

A View of The Last Days

An Eight Week Survey

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Unless Otherwise Noted all Scripture Quotes Come from the New King James Version

*Note: For a more detailed explanation of events related to the Last Days please refer to
“Our Journey Through the Book of Revelation” on our church website under
“Resources” and “Bible Studies”.*

A View of The Last Days

An Eight Week Survey

Week 1

Introduction and God's Timeline

“6. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.”

(Matthew 24:6)

Week 1 - Introduction

Outline

- Why Study the Last Days?
 - There is a lot of misunderstanding amongst Christians
 - Wars, rumors of wars, natural disasters, political movements
 - All result in questions, confusion and fear
 - With each event many believers wonder – “Is this it?”
 - We're going to try to clear that up
 - And give you confidence and knowledge, not fear and confusion.
- Setting the Stage – What does the “Last Days” mean?
 - Also called the “End Times”
 - Generally considered to be the period of time just before the Rapture
 - The current Age of Grace
 - But an expanded view would include the Rapture, Tribulation, Second Coming, the Millennial Kingdom and the final Great White Throne Judgment
 - Basically everything from now until Eternity
 - The next event on the prophetic timeline is the Rapture
 - We don't know when the Rapture will occur
 - The Bible indicates no other events must happen first
 - But current world events point to it growing closer each day
 - We can't say for sure, but we may be living near the end of the Last Days
 - So we must be ready and sharing the gospel
 - The Last Days can be confusing, but we must not fear it

- Why are the Last Days Important?
 - When discussing the Last Days Jesus tells us, “...**whoever reads, let him understand...**” (Matthew 24:15).
 - The Last Days are a key part of God’s plan
 - They include specific events He recorded throughout His word
 - We need to understand what these events are so we don’t fear
 - Understanding God’s future plan is part of being a fully equipped believer
 - Understanding brings clarity and connectivity between Old Testament and New Testament prophecy
 - We also need to understand the critical role of Israel in God’s future plan
- How will we study the Last Days?
 - We will apply a literal meaning of scripture.
 - The time allotted for this study only allows for a very high level survey
 - We will focus on key topics that seem to be the most confusing or cause the most fear
 - Each lesson will include an Outline and a Narrative
 - The narrative is intended to give you more information than will be provided in class
 - Lots of scripture references are provided to guide you
 - A more detailed understanding can be gained by reviewing “*Our Journey Through the Book of Revelation*” on our church website under “Resources” and “Bible Study”
- How will we address controversial topics?
 - We will provide a fair explanation of each major viewpoint
 - Then we will tell you which option we believe the Bible supports
 - We would suggest you avoid social media feeds related to the Last Days
 - They are often sensationalized and unBiblical
- Key Discussion Topics:
 - Week 1 - Introduction and Setting the Stage
 - Week 2 - The Difference Between the Rapture and the Second Coming
 - Week 3 - What is the Tribulation – And has it Begun?
 - Week 4 - Who, What and When is the antichrist?
 - Week 5 - When is the Ezekiel War?
 - Week 6 - What is the Millennial Kingdom?
 - Week 7 - Understanding Israel’s Current and Future Role
 - Week 8 - A View of Eternity - The New Heaven, the New Earth and the New Jerusalem

Week 1 - Introduction Continued

Setting the Stage

So what is meant by the term “Last Days”? Some consider it the time just prior to the Rapture, but for our study we’ll expand that definition to include the total period of time from the cross until the beginning of Eternity. In other words, we’ll look at the Last Days, also called the “End Times”, as the time remaining for mankind to exist on earth. Unfortunately, the Lord doesn’t tell us exactly when these events will occur which means there is often a sense of dread for those who are not students of Bible prophecy. They want to know what does “Last” really mean? When will it happen? How will it impact my family? How do I know if I’m ready? All of these, and many other questions can be answered by a thorough study of the overall sequence of events from the Rapture, through the Tribulation, to the Second Coming of Christ, the Millennial Kingdom and into Eternity.

*But whatever our level of understanding may be, we shouldn’t fear any of this. Nearly a third of God’s word focuses on End Times prophecy. Not to frighten us, but to equip us to be prepared and alert. As Jesus explains in Matthew 24:6, “**6. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.**”. In other words, we should not be “...alarmed...” by the Last Days. Instead, we need to be alert, patient and eagerly awaiting for our Lord’s return. But how long will we have to wait? We simply don’t know but it draws closer every day. As Dr. David Jeremiah says, “We may not be at the end of the world, but we surely are at the world of the end.”. In other words, what we see happening around us today indicates time is drawing to a close.*

*At the very end of the Bible Jesus declares, “**20. He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming quickly.”** (Revelation 22:20). But “...quickly...” doesn’t mean He’s coming soon from a timing perspective. It means He’s coming without warning, and that means it could happen at any moment. It also means we should be eager and ready for His return no matter how long we have to wait. But how long do we have to wait? Only the Lord knows. At the Ascension of Jesus the Apostles assumed Jesus would return immediately, “**10. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, 11. who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”** (Acts 1:10-11). Likewise, the Apostle Paul, when speaking to the Thessalonians, seems to indicate he felt the Lord’s return was*

imminent, “**17. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18. Therefore comfort one another with these words.**” (1 Thessalonians 4:17-18). But now, over two thousand years later we still wait patiently for our Lord's return at the Rapture.

But that's okay, because even though we don't know when these events will occur the Lord tells us to be alert and ready, “**44. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.**” (Matthew 24:44). That means we are to be prepared, but not afraid, because when we are alert and prepared we grow closer to the Lord. Plus, as we wait for the Lord's return we have to remember God doesn't measure time like we do. To our Lord, “**...one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day...**” (2 Peter 3:8b), so Jesus is not slow in delaying His return. He is simply giving His lost creation every opportunity to repent, “**9. The Lord is not slack [slow] concerning His promise [to return], as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**” (2 Peter 3:9).

All that said, current world events indicate we may be living near the end of the Last Days. Just look around at our society and you'll see many signs. Chaos, confusion, political posturing and progressive agendas seek to legitimize sinful actions not even considered plausible by prior generations. But most disturbing is the global rise in violent and open antisemitism. A phenomenon our post-holocaust society emphatically proclaimed “Never again” after World War II. But as students of God's word, and specifically End Times prophecy, none of this should come as a surprise. In fact, what we are witnessing today is simply a precursor to what the Bible says is yet to come. This includes the unprecedented focus on globalization, multinational currency systems, a world health organization and the recent and significant rise in worldwide antisemitism. Couple this with political unrest in America, the rise of Islam in Western Europe, Biblical illiteracy, the global reaction to the Covid pandemic, Iran's emerging nuclear presence, the alignment of Russia and China, events in Israel and even the progressive climate agenda, all point to the type of alignment that must occur to usher in the end of humanity described in God's prophetic word. Is this a doomsday prediction or fear mongering? Not at all. It is simply being aware of what the Bible says and alert to what we see happening around us.

The next prophetic event to occur will be the Rapture. But we don't know when the Rapture will occur but indications are no other Biblical prophecies that need to be fulfilled first. Key to this is the fact Israel is back in her land, she is prospering, and surrounded by her enemies. This condition sets the stage for events to occur during the

Tribulation which are focused primarily on Israel. But as the Rapture draws near we need to remember, although God's timing is not like our timing, the outcome is predictable because the Lord has already given us clues to follow.

*After the Rapture the antichrist will rise and usher in satan's plan for world dominance. He will initially emerge as a peacemaker who establishes a seven year treaty with Israel. But in the middle of the seven years, the antichrist will violate the treaty and seek to destroy them as a nation and turn on anyone else who chooses to follow Jesus, "7. **It was granted to him [the antichrist] to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.** 8. **All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.**" (Revelation 13:7-8). We need to pay close attention to the beginning of verse 8 which says, "...**All who dwell on the earth will worship him...**". The term "...**All...**" indicates that during the Tribulation all people, all nations, and all governments will not only follow the antichrist but "...**will worship him...**". That means between now and the emergence of the antichrist the whole world will need to be in the right mindset in order to worship him and agree to his platform for the destruction of Israel and followers of Jesus. But getting the world in that mindset will take time. It will require a globalist agenda, progressive thinking, extreme antisemitism, corrupt officials at every level, and a total mindset change for society to be anti-God. This is the path mankind must be on in order to get to the point they accept the antichrist as their leader, and it is the glideslope we see materializing today as our society grows darker and more deviant. It is also the glideslope currently drawing millions away from the true gospel of Jesus to the lies of satan. But this has to happen too as Paul tells us In 2 Thessalonians 2:3, "**3. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin (the antichrist) is revealed, the son of perdition.**". As part of this glideslope a "...**falling away...**" must occur first. This is not a falling away of the lost. They have already fallen. It will be a falling away of those who claim to be Christians but do not truly know Jesus as their Savior (see Matthew 7:21-23). We see this happening today as aberrant and heretical "gospels" draw well-meaning people to a self-focused "feel good" platform rather than Christ focused salvation through the blood of the Lamb. It may also represent a falling away from accepted and Biblically based moral standards to a point when things like abortion or gender fluidity are viewed as "normal". The catalyst for this spiritual and moral decline is found in today's progressive agendas and a mindset that seeks to, "...**call evil good, and good evil...**" (Isaiah 5:20).*

So what does all that mean to the followers of Jesus? What we see happening in the world today is the moral glideslope mankind must be on to eventually fall to a place

where they will accept the antichrist. How long will that take? We simply don't know. But indications are more clear every day that the world is headed in that direction at a fever pitch. But more importantly, as the church, we have been warned. Prophecies related to the Last Days are found throughout the Bible and point to a terrible time in the future when satan will make a last ditch effort to supplant God and rule the world. Of course he will fail, but not before dragging most of the world to hell with him.

The good thing is most of this will happen after the Rapture of the church, when we will be taken home to be with the Lord. The Lord confirms this in Revelation 3:10-11 when speaking to the faithful church, "**10. Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.**". Paul further clarifies this in 1 Thessalonians 5:9, when he tells us, "**For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.**" As followers of Jesus we will not suffer God's wrath, because our wrath was paid for on the cross.

Because of that promise we should not be afraid of what we see. Jesus has given us clear indications of what is to come so we can be prepared. He does this through God's revealed word which tells us about the events that will occur in the future, "**...See, I have told you beforehand.**" (Matthew 24:25). Unfortunately, we don't know exactly when that will be, but we know for certain it will happen. That's why we should be encouraged by what we see happening around us. But don't misunderstand. The fall of our society into immorality is tragic and heartbreakin, but it follows a pattern we see in God's word. In other words, it's part of His plan, so it doesn't take Him by surprise and it is required before Jesus will return. That fact shouldn't depress us or scare us. Instead, it should energize us because we see God's hand in this and can see prophecy being fulfilled. That means there is no greater time to be deeply in God's word and seeking His wisdom than today. It is only through being in the word and in prayer that we will, "**Take heed that no one deceives you...**". (Matthew 24:4b).

It's certainly difficult to watch society fall apart and not be concerned. That's understandable. But we should not fear what is coming. When Jesus told His disciples about the Last Days He warned them of mankind's future fall, "**But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.**" (Matthew 24:36-37). Here Jesus warns us the Last Days will be, "**...as the days of Noah were...**". But what does that really mean? The word tells us in Genesis 6:5, "**5. Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.**" Note what this verse says. In Noah's time, "**...every intent of the thoughts of his [man's] heart was only**

evil continually... ”. Taking that and applying it to what Jesus said of the future means the core thoughts of man will be “...evil...” all the time. That means a time is coming when even the innermost “...thoughts...” of man will be “...evil continually... ”. This is a recipe for continuous and unrepentant sin. Our society is not there yet, but we can certainly see it headed that way.

