

THE END

**A Chronological
Study of the Last
Days**



**Student
Workbook**

Glen A. Blanscet

THE END

*A Chronological Study of
the Last Days*

Student Outline

Glen A. Blanscet

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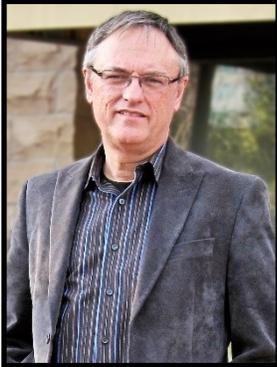
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Therefore keep watch,
because you do not know the day or the hour.

--Matthew 25:13

The Author



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Table of Contents

The Author	vii
Course Description	xi
Session 1 Introduction to End Times Prophecy	1
Session 2 The Book of Revelation and the “Times of the Gentiles”	5
Session 3 The “Things Which Are:” Letters to the Seven Churches	13
Session 4 Events Preceding the Tribulation: The Reestablishment and Invasion of Israel	25
Session 5 Events Preceding the Tribulation: America, One-World Government, and the Antichrist	29
Session 6 Events Preceding the Tribulation: The Rapture, the Third Temple, and Other Events	33
Session 7 The Beginning of the Tribulation: The Covenant with Israel	37
Session 8 The First Half of the Tribulation: Seals, Trumpets, 144,000 Jews, and Two Witnesses	43
Session 9 The Middle of the Tribulation: War in Heaven and on Earth	51
Session 10 The Middle of the Tribulation: The Abomination of Desolation	57
Session 11 The Second Half of the Tribulation: Prerequisites for Jesus’ Second Coming	67
Session 12 The Second Half of the Tribulation: Armageddon and the Second Coming	71
Session 13 The Millennium	75
Session 14 The Olivet Discourse	79
Session 15 Eternity	85
Timeline Charts	89
Other Books by the Author	91

Course Description

ONE OF THE MOST fascinating topics in the Bible is the study of prophecy and what the Bible has to say about the future. For centuries, Christians have believed they were living in the last days. Every worldwide crisis triggers a new wave of expectation and anticipation of Christ's return. In our own lifetime, we have seen global wars, pandemics and plagues, more reports of earthquakes of greater magnitude and intensity, increasingly volatile weather patterns, and a growing hostility toward Christianity and Christians. Every new event causes people to wonder whether "the end" truly is near.

The purpose of this course is to study the biblical prophecies regarding the Last Days—the Rapture of the Church, the Tribulation, the Millennium, and the events during these time periods—to get a deeper understanding of what the Bible tells us to expect. The goal is to review these end time events in chronological sequence and to consider such questions as: What events must happen before the Rapture can occur? What events will occur after the Rapture? What does the Bible say America's role will be in the Last Days? What will happen to Israel? What does all of this mean to us today?

One thing we will *not* do in this course is set or advocate any specific dates for these events. In fact, in my studies for this course, I have refused to use any commentaries or authors who attempt to do so. Jesus made it clear that "no one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Matthew 24:36).

This is both a challenging and an interesting course aimed at helping Christians and others who are interested in biblical prophecy to put into perspective the numerous prophecies in the Bible regarding the end times and the order of their occurrences. My prayer is that students will develop a better understanding of what Scripture has to say about the future and will be encouraged by the fact that Jesus is returning again one day to claim His final victory over sin, death, and evil.

Session 1
INTRODUCTION TO END TIMES PROPHECY

I. ESCHATOLOGY: THE DOCTRINE OF THE LAST THINGS. The study of eschatology involves all aspects of the future. It includes the study of Christ's return, the intermediate state of the dead, the resurrection of the dead, eternal punishment, and heaven. This course focuses primarily on the events of Christ's return, including the Rapture, the Tribulation, the Millennium, and Eternity.

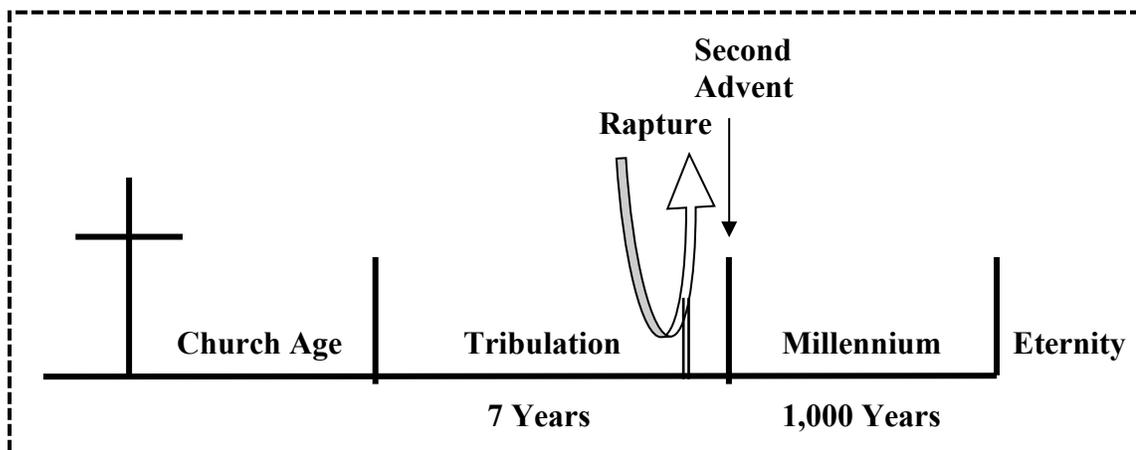
II. OUR APPROACH TO END TIMES PROPHECY

A. The Reasons for Studying Prophecy

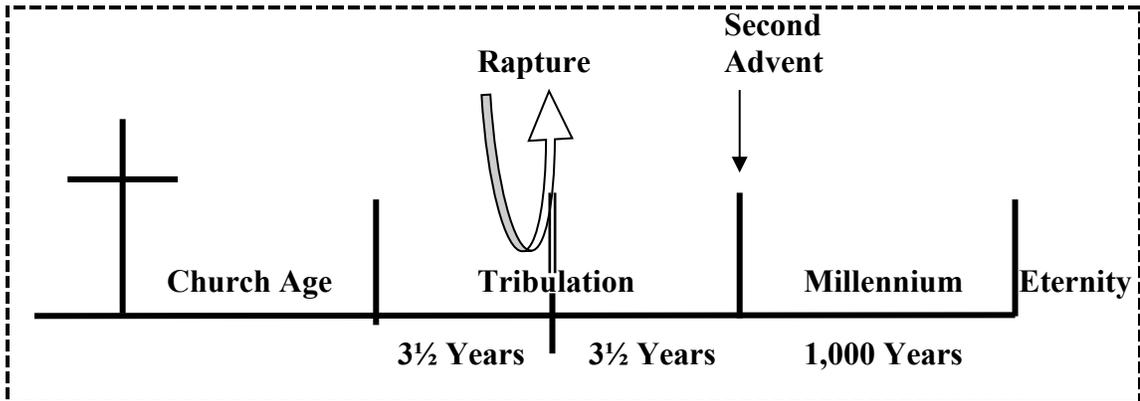
1. Prophecy is the means by which we can know Jesus is coming again and will be victorious.
2. Prophecy is a major part of the Bible.
3. Prophecy reveals Jesus as mighty and exalted.
4. Prophecy promotes evangelism.
5. Prophecy brings hope and encouragement, and hope promotes purity (1 Thessalonians 4:18; 1 John 2:28, 3:2-3).

B. The Major Interpretations of the End Times

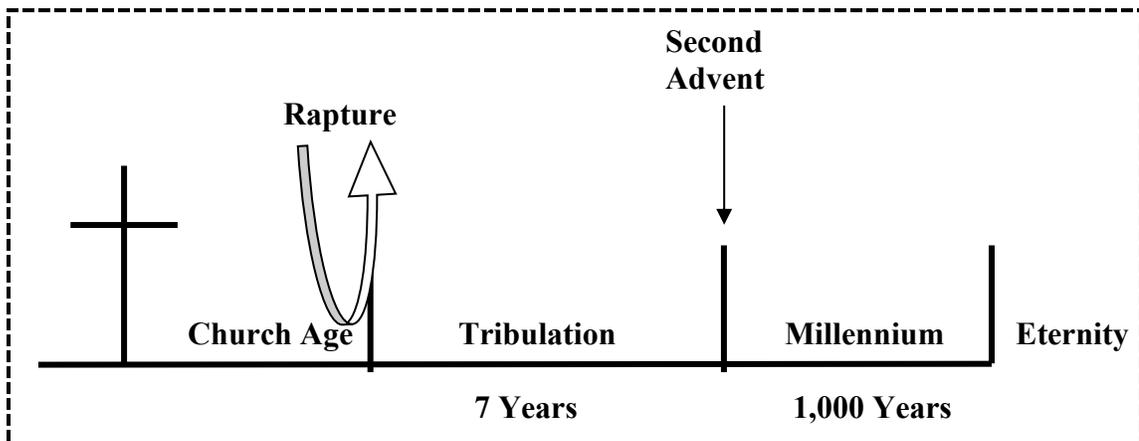
1. Three Primary Views Regarding the Rapture
 - a. **POSTTRIBULATIONISTS:** Believe the Rapture will occur after the Tribulation ends as a part of the Second Coming.



b. MIDTRIBULATIONISTS: Believe the Rapture will occur in the middle of the Tribulation.

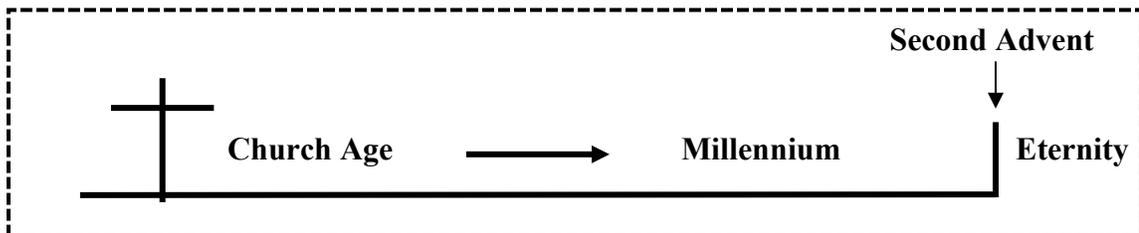


c. PRETRIBULATIONISTS: Believe the Rapture will occur prior to the Tribulation.

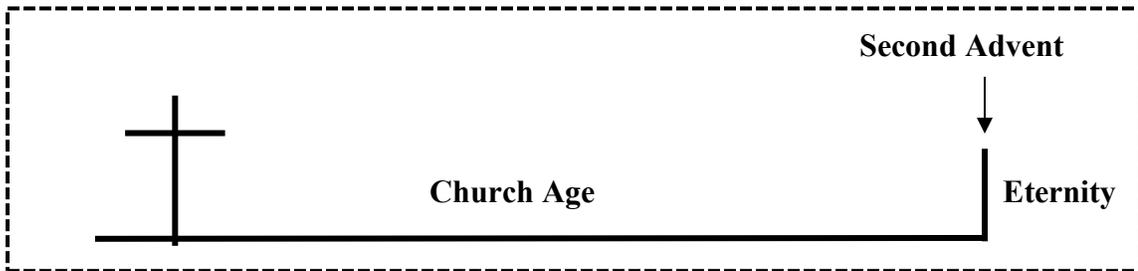


2. Three Primary Views on the Millennium:

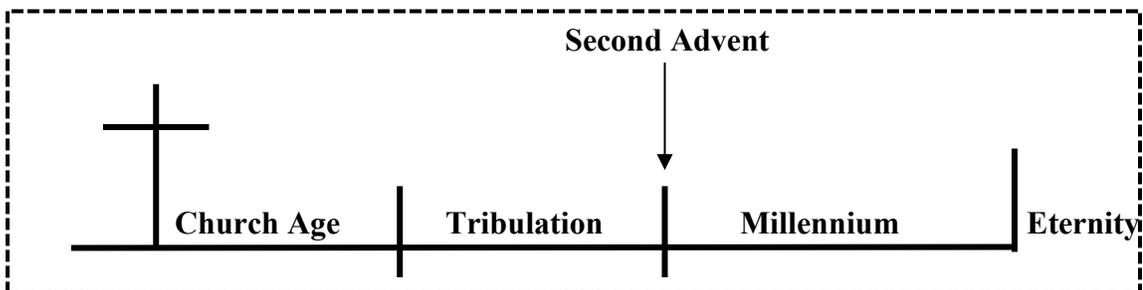
a. POSTMILLENNIALISTS: Believe the Millennium is symbolic, referring to the present Church Age.



- b. AMILLENNIALISTS: Believe the Millennium is symbolic and see no earthly Millennium of any kind.



- c. PREMILLENNIALISTS: Believe the Millennium is a literal one thousand year period following the end of the church age.



3. This course takes a pretribulational, premillennial viewpoint and follows this basic outline for the End Times:
- a. The Dispensation of Law: the period before the Cross
 - b. The Dispensation of Grace: the period from the Cross to the end of the Tribulation.
 - (1) The Church Age: the period from the Cross to the Rapture.
 - (2) The Tribulation: a seven-year period starting sometime after the Rapture.
 - c. The Millennium: the one-thousand year period following the Tribulation.
 - d. The Eternal Order: the eternal state of a "new heaven and a new earth" (Revelation 21:1) following a brief interlude after the Millennium.

C. Two Basic Rules for Interpreting Prophecy

1. *The Golden Rule of Interpretation.* Scripture should be interpreted literally unless the text indicates otherwise.

2. *Interpret Scripture Within Context.* A verse should not be pulled from its context in order to give it a meaning not intended. In making contextual interpretation, consideration must be given to surrounding verses and paragraphs, the book in which the verses occur, the message of the entire Bible, and the historical-cultural environment of the time it was written.

Session 2

THE BOOK OF REVELATION AND "THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES"

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF REVELATION

A. The Background of the Book of Revelation

1. *Author:* the Apostle John
2. *Date of Writing:* Around 95 A.D. during the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian
3. *Purpose of Writing:* To encourage believers suffering through Domitian's severe persecution of Christians by revealing Jesus Christ's ultimate victory over sin, death, and evil.

B. A Basic Outline of the Book of Revelation.

The basic outline of the Book of Revelation is found in Revelation 1:19: "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later."

1. *Chapter 1: "What you have seen."* What John saw was a vision of Jesus Christ in His role, not as the Suffering Servant any longer, but as our priest, king, and judge. John described him as "someone like a son of man" (Revelation 1:12), which was the phrase used by Daniel in Daniel 7:13 to describe the Messiah.
2. *Chapters 2-3: "What is now."* The things that were "now" to John are covered in the letters to the seven churches in these two chapters.
3. *Chapters 4-22: "What will take place later."*

C. The Significance of Revelation in Old Testament Prophecy.

The Book of Revelation makes 550 references to the Old Testament. The majority of the events described in Revelation 1-20 can be found in the Old Testament. Only chapters 21-22 introduce new things regarding the eternal order. The value of Revelation, therefore, is that it takes the scattered Old Testament prophecies and puts them in somewhat of a sequential order.

II. THE MEANING OF “THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES.” Jesus used this phrase in Luke 21:24 to describe the period of history preceding the end times. Specifically, it refers to the period when the Gentiles retain dominance over the world and specifically over the city of Jerusalem, beginning with the Babylonian destruction of the Temple in 586 B.C. and ending with the second coming of Christ. The “times of the Gentiles” will end when Gentiles are no longer able to claim authority over Jerusalem.

A. Daniel 2:31-45 – Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream

1. *The Details of the Dream (Daniel 2:31-35).* Nebuchadnezzar dreamt about an enormous statue of a man with a head made of gold, chest and arms of silver, stomach and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of iron and clay. Then a stone destroyed the statue and became a huge mountain that filled the earth.



2. *The Interpretation of the Dream (Daniel 36-45)*

- a. The head of gold represents the Babylonian Empire (Daniel 2:37-38), which ruled Jerusalem from 586 - 539 B.C.
- b. The chest and arms of silver represent the Medo-Persian Empire, which ruled Jerusalem from 539-331 B.C. (Daniel 2:39a).
- c. The stomach and thighs represent the Greek or Hellenistic Empire that ruled Jerusalem from 331-63 B.C. (Daniel 2:39b). This period includes the rules of Alexander the Great, the Ptolemies, the Seleucids, and the brief Jewish rule during the Hasmonean Dynasty.
- d. The legs of iron represent a fourth kingdom (Daniel 2:40), which includes three different stages: it begins united (Daniel 2:40), then divides into two parts (Daniel 2:41), and finally further divides into ten parts (Daniel 2:42-43).
- e. The stone that breaks the statue by crushing the feet and toes is a kingdom established by God during the ten-division stage of the fourth kingdom. (Daniel 2:44).

- (1) Throughout Scripture, a stone, when used symbolically, generally symbolizes Jesus Christ. Likewise, a mountain, when used symbolically, refers to a king, kingdom, or throne.
 - (2) Thus, God will establish His own kingdom in the end that will destroy the Gentile kingdoms. This kingdom is the Messianic Kingdom.
3. *Summary of the "Times of the Gentiles" in Daniel 2*
- a. The Babylonian Empire (586-539 B.C.)
 - b. The Medo-Persian Empire (539-331 B.C.)
 - c. The Greek Empire (331-63 B.C.)
 - d. The Fourth Empire
 - (1) The United Stage
 - (2) The Two-Division Stage
 - (3) The Ten-Division Stage
 - e. The Messianic Kingdom

B. Daniel 7:1-28 – Daniel's Vision

1. *The Four Beasts (Daniel 7:2-14)*. Daniel's vision started with the four winds churning the sea. The sea typically represents the Gentile nations. Then four beasts, who represent the great empires that ruled those nations, arose out of the sea.
 - a. The first beast was lion-like, representing the Babylonian Empire and its strength and ferocity (Daniel 7:4).
 - b. The second beast looked like a bear (Daniel 7:5), which represents the Medo-Persian Empire and its power. This empire conquered its foes by overpowering them numerically.
 - (1) It is described as being "raised up on one of its sides" because the Persians were the more dominant power of the Medes and Persian confederation.
 - (2) The three ribs in the bear's mouth represent the three major kingdoms conquered by the Medes and Persians: Lydia (546 B.C.), Babylon (539 B.C.), and Egypt (525 B.C.).

- c. The third beast looked like a four-headed leopard with four wings (Daniel 7:6). This beast represents the Greek Empire. A leopard's swiftness symbolizes the great speed with which Alexander the Great conquered the world.
 - (1) The four wings may represent the four corners of the world, symbolizing the four quarters of the world and the total world domination of the Greeks.
 - (2) The four heads represent the four rulers who took over the Greek Empire after Alexander the Great's death: Ptolemy, Seleucus, Antipater followed by Cassander, and Lysimachus.
 - d. The fourth beast was not described as an animal (Daniel 2:7). It was different from the former beasts and was more ferocious and terrifying than all of the others, capable of crushing the previous empires.
 - (1) This beast had ten horns, but an eleventh horn (which was arrogant and boastful) arose and uprooted three of the other horns (Daniel 2:8).
 - (2) In the middle of this vision, Daniel saw events that took place in heaven, where the "Ancient of Days" destroyed the fourth beast and established His eternal kingdom (Daniel 2:9-14).
2. *The Interpretation of the Vision (Daniel 7:15-28)*
- a. The four beasts represent four kingdoms arising from the earth (Daniel 7:17).
 - b. Like the fourth empire seen in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the fourth beast represents a kingdom that will go through different stages: a united stage (Daniel 7:23a), a one-world government stage (Daniel 7:23b), a ten-kingdom stage (Daniel 7:24a), and an Antichrist stage (Daniel 7:24b-25). The Antichrist's rule will be destroyed by God and replaced by the Messianic Kingdom (Daniel 7:26-27).
 - (1) The united stage of the fourth empire is the Roman Empire. According to Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, the distinctive characteristic of the Roman Empire was its practice of imperialistic rule. Instead of letting the nationals rule over territory it conquered, as the earlier three kingdoms

did, Rome sent Romans in to rule. Thus, the fourth empire refers to an Imperialistic Empire, which essentially continues today.¹

(a) The Imperialistic Empire started in a united stage, which was the Roman Empire from 63 B.C. until 285 A.D.

(b) Next came the Two-Division Stage foreseen in Daniel 2, which was fulfilled in 364 A.D. when Emperor Valentinian made his brother Valens a co-emperor and gave him rule over the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire. Valentinian retained the west, thus dividing Rome into two east-west divisions. The West division was headquartered in Rome; the East division was headquartered in Constantinople. The East-West division and balance of power continues today.

(c) The One-World Government Stage, the Ten-Division Stage, and the Antichrist Stage are future stages. The Imperialistic Empire has yet to “devour the whole earth” as stated in Daniel 7:23, which will happen when the East-West division of power in the world gives way to a one-world government.

3. *Summary of the “Times of the Gentiles” in Daniel 2 and 7*

a. The Babylonian Empire (586-539 B.C.)

b. The Medo-Persian Empire (539-331 B.C.)

c. The Greek Empire (331-63 B.C.)

d. The Fourth Empire – *The Imperialistic Empire*

(1) The United Stage: *The Roman Empire (63 B.C. – 285 A.D.)*

(2) The Two-Division Stage: *The East-West Balance of Power (364 A.D. – present day)*

(3) *The One-World Government Stage: Future*

(4) The Ten-Division Stage: *The Ten Kingdoms - Future*

(5) *The Antichrist Stage: Absolute Imperialism - Future*

e. The Messianic Kingdom: *Future*

¹ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*, 3d ed. (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries Press, 2020), 33.

C. Revelation 13:1-2 – The Beast Out of the Sea. John described a beast that he saw come out of the sea, which is the same as the fourth beast Daniel saw in Daniel 7, representing the Antichrist Stage of the Fourth Empire.

1. John's beast had a leopard-like body, bear-like feet, and a lion-like mouth (Revelation 13:2), which suggests the Fourth Empire would have similar characteristics to the earlier Babylonian, Medo-Persian, and Greek Empires.
2. John described the beast's ten horns as Daniel did, but John added a fact that has not been previously disclosed: the beast's seven heads (Revelation 13:1). These will be further described in Revelation 17.

D. Revelation 17:7-14 – The Beast of the Prostitute

1. *The Beast's Seven Heads.* The beast on which the prostitute rode was the same beast John saw coming out of the sea in Revelation 13. This passage explains the meaning of the beast's seven heads of the beast.
 - a. The seven heads represent seven hills, which further represent seven kings (Revelation 17:9-10). John further explained that five of the seven kings had fallen, one still existed, and one was yet to come.
 - (1) Before Rome developed into an Imperialistic Empire, it went through five different types of governments. These five governments are the five heads that had fallen:
 - (a) The city-state kings (753-510 B.C.)
 - (b) The consuls (510-494 B.C.)
 - (c) The dictators (494-390 B.C.)
 - (d) The decemvirs (390-59 B.C.)
 - (e) The triumvirate (59-27 B.C.)
 - (2) The one "king," form of government that still existed during John's time was the imperialistic Roman Empire. Thus, imperialism is the sixth head, which encompasses the first four stages of the Fourth Empire—the longest enduring form of government in world history.
 - (3) The "king" who is "yet to come" is the Antichrist government.
 - b. The passage closes with the Antichrist being defeated by Jesus (Revelation 17:14), which also marks the end of the Fourth Empire's Antichrist stage and the beginning of the Messianic Kingdom.

2. Summary of the "Times of the Gentiles" in Daniel 2 and 7 and Revelation 13 and 17

- a. The Babylonian Empire (586-539 B.C.)
- b. The Medo-Persian Empire (539-331 B.C.)
- c. The Greek Empire (331-63 B.C.)

Prelude to the Fourth Empire

(1) *City-State Kings (753-510 B.C.) - The First Head*

(2) *Consuls (510-494 B.C.) - The Second Head*

(3) *Dictators (494-390 B.C.) - The Third Head*

(4) *Decemvirs (390-59 B.C.) - The Fourth Head*

(5) *Triumvirate (59-27 B.C.) - The Fifth Head*

d. The Fourth Empire – The Imperialistic Empire

*The
Sixth
Head*

(1) The United Stage: The Roman Empire (63 B.C. – 285 A.D.)

(2) The Two-Division Stage: The East-West Balance of Power (364 A.D. – present day)

(3) The One-World Government Stage: Future

(4) The Ten-Division Stage: The Ten Kingdoms – Future (*Ten Horns, Ten Kings*)

(5) The Antichrist Stage: Absolute Imperialism – Future (*Seventh Head/King*)

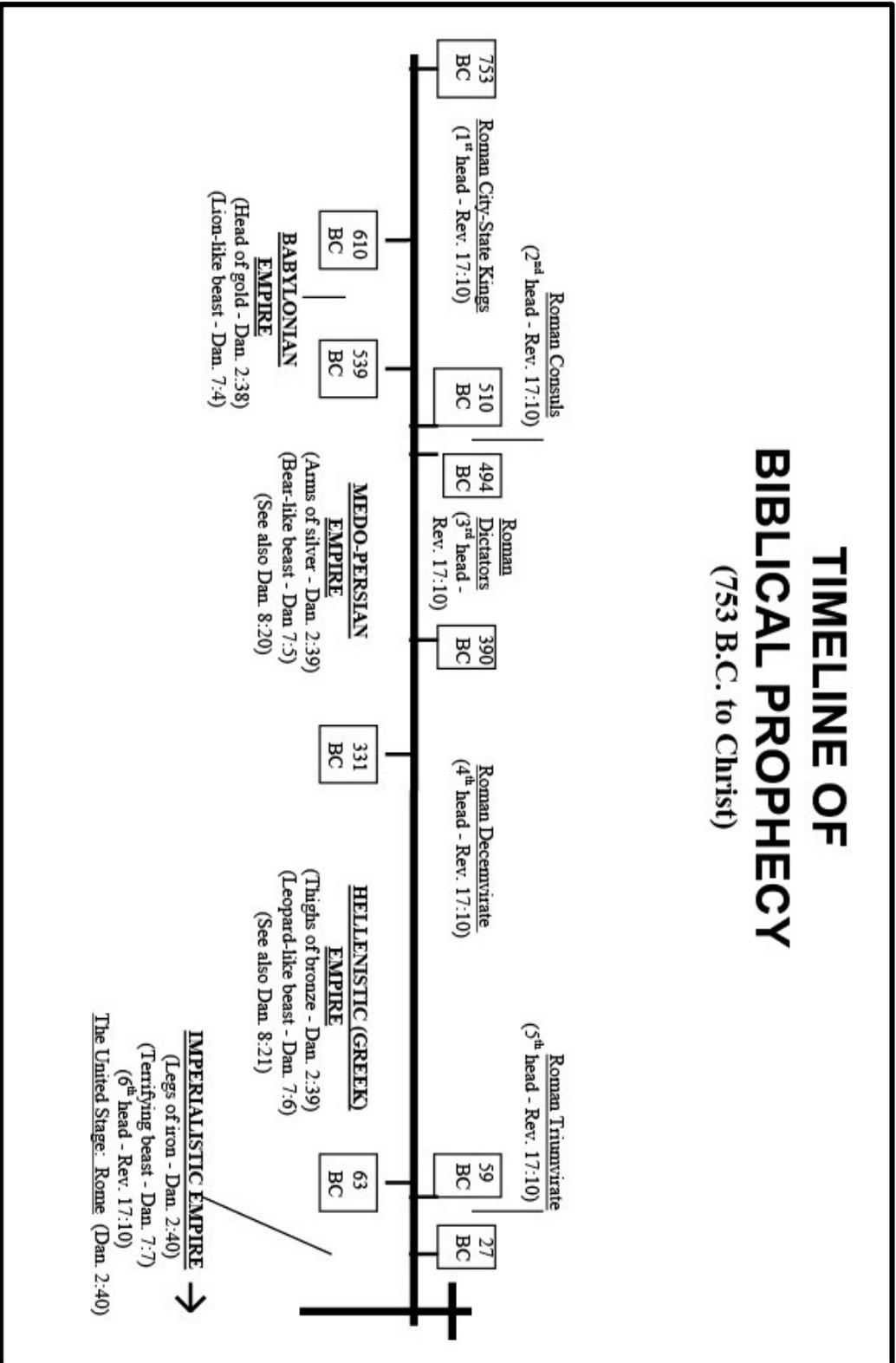
e. The Messianic Kingdom: Future

E. LESSONS ABOUT GOD FROM THESE PROPHETIC MESSAGES

- 1. God is sovereign.
- 2. God has a plan for the world.
- 3. God is in charge of all that is going on in the world.
- 4. God sees and recognizes man's depravity.
- 5. A day is coming when God will directly and visibly intervene in the affairs of the world.

TIMELINE OF BIBLICAL PROPHECY

(753 B.C. to Christ)



Session 3
THE "THINGS WHICH ARE:"
LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE LETTERS TO THE CHURCHES

A. How to Interpret the Letters to the Churches

1. Revelation 1:19 sets out the outline for the book of Revelation: "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later." The vision John saw of Christ in chapter 1 constituted the first part of the outline: what John saw. The letters to the seven churches in Asia in Revelation 2-3 constitute "what is now," i.e., current events in John's day.
2. Scholars disagree over how to interpret these letters.
 - a. Some views interpret the letters as describing the conditions of the actual seven churches in Asia with correlations to issues all churches have encountered throughout history.
 - b. A second method of interpretation is called the "historical-prophetic" method, which recognizes these seven churches as seven real churches to which John wrote but also views them as representative of the chronological development of church history. Although it is easy to apply this method to an extreme, we will identify the historical periods that this method of interpretation finds applicable to each church letter.²

B. The Pattern of the Letters to the Churches. Each letter tends to follow a general pattern consisting of six parts:

1. The *Place* to which the letter was written
2. The *Portrayal* of Christ presented to the church (generally from the vision in chapter 1)
3. The *Praise* Christ had for the church

² See John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1966), 52-53; see also Fruchtenbaum, 50-52; Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 105. The description of the historical periods are summarized primarily from Fruchtenbaum, 52-90.

4. The *Problem* He had with the church
5. The *Prescription* He gave to the church
6. The *Promise* He made to those who were faithful in the church



II. THE MESSAGES OF THE LETTERS TO THE CHURCHES

A. Revelation 2:1-7 – The Letter to Ephesus (the “Careless Church”)

1. *Place (2:1a)*. Ephesus (from a Greek word that means “desirable”) was perhaps the most important city in Asia in John’s time. All roads in Asia led to Ephesus so that it became the wealthiest and greatest city in Asia.
 - a. Ephesus was a free city in the Roman Empire, which meant that, due to its loyalty and service to the empire, it was granted the right to be self-governing.

- b. It was the home of the Temple of Artemis, or Diana (one of the Seven Wonders of the World). It also housed many temples to Roman emperors. Pagan worship was rampant.
2. *Portrayal of Christ (2:1b)*. Christ is pictured as the one who “holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands,” as described in Revelation 1:13 and 16. This picture emphasizes Jesus’ presence with the churches and His control of their destiny.
 3. *Praise (2:2-3, 6)*. Jesus praised the church for its deeds, hard work, perseverance, and discernment. Ephesus was a church that worked for God and would not tolerate false teachers. In verse 6, an additional commendation was made about the church’s hatred of the practices of the Nicolaitans, who believed in self-indulgence and immorality. Nicolaitans believed a person could live his physical life in total sin without affecting his spiritual life.
 4. *Problem (2:4)*. The problem Jesus had with the church in Ephesus was that it had “forsaken the love [they] had at first.” They lost their initial fervor and intensity in their love for Christ and one another. Their works and service had become nothing more than their duty rather than service performed out of love for Christ and others.
 5. *Prescription (2:5)*. The prescription for regaining their first love was to *remember* the love they used to have, *repent* of the wrong direction they had taken, and *return* to doing the things they had done at the beginning.
 6. *Promise (2:7)*. Those who overcame their problem and the sin of the world are promised food from the “tree of life.” This was the tree Adam and Eve were unable to eat from after they sinned. What Adam lost, though, Jesus regained. The tree of life represents eternal life with Christ.
 7. *Historical-Prophetic Interpretation*. Ephesus represents the era of *the Apostolic Church* from 30 A.D. until 100 A.D., during which period the church was characterized by its fervent evangelism and work. At the same time, though, churches of this period drifted from their warm ministry to the world and developed a religion rife with conflict and theological arguments, formality, and rituals.

B. Revelation 2:8-11 – The Letter to Smyrna (the “Suffering Church”)

1. *Place (2:8a)*. Smyrna (which today is Izmir, Turkey) was another major commercial center in Asia, characterized by its beauty and magnificent architec-

- ture. An important feature of the city was the circle of buildings on nearby Mount Pagos, known as the “Crown of Smyrna.” The city was also involved in pagan and emperor worship.
2. *Portrayal of Christ (2:8b)*. Jesus described Himself as the “First and the Last, who died and came to life again.” Smyrna was a greatly persecuted church, so this description of the Savior as eternal and victorious over death was comforting to those who faced death in the midst of such persecution.
 3. *Praise (2:9)*. Jesus praised the church for its faithfulness despite their persecution and affliction. In a city of great wealth, the church in Smyrna suffered extreme poverty, probably because of the persecution it experienced.
 4. *Problem*. Jesus had no criticism for the church in Smyrna.
 5. *Prescription (2:10a)*. There being no problem, Jesus did not offer a prescription for any problems. Instead, He exhorted them to hang in there in the midst of suffering and warned them of suffering yet to come.
 - a. The suffering Jesus predicted would last “ten days.” This is likely a symbolic expression meaning that their suffering would not last forever.³
 - b. In exchange for their faithfulness, Jesus promised a “victor’s crown” of eternal life. Jesus likely used the crown reference as an allusion to the Crown of Smyrna on Mount Pagos.
 6. *Promise (2:11)*. Jesus promised the church in Smyrna that they would not experience the “second death.” In Revelation 20:14-15, the second death is the death of those who are lost and who will be thrown into the lake of fire. This was, therefore, another promise of eternal life.
 7. *Historical-Prophetic Interpretation*. Smyrna represents the ***Church of the Martyrs*** from around 100 to 313 A.D. This was the period during which Christians were fed to lions for sport. Interestingly, despite the severe persecution, the Church grew and prospered during this period perhaps more than during any other time, until it was made the state religion by Constantine in 313 A.D.

³ Some scholars interpret the “ten days” as a reference to the ten Roman emperors during this period who issued edicts of persecution against the Christians: Domitian, Trajan, Hadrian, Antonius Pius, Marcus Aurelius, Septimius Severus, Maximin, Decius, Valerian, and Diocletian. Fruchtenbaum, 55; see also Marie Gentert King, ed., *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1968), 13-31.

C. Revelation 2:12-17 – The Letter to Pergamum (the “Compromising Church”)

1. *Place (2:12a)*. Pergamum was Rome’s official center in the Province of Asia, although, because of its location, it never achieved the commercial greatness of Ephesus or Smyrna. The city was famous for its library and its emperor worship. It also housed temples to Zeus, Athena, Dionysius, and Asklepios (the god of healing, who people worshipped by having snakes crawl over the sick).
2. *Portrayal of Christ (2:12b)*. Jesus is identified as having a “sharp, double-edged sword” (see also Revelation 1:16), which suggests the piercing nature and power of His words and truth.
3. *Praise (2:13)*. Jesus commended the church for not renouncing its faith even while people were being killed because of it.
4. *Problem (2:14-15)*. The problem Jesus had with the church, though, was that they permitted the teachings of Balaam and the Nicolaitans.
 - a. In Numbers 25:1-3, the Israelites indulged in sexual sin with the Moabite women. In Numbers 31:16, Moses accused Balaam of causing this to happen. Thus, reference to the teachings of Balaam, as well as the Nicolaitans, was a reference to one who leads others into sin and immorality.
 - b. Apparently, the church in Pergamum allowed within its membership those who advocated living a lifestyle similar to those of the world. In other words, it was a church of compromise with the world.
5. *Prescription (2:16)*. The prescription for solving the problem was repentance. Jesus said that, if they failed to repent, He would wield His sword of Truth against them in judgment.
6. *Promise (2:17)*. Jesus promised the overcomers in Pergamum hidden manna and a white stone with a new name.
 - a. Apocalyptic literature spoke of an angel hiding the Ark of the Covenant and the manna in it after the fall of the Temple. The literature claimed that the hidden manna would not be discovered until the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom (2 Maccabees 2:4-7; 2 Baruch 6:7-10). The manna of God represents God’s provision for His people and the eternal Bread of Life.
 - b. The white stone was used by the Romans as a mark of special favor, acquittal, and acceptance. A new name is a symbol of identity and intimacy

(see Isaiah 56:5 and 62:2). Thus, overcomers could count on the special favor of God and an intimate relationship with Him.

7. *Historical-Prophetic Interpretation.* The Pergamum church represents *the Church of the Age of Constantine* from 313 to around 600 A.D.
 - a. After the persecution of the Church resulted in its growth, Satan took a more damaging approach by elevating the Church to a position of importance and power. Constantine declared Christianity as the state religion, but his lifestyle was not that of a Christian. In order to please Constantine, church leaders adapted their customs to the pagan customs Constantine favored. They allowed pagan rituals and beliefs to enter the church and, thereby, compromised its message.
 - b. During this period, the Church adopted new rituals and beliefs that were unscriptural. These included the practices of praying for the dead, making the sign of the cross, venerating saints and angels, exalting and praying to Mary, and adopting the doctrine of purgatory.⁴

D. Revelation 2:18-28 – The Letter to Thyatira (the “Corrupt Church”)

1. *Place (2:18a).* Thyatira is perhaps the least important of the seven cities. It was not a major commercial city, but it housed prominent trade guilds (or labor unions), which involved patron deities and festivities unique to each guild.
2. *Portrayal of Christ (2:18b).* Jesus is pictured as the Son of God with eyes of blazing fire and feet of bronze (see also Revelation 1:14-15). This is a picture of penetrating scrutiny and judgment.
3. *Praise (2:19).* Jesus praised the church for its deeds, love, faith, service, perseverance, and progressive action. These praises sound much like those given to Ephesus.
4. *Problem (2:20-23).* But whereas Ephesus would not tolerate immorality with an unloving attitude, Thyatira loved others but tolerated sin. The church tolerated the idolatrous and immoral teachings of a priestess called Jezebel. The church’s sin was similar to that of Pergamum.
5. *Prescription (2:24-25).* Jesus encouraged those who did not tolerate sin to “hold on” to purity.

⁴ Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962), 8.

6. *Promise (2:26-28)*. Jesus promised that those who obeyed Him would receive authority in Christ's coming kingdom and a "morning star," a reference to Jesus (see Revelation 22:16).
7. *Historical-Prophetic Interpretation*. The Thyatira church represents *the Church of the Dark Ages* from around 600 to 1517.
 - a. Thyatira was the most corrupt of the seven churches, and it symbolizes the darkest and most corrupt period in Christian history. The institutional church established by Constantine used its power in corrupt ways. It continued to add pagan rituals to its Christian teachings. The office of Pope came into being during this period.
 - b. The Roman Catholic Church was the institutional church of the Dark Ages, but Thyatira does not represent the Roman Catholic Church. Instead, Thyatira symbolizes all churches—Catholic and Protestant—that tolerate sin, water down the truth of the Word with rituals, and attempt to control and dominate its people with power.
 - c. During the Dark Ages, there were some who continued in love and faith, as Jesus' promise reminds us. The Church was able to produce some good even during this dark period. Monasteries became hospitals and refuges for the sick and needy, and many hymns and literature were written by faithful men such as Francis of Assisi, Thomas Aquinas, and others.

E. Revelation 3:1-6 – The Letter to Sardis (the "Dead Church")

1. *Place (3:1a)*. Sardis was a commercially prosperous town of strategic, military importance. But it was a city in decline and decay because of its lethargic, spiritless nature.
2. *Portrayal of Christ (3:1b)*. Jesus is described as "the one who holds the seven spirits and seven stars" (see also Revelation 1:16). This was a reference to the Holy Spirit.
3. *Praise*. Jesus had no praise for this church.
4. *Problem (3:1c)*. Jesus described the church as appearing to be alive, but actually being dead. It was a lazy, lethargic, complacent, mediocre church, with a good reputation but no reality to back it up. It lacked vitality and ambition. They performed many deeds, yet were dead. They were nominal Christians.

5. *Prescription (3:2-3)*. Jesus' prescription to this church was simply, "Wake up!" They needed to exercise their faith, remember what they have been taught, obey the Word, and repent. If they failed to do so, Jesus would catch them unprepared when He returns "like a thief."
6. *Promise (3:4-6)*. To the victorious, Jesus promised white clothing and avoidance of having their names blotted from the book of life. Both of these refer to eternal life.
7. *Historical-Prophetic Interpretation*. Sardis represents *the Church of the Reformation* from 1517 to 1648. At first, the Protestant Reformation was a revival of the Church and a return to scriptural principles. But the reform churches often became state churches (Luther-Germany, Zwingli-Switzerland, Calvin-City of Geneva, Knox-Scotland), and they did not rid themselves of all pagan rituals. As state churches, they technically included all of the population of the state. "Christianity" had nothing to do with a personal acceptance and relationship with Christ, thus making it dead and lacking vitality.

F. Revelation 3:7-13 – The Letter to Philadelphia (the "Loving Church")

1. *Place (3:7a)*. Philadelphia was the youngest of the seven cities and was located on the edge of a great volcanic plain. Its land was fertile and made Philadelphia a major grape producer. But the location was also extremely seismic, and the city suffered many earthquakes, such that the people mostly lived outside of the city. One earthquake virtually destroyed the city in 17 A.D., but Emperor Tiberius generously helped to rebuild the city.
2. *Portrayal of Christ (3:7b)*. Jesus is identified as holy and true and the holder of the Key of David (see Isaiah 22:22). The key is a symbol of authority and sovereignty, representing Christ's authority to admit and exclude people into and from the presence of God.
3. *Praise (3:8-10)*. Jesus praised the church for its deeds, obedience, and endurance. He praised their obedience despite their "little strength," which suggested their humble reliance upon the strength of Christ. In verse 10, Jesus promised to keep the church from the "hour of trial."⁵
4. *Problem*. Jesus had no criticism for this church.
5. *Prescription (3:11)*. Jesus urged the church to "hold on" until He returns.

⁵ This verse is often used as a supporting verse for the pretribulation view. See, e.g., Fruchtenbaum, 66.

6. *Promise (3:12-13)*. Jesus promised the victorious three things: to be made a “pillar in the temple of God,” to have written upon them the names of God and Jerusalem, and to receive a new name.
 - a. As a pillar, the church would be a foundational support in the kingdom of God—i.e., a place of honor.
 - b. The names of God and the New Jerusalem branded the church with the mark of its owner and the place of its true citizenship.
 - c. A new name is one that identifies a church or person as belonging to Christ.
7. *Historical-Prophetic Interpretation*. The name “Philadelphia” means “brotherly love.” This was a church Jesus loved greatly. It represents *the Church of the Great Missionary Movement* from 1648 to 1900, a time of tremendous revival called “the Great Awakening.” Events and people during this time period include the Puritan Movement, John Bunyan, John Newton (author of “Amazing Grace”), William Carey in India, David Livingstone in Africa, Adoniram Judson in Burma, Hudson Taylor in China, David Brainerd among American Indians, and evangelists such as John Wesley, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, and Dwight L. Moody.

G. Revelation 3:14-22 – The Letter to Laodicea (the “Apostate Church”)

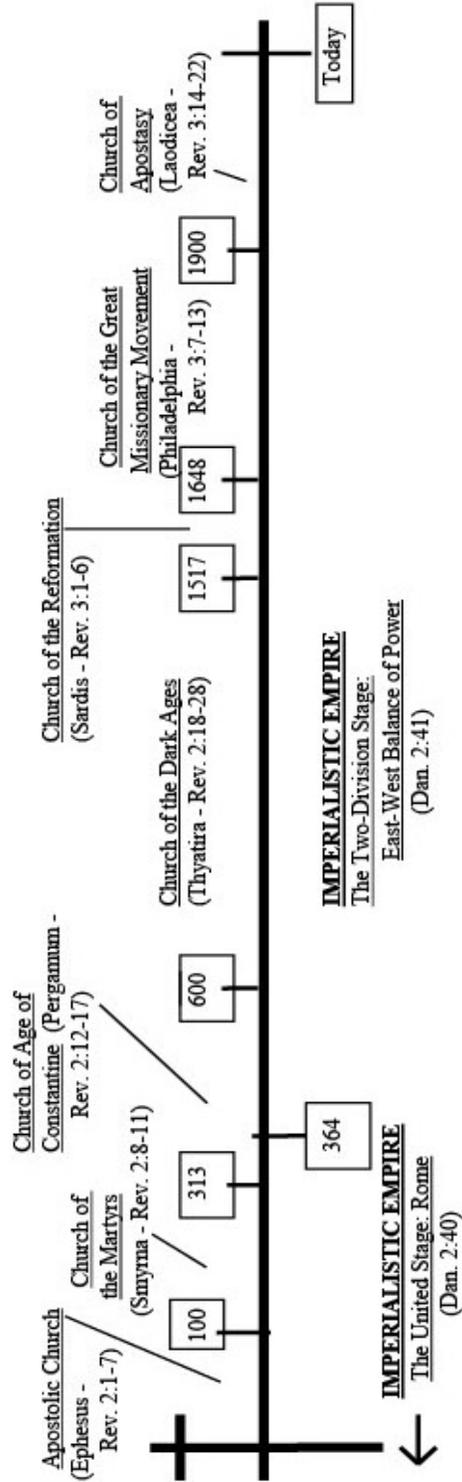
1. *Place (3:14a)*. Laodicea was a wealthy city that was particularly famous as a banking and financial center, a clothing manufacture center, and a medical center. It was especially well-known as the place where the Phrygian powder, an eye-salve, was made.
2. *Portrayal of Christ (3:14b)*. Jesus is identified as the Amen, faithful and true witness, and ruler of God’s creation. These identifications referred to Jesus’ trustworthiness and faithfulness as well as His divinity as the creator.
3. *Praise*. Jesus had no praise for this church.
4. *Problem (3:15-17)*. Jesus told this church the same thing He told Philadelphia: “I know your deeds.” But there is an obvious difference in meaning. In Philadelphia, He praised their deeds. In Laodicea, He called their deeds “lukewarm,” exemplifying only a self-satisfied, complacent, and indifferent people. Despite living in a wealthy city that was the center of clothing and medicine manufactures, Jesus called them poor, naked, and blind.

5. *Prescription (3:18-20)*. Jesus urged the church to “buy from Him” refined gold, white clothes, and eye-salve (i.e., faith, righteousness, and spiritual sight). He also demanded repentance, and made it clear that He stood with open arms ready to receive anyone who would repent.
6. *Promise (3:21-22)*. Jesus promised the overcomers a place of authority next to Him in His Messianic Kingdom.
7. *Historical-Prophetic Interpretation*. Laodicea represents *the Church of Apostasy* from 1900 to the present. It pictures the church full of organization, progress, committees, activities—but no power; one interested in social action—but not the Gospel; reformation—but not transformation; planning—but not prayer.

III. LESSONS FROM THE SEVEN CHURCHES

- A. **Ephesus**. Keep Jesus in focus. Don't lose your love for Him and keep Him your sole motivator and motivation.
- B. **Smyrna**. When in the midst of suffering, remember that Jesus is in control and there is no need to fear.
- C. **Pergamum**. Be *in* the world, but not *of* the world. Don't conform.
- D. **Thyatira**. Love and sound doctrine must go together. When surrounded by sin, “hold fast” to the faith.
- E. **Sardis**. The Christian life is more than “going through the motions.”
- F. **Philadelphia**. The focus of your faith should be Jesus, not church tradition.
- G. **Laodicea**. Do not give in to complacency in your Christian life. Be passionate for Christ.

TIMELINE OF BIBLICAL PROPHECY (Christ to Today)



Session 4

EVENTS PRECEDING THE TRIBULATION: THE REESTABLISHMENT AND INVASION OF ISRAEL

I. EVENTS THAT HAVE ALREADY OCCURRED

A. **World Wars I and II (1914-1918, 1939-1945) – Matthew 24:4-8.** Matthew 24 (also Mark 13 and Luke 21:5-36) is commonly referred to as the Olivet Discourse. It contains Jesus' teachings about the End Times in response to three questions His disciples asked Him:

1. *When will the Temple be destroyed?* Jesus' answer to this question is recorded in Luke 21:20-24.
2. *What are the signs of Jesus' coming again?* Jesus' answer to this question is recorded in Matthew 24:6-42.
3. *What are the signs of the end of the age?* Jesus' answer to this question is recorded in Matthew 24:4-25, most of which we will discuss in a later session.
 - a. First, Jesus described events that are *not* signs of the end: false messiahs and rampant local wars (24:4-6).
 - b. Then, Jesus described events that constitute the "beginning of birth pains" (24:7-8). These are events that do not mean the end is near, but are signs that progress to the end has begun. These describe events that are global in scope, such as global wars, famines, and earthquakes.
 - (1) Arguably, World Wars I and II, being the first world-wide conflicts, fit within this prophecy as signals of the "beginning of birth pains." In addition, WWI provided the impetus for the Zionist movement, which led to the reestablishment of the nation of Israel, a further sign of the end of the age.
 - (2) Some End Times teachers claim that there has been a drastic increase in famines and earthquakes around the world in recent decades.
 - (a) Scientific data, however, disputes such a claim. Earthquake activity around the world has been relatively stable since 1900 with normal

fluctuations in rates and severity.⁶ Instances of death by famines and forcible mass starvation are also trending downward over the past several decades.⁷

(b) Jesus' prediction in Matthew 24:7 did not say that there will be an increased number of famines and earthquakes. He said that famines and earthquakes will occur in "various places." With our increased technology and communication methods, we are increasingly aware of the number of cataclysmic events occurring all around the world. They are a constant reminder that Christ is returning someday.

B. The Reestablishment of Israel as a Nation (1948)

1. Several prophecies in the Bible predict a regathering of Israel in unbelief that precedes a subsequent gathering in belief.
 - a. Ezekiel 20:33-38, specifically verses 34-35
 - b. Ezekiel 22:17-22, specifically verses 19-20
 - c. Ezekiel 36:22-24
 - d. Isaiah 11:11-12
 - e. Zephaniah 1:14-2:2. In Zephaniah 1:14-18, the prophet described the "great day of the Lord," which is a common euphemism in the Old Testament to the Tribulation period. In Zephaniah 2:1-2, he explained that the time of the regathering of Israel will occur "before the day of the Lord's wrath."
2. Consequently, the reestablishment of Israel in 1948 appears to be a fulfillment of these Old Testament prophecies regarding the regathering of Israel in judgment and unbelief.

⁶ According to the U.S. Geological Survey data, the increased numbers of earthquakes in recent years are due to an increased number of seismic instruments recording more earthquakes. Since 1900, there are generally sixteen major earthquakes each year. That average has been exceeded approximately twelve times in the past fifty years. "Why are we having so many earthquakes," *USGS.gov*, online at https://www.usgs.gov/faqs/why-are-we-having-so-many-earthquakes-has-naturally-occurring-earthquake-activity-been?qt-news_science_products=0#qt-news_science_products.

⁷ The World Peace Foundation of Tufts University reports that an average of approximately 930,000 people died each year between 1870 and 1980. Since 1980, the average death rate from famines is around 75,000 per year. "Famine Trends Dataset, Tables and Graphs," *World Peace Foundation*, online at <https://sites.tufts.edu/wpf/famine>.

C. Jerusalem Under Jewish Control (1967)

1. Scripture refers to the existence of a rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem during the Tribulation period (see Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4; Revelation 11:1-2). This presupposes that the Jews will someday be in total control again of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount.
2. The Jews gained control of Jerusalem in 1967 as a result of the Six Day War. Although Moshe Dayan, the Israeli Defense Minister, returned control to the Muslims ten days later, the legal situation is that Israel maintains overall sovereignty of the Temple Mount while the Muslims have religious sovereignty over it. Thus, Jews are not allowed to worship on the Temple Mount but are allowed to visit it. Jews are only allowed to pray at the Western Wall.⁸ Obviously, more events must occur before the Temple can be rebuilt, but it appears that a major first step took place in 1967.

II. EVENTS THAT ARE STILL FUTURE

A. The Temple Rebuilt. It is unclear whether the Temple will be rebuilt before the Tribulation begins or sometime during the first half of the Tribulation. This will be discussed further in Session 6.

B. The Invasion of Israel - Ezekiel 38:1-39:16

1. *Who Will Invade (Ezekiel 38:1-6)*
 - a. Magog, Meshech, and Tubal are generally identified as tribes that settled north of the Caucasus Mountains in modern day Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan. Some commentators place Meshech and Tubal as cities in Asia Minor.
 - b. Persia = Iran.
 - c. Cush = Ethiopia.
 - d. Put is often thought to be Libya but more likely is the area south of Cush in modern day Somalia.
 - e. Some commentators identify Gomer as East Germany. Others place it in eastern Europe and Asia Minor or somewhere north of the Black Sea.

⁸ Rivka Gonen, *Contested Holiness: Jewish, Muslim, and Christian Perspectives on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem* (Jersey City, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 2003), 147-151.

- f. Beth Togarmah = Armenia.
- 2. *Where They Will Invade (Ezekiel 38:7-9)*. The location of the invasion is identified as the “mountains of Israel.”
- 3. *Why They Will Invade (Ezekiel 38:10-16)*
 - a. The invaders will be seeking plunder and wealth (38:12-13), but God will use the invasion to prove His holiness (38:16).
 - b. Three nations will protest the invasion (rather feebly, it seems). Sheba and Dedan are typically identified as peoples in Saudi Arabia. The “merchants of Tarshish” have been variously identified as being located in East Africa, Spain, or England.
- 4. *How God Will Destroy the Invaders (Ezekiel 38:17-23)*. God will destroy the invaders with earthquake, confusion, “plague and bloodshed,” violent rainstorms, hail, and burning sulfur.
- 5. *The Results of the Invasion and God’s Protection of Israel (Ezekiel 39:1-16)*
 - a. Total destruction of the invaders and their lands (39:1-6), so much so that it will take Israel seven years to dismantle the invaders’ weapons (39:9-10) and seven months to bury all of the invaders’ dead (39:11-16)
 - b. Spiritual revival among the Jews in Israel (39:7-8)



Session 5

EVENTS PRECEDING THE TRIBULATION: AMERICA, ONE-WORLD GOVERNMENT, AND THE ANTICHRIST

I. AMERICA'S ROLE IN THE END TIMES

A. Specific Bible References to America. There are no specific references to the United States or North America in the Bible. None of the symbolism of apocalyptic literature can realistically be applied to America.

B. General Bible References to America

1. *Zechariah 12:2-3*. There are several references to the entire world in Scripture, which necessarily includes America. For instance, *Zechariah 12:2-3* says that "all the nations of the earth" will gather in opposition against Israel. Apparently, this will include the USA.
2. *Ezekiel 38-39*. In Ezekiel's prediction of the invasion of Israel by a northern confederacy, he makes a broad reference that may include America.
 - a. In *Ezekiel 38:13*, Ezekiel prophesied that Sheba, Dedan, and the "merchants of Tarshish and all her villages" will protest the northern invasion of Israel. The "merchants of Tarshish" may refer to the seafaring Phoenicians from Spain during the time of King Solomon. These maritime traders established trading posts along their routes and eventually settled into the modern nations of Western Europe such as Spain, Holland, and Britain.
 - (1) "All her villages" can also be translated "her strong, or young, lions." This may refer to the colonies established by the "merchants of Tarshish," which would include America.
 - (2) Thus, at this early stage in the end time prophecies, America—together with Saudi Arabia and Western Europe—are identified as making a feeble objection to the northern confederacy's invasion of Israel.
 - b. Some commentators attempt to include America in the reference in *Ezekiel 39:6* to those living "in safety in the coastlands." This seems unlikely, though. The reference is probably to the homelands of the invading nations.

3. *Summary Thoughts.* It appears America's stature in the world during the end times will have diminished significantly. It apparently will be aligned with the one-world government and the ten kingdoms that are prophesied in Daniel 7. World power during the end times, though, appears to shift back to Europe and the area of the old Roman Empire.

II. A ONE-WORLD GOVERNMENT – DANIEL 7:23. In Daniel's vision in Daniel 7, he saw a fourth beast that represents a fourth kingdom that will arise in the future. We identified this kingdom as the Imperialistic Empire. Daniel 7:23 says this kingdom "will devour the whole earth," suggesting that the entire world will be controlled by one government.

III. TEN KINGDOMS – DANIEL 7:24a. Daniel's vision predicted that ten kings will come from the kingdom that devours the whole earth. Apparently, the one-world government will not maintain power for very long, and ten kings will arise to take control.

IV. THE RISE OF THE ANTICHRIST

A. The Antichrist Appears (Daniel 7:24-25). After the ten kingdoms arise, the Antichrist (i.e., the "little horn" in Daniel 7:8) will begin his rise to power by defeating three of the ten kings and subjecting the other seven to him.

B. Details Regarding the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).

1. *2 Thessalonians 2:1-2.* Paul wrote the second letter to the Thessalonians to dispel false claims that "the day of Lord" had already come. The persecution of the church was so great at the time that many thought the Tribulation had begun.
2. *2 Thessalonians 2:3.* Paul described two things that must occur before the "day of the Lord" (i.e., the Tribulation) can begin:
 - a. The "rebellion" must occur. This likely refers to a general apostasy in the last days (see also Matthew 24:10; 1 Timothy 4:1), although it could refer to the Antichrist's active rebellion against God.
 - b. The "man of lawlessness" must be revealed.

- (1) “The man of lawlessness” refers to the Antichrist (1 John 2:22). Other names for him in the Bible are:
- (a) The little horn (Daniel 7:8)
 - (b) A fierce-looking king (Daniel 8:23)
 - (c) A master of intrigue (Daniel 8:23)
 - (d) The ruler who will come (Daniel 9:26)
 - (e) One who sets up an abomination causing desolation (Daniel 9:27)
 - (f) The worthless shepherd (Zechariah 11:17)
 - (g) The man doomed to destruction (2 Thessalonians 2:3)
 - (h) The lawless one (2 Thessalonians 2:8)
 - (i) The beast (Revelation 11:7)
- (2) This interpretation places the rise of the Antichrist at a time *prior to* the start of the Tribulation. Since the Tribulation will begin with the signing of a seven-year covenant with Israel, the Antichrist must, by necessity, be a major political figure and power before then.⁹
3. *2 Thessalonians 2:4*. The Antichrist will oppose and exalt himself over God. He will proclaim himself to be God by setting “himself up in God’s temple.” This is likely the “abomination of desolation” Jesus mentioned in Matthew 24:15.
 4. *2 Thessalonians 2:5-7*. While the spirit of the Antichrist is at work in the world already, there is “one who now holds it back” (2:7) and is preventing the Antichrist from coming in full force now. That one is the Holy Spirit.
 5. *2 Thessalonians 2:8-12*. Paul listed several facts regarding the Antichrist:
 - a. He will be destroyed by Jesus at Jesus’ Second Coming (2:8).
 - b. He will be empowered by Satan to do counterfeit miracles and wonders (2:9; see also Daniel 8:23-25).
 - c. He will deceive those who rejected the love and truth of God (2:10-12).

⁹ Others believe the Antichrist’s rise to power must follow the Rapture, arguing that his rise to power may result from his ability to provide stability and a rational explanation for the Rapture. John F. Walvoord, *Major Bible Prophecies: 37 Crucial Prophecies that Affect You Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 373; Ed Hindson, *Final Signs: Amazing Prophecies of the End Times* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1996), 80. In such case, the peace that would result would probably be the false peace referred to in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3.

Session 6

EVENTS PRECEDING THE TRIBULATION: THE RAPTURE, THE THIRD TEMPLE, AND OTHER EVENTS

I. THE FIRST BLACKOUT – JOEL 2:30-31

- A. Five Blackouts.** The Bible mentions five blackouts during the end times. These blackouts are times when light from the sun, moon, or stars will be obstructed. They are events similar to the ninth plague of darkness in Egypt (Exodus 10:21-23) and to the darkness that occurred during Jesus' crucifixion (Matthew 27:45).
- B. Blackout No. 1.** In Joel 2, the first blackout is described as occurring sometime "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (2:31). The phrase "day of the Lord" in the Old Testament refers to the final judgment of God upon the earth, which will commence with the Tribulation period.

II. THE THIRD TEMPLE

- A. Temple-Related Prophecies.** Several passages in the Bible speak of an event occurring in the middle of the Tribulation when the Antichrist will desecrate the Temple in Jerusalem (see Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15-16; 2 Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 11:1). For that to happen, a new Temple must be built and functioning before that time. It is not clear, though, whether the Temple will be rebuilt before the Tribulation begins or during the first half of the Tribulation.
- B. Plans for Rebuilding the Temple.** It is interesting to note that there are several groups in Israel that are currently making plans for rebuilding the Temple.
1. *The Temple Mount & Land of Israel Faithful Movement.* The Faithful Movement (www.templemountfaithful.org) seeks to raise awareness in Israel for the need to liberate the Temple Mount from Arab occupation and to rebuild the Third Temple in accordance with Hebrew Scriptures.
 2. *The Temple Institute.* The Temple Institute (www.temple.org.il) is currently in the process of researching and making all of the utensils needed for Temple worship.

3. Many schools exist in Jerusalem to prepare for different aspects of a future Temple, including training people to become Temple priests, making clothing, constructing musical instruments, developing architectural plans, and securing kosher animals for sacrifice.¹⁰

III. THE RAPTURE

A. The Doctrine of the Rapture. The word “rapture” is not found in Scripture, and the concept of a Rapture is not mentioned in the Old Testament. But the New Testament introduces the subject in several passages.

1. *John 14:1-3*. Jesus promised to return for us after He prepares our place in heaven.
2. *1 Thessalonians 4:13-18*
 - a. The Thessalonians were concerned that their predeceased friends and family were going to miss out on the return of Jesus. Paul comforted them by explaining how their loved ones will be resurrected and “caught up together with” the believers who are alive when He returns (4:13-15).
 - b. Paul described seven events that will be part of the Rapture:
 - (1) The Lord will descend from heaven (4:16a).
 - (2) The Lord will issue a “loud command” or shout (4:16b). The Greek word for “loud command” refers to a command from a military leader.
 - (3) The voice of the archangel will follow (4:16c).
 - (4) A trumpet will sound (4:16d). This is the summons to begin moving.
 - (5) The dead “in Christ” will be resurrected first (4:16e).
 - (6) The living Christians will be “caught up” into heaven with the dead in Christ (4:17a).
 - (7) After that, we will be with God forever, permanently united with Christ (4:17b).
 - c. These promises were intended as reassurance for all believers, and Paul encouraged us to constantly remind one another of these truths (4:18).

¹⁰ Thomas Ice & Timothy Demy, *The Truth About the Last Days' Temple* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1996), 30.

3. *1 Corinthians 15:51-53*. When the Rapture occurs, our bodies will be changed, “in the twinkling of an eye” at the moment the “last trumpet” sounds, from perishable and mortal bodies to ones that are imperishable and immortal.

B. The Timing of the Rapture. Nothing in Scripture specifically identifies whether the Rapture will occur before, during, or after the Tribulation. But there is evidence in Scripture that suggests it will occur before the Tribulation.

1. *No References to the Church in Tribulation-Related Passages*. There is no biblical reference to the Tribulation in which the Church is mentioned. For instance, the Church is referred to in Revelation 1-3 describing events before the Tribulation and in Revelation 19-22 describing events after the Tribulation, but it is not mentioned in Revelation 6-18 which describe the Tribulation period itself.
2. *1 Thessalonians 1:9-10*. First Thessalonians 1:9-10 says Jesus will “rescue us from the coming wrath,” an apparent reference to the Church being spared from going through the Tribulation period.
3. *Revelation 3:10*. Jesus told the church in Philadelphia that He would keep them “from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth.”

C. The Imminence of the Rapture. Pretribulationism is the only End Times view that retains the concept of the imminence of the Rapture, i.e., the view that the Rapture can occur at any moment. Various scriptures teach that Christ could return at any time (John 21:22), our redemption is near (Romans 13:11-12), and Jesus is right at the door (James 5:7-9). The other End Times views do not maintain a concept of the imminence of His return.

IV. EVENTS IN HEAVEN AFTER THE RAPTURE. The Bible mentions two events that will occur while we are in heaven after the Rapture and before we return with Jesus at His Second Coming.

A. The Judgment Seat of Christ

1. *Romans 14:10-12*. All believers will be subject to this judgment.
2. *2 Corinthians 5:10*. The judgment will be based on our works on earth. It is at this time when believers will stand before God in order to receive their rewards based upon the works they did during their lifetimes.

3. *1 Corinthians 3:10-15*

- a. This judgment will be based on the *quality* of our works, not the *quantity* of them (3:12-13).
- b. The results of the judgment will be rewards. It has nothing to do with our salvation (3:14-15).

B. The Marriage of the Lamb – Revelation 19:6-8

1. The timing of the marriage between the Lamb and the Church is not necessarily before the Tribulation. It must occur sometime after the Judgment Seat and before the Second Coming, though.
2. This is the ultimate goal for all of the Church: to be cleansed by Christ and united with Him as His “bride.”

Session 7

THE BEGINNING OF THE TRIBULATION: THE COVENANT WITH ISRAEL

I. THE SEVEN-YEAR COVENANT WITH ISRAEL - DANIEL 9:24-27. The Tribulation begins when the Antichrist signs a covenant with Israel.

A. Daniel's Prayer – Daniel 9:1-23. God's answer to Daniel's prayer in Daniel 9 described the future covenant with Israel.

1. *When Daniel Prayed – Daniel 9:1-2a.* His prayer occurred during the first year of Darius' reign over Babylon: 539-538 B.C.
2. *Why Daniel Prayed – Daniel 9:2b-3.* Daniel had been reading Jeremiah 25:11-12, in which Jeremiah prophesied that Babylon would rule over Judah for seventy years.¹¹ Judah was captured by the Babylonians in 605 B.C. The Persians captured Babylon in 539 B.C., approximately 70 years later. It was this event that fulfilled Jeremiah's prophesy (see 2 Chronicles 36:20-21).
3. *What Daniel Prayed – Daniel 9:4-19.* Daniel realized that the seventy-year period was about to end, so he prayed fervently for forgiveness for his people.

B. The Answer to Daniel's Prayer – Daniel 9:20-27

1. *Gabriel's Message – Daniel 9:20-23.* During Daniel's prayer, the angel Gabriel arrived with a message from God for Daniel. His aim was to dispel Daniel's apparent belief that the end of Judah's Babylonian captivity would bring in the Messianic Kingdom. He explained that the Messianic Kingdom would not start until after a period of "seventy weeks."
2. *The Seventy-Weeks Prophecy – Daniel 9:24-27*
 - a. Two important facts about this prophecy:
 - (1) The prophecy only applies to the Jews and the City of Jerusalem (9:24a).
 - (2) The prophecy covers seventy sets of seven-year periods, or a total of 490 years. The Hebrew word translated "sevens" in the NIV or

¹¹ The seventy-year timeframe may have been intended to be the approximation for a lifetime rather than a precise seventy-year period. See, e.g., Psalm 90:10; Isaiah 23:15.

“weeks” in KJV and NASB refers to a heptad or a series or combination of sevens. The events described can only relate to heptads of years, as opposed to months, weeks, or days.¹²

- b. Gabriel cited six purposes for the seventy sevens (9:24b):
 - (1) “To finish transgression,” i.e., to end Israel’s rebellion against God’s rule and its rejection of the Messiah.
 - (2) “To put an end to sin,” i.e., to deal with Israel’s sin of unbelief in Jesus Christ once and for all.
 - (3) “To atone for wickedness,” i.e., to accomplish the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the Cross.
 - (4) “To bring in everlasting righteousness,” i.e., to ultimately bring in the Messianic Kingdom.
 - (5) “To seal up vision and prophecy,” i.e., to fulfill all of the prophecies and promises pertaining to Israel.
 - (6) “To anoint the Most Holy Place,” i.e., to anoint the Millennial Temple.
- c. The six purposes of the seventy sevens have not yet been fully accomplished, so their completion remains in the future. The first sixty-nine sevens have already happened, but the final seven is yet to take place.
 - (1) The seventy sevens begin with “the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem” (9:25). This decree was the one issued by Artaxerxes in 444 B.C. that authorized Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem and rebuild its walls (Nehemiah 2:1-8).¹³
 - (a) The first period of the seventy sevens is seven sevens, or forty-nine years. During this period, Jerusalem was rebuilt and fully restored “with streets and a trench” (9:25b).

¹² For a more detailed explanation of this point, see Kenneth L. Barker, “Premillennialism in the Book of Daniel,” *The Masters Seminary Journal*, vol. 4, no. 1 (Spring 1993):25-38, 35.

¹³ Some scholars believe the decree Gabriel referred to was the one issued by Artaxerxes in 457 B.C., granting permission to Ezra and anyone who wanted to accompany him to return to Jerusalem (Ezra 7:6-28). Barker, 35.

(b) Under Nehemiah’s leadership, the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt in fifty-two days, but it apparently took the full forty-nine years to clear out the debris and restore the City.¹⁴

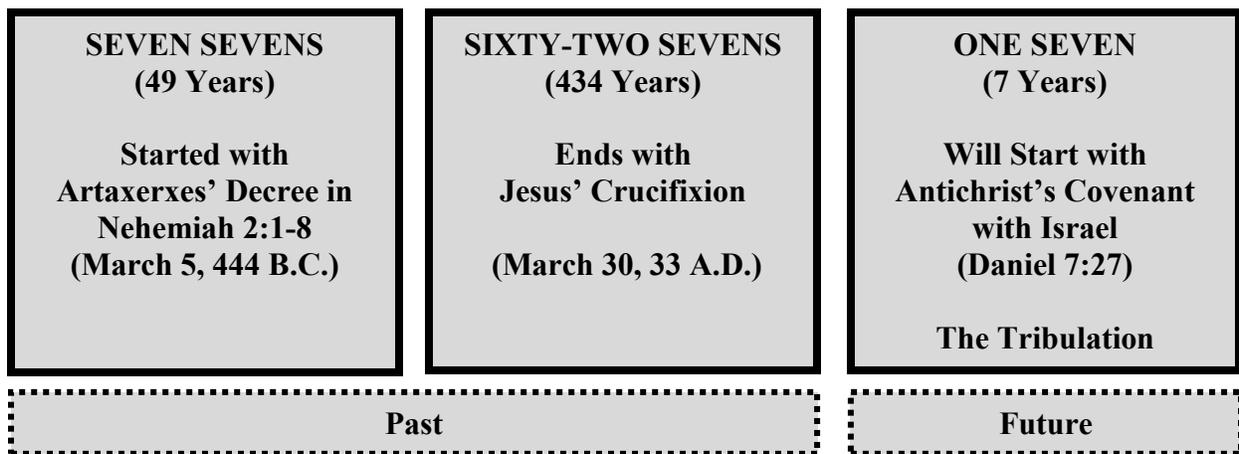
(2) The second period of the seventy sevens is sixty-two sevens, or 434 years. This period ends with the cutting off of the “Anointed One” (Dan. 9:25-26a), which coincides with Jesus’ death. Using the Jewish calendar of 360 days per year, 483 years from Artaxerxes’ decree in 444 B.C. ends during the week of Jesus’ crucifixion.¹⁵

(3) Gabriel further explained that, following the sixty-nine sevens, Jerusalem and the Temple will be destroyed by “the people of the ruler” (9:26). This destruction occurred in A.D. 70 when the Romans overtook Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple.

(4) The last seven has not yet occurred, meaning that a gap exists between the first sixty-nine sevens and the last seven. This is apparent because the purposes listed in verse 24 have not been accomplished and the events described in verses 26-27 have not happened. It is this last seven-year period that is referred to as the Tribulation.

(a) This last seven (i.e., the Tribulation) begins with the Antichrist entering into a covenant with Israel (9:27a).

(b) In the middle of the seven-year period, though, the Antichrist will break the covenant, stop all sacrifices in the Tribulation Temple, and “set up an abomination that causes desolation,” which Jesus identified as the beginning of the end (9:27b; Matthew 24:15).



¹⁴ Donald K. Campbell, *Daniel: God’s Man in a Secular Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House Publishers, 1988), 142.

¹⁵ Barker, 36.

II. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE TRIBULATION

- A. Daniel 9: The Primary Source for the Tribulation Prophecy.** Daniel 9:24-27 is the primary source for the doctrine of the Tribulation and the understanding that it is a seven-year period.
- B. “The Day of the Lord.”** The most common name for the Tribulation in the Old Testament is “the Day of the Lord” or some variation of this phrase. It is also frequently found in the New Testament.
- C. The Purpose of the Tribulation.** The basic purpose of the Tribulation is a time of judgment and to finalize the purposes for the entire seventy sevens listed in Daniel 9:24. Essentially, the Tribulation will accomplish three things:¹⁶
1. End evil and destroy sinners (Isaiah 13:9)
 2. Start a world-wide revival (Revelation 7:1-9)
 3. End the stubbornness of the Jews against accepting Jesus as the Messiah (Daniel 12:7)

III. EVENTS IN HEAVEN PRECEDING THE TRIBULATION – REVELATION 4-5

A. The Throne of God – Revelation 4

1. Chapter 4 of Revelation begins the third section of the Book of Revelation as outlined in Revelation 1:19: “what will take place later.” It begins with Jesus beckoning to John so that He can show John “what must take place after this” (4:1).
2. John described an incredible scene in Heaven. While each element of his vision has significance, the real meaning of chapter 4 is best understood in the overall, general picture, rather than the specific details. John saw God, sitting on His throne, in magnificent splendor, surrounded by representatives of God’s redeemed people and His total creation, both of whom declared His worthiness of our worship and praise.

¹⁶ Fruchtenbaum, 175-178.

B. The Lamb and the Scroll – Revelation 5

1. After the scene in Heaven, John saw God holding a scroll in His right hand. The scroll was sealed with seven seals and contained writing on both sides (5:1).
 - a. The scroll represents the destiny of the world and God's plan for bringing real peace and salvation to the world.
 - b. The problem was that no one was worthy enough to open the seven seals, which caused John to weep with hopelessness (5:2-4).
 - (1) One of the twenty-four elders mentioned in chapter 4 explained that there was one who was worthy to open the scroll: "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David" (5:5), both of which terms were messianic terms from the Old Testament.
 - (2) When John looked to see the Lion, he saw instead a Lamb that appeared as though it had been dead. The message to the Jews is clear: the Lamb that was sacrificed on the cross is the Messiah. Despite his "slain look," the Lamb had seven horns, which represent perfect power, and seven eyes, which represent perfect vision (5:6-7).
2. When the Lamb took the scroll, all creatures and all of the redeemed fell before Him to worship and praise Him with a "new song" that declared His worthiness as a result of His sacrifice on the Cross (5:8-10).
 - a. Each of the creatures and elders held a bowl containing the prayers of the saints (5:8). Our prayers are never lost or forgotten. They will, someday, be presented to Christ in ultimate praise, and each of them contributes to Christ's work of redemption.
 - b. In the midst of this praise and worship, John saw countless angels join in the chorus and praise the Lamb (5:11-14).
3. The point of Revelation 5 is its elevation of the Lamb to equal status and worthiness of praise with God in chapter 4. Both are worthy of our praise and worship.

Session 8

THE FIRST HALF OF THE TRIBULATION: SEALS, TRUMPETS, 144,000 JEWS, AND TWO WITNESSES

I. **THE SEAL JUDGMENTS – REVELATION 6.** The Seal Judgments continue the events John described in Revelation 5 as the Lamb begins opening the seals. The first four seals are commonly referred to as the “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.” The events described by these seal judgments are probably not consecutive in timing with one judgment stopping when another one starts. Instead, they likely will have a compounding effect with one judgment accompanying the preceding one.¹⁷

A. The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

1. *Seal 1: The White Horse – Revelation 6:1-2*

- a. The rider of the white horse is not the same as the rider in Revelation 19:11-16. The rider in Revelation 19 is Jesus. The rider in Revelation 6 is a “conqueror bent on conquest” (6:2) and probably is the Antichrist.
- b. The rider of the white horse carries a bow but no arrows, which suggests that his conquest will not be by bloodshed but through lies and deceit. The first Seal Judgment is, therefore, *a picture of worldwide conquest by lies and deceit.*

2. *Seal 2: The Red Horse – Revelation 6:3-4*

- a. The false peace of the first horseman will not last long because the second horseman brings *worldwide war and anarchy*. Verse 4 says he will “take peace from the earth” and “make men slay each other.” This will include civil war, anarchy, general violence on the streets, internal revolution, etc.
- b. This horseman has a “large sword,” suggesting terrible and frightful weaponry.

3. *Seal 3: The Black Horse – Revelation 6:5-6*

- a. The third horseman is typically associated with worldwide famine, but the description of this Seal Judgment refers to *staggering inflation and economic*

¹⁷ Billy Graham, *Storm Warning* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1982), 229.

recession leading to worldwide famine. The resulting scarcity of food and other essentials may become the Antichrist's justification for imposing strict controls over buying and selling and requiring people to bear his mark.

- b. Two pounds of wheat and six pounds of barley would be enough for one person and one small family, respectively. Inflation will be so bad that it will take a full day's salary simply to buy such small portions of food, almost ten times their normal level.
 - c. The oil and wine, however, must not be destroyed (6:6). These items probably represent luxury items. The requirement not to destroy them implies a great gap between the poor and the rich during this recessionary period.
4. *Seal 4: The Pale Horse – Revelation 6:7-8.* The fourth horseman brings *death* to one-fourth of the world by four means:



- a. Sword, which refers to general violence, including war, murders, slaughter, etc.
- b. Famine. The economic crisis of the previous horseman will cause many deaths from starvation and food deprivation around the world.
- c. Plague, including pandemics, epidemics, and general diseases across the world.
- d. Wild animals. As things deteriorate in the world, even the wild animals will become more menacing and dangerous to humans.

B. Seal 5: Martyrs – Revelation 6:9-11

1. *Who the Martyrs Are.* There are different interpretations of who these martyrs are. Some believe them to be Christian martyrs from the Church. Others believe them to be martyrs from the Tribulation period. The latter is probably a better interpretation, illustrating the *vast martyrdom of believers during the Tribulation.*

2. *The Prayers of the Martyrs.* In any event, the martyrs pray for vengeance. Their prayers reflect God's will during the Tribulation time, although God will delay in answering the prayers until more believers suffer the same martyrdom for their faith.

C. Seal 6: Natural Disasters – Revelation 6:12-17

1. *Widespread Natural Calamities.* This Seal Judgment brings tremendous natural calamities around the world in the form of great earthquakes, Blackout No. 2, perhaps a meteor shower, and violent windstorms.
2. *The People's Response.* As a result, people around the world will panic and seek ways to hide from these natural phenomena. While they will recognize the phenomena as God's judgments, they will continue to repent and turn to Him in faith (6:15-17).

II. THE 144,000 JEWS – REVELATION 7:1-17

- A. **In the Meantime.** This chapter is a parenthetical break between the descriptions of the opening of the Sixth and Seventh Seals. Chronologically, the sealing of the 144,000 probably started at the beginning of the Tribulation (7:1-3).
- B. **Who the Sealed Were.** Verses 4-8 explain that the 144,000 people come from "the tribes of Israel." This clearly identifies them as converted Jews.
- C. **The Ministry of the Sealed.** Verses 9-17 illustrate the results of the ministry of the 144,000 Jews during the Tribulation. Their ministry will bring about a worldwide revival and lead to the salvation of "a great multitude that no one could count" (7:9).

III. THE TRUMPET JUDGMENTS – REVELATION 8-9

- A. **Seal 7: Silence – Revelation 8:1-6.** The Seventh Seal triggers the seven Trumpet Judgments. When the Seventh Seal is opened, several things will happen:
 1. *Silence.* First, there is a half an hour of total silence in heaven (8:1), representing the ominous judgment yet to come.
 2. *Incense.* Second, incense is added to the prayers of the saints for God's vengeance (8:3), representing the answers to those prayers.

3. *Judgment*. The answer to the prayers consisted of intense judgment on the earth, symbolized by thunder, lightning, and an earthquake, all of which may be a foreshadowing of the Trumpet Judgments to come. Throughout the Trumpet Judgments, one-third of a different aspect of the earth will be destroyed. This fraction suggests that judgment is not completed, although the punishment will be severe.

B. Trumpet 1: Hail and Fire – Revelation 8:7. Hail and fire (perhaps erupting volcanoes) will fall from the sky and destroy one-third of the dry ground. This judgment is similar to the seventh Egyptian plague of hail (see Exodus 9:13-25).

C. Trumpet 2: “Huge Mountain” from the Sky – Revelation 8:8-9. “Something like a huge mountain” will fall into the sea and destroy one-third of the sea life and ships. This may refer to a large meteor or larger-scale volcanic eruptions across the world. The effect of the sea being turned into blood is reminiscent of the first Egyptian plague (Exodus 7:20-21).

D. Trumpet 3: “Great Star” from the Sky – Revelation 8:10-11

1. *Destruction of Drinking Water*. A “great star” will fall from the sky and destroy one-third of the earth’s sweet water. The water will become so bitter that many who drink it will die.

2. *Wormwood*. The fallen star is named “Wormwood” (8:11). Wormwood is a European plant that has a strong, bitter taste, although it is not generally poisonous. It is often used as a metaphor for bitterness and sorrow. This judgment is the reverse of Moses’ miracle at Marah, where bitter waters were made sweet (Exodus 15:25).

E. Trumpet 4: Darkness – Revelation 8:12. This judgment causes one-third of the light from the sun, moon, and stars to be hindered from getting to the earth. It is similar to the ninth Egyptian plague of darkness (10:21-23).

F. The Woe Judgments. The last three Trumpet Judgments are preceded by a special warning of woe in Revelation 8:13. The eagle is an apocalyptic symbol of swiftness and judgment. Consequently, the last three Trumpet Judgments are called the Woe Judgments.

1. *Trumpet 5 / Woe Judgment 1: Locusts – Revelation 9:1-12.* This judgment consists of a locust plague that causes torment on unbelievers for a period of five

months (the normal life span of a locust). This is similar to the eighth Egyptian plague of locusts (Exodus 10:1-20).

- a. The locust plague is headed by a fallen angel (identified as Abaddon in 9:11) who is given the key to the Abyss (9:1). The Abyss is the traditional abode of fallen angels. It was where the demons asked to be sent when Jesus cast them from the pigs in Luke 8:31.
- b. The locusts may actually be demons rather than literal locusts. They come from the Abyss in such great hordes that they cause the third Blackout. (9:2; see also Joel 2:10). This may be a plague of demonic possession rather than physical torment.
- c. The demons were given restrictions on what they could do (9:4-6). This is reminiscent of the way God placed restrictions on Satan in the story of Job.
 - (1) No damage to any plant-life (which is unusual for a locust plague)
 - (2) No harm to anyone with the seal of God on them
 - (3) No death to anyone, although the torment from them will be so great that men will want to die (9:6)
 - (4) No torture after five months
- d. John next described the locusts and some of their characteristics (9:7-11):
 - (1) "Like horses ready for battle" (9:7a), reflecting their fierceness
 - (2) Wore "something like crowns of gold," suggesting the authority they were given to bring judgment (9:7b)
 - (3) Human-like faces, conveying intelligence and cunning (9:7c)
 - (4) "Hair like women's hair" (9:8a) symbolizing the deceptive attractiveness of their occultist propaganda and lies
 - (5) "Teeth like lion's teeth" (9:8b), representing their cruel and inhumane nature
 - (6) "Breastplates like breastplates of iron" (9:9a), referring to their callous behavior and lack of compassion
 - (7) Noise from their wings sounded like an army of war chariots rushing into battle (9:9b), suggesting how frightening and overwhelming they were
 - (8) "Tails with stingers" (9:10), serving as instruments of torture

(9) Led by an angel named Abaddon or Apollyon (9:11), which means “destroyer.”

2. *Trumpet 6 / Woe Judgment 2: Mounted Troops – Revelation 9:13-21.*

- a. This judgment results in the killing of one-third of mankind. One-fourth of the world already died in the Fourth Seal Judgment. Now an additional one-third will die as a result of this great invasion.
- b. This judgment begins by the releasing of the four angels bound at the Euphrates River. These are not the same four angels referred to in Revelation 7, who were actually God’s angels. The Revelation 9 angels are evil demons who have been bound by God and prevented from unleashing their evil on the world until God was ready (9:14-15), depicting again the sovereignty and control God has over all events.

(1) John said the troops numbered 200,000,000 soldiers (9:16). Some interpret this as meaning the invasion will come from China because it is the only nation currently with an army of such size. But, the meaning of the number may be symbolic rather than literal.

(a) The number 200,000,000 may represent a number so large it cannot be counted (see, e.g., Psalm 68:17).

(b) The four angels who release this devastation used a number that typically symbolizes the entire earth. Thus, their hordes of armies probably are not limited to coming from the east but from all around the world.

(2) The invaders are described in Revelation 9:17-19. The description sounds similar to tanks, missiles, and other tools of modern warfare, although that is likely not its intended meaning. John’s description is meant to describe an overwhelming and irresistible force of demonic nature.

(3) Some commentators believe this judgment is another picture of a demon invasion as in the Fifth Trumpet Judgment. Others believe it is world war among the nations. Regardless, despite the devastation of these judgments, those who survive will still refuse to repent and turn to God (9:20-21).

IV. THE TWO WITNESSES – REVELATION 11:3-6

- A. God’s Witnesses.** During the first 3½ years of the Tribulation, while the events of the Seal Judgments and Trumpet Judgments are happening, God will send two witnesses to whom He will give great power to perform miracles similar to those performed by Moses and Elijah. He will also initially protect them from harm while they perform their ministry. They will fulfill the prophecy of the “two olive trees” in Zechariah 4:11-14.
- B. Who the Witnesses Will Be.** Many speculate these two witnesses will be Elijah and Moses or Enoch reincarnated. There is no Scripture that supports such a view. These witnesses will likely be two special Jewish prophets who will arise during the Tribulation.
- C. The Focus of Their Ministry.** Their ministry will center in Jerusalem rather than having a global focus. The 144,000 Jews will be ministering around the world.

V. THE ONE-WORLD CHURCH – REVELATION 17:1-6

- A. The Woman Sitting on a Scarlet Beast.** Another event that will occur during the first half of the Tribulation will be the growth of a one-world church, which the angel described as a woman riding on a scarlet beast.
1. *The Great Prostitute.* The one-world church is described as a prostitute (17:1). The real Church is gone after the Rapture, so the only religions remaining are false religions, cults, and carnal church-goers who proclaim false messages and prostitute the truth.
 2. *Universal Influence.* The woman “sits by many waters,” which is a description of the universal nature of the church’s global influence (17:1, 15). Waters are symbolic of the nations.
 3. *Unified with the Government.* The false church will be united with the government as symbolized by the woman’s adultery with the kings of the earth (17:2) and by her position on the beast (17:3).
 4. *Wealth.* The universal church will be extremely wealthy (17:4a).
 5. *Sinful and Evil.* The woman holds a golden cup that appears to be a worship utensil but is filled with abominations and filth (17:4b).

6. *Her Titles.* The woman is given several titles that provide clues to her identity (17:5):
 - a. "Mystery:" There remain hidden aspects about this woman.
 - b. "Babylon the Great:" Connects the woman with the background and history of Babylon and the pagan religious rituals that began there.
 - c. "Mother of Prostitutes:" Suggests the woman has many spiritual offspring that perpetuate her false teachings and idolatries.
 - d. "Mother of the Abominations of the Earth:" Repeats the fact that the Tribulation church is the source of the false teachings.
7. *Persecutor of True Christians.* She is the cause of the persecution of the Tribulation saints (17:6).
8. *Her Identity.* The angel identified the woman as "the great city that rules over the kings of the earth" (17:18). That city would be Rome, which suggests that the false church will be headquartered in Rome. It *does not mean* the Roman Catholic Church is the false church. The false church of the Tribulation period will consist of what remains of the Roman Catholic Church as well as the Protestant churches after the Rapture.

B. Summary About the One-World Church. During the first half of the Tribulation, the one-world church will be supported by the governments of the ten kingdoms, including the Antichrist. In fact, the Antichrist will probably use the church in order to accomplish his goals. Once they are accomplished, though, he will have no further use for the one-world church (17:16).

Session 9

THE MIDDLE OF THE TRIBULATION: WAR IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH

I. **A BRIEF RESPITE FROM JUDGMENT.** After the Sixth Trumpet Judgment, there is a short break from God's judgments. But the brief cessation does not mean the chaos on earth stopped. Mankind will keep things stirred up on its own with the help of Satan and the Antichrist. The events described in Revelation 10-14 occur during the middle of the Tribulation and happen so rapidly it is hard to ascertain the order in which they occurred.

II. THE LITTLE SCROLL - REVELATION 10

A. **The Mighty Angel.** John described a scene in which a "mighty angel" appears holding a "little scroll." This is the second scroll mentioned in the Book of Revelation, but it is not the same scroll referred to in chapter 5.

1. *The Identity of the Angel.* Some commentators identify the "mighty angel" as Jesus since his description is similar to Christ's description in chapter 1. Others identify him as the angel mentioned in Revelation 5:2.
2. *The Position of the Angel.* The angel stood with one foot on the sea and one on the land (10:2), which represents the fact that the message in the little scroll is for the entire world and all of creation.
3. *The Seven Thunders.* The angel gave a loud shout, which started the Seven Thunders (10:3). But John was prevented from writing down what the Seven Thunders said (10:3-4). This emphasizes the fact that God has not and does not have to tell us all things. By His sovereignty He can decide what to reveal to mankind.
4. *The Message of the Angel.* The angel then swore (with uplifted right hand) that, upon the sounding of the Seventh Trumpet, "the mystery of God will be accomplished" without further delay (10:5-7). A mystery in the Scripture is typically a secret preserved in heaven and revealed to the writer. But this is a mystery that was revealed to the prophets.
 - a. Some believe the mystery is the fact that God will achieve victory over evil and will finally begin to reign on earth (see Revelation 11:17).

- b. Another possible explanation derives from Romans 11:25-27 where Paul explained that the mystery of God is the salvation of Israel following the time of the Gentiles. In other words, after the Seventh Trumpet, all of the Jews in Israel that are going to be saved will be saved.

B. Eating the Scroll. The angel required John to eat the little scroll, which tasted sweet but turned bitter in his stomach (10:8-11). This is similar to Ezekiel's calling described in Ezekiel 2:9-3:3 and 14 (see also Jeremiah 15:16).

1. *The Meaning of Eating the Scroll.* John's experience illustrates the fact that God's truth is sweet for the believer but it also involves action, involvement, and suffering, which can be bitter.



2. *The Application of Eating the Scroll.* Like John and Ezekiel, we must learn to “eat” God's Word—to assimilate it into our lives and let it affect us. Often we hear His Word, and it tastes sweet as long as it stays “out there.” But once God's Word penetrates our lives, assimilating or metabolizing into our very spirits, it begins to sour because it convicts, judges, exposes sin, and calls us to repentance.
 - a. This means that the lessons of Revelation—the judgments, the wrath, the awesomeness of God—have meaning to us. We should not be able to complete this study of the End Times with a “sweet taste” and leave to wonder why the world will not change. God's Word calls *us* to change as well—to repent, to live lives that reflect Jesus more, to become a witness to others.
 - b. It is after John lets the Word of God affect him that John is told to prophecy again (10:11). By letting the truth penetrate his spirit, he became qualified to minister again. The fact that God wanted him to prophecy to the world depicts God's grace even in the midst of total rebelliousness. God desires His message to be told to all so that they can have the opportunity to choose Him.

III. SATAN EVICTED FROM HEAVEN AND THE PERSECUTION OF ISRAEL – REVELATION 12

A. Israel's Flight to Safety – Revelation 12:1-6

1. *A Great Sign.* In chapter 12, John described a “great sign” in heaven that depicted both the past and the future.
2. *Events from the Past.* With regard to the past, he saw a pregnant woman pursued by a red dragon who wanted to destroy her child when it was born. But when the child was born, God “snatched” the baby up to His throne.
 - a. This is clearly a description of the birth of Jesus. The woman represents Israel (not Mary).
 - b. The red dragon is Satan (10:9).
 - (1) John's description of the red dragon is the same description of the Antichrist in Daniel 7:7 and Revelation 13:2—seven heads, ten horns, and seven crowns on each head (12:3). These parallel descriptions emphasize the fact that Satan will be the source of the Antichrist's power.
 - (2) The dragon's tail and the flinging of a third of the stars to the earth depict Satan's massive effort to destroy Jesus during His lifetime (12:4).
 - (a) The stars represent fallen angels. This explains the plethora of demonic activity during Christ's time.
 - (b) The child is Jesus, whom Satan failed to destroy before Jesus ascended (or was “snatched up”) to God and heaven (12:5).
3. *Events in the Future.* In verse 6, the events jump to the End Times with the woman (Israel) fleeing to a place of safety for 3½ years (i.e., the last half of the Tribulation). The fleeing Israelites probably refer to believing Jews. As will be seen in later verses, Israel flees to escape Satan, who hates Israel because it will be used by God to bring in His kingdom.

B. War in Heaven – Revelation 12:7-12. War breaks out in Heaven between Michael and his angels and Satan and his demons. Satan lost and, along with his demons, is cast out of Heaven to earth (12:7-9). It is this heavenly event that starts the Great Tribulation, i.e., the last 3½ years of the Tribulation (see also Daniel 12:1).

1. *Three Steps to Overcoming Satan.* After Satan's banishment from heaven, a loud voice declares God's victory (12:10-12). Verse 11, though, explains how they

overcame Satan and presents a three-step plan we can use to overcome him as well.¹⁸

- a. **STEP 1: TRUST IN THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB.** When Satan attacks us, causes us to doubt our salvation or worthiness before God or assails us for our sins and our past, we overcome his attacks by reminding him that our sins have been forgiven and are covered by the blood of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:1).
 - b. **STEP 2: SHARE YOUR TESTIMONY.** As we tell others what God has done for us, we not only help those with whom we share but strengthen our own walk with God.
 - c. **STEP 3: PUT IT ALL ON THE LINE.** Decide now to do whatever it takes to defeat Satan when he comes around. We must be resolute that there is nothing more important than to obey God.
2. *Satan's Fury and Attacks on Earth.* Satan will be furious about his eviction from heaven (12:12). In his fury, he will attempt to exterminate Israel (12:13-15), but God will protect Israel for the remaining 3½ years of the Tribulation (12:16). Then, further enraged, Satan will attack "the rest of her offspring," which are identified as other believers, probably including the 144,000 witnesses (12:13-17).

C. The Antichrist's Domination of the World – Revelation 13:1-3

1. *Satan's Control of the Antichrist.* The person Satan will use to exterminate the Jews and the Tribulation saints will be the Antichrist. It may be at this point that Satan will actually possess the Antichrist and begin controlling his every move.
 - a. This may be the time when the Antichrist defeats three of the ten kings and dominates the other seven (Daniel 7:24; 11:40-45). This is the beginning of the Antichrist Stage on our timeline.
 - b. During this war, apparently the Antichrist will suffer a wound that appeared fatal (13:3). Satan, though, in an attempt to counterfeit Jesus' resurrection, will miraculously heal the Antichrist. As a result, many people will be amazed and begin to worship the Antichrist (13:1-3).

¹⁸ See Ray C. Stedman, *God's Final Word: Understanding Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House Publishers, 1991), 236-239.

2. *The Antichrist's Control of the Temple Mount.* Upon the Antichrist's domination of the world, he will set up headquarters on the Temple Mount (Daniel 11:45) and will be in position to perform multiple atrocities against Israel.

Session 10

THE MIDDLE OF THE TRIBULATION: THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION

I. THE AMAZING PROPHECIES OF DANIEL 11. Daniel 11 is one of the most amazing prophetic passages in the Bible. Verses 2-35 contain at least 135 specific prophecies, all of which have clearly been fulfilled.¹⁹ The remaining verses of the chapter are yet to be fulfilled, but the accuracy of the first thirty-five verses provides confidence that the rest of the chapter will happen just as Daniel described.

A. The Fulfilled Prophecies – Daniel 11:2-35

1. *Prophecies of Persia – Daniel 11:2*

a. Four Persian kings (11:2a)

(1) Cambyses (529-522 B.C.)

(2) Pseudo-Smerdis (522-521 B.C.)

(3) Darius I (521-486 B.C.), who is mentioned in Ezra 5-6

(4) Xerxes I (486-465 B.C.), who is mentioned in Ezra 4:6 and in the Book of Esther. In fact, Esther was his queen. He was very rich (Esther 1:4).

b. The fourth king will “stir up everyone against” Greece (11:2b). In 480 B.C., Xerxes invaded Greece with a massive army.²⁰

2. *Prophecies of Greece - Daniel 11:3-4*

a. The “mighty king” in verse 3 is Alexander the Great (336-323 B.C.), who retaliated against Persia and conquered them.

b. Alexander died soon thereafter and his kingdom was divided among Alexander’s generals, ultimately settling into four main areas controlled by Cassander, Lysimachus, Ptolemy, and Seleucus (11:4).

¹⁹ For an excellent summary of the historical events described in Daniel 11, see J. Paul Tanner, “Daniel 11:2-21: Historical Developments from Daniel’s Day until Antiochus IV Epiphanes,” 2d ed., *Thy Word is a Lamp Unto My Feet*, online at paultanner.org. (Dec. 12, 2016).

²⁰ Part of this invasion probably included the Battle of Thermopylae, which was the inspiration for the movie *300*.

3. *Prophecies of Egypt and Syria - Daniel 11:5-35*

- a. Two of the four kingdoms from Alexander's reign were Egypt and Syria, ruled by the Ptolemies and the Seleucids, respectively.
 - (1) The "King of the South" (11:5) was Ptolemy I Soter, the ruler of Egypt from 323-285 B.C. His dynasty included Palestine.
 - (2) The commander who was "even stronger" (11:5) was Seleucus I Nicator, the ruler of Syria from 311-280 B.C. Seleucus' reign began in Babylon, but ultimately extended from east Asia Minor to India.
- b. Egypt and Syria became allies (11:6a) when Berenice, the daughter of Ptolemy II (ruler of Egypt), married Antiochus II (ruler of Syria). The alliance ultimately failed when Antiochus' first wife, Laodice, murdered both Antiochus and Berenice as well as their infant son. Ptolemy II, Berenice's father, also died at about the same time (11:6b).
- c. Berenice's brother, Ptolemy III Euergetes, became ruler of Egypt then from 246-221 B.C. (11:7a). In retaliation against the murder of his sister, he successfully invaded Syria (11:7b), which was then ruled by Seleucus II Callinicus (246-226 B.C.).
 - (1) During his invasion, Ptolemy III plundered and looted the lands and returned to Egypt with great treasures (11:8).
 - (2) Some years later, according to the Roman historian, Justin, Seleucus II attacked Egypt but was defeated (11:9).
- d. Seleucus II's sons, Seleucus III Ceraunus (226-223 B.C.) and Antiochus III the Great (223-187 B.C.) then won victories of their own (11:10).
 - (1) Ptolemy IV Philopater (221-203 B.C.) defeated Antiochus in 217 B.C. at the Battle of Raphia on the southern border of Palestine (11:11-12).
 - (2) Antiochus the Great allied with Philip V of Macedonia (and the Jews of Palestine) and waged war against Ptolemy V Epiphanes of Egypt (203-181 B.C.) and defeated him (11:13-16a). Syria thus wrested control of Palestine from Egypt in 198 B.C. (Dan. 11:16b).
 - (3) In 194 B.C., Antiochus the Great attempted to take complete control of Egypt by giving his daughter, Cleopatra I, in marriage to Ptolemy V.

THE PROPHECIES OF DANIEL 11

Daniel	Egypt (Kingdom of the South)	Syria (Kingdom of the North)
11:5	Ptolemy I Soter (323-285 B.C.)	Seleucus I Nicator (311-280 B.C.) Antiochus I Soter (280-261 B.C.)
11:6	Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246 B.C.)	Antiochus II Theos (261-246 B.C.) <i>--Married Berenice, daughter of Ptolemy II</i>
11:7-9	Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-221 B.C.) <i>--Berenice's brother</i> <i>--Successfully invaded Syria (11:7)</i> <i>--Carried home great wealth (11:8)</i>	Seleucus II Callinucus (246-226 B.C.) <i>--Attacked Egypt but was defeated (11:9)</i>
11:10		Seleucus III Ceraunus (226-203 B.C.) Antiochus III the Great (223-287 B.C.)
11:11-12	Ptolemy IV Philopater (221-203 B.C.) <i>--Defeated Antiochus III (217 B.C.)</i>	
11:13-17	Ptolemy V Epiphanes (203-181 B.C.) <i>--Married Cleopatra I, daughter of Antiochus III (194 B.C.) (11:17)</i>	<i>--Allied with Philip V of Macedonia and defeated Ptolemy V (11:13-15), gaining control of Palestine (198 B.C.) (11:16)</i>
11:18		<i>--Conquered several Greek islands until he was defeated by Rome (190 B.C.)</i>
11:19		<i>--Died while plundering pagan temple (187 B.C.)</i>
11:20	Ptolemy VI Philometor (181-146 B.C.)	Seleucus IV Philopater (187-175 B.C.) <i>--Died mysteriously, perhaps poisoned by Heliodorus, the tax collector</i>
11:21		Antiochus IV Ephiphanes (175-164 B.C.)
11:22		<i>--Killed Onias III, the high priest (170 B.C.)</i>
11:23-24		<i>--Extended his rule throughout the world</i>
11:25-26		<i>--Defeated Ptolemy VI (170 B.C.)</i>
11:27		<i>--Held a peace conference with Ptolemy VI</i>
11:28		<i>--Plundered the Temple</i>
11:29-30		<i>--Attacked Egypt again, but was defeated with Rome's help (168 B.C.)</i>
11:30-31		<i>--Desecrated the Temple (168 B.C.): THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION</i>
11:32-35		<i>--The Jews revolt, led by Mattathias and Judas Maccabeus</i> <i>--The Temple was cleansed and rededicated in Dec. 165 B.C. (Hannukah)</i>

Cleopatra, though, remained loyal to her husband and failed to deliver Egypt to her father (11:17).²¹

- (4) After that, Antiochus the Great turned his attention to the islands of Asia Minor and Greece, conquering several islands in the Aegean Sea (11:18a). He was ultimately defeated, though, by the Roman commander, Lucius Cornelius Scipio Asiaticus, in 190 B.C. (11:18b).
 - (5) Antiochus the Great returned home in defeat and died while attempting to plunder a temple of Bel in 187 B.C. (11:19).
- e. Antiochus the Great's successor was Seleucus IV Philopater (187-175 B.C.), who inherited a country with a great debt owed to Rome.
- (1) As a result, Seleucus IV sent tax collectors throughout the country to collect a large tax from the people (11:20a). One of the tax collectors was a man named Heliodorus, who attempted to plunder the temple in Jerusalem (see 2 Maccabees 3:7).
 - (2) Seleucus IV died mysteriously in 175 B.C. (11:20b). Some believe Heliodorus poisoned him, possibly in Heliodorus' attempt to seize the throne for himself.
- f. Antiochus IV Euphron (175-164 B.C.) has been called a "contemptible person who has not been given the honor of royalty" (11:21). He was an evil man who secured the throne through murders and intrigue.
- (1) Antiochus IV had several early military victories and survived an attack by a large army. In the defeat of the army, Antiochus IV murdered the high priest, Onias III, in 170 B.C., commencing Antiochus IV's persecution of the Jews (11:22) and establishing his own priesthood.
 - (2) Antiochus IV continued to extend his power throughout Syria, Palestine, Edom, Ammon, and Moab by means of deceit, lies, and bribery (11:23-24).
 - (3) Antiochus IV attacked Egypt in 170 B.C. and defeated Ptolemy VI Philometor with the help of Ptolemy VI's own assistants (11:25-26).
 - (a) After the battle, Antiochus IV and Ptolemy VI met in conference, but peace was not actually achieved (11:27).

²¹ This is not the more famous Cleopatra VII (70/69 B.C.-30 B.C.), who married Mark Antony and became queen of Egypt.

(b) Antiochus IV then returned to his home, but on the way plundered the Temple in Jerusalem (11:28).

(4) In 168 B.C., Antiochus IV attacked Egypt again but was defeated when Rome (“ships of the western coastlands”) came to Egypt’s aid (11:29a).

(a) Angered by his defeat, Antiochus IV returned to Syria and focused on his persecution of the Jews (11:29b).

(b) Antiochus IV desecrated the Jewish Temple in 168 B.C. by offering a pig on the altar and raising a statue of a Zeus in the Holy Place. This event constituted the “abomination that caused desolation” (11:31).

(c) As a result of Antiochus IV’s desecration of the Temple, the Jews revolted (called the Maccabean revolt) under the leadership of Mattathias and his son, Judas Maccabeus (11:32-34), and ultimately regained control of the Temple.

i. The Jews rededicated the altar of the Temple in December 165, a time now celebrated as Hanukkah.

ii. The suffering of the Jews during this time was a refining and purifying process that, according to Daniel’s prophecy, will continue until the “time of the end” (11:35).

B. Prophecies Yet to Be Fulfilled – Daniel 11:36-45

1. *Prophecies About the Antichrist.* Beginning in verse 36, the events described by Daniel have no relationship to events in history. It appears that verses 36-45 describe the Antichrist and the period of the Tribulation.

2. *Twelve Specific Prophecies.* There are at least twelve descriptions and prophecies regarding the Antichrist in Daniel 11:36-45:²²

a. He will act solely pursuant to his own self will (11:36a).

b. He will exalt himself as a god (11:36b).

c. He will magnify himself above all other gods (11:36c).

d. He will blaspheme God (11:36d; see also Revelation 13:6).

e. He will prosper for a limited time (11:36e).

²² Donald G. Campbell, *Daniel: God’s Man in a Secular Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discover House Publishers, 1988), 17-173.

- f. He will disregard God and Jesus (11:37).
- g. He will place his confidence in his military strength. With victory, he will reward those who acknowledge his greatness and deity (11:38-39).
- h. He will be challenged by other nations (11:40a). This likely refers to the war that will occur during the middle of the Tribulation.
- i. He will be victorious initially (11:40b-43), invading Israel and overcoming many countries, including Egypt, Libya, and Ethiopia. He will not, however, defeat Jordan.
- j. He will face renewed conflicts from other places (11:44).
- k. He will establish his military headquarters in Jerusalem (11:45a).
- l. He will be defeated in the end (11:45b).

II. THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF THE TWO WITNESSES – REVELATION 11:7-14

- A. The Witnesses' Deaths.** After the Antichrist gains control of the world, one of the first things he will do is kill the two witnesses in Jerusalem. Because of the unpopularity of these two witnesses among the world's population, their deaths will help cement the Antichrist's position (11:7-9).
- B. The Witnesses' Resurrections.** After 3½ days, though, God will resurrect the two witnesses, and they will "ascend" into heaven (11:11-12).
 - 1. In conjunction with the two witnesses' ascension, an earthquake will destroy one-tenth of the city of Jerusalem, killing seven thousand people (11:13).
 - 2. With this event, the Sixth Trumpet Judgment and the Second Woe will be completed (11:14).

III. THE WORSHIP OF THE ANTICHRIST – REVELATION 13:4-10

- A. The Actions of the Antichrist.** Despite the amazing resurrection and ascension of the two witnesses, people will continue to worship the Antichrist and his god, Satan (13:4). The description of the Antichrist in verses 5-8 is similar to the prophecies in Daniel 11:36-45.

1. *Blasphemy.* He will blaspheme God for forty-two months (i.e., 3½ years) (13:5-6).
2. *War.* He will make war against believers and defeat many of them (13:7a).
3. *Domination.* He will have authority over the entire world (13:7b).
4. *Worship.* Everyone will worship the Antichrist except those whose names are written in God's Book of Life (13:8).

B. A Call to Endure. John quoted a passage from Jeremiah 15:2 as a word of encouragement to believers facing persecution (13:10). God will exact His revenge on those who harmed His people by the same means they persecuted His people.

IV. THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION – DANIEL 9:27

A. The Breach of the Covenant with Israel. The Antichrist will breach his agreement with Israel in the middle of the Tribulation by invading Israel. He will stop the sacrificial system in the Temple and set up an idol of Zeus in the Holy Place, just as Antiochus IV Epiphanes did in 168 B.C. This is the future “abomination of desolation” Jesus referred to in Matthew 24:15-16.

B. 1,290 Days. The abomination of desolation will last for 1,290 days, i.e., thirty days beyond the end of the Tribulation. This is part of the 75-day interim period to be discussed later (see Daniel 12:11).

V. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TRIBULATION CHURCH – REVELATION 17:15-18

The apostate church that arose during the first half of the Tribulation with the assistance and support of the Antichrist's government (17:15) will ultimately be destroyed by the Antichrist (17:16).

VI. THE RISE OF THE FALSE PROPHET – REVELATION 13:11-18

A. The Work of the False Prophet. After the Antichrist destroys the Tribulation Church, he will assume total control of the world's religious practices, which he will accomplish with the help of another beast—the “beast from the earth.” This beast is also known as the False Prophet (see Revelation 16:13, 19:20, 20:10). With the appearance of this person, the unholy trinity is completed: Satan, Antichrist, and the False Prophet.

1. *His Origin.* He will come out of the earth as opposed to heaven, highlighting his worldliness and false message (13:11a).
2. *His Deceitfulness.* He will appear like a lamb but speak like a dragon, illustrating his deceitfulness (13:11b).
3. *His Authority.* He will have full authority to act on behalf of the Antichrist (13:12).
4. *His Purpose.* His purpose will be to point the world to worship the Antichrist (13:12b).
5. *His Miracles.* He will be able to perform miracles, which will deceive people into worshiping the Antichrist (13:13-14a).
6. *His Idolatrousness.* He will set up a statue of the Antichrist and order the execution of anyone who refuses to worship it (13:14b-15).
7. *His Counterfeit Seal.* He will establish an economic system that requires people to carry a mark on their foreheads or right hand, identifying them as followers of the Antichrist. The mark will be necessary for anyone to buy or sell merchandise (13:16-17). This mark is a counterfeit of God's seal on His people.

B. The Meaning of 666

1. *What It Is*
 - (a) The real point of the number seems to be its use of the number 6, which, in biblical numerology, represents mankind—falling just short of the number 7, which represents the perfection and completion of God.
 - (b) The threefold repetition serves as the superlative form of the number, thus identifying the beast as not just a sinful, fallen being, but the most sinful and fallen of all beings.
2. *What It Signifies.* God will seal His people as evidence of their identity with Him and His victory over evil. Satan will also seal his followers, a seal that evidences their ultimate destruction.

VII. VISIONS OF THE FINAL RESULTS – REVELATION 14

- A. A Vision of Victory for God's People – Revelation 14:1-5.** Revelation 14 serves as a bridge between the mid-Tribulation events and the events of the second half

of the Tribulation, beginning with a brief interlude of the 144,000 joyously worshipping the Lamb (14:1-5). It also reveals several contrasts between the beast of Revelation 13 and the Lamb.

1. *Their Foundations.* The dragon stands on the sand (13:1); the Lamb stands on a mountain (14:1).
2. *Their Followers.* The beast's followers consisted of every "tribe, people, language, and nation" (13:7); the Lamb's followers consisted of the 144,000 (14:3-4).
3. *Their Marks.* The beast marked his followers so they could survive on earth (13:16); the Lamb marked His followers to identify their eternal life (14:1).
4. *Their Voices.* The beast spoke with a voice of blasphemy (13:5); the Lamb and the 144,000 were a "sound from heaven" (14:2).
5. *Their Followers' Characters.* The beast's followers were idolatrous (13:14); the Lamb's followers were undefiled and pure (14:4).
6. *Their Messages.* The beast was deceitful (13:14); the 144,000 had "no lie ... in their mouths" (Rev. 14:5).

B. A Vision of Judgment – Revelation 14:6-20

1. *Judgment is Coming.* The first of three angels sounds a final call for people to worship God before the last judgments begin (14:6-7).
2. *The Fall of Babylon.* The second angel announces the fall of Babylon, which refers to the fall of the false religion and deception (14:8).
3. *The Doom of the Antichrist's Followers.* The third angel announces the doom and torment that the Antichrist's followers will suffer (14:9-12).
4. *Christ's Martyrs Will Be Blessed.* Another voice spoke from heaven and announced special blessings on those who die as martyrs for God during the Tribulation period (14:13).
5. *The Harvest of the Earth.* There is a mixed view on what the harvest is (14:14-16). Some commentators believe it pictures the coming judgment of the entire world. Others believe it is the ingathering of the righteous.
6. *The Gathering of the Grapes.* It is more universally agreed that the gathering of the grapes is a picture of final judgment (14:18-20).

Session 11

THE SECOND HALF OF THE TRIBULATION: THE PREREQUISITES FOR JESUS' SECOND COMING

I. THE BOWL JUDGMENTS – REVELATION 15:1-16:11

A. Preludes to the Bowl Judgments

1. *Trumpet 7 / Woe 3: Victory Declared – Revelation 11:15-19*
 - a. As the Seventh Trumpet sounds, signaling the worst of God's judgments to come, John hears voices from heaven proclaiming Christ's eternal reign on earth (11:15). He also hears the twenty-four elders worshiping and proclaiming Christ's pending victory (11:16-18).
 - b. In his vision, John also saw the Ark of the Covenant in God's heavenly temple. In the Old Testament, the ark symbolized God's presence among His people. In the New Testament, it symbolizes God's faithfulness in keeping his covenant with His people. With the upcoming judgments, God's covenant is about to be completed.
2. *The Scene Before the Bowl Judgments – Revelation 15:1-8.* Before recounting the different Bowl Judgments, John described a preliminary scene in heaven.
 - a. SEVEN ANGELS HOLDING THE "LAST PLAGUES" (15:1)
 - b. THE TRIBULATION MARTYRS ("those who had been victorious over the beast") standing beside a "sea of glass" (15:2)
 - (1) A sea of glass was last mentioned in chapter 4. It represents the holiness and purity of God.
 - (2) The sea of glass was "glowing with fire," which represents the judgment of God.
 - c. THE SONG OF MOSES (15:3). This song refers either to Exodus 15:1-18 or Deuteronomy 32:1-43, both of which were songs of God's deliverance of Israel.
 - d. THE SONG OF THE LAMB (15:3-4). The words of the song of the Lamb offer praise to God for His might, justice, truth, glory, holiness, and righteousness.

- e. **THE SMOKE-FILLED TEMPLE.** After describing the seven angels (15:5-7), John saw the heavenly temple filled with smoke, representing the glory of God. No one was allowed back into the temple until God's judgments were completed (15:8), suggesting that all opportunities to repent have ended.

B. The First Five Bowl Judgments

1. *Bowl 1: Boils – Revelation 16:1-2.* Painful sores will break out on everyone who has the mark of the Beast. This is similar to the sixth Egyptian plague of boils (Exodus 9:9-11).
2. *Bowl 2: Sea Turns to Blood – Revelation 16:3.* The sea will turn to blood and everything in it will die. This is similar to the first Egyptian plague when the Red Sea became blood (Exodus 7:20-21).
3. *Bowl 3: Fresh Water Turns to Blood – Revelation 16:4-7.* The fresh water will turn to blood. This judgment elicits two statements from heaven declaring the justness of God's judgments.
4. *Bowl 4: Scorching Heat from the Sun – Revelation 16:8-9.* Scorching heat from the sun will become extremely intense on the earth. The result, though, was cursing and blasphemy and not repentance.
5. *Bowl 5: Blackout No. 4 – Revelation 16:10-11.* This judgment is the fourth blackout throughout the Beast's kingdom. Again, it resulted in additional blasphemy and a refusal to repent.

II. ISRAEL IN THE TRIBULATION

A. "The Time of Trouble for Jacob"

1. *The Suffering of Israel During the Tribulation.* The Tribulation will be a time of intense suffering for the nation of Israel as Jeremiah predicted in Jeremiah 30:7. Jeremiah called it a "time of trouble for Jacob." During the Tribulation, two-thirds of the Jewish population will be killed (see Zechariah 13:8; Ezekiel 5:12).
2. *The Flight of Israel to the Wilderness.* Nevertheless, a remnant of the Jews will survive (Joel 2:32), and they will flee for their lives to a place in the wilderness prepared by God (Revelation 12:6, 14; see also Matthew 24:16). Some commentators believe the place Israel will run to will be Petra in Jordan.²³

²³ See Fruchtenbaum, 612.

- a. According to the King James translation of Micah 2:12 says the Jewish remnant will be gathered together “as the sheep of Bozrah,” a city that was located in the Mount Seir mountain range of Jordan where Petra is located.
- b. The commentators point out that this is consistent with the prediction in Daniel 11:41 that Jordan will be one of the countries that will not fall to the Antichrist.

B. Israel’s Acceptance of Jesus Christ. As previously mentioned, one of the purposes of the Tribulation is to bring the Jews as a nation back to God by accepting Jesus Christ as the Messiah. As a result, God pronounced that Jesus will not return and Israel will not be restored until two events occur: Israel must confess her national sin for rejecting Jesus and plead for His return.²⁴

1. *Leviticus 26:40-42.* Moses predicted that Israel’s disobedience would lead to God scattering them. Before God will complete His covenant with Israel, He requires that they confess their sins, unfaithfulness, and hostility toward God.
2. *Jeremiah 3:13-18.* In verses 14-18, God described the blessings of Israel in the Messianic Kingdom, but He conditioned their receipt of the blessings in verse 13 with the requirement that they “acknowledge their guilt.”
3. *Zechariah 12:10.* The cleansing of Israel’s sin is conditioned on Israel “looking on ... the one they have pierced” and mourning and grieving for Him.
4. *Hosea 5:15.* Jesus went back to His place (i.e., from earth to heaven) and will stay there until Israel admits her guilt and earnestly seeks Him.
5. *Matthew 23:37-39.* Jesus promised that Jerusalem would not see Him again until Israel accepts Him as Messiah.

²⁴ Fruchtenbaum, 300-304.

Session 12

THE SECOND HALF OF THE TRIBULATION: ARMAGEDDON AND THE SECOND COMING

I. THE ARMAGEDDON CAMPAIGN

A. Introduction to the Prophecies of Armageddon. The Tribulation will end with two climactic events: the battle of Armageddon and Christ's Second Coming. The "battle" of Armageddon, though, is a misnomer. First, it consists of a series of wartime events rather than a single battle. Second, no battle actually takes place in Armageddon. To understand the prophecies regarding Armageddon, then, we must look at the different events that constitute the Armageddon military campaign.

1. *The Gathering of the Armies of the Antichrist – Revelation 16:12-16*

- a. The Sixth Bowl Judgment dried up the Euphrates River, which will provide access for the armies from the East (Babylon) to cross into Israel.
- b. Jesus added a word of hope to the believers in verse 15. He encouraged them to remain faithful because He will come quickly and, as far as their enemies are concerned, unexpectedly.

2. *The Destruction of Babylon – Revelation 18; Isaiah 13:1-14:23; Jeremiah 50-51*

- a. The Antichrist will rebuild the city of Babylon and make it the political and economic capital of the Tribulation world.
- b. An angel declared the destruction of Babylon in Revelation 18:1-3. Its destruction is also mentioned in Jeremiah 50-51 and Isaiah 13:1-14:23.
 - (1) An alliance of nations to the north of Babylon will be the ones who attack the city (Jeremiah 50:3, 9, 41-42; see also Isaiah 13:1-5).
 - (2) The destruction of Babylon will be complete and total. It will become completely uninhabitable by humans; only animals will be able to exist there (Revelation 18:21-24; Isaiah 13:19-22; Jeremiah 50:11-13, 39-40, 51:29).
 - (3) The Antichrist will not be in Babylon at the time of its destruction since he must be told of its destruction (Jeremiah 50:43; 51:31-32). Likely, he will be with the gathering armies in Armageddon.

- c. The Jews who remain in Babylon at the time are told to flee because God plans on bringing upon Babylon the full force of His judgment—double the punishment it meted out on God’s people (Revelation 18:4-8; Jeremiah 50:8, 51, 51:45, 50).
 - d. Babylon’s destruction will be lamented by the kings of the earth (suggesting the political nature of Babylon) (Revelation 18:9-10) and the merchants of the earth (suggesting how important the city had become as a financial and economic center) (Revelation 18:11-19). In contrast, the saints, apostles, and prophets will rejoice (Revelation 18:20).
3. *The Fall of Jerusalem – Zechariah 12:1-9; 14:1-2*
 - a. The Antichrist will not turn east in order to defend Babylon but will continue south to attack Jerusalem (Zechariah 12:1-3a, 14:1-2a).
 - b. The fighting will be fierce, and God will supernaturally allow Jerusalem to resist at first, causing tremendous losses to the Antichrist’s forces (Zechariah 12:3b-9). But, Jerusalem will fall and half of the city will be taken captive. The other half will escape, perhaps fleeing to Bozrah (perhaps Petra) where the rest of the Jews have fled (Zechariah 14:2b).
 4. *The Attack of Bozrah – Jeremiah 49:13-14.* Upon capturing Jerusalem, the Antichrist will move his forces toward Bozrah (Petra?) where the Jews who fled after the abomination of desolation gathered (Jeremiah 49:13-14).
 5. *Israel’s Salvation – Zechariah 12:10-13:9; Romans 11:25-27.* With the Antichrist’s army closing in on the last vestige of the Jewish nation, Israel will be brought to a realization of its national sin for rejecting Jesus and will plead for His return (Zechariah 12:10-13:9). This will complete God’s requirements for Christ to return and fulfill Paul’s statement in Romans 11:25-27 that Israel will be saved when the times of the Gentiles are completed.
 6. *The Second Coming of Christ – Revelation 19:1-18*
 - a. With Israel’s repentance, Jesus will return to earth to do battle with the Antichrist and destroy him (Revelation 19:11-18; see also Isaiah 63:1-6; Matthew 24:30).
 - b. Most commentators identify the location of Jesus’ return as the Mount of Olives because of the passage in Zechariah 14:3-4. But other passages suggest that His return will be at Bozrah (Petra?) or in that vicinity (see Isaiah 34:1-7, 63:1-6; Habakkuk 3:3).

- c. Prior to describing Jesus' second coming, John included a prelude that consisted of two elements (Revelation 19:1-10).
 - (1) A HALLELUJAH CHORUS – REVELATION 19:1-8. This passage is the first time in the New Testament that the word “hallelujah” is used. The chorus includes a series of praises for the fall of the religious Babylon (19:1-2) and for the destruction of the city of Babylon (19:3). The twenty-four elders and the creatures around God's throne joined in on the praise (19:4-5), and the entire multitude in heaven shouted for joy for the marriage of the Lamb to his bride, the Church (19:6-8).
 - (2) THE WEDDING LIST – REVELATION 19:9. Then, John mentioned the invitation list to the wedding supper.
- 7. *The Fighting Ends in the Kidron Valley – Joel 3:12-13; Revelation 19:19-21.* Apparently, the fighting will continue from Bozrah all the way to the Kidron Valley (or the Valley of Jehoshaphat) near Jerusalem where the Antichrist's army will finally be totally destroyed.
- 8. *Bowl 7: Supernatural Occurrences; Jesus' Victory – Revelation 16:17-21; Zechariah 14:3-6*
 - a. While the last fighting is going on, the Seventh Bowl Judgment will occur, bringing on several supernatural calamities that will end the Tribulation (Revelation 16:17).
 - (1) The largest earthquake in world history, causing Jerusalem to split into three parts, cities around the world to fall, and islands and mountains to be rearranged (Revelation 16:18-20)
 - (2) One hundred-pound hailstones (Revelation 16:21).
 - (3) The Mount of Olives split in two, probably from the earthquake (Zechariah 14:4b-5)
 - (4) Blackout No. 5 (Zechariah 14:6; Matthew 24:29)
 - b. In the end, Jesus ascends up the Mount of Olives in victory (Zechariah 14:3-4a).

II. THE ENDS OF THE DRAGON, THE ANTICHRIST, AND THE FALSE PROPHET – REVELATION 19:20-20:3.

- A. **The Antichrist and False Prophet.** The Antichrist and the False Prophet will be captured at the end of the battle and cast *alive* into the Lake of Fire (19:20).

- B. **Satan.** Satan will be bound and cast into the Abyss, where he will remain until the end of the Millennial Kingdom (20:1-3).

Session 13

THE MILLENNIUM

I. THE 75-DAY INTERVAL

A. The Interval Between the Second Coming and Millennium. After the end of the Tribulation and Second Coming of Jesus, there will be a brief interval before the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom. Daniel 12:11-12 refers to two time periods: 1,290 days and 1,335 days following the abomination of desolation.

1. *A Thirty-Day Interval.* The second half of the Tribulation last 1,260 days, or 3½ years, following the occurrence of the abomination of desolation (Daniel 9:27, 12:7). Daniel 12:11, however, refers to a 1,290-day period, suggesting that the abomination of desolation will not be removed from the Tribulation Temple until thirty days after the end of the Tribulation.
2. *An Additional Forty-Five Day Interval.* Daniel 12:12 refers to an additional forty-five days, which is apparently the additional time used for completing two judgments relating to Christ's Second Coming:
 - a. The judgments of the Antichrist, False Prophet, and Dragon (Revelation 19:20, 20:1-3)
 - b. The judgment of the Gentiles still living at the end of the Tribulation. This is the judgment Jesus described as the separation of the sheep (i.e., the saved Gentiles) from the goats (the lost Gentiles) (Matthew 25:31-46; see also Joel 3:1-3).
3. *The First Resurrection.* Another event that will occur during the interval will be the completion of the "first resurrection" (Revelation 20:4-6).
 - a. The first resurrection is not a single event, but involves a series of resurrections (1 Corinthians 15:20-24):
 - (1) Prior to the Tribulation, there will be three resurrections: the holy people resurrected upon Jesus' death (Matthew 27:50-53), Jesus Himself (Matthew 28:1-7), and the "dead in Christ" in connection with the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:16).
 - (2) During the Tribulation, the two witnesses will be resurrected (Revelation 11:11-12).

- (3) During the seventy-five day interval, the Old Testament saints will be resurrected (Isaiah 26:19; Ezekiel 37:13-14; Daniel 12:2).
 - (4) The last phase of the “first resurrection” will be the resurrection of the Tribulation saints (Revelation 20:4).
- b. The first resurrection will involve only believers and is, therefore, a “blessed and holy” event. Death will have no more power over those who are resurrected (Revelation 20:6).

II. THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM (MILLENNIUM)

A. The Physical Characteristics of the Millennium

1. No wars (Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3-4)
2. Harmony within the animal kingdom (Isaiah 11:6-9)
3. Eradication of illnesses and deformities (Isaiah 29:18, 33:24a)
4. Cessation of droughts and famines (Isaiah 30:23, 35:1-2, 6b-7)
6. End of infant deaths (Isaiah 65:20)
7. Longer lifespans (Isaiah 65:20b)
8. Prosperity for everyone (Isaiah 65:21-25; Jeremiah 31:12-14)

B. The Political Characteristics of the Millennium

1. Jesus will reign over the earth (Psalm 72:8-11; Isaiah 2:3-4).
2. The Church and Tribulation saints will co-reign with Christ (Revelation 20:4-6).
3. Israel will rule over the Gentile nations (Isaiah 14:1-2).

C. The Spiritual Characteristics of the Millennium

1. Sin will still exist. The Gentiles and Jews who survive the Tribulation will not yet be in their glorified bodies and will still have babies. Those babies will not be automatically saved when they get older. Thus, sin will continue to exist. (see Isa. 2:4a; 65:20b)
2. Most people will be saved and will have knowledge of the Lord (Isaiah 11:9).

3. A new Millennial Temple will become the central focus of worship throughout the world (Ezekiel 40-46; Isaiah 2:2-3).

III. AFTER THE MILLENNIUM

A. Satan's Release from the Abyss – Revelation 20:7-10. The Millennium will end with the release of Satan from the Abyss and his last deception of people on earth (20:7).

1. *The Last Deception.* Amazingly, even while living in the midst of Jesus, people can still be duped into opposing Him and the Jews. An army from all ends of the earth (i.e., "God and Magog") will gather against Israel and Jerusalem. Fire from heaven will end the revolt (20:8-9).
2. *The Final Defeat of Satan and Death.* Why does God release Satan to deceive the earth again after one thousand years of Jesus' rule? It is the final act necessary to complete Christ's destruction of all Satanic "dominion, authority, and power" over the earth and finalize Christ's defeat of death, "the last enemy" (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

B. The Great White Throne Judgment – Revelation 20:11-15. Following Satan's eternal imprisonment in the Lake of Fire, final judgment awaits all unbelievers. This judgment is commonly referred to as the Great White Throne Judgment (20:11).

1. *Judgment for Unbelievers.* This will be a judgment of all unbelievers since the beginning of time (20:12).
2. *Second Resurrection.* All dead unbelievers will be resurrected in a "second resurrection" (20:13), which will not be as positive an experience as the first resurrection.
3. *Second Death.* All unbelievers will be cast into the Lake of Fire because their name will not be found in the Book of Life (20:14-15).

Session 14

THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

After thirteen sessions reviewing the Bible's teachings about the Last Days, it is a good check to see if our interpretations stand the scrutiny of Jesus' teachings in His most detailed discussion on the subject: the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24-25; Mark 13; Luke 21:5-36).

I. THE SETTING – MATTHEW 24:1-3; MARK 13:1-4; LUKE 21:5-7

A. Jesus' Comments on the Temple. Jesus had just completed a scathing denunciation of the Pharisees and teachers of the law. As He and His Apostles left the Temple Mount, the Apostles remarked to Jesus about the Temple's beauty. Jesus responded that not one stone of the Temple would be left on another. Jesus' prophecy was fulfilled in 70 A.D. when the Romans ended the Jewish rebellion against Rome, removed them from Jerusalem, set the Temple on fire, and dismantled it.

B. The Apostles' Questions. After Jesus and His Apostles arrived at the Mount of Olives, Peter, James, John, and Andrew (Mark 13:3) asked Jesus three questions (Matthew 24:3):

1. *"When will this happen?"* In other words, when will the Temple be destroyed?
2. *"What is the sign of your coming?"* The Apostles' question related to Jesus establishing His Kingdom, which will occur at His Second Coming.
3. *"What is the sign of the end of the age?"* This question referred to the end of the present age preceding Christ's Messianic Kingdom.

II. SIGNS OF THE END OF THE AGE - MATTHEW 24:4-25; MARK 13:6-13; LUKE 21:8-19

A. Events That Are Not Signs of the End. Jesus began His response by answering the third question first. He identified events that are *not* signs of the end of the age (Matthew 24:4-6; Mark 13:6-7; Luke 21:8-9).

1. False messiahs
2. Local wars and rumors of wars

B. Events That Are the “Beginning of Birth Pains.” Jesus next listed events that constitute the “beginning of birth pains.” These events are not signs of the end, but merely signs that the world has begun its march to the end (Matthew 24:7-8; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:8-9).

1. Worldwide wars and revolutions. World Wars I and II may be the initial events fulfilling this prophecy (see Session 4).
2. Worldwide famines and earthquakes, pestilences and “fearful events and great signs from heaven”

C. Events That Will Happen to the Apostles. Jesus interrupted His discussion of the End Times (“But before all this ...”) to mention what the Apostles would encounter in their own lifetimes (Luke 21:12-19; see also Matthew 24:9; Mark 13:9-11). He listed seven things the Apostles would experience:

1. Persecution by Jews and Gentiles because of their relationship to Jesus
2. Opportunities to proclaim the gospel to government leaders
3. Divine assistance as they spoke
4. Rejection by their families and friends
5. Execution
6. Hatred
7. Assurance of their salvation

D. Events in the First Half of the Tribulation – Matthew 24:10-14. Jesus listed five events that would be a part of the first half of the Tribulation.

1. Apostasy
2. Deception by false prophets
3. Increased sin and evil
4. The salvation of some
5. The gospel preached around the world (perhaps referring to the work of the 144,000 Jews)

E. Events in the Last Half of the Tribulation – Matthew 24:15-25; Mark 13:14-23. Jesus described six events that occur during the second half of the Tribulation.

1. The “abomination of desolation”
2. The flight of the Jews to the mountains
3. Worldwide anti-Semitism and another holocaust attempt
4. The deaths of many Jews
5. The appearance of the Antichrist and other false Christs
6. Deception by false prophets with great miracles

III. SIGNS OF THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE – LUKE 21:20-24. Luke is the only Gospel to record Jesus’ answer to the first question the Apostles asked regarding when the Temple would be destroyed. Jesus explained that Jerusalem’s destruction (along with the Temple) would occur when it is surrounded by Gentile armies. When the Jews saw this occur, they should flee to the mountains. This was fulfilled in 70 A.D.

IV. SIGNS OF HIS SECOND COMING – MATTHEW 24:26-42; MARK 13:24-32; LUKE 21:25-36

A. Events Signaling His Second Coming. Jesus then answered the second question: what is the sign that He will come again?

1. *A Visible Return.* He first explained that His Second Coming will be visible to all so that no one needs to be deceived into thinking that they missed it. His Second Coming will be as obvious as lightning in the sky and as certain as vultures gathering around a dead carcass (Matthew 24:25-28).
2. *Preceded by Great Turmoil.* Before His Second Coming, the world will face turmoil and natural disasters of such intensity that people will “faint from terror” (Luke 21:25-26; see also Matthew 24:29-30; Mark 13:24-26). This is a description of the Tribulation period.

B. The Regathering of Israel. Upon His return, Jesus will gather all of His people from around the world to take them into the Messianic Kingdom (Matthew 24:31; Mark 13:27).

C. The Parable of the Fig Tree – Matthew 24:32-35; Mark 13:28-31; Luke 21:29-33

1. *The Illustration of the Parable.* Just as the blossoming of the fig (and other) trees is a sign that summer is on its way, so are the events Jesus described signs that His second coming is near. Once the signs begin, that generation will not pass away before He returns.
2. *The Meaning of the Parable.* Jesus' return is certain; we can bank on it (see Matthew 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33).

D. The Rapture – Matthew 24:36-42; Mark 13:32; Luke 21:34-36. Most pretribulationists believe this passage refers to the Rapture rather than Jesus' Second Coming since His Second Coming has signs that precede it and its timing is known. Jesus made three points in this passage regarding the Rapture:

1. When it will occur is unknown. No one can determine its date.
2. Life before the Rapture will be relatively normal (unlike the days before the Second Coming).
3. He urged us to be ready so that we can avoid the horrors of the Tribulation.

V. PARABLES EMPHASIZING WATCHFULNESS AND READINESS. After answering the questions, Jesus told a series of parables, all of which emphasized how important it is for us to be ready and watchful for His return.

A. The Parable of the Owner of the House – Matthew 24:43-44. Jesus emphasized our need to be ready for Jesus' return. His point is not merely to expect His return, but to be prepared for His return. Although we do not expect a thief to break into our homes, we still take actions to prepare for such a possibility.

B. The Parable of the Master and the Servants – Matthew 24:45-51; Mark 13:32-37. This parable continues the thought of Jesus in the prior parable in which He warned us to be ready. This parable, though, adds a description of what we must do to be ready. We must be busy doing the tasks God has given us to do. This is a warning against removing ourselves from our responsibilities in this life while we wait for Him to return.

C. The Parable of the Ten Virgins - Matthew 25:1-13

1. *The Need to Be Prepared for Jesus' Return.* Jesus illustrated the need for being prepared with this parable. The point of the parable is that there will be a time when it is too late to prepare.
2. *How to Be Prepared for Jesus' Return.* The virgins with oil are symbolic of those who have the Holy Spirit and have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. The virgins without oil represent lost persons. The parable illustrates that there will come a time when a person can no longer be saved. It urges preparation for His return by receiving the Holy Spirit through salvation.

D. The Parable of the Talents – Matthew 25:14-30

1. *The Theme of the Parable.* Jesus used this parable to emphasize that being watchful and ready does not remove our responsibility to be busy ministering and doing the tasks God has given us, similar to the meaning of the Parable of the Master and Servants.
2. *The Lessons of the Parable.* The parable teaches several lessons:
 - a. Matthew 25:19 illustrates that there is an interim period of time before Jesus (i.e., the master) returns. Obviously, we are living in that interim time.
 - b. The talents given to each servant “according to his ability” (25:15) do *not* represent the servants’ differing abilities. They represent the different responsibilities and duties each servant had. We all have certain responsibilities to perform, and God expects us to perform them regardless of how insignificant they seem in comparison with others’ work.
 - c. The rewards given to the two faithful servants were equivalent because they exhibited equivalent faithfulness. What we have to begin with and what we end up with do not govern our rewards from God. Our faithfulness to perform the tasks we have been given determines our rewards.
 - d. The servant who did not trust the master failed to perform his task. He was not like the wicked servant in the Parable of the Master and the Servants, who abused his responsibilities. This servant did nothing, yet the master punished him just as severely.

E. The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats – Matthew 25:31-46. Jesus' concluded His discourse on the End Times with a description of the judgment that will occur upon His return at the Second Coming. This will occur during the seventy-five day interval at the end of the Millennium (see Session 13).

Session 15

ETERNITY

I. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ETERNITY – REVELATION 21:1-22:5

A. A New Heaven and New Earth. Immediately before the final judgment, John said that the “earth and sky fled from God’s presence” (Revelation 20:11). In other words, creation and nature as we know it will end. In their place, God will create a new heaven and a new earth, where we will spend the rest of eternity (21:1).

1. *The New Jerusalem.* John also referred to eternity as the New Jerusalem, a holy city that is already prepared (i.e., it does not need to be created) and beautifully adorned—like a “bride dressed for her husband” (21:2). Other Scriptures also referred to this future city:
 - a. Galatians 4:26: A place of freedom
 - b. Hebrews 11:9-10: A place of anticipation
 - c. Hebrews 12:18-24: A place of security and salvation
2. *The Description of Eternity.* What will eternity—heaven—be like?
 - a. There will be no sea (21:1). The sea represents a great divide. It is what separates the continents, nations, and peoples across the earth. A new Heaven and earth without a sea means there will no longer be any separation between earth and Heaven, suggesting that we will be able to move freely back and forth between earth and Heaven in Eternity.
 - b. God will live with us visibly (21:3). In the past, God dwelt temporarily in the Tabernacle, the Temple, the Person of Jesus, and the Person of the Holy Spirit. All of these were temporary dwelling places, but soon He will visibly abide among His people.
 - c. There will be no death, mourning, or crying (21:4). The curse and consequence of sin will be gone.
 - d. Everything will be new (21:5).
 - e. It will be glorious (21:11).

- f. It is surrounded by a huge wall (200 feet high or thick) with twelve gates (21:12-13, 17). The wall typically symbolizes security, suggesting our eternal security in heaven.
- g. The wall is built on twelve foundations, which symbolizes its eternal permanence (21:14).
- h. The city will be 1,500 miles long, wide, and high (21:15-16), suggesting the spaciousness of heaven.
- i. The city will be composed of a multitude of precious stones (21:18-21)
- j. There will be no Temple because God will live among men, not needing a temple or tabernacle in which to dwell (21:22). There will be no rituals, no religious duties, and no cleansing required for us to be with God because we will already and always be in the physical presence of God.
- k. There will be no sun or moon because God's glory will illuminate the city (21:23; 22:5). The truth of the Word of God and the truth of Jesus Christ will be so visible and so undeniable that no one can fail to see it and believe it.
- l. There will be no closed gates (21:24).
- m. There will be no night (21:25a).
- n. There will be no impurities (21:25b).
- o. There will be no unredeemed (21:26-27).
- p. A river of life will flow down its main street (22:1).
- q. The tree of life will stand on both sides of the river with abundant fruit (22:2; see Genesis 3:22-24).
- r. There will be no curse of sin (22:3).
- s. God's and Jesus' throne will be there (22:3).
- t. The redeemed will serve Him there (22:4).

B. An Inadequate Description. After reading the description of Eternity, a person may feel a sense of disappointment or indifference. Its description may fall flat. But it is essential to read this description with our faith turned on, recognizing that John was limited by human language to describe the splendor and wonder of what he saw. Likewise, we are limited by our human minds and are unable to grasp its true magnificence.

1. The negatives in the description (no sea, no sun, no moon, etc.) may depict the fact that these marvelous things on earth are only a small picture of the marvels on the new earth. The pleasures and joys we enjoy here are probably merely hints of the pleasures and joys yet to come.
2. Some of the other negatives, though (no death, no mourning, no sorrow, etc.), will be amazing in and of themselves.

II. CONCLUSION TO THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST – REVELATION 22:6-21.

Following the scenes of the New Jerusalem, John recorded several concluding remarks made by an angel, by Jesus, and by John.

A. An Authentication of the Prophecies – Revelation 22:6-9, 16.

Each of three speakers authenticated the prophecies.

1. *The Angel's Authentication.* The angel authenticated them by declaring them trustworthy, true, and commissioned by God (22:6).
2. *Jesus' Authentication.* Jesus authenticated them by declaring blessings on those who keep the prophecies (22:7, 16).
3. *John's Authentication.* John authenticated them by declaring that he saw all of these things and was overwhelmed by them (22:8-9).

B. The Power of the Prophecies – Revelation 22:10-11

1. *Do Not Conceal the Prophecies.* The angel commanded John *not* to seal up the word of the prophecy, unlike what Daniel was told with regard to his prophecies (21:10; see Daniel 12:4). John's prophecies were not to be sealed because the end was near. They are ready to be understood and fulfilled.
2. *Do Not Ignore the Prophecies.* In verse 11, the angel did not advocate that those who do wrong or are vile persons should not change their lives. Instead, he cautioned that, if these prophecies were not enough to convince the wicked to change, then there was no other hope for them.

C. The Certainty of the Prophecies – Revelation 22:12-17

1. *The Certainty of Jesus' Return.* Jesus repeated the truth of His imminent and immediate return and His purpose to return in order to judge and reward each person "according to what they have done" (21:12-13).

2. *The Results of Believing the Prophecies.* Jesus expressed blessings on the righteous and exclusion to the unrighteous (21:14-16).
3. *The Invitation to Believe the Prophecies.* The Holy Spirit and the Church issued a three-fold invitation to everyone who will listen, to anyone who is thirsty, and to all who desire eternal life (21:17).

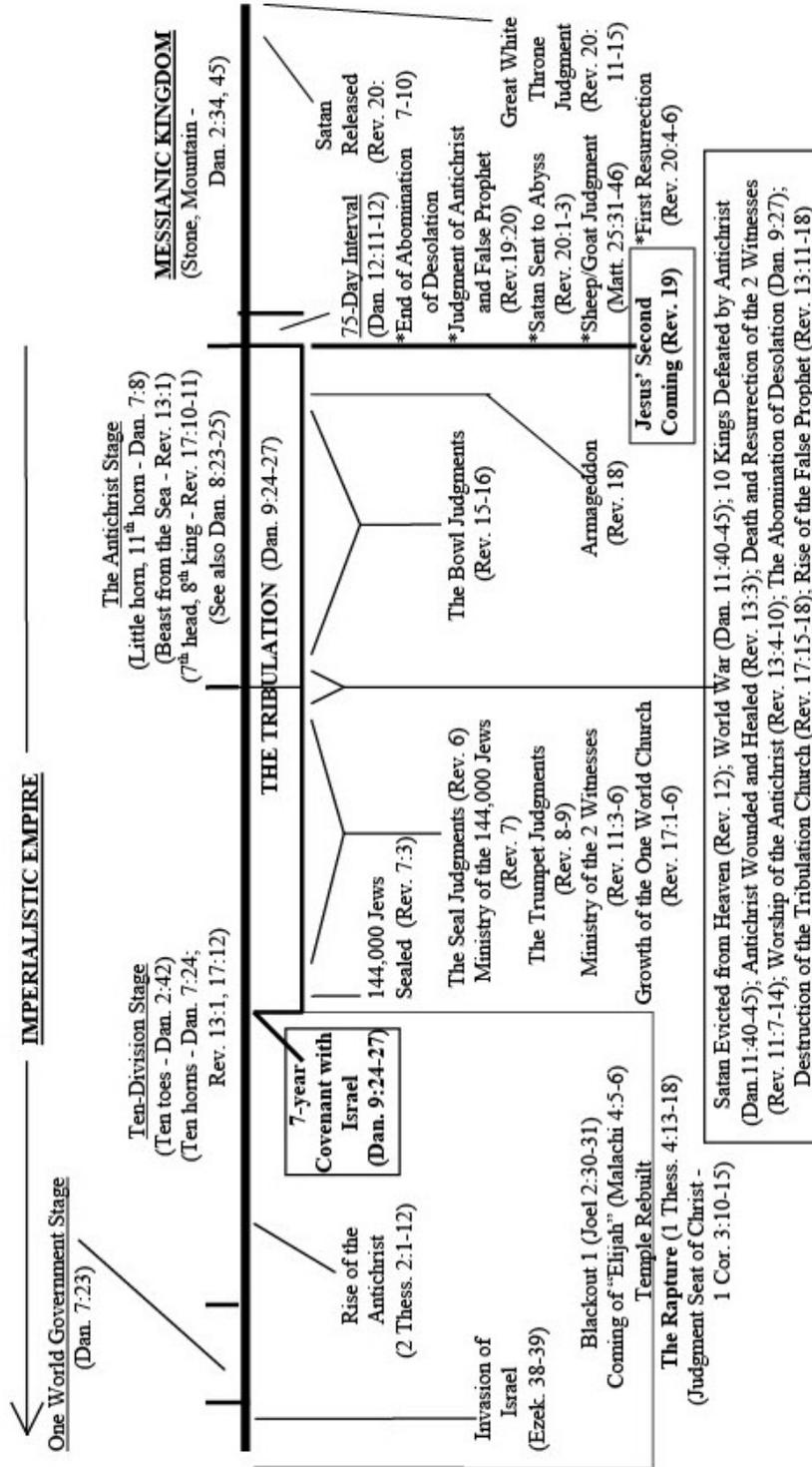
D. The Warnings about the Prophecies – Revelation 22:18-20a

1. *Do Not Alter the Prophecies.* John issued two warnings not to add anything to the prophecies and not to delete anything from them (21:18-19). The warnings do not mean that someone can lose his salvation, though, but that such tampering with God's word serves as evidence that they are likely lost to begin with.
2. *Do Not Doubt the Prophecies.* In verse 20, for the third time in these verses, Jesus affirmed the imminence of His return. This, along with the admonitions to be ready, is the undeniable message of the Book of Revelation.

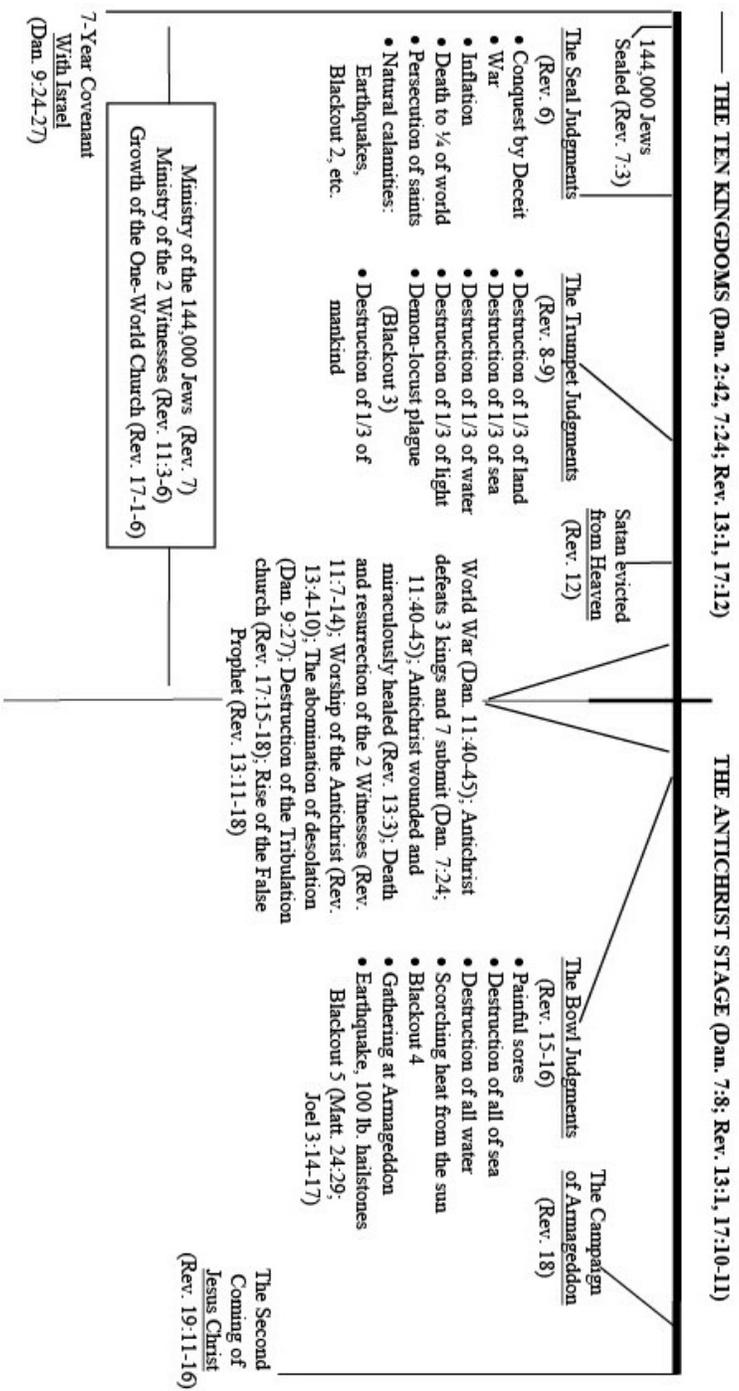
E. The Hope of the Prophecies – Revelation 21:20b-21. John closed with a prayer of hope and desire for Christ to return and bring grace upon His people (21:20b-21).

TIMELINE OF BIBLICAL PROPHECY

(The Future)



TIMELINE OF BIBLICAL PROPHECY (The Tribulation)

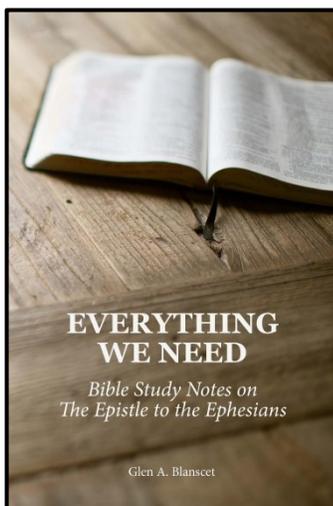
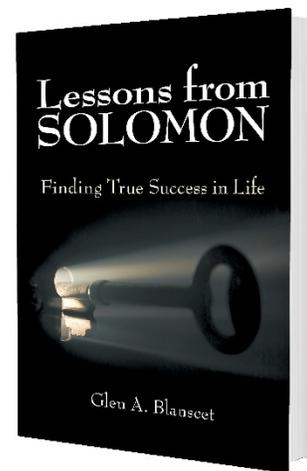


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Lessons from Solomon: Finding True Success in Life

Career goals, financial goals, physical goals—all these types of goals are good and important, but they do not provide a result that guarantees a lasting and eternal joy, peace, and contentment in life that so many people lack. Solomon achieved those things, but he lost them. True success is having an abiding joy, peace, and contentment in life and not losing them before we get to the end. How can we achieve that kind of success, and how can we hang on to it? That is what we will learn from Solomon's life.



Everything We Need: Bible Study Notes on the Epistle to the Ephesians

Christians have unlimited spiritual wealth at their disposal. Paul told the Ephesians we have "every spiritual blessing in Christ." In other words, when we receive Jesus Christ as Lord, we also receive all the spiritual blessings God offers and everything we need in order to live life as God intended. Yet many Christians still choose to live defeated, empty lives as though they were spiritual paupers. The letter to the Ephesians is a clarion call to believers to live in a manner consistent with who we are and what we possess in Christ.

*Contending for the Faith: Bible Study Notes
on the Epistle of Jude*

As an itinerant preacher and pastor, Jude travelled among several churches of the first century. He was startled by news that those churches were besieged by false teachers who were leading them away from the truth of God's grace and enticing them to live in a manner inconsistent with God's commands. In his letter, he urged believers to fight against these false teachings, to oppose those who were trying to deceive them, and to contend for their faith. In our time, there is no more relevant message for Christians than the message of Jude. As believers, it is essential we understand what we are fighting against and how to respond to those who attack the basic doctrines and teachings of the Christian faith.

