

ISSUES

A Biblical Perspective On Contemporary Topics

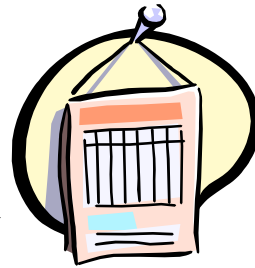


THE END

An Overview of
End Time Events

Introduction

The 70's and early 80's were a period of intense interest in what is popularly referred to as "the Last Days." Bible prophecy was all the rage and it seemed that for many, there was nothing more exciting than to hear about some new fulfillment of this or that latter day portent.¹ Despite the predictions of a handful, Jesus did *not* come back before the advent of the 90's. As a result of the spent excitement in such things, the early and middle years of the decade were marked by a general reluctance to talk about prophecy and the end times. It seemed some were a bit embarrassed that the forecasts of imminent doom weren't realized.



Interest is once again rising in the study of Bible prophecy. A whole new generation of believers is discovering it for the first time and the wild success of the *Left Behind* novels has fueled new impetus to "get up to speed" in what the Bible says about this important topic. Those of us who *never* lost interest in the subject from those earlier days are encouraged and have been waiting for the Church to re-discover the vital doctrine of the return of Jesus.

What follows is an attempt to *summarize* and *capsulize* the basic flow of events the Bible foretells will precede, attend, and then follow the return of Christ to earth. An exhaustive treatment would demand volumes! This is a thumbnail sketch of a complex and engaging subject. It is meant to be more of a "teaser" than to impart a significant level of knowledge. This booklet will also provide a profile of our eschatological² position at Calvary Chapel of Oxnard. And that leads us to an important caveat . . .

When it comes to the subject of Bible prophecy and the Last Days, there are many different theories on how everything will pan out. These differences have existed for generations and intelligent, godly men and women have lined up on all sides. It is our duty in Christian love and grace to respect each other even while vehemently disagreeing over doctrinal issues which are *not essential* to salvation. Such is the subject before us. It is *important*, but *not essential*. *This everyone* agrees upon -- Jesus IS coming again!

While we will footnote the pertinent passages, we will not *argue* for the positions taken here. That would lengthen this booklet into another multi-volume work. The purpose of this booklet is to provide those new to the

Footnotes

1 Portent: a sign, usually indicating some impending disaster or something of great significance.

2 Eschatology: Greek for the study of the end times.

subject of Bible prophecy and the Last Days a *primer* and handy reference tool for further personal study.

The Great Hiatus

In Daniel 9, the angel Gabriel told the prophet Daniel that 490 years had been set apart from human history for the unique purpose of God's attention focused on the people and nation of Israel.³ A starting date was given, and some foretelling of all the events that would transpire during this 490 years. It would conclude with the arrival of the Messiah and the establishing of His visible kingdom on earth.

Like clockwork, the first 483 years were literally fulfilled – to the very day. But then the clocked stopped! There remains another seven years for the Jews and the nation of Israel when God will re-direct His attention to them in a special and focused way.



The first 483 years ended with the Triumphal Entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem on the day we celebrate as Palm Sunday. With the death and resurrection of Christ one week later, God turned the focus of His redemptive plan from the people and nation of Israel to the *Church*, which is comprised of any and all, both Jews and Gentiles, who come to faith in Christ. The last 2000 years are a great *hiatus*, a stitch in time, if you will, in which God suspends the prophetic clock and opens wide the doors to His Kingdom. It seems His attention now is on the *Gentiles*, as they are the majority comprising the Church.

But the time will come, when the Gentiles that are going to be saved will reach their total.⁴ When that number is reached, God shifts His redemptive attention back to Israel, and the clock resumes its course.⁵

The Great Departure

But wait, if God turns His redemptive focus *back* to the Jews and the nation of Israel, what becomes of the Church? Didn't God promise to never leave or forsake us?⁶ Indeed He did!

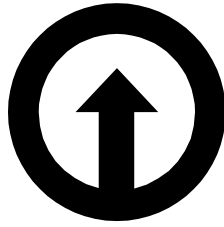
Before God can turn His redemptive focus back to Israel, He must first *remove*

³ Daniel 9:24-27

⁴ Romans 11:25

⁵ Luke 21:24 – This is not to say that no more Gentiles will be saved after this point. IN fact, there will be multitudes of both Jews and Gentiles that will be saved after this. We are just saying that the Great Hiatus is a period of time in which God has shifted His redemptive focus off of Israel specifically, and is opening wide the doors to His kingdom to all, but especially to the Gentiles.

His redeemed from earth. This is what is foretold in 1 Thessalonians 4.⁷ There will come a moment in history when all those who are born again will be instantly transformed from mortal to immortal.⁸ Those who have died, whose bodies have been buried and their spirits departed to heaven, shall see a reuniting of their spirits and bodies which will be changed from corruption to incorruption. Those who are alive at this event, will never see death! They will be instantly transported into heaven.



If you were an unbeliever living on the Earth at that time, you could be talking to a Christian one moment, and when you blinked your eyes, just that fast, they would no longer be in front of you. In fact, you would witness their clothing dropping to the floor and hear their watch and glasses hitting the ground.

This event, which sounds like something straight out of a rather far-fetched science fiction movie, is called the *Rapture of the Church*.⁹ And as bizarre as it sounds, it *will* take place one day. Many of us believe it is the *NEXT* major event to take place in the prophetic scenario.

The Great Tribulation

What follows the Rapture is a seven year period of time commonly called the *Tribulation*. It is a time of great deception and trouble for those left behind. It is also the last seven years of that 490 years God set apart to deal with Israel and the Jews and to bring in the Messiah's Kingdom.¹⁰ But before Messiah can come and set up His glorious kingdom, the rebellious kingdoms of man have to be moved out of the way. God backs man into a corner and confronts him with the reality that there is a God and He is righteous, while man is a rebel whose only hope is to repent and cast himself on the mercy of God.



The troubles of the Tribulation are much like "birth pangs."¹¹ They increase in frequency and intensity as the Tribulation progresses.¹² They are intended by God to turn man back to Him, and for some it works. But the majority will only harden in their rebellion. So God turns up the heat even more. This is what

⁶ Hebrews 13:5 Matthew 24:20

⁷ 1 Thess 4:13-18

⁸ 1 Corinthians 15

⁹ From the Latin for to "carry away" *rapturo*

¹⁰ "Messiah" is the Hebrew word for "Christ" which means "anointed one." The Messiah/Christ was a person foretold in the Old Testament Scriptures who would come and redeem man and creation from the Fall and it's subsequent curse.

¹¹ Matthew 24 1 Thess 5:3

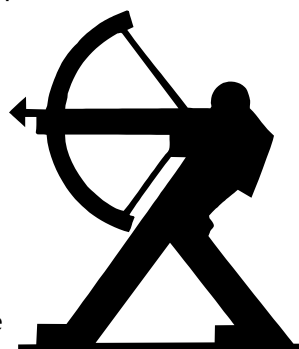
makes the Tribulation different from other periods of history. While every age has known trouble and calamity, this period will see the entire earth reel with one blow after another. It is a time of God's wrath poured out, and it will be brutal. In fact, Jesus said that if it was not brought to an early end, all of mankind would be wiped out!¹³

Chapter six of Revelation describes four horses and riders that run rough-shod over the earth during the Tribulation. Three of the four are symbols of war, pestilence, and famine. But one, the first, seems to stand in stark contrast to the other three. It is to this first horse and rider we now turn – for they come during the Tribulation, after the Church has been raptured.

The Great Deceiver

In Matthew 24, Jesus warned that the Tribulation and the days just before it would be marked by widespread *deception*. Many pretenders would come claiming to be the world's savior, but they are all false christs. The Apostle Paul elaborates in 2 Thessalonians 2 and tells us that there will come one man from among the crowd of false prophets who is the *arch-deceiver*.

This character, popularly referred to as the *antichrist*, has become the source material for a lot of conjecture in both the Christian and secular communities. Movies have been made, and the popular series of novels by LaHaye and Jenkins give an interesting picture of what his career may or may not be like.



What we do know is that he will lead in world affairs by promising peace. He will establish some kind of treaty or agreement between the peoples of the world, that possibly includes something significant for Israel. When this treaty is signed, it begins the countdown of the last seven years referred to above.¹⁴ He will have effective answers to the intractable problems that plague the world and it won't take long before he has almost everyone singing his praises – literally.

You see, that is his ultimate goal. As time progresses, his agenda is increasingly revealed until it is understood that what he wants and requires is nothing less than worship; the kind of worship that is reserved for God Himself. By the time he demands to be worshiped, he will have demonstrated not only great

¹² Revelation 6-16

¹³ Matt 24:22

¹⁴ Daniel 9:27

wisdom, but supernatural power; able to perform miracles before the collective eyes of the world. Then, he will enter the rebuilt Jewish temple in Jerusalem, and position himself as God.¹⁵

Jesus warned the Jews that when they see this, the antichrist sitting in the temple claiming to be God,¹⁶ they were to get up and out of Jerusalem and their cities as quickly as possible because this would mark the beginning of the end. In Daniel 9, we read that this will take place in the very middle of the Tribulation period, or three and a half years after the treaty is signed.

The *final* three and a half years of the Tribulation are the time when the “real bad stuff” comes down. The *first* three and a half years are marked by a kind of false peace as the antichrist moves to effect his agenda. For this reason, some people today prefer to call the whole seven years the “Tribulation” and the last half of it the “Great Tribulation.”

The Great Persecution

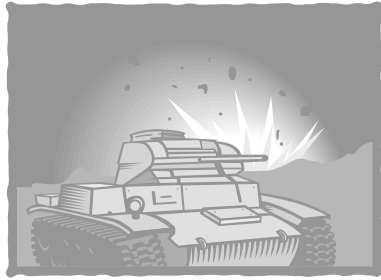
The True Church has always known persecution. Even today, thousands of Christians die each year in persecution. In fact, more believers have died for their faith in the 20th Century than in all previous centuries *combined*. But the reign of the antichrist will see the persecution and death of multiplied millions.

As part of his plan for global unification, he will institute a new economic system that in some way incorporates the buying and selling with numbers. How this technology will all work out, we are unsure at the present time. But he will demand that everyone who wants to be a part of his new world order be given some kind of an identification mark that becomes a part of their body. Revelation 13 describes it as a mark on the hand or head, without which no one may buy or sell. This mark, whatever it is, is more than a bar code tattoo – it is an act that shows a person’s complete surrender to the person and agenda of the antichrist. Revelation says that *if a person willingly takes the mark, they are eternally damned*. Consequently, there will be many who will refuse to take it because the truth and reality of the real God will become their faith. Having missed the Rapture, they will determine to not miss out on heaven. There will be many of these “Tribulation saints” as they are called, and a large proportion of them will end up being martyred for their faith.¹⁷

¹⁵ 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12

¹⁶ Matthew 24:15-19

¹⁷ Revelation 6:9-11

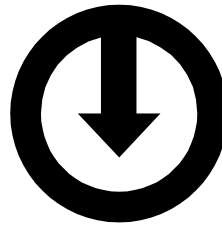


The Great War

As the last days of the Tribulation period wind down, it seems the world will be polarized into three power centers; the antichrist's realm which is centered in Europe, the kings of the east (China) and the kings of the south (Africa). They will all send their armies into that geographic place which has been the center of the world and the meeting place of three continents – Israel. There in the Jezreel Valley they will enter into a contest to see who will win and assert domination over the entire earth.¹⁸ This battle, called Armageddon, is the bloodiest in the history of the world and will be in full swing when Jesus returns to earth.

The Great Return

When Christ comes for the Church in the Rapture, He doesn't really come to the earth. He comes in the skies and takes Christians up to be with Him. But when He comes at the end of the Tribulation, He comes visibly in the clouds, and everyone will see Him.¹⁹ He puts an abrupt end to the battle of Armageddon and immediately judges the kings of the world and the antichrist.



Then the world will enter a short period of time where the nations come before Jesus for His review and judgment.²⁰ Those deemed worthy will be allowed to enter the Messiah's Kingdom. Those who have proven themselves unworthy will experience immediate judgment.



The Great Kingdom

Then begins a thousand years of paradise on earth. Jesus will rule from the City of Jerusalem. His rule will be perfect! Justice will be instant and

¹⁸ Revelation 16:12-16; Armageddon comes from *har-meggido*, the mount of Meggido, and refers to the tell upon which sits the ancient city of Meggido, the fortress city which guarded the ancient trade route of the Via Maris as it left the coastal valleys and entered the expansive Jezreel Valley.

¹⁹ Zechariah 114:1-11 Revelation 19:11-16.

²⁰ Daniel 12:11-12 Matthew 25:31-46

²¹ The Fall refers to the sin of Adam & Eve in the Garden of Eden which plunged the human race under the curse of bondage to decay and ultimately death.

complete. The world will be restored to the place it was before the Fall.²¹ Think of it – all of the things that make trouble and bring sorrow, will be wiped away. Sickness, disease, famine and crime will be a thing of the past. People will still have free will, but the rule of Christ will be so swift and perfect, evil will be greatly restrained. Additionally, the devil will be bound so that his influence cannot stir up wickedness.²² There will be those who will attempt to sin, but their judgment will be swift and public.²³

During this thousand years, many new people will be born. The earth will fill again, and while the whole world has seen what it is like to live in a perfect environment, their hearts will still be in opposition to God. So God will end the thousand years with an opportunity for these people to reveal what is really in their hearts. The devil, who has been bound, will be released. He will raise a new rebellion against God and will incite his followers to march with a vast army on the capital of Jerusalem. But the rebellion will be short lived. God will put an end to it before it gets anywhere. It was all just an opportunity for all of humanity to see that there is nothing wrong with God – the fault and problem lies with rebel man.²⁴



Finis

The current heavens and earth, the physical creation as we know it, will dissolve and a whole new reality will emerge.²⁵ A great throne will be set up and all of mankind will be brought before it for judgment.²⁶ Anyone whose name is not found in the Lamb's Book of Life will be sent to an eternity in the Lake of Fire.²⁷

What the citizens of heaven will be doing after this does not fall under the scope of the scriptures. All we know is that we will be with our God in eternal glory.

Final Word

We realize that many of the things in this booklet seem pretty far-fetched. But then, so many of the things we enjoy in the way of technology would have seemed far fetched to people just 50 years ago. Things have taken place in the last decade or so that no one would have guessed. Who predicted the demise of the Soviet Union? Who ever would have thought the Prime Minister

22 Revelation 20:1-2

23 Psalm 2

24 Revelation 20:7-9

25 Revelation 21 2 Peter 3:11-13

26 Revelation 20:11-15

of Israel and Yassir Arafat would ever shake hands in the garden of the White House? Who could have guessed that Yugoslavia would turn into such a horrendous bloodbath? Yet here we are. These things will take place, and by all appearances, soon!

As we mentioned earlier, the next major event to take place is the Rapture of the Church. However, Ezekiel 38 and 39 foretell an aborted attempt by Russia and her Muslim allies to attack and destroy Israel. The attacking armies will suffer a miraculous crushing defeat and Israel will come out unscathed. There are some bible students who believe that this Russian invasion of Israel and the Rapture are concurrent events. If they don't happen at the same time, they will at least be placed near each other.

So – what about you? Are you ready for the Rapture? If Jesus were to come for His own right now, would you be rising to meet Him, or would you be one of those who realized only too late that it was all true and you played the fool?

If you want to receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior – do it now. Jesus died for your sins and rose again from the dead to give you new life. If you repent of your sins and put your faith in Him, you will be saved.

For more information about receiving Christ or to dig deeper into the study of the last days and the subject of Bible prophecy, please contact us at 805-485-0111.