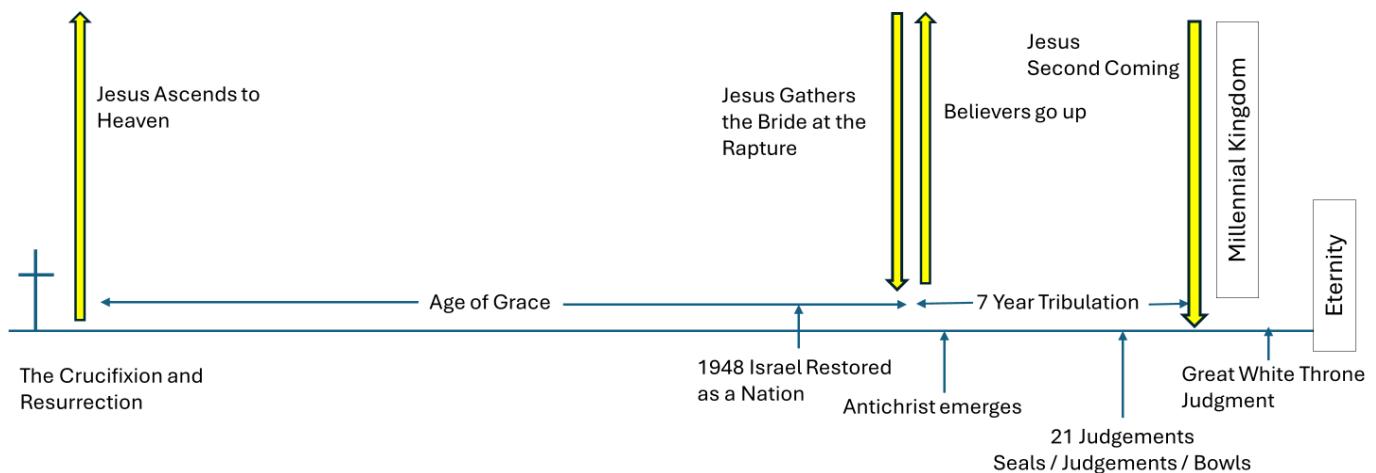
So where is Southside in all of this? Frankly, we’re the point of the spear. Every day we see clear evidence of the “...falling away...” as mankind and the self-proclaimed “church” slide down the glideslope of sin and tolerance as it teeters on the edge of destruction. As we watch, mankind is falling into sin and the “church” is right behind them as they seek to be relevant. But we, the faithful Bride, who follow our King Jesus, who seek to preach God’s word and the true gospel, who seek to understand and follow solid Biblical doctrine, who are alert to what God has already told us and are patiently waiting for His return. We are the faithful who will prevail.

And in the meantime, “...but see to it that you are not alarmed... ”. (Matthew 27:6b)

God's Prophetic Timeline

Note: In the Appendix you will find a more detailed timeline of Biblical events, but for the purpose of this survey the chart below focuses on the major events associated with the Last Days from the Cross to Eternity

A View of the End Times God's Timeline of Prophetic Events From the Cross to Eternity



Brief Explanation of Timeline Events

- The Cross
 - The death and resurrection of Jesus (John chapters 19-20)
- The Ascension
 - Jesus returns to heaven (Acts chapter 1)
 - After the Ascension the Holy Spirit indwelt believers and began the “Age of Grace”, also called the “Church Age”. (Acts chapter 2)
- 1948
 - Israel reestablished as a nation (Deuteronomy 30:1-10)
 - This is critical to End Times prophecy
- The Rapture
 - When Jesus will return in the air to gather His bride (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)
- The antichrist emerges
 - At some point after the Rapture the antichrist will emerge and establish a seven year treaty with Israel (Daniel 9:24-27 / Revelation 6:1-2).
 - This signifies the start of the Tribulation.
 - The antichrist will then create a worldwide empire of sin (Revelation 13:1-10)
- The Tribulation
 - A seven year period when God seeks to draw Israel to the Messiah Jesus and brings judgment on the whole earth. (Daniel 9:20-24 / Revelation chapters 6-19)
- The Second Coming
 - The physical return of Jesus to the earth as the Warrior King (Zecharia chapter 12 / Revelation 19:11)
- The Millennial Kingdom
 - A one-thousand year period when Jesus will reign on earth (Revelation 20:4-6)
- The Great White Throne Judgment
 - The final sentencing of lost mankind to hell (Revelation 20:11-15)
- Eternity
 - When all believers will dwell with God forever in the New Heaven, New Earth and New Jerusalem (Revelation chapters 21-22)

A View of The Last Days An Eight Week Survey

Week 2

The Difference Between the Rapture and the Second Coming

The Rapture

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

“16. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”

The Second Coming

Revelation 19:11

“11. I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war.”

Week 2 - Outline

- Let's clarify something Right Upfront
 - The Rapture and the Second Coming are not the same event
 - They are different events, at different times and for different reasons
- What is the Rapture?
 - The return of Jesus in the clouds to gather His bride (the Church / the Body of Christ)
 - 1Thessalonians 4:16-17
 - Who is the Rapture for?
 - What will happen?
 - When will it occur?
- What is the Second Coming?
 - The return of Jesus to earth for final judgment
 - Revelation 19:11

- Who is the Second Coming for?
 - What will happen?
 - When will it occur?
- The major difference between the Rapture and the Second Coming is seen in their Proximity and Purpose:
 - The Rapture
 - Proximity - Jesus returns in the clouds
 - Purpose - To gather His bride
 - The Second Coming
 - Proximity - Jesus returns and stands on the earth
 - Purpose - To destroy satan and the remnant of mankind who refuse to accept Christ
- Why is this difference important?
 - They are two separate events for two completely different purposes
 - But they are often confused
- What are the most commonly held views about when the Rapture will occur relative to the Tribulation Period?
 - Pre-Tribulation Rapture (or "Pre-Trib.")
 - The church is removed before the Tribulation begins.
 - Mid-Tribulation Rapture (or "Mid-Trib.")
 - The church is removed at the 3-1/2 year mid-point of the Tribulation.
 - Pre-Wrath Rapture (or "Pre-Wrath")
 - The church is removed after the 3-1/2 year mid-point but just prior to God's final wrath
 - Post Tribulation Rapture (or "Post-Trib.")
 - The church is removed at the end of the Tribulation
- Which option do we believe the Bible teaches?
 - Pre-Tribulation Rapture
 - The church is removed before the Tribulation begins
 - Supported by Revelation 3:10 and 1 Thessalonians 5:9
- What do we see happening to indicate the Rapture is near?
 - Israel is back in her land
 - Israel is prospering
 - Israel is surrounded by her enemies

- Wide spread and open antisemitism
- Mankind on the glideslope of immorality
- All of these are precursors to the Tribulation

- How do we prepare?

Week 2

The Difference in the Rapture and the Second Coming

The Rapture

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

“16. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”

The Second Coming

Revelation 19:11

“11. I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war.”

Week 2 - Narrative

You'll often hear believers say they're looking forward to the *Second Coming* of Christ. But in reality, that's not the event we should be anticipating. Instead, we should be looking for the *Rapture*. Both of these events are critically important but often misunderstood. So let's take some time to understand what happens during each event and why their differences are so important.

So to begin, let's clear-up a common misconception -- the Rapture and the Second Coming are not the same event. They are two separate events that occur at different times and for completely different reasons. The primary difference between the two events can be easily understood by comparing their Proximity and Purpose:

- The Rapture
 - Proximity - Jesus returns in the clouds
 - Purpose - To gather His bride

- The Second Coming
 - Proximity - Jesus returns and stands on the earth
 - Purpose - To destroy satan and the remnant of mankind who refuse to accept Christ

The Rapture

The word "*Rapture*" is used to describe a point in the future when Jesus will return to gather His believers and take us to heaven. The purpose of this event is not to judge, but to gather. The term Rapture originated from the Greek word "*harpazo*" which basically means "*to snatch up*", "*to be caught up*", or "*to be carried away*". During the middle ages when the original Hebrew and Greek texts were translated into Latin, the word *harpazo* was replaced with the Latin word "*rapturo*". Centuries later the Latin word "*rapturo*" was translated to "*Rapture*" in English. Although the word "*Rapture*" does not appear in English translations, the action of gathering or to be "*...caught up...*" replaces the original use of "*harpazo*". We see this in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 (underline added), "**17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.**" This verse describes the Rapture using the English phrase "*...caught up...*" which is derived from the Greek term "*harpazo*".

The Rapture is intended for two groups of people:

- Believers who have already died in Christ, and therefore have been with the Lord in spirit since their death.
- Believers who will still be alive at the time the Rapture occurs.

In both cases, the Rapture is limited to people who have come to faith in Christ after the crucifixion and resurrection. The rest of post-crucifixion humanity who died without Christ will rise after the Millennial Kingdom to be sentenced at the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:5-15). On the surface their sentencing may seem unfair, but we have to remember, by the time the Rapture occurs God will have spent centuries spreading His truth, sending Himself as a sacrifice to cover our sins in His own blood, and offering grace upon grace to hundreds of generations. Those who have accepted Christ as the promised Messiah and Redeemer will be Raptured, and *caught up* (*harpazo*), to be with the Lord. But those who have failed to accept God's grace through Jesus will be resurrected at a later time to suffer God's wrath and eternal punishment. (Revelation 20:11-15).

Paul explained the outcome of the Rapture in his first letter to the early Christians at Thessalonica. They were believers in the early days of the church before the New Testament was written so they were still learning about their new faith. In this particular case they worried about what would happen during the Rapture to their family and friends who had been believers but had already died. Would they miss the coming of Jesus? What would happen to their bodies? Would they ever see them again? In

answering their questions Paul used the opportunity to explain what would happen when the Rapture occurs,

"13. But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. 15. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up [harpazo] together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18. Therefore comfort one another with these words." (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Paul starts by explaining that believers who had physically died are not spiritually "dead". Instead, he describes their condition as "...asleep...", using a term that comes from the original Greek word "Koimao" which means "dead", but in this context of believers it is describing the death of our earthly body, not our spirit. So using the term "...asleep..." helps us understand that our spirit (if we are believers in Christ) never "dies" in an earthly sense, but goes to be with Jesus. To help us understand this Paul describes the body of a believer as, "...our earthly house, this tent...", using the word "...tent..." to mean a temporary home. (2 Corinthians 5:1b / see also 1 Peter 1:13-14). But here in 1 Thessalonians 4 Paul adds clarification about believers, "...who sleep in Jesus...". The key to their "...sleep..." is the fact they died "...in Jesus..." because they had accepted the gospel and "...believe that Jesus died and rose again...". In other words, the people Paul is talking about are those who died "in Christ" due to their faith in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus (see 2 Corinthians 5:17). Therefore, if you are a true believer in Jesus your spirit never "dies". It simply leaves your earthly "...tent..." to be with Jesus. The Rapture is the event when our spirit will be united with our new body to live for eternity with the Lord.

Paul described this transformation in his letter to the church at Corinth when he explained the Rapture to them. There he explained that at the Rapture the spirits of believers who have died and gone to be with the Lord will be brought back by Jesus and reunited with their bodies. But not their old earthly "...tent...". Instead, we will be given new bodies that are perfect and renewed. Paul describes this in 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, **"42. So also is the resurrection of the dead (the Rapture). the body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. 43. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. 44. It is sown a natural body, it**

is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." This renewal of our corrupted earthly body to a perfected heavenly body will not only apply to those who have died in Christ but to the living believers as well - **"51. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep (die), but we shall all be changed— 52. in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."** (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

So what does all this mean? It means the spirits of those who have died in Christ will go to be with the Lord when we die. We know this from 2 Corinthians 5:8, **"8. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord".** At death a believer's spirit will immediately go to be with the Lord, and then at the Rapture our spirit will return with Jesus to be reunited with a perfect body. Then those of us who are still alive at the Rapture will also be united with Christ and our bodies changed as well. How do we know this? Because Paul says - **"...And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."** (1 Thessalonians 4:16b-17).

So why does Jesus return to gather His followers before His Second Coming? Let's think about what Jesus said in John 14:2-3, **"2. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."** Here we see the promise that Jesus will come back to take us and, **"...receive you to Myself..."** when He comes to gather His bride and take us to the home He has prepared for us. But how He returns at the Rapture is important, which we understand from Acts 1:9-11, **"9. Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, 11 who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."** From this we see that Jesus will return **"...in like manner..."** which will be **"...taken up from you into heaven..."** He will return in the clouds the same way He ascended. This is what Paul meant in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 when he said, **"16. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first."** Do you see how this passage helps us understand the difference between the Rapture and the Second Coming? Here in Acts the disciples are told Jesus will come back **"...in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."** In other words, in the clouds. But at the

Second Coming we see a different view of Jesus. During that event He does not return "...*in like manner...*", but in a completely different way, "**11. Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. 12. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. 13. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.** (Revelation 19:11-13). From this passage it becomes obvious that the Second Coming view of Jesus is completely different from what we see in Paul's description of the Rapture, **17. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.**" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Please note the key difference in this passage and the one in Revelation 19:11-13. At the Rapture Jesus does not physically come to earth. He comes down from heaven to gather His followers who are, "...*caught up* [harpazo / Rapture] **together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air**" (1 Thessalonians 4:17), so He can, "...*receive you to Myself...*" and take us to the place He has prepared (John 14:3b).

Very simply;

- At the Rapture the Lord does not come all the way to earth. Instead, we are caught up to Him in the clouds.
- Yet at the Second Coming, we see Jesus as a Warrior King who comes to earth to fight evil.

Zechariah confirms the position of Jesus at the Second Coming when he tells us "...**His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east...**" (Zechariah 14:3b-4). John also describes this event in Revelation 14:1a when he says, "...**Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion...**". This is the same future event Job saw when he foretold, "**For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth**" (Job 19:25). In each case Jesus is physically "...*standing...*" on the earth, not gathering in the clouds. Taken together, all of these passages point to the fact that at the Rapture Jesus comes in the clouds to gather His people, and at the Second Coming He comes all the way to earth to wage war on those who rejected Him. From this we can clearly see the Rapture is the point on the biblical timeline when Jesus will come to gather His followers to Him. When this occurs all believers will immediately leave the earth. This will undoubtedly set the world on edge because they cannot explain what happened to millions of people who simply vanished. Some will have no idea how to interpret this, but tragically, others will certainly think, "*Why didn't I listen?*"

The Timing of the Rapture

Now that we understand what the Rapture is, let's look at the different views of when it will occur. The key debate about the Rapture is not if it will occur, but when it will occur relative to the "*Tribulation*". So let's quickly review what the Tribulation is to help us understand the context.

Note: we'll discuss the Tribulation in more detail in Lesson #3.

The Tribulation is a seven year period of time described in Revelation chapters 6 through 19. It is often called "*The Seventy Weeks of Daniel*" because the original prophecy was given to Daniel (Daniel 9:24), but it is also called "*The Time of Jacob's Trouble*". We see this in Jeremiah chapter 30 when Jeremiah describes the Tribulation as, "**7. Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.**" (Jeremiah 30:7). That's because God had changed Jacob's name to Israel and made him the father of the twelve tribes (Genesis 32:28). Today, Israel, who are still God's chosen people, remain disobedient in the sense they have failed to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. But that will change during the Tribulation which we see in Zachariah 12:10, "**10. "And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn."**". At that future time the remnant of Israel will finally recognize the true Messiah.

Now with that brief background on the Tribulation, let's discuss the four most commonly held views of when the Rapture will occur:

1. Pre-Tribulation Rapture (or "Pre-Trib.")
 - The church is removed before the Tribulation begins.
2. Mid- Tribulation Rapture (or "Mid-Trib.")
 - The church is removed at the 3-1/2 year mid-point of the Tribulation.
3. Pre-Wrath Rapture (or "Pre-Wrath")
 - The church is removed after the 3-1/2 year mid-point but just prior to God's final wrath
4. Post-Tribulation Rapture (or "Post-Trib.")
 - The church is removed at the end of the Tribulation

Let's look at each of these:

1. Pre-Tribulation Rapture (or "Pre-Trib.")

In this view the church will be removed before the Tribulation begins.

This view seems to make the most sense from a Biblical perspective. It's also the mostly commonly held view amongst conservative evangelical Christians. There are a number of indications in scripture why the Rapture will take place before the Tribulation begins.

- At the Rapture Jesus does not come to earth but instead gathers believers to Him in the air. (1 Thessalonians 4:17)
 - In contrast, at the Second Coming Jesus returns as the Divine Judge and physically comes to earth for war (Revelation 19:11-12)
 - During the Second Coming the followers of Jesus (the church) come back with Him. (Revelation 19:14).
- Jesus promised to remove the obedient church prior to His wrath, - "**...10. Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth..**" (Revelation 3:10).
 - Here Jesus clearly says He will keep His followers out of the time of wrath. There are only two times in the Bible when God's wrath comes upon the "**...whole world...**". The first was during the flood and the second during the Tribulation. Just as Noah and his family were sheltered from wrath during the flood by being removed in the ark, Jesus will remove us from the Tribulation wrath by gathering us to Himself.
- We also see this promise in 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10, "**9. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10. who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.**"
 - Believers in Christ are no longer subject to God's wrath because His wrath was satisfied for us on the cross, and applied to us through our faith.
 - The Lord confirms this in Romans 5:9, "**9. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.**"
 - And in Romans 8:1-2, "**There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.**"
- Latestly, the absence of the church during the Tribulation narrative indicates the church is no longer part of the story. The church is mentioned nineteen times in the

first three chapters of Revelation where Jesus gives His revelation to seven churches through seven letters. In doing so He characterizes each segment of the church, segregates the obedient from the disobedient, warns them of their sin and promises eternal blessings to those who follow Him. Then after chapter 3 the church is not mentioned again until chapter 19 when the saints in white return with Jesus.

- o The fact they return with Jesus indicates they had already gone to be with Jesus.
- o There is no warning for the church prior to the Tribulation, there is no guidance for the church during the Tribulation, and after chapter 3 the focus of the narrative clearly shifts from the church to Israel.

2. Mid-Tribulation Rapture (or "Mid-Trib.")

This view indicates the church will be removed at the 3-1/2 year mid-point of the Tribulation. --

Proponents of this view believe the church will go through a portion of the Tribulation and are raptured just before the Abomination of the Desolation.

- This view comes primarily from Matthew 24:21-22 when Jesus says, "**21. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.**"
- Also, Daniel seems to speak of the antichrist punishing believers when he says "**25. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people and try to change the set times and the law. The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time. He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, Shall persecute the saints of the Most High, And shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand For a time and times and half a time.**" (Daniel 7:25).
- These verses could be speaking to the church -- "...**the holy people...**", but it could also be speaking of Israel who despite their disobedience are still the nation God chose as His messenger to the world. It could also be speaking of the "*Tribulation Saints*" who turn to Jesus for salvation during the Tribulation (Revelation 19:4). But in no case does it indicate the bride will not be gathered until she goes through part of God's wrath.

3. Pre-Wrath Rapture

This view points to the Rapture coming after the 3-1/2 year mid-point but just prior to God's final wrath

- In recent years this opinion has seen more scholarly investigation, primarily by a prominent Jewish-Baptist pastor. In his view the pivotal word is "...wrath..." in 1 Thessalonians 5:9 - "**9. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.**"
- Supporters of this option believe this verse indicates the church will go through Tribulation up to the point when the punishments from God become more rapid and more destructive -- the point just prior to the seventh Seal when He brings forth the final Trumpet and Bowl judgments.
- However, other scholars believe the word wrath in this verse indicates God's eternal wrath against the lost, and not just His short-term wrath at the end of the Tribulation.

4. Post-Tribulation Rapture (or "Post-Trib.")

Supporters of this view believe the Rapture occurs after the end of the Tribulation.

- Proponents of this view believe the church will go through the Tribulation and will be Raptured at the very end. They base this partly on Revelation 20:5, "**5. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.**"
- But this verse speaks to two resurrections:
 - The "**...first resurrection...**" began with the resurrection of Jesus as the first-fruit (1 Corinthians 15:23) and ends with the Rapture of the church (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 / John 5:29 / Revelation 20:6),
 - The second resurrection is for the condemned at the end of the Tribulation - "**12. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.**" (Revelation 20:12-13).
 - This indicates the second resurrection is limited to those who rejected Christ and are raised to be sentenced at the Great White Throne Judgment.
 - But logically, why would Jesus wait until the end of the Tribulation to Rapture the church and then bring us right back at His Second Coming?

So the debate goes on. We've summarized the four most commonly held views of when the Rapture will occur and briefly explained which view makes the most sense from a

Biblical perspective. But the most important thing for us to remember is that the Rapture will occur. Whenever it happens our task is to be ready, to remain alert, to be ever vigilant, to understand world events, the position of Israel and the declining focus on God in light of End Times prophecy. Pay attention to what is going on around you. Be alert to how events play their part in scripture. The Rapture could occur before we complete this lesson or it could occur at some point in the future, but as Paul said - **“..11. And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.”** (Romans 13:11). So tomorrow morning let's face life from a different perspective. As a believer in Christ we are children of God, wonderfully made and eternally loved (1 Peter 2:9-10 / Psalm 139:14). When will He return to gather us to Him? When He is ready. So we need to make sure we are always ready. We must live every day with that hope, view the world through faithful eyes and anticipate His coming with every breath.

The Second Coming

As we've already discussed, many Christians believe the Second Coming is when Jesus returns to gather His faithful believers. But as we've seen, that event is actually called the Rapture which occurs before the Second Coming. If you read God's word carefully you'll understand that the Rapture is the gathering of believers before the Tribulation (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), and the Second Coming is when Jesus physically stands on the earth as the Warrior King at the end of the Tribulation (refer to the Timeline in Lesson #1).

We see the Second Coming in Revelation 19:11-16 which describes the post-Tribulation return of Jesus,

“11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. 12. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. 13. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. 15. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”

Here we see Jesus as the divine Warrior King focused on waging war against the sources of evil. At this point He's not focused on gathering believers but is instead focused on judgment of the lost. But please note an important point, when Jesus returns to earth He will have with Him His "...armies..." who are "...**following Him...**". But who is this? It is us; believers, the bride, who Jesus will bring back with Him from heaven, which means we will have already been gathered together at the Rapture. We know who they are because the verse describes those following Him as an army "...**clothed in fine linen, white and clean...**".

We see a similar description in several other passages:

- The faithful believers from the church at Sardis, "**4. You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. 5. He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.**" (Revelation 3:4-5a).
- The Twenty-Four Elders around the throne "...**clothed in white...**", who many believe represent the Raptured church in heaven. (Revelation 4:4a).
- The bride of Christ (also symbolic of the church) who, "**...has made herself ready.** **8. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.**" (Revelation 19:7b-8).
- These verses reference people dressed in "...**white...**" who are the righteous and redeemed. They are believers -- the born again followers of Christ. It is us!

But what also becomes clear about the Second Coming is the fact Jesus physically returns and places His feet on the earth. We see this in several places:

- Zechariah 14:3-4
 - "**3. Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. 4. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south.**"
- Job 19:25
 - "**25. For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth**"

- Revelation 14:1
 - ***“14. Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads.*”**

In each case, Jesus is physically standing on the earth, and is not in the clouds as we saw during the Rapture. This is important, because the Second Coming is when Jesus will return to destroy all that is evil. This event is critically important to us as believers because it will be the final point on the timeline of humanity when Jesus will return victorious to rid His creation of every sin and every source of sin. It will be the time when man's kingdom will end and Christ's Kingdom on earth will begin. The time when God's creation will begin to shift from the fallen world of man back to the perfect world of God. It will be the time spoken of by Job when he prophetically proclaimed, ***“25. For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth”*** (Job 19:25). There He will stand, with His feet in Israel, on Mount Zion, (Revelation 14:1), all-powerful and all-holy, as He stomps the winepress of vengeful wrath on His fallen creation. It is then, ***“14. When you see this, your heart shall rejoice, And your bones shall flourish like grass; The hand of the LORD shall be known to His servants, And His indignation to His enemies. 15. For behold, the LORD will come with fire And with His chariots, like a whirlwind, To render His anger with fury, And His rebuke with flames of fire. 16. For by fire and by His sword The LORD will judge all flesh; And the slain of the LORD shall be many.”*** (Isaiah 66:14-16). It will be the time when, ***“16. The LORD also will roar from Zion, And utter His voice from Jerusalem; The heavens and earth will shake; But the LORD will be a shelter for His people, And the strength of the children of Israel.”*** (Joel 3:16) It will be the time when Jesus will fulfill the curse placed on satan so long ago in the garden that one day He would crush his head. (Genesis 3:15b). This will be the time prophesied by so many, for so long, as a warning that God will destroy the wicked realm of satan and the fallen souls of mortal man in order to establish His eternal kingdom for His redeemed children.

The day of destruction will not come slowly but will be an event of sudden shock and awe as Jesus, the Holy Warrior King and Righteous Judge, brings wrath and carnage to destroy all that is left of satan's seed. His destructive force will be quick, decisive and complete as blow after blow of His punishing and unrelenting power crushes all rebellion and eliminates all who rebel. He will come like a thief - unexpected and without warning - but His coming will be like a heavenly battering-ram with forces we cannot even imagine.

So how important is the Second Coming? A study conducted by Dr. David Jeremiah reveals the following facts:

- The Second Coming is referred to in the Bible eight times more than the First Coming
- It is prophesied in 17 books of the Old Testament
- It is referred to in 23 of the 27 books of the New Testament
- In fact, in the New Testament, on average, the Second Coming is mentioned in every 30 verses and in 7 out of every 10 chapters
- Jesus Himself mentions His return 21 times
- In total, only the topic of salvation is mentioned more than the Second Coming in the Bible

But maybe you didn't realize that and had no idea the Second Coming was mentioned so many times in the Bible.

Here are just a few examples:

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

“14. Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, 15. to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” (Jude 14-15)

“13. I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. 14. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed.” (Daniel 7:13-14)

“27. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 28. For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.” (Matthew 24:27)

“3. Then the Lord will go forth And fight against those nations, As He fights in the day of battle. 4. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which

faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, From east to west, Making a very large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north And half of it toward the south.” (Zechariah 14:3-4)

“7. Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.” (Revelation 1:7)

“14. Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. 15. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, “Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.” 16. So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.” (Revelation 14:14-16)

At the Rapture Jesus will return as the loving Groom to gather His bride and remove her from the sinful world. But at the Second Coming Jesus will return as the Warrior King, who with power and wrath will destroy all who have chosen to refuse His offer of redemption. He will attack with vengeance and in the blink of an eye, it will be over. In response, the heavenly host and followers of Christ will declare a chorus of four powerful Hallelujahs and the bride, now vindicated and righteous, will be led into God's kingdom forever.

This will be the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Because the Second Coming is such an important event, let's dig even deeper by looking closely at Revelation 19:11-16,

“11. Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. 12. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. 13. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. 15. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.” (Revelation 19:11:16)

11.a. - "**11. Now I saw heaven opened, and behold,..."**

- Throughout Revelation John uses terms like, "...**I saw...**" or "...**there before me...**" indicating his view may be more than a simple vision. It has substance and form. Here John sees into heaven and it has been opened. But the view is not so John can see in, but so Jesus can come out. The Messiah, the Groom, who ascended into heaven to prepare a place for His bride, "...**will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.**" during the Rapture (Acts 1:11b). But now, at the Second Coming, He will return as a Warrior whose task is to free His creation from the ravages of sin. Jesus went from earth to heaven, He prepared the place for His bride, He returned to retrieve her at the Rapture, and now as promised, He will return from heaven to earth to destroy His enemy and establish His kingdom.

11.b. - "**...a white horse..."**

- The Bible sometimes uses imagery so people across cultures and centuries can clearly understand its meaning. Here we see a "...**horse...**". This may in fact be a literal horse, but the term may also be used to express power, might and speed. It would have been recognized by early readers as the steed upon which a triumphant King would ride. In this case the horse illustrates the difference between Jesus the Warrior King on His warhorse and Jesus the bride-price sacrifice who rode into Jerusalem "...**Lowly and riding on a donkey,...**" of peace. (Zechariah 9:9 / Matthew 21:2-3). The "...**white...**" color of the horse also indicates purity and righteousness of its Divine Rider (Revelation 19:8).

11.c. - "**...And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True,**".

- The rider is Jesus, the Messiah, and the Son of God. The Groom who paid the ultimate price for His bride. He is returning just as He said He would to fulfill all the promises He has made. He presents Himself Just as He did to the church at Laodica, "**These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:**" (Revelation 3:14), He is "...**Faithful and True...**" to His word, confirming that He is the "...**the way, and the truth, and the life...**" (John 14:6).

11.d. - "**...and in righteousness He judges and makes war.**"

- The judgments of God are righteous and just (Revelation 19:2). Now in the end of the Tribulation Jesus comes as the Warrior King, set on the destruction of everything sinful and unholy. His judgments will be swift, but they will also be holy, "...**11. God is a just judge, And God is angry with the wicked every day. 12. If he does not turn back, He will sharpen His sword; He bends His bow and makes it ready.**" (Psalm 7:11-12).

12.a. - "**12. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns.**"

- The shock of John's first view of Jesus in Revelation made him faint. (Revelation 1:17). That's because the person of Christ he saw was that of the Warrior King, with, "...**14. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; 15. His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; 16. He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength..**" (Revelation 1:14-16). This is clearly not the image of the gentle Jesus we picture on the donkey riding into Jerusalem, but is the mighty and all-powerful Warrior King bedecked in His royal crowns, returning to earth to reap those who have perpetually rejected His offer of free grace.

12.b. - "...**He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.** ."

- This is a true mystery that we may someday understand, but for now, we will not speculate. Its hidden meaning reminds us that even with the detailed description John gives us there are things about God that we still do not understand. "**29. "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."**" (Deuteronomy 29:29)

13.a. - "**13. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood....**"

- Since the battle has not yet been fought the blood we see here may indicate the blood Jesus shed for His bride, or more likely, may represent the on-going battles in the spiritual realm as Christ fights against all sin. (Ephesians 6:12).

13.b. - "...**and His name is called The Word of God.**"

- Here is yet another reminder of who Jesus is. It is the same term John used to define Jesus in his gospel, "**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**" (John 1:1) This is Jesus who, "...**became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.**" (John 1:14b).

14.- "**And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.**"

- So who are the "...**armies in heaven...**"? Some believe they are angels. Maybe those warrior angels who through time and the Tribulation have played a role in God's judgment? Maybe the angels Jesus spoke of when He said, "**39. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.**" (Matthew 13:39)? And maybe it is the angel with the

sharp sickle and another in charge of fire that, "...19. **So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.**" (Revelation 14:19)? That's all very possible, but it appears from scripture the army is more than just angels. This army also includes the raptured church. The use of the phrase "...clothed in fine linen, white and clean..." is essentially the same description used to describe the bride, the raptured church in Revelation 19:8, "**8. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.**" Remember, the church is raptured before the Tribulation, which is why we will return with Jesus to reign in His coming kingdom. (Revelation 20:4). Paul speaks to this blessed return when he tells the church in Colossae, "**4. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.**" (Colossians 3:4).

15. - "**Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.**"

- Even though we, the bride of Christ, will return with Jesus, scripture does not indicate we will actually fight. As much as we'd love to imagine ourselves as comrades-in-arms with our King on that day, with the power to destroy evil, scripture indicates we will be observers, not fighters. We know the angels are warriors. We see that throughout the Bible and particularly in Revelation. They are powerful, mighty and aid God in the execution of judgment. But at the Second Coming we will be the bride, who has made herself clean and ready. (Revelation. 19:8). We are not seen blood splattered like our King, (Revelation. 19:13) and we appear to have no weapons. In fact, the only weapon mentioned in this verse belongs to Jesus who has, "...**a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations...**". But there is another beautiful passage that indicates Jesus fights without the help of man., "**3. I have trodden the winepress alone, And from the peoples no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, And trampled them in My fury; Their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, And I have stained all My robes. 4. For the day of vengeance is in My heart, And the year of My redeemed has come. 5. I looked, but there was no one to help, And I wondered That there was no one to uphold; Therefore My own arm brought salvation for Me; And My own fury, it sustained Me. 6. I have trodden down the peoples in My anger, Made them drunk in My fury, And brought down their strength to the earth.**". (Isaiah 63:3-6). Here Jesus returns to bring horrific judgement on the nations - on mankind - but no nation stands by His side. No nation comes to His defense. So He fights alone against the whole world, and is victorious. So we need to remember that day will be the Lord's day:

- It is the Lord's day, not our day.
- It is the day the armies of the world. "...**will make war with the Lamb...**" (Revelation. 17:14a).
- It is the day "...**the Lamb will overcome them...**" (Revelation. 17:14b)
- It is the day He will, "...**thrust in Your sickle and reap...**" (Revelation. 14:15)
- It is the day, "...**the Lord will roar from on high...**" (Jeremiah 25:30)
- It is the day when, "...**And fight against those nations, As He fights in the day of battle....**" (Zechariah 14:3)
- It is the day, "...**The LORD gives voice before His army...**" (Joel 2:11)
- It is the day when Jesus declares, "**6. Wail, for the day of the LORD is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. 7. Therefore all hands will be limp, Every man's heart will melt, 8. And they will be afraid. Pangs and sorrows will take hold of them; They will be in pain as a woman in childbirth; They will be amazed at one another; Their faces will be like flames. 9. Behold, the day of the LORD comes, Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, To lay the land desolate; And He will destroy its sinners from it. 10. For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not give their light; The sun will be darkened in its going forth, And the moon will not cause its light to shine. 11. "I will punish the world for its evil, And the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, And will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible." 12. I will make a mortal more rare than fine gold, A man more than the golden wedge of Ophir. 13. Therefore I will shake the heavens, And the earth will move out of her place, In the wrath of the LORD of hosts And in the day of His fierce anger.**" (Isaiah 13:6-13)

15.b.- "...**And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God...**".

- The judgements of Jesus will be swift and the great Shepherd will rule His Kingdom as Sovereign Lord. (Revelation 2:27 / Psalm 2:9). Several times in Revelation we see reference to a wine press associated with the wrath of God. In the ancient world a winepress was a large vat where grapes would be stomped or pressed until all their juice was extracted, but here the term symbolizes the wrath of God treading the winepress of the earth until the life of unrepentant man is stomped out by Jesus. Similarly in chapter 14 of Revelation John saw the extent of this judgment when we are told, "**19. So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress**

of the wrath of God. 20. And the winepress was trampled outside the city [Jerusalem], and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles [about 4 feet], for one thousand six hundred furlongs. [about 185 miles]." (**Revelation. 14:19-20**). This describes the carnage of the Battle of Armageddon which will stretch from the Plains of Megiddo in the north to Edom in the south; roughly the length of Israel.

16. - **"And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."**

- Here we see Jesus, our Precious Savior returning in His role as the Warrior King. He is and always was the True Word, who blotted out the darkness (John 1:1-4). Now He returns to remove all darkness forever so His eternal Kingdom will need no sun or moon for illumination, "**23. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.**" (Revelation 21:23). Vengeance for sin belongs to the Lord, not us (Isaiah 34:8 / Nahum 1:2). Just as Jesus came the first time to destroy our sin on the cross, He will come the second time to destroy the vestige of all unrepentant sin on the battlefield of God. It is His day of retribution and glory when, "**14. These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.**" (Revelation 17:14). He is truly our, "...**KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS....**". Of all the names of Jesus in the Bible this phrase encompasses all descriptions. He is not only our Sovereign King, but He rules supreme over all kings and all lords for all time. He is not only the divine Lord, but He is the Lord God Almighty who reigns over all creation. He is truly the Almighty Creator, the King, the Lord, the Savior, Redeemer, Rock and Fortress. And on that final Day of the Lord, He will be eternally victorious.

Hallelujah!!!

A View of The Last Days An Eight Week Survey

Week 3

What is the Tribulation – And has it Begun?

“21. For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.”

(Matthew 24:21)

Week 3 - Outline

- What is the Tribulation?
 - A seven year period when God will bring final judgment on the earth
 - The final offer of God's grace
 - The Tribulation is a future event
 - Primarily described in Revelation
 - But also in many Old Testament and New Testament References
 - The Tribulation did not happen in the past
 - It is not happening now
- Why will there be a Tribulation?
 - To draw Israel back into obedience
 - When they will finally recognize Jesus as the Messiah (Zechariah 12:10)
 - To rid the world of satan and his followers
 - But also, to give mankind multiple opportunities to repent
- When will it occur?
 - At a point in the future
 - After the Rapture
 - Prior to the Millennial Kingdom
- What will happen?
 - Emergence of the antichrist
 - A one world government, economy and religion
 - Twenty-one judgment actions by God
 - The Second Coming of Jesus

- The destruction of satan and the current heavens and earth
- What needs to happen first?
 - The Rapture
- How will it start?
 - Jesus will release the first "Seal" judgment
 - And the antichrist will emerge
 - The Seal judgments will be followed by "Trumpets" and "Bowls"
 - For twenty-one total judgements
- How will it end?
 - Jesus will return as the Warrior King and Judge
 - The Battle of Armageddon
 - Then Jesus will then usher in the Millennial Kingdom

Week 3

What is the Tribulation – And has it Begun?

“21. For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.”

(Matthew 24:21)

Week 3 - Narrative

There are only two times in the Bible when God destroys all creation with cataclysmic wrath. The first was during the Noahic flood (Genesis chapters 6-8), and the second will be during the future Tribulation Period described in the Book of Revelation and through many other Old and New Testament prophecies.

The Tribulation will be a future seven year period when God will accomplish several tasks:

- He will spread the gospel throughout the entire world through The 144,000, the Two Witnesses and the Proclaiming Angels (Revelation chapters 7, 11 and 14)
- He will use twenty-one judgments of wrath to destroy the earth and all its inhabitants who fail to accept His grace and redemption (Revelation chapters 6-18).
- He will draw disobedient Israel to Jesus (Revelation chapter 12 / Zechariah 12:10)
- He will usher in the thousand year Millennial Kingdom and prepare the world for final judgment (Revelation chapter 20).

You will sometimes hear the Tribulation called “*The Time of Jacob’s Trouble*”. We find that in Jeremiah’s description of the event, “***7. Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.***” (Jeremiah 30:7). Here Jeremiah uses the phrase, “...***Jacob’s trouble...***” with the understanding that God changed Jacob’s name to Israel (Genesis 32:28). In other words, he is emphasizing His primary focus on Israel during the Tribulation period. As God’s chosen people Israel continues to be disobedient because they have failed to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. But that will change during the Tribulation when Israel will finally realize who Jesus is, “***10. And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.***” (Zechariah 12:10).

At that future time the remnant of Israel will finally understand that Jesus is the true Messiah, but not before they go through a time of great trial and punishment. In fact, the Bible indicates that at the time Israel finally recognizes Jesus as the Messiah only one-third of the Jewish people will be left, but those who remain will turn to the Lord, **“8. And it shall come to pass in all the land [Israel],” Says the Lord, “That two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, But one-third shall be left in it: 9. I will bring the one-third through the fire, Will refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them. I will say, ‘This is My people’; And each one will say, ‘The Lord is my God.’ ”** (Zechariah 13:8-9)

You will also hear the Tribulation called the “Seventy Weeks of Daniel”. That comes from Daniel’s description of the Tribulation’s timing in Daniel 9:24, **“24. Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.”** Jesus helps us understand what Daniel is talking about when He discusses specific events that will occur during the Tribulation and cites Daniel as the source, **“15. ‘Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place’ (whoever reads, let him understand)** (Matthew 24:15). His statement, **“...spoken of by Daniel the prophet...”** takes us back to Daniel chapter 9 and helps us understand that both passages are talking about the future Tribulation period.

But what does the phrase **“...seventy weeks...”** really mean? Let’s dig a little deeper to find out.

- In Hebrew the term used here for **“...week...”** represents a seven-year span of time.
- So seventy, seven year periods of time equals 490 years (using the Hebrew calendar of 360 days per year).
- The 490 year period began with a decree issued by the Persian king Artaxerxes in 445BC giving the captive Jews permission to rebuild Jerusalem (Daniel 9:24-26 / Nehemiah 2:1-8).
- We see this in Daniel 25a, **“Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks.”**
- So let’s do the math:
 - The rebuilding of Jerusalem took seven “weeks” (Nehemiah 2:1-8)
 - Plus 62 “...weeks...” from then until the crucifixion of Jesus, **“...Messiah the Prince...”**,

- Equals 69 "...weeks..." or 483 years.
- That leaves one "week" remaining (70 minus 69 weeks) / or one seven year period (490 minus 483 years)
- This final "week" is the future Tribulation Period that will last seven years, which is the "Seventieth" week.
- That means the time between the 69th week (the crucifixion) and the final 70th "week" is the church age. The time we live in today.
- Given that, the first 483 years -- sixty-nine of the seventy "...weeks..." -- , including the seven weeks of reconstruction (7 plus 62) ends at the crucifixion of Christ, **"And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off** (crucified), **but not for Himself**; (Daniel 9:26).
- This leaves one remaining period of seven years, which is the final seventieth "week". That's why you'll sometimes hear the Tribulation called "*The Seventieth Week*".
- The seventieth week (7 years) is divided into two 3-1/2 year periods.
 - Specific events occur during each of the 3-1/2 year segments with the second 3-1/2 period often called the "*Great Tribulation*" when God will bring final destruction upon all creation.
 - Each 3-1/2 year period is described in the Bible in several ways:
 - **"...a time and times and half a time..."**
 - Here, "**time**" (singular) is one year + "**times**" (plural) is two years + "**...half a time...**", is half of a year - so, $1+2+1/2 = 3-1/2$ years (Daniel 7:25 / 9:27 / 12:7 / Revelation 12:14).
 - 1,260 days (Revelation 11:3)
 - 42 months (Revelation 11:2 / 13:5)

In each case these titles describe the seven year Tribulation period which is divided into two 3-1/2 year segments.

During that time:

- God releases twenty-one cataclysmic judgments called "Seals", "Trumpets" and "Bowls" (Revelation chapter 6-17).
- The antichrist comes to power (Revelation 6:2 / Matthew 24:4 / Daniel 9:26-27)
- At the mid-point, or 3-1/2 years, the antichrist will declare himself to be God in the temple in Jerusalem. This action is called the **"...abomination of desolation..."** (Matthew 24:15 / Daniel 9:27 / Daniel 11:31). The time when the antichrist will abominate the temple.
- From that point until the end of year seven, God will release His most destructive forces through the final seven "*Trumpets*" and seven "*Bowls*" (Revelation chapters 8-16).

- At the end of the seven year Tribulation comes:
 - The Second Coming of Christ (Revelation 19:11 / Zechariah 14:3-8),
 - The Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 19 / Zechariah 12 / Daniel 11-12),
 - The Millennial Kingdom (Revelation 20:1-10),
 - The Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15)
 - And Eternity (Revelation chapters 21-22)

So when will all of this occur? We don't know, but we believe the Bible teaches it will occur at the end of the church-age and immediately after the Rapture. In other words, if the Rapture were to occur today the Tribulation would start shortly after that and the Second Coming would occur at the end of the seventh year. The Tribulation will be the time when Israel and the entire world will come under severe judgment from which Israel will eventually turn to God and recognize Jesus as the true Messiah (Zechariah 12:10). Then the remnant of the unbelieving world and creation itself will be destroyed and replaced by a new creation for God's faithful children.

But why will the Tribulation happen? Very simply. For millennia God has offered His grace and mercy to a wholly undeserving world. From the first bite of forbidden fruit God has been patient and caring, offering to love and redeem anyone who seeks forgiveness through faith in His redeeming grace. He has given fully of Himself by paying the most costly bride-price so that every person has an opportunity to repent. But in the end relatively few will turn to Him (Matthew 7:13-14). Instead, they will continue to blaspheme His name and turn their hearts to self-satisfaction and idolatry in order to satisfy their sinful lusts. Then at the end of human time, at the conclusion of the Tribulation, when unredeemed mankind is on the cusp of extermination, there will be a remnant who will curse the name of God even when they realize He is the Lord. It is then, in the face of unrelenting disobedience and rejection, an angel will cry, "**...there should be delay no longer...**" and Jesus will return as the Warrior King. (Revelation 10:6b / 19:11). This will occur at the end of the seven years and the conclusion of Daniel's final week. As the Tribulation draws to a close, and as the final wrath of the twenty-one judgments have been revealed, blasted and poured, Jesus will come to vindicate His name, clear His creation of sin and establish His earthly kingdom for His bride.

Quick Overview of the Tribulation Period

The Tribulation period begins in Revelation chapter 6 when Jesus opens the first of seven "Seal" judgments and the antichrist emerges, **"1. Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see." 2. And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out**

conquering and to conquer.” (Revelation 6:1-2). Here the antichrist is seen as a diplomatic leader. He has a bow, but no arrows, indicating he has power but will initially emerge as a diplomat. But that will quickly change as he seeks to dominate the world through a centralized government, military, economy and religion. To the point, “... **8. All who dwell on the earth will worship him...**” (Revelation 13:8a). The antichrist, also called the “beast” will be accompanied by a helper, the “*false prophet*” who will seek to persuade mankind to worship the beast. Together with satan they will form a trinity of evil, with satan seeking to supplant God the Father, the antichrist God the Son and the false prophet, God the Holy Spirit. But they will fail and be destroyed (see Isaiah 14:13-14 / Revelation 19:17-21).

From chapters 6 to 8 of Revelation we see seven “Seal” judgments. These will bring severe punishment on creation and the inhabitants of the world. This will include war, famine, pestilence, death and disturbances throughout the universe as God begins the process of destruction. But unfortunately mankind will not repent but will actually grow more evil to the point, “...**9. and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory.**” (Revelation 16:9a).

Beginning in Revelation chapter 8 God will increase the punishment through the next seven judgments called “Trumpets”. Think of these as “blasting” God’s destructive power on creation and mankind. They will bring even more destruction on man, nature, rivers and seas and the entire universe. This portion on Revelation also discusses:

- The mighty angel (chapter 10)
- The “Two Witnesses” sent by God to share the gospel in Jerusalem (chapter 11)
- The escape of Israel and the final banishment of satan to the earth (chapter 12)
- The growth of the antichrist’s worldwide power (chapter 13)
- The 144,000 Jewish evangelists who will share the gospel throughout the world (chapters 7 and 14)
- Three proclaiming angels spreading the gospel to every one on earth (chapter 14)

After the Trumpet judgments come the final seven judgments, which are the most horrific, called "Bowls". Picture these as God pouring His final wrath on the earth in preparation for final destruction. They will be singularly destructive judgments poured on the universe, earth and mankind as God destroys the antichrist, the false prophet, what is left of unrepentant man, and then prepares the earth for the Millennial Kingdom. Each of the Bowls are discussed in chapters 15-19.

Chapter 17 of Revelation helps us understand why all of this is happening. There we get an understanding of the spiritual depravity of those remaining on earth during the

Tribulation. With the exception of people who come to Jesus during this terrible time, the remainder of the earth's population will blaspheme God even though they know who the Father and Jesus are (Revelation 6:15-17). They will have heard the gospel from 144,000 Jewish evangelists, Two Witnesses, the testimony of those saved during the Tribulation, and a proclaiming angel who shouts the gospel to every ear of every man. Yet despite this constant offer of gospel mercy, mankind will turn away from God and form a pagan religion aptly named "**Mystery Babylon The Great, The Mother of Harlots and of The Abominations of The Earth.**" (Revelation 17:5). It is hard for us to imagine what this world-wide religion of depravity will be like as the sin-driven population of the world, deceived by the signs and wonders of the false prophet, gyrate to a satan-focused frenzy of pagan worship. But as we look at our fallen society today we can begin to get a sense of how mankind's mind and morals will decline.

Then something totally unexpected will happen. The antichrist will turn on his own religion and destroy it in a fit of jealous rage (Revelation 17:16). Possibly because he recognizes the power religion will have over the people and wants it all for himself, he will destroy the religion and refocus the sinful remnant of mankind's religious fervor on him. Then he will declare himself to be god. Once the antichrist destroys his religion he will be in total control. Through his world-wide government, military, economy and religion, the antichrist will rule a world bathed in sin through a government of sin as he seeks to destroy anyone and anything related to God (Revelation 13:7). He will build an empire of sin that drives man to the worship of material wealth. An empire with a seat of operations also called "Babylon". An empire of unequaled wickedness. By this point on the timeline of humanity the world and its remnant unrepentant population will have gone through seven years of horrific judgment as seven "Seals", seven "Trumpets" and seven "Bowls" bring God's wrath upon the earth in ways we can hardly imagine. War, pestilence, famine, cosmic destruction, natural disasters, demon attacks, oozing sores and total darkness will inflict mankind with continuous punishment from God. Yet, their wickedness will be so complete that even in the midst of judgment after judgment man will find a way to prosper. As the antichrist rules the world, mankind will worship themselves by focusing their passions on the last vestige of material wealth and prosperity. But destruction will come and near the end of the Bowl judgments God will destroy the antichrist's empire (Chapter 18). His infrastructure will topple and burn as the leaders and people of the world, personified by the titles, "...**kings...**", "...**merchants...**" and "...**ship masters...**", stand at a distance to wail and lament over the loss of their prized possessions (Revelation 18:9-20). It will be at this point Christ will bring final destruction on mankind.

Then in chapter 19 we see the culminating event of God's judgment actions. An event foretold centuries before when Job said, "**For I know that my Redeemer lives,**

And He shall stand at last on the earth;" (Job 19:25). This is the return of Jesus as the Warrior King - the Second Coming - "***11. Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. 12. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. 13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. 15. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.***" (Revelation 19:11-16)

We are then given a preview of the battle that will take place between Jesus and the armies of the world. The battle we know as Armageddon, "***16. And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.***". (Revelation 16:16). In preparation for the greatest and final of all battles God prepared the way (Revelation 16:12) for His enemies to come. But the way will not be a conveyance. It will be a trap.

After thousands of years of God's freely offered grace and seven years of Tribulation judgement, the remnant of unrepentant man comes to the point of no return. Lured to Megiddo by satan's deception they will gather for war against Christ Himself. But Jesus, in His role as the Holy Judge and Righteous King will come to quickly destroy all who remain disloyal to Him. In this role He is not only Judge and Jury but He is also the Executioner. As unbelievable as that may seem, it is true. Jesus, at His Second Coming will return to carry out the sentence sinful man will choose to accept. Here we clearly see Jesus in His judgement role. Markedly different than His role as a Shepherd during His first coming, He will now return as the Warrior King, with eyes like blazing fire and feet like burnished bronze, He comes at last, in a whirlwind of fury to clear His creation of sin and to vindicate the souls under the altar who, "***...10. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"***" (Revelation 6:10). Now they will wait no longer.

The Second Coming of Christ at the culmination of the Tribulation will result in the end of humanity as we know it today (Revelation 16:16). The day when Jesus as the holy and divine Warrior King returns with His righteous army to defeat the antichrist and remove the final remnant of unrepentant man from the earth. The battle, carried out on the famous Plains of Megiddo will stretch across Israel and bring carnage and destruction we can scarcely imagine as Jesus strikes the earth with a thunderous whirlwind of punishing fury. In His judgment role He has eyes of blazing fire, wears the

royal crowns of an All-Sovereign Lord, and has a robe dipped in blood from countless battles against the demonic spiritual realm. He comes with His army, soldiered by powerful angels of judgment, and His raptured bride of faithful believers. He comes to battle with a sword coming out of His mouth. Symbolic of His ultimate power and supreme wrath, and the truth of His prophetic word. A weapon of creation that is now a weapon of destruction. His power is His Word, the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17), **"...12. For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 13. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.."** (Hebrews 4:12-13). It is the sword of ultimate judgment for those who will not repent (Revelation 1:16 / 2:16). It is reminiscent of a promise God made to Israel so many generations ago. **"40. For I raise My hand to heaven, And say, "As I live forever, 41. If I whet My glittering sword, And My hand takes hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to My enemies, And repay those who hate Me. 42. I will make My arrows drunk with blood, And My sword shall devour flesh, With the blood of the slain and the captives, From the heads of the leaders of the enemy."** (Deuteronomy 32:40-42).

Jesus spoke of this horrible day in the Olivet Discourse, **"27. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 28. For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together. 29. Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."** (Matthew. 24:27-31)

This is the Day of the Lord. A day unlike any other day in history. The day when Christ's return will not only destroy man and physically alter the earth but a day when the universe itself will implode as the sun and moon are darkened and, **"14. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. "** (Revelation. 6:14 / 16:16-20). This is the day mentioned so often in scripture. An ancient message of prophecy delivered over and over as a warning from God.

It will be a day when:

- ***You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.' "(Psalm 2:9).***
- ***"They shall go into the holes of the rocks, And into the caves of the earth, From the terror of the LORD And the glory of His majesty, When He arises to shake the earth mightily." (Isaiah 2:19).***
- ***3. "Then the LORD will go forth And fight against those nations, As He fights in the day of battle. 4. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, From east to west, Making a very large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north And half of it toward the south." (Zechariah 14:3-4).***
- ***"8. Therefore wait for Me," says the LORD, "Until the day I rise up [a]for plunder; My determination is to gather the nations To My assembly of kingdoms, To pour on them My indignation, All My fierce anger; All the earth shall be devoured With the fire of My jealousy." (Zephaniah 3:8).***
- ***"13. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; For the winepress is full, The vats overflow— For their wickedness is great." 14. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. 15. The sun and moon will grow dark, And the stars will diminish their brightness. 16. The LORD also will roar from Zion, And utter His voice from Jerusalem; The heavens and earth will shake; But the LORD will be a shelter for His people, And the strength of the children of Israel." (Joel 3:13-16).***
- ***"14. Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. 15. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." 16. So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped. 17. Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. 18. And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe." 19. So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and***

threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. 20. And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs." (Revelation 14:14-20)

This will be the time when mankind gathers together to defeat Christ, but unknown to them the reason they gather for battle will not be their own idea. They will gather because God will call them there for destruction. In doing so He will dry up the Euphrates, "***...so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared....***", and He will use the unclean spirits to, "***...go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.***" (Revelation 16:12/14). God will, "***...assemble the nations, to gather the kingdoms and to pour out my wrath on them gather the nations To My assembly of kingdoms, To pour on them My indignation, All My fierce anger; All the earth shall be devoured With the fire of My jealousy....***" (Zephaniah 3:8). In doing so He will bring them to the "***...valley of decision...***" (Joel 3:14). This is not a place where man will decide when to fight God. It is the place where God has already decided where to execute man. On that day the armies of the world will be drawn to a place to wage war on Jesus. They will feel confident and strong in their satan-led effort, but they will soon be surprised to find their gathering is not the result of superior tactical maneuvers, but is instead a deadly trap. They will have come to Israel with the intent to take possession of her, but their hopes will be dashed to pieces on that day, "***...3. And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it..***" (Zechariah 12:3). This will be the time, "***I will consume man and beast; I will consume the birds of the heavens, The fish of the sea, And the stumbling blocks along with the wicked. I will cut off man from the face of the land,***" Says the ***LORD.***" (Zephaniah 1:3).

And with that context let's now go and observe the much anticipated Battle of Armageddon.

"17. Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, 18. that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great." 19. And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. 20. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who

worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. 21. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh." (Revelation 19:17-21)

"17. Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God,..."

- By this point in the Tribulation man will have no excuse. In addition to the offered grace of the 144,000, the Two Witnesses, the testimony of the Tribulation Saints, and the clear gospel message of the Proclaiming Angel, there will be other angelic warnings:
 - In chapter 10, a "...mighty angel...", "...with a loud voice, as when a lion roars..." proclaimed, "...there should be delay no longer..." (Revelation 10:3-6).
 - Then in chapter 14 two more angels announce the coming destruction of the antichrist's empire through the cup of God's wrath. (Revelation 14:8-10)
 - Then the angels with sickles and the one controlling fire will declare the gathering of the grain and grapes (mankind) for the final harvest of the earth. (Revelation 14:1-20).
 - Seven angels will pour God's Bowls of final judgment on man. (Revelation 16).
 - An angel with great authority will illuminate the earth with his splendor and lead the heavenly host in a praise of destruction as he announces the judgment of the antichrist's pagan religion and his empire as another angel illustrates the power of Christ's coming like a boulder thrown into the sea. (Revelation. 18:21).

Now we see an angel "...standing in the sun...", reminiscent of the angel "...ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God" (Revelation 7:2-3). The fact he is standing in the sun may indicate he appears prior to the fifth Bowl of judgment when, "...his kingdom became full of darkness..." (Revelation 16:10b). This is the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, "...15. The sun and moon will grow dark..." (Joel 3:15). But unlike the angel in chapter 7 who held back judgment, this new angel prepares for the final battle as he calls together the birds of the air and brings them, "...together for the supper of the great God,...". A feast that stands in absolute conflict with the beautiful supper we see earlier in Revelation, "...the marriage supper of the Lamb..." (Revelation 19:9). One is a gathering of the righteous to celebrate the joining of Christ and His bride, the church of faithful believers. There the groom and

bride invite their guests to feast with them. The other supper is a gathering of the unrighteous to be destroyed. Their invited guests will not be God's faithful to dine at Christ's table, but will be the birds of the air to dine on the corpses of the unfaithful.

"18. that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great."

- None will be spared. From rulers and leaders, both free and slave, prospering and poor, the birds will gather to eat the flesh of millions who will be slain by Jesus. This is a similar outcome to what we see in the Ezekiel War, ***"...17 "And as for you, son of man, thus says the Lord God, 'Speak to every sort of bird and to every beast of the field: "Assemble yourselves and come; Gather together from all sides to My sacrificial meal Which I am sacrificing for you, A great sacrificial meal on the mountains of Israel, That you may eat flesh and drink blood. 18. You shall eat the flesh of the mighty, Drink the blood of the princes of the earth, Of rams and lambs, Of goats and bulls, All of them fatlings of Bashan..."*** (Ezekiel 39:17-18). Here the prophet Ezekiel speaks of the godless dead as sacrifices. This is symbolic of a sacrifice made for the atonement of sin, but since the remnant of mankind will refuse the sacrifice of the Lamb to forgive their sins, they will pay eternally by sacrificing their own lives.

"19. And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army."

- And finally they come. The antichrist and his rulers will be lured from around the world into a deadly trap. To a place where their intention is to fight against God, but a place where God's plan of destruction will be fulfilled. It is the place where, ***"2. I will also gather all nations, And bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; And I will enter into judgment with them there On account of My people, My heritage Israel, Whom they have scattered among the nations; They have also divided up My land."*** (Joel 3:2). It will be the place of their destruction.

"20. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone."

- Finally, satan's prodigy, the antichrist, the most vile and sinful human who will ever live, along with his demonic counterpart, the false prophet will be captured - but not killed. A quick death is far too lenient for them. Instead, they will be captured and thrown alive into hell. Into the lake of fire. A place described by

Jesus in His parable of the wheat and the weeds. A parable reflecting the end times which His disciples did not at first understand. So Jesus explained the imagery and the prophecy, **"38. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. 39. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. 40. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. 41. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, 42. and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 43. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"** (Matthew 13:38-43). This is hell, the final gathering place for all the unholy of all time. The place is, **"...hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched..."**. (Mark 9:43b). The place where those in eternal punishment, **"...shall be beaten with many stripes...."** (Luke 12:47b).

What is so interesting about their capture is the apparent speed with which it will happen. The destruction of mankind will be quick but it appears that the capture of the antichrist will be immediate as Jesus quickly removes the leaders of the wicked army and casts them into hell. They are cast **"...alive..."** which further indicates the severity of their punishment. God does not wait for final judgment and sentencing as He will with the rest of mankind (Revelation. 20:11) but sentencing for these two will be immediate and eternal. In fact, they will be cast into hell long before satan. (Revelation. 20:10). At this point, the antichrist's evil empire and the pagan religion he supported will have been destroyed. The wealth of his kingdom, wrought by greed and lust, will be destroyed along with his **"Kings"**, **"Merchants"** and **"Ship Masters"**. All of those who led and prospered from evil will be gone. Babylon the religion and Babylon the empire will exist no more.

"21. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh."

- We often think of the Great White Throne Judgment as a trial where Jesus will cast judgment on man's soul (Revelation 20:11). But in reality, it is not a judgment at all. It is the final sentencing. Man's trial is at his death. It is then, based on his acceptance or rejection of God's grace through Christ, that the verdict is final and man enters into the presence of God or the absence of God. Those who know Christ will be raised in the **"...first resurrection..."** of the Rapture (Luke 14:14 / 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) and those who died in rejection will be raised during the **"...second resurrection..."** at the end of the Millennial Kingdom. (Revelation

20:5). The climactic end at Armageddon will be a quick trial and execution. The Great White Throne Judgment will then be their final and eternal sentencing.

The judgment actions of Christ will be swift and complete. **"17. I will bring distress upon men, And they shall walk like blind men, Because they have sinned against the Lord; Their blood shall be poured out like dust, And their flesh like refuse."** (Zephaniah 1:17). And at that moment all unrepentant humanity will be gone. Every breath extinguished, every heartbeat silenced. But why? Very simply, because mankind will have rejected every offer of God's free gift of grace. It will be, **"...as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."** (Matthew 24:37b), a time when, **"...every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."** (Genesis 6:5b). A time like it was in the days of Lot when fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. (Luke 17:29 / Genesis 19:24). But mankind has always had a simple remedy to avoid this day. A remedy provided by God, in His word, on the cross and through the blood of the spotless Lamb. Long before Jesus will return to destroy mankind He came to save mankind. Their destruction is such a tragic ending because it could have been avoided if man would simply believe in the saving grace of Christ Jesus. But God knows most will not. Inevitably man will follow after his pagan beliefs, immoral attitude and earthly lusts even though he will be given every opportunity to follow Jesus. .

That is why it is so important for us to share the gospel and, **"23...pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh...."** (Jude 23b).

After the great battle, the Tribulation will be over. Jesus will then capture satan and bind him for one-thousand years (Revelation 20:1) and usher in His Millennial Kingdom when He will reign on earth (Revelation 20:4-6). After that, satan will be released, quickly destroyed and cast into hell with all who died lost through the centuries. This will be the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15).

A View of The Last Days An Eight Week Survey

Week 4

Who, What and When is the antichrist?

"2. I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest."
(Revelation 6:2)

"4. So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" 5. And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. 6. Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. 7 It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. 8. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Revelation 13:4-8)

Week 4 - Outline

- Introduction and Context
- "What is an antichrist?"
 - A human
 - A puppet of Satan
 - The leader of a worldwide government, economy and religion
 - The most vile and sinful human to ever live
- Why is there an antichrist?
 - God allows the antichrist to emerge to bring about the destruction of the world

- The antichrist will attempt to take the place of the Messiah
- Who is the antichrist?
 - The Bible doesn't say
 - Probably a well-known charismatic leader
 - The antichrist is not a past historical figure
- What will the antichrist do?
 - Set-up a one world government, economy and religion
 - Make a false treaty with Israel
 - Reestablish the temple and sacrificial system
 - Then destroy both and declare himself to be god
 - But he will fail

Week 4

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Week 4 - Narrative

The story of the antichrist is complicated and often misunderstood. So we're going to define who and what he is from several vantage points:

- What is an antichrist?
- Why is there an antichrist?
- Who is the antichrist?
- What will the antichrist do?

But why is a lengthy study of the antichrist so important? Simply because there is no other single topic related to the Last Days that creates more confusion and fear than the antichrist. And even though the antichrist himself will not emerge until after the Rapture, the ***“...spirit of the antichrist...”*** grows stronger every day, so as believers we need to be able to recognize his emerging influence. As the apostle John declares, ***“2. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, 3. and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.”*** (1 John 4:3).

The antichrist - Introduction and Context:

A thorough study of the antichrist would take considerable time. Not because it's theologically complex, but a full understanding would require deep study throughout the Bible. That's because the story of the antichrist is the story of sin. He will embody in a single human the culmination of satan's battle against God, spread throughout the Bible, that eventually manifests itself in a vile human who will attempt to bring the total depravity of sin upon the whole earth.

There are a wide range of opinions amongst Bible scholars about who the antichrist will be, when he will come on the scene and what he will do. The Bible gives us many clues but doesn't provide enough detail to clearly understand all we'd like to know. As a result, there are many opinions, and unfortunately many of them have no Biblical basis and instead seek to confuse or sensationalize the truth of God's word. So for the purpose of our study we're not going to fill-in-the-blanks with conjecture. Instead, we'll discuss exactly what the Bible says about who the antichrist will be and how he fits into the overall End Times chronology.

That said, let's briefly review two common views held by a number of conservative evangelical scholars today. Both are certainly possible, but illustrate how different - yet connected - these opinions can be. But keep in mind, the Bible doesn't directly affirm either view and doesn't tell us who the antichrist will be or where he will come from.

The Madhi:

Some believe the antichrist will be a future Muslim leader known as the "mahdi", the 12th Imam or "the guided one". Proponents of this view believe he will create a powerful Islamic Caliphate (reign) with which to rule the world. According to the Islamic Sunnah (an Islamic text that when combined with the Hadith and Qur'an make up the major source of Muslim traditional guidance), he will appear in the End Times on a white horse to make war on anyone who opposes his rule. Muslims believe he will be accompanied by a second person of power; a spiritual leader named "Isa". Isa, whose Arabic name can be translated as "Jesus", is referenced in the Qur'an more than any other person and is highly revered by the Muslim world. Islamic literature teaches that the mahdi and Isa will make a treaty with Israel for seven years, but at the mid-point of the treaty they will turn on Israel and seek to destroy them and all non-Muslims. In many ways the story of the mahdi is very similar to the chronology found in Revelation, but the characters are fundamentally different. For example, you will sometimes read or hear people comment about "Jesus" in the Qur'an, with the implication that he may be the same Jesus we worship (the Hebrew Messiah and the Son of God). This is

completely untrue. Muslims believe Isa stands at the right hand of allah, who is not the Christian God of the Bible. They also believe he is not the son of god, he is not divine, he did not die on the cross and he was not resurrected. Instead, they believe he is a human prophet who assists the mahdi in establishing his empire. In their view Isa's role will be to form an Islamic-based world-wide religion by convincing Christians their belief in Jesus as their Savior is wrong. The intended outcome is to establish a religion focused on the worship of the mahdi, who will, at the mid-point of the seven years, declare himself to be god. ---- So please be very careful what you read about Jesus in Islamic eschatology. He is the same in name only and is not connected to the Lord Jesus in any way. He is another way the enemy seeks to confuse us.

The Emerging Roman:

A second view is the antichrist will be a popular political, business or military leader who rises to power within a revived Roman Empire that emerges in Western Europe. This view contends the antichrist will form an alliance of nations from the ten or so ancient people-groups who originally inhabited the European countries controlled by the Roman Empire. Keep in mind, at its height, the Roman Empire occupied most of the known world from North Africa in the south, to Scandinavia in the north, to Great Britain in the west to Russia in the east. A large portion of their empire is what we know today as Europe. An area that continues to separate itself more and more from God. This is particularly relevant given the growth of anti-Semitism and the recent influx of Islam. The Bible teaches that the antichrist - known in Revelation as "***the beast***" - will seek to rule the world, establish a single economy, a one-world government and a single false religion focused on him as the supreme power (all guided by satan). He will be accompanied by a religious leader known as the "***false-prophet***", who will help the antichrist make a treaty with Israel for seven years. But in the middle of the seven years the antichrist will declare himself to be God and desecrate the temple in Jerusalem. This event is the "*Abomination that causes Desolation*" that occurs at the mid-point of the Tribulation. Supporting this option, many believe -- and it certainly seems plausible -- that the current European Union of 28 combined pre-Roman Empire territories, the World Bank, the Eurodollar, the influx of Islam into Europe, the falling-away of Christianity, and the rise of anti-Semitism could all point to a political and spiritual environment that lends itself to the rise of a single, powerful leader. Coupled with the re-establishment of Israel in 1948, the recognition by the United States of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and the obvious acceleration of multiple Islamic powers against Israel, it certainly seems that Europe is becoming a stage for the fulfillment of End Times Bible prophecy.

Although we're going to steer clear of conjecture, there is another potential option that could be a combination of both opinions listed above. In other words, a European-Mahdi. Most scholars lean towards the Roman-Empire-European option as a possible source of the antichrist. Particularly given the condition of Europe today and their insatiable hunger for a single government and financial system. But a possible connection could be the rise of Islam in Europe. Years of legal immigration away from the war-torn Middle East, plus the recent influx of Muslim refugees has resulted in an explosive growth of Islam in places it did not exist before. For example, Muslims make-up about 6% of the total population of Europe, with the highest being 8% in France. While those percentages may not seem like much, the total muslim population across the 28 key nations of Europe is over 46 million people. That's 46 million people who probably believe in the mahdi option. On top of that, Muslim women (on average) have more children than European women, which means the birthrate, plus the increasing immigration of Middle Eastern refugees could increase the Muslim population in Europe to almost 15% over the next few years. That brings with it the fact that Islam is the fastest growing religion in Europe - even outnumbering Roman Catholics in many areas. And on top of that, a large portion of the European Muslims are from the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, an offshoot of mainline Islam founded in the Punjab of Pakistan in the late 19th century. Interestingly, they are a messianic movement community who believe that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1905) was appointed by allah as the promised mahdi who will *"...appear towards the end-times and bring about, by powerful means, the final triumph of Islam."* (From, "Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law" by Walter de Gruyter). At the same time all of this is happening, the majority of "Christians" in Europe are non-practicing with only 22% attending church at least once a month. In some areas the percentage is much lower. For example, in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, and Sweden, the population of "practicing" Christians is 10% or less. Additionally, about 12% of the population of Europe are atheist. In other words, the majority of "Christians" in Europe are in name only. Clearly, that coupled with the rise in European globalism certainly seems to foster fertile ground for the rise of an End Times leader.

Now, within that context let's dig deeper into what the Bible says about the antichrist. To do this we'll focus our attention on four areas:

- What is an antichrist?
- Why is there an antichrist?
- Who is the antichrist?
- What will the antichrist do?

What is an antichrist?

We don't know his name, but we do know he will be real. Despite what some commentators may say, the antichrist (in his End Times role) has not yet appeared. He's not a Roman Caesar, he's not a past military leader, he's not an abstract concept and he's not symbolic. The antichrist will be a man. A real human. Who will be supernaturally empowered by satan to make one last-ditch effort to destroy God's redemptive work through Christ and assume control of creation. In this role he will be the ultimate culmination of all human sin and disobedience against God across all time.

The general term antichrist basically defines anyone who is in opposition to God; specifically His grace-giving forgiveness of sin through the work of Christ on the cross. Basically, the term means "*instead of Christ*", as in a replacement or alternative. Given that, we can easily see how the spirit of the antichrist has been in place since the fall of man when 100% of mankind became the enemy of God through a single sin of satan-influenced disobedience to God's command (Genesis 3:6-7). From that point until now satan and God have been in constant conflict, specifically as it applies to the role of Jesus as the atoning sacrifice for sinful man (Genesis 3:15). John tells us - "**...18. Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.**" (1 John 2:18). He further clarifies what - "...many antichrists..." means by telling us, "**22. Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.**" (1 John 2:22). John is not talking about the final and singularly evil antichrist who will emerge during the Tribulation, but is pointing out the fact that anyone who does not believe in Jesus as the atoning sacrifice of grace is in "...the spirit of the antichrist...". That's because, "**2. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, 3. and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.**" (1 John 4:2-3). This is not a description of the single individual who will someday rise to the heights of evil power, but describes those who are in a sinful anti-Christ spirit, "**7. For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.**" (2 John 7). These are the false teachers, false-prophets and heretics Jesus warns us about, "**5. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.**" (Matthew 24:5). These are also the people Peter warns us about, "**1. But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring**

on themselves swift destruction." (2 Peter 2:1). These are the same type of heretics Paul spoke of to the church at Ephesus, the church who lost its first love for Jesus (see Revelation 2:4), **"29. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock."** (Acts 20:29).

These are just a few of many verses that warn us about false teachers and their heretical views. These are the people -- around us every day -- who are even now in the spirit of the antichrist. We find them in pulpits, on social media, in Christian bookstores, in heretical denominational teaching, and nearly any other place satan can infiltrate with his lies. We need to remember, our enemy does not need to destroy the gospel in order to destroy its effectiveness. He simply needs to lure people away with half-truths that keep them from accepting the full truth. As Paul warns us, **"13. For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. 14. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. 15. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works."** (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). These are the people who embody what the eventual antichrist will be.

So to help us understand the context in which the antichrist will emerge, let's take a quick deep dive into Revelation Chapter 6, verses 1-2. This describes the initial rise of the antichrist, which is explained in much more detail beginning in Revelation Chapter 13.

"1. Now I saw when the Lamb [Jesus] opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see." 2. And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer."

6:1a. - ***"I saw..."***

- At this point in Revelation the apostle John has a view into heaven. There he sees Jesus revealed as the Lamb of God, who is worthy to open the scroll of judgment. When this happens the heavenly host will know the time of judgment has come. This is what John hears and sees, ***"...11. Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, 12.. saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!" 13. And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that***

are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"

(Revelation 5:12-13) -- This amazing view sets the stage John will now witness as the future judgment unfolds.

6:1b. - "...when the Lamb opened one of the seals..."

- The Lamb of God, Jesus, the Son, is the only one worthy who can open the scroll - which is the deed to creation - and in doing so He reveals God's final plan for the destruction of sin (Revelation 5:6-10). In Revelation, the scroll mentioned here has seven "...seals...", which are devices used to clasp a rolled document, or scroll, until opened by its rightful owner. As the "...seals..." are broken they release a series of judgments that come in more rapid succession near the end and bring increasingly more catastrophic destruction. When Jesus opens the final seventh seal it will release seven "...Trumpet..." judgments, and when the seventh Trumpet blast comes it will release seven "...Bowl..." judgments -- for a total of twenty-one judgment actions.
- The seven "...seals..." reveal the "environment" in which judgment will take place. Through them we see false-peace, war, famine, pestilence, death, martyrdom and destruction. These "...seals..." take us through a portion of the Tribulation to the full emergence of the antichrist which we see later in Chapter 13. The seventh "...seal..." opens the seven "...trumpets..." as they blast even greater and more rapid judgments. Then the seventh "...trumpet..." opens the seven "...bowls..." as God pours His final judgments upon creation. All of this is happening while the antichrist works feverishly to take over the world for satan.

6:1.c - "...and I heard ..."

- Revelation 1:3 promises a blessing to those who read it, hear it and "...keep those things which are written in it...". So John tells us in the first part of this verse what he "...saw..." (sort of like "read", which requires seeing), and now John tells us what he sees. John is blessed by the prophetic vision he is given by Jesus, and now we receive a blessing when he shares with us what he sees and hears. This is an indication that Jesus gives John more than a simple vision. Seeing and hearing may indicate God took John into the future so he could, "**19. Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.**" (1:19). This is debatable, but several times John mentions the physical actions of seeing and hearing, which indicates more than just a future vision.

6:1.d. - "...one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, “Come and see.” ...

- We are first introduced to the "...**four living creatures**..." in Revelation 4:6. These are angelic beings who function close to the throne of God. They are mentioned several times in Revelation either participating in worship or taking part in administering judgments. For example, in Revelation 15:7 they present the seven angels with seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God. (Refer also to Revelation 4:8-11 / 5:8-14 / 6:1-5 / 7:11 / 19:4 / Isaiah 6:1-3 / Ezekiel chapters 1 and 10). Obviously, they play a key role in the judgment events.
- And they have a voice, "...**like thunder**...". In Revelation Chapter 4 John saw and heard a profound scene in heaven. This included flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. (Revelation 4:5). This may indicate the mood of God, which in this case would be associated with the final wrath of judgment. Interestingly, we will see these same words used when the seventh angel pours the final bowl of judgment on creation and says "...**It is done!**...". There again we see "...**noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake.**" (Revelation 16:17-18). This is the mood of heaven at the end of wrath when all twenty-one seals, trumpets and bowls have been administered. But here in chapter 6 we see the beginning of wrath - the first of the twenty-one - when one of the "...**four living creatures**..." represents the judgment mood of heaven.
- And then the creatures say, "...**Come and see**...". This is profound. The angelic beings who serve God's throne, reveal the first judgment action when they announce "...**Come and see**...". But see who? The antichrist. The creature calls to John to come and see the evil who will emerge from the Lamb's first seal. What's amazing is it is Jesus who opens the "...**seal**..." and releases the antichrist. This means the antichrist is part of God's plan to bring judgment on the world. Just as God allowed satan to tempt Eve, He will allow the antichrist to tempt mankind during the Tribulation. But He does this because He also knows He will give Tribulation man a choice. To follow the antichrist or to accept the redemption offered through His grace.

6:2. - "...2. And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer."

- Over the centuries, the interpretation of this verse has been debated. Some believe the white horse represents the coming of Christ. But that's not what scripture says. Jesus will not arrive until His Second Coming which is in Chapter 19 verse 11. Here in Chapter 6 the white horse represents the emergence of the

antichrist. He doesn't initially come representing war and sin, but is seen as a peacemaker - but a false peacemaker. The word horse is used five times in the book of Revelation. The first four illustrate the evil powers of the first four Seals and the fifth represents the righteous power of Jesus as He returns to earth for the final battle to defeat sin and satan. We probably shouldn't view them as actual horses, although they may be, but more likely, in the case of the first four they represent the powers and forces that come quickly on the scene, galloping so to say, as they swiftly bring their evil to create a sin-ridden environment. The colored horses and their riders (with various roles) are the powers and forces that set the stage for the antichrist to assume power. These are the forces, released by Christ, that enable the antichrist to do the things he is prophesied to do. From this we can understand they are a force to be reckoned with.

- But pay close attention to how the “*...rider...*” is described. He has, “**2....a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.**”. This is the antichrist, but at first he doesn't emerge as a warrior. Instead we see him as a diplomat. He has a “*...bow...*”, which is a weapon, but he has no arrows. He will initially work through a gaggle of false-prophets and leaders who will attempt to deceive the world that he is the messiah they need. But this person, who seeks to take the place of the true Messiah, will instead be the antichrist.
- So let's think about this for a minute. Ephesians 6:10-18 tells us to put on the full armor of God. But in doing so it reminds us, “**12. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.**” (Ephesians 6:12). This describes spiritual warfare at its worst, and this is what we see being revealed here in chapter 6. But we must remember, that nothing, not even the most vile sin of the End Times will take God by surprise. In fact, God will allow these events to occur as satan attempts one last time to bring the whole world under his control. We know this because long before it ever happens Jesus is already showing John the events He knows will take place. And...since nothing happens without God's sovereign authority, these events are part of His plan.
- The bow but no arrows is the deceptive false-peace Daniel speaks of in his prophetic vision of the antichrist - “**27. Then he [the antichrist] shall confirm a covenant [treaty] with many for one week [seven years]; But in the middle of the week [half way through the Tribulation] He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes**

desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate.” (Daniel 9:27). This is undoubtedly a covenant of peace, but who is the “...many...”? Probably Israel, who will be given a treaty of false peace which will influence them to believe the antichrist is the messiah. But how do we know he will make peace with Israel? Because they will have been allowed to rebuild the third temple, on the temple mount, which is currently partly held by Muslims, and will have re-instituted the Old Testament sacrificial system of, “...sacrifice and offering...”. In 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 Paul confirms this when he tells us, “...3. **Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 4. who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.**” Part way through the Tribulation the antichrist will go into the new temple in Jerusalem and declare himself to be God. This is the “...abomination...” Jesus spoke about in Matthew 24:15, “**15. Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place**” (whoever reads, let him understand). (Referring back to Daniel 9:27). In order for the antichrist to do this in the temple the temple must be rebuilt, and in order to rebuild the temple there must be peace and protection for Israel -- potentially even overcoming the Muslim world.

- But the peace that comes with the emergence of the antichrist will be a false-peace. Jesus has already told us there will be many who come in His name, who are false-teachers with a false doctrine. But the antichrist will be different because He will claim - “**I am the Christ...**” (Matthew 24:5), which will convince the disobedient Jews he is truly their king -- or at a minimum a protecting leader. The imagery of the bow with no arrows also points to the false-peace and the false covenant he will make with Israel for a seven year period (Daniel 9:27). But it will be a false-peace, a deceptive peace, a peace brought on by power (the bow) but initially without bloodshed (no arrows). It will also be a limited peace that ends - “**27....in the middle of the week** [half way through the Tribulation] **He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.**” It is at that point he will go into the temple and commit the “...abomination of desolation...” (Matthew 24:15b). This will be the time when the antichrist shows his true evil and turns on Israel to destroy God's people, “**14. So when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not**” (let the reader understand), “**then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.**” (Mark 13:14). This will be a time when the antichrist brings nations against Israel, “**20. But when you see Jerusalem**

surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. 21. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her." (Luke 21:20-21). The time of great deception will be over, the antichrist's true mission will be fully revealed and the final judgments of God will be unleashed.

- One final thought on the bow as it relates to this context. The bow also indicates deception because the bow is a weapon of distance warfare. It's not designed for close combat, where you come face-to-face with your opponent. Instead it's designed to attack your enemy from a distance; silently and stealthily. An attack you may not see coming, have no idea where it came from or who sent it in flight. This type of attack is almost impossible to avoid. It is an attack of deception. Just like the deceptive peace of the antichrist.
- And yet, despite his evil intent the antichrist is given a "...**crown**...". This doesn't seem to indicate he will initially assume leadership by force, but instead by the approval of the people. Sort of a victor's crown given to the winner of a contest. Here that contest is the following of mankind to his deceptive but false plan. Remember again what Jesus warned us about this in the Olivet Discourse, "**4. And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. 5. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.**" and "**24. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. 25. See, I have told you beforehand.**" (Matthew 24:5 and 24). Paul takes it one step further and clarifies that the false messiah Jesus is talking about is the antichrist, "**9. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, 10. and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.**" (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10). But how will he deceive the whole world to this degree? Because God will allow this deception to be used as a method of judgment. Paul further explains this, "**11.. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, 12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.**" (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12). Wow! God gave them a delusion not to believe? But why? Because this is the time of destruction when God will allow satan to roam like a lion one last time, but more powerfully than he has ever done before (1 Peter 5:8-11). This is a time similar to the wickedness Paul spoke of in Romans when God "**28....gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting.**" (Romans 1:28). It is also a time similar to the judgment of Israel when their leader Ahab allowed the

worship of baal, “**21. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, ‘I will persuade him.’** 22. **The LORD said to him, ‘In what way?’** So he said, ‘**I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’** And the LORD said, ‘**You shall persuade him, and also prevail. Go out and do so.’** 23. **Therefore look! The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you.**” (1 Kings 22:20-23).

- Finally we see the antichrist moving forward with his plan of deception, “**...and he went out conquering and to conquer.**” This shows his true intentions as he moves forward and takes control. For the rest of Revelation he is seen as a leader, riding ahead of his evil army, his corrupt political system and his false religion. In this case he is intently focused on the total conquest of man. At this point in Revelation Jesus has broken the first “**...seal...**” and in doing so releases forces that will bring judgment on man but will also support the rise of the antichrist. But the antichrist, like his father satan, is patient and deceiving. He allows the environment to enable a false-peace he will use to put Israel in a state of false confidence. He will then turn on them in another of satan's many efforts to destroy Israel.

"Why is there an antichrist?"

We don't know as much as we'd like to know about the antichrist. From scripture we can get a general understanding of why he will emerge, when he will be revealed, and some of the key things he will do. But we don't know specifically who he will be or where he'll come from. But one thing is for sure. The antichrist will be used to test the obedience or disobedience of mankind.

Earlier in this lesson we discussed a couple of commonly held views about where the antichrist might come from, but let's be careful with these opinions because the Bible doesn't give us those details. We also cited several warnings given to us by Jesus, Paul, Peter and John, alerting us to the fact the "*...spirit of the antichrist...*" already exists in everyone who does not believe in Jesus as the risen Savior. That gave us at least a high-level view of "What is an antichrist?" Now we're going to study why there will be one.

From the day in the garden when satan initially influenced all of mankind to sin, he has sought to turn man away from God. More specifically, he has sought to destroy God's redemptive work through Jesus by disrupting God's plan to provide grace and forgiveness to those who are lost. Over the centuries he has attempted to do this by tempting man to sin, and in some cases, possessing men, nations and empires with deep-seated evil and false religion. And in each case, his prime focus was to destroy Israel, the chosen nation of God. Just look at the news today and you'll see the same thing happening in the global rise of antisemitism.

But at some point in the future satan will embody himself in a single demonically-influenced human-being through whom he will seek to rule the world. This will be the antichrist. But until that time how has satan sought to accomplish this task?

Let's think about that:

- It all starts with satan, the progenitor of sin, who sought to be above God so he could become the supreme ruler over all creation. For his disobedience satan was cast out heaven:
 - **"12. How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! 13. For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; 14.**

I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.' 15. Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit. (Isaiah 14:12-15).

- Jesus, who was of course a witness to this event, spoke of it to the seventy-two disciples when they returned from a short-term mission trip, "**18....I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven..."** (Luke 10:18); an event also mentioned by Peter - "**4. For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment..."** (2 Peter 2:4). We see a similar but future event in Revelation chapter 12, when satan is finally exiled from heaven during the Tribulation, - "**7. And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, 8. but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. 9. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the devil and satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.**" (Revelation 12:7-9). The first time God cast satan and his followers out of heaven He still allowed him to influence the actions of man by constantly, "**7...going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.**" (Job 1:7b). This passage also gives us an indication that the exiled satan still has access to heaven because Job tells us, "**6. Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and satan also came among them.**" (Job 1:6b) Yet, by the time we get to Revelation 12:8 we see the final removal of satan's access when, "**8. but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.**" Isn't that interesting. Until his future casting from heaven satan still has a "**...place...**" in heaven because he must still report his activities to God. In other words, satan does nothing outside the boundaries set by God. That fact should reassure us. But satan is still a powerful presence on earth. A fact testified by Peter who describes satan as, "**8...your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.**" (1 Peter 5:8b). By allowing satan to influence mankind God created a situation whereby man, in his sinful nature, has to come away from sin, to obtain God's grace through accepting the divine work of Jesus who crucified our sin on the cross, and defeated our sin through His resurrection (see Romans 6:6). But until his final destruction (Revelation 20:10) satan seeks to bring sin upon the world in order to distract man from his need for salvation, and in doing so, attempts to overcome God's

influence and take His place. Throughout time he has done this through temptation, false religion, false prophets and sinful empires as he seeks to lead man away from God and destroy Israel. But during the Tribulation he will bring a person on the scene, whom he can control, and through whom he will attempt one final time to destroy God's influence on man.

- Have you ever thought about the profound message within this verse? "**6. So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate..**" (Genesis 3:6). Here we see satan tempting Eve to sin, and through her he tempted Adam. Once both had eaten of the fruit, and thereby disobeyed God's one commandment, 100% of mankind became the enemy of God. Because of satan they were now in sin and could only return to God through the redemptive power of a spotless blood sacrifice (Genesis 3:21). But for tempting man to sin satan was eternally punished. God cursed him and promised to, "**15...And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.**" (Genesis 3:15). --- Of course. "...**her Seed...**" speaks of Jesus, and "...**your seed...**" speaks of the product of satan, which is sin, and which will one day be manifest in the person of the antichrist. With this curse satan knows who his true enemy is. It is Jesus, who satan knows, and who he knows will come to earth. First to defeat sin on the cross and second to defeat satan forever (Luke 23:46 / Revelation 20:10 / Luke 24:26). The statement "...**you shall bruise His heel...**" speaks to a wound. A temporary wound inflicted on Jesus on the cross. But the term "...**He shall bruise your head...**" speaks to a mortal wound. This will be the total destruction of satan we will see near the end of Revelation. So, with this "...**enmity...**", satan's target becomes Jesus, His followers and His gospel. And by extension, satan will work to destroy God's chosen nation -- Israel -- the earthly people from which the Messiah will come.

But how has satan sought to do this?

- satan's influence on man is powerful and profound. Sin initially emerged through Adam in Genesis Chapter 3 but by Chapter 6 mankind had already become so wicked and immoral that, "...**5, Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. 7. So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and**

beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.” 8. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord..” (Genesis 6:5-7). satan had almost succeeded. He had tempted every person on earth to sin except one family. The family of Noah who would be God's remnant. Had God destroyed all of mankind He would have destroyed the line of Eve and the earthly lineage of Christ (Genesis 3:15). But God spared His remnant, Noah, a descendant of Eve, and a man who “...walked with God....” (Genesis 6:9b). Through him and his family God would extend the human race, and in doing so, extended the earthly line of the Messiah's birth (Genesis 9:1 / Luke 3:23-38). But satan was strong and through his relentless influence man quickly fell back into sin. So sinful in fact that nations came together in the region of Babel to build a tower to heaven and “...make a name for ourselves...” (Genesis 11:4b). In doing so they sought to put themselves above God - just as lucifer had done - so God, “**8...scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth,**” (Genesis 11:8b). Once again, satan had almost succeeded in turning man away from God, but God always prevails, because God already knows satan's plans.

- But God chose a man, who in the spirit of Noah's obedience would establish a people who would represent God to the world (Genesis 12:1-3). He was Abram from Ur, in modern day Iraq, who following God's command went to Canaan where God would eventually establish His people and His Holy City Jerusalem in the Promised Land. In time, Abram (Abraham) begot Isaac, who begot Jacob, who was renamed Israel and who became father of the twelve tribes. One of those tribes, Judah, became the next step in the Messiah's earthly lineage. But none of these followers of God were immune to satan's influence, so sin wreaked havoc across every generation of their family in an attempt to destroy them.
- We see this in the story of Jacob's (Israel's) family, who avoided a drought by immigrating to Egypt and began an exile that lasted more than 400 years. Initially they were favored in Egypt through Jacob's son Joseph, but after Joseