and boastful (*Revelation 18:4-7*). She'll export a global system of false religion that will reign throughout the Tribulation (*Revelation 13:11-18*). It will lure the world into worshipping the Antichrist, and it will provoke the anger of God.

Mystery Babylon will deceive the nations. She'll spill the blood of God's prophets, the blood of His holy people, and the blood of people all over the world (*Revelation 18:24*). Because of this evil, God's judgment will come. In a single moment, He'll destroy mystery Babylon (*Revelation 18:10*), and no one will ever live there again (*Revelation 18:21-23*). When the fire of

God's judgment consumes the city (***Revelation 18:8***), its destruction will trigger a time of global mourning. The world's merchants will mourn because of the city's great wealth (***Revelation 18:11***). They'll watch as smoke rises from her charred remains (***Revelation 18:9***), and they'll shed tears for the city they so loved. And then? And then, God's judgment will come upon the rest of the world.



## ARMAGEDDON

In the 1983 movie *War Games*, a teenager searching for video games accidentally hacks into a top secret government supercomputer. Thinking he's playing a video game, he simulates a Soviet nuclear attack on the United States. What he doesn't realize is the supercomputer is linked to the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), and the government thinks his simulated attack is real. The events that follow bring the world to the brink of all-out nuclear war. In the end, the hero saves the day. His quick thinking averts disaster. The world avoids World War III, and peace prevails for another day.

End-of-the-world movies have always been a popular theme for Hollywood moviemakers. And why shouldn't they be? The best stories involve high stakes, and the stakes don't get any bigger than global destruction. Whether it's aliens, asteroids, global warming, or World War III, you'll find many of these global disaster movies invoke Armageddon in their storylines. Because they do, people associate Armageddon with these events. The word itself has come to mean "global catastrophe." But is this what Armageddon is really about?

### **The Bible and Armageddon**

While popular opinion links Armageddon with the end of humanity, the Bible says something entirely different. Armageddon isn't the outbreak of

nuclear war. It isn't even a battle between humans. And it won't be the end of the human race.

Instead, Armageddon is a place where all the armies of the world will gather together. It's the Greek name of the Israeli city Megiddo. In ancient times, Megiddo held great strategic significance. Located at the northern end of a narrow pass, it served as a gateway to the fertile Jezreel Valley. This gave the city great economic value as a checkpoint along ancient trade routes.

Conquerors destroyed and rebuilt Megiddo multiple times. The city hosted so many battles, archeologists have found more than twenty-five layers of ruins. But despite its storied history as a battleground, Megiddo plays a much more significant role in the future. Why? Because one day, it will be the staging ground for the most famous battle in human history.

## The Gathering Nations

At the end of the Tribulation, all the armies of the world gather at Armageddon in preparation for war (***Revelation 16:16; Revelation 19:19***). They come at the direction of the Antichrist and the false prophet (***Revelation 16:13-16***). The Euphrates River even dries up to pave the way for the armies of "the kings of the East" (***Revelation 16:12***). When all these armies arrive, the Antichrist will set up camp "between the seas and the beautiful holy mountain" (***Daniel 11:45***). This means he'll set up camp between the Mediterranean Sea, the Dead Sea, and Mount Moriah in Jerusalem – exactly where Armageddon is located. But why? Again, these armies don't gather to do battle with one another.

In the end times, the Antichrist will rule the entire globe (***Revelation 13:7***). The world will ask itself, "Who can fight against him?" (***Revelation 13:4***). He'll be enormously powerful, and by the end of the Tribulation, all his human rivals will be defeated. So it makes no sense for the armies of the world to gather at Armageddon to fight each other.

## Why They Gather

If that's true, who do these armies gather to fight? Why bother to prepare for battle? Those are good questions, and the truth may surprise you.

The armies of the world gather at Armageddon to wage war against Jesus (**Revelation 17:14**). That's right. Armageddon is a staging ground for a great rebellion against God Himself. But don't take my word for it. Here's what the Bible says about the true intent of the gathering armies (emphasis mine):

"These miracle-working demons caused all the rulers of the world **to gather for battle against the Lord** on that great judgment day of God Almighty." **Revelation 16:14** (NLT)

"Then I saw the beast gathering the kings of the world and their armies in order **to fight against the one sitting on the horse and his army.**" **Revelation 19:19** (NLT)

When the world's armies gather at Armageddon, they're preparing for war. But these armies aren't planning to attack each other. They're planning to attack "the one sitting on the horse and his army." Who is the "one sitting on the horse"? Jesus Himself.

What do these armies hope to achieve? Power. Remember, the Antichrist gets his power from Satan (**Revelation 13:2**). Many people believe Satan will indwell the Antichrist, just as he did Judas (**Luke 22:3**). If Satan controls the Antichrist, we know what the motive is. We don't have to guess. The Bible tells us. Satan's goal is to "ascend to heaven and set his throne above God's stars – to climb to the highest heavens and be like the Most High" (**Isaiah 14:13-14**).

The Antichrist has the same desire. He aims to usurp the throne of God and raise himself higher than the stars. Satan craves worship (**Matthew 4:9**). So does the Antichrist (**Revelation 13:15**). All this explains why the Antichrist brings the armies of the world to Armageddon. But what about the rest of the world? Why do they come? Why do they want to attack Jesus?

## The Great Rebellion

It's clear why the Antichrist opposes Jesus. It's not so clear why the rest of the world does. The reasons will be varied. But it's likely they'll oppose Jesus for the same reason people have opposed God throughout history. People want to go their own way. They don't like God's commandments, and they don't like having to answer to Him. Those who gather at Armageddon will seek to

cast off the moral and physical constraints of God. In their eyes, God holds them in bondage (*Psalms 2:3*). They love the darkness and hate the light (*John 3:19-20*). But there's another reason. These people will rightfully see God as the source of the Tribulation judgments. How do I know? Because the Bible says so. Consider this. During the Tribulation, the following events take place:

- Global war (*Revelation 6:4*),
- Global famine (*Revelation 6:6*),
- Widespread death (*Revelation 6:8*),
- Stars falling to the earth (*Revelation 6:13*),
- A rain of hail and fire mixed with blood (*Revelation 8:7*),
- A five-month global plague of locusts (*Revelation 9:3-5*),
- The death of one-third of the earth's people (*Revelation 9:15*),
- No rain for three and a half years (*Revelation 11:6*),
- Rivers and oceans turned to blood (*Revelation 11:6*),
- A global plague of sores (*Revelation 16:2*),
- The death of everything in the sea (*Revelation 16:3*),
- The transformation of all rivers and springs to blood (*Revelation 16:4*),
- Scorching fire from the sun (*Revelation 16:8*),
- Global darkness (*Revelation 16:10*),
- A global earthquake so great islands and mountains disappear (*Revelation 16:20*), and
- A terrible hailstorm with 75-pound hailstones (*Revelation 16:21*)

Does all this sound terrible? It will be. To top it off, all this pain and suffering will come in a single seven year period. The people of the earth will acknowledge these judgments come from God (*Revelation 6:15-17; 18:10*), and they'll curse Him for it (*Revelation 16:21*).

They'll curse Him because He controls the plagues (*Revelation 16:9*). They'll curse Him because of their pains and sores (*Revelation 16:11*), and

they'll curse Him because of the terrible hailstorm (**Revelation 16:21**). They'll hate God. Given the chance to attack Him, they'll be more than happy to join in.

Remember, the Tribulation is a time of widespread persecution of Christians. When the Antichrist kills God's two witnesses, the world will celebrate. They'll declare a time of great jubilation. They'll exchange gifts (**Revelation 11:10**). If they hate these two servants of God with such a passion, is it any surprise they'll hate Jesus too? It shouldn't be. Jesus once described a similar scenario. In one of His parables, He told the story of a vineyard owner:

*"A man planted a vineyard. He built a wall around it, dug a pit for pressing out the grape juice, and built a lookout tower. Then he leased the vineyard to tenant farmers and moved to another country. At the time of the grape harvest, he sent one of his servants to collect his share of the crop. But the farmers grabbed the servant, beat him up, and sent him back empty-handed. The owner then sent another servant, but they insulted him and beat him over the head. The next servant he sent was killed. Others he sent were either beaten or killed, until there was only one left – his son whom he loved dearly. The owner finally sent him, thinking, 'Surely they will respect my son.' But the tenant farmers said to one another, 'Here comes the heir to this estate. Let's kill him and get the estate for ourselves!' So they grabbed him and murdered him and threw his body out of the vineyard. 'What do you suppose the owner of the vineyard will do?' Jesus asked. 'I'll tell you – he will come and kill those farmers and lease the vineyard to others.'" **Mark 12:1-9** (NLT)*

When Jesus told his parable, He told it in reference to His First Coming. This parable shows how Israel treated the prophets and eventually the Son of God Himself. But it's also relevant to the two witnesses, the 144,000 evangelists, and the Second Coming. Similar to the way the farmers mistreated the vineyard owner, the world will mistreat all of God's people. In the end, they'll even try to attack Jesus Himself.

## Why Armageddon?

So why do the world's armies gather specifically at Armageddon? We don't know for sure. The decision to gather in that particular location could be

a coincidence, but it could also be intentional. Given the earth-shattering events of the Tribulation, it's possible the Book of Revelation will be one of the most well read books of the end times. It reveals where and when the armies will gather. In addition, Daniel reveals the exact number of days from the abomination of desolation until the Second Coming (***Daniel 12:11***).

Perhaps the armies of the world gather at Armageddon because they know Jesus is coming. Maybe they're itching for a fight. Whatever their reason, they gather to fight against God and his anointed one, Jesus Christ (***Revelation 16:14; Revelation 19:19; Psalm 2***). They challenge the Lord of lords and King of kings. He answers their challenge. What happens when He does makes it clear why Armageddon is connected to complete and total destruction.

## THE GLORIOUS APPEARING

Several weeks after the resurrection, the apostles stood on the Mount of Olives talking with Jesus. After they spoke, Jesus rose into the sky. He went higher and higher until they could barely see Him. Then, they all watched as He disappeared into the clouds. When He did, two angels appeared. “Why are you staring into heaven?” they asked. “Jesus has been taken into heaven, but someday He will return in the same way you saw Him go” (*Acts 1:9-11*).

That someday will be at the end of the seven year Tribulation. Armageddon sets the stage for the climax of human history – the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. As the angels said, Jesus will come back the same way He left. But one thing will be different. When Jesus left for heaven, only a few people saw Him. When He returns from heaven, the whole world will see Him.

Jesus said, “You will see one like the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven” (*Mark 13:26; Mark 14:62; Daniel 7:13*). He also said, just as lightning can be seen from one side of the sky to the other, so it will be at His return (*Matthew 24:27*). Every eye on earth will see Him (*Revelation 1:7*). But before Jesus bursts from the sky, both the heavens and the earth will announce His arrival.

## What Happens When Jesus Returns?

When Jesus returns, His appearance in the sky won't be the first sign of His arrival. Like the formal announcement of a king's entry, several events will let the world know He's about to come back. The sun will go dark (***Revelation 6:12***). The moon will turn red (***Revelation 6:12***). Stars will fall from the sky (***Revelation 6:13; Matthew 24:29***), and the entire sky will peel back and roll up like a scroll (***Revelation 6:14***). Then, the earth will shake (***Revelation 6:12***). The largest earthquake ever recorded (***Revelation 16:18***) will strike the earth. This quake will be so massive, mountains will disappear (***Revelation 16:20***). The people of the world will know who's coming, and they'll hide in caves because they fear His wrath (***Revelation 6:15-17; Isaiah 2:19***).

## The Arrival of Jesus

Finally, Jesus will appear in the sky. Everyone will see Him, and every nation will mourn (***Revelation 1:7***). The whole earth will shine with His glory, and the sound of His coming will be like the roar of rushing waters (***Ezekiel 43:2***). He'll be seated on a white horse (***Revelation 19:11***). His eyes will be like flames of fire (***Revelation 19:12***). He'll be clothed with many crowns and a robe dipped in blood (***Revelation 19:12-13***), and He won't be alone.

The Bible calls Him "the Lord of Heaven's armies" (***Psalms 46:7***), and those armies will be with Him. A multitude will arrive with Jesus. They'll be clothed in the finest of pure white linen, and they'll follow Him on white horses (***Revelation 19:14***). Who are these people? They're all those redeemed by the blood of Jesus. Every saint from the days of Adam and Eve right up until the time of the Tribulation. In fact, if you believe in Jesus, and the rapture hasn't occurred yet, the Lord of Heaven's armies will lead *you* into battle on that day.

When Jesus and His vast heavenly army burst onto the world stage, He won't arrive at Armageddon. Instead, His feet will touch down on the Mount of Olives, and it will split in two (***Zechariah 14:4***). This will fulfill prophecy. Just as the angels said, Jesus will come back the same way He left. After His resurrection, He ascended from the Mount of Olives. During His



Second Coming, He'll descend onto the Mount of Olives. The whole earth will tremble in His presence, and He'll set out to bring justice.

## Why Does Jesus Return?

The first time Jesus came to earth, He came as a lamb (***John 1:29***). He came to bring grace (***John 3:16; Mark 10:45***). When Jesus returns, He'll come as a lion (***Revelation 5:5***). He'll come to bring judgment (***Hebrews 10:27; Acts 17:31***).

Jesus will come as a great warrior – the Lord of Heaven's armies (***Isaiah 47:4***). Then He'll set out to destroy His enemies. These enemies include the Antichrist, the false prophet, and anyone who follows them. He'll unleash the wrath of God (***Revelation 19:15***) and slaughter His enemies all over the earth (***Psalms 110:5-7***). He'll destroy the nations in His anger (***Isaiah 63:6***), and their blood will stain His clothes (***Isaiah 63:3***). The eyes of His enemies will rot in their sockets (***Zechariah 14:12***). The blood of His enemies will form a river more than 180 miles long. This river of blood will be so deep it will reach a horse's bridle (***Revelation 14:20***).

Will Jesus use traditional weapons to destroy His enemies? No. Jesus won't use knives, guns, tanks, missiles, or other conventional weapons of war. The weapon He'll use is more powerful than any weapon ever devised by human beings. He'll use the Word of God.

A sharp sword will come from His mouth to strike down the nations (***Revelation 19:15***). A single breath from His mouth will destroy His enemies (***Isaiah 11:4***). Jesus displayed this same power in the Garden of Gethsemane. When the Temple soldiers came to arrest Him, Jesus spoke and knocked them down (***John 18:6***). When Jesus comes back, He'll use this same power, only on a much larger scale.

Does this surprise you? It shouldn't. The voice of Jesus is so powerful, it causes the heavens and the earth to shake (***Joel 3:16***). He'll make war with the sword of His mouth (***Revelation 2:16***), and it's a powerful weapon. His words alone will destroy all the enemy armies at Armageddon (***Revelation 19:21***).

The Bible says His voice splits mighty cedars (*Psalm 29:5*). It twists mighty oaks and strips forests bare (*Psalm 29:9*). Picture a tornado shredding large trees, and you'll have an idea of the power of His voice. The scriptures say it strikes with bolts of lightning (*Psalm 29:7*). It makes the barren wilderness quake (*Psalm 29:8*). It thunders like mighty waters (*Revelation 1:15*). When He speaks, the earth melts (*Psalm 46:6*).

## The Fate of His Enemies

Jesus will slaughter the armies gathered against Him (*Revelation 19:21*). Again, their blood will form a deep river 180 miles long. The Antichrist will wield power beyond that of any human being before him. No human will be powerful enough to defeat him (*Daniel 8:23-25*). Even angels will struggle against him. He'll be so powerful he'll throw them to the ground (*Daniel 8:10*). This remarkable display of power may explain why the Antichrist is arrogant enough to think he can defeat Jesus in battle. But he doesn't come close. The Bible gives no indication the Antichrist can do anything to hurt, stop, or slow down the Lord of Heaven's armies. Jesus destroys every force gathered against Him. This includes the Antichrist who will be slain by "the breath of the Lord" (*2 Thessalonians 2:8*).

The bodies of God's fallen enemies will litter the landscape. God will prepare a great feast. He'll announce to the birds of the earth, "Come and eat the flesh of kings, generals, and strong warriors. Of horses and their riders. Of all humanity, both free and slave, small and great" (*Revelation 19:17-18*). Then, the Antichrist and false prophet will be thrown into the lake of fire (*Revelation 19:20*).

## The Triumphal Entry

When He first came, Jesus entered Jerusalem through the eastern gate riding on a donkey. This fulfilled a prophecy Zechariah made centuries before (*Zechariah 9:9*). When Jesus returns, He'll once again enter Jerusalem. This time, He'll come as the Lord of Heaven's armies. He'll arrive on the back of a glorious white horse (*Revelation 19:11*). And once again, He'll enter

Jerusalem through the eastern gate. When He does, it will fulfill yet another ancient prophecy.

In 1541, an Ottoman Sultan named Suleiman I sealed the eastern gate. No one knows for sure why he did this. One legend says his goal was to prevent the Messiah's arrival. Jewish prophecies said the Messiah would enter Jerusalem through the eastern gate. Suleiman wanted to end any rumors of the Messiah's arrival, so he sealed the gate. Then, he placed a Muslim cemetery in front of the bricked up gate. He believed no Jewish holy man would walk through and risk defiling himself. At least, that's the legend. We can't be certain this story is true. Nevertheless, the eastern gate remains sealed to this day. You can go to Jerusalem and see for yourself.

Why do I bring this up? Because more than 2,000 years before Suleiman sealed it, Ezekiel said the eastern gate would be shut. No one was to ever open it and pass through it again. Why? Because the Lord, the God of Israel, entered through it (***Ezekiel 44:2***). This refers to Jesus entering through the eastern gate on Palm Sunday (***Matthew 21:1-11***). Since 1541, no one has entered the eastern gate and passed through. During that time, numerous kings and nations ruled over Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. Yet, despite several attempts to open it, the gate remained closed. And just as the Bible said, it remains closed to this day.

But that's not the end of the story. One day the gate will be opened. No man will open it, but Jesus will. Ezekiel said the eastern gate is the gate Jesus will enter through when He returns (***Ezekiel 43:1-4***). The eastern gate is one of eight gates built into the walls surrounding the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. It's the only entrance from the East, and it faces the Mount of Olives. Remember, the Mount of Olives is the place where the angels said Jesus would return (***Acts 1:11***). It's the exact place where His feet will once again touch the earth (***Zechariah 14:4***).

Isaiah said when Jesus comes, He'll approach from the southeast. He'll come from ancient Edom and Bozrah. Today, these areas are in the nation of Jordan (***Isaiah 63:1-6***). Ezekiel said He'll come to the eastern gate. The sound of His arrival will be like the roar of rushing waters. The whole land will shine with His glory. Then, the glory of the Lord will enter the Temple through "the east gateway" (***Ezekiel 43:4***). After being shut for hundreds of

years, the eastern gate will open so the King of kings, the Lord of Heaven's armies, can pass through once again (*Psalm 24:7-10*).

## **The Dawn of a New Earth**

With His enemies defeated, Jesus will establish His kingdom on earth. He'll set up His throne in Jerusalem (*Ezekiel 43:7*), and a new age will begin. In this new era, love and justice will prevail. It's a time when God will live among men.

## THE EVERLASTING KINGDOM

Watch footage of the waning days of World War II, and you'll notice a number of recurring images. Thousands of German prisoners marching in endless columns, defeated and broken... Cities reduced to rubble, bombed into submission... Piles of dead bodies in concentration camps, victims of the Nazi Holocaust... Hitler claimed the Third Reich would last a thousand years. It was a smoldering heap of ruins after twelve. All of Hitler's lies unraveled, and Germany and the world paid a terrible price.

The Tribulation will leave the world in a similar state of destruction. The rise of the Antichrist will end with no less than half of the world's population dead (***Revelation 6:8; Revelation 9:18***). The world will lie in ruin. The Antichrist will promise an eternal kingdom. Jesus will smash it after only seven years.

In the battle of Armageddon, Jesus will achieve absolute victory. The Antichrist and the false prophet will be thrown in the lake of fire. There, they'll spend eternity in torment. Millions who joined them at Armageddon will lay dead. Yet, believe it or not, countless others will survive. Despite incredible worldwide destruction, a number of people will live to the end. Some will be Christians who survived the Antichrist's reign of terror. Others will be followers of the Antichrist who survived Armageddon. As Jesus takes His throne in Jerusalem, one of His first tasks will be to sort out the survivors of the Tribulation.

Jesus will also need to deal with Satan and the fallen angels who followed him. He'll punish the fallen angels who rebelled with Satan. He'll also punish the proud rulers of the nations. He'll round them all up and put them in prison (*Isaiah 24:21-22*). He'll put Satan in chains and throw him into a bottomless pit (*Revelation 20:1-3*). Unfortunately, this isn't a permanent sentence. It only lasts for a thousand years (*Revelation 20:2*). At the end of the thousand years, He'll let Satan out for a short time (*Revelation 20:7-10*). This is why the earthly kingdom of Jesus is called the Millennial Kingdom. The reign of Jesus is eternal, but this particular phase of His kingdom will only last a thousand years.

## The Sheep and Goat Judgment

The Millennial Kingdom will begin with the sheep and goat judgment. Jesus will sit on His throne, gather the nations in His presence, and separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats (*Matthew 25:31-32*). He will place the sheep (His followers) to His right and the goats (His enemies) to His left. Then He will say to those on His right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, and inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world" (*Matthew 25:31-34*). Only Christians who survive the Tribulation will enter the Millennial Kingdom.

But what about other Christians? What about those martyred during the Tribulation? And what about those who lived and died in the centuries before the Tribulation? They'll also enter the Millennial Kingdom. They'll serve Jesus and help Him rule over the nations.

## The Saints

If you believe in Jesus, you'll rule the Millennial Kingdom with Him. He'll give authority over the nations to all who are victorious and obey Him to the end (*Revelation 2:26-27*). Daniel had a vision of a time when the holy people will take over the kingdom (*Daniel 7:22*). He foresaw a time when the sovereignty, power, and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be given to the holy people. This kingdom will last forever, and all rulers will serve and obey the Most High (*Daniel 7:27*). In this kingdom, Christians

will serve as priests (*Revelation 5:10*) and judges (*Revelation 20:4*). The twelve apostles will sit on twelve thrones. From there, they'll judge the twelve tribes of Israel (*Matthew 19:28*).

Martyrs from the Tribulation will also enter the Millennial Kingdom. Anyone beheaded for their testimony and for proclaiming the Word of God will rule the Millennial Kingdom with Jesus (*Revelation 20:4*). The Bible describes these people as “those who did not worship the beast or his statue or take his mark on their forehead or their hands.” If you're a Christian, you too will one day rule the nations with Jesus. Have you ever thought about what your role will be? Jesus will give everyone in His Kingdom a special job. Some will hold positions of high authority. Others will have less prestigious roles. How does Jesus decide what job you'll have? What you do with your life now will determine the answer.

## The Bema Judgment

No one is condemned who puts their faith in Jesus (*Romans 8:1*). But this doesn't mean Christians will avoid all judgment. Christians *will* face a day of judgment. This day of judgment has nothing to do with salvation. It doesn't impact whether or not you go to heaven or hell. Instead, it's a judgment of works. Jesus said everyone will give an account on judgment day for every idle word they speak (*Matthew 12:36*). God searches hearts and examines secret motives to give people the rewards they deserve (*Jeremiah 17:10*). This means God will bring our darkest secrets to light. He'll reveal our true motives and give each person whatever praise is due (*1 Corinthians 4:5*).

This coming day of judgment is called the bema judgment (*2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10*). The word “bema” is a Greek word meaning “platform” or “judgment seat.” In ancient Greece, a bema was an elevated orator's platform. In the Olympic games, the Greeks used it to crown their champions with olive leaf wreaths. In a similar way, Jesus will hand out eternal, heavenly rewards at the bema judgment.

This means some people will enjoy positions of higher status or recognition. They'll receive more authority or responsibility than others. This doesn't mean God will reject anyone at the bema judgment. God loves everyone equally. However, some people will receive greater rewards than others. This

might surprise you if you believe everyone will have equal status in heaven. They won't. Remember, Jesus said some will be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven while others will be called great (*Matthew 5:19*). He also said some who seem important now will be least important then, and some who are seen at least here will be greatest then (*Matthew 19:30*). It's clear not everyone will enjoy equal status.

This is why Jesus said to focus on heavenly treasures. He told us to avoid storing up treasures on earth, where moths and rust destroy and thieves steal (*Matthew 6:19*). Instead, store up treasures in heaven where moths and rust cannot destroy and thieves cannot steal (*Matthew 6:20*). The treasures of heaven are eternal. So don't spend your life hoarding earthly treasures. Money, houses, and possessions are temporary. You can't take any of them to heaven. But you can take your heavenly rewards. Those, you'll have forever.

What are these heavenly rewards? It's beyond our ability to describe them all. As Paul said, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love Him" (*1 Corinthians 2:9*). However, the Bible reveals a few of these rewards. They include:

**The Crown of Victory** (*1 Corinthians 9:25*) – This reward is for those who have overcome the desires of the flesh through careful discipline. To win this crown, you must discipline your body like an athlete.

**The Crown of Rejoicing** (*Philippians 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20*) – This reward is for those whose efforts have led others to become followers of Jesus. To win this crown, make sure you share the Gospel every chance you get.

**The Crown of Righteousness** (*2 Timothy 4:8*) – This reward is for those who eagerly and patiently await the Second Coming. To win this crown, live every day of your life as if Jesus could return at any moment.

**The Crown of Life** (*James 1:12; Revelation 2:10*) – This reward is for those who endure testing, temptation, persecution, suffering, and martyrdom for Jesus. To win this crown, remain faithful to the very end. Love Jesus more than you love your own life.

**The Crown of Glory** (*1 Peter 5:1-4*) – This reward is for those who are placed in positions of authority or responsibility in the church. This crown



brings “never-ending glory and honor.” To win it, you must lead by example. Exhibit love and humility. Carefully watch over those around you.

**Houses, Family, and Property (*Matthew 19:29*)** – Jesus said anyone who gives up “houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or property” for His sake will receive a hundred times as much in return. How many professional investors dream of a 100-fold investment return? Yet the opportunity to receive an everlasting 100-fold return is available for anyone who invests in following Jesus.

**Other Rewards (*Matthew 25:14-30*)** – Jesus says other rewards await those who love Him. But our ability to receive those rewards is directly linked to how we handle the earthly opportunities He gives us. Jesus illustrated this concept in The Parable of the Talents. In this story, a master gave each of his servants talents to invest. Then, he went on a long trip. When he returned, he asked each servant to give an account of what they did in his absence. Some servants received more talents than the others. But in the end, the master rewarded his servants not for how much they returned to him, but for how well they invested what they were given. In the same way, Jesus will reward you for what you did with the resources you had. Did you advance the kingdom of heaven? Did you bring others to know Jesus? If so, you’ll be rewarded.

**Heavenly Mansions (*John 14:2*)** – All of these rewards come in addition to the personal mansion you’ll receive in heaven. Jesus said, “There’s more than enough room in my Father’s house. If this weren’t so, would I have told you I’m going to prepare a place for you?” Millions aspire to live in earthly mansions, but Jesus is preparing heavenly mansions for those who love Him. These mansions will never experience any of the problems of earthly homes, such as fires, floods, and termites.

Does any of this excite you? If you’re reading this, it means you’re still on the earth. And that means you can still earn heavenly rewards. The approach of the end times are a reminder of where your attention should be and what you should do with the little time you have left. In the Book of Revelation, Jesus says, “Hold on to what you have, so no one will take away your crown” (*Revelation 3:11*). Then, He says, “Look, I’m coming soon, and I’m bringing my reward with me to repay all people according to their deeds” (*Revelation 22:12-13*).

## **Describing the Millennial Kingdom**

What will the Millennial Kingdom (*Revelation 20:2-5*) be like? It will be far different from the world we live in today. Jesus will establish His throne in Jerusalem (*Isaiah 24:23*). Each year, the kingdoms of the earth will stream to the city to praise Jesus (*Isaiah 2:2-3*). Any nation that doesn't participate in this annual pilgrimage will experience drought (*Ezekiel 14:17*).

People will be full of wisdom and understanding (*Isaiah 32:4-5*). They'll live long lives. Babies won't die, and the average lifespan will be more than a hundred years old (*Isaiah 65:20*). When people pray to God, He'll answer them before they even tell Him what they need (*Isaiah 65:24*). People won't worry about thieves, invaders, or tyrannical governments. They'll enjoy the fruits of their own labor and live life the way God intended.

Violence will disappear. Animals will no longer hunt each other. People will no longer attack each other. Both humans and animals will live in peace. Wolves and lambs will lie side-by-side. Leopards will lie down with baby goats, and calves and children will be safe with lions (*Isaiah 11:6*). Babies will play with cobras, and they'll be completely safe. Nothing will hurt or destroy, and the whole earth will be filled with people who know and love the Lord (*Isaiah 11:10*).

Day and night as we know it will also disappear. The light of the sun and the moon will fade away (*Isaiah 24:23*). Yet, it will still be continuous day (*Zechariah 14:6*). Even at night, it will still be light because of the glory of the Lord (*Zechariah 14:6-7*).

The Millennial Kingdom will feature its own version of the Appian Way – a great road that goes through a once deserted land. It will be called the Highway of Holiness. Those who are evil or foolish will never walk on it. Only those who follow Jesus will walk on it (*Isaiah 35:8-9*), and it will be free of all danger. The whole world will be filled with peace. The people of the world will beat their swords into plowshares and war will come to an end (*Isaiah 2:4*).

In spite of all this, the Millennial Kingdom won't be perfect. Sin will still lurk in the heart of mankind. And as the Millennial Kingdom draws to an end, it will lead to one final rebellion.

## The Last Rebellion

Those who rule the Millennial Kingdom as servants of Jesus will be free of sin. These are all the Christians who died in ages past, the Tribulation martyrs, and those who were raptured before the Tribulation. They'll rule the world in glorified, resurrected bodies (***Revelation 20:4-6***). But those who become Christians after the rapture and survive until the end of the Tribulation will enter the Millennial Kingdom in non-glorified bodies. They'll repopulate the earth with their children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren.

Many of these people will worship God in their hearts and minds, but not all of them will. Near the end of the Millennial Kingdom, a large group will come to resent Jesus and His rule. They'll have no memory of a world without Jesus, and rebellion will enter their hearts. When Satan is let out of prison at the end of the millennium, he'll lead a massive rebellion against Jesus. He'll go out to deceive the nations in every corner of the earth. He'll gather a mighty army as numerous as the sand along the seashore (***Revelation 20:7-8***). This army will surround Jerusalem. Then, fire will come down from heaven and destroy them (***Revelation 20:9***).

After this final rebellion, God will condemn Satan forever. He'll throw him into the lake of fire. There, along with the Antichrist and the false prophet, he'll be tormented day and night forever (***Revelation 20:10***). Satan will be the first to face judgment. But he won't be the last. Once Satan is thrown in the lake of fire, Jesus will judge all those who died in their sins.

## The Great White Throne Judgment

At the end of the millennium, the rest of the dead will come back to life (***Revelation 20:5***) for the Great White Throne Judgment. This judgment is reserved for all those in history who died in their sins. Jesus said, "That is why I said you will die in your sins. For unless you believe I am who I claim to be, you will die in your sins" (***John 8:24***). At the bema judgment, Jesus handed out rewards. At the great white throne judgment, Jesus will hand out punishments.

He'll sit on a great white throne. The earth and the sky will flee His presence. The dead, both great and small, will stand before Him (***Revelation***

**20:11-12**). Books will be opened. These books contain records of each person's deeds, both good and bad. And all the dead will be judged according to their deeds. The Book of Life will also be opened. Only those who put their trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior will find their names written in the Book of Life. Anyone who's name is not recorded in the Book of Life will be thrown into the lake of fire (**Revelation 20:15**). Like Satan, the Antichrist, and the false prophet, they'll experience torment day and night forever.

## Eternity Begins

After the Great White Throne Judgment, the old heaven and the old earth will disappear. God will create a new heaven and a new earth. In the new heaven and earth, He'll create a holy city called new Jerusalem (**Revelation 21:1-2**). The new Jerusalem is a city beyond compare in its size and magnificence. It's the basis for most of our ideas of what heaven looks like. The main street of this holy city is pure gold. The gold is so pure, it looks like glass.

The city features twelve "pearly gates" – each made from a single pearl (**Revelation 21:21**). John says the city sparkles like a precious stone. He compares it to crystal clear jasper (**Revelation 21:11**). An angel guards each of the twelve pearly gates, and the gates feature the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (**Revelation 21:12**). The city has four sides with three pearl gates on each side (**Revelation 21:13**). The city walls are broad and high with twelve foundation stones, and the names of the twelve apostles are written on each of the stones (**Revelation 21:14**).

The new city shines with the glory of God, and its size is greater than any city in history. The new Jerusalem is 1,400 miles long, 1,400 miles wide, and 1,400 miles high. Its walls are 216 feet thick (**Revelation 21:15-17**). This means the new Jerusalem is either a cube or a pyramid. We don't know for sure. But either way, it's big. To visualize it, imagine a city that takes up almost half of the continental United States and extends that far into the air!

The materials used to build the new Jerusalem only add to its beauty. The city walls are jasper (**Revelation 21:18**). Like the main street, the city itself is pure gold – gold as clear as glass (**Revelation 21:18**). Each of the city's twelve foundation stones is inlaid with a precious stone. These precious stones include jasper, sapphire, agate, emerald, onyx, carnelian, chrysolite,

beryl, topaz, chrysoprase, jacinth, and amethyst (***Revelation 21:18-20***). The human mind cannot begin to grasp the beauty of this heavenly city. Think about it. Pure gold as clear as glass? An entire wall made of jasper? And foundation stones inlaid with some of the most colorful and exotic stones ever created.

## The River of Life

Along with all the shining brilliance of precious metals and the colorful landscape of rare jewels, the new Jerusalem features a mighty river. Known as the “river of life,” its life giving waters flow through the city. They go from the throne of Jesus down through the center of the main street (***Revelation 22:1-2***). The river is clear as crystal with a “tree of life” on each side. These two trees bear twelve crops of fruit. Each grows a fresh crop each month. The fruit from these trees will be used as food (***Ezekiel 47:12***), while the leaves will be used as medicine (***Revelation 22:2***). These leaves will never turn brown or fall off, and their branches will always bear fruit (***Ezekiel 47:12***).

The Bible describes a city bursting with life, sustained by the living water of Jesus Christ. Springs flow in the wilderness and water the wasteland. Springs of water irrigate the land, and plants flourish where desert jackals once lived (***Isaiah 35:6-7***). To anyone who wants to drink this water, Jesus offers a free invitation. He says, “Let anyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who desires drink freely from the water of life” (***Revelation 22:17***). As Jesus told the woman at the well, “Those who drink the water I give them will never be thirsty again. It will become a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life” (***John 4:14***). The water in the new Jerusalem is more than the river of life. Jesus is the life giving water. He’s the centerpiece of the new city.

## God Will Dwell Among Us

The most glorious part of the new Jerusalem has nothing to do with its material splendor. It has nothing to do with the river of life and its crystal clear waters. It has nothing to do with the trees of life on either side. The best part of the new Jerusalem is this – God Himself will dwell among men

(**Revelation 21:3**). He will make His home among His people. He will live with them, and they will be His people. In the new Jerusalem, Jesus will illuminate all life. This is why the glory of the sun and moon will fade. The Lamb of God will give the city its light. There will be no need for a temple in the city. Jesus will be its temple (**Revelation 21:22-23**). God will remove the curse He placed on the earth in the Garden of Eden (**Isaiah 11:6-9; Romans 8:20-21**). He will sit on His throne. People will see His face, serve Him, and worship Him. His name will be written on their foreheads, and they will reign with Him forever and ever (**Revelation 22:3-5**).

In short, the new Jerusalem is heaven. It's the final destination of those who believe in Jesus. Once you become His follower, you become a citizen of heaven – the place where Jesus lives (**Philippians 3:20**). Because Jesus lives there, the new Jerusalem is a place of continuous joy and happiness (**Isaiah 65:18**). Disabilities will no longer exist. The blind will see. The deaf will hear. The paralyzed will walk, and the mute will sing with joy (**Isaiah 35:5-6**). No one will hear sounds of weeping or crying (**Isaiah 65:19**). God's people will enter the city singing and crowned with everlasting joy. Sorrow and mourning will be gone, replaced with joy and gladness (**Isaiah 35:10**). God Himself will wipe away every tear. And death, sorrow, crying, and pain will be gone forever (**Revelation 21:4**).

## Everything We've Dreamed

The description of the new Jerusalem provides a laundry list of everything mankind says it longs for. Fellowship with God. Justice. Everlasting life. Exquisite beauty. No more fear, crying, or pain. By every account, the new Jerusalem is the paradise the world has always dreamed of. Almost everyone would say they'd like to live in such a place. Unfortunately, not everyone will. What about you? Are you sure you'll be a citizen in the new Jerusalem? If not, now is the time to become certain. If you follow Jesus, you can live in the new Jerusalem. You can experience all the joys of heaven. But there's another benefit. You can avoid all the horrors of the Tribulation. Why do I say that? Because the next event on God's prophetic calendar is to gather all those who belong to Him.

## THE RAPTURE

Imagine you're traveling through the desert and you come across a man building a giant wooden boat. It's 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. Would such a sight surprise you? What if the man told you he was building it to prepare for a great flood? Would you think he's crazy?

Many centuries ago, this described Noah. God told Noah to prepare for a great flood, one that would cover the entire earth. He gave Noah the dimensions for a huge ship (*Genesis 6:15*), and Noah went to work building it. While the Bible doesn't say, we can imagine the people of Noah's day made fun of him. They didn't believe the flood would come. But it came.

This is what the end times will be like. Many people dismiss bible prophecy. They believe the Tribulation will never come. Like the people of Noah's day, they won't realize their mistake until it's too late. Jesus said the time before He returns will be like "the days of Noah" (*Matthew 24:27-39*). People will eat, drink, work, and celebrate as though everything is fine. In Noah's day, they did these things right up until the moment Noah and his family entered the ark and the flood waters came. Likewise, as the end times approach, people will do these things right up until the day the Tribulation begins.

In Noah's day, God poured out His wrath on a world filled with violence and evil (*Genesis 6:5-13*). God spared Noah and his family from this worldwide judgment. In the Tribulation, God will once again pour out His wrath on a world filled with violence and evil. And just as He did with Noah and his family, God will rescue a select few from the terrible events to come.

## The Rapture

Over the years, I've heard people say, "We all die. No one lives forever." I'm sure you've heard it too. Maybe you've even said it. And who could argue? No one has a 200-year-old relative or a neighbor approaching his 300<sup>th</sup> birthday. Simply look around, and you'll see everyone eventually dies. But will that always be the case? Is it really true to say "everyone will die"?

No. Not everyone will die (**1 Corinthians 15:51**). One generation of Christians will avoid death. They'll escape the grave all together. This will happen because of an event known as "the rapture," and it's the blessed hope of all Christians (**Titus 2:13**). Eventually, God will transform every believer. He'll take our current bodies and turn them into heavenly bodies. These new bodies will never die (**1 Corinthians 15:53**). For most people, this will only happen when they die. But for one generation, it will take place while they're still alive.

## What is the Rapture?

Some people claim the Bible doesn't mention the rapture. Nothing could be further from the truth. While it's true some English translations don't use the actual word "rapture," it's still there. It comes from the Latin word "rapio" (**1 Thessalonians 4:17**), and it means "to catch away" or "to snatch up." The Greek translation of the same word is "harpazo." Some churches use this word instead of the word "rapture." Some call the rapture "the translation." But it doesn't matter if you call it the rapture, harpazo, or something else. What matters is that it's coming.

The rapture is a future event Paul revealed to the early church. One day, Jesus will come down from heaven with a loud shout (**1 Thessalonians 4:16**). When He does, the bodies of all believers who have died will rise from the grave and transform into glorified bodies. Those believers who are still alive will also receive glorified bodies. In this way, all who believe in Jesus will take part in the rapture (**1 Corinthians 15:23**). Together, they'll be caught up in the clouds where they'll be united with Jesus and live with Him forever (**1 Thessalonians 4:17**).



Just as we have bodies on earth, we'll have bodies in heaven (*1 Corinthians 15:40,44*). Our earthly bodies return to dust when we die. But if you believe in Jesus, God will raise your body to live forever. Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but God will raise them in glory (*1 Corinthians 15:42-43*). The new body you receive won't break down. It won't age, and it won't get sick. It will be a heavenly body like the one Jesus had after the resurrection.

Jesus had a real, physical body. He was more than a ghost or a spirit (*Luke 24:39*). He ate food (*Luke 24:42-43*). Thomas touched Him and put his hands in the crucifixion wounds (*John 20:27*). These wounds showed the glory of Jesus and what He did for us. The glorified body of Jesus was not broken. He conquered the grave and received a new glorious, heavenly body. He was the first fruit of the resurrection, paving the way for you and me (*1 Corinthians 15:20*).

In His glorified body, Jesus could appear anywhere He wanted (*John 20:26*), and He could fly in the air (*Acts 1:9*). Think about how much you enjoy getting new clothes. Imagine getting a new body. If you're a Christian, you will. You'll receive a glorious body like His on the day of the rapture. Your dying body will transform into a body that will never die. Your mortal body will become immortal, and death will be swallowed up in victory (*1 Corinthians 15:53-55*).

All this will happen quickly – in the blink of an eye (*1 Corinthians 15:52*). The Bible uses the Greek word “atomos” to describe the length of time. Atomos is where the word “atom” comes from. It describes something so small it can't be divided. This is how it will be with the rapture. It will happen in an instant, and the world will descend into chaos.

## What Will Happen on Earth?

In less than a second, every Christian on earth will disappear. Millions will be gone. One moment they'll be present, the next they won't. Jesus described it this way. He said, “Two men will be working together in a field. One will be taken, the other left. Two women will be grinding flour in a mill. One will be taken, the other left” (*Matthew 24:40-41*).

Imagine the impact on the world they leave behind. What will happen when cars lose their drivers? When airliners lose their pilots? If tens of millions or hundreds of millions of people disappear, what will happen to the global economy? What will happen to society, culture, and international relations? The rapture will do more than simply take millions of Christians. It will take doctors, nurses, policemen, firemen, and military and governmental leaders. It will take counselors, neighbors, and best friends.

It will also take millions of productive workers and taxpayers. The financial impact will be catastrophic. Millions of people who pay mortgages will disappear. Once they're gone, who will make those payments? What will happen to banks when those payments aren't made? Think foreclosure will help? It won't. With millions of vacant homes, housing prices will plummet. Banks will face a crisis worse than the Great Recession.

And that's just the impact from a battered housing market. What happens to the world's businesses when key employees disappear? When millions of customers vanish? When suppliers are gone? Large corporations and small businesses alike will be pushed to the brink of bankruptcy. Global markets will plunge. The financial carnage will likely result in the worst economy since the Great Depression.

And what will happen to the geopolitical landscape? Overnight, the global power structure will shift. Today, the United States is the world's most powerful nation. But with a high percentage of Christians, U.S. power will likely dwindle after the rapture. Some nations will lose more people than others, and those least impacted will be best able to fill the power vacuum. The loss of key military personnel will increase the odds of a devastating war. Dictators will have a green light to carry out aggression against neighboring states. Conflict will escalate and possibly spiral out of control.

What about society itself? What will happen when every Christian disappears? Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth" (*Matthew 5:13*). In the first century, salt was a preservative. It kept food from spoiling. Christians serve the same function in society. They're the salt that keeps spiritual rot and decay from taking hold. What will happen to young people when pastors, teachers, and mentors disappear? What will happen to culture when Christian lawmakers and judges disappear? Nations will rot from within.

The rapture will create an epidemic of anxiety and depression. Entire families will disappear. Husbands and wives will go missing. Children will vanish. People will frantically search for their missing loved ones. The stress and trauma for those left behind will be enormous. Regardless of who's taken and who's not, the rapture will touch every life on earth.

Because of its global impact, the rapture will be the biggest news story in media history. It will dominate the 24/7 news networks. It will overwhelm the Internet and be the number one topic of conversation. Speculation will run rampant. But millions will know exactly what's happened. They'll remember reading books like this one or hearing others talk about the rapture. Yet despite all the books and films explaining the rapture, millions more will accept alternative explanations. They'll embrace endless theories to explain the missing.

## When Does the Rapture Occur?

When will all this happen? Not everyone agrees. The timing of the rapture is still a subject of debate. Some believe it will come before the Tribulation. This is called the “pre-Tribulation rapture.” Some believe it will occur in the middle of the Tribulation. This is called the “mid-Tribulation rapture.” Still others believe it will happen at the end of the Tribulation, when Jesus physically returns to earth. This is called the “post-Tribulation rapture.” Whatever position you hold has nothing to do with your salvation. The Bible says if you declare Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart He rose from the dead, you will be saved (**Romans 10:9**). It does not say, “Believe in XYZ viewpoint of the rapture, and you will be saved.” Many God-fearing Christians hold opposing views on this subject. However, I believe a careful study of the Bible shows the rapture will occur *before* the Tribulation.

Why do I say this? Here are just a few reasons:

**1) A Promise From Jesus** – In the Book of Revelation, Jesus makes a promise. If you persevere in following Him, He promises to keep you from “the time of testing that will come upon the whole world” (**Revelation 3:10**). The Tribulation is the only time of testing the Bible describes as coming upon the whole world. So Jesus is saying His faithful followers will

avoid the Tribulation. This is only possible if the rapture takes place before the Tribulation.

**2) God's Wrath is not for Christians** – The Tribulation is a clear outpouring of God's wrath (*Zephaniah 1:15*). It's a time of judgment (*Revelation 14:7*) when God will test those who belong to this world (*Revelation 3:10*). The Tribulation judgments are not for Christians. God made Jesus, who never sinned, to be an offering for your sin so you can be made right with God through Him (*2 Corinthians 5:21*). Christians are God's children (*1 John 3:1*), and God has not appointed His children to wrath. Paul said so in his letter to the Thessalonians. He said God chose to save us through Jesus, not to pour out His anger (*1 Thessalonians 5:9*). The Bible repeats this promise over and over. If you're a Christian, it says God will save you from His condemnation (*Romans 5:9*). He'll rescue you from the terrors of the coming judgment (*1 Thessalonians 1:10*).

Now, does this mean you'll avoid suffering? Absolutely not. Jesus said those who follow Him will have many trials and sorrows (*John 16:33*). He said to follow Him, you must be willing to pick up your own cross (*Matthew 16:24*). Paul said Christians are destined for such troubles (*1 Thessalonians 3:3*). Have no doubt – if you follow Jesus, you'll suffer. But Christian suffering is different from "God's wrath." God's anger only falls on those who disobey Him (*Ephesians 5:6*). Christians are not perfect, but the blood of Jesus saves them from God's judgment (*John 3:36*).

Think that's wishful thinking? Examples from the Bible show it's not. God spared Noah and his family from the judgment of the flood (*Genesis 6:17-18*). God brought Lot and his family out of Sodom and Gomorrah before He judged those cities and destroyed them with fire (*Genesis 19:29*). Likewise, the Tribulation is a time of God's judgment on the whole world, and it's in God's character to spare the faithful from His judgment.

**3) The "Restrainer" Will Be Removed Before the Tribulation** – The only force holding back the Antichrist is the Holy Spirit (*2 Thessalonians 2:6*). The Bible says the Antichrist will only be revealed when "the restrainer" is taken out of the way (*2 Thessalonians 2:7*). This means the church will be gone when the Antichrist comes to power. The Holy Spirit working through the church is "the restrainer," and the Holy Spirit lives in the heart

of everyone who follows Jesus (*1 Corinthians 3:16*). If the rapture takes millions of Christians from the earth, the loss of their restraining influence will pave the way for the Antichrist.

But the Bible gives additional details. It says the Tribulation will begin when the Antichrist signs a seven year covenant (or treaty) with Israel (*Daniel 9:27*). When the Antichrist does that, he'll become known to the world. And how could he be known to the world unless "the restrainer" is first removed? He can't. That means the rapture must take place before the Antichrist makes his covenant with Israel. And since that covenant signals the beginning of the Tribulation, the rapture must take place *before* the Tribulation.

**4) Descriptions of the Rapture and the Second Coming are Different –** Some people claim the rapture happens at the end of the Tribulation. This means the rapture and the Second Coming take place at the same time. However, if you read descriptions of both events, you'll notice some major differences. These differences are so great, they can't possibly describe the same event. Here are just a few examples:

- At the rapture, believers meet Jesus in the air (*1 Thessalonians 4:17*). At the Second Coming, they return to earth with Jesus as a heavenly army (*1 Thessalonians 4:14; Revelation 19:14*).
- At the rapture, believers get new glorified bodies and go to heaven (*1 Corinthians 15:51-54*). At the Second Coming, glorified believers come down from heaven to meet earthly believers on earth (*1 Thessalonians 4:14*).
- The rapture delivers the church from the Tribulation (*Revelation 3:10*). The Second Coming provides relief for believers who endured the Tribulation (*Mark 13:27; Matthew 25:34*).
- No signs appear before the rapture (*Matthew 24:36*). Many signs appear before the Second Coming (*Matthew 24:28-29*).
- At the rapture, the church goes to heaven (*1 Thessalonians 4:17; Revelation 4:1*). At the Second Coming, Jesus comes to earth (*Revelation 11:15, 21:3*).

- The rapture could happen at any moment (*Matthew 24:42, 25:13; Revelation 3:3*). The Second Coming happens after the Tribulation (*2 Thessalonians 2:8; Revelation 19:11-21*).
- The rapture will only impact believers (*1 Thessalonians 4:16-17*). The Second Coming will impact all of humanity (*Mark 13:26*).
- The rapture is a time of joy (*1 Thessalonians 4:18*). The Second Coming is a time of mourning (*Matthew 24:30*).

These verses draw a clear distinction between the rapture and the Second Coming. Comparing the two, it's easy to see they're different events. This means scripture doesn't support the idea of a post-Tribulation rapture.

**5) The Bible Doesn't Mention the Church in the Tribulation** – The Bible never links the church with the Tribulation. For instance, the second and third chapters of Revelation deal exclusively with the church. But in the fourth chapter, John (a member of the church) describes seeing an open door in heaven. A voice tells him, “Come up here,” and he's instantly in the Spirit (*Revelation 4:1-2*). Chapters 6 through 18 then go on to describe the Tribulation. Nowhere in those chapters is the church mentioned. After the Tribulation passages are finished, the church reappears in chapters 19 through 22.

There isn't a single passage in the Bible concerning the Tribulation or “the Day of the Lord” where the church is found. Now, does this mean Christians don't exist during the Tribulation? No. Christians from the *current church age* won't be on the earth during the Tribulation. But many people will become Christians *during* the Tribulation. Some will do so because of the rapture. They'll know what happened to all the missing. Others will see the fulfillment of other end times prophecies and devote their lives to Jesus. The Tribulation will be a time of great worldwide spiritual revival (*Revelation 7:9-14*), and many Christians will pay with their lives (*Revelation 20:4*). However, these are all people who will become Christians during the Tribulation. The rapture will take all other Christians beforehand.

**6) The Sheep and Goat Judgment** – When Jesus returns, He said He'll gather the nations and separate the people “as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats” (*Matthew 25:32*). Jesus said the sheep are the righteous

and the goats are the unrighteous (*Matthew 25:31-46*). This raises some important questions.

If Christians are raptured when Jesus returns, who are the sheep in the Sheep and Goat Judgment? If the rapture occurs at the end of the Tribulation as some people claim, then who will populate the earth during the Millennial Kingdom? These questions answer themselves. Neither event can happen unless Christians remain on the earth. If the rapture takes place after the Tribulation, Christians won't be around for these events. Once again, the idea of a post-Tribulation rapture conflicts with scripture.

**7) The Rapture Can Happen at Any Moment** – But the most important reason to believe the rapture will occur before the Tribulation is this – the rapture is a signless event. No one knows when Jesus will come back for His followers. It could happen in the next minute, a year from now, or well into the future. This is called “imminence.” It's the belief Jesus could return at any moment, and it's been the blessed hope of Christians throughout history. Jesus told a number of parables to drive home this point. In the parable of the master and the servant, Jesus said the master will return *unannounced* and *unexpected* (*Matthew 24:50*). In the parable of the ten bridesmaids, Jesus said, “Keep watch! For you do not know the day or hour of my return” (*Matthew 25:13*).

Jesus also said He would come like a thief in the night “when least expected” (*Matthew 24:42-44*). Over and over, Jesus taught He could return at any moment with no precondition. But this is only possible with a pre-Tribulation rapture. If the rapture occurs in the middle of the Tribulation or at the end, it *can't* be imminent. His return can't come suddenly, at any time, or be a surprise. Why? Because some or all of the Tribulation events will need to occur before His return. Once these earth-shattering events take place, the return of Jesus won't surprise anyone.

This fact alone makes it impossible for the rapture to occur after the Tribulation begins. Both a mid-Tribulation or a post-Tribulation rapture require major events to precede them. Remember, when asked about His return, Jesus said it will be like the days of Noah (*Matthew 24:37-39*). People will be eating, drinking, working, and feasting right up until the moment He comes. Everything will seem normal. No one will suspect a

major event like the rapture is about to happen. However, this can't be true during or after the Tribulation. Remember, each of the following events will take place during that time:

- Global war (***Revelation 6:4***),
- Global famine (***Revelation 6:6***),
- Widespread death (***Revelation 6:8***),
- Stars falling to the earth (***Revelation 6:13***),
- A rain of hail and fire mixed with blood (***Revelation 8:7***),
- A five-month global plague of locusts (***Revelation 9:3-5***),
- The death of one-third of the earth's people (***Revelation 9:15***),
- No rain for three and a half years (***Revelation 11:6***),
- Rivers and oceans turned to blood (***Revelation 11:6***),
- A global plague of sores (***Revelation 16:2***),
- The death of everything in the sea (***Revelation 16:3***),
- The transformation of all rivers and springs to blood (***Revelation 16:4***),
- Scorching fire from the sun (***Revelation 16:8***),
- Global darkness (***Revelation 16:10***),
- A global earthquake so great islands and mountains disappear (***Revelation 16:20***), and
- A terrible hailstorm with 75-pound hailstones (***Revelation 16:21***)

If all those things happen, do you really believe the world will go on as if nothing unusual is taking place? Could the rapture possibly surprise anyone under conditions like those? I don't think so. People will catch on. Even the most ardent atheist would expect Jesus to return at that point. Again, Jesus said, "No one knows the day or hour of my return" (***Matthew 24:36***). Yet the Book of Revelation says the Second Coming will occur exactly 2,520 days after the Antichrist confirms a covenant with Israel (***Revelation 11:3, 12:6***). So when Jesus said no one knows the day of His return, He was talking about the rapture.



Throughout the Bible, Jesus tells us to be alert and ready for this event. Why? Because it can happen at any moment. Jesus said He'll come when least expected (***Matthew 24:44***), so keep watch (***Matthew 24:42***). Once again, if you think the rapture takes place during or after the Tribulation, why would you keep watch? If you knew the Tribulation had to come first, would you eagerly await the return of Jesus?

No. You wouldn't look for Jesus at all. Instead, you would look for the events of the Tribulation. But the Bible doesn't say to fix your eyes on end times events. It doesn't say to eagerly await the coming of the Antichrist, the mark of the beast, or a global government. The Bible says to keep your eyes fixed on Jesus (***Hebrews 12:2***). It says to eagerly await ***His*** return (***Philippians 3:20***).

Is this what you do? Do you eagerly await His return? Or are you fearful of what the future holds? If you believe in Jesus, you have no reason to fear future events. You have no reason to fear the present. Even if you enter the Tribulation and face persecution, you have nothing to fear. God is with you. Jesus said "fear not he who can destroy your body, but he who can destroy your soul" (***Luke 12:4-5; Matthew 10:28***). Of course, that's if you know Jesus. What if you don't?



## ARE YOU READY?

Jesus said a faithful servant is one the master can put in charge of feeding and overseeing his household. If the master returns and finds his servant has done a good job, he'll be rewarded. But what if the servant is evil and thinks, "My master won't be back for a while"? What if he beats the other servants and spends all his time partying and getting drunk? Then, the master will return unannounced and unexpected. He'll cut the servant to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites (*Matthew 24:45-51*).

This story is a warning of what will happen to those who don't faithfully serve Him. Jesus is the master. When He returns, will you be ready? If you aren't absolutely sure, you need to find out right now. Nothing in life is more important. Why? Because your relationship with Jesus determines your eternal destiny.

Many people go through their whole lives and never give any thought to where they'll spend eternity. Don't make the same mistake. Where you spend eternity is *the* biggest decision you'll ever make. Do you know where you'll spend it? Many people think they do. They think they'll go to heaven. In fact, they think everyone they know will go to heaven – everyone, that is, except for "bad people." But who decides who's "bad"? Where do you draw the line between a mass murderer and a "good person"? You may think you know the answer, but the Bible says there's no line.

God says "no one is good" (*Romans 3:10*). That's right. No one. *All* have fallen short of the glory of God (*Romans 3:23*). We're all sinners. Not

one person on earth is “good.” Not one is righteous (**Romans 3:10**). Why? Why would God create us, and then condemn us all to a life of sin? The better question is “Why are we like this?” And the answer is simple – God gave us free will.

God gave Adam and Eve freedom to choose, and they chose to break God’s law. Because they did, everyone born from then to now has been born into a life of sin. We can’t help it. It’s in our nature to break God’s law. And that means everyone is guilty. Don’t believe me? Then ask yourself this question. Have you ever stolen anything? I mean *anything*. I’m not talking about robbing a bank or stealing from Wal-Mart. I’m talking about anything. It could be as seemingly insignificant as a cookie or a piece of bubble gum. Have you ever done that? If so, you broke God’s eighth commandment (**Exodus 20:15**).

Have you ever lusted in your heart (**Matthew 5:27-28; Exodus 20:14**)? Have you ever coveted something someone else had (**Exodus 20:17**)? If you’ve done either, you’ve broken God’s law. You’re a sinner. And believe me, it gets worse. God says if you break even one commandment – just one – you’re guilty of breaking them all (**James 2:10**). This means you’re condemned, and the penalty is physical and spiritual death (**Romans 6:23**). No good deed or series of good deeds will ever be enough to pay your penalty and cover your sin.

Sin separates you from a Holy God (**Isaiah 59:2**), and if you die in your sins (**John 8:24**), you’ll be separated from God for eternity (**2 Thessalonians 1:9**). If that happens, you don’t go to heaven. You go to hell. So don’t buy into the idea everyone goes to heaven when they die. That’s a lie.

Hell is a terrible place. The Bible calls it “a lake of fire” (**Revelation 20:15**). It’s a place where “blazing coals and burning sulfur rain down on the wicked” (**Psalms 11:6**). It’s a place of sorrows (**Psalms 18:5**). Jesus says it’s a place of torment (**Luke 16:23**), outer darkness (**Matthew 8:12**), and weeping and gnashing of teeth (**Matthew 13:42**). It’s a place of no relief (**Revelation 14:11**) and eternal punishment (**Matthew 25:46**). Hell is a terrible, terrible place. And humanity is marching straight into it. Our sin makes us an enemy of God. It condemns us to eternity in hell.

Does this mean all hope is lost? No. Far from it. Why? Because God provided a solution.

## The Solution

What is this solution? Only this... Because God loves you (**John 3:16**), He died **for** you (**Romans 5:8**). He paid the penalty for your sin so you don't have to face hell. How did He do this? He sent Jesus. God sent His one and only Son to die in your place (**John 3:16-17**). He willingly went to the cross. He allowed His captors to nail Him to it. He freely spilled His blood for you and me. Because He did this, Jesus wiped away our sins (**1 John 1:7**). This was the only way. Because without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness (**Hebrews 9:22**).

In Jesus, you're forgiven. Not because of anything you've done. But because of God's grace. It's a free gift. God's grace saves you when you believe in His one and only Son. You're not saved as a result of anything you've done. No amount of good deeds make you "good" in the eyes of God. Otherwise, you could boast (**Ephesians 2:8-9**). No. It's only through God's grace that you can be saved.

This is great news. You can avoid hell. You can experience all the joy of heaven. You can become an adopted son or daughter of God Himself (**Ephesians 1:5**). But there is a catch. What is it? While God's grace is freely given, you must accept it. If you reject it, you'll die in your sins (**John 8:24**). Remember, God gave you free will. He'll let you refuse His saving grace. He'll let you step right over His dead body and march straight into hell. Don't make that choice. God gave everything to ransom you. He died a terrible death to save you. He died so you can live. Don't let His sacrifice go to waste. Don't let pride stand in your way.

If you think you're already good enough – if you think you don't need God – you're going down the wrong path. It's the road to ruin, and many people choose it. They refuse forgiveness of their sins and condemn themselves to eternity in hell. Don't be one of them. Choose the narrow road and the gate to life. Choose the gate few people ever find (**Matthew 7:13-14**). Jesus is the gate (**John 10:9**). He's the way, the truth, and the life, and no

one gets to heaven except through Him (*John 14:6*). Jesus is your Messiah. He's your Savior. He's the one you've been looking for your whole life.

## Two Roads

Jesus said you're either for Him or against Him (*Matthew 12:30*). These are the only two roads in life. One leads to death and destruction (*Matthew 7:13*). The other leads to eternal life (*Matthew 7:14*). Jesus said the road to destruction is broad and wide, and many take it. But the road to life is narrow and difficult, and only a few ever find it (*Matthew 7:13-14*). Those who chase after the things of this world are on the wide road. Those who follow Jesus find life on the narrow road.

This is the only road to heaven. The world tells you many paths lead to heaven, but that's a lie. All the world's religions are not all true. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (*John 14:6*). No one. Not some or a few. **No one.** Jesus is the **only** way to heaven. Absent the cross, you have no hope.

Many people reject this idea. They think it's exclusionary. They think it's intolerant. "How," they ask, "could a just God keep people out of heaven?" The more accurate question is, "How could He not?" Remember, we're guilty. Hell is the punishment we deserve.

Choose the narrow road. If you pick up your cross and follow Jesus (*Matthew 16:24*), God's blessings will flow into your life. If you follow Jesus, He'll say to you, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father – inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world" (*Matthew 25:34*). In Jesus, you'll find fullness of joy (*Psalms 16:11*), freedom (*2 Corinthians 3:17*), and peace (*Romans 5:1*). In Jesus, you'll find rest for your soul (*Matthew 11:28-30*).

Don't choose the broad road. If you reject Jesus, you're on your own. His blood won't cover your sins. When God looks at you, He'll see rebellion. Remember, no one is righteous – not one person (*Romans 3:10*). On your own, you're a sinner. If you refuse the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross, if you reject the blood He shed for you, then you're on your own come judgment

day. And make no mistake, the Bible is clear. A day of judgment is coming (*2 Corinthians 5:10*).

On Judgment Day, the earth and sky will flee His presence, and the Book of Life will be opened. If your name is not found in it, you'll be thrown into the lake of fire (*Revelation 20:11-15*). That doesn't have to happen. Choose Jesus now. Today is the day of salvation (*2 Corinthians 6:2*). Not tomorrow or next month. ***Right now.*** Invite Jesus into your life. Accept His free gift. Make sure your name is in the Book of Life. As Jesus says, "I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends" (*Revelation 3:20*). Jesus is standing at the door of your heart. Right now, He's knocking. Let Him in. If you do, your life will change. Your eternal destination will change. And if the Tribulation comes in your lifetime, you'll avoid all of its horrors.

In reading this book, you now know more about the end times than most people. You understand the purpose of the Tribulation. You know about the Antichrist, the false prophet, and the bowl judgments. You understand the mark of the beast and the abomination of desolation. But make sure you understand the most important figure of all – Jesus. To study the end times is to study Jesus. All prophecy points to Him (*Revelation 19:10*). Jesus Himself said so. He said the law and the prophets are all about Him (*Luke 24:27,44*). And Jesus says you're either for Him or against Him. Which one are you?





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Britt Gillette is a devoted follower of Jesus Christ, husband to Jen, and father to Samantha, Tommy, and Elizabeth. He and his family live in Virginia.

Britt is also the author of:

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*11 Reasons Jesus Will Return in Our Lifetime*

### ***Racing Toward Armageddon:***

*Why Advanced Technology Signals the End Times*

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Britt writes a number of articles about Jesus Christ and bible prophecy on his website, [www.end-times-bible-prophecy.com](http://www.end-times-bible-prophecy.com). Please drop by and visit! You can also connect with him on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/brittgilletteauthor](http://www.facebook.com/brittgilletteauthor).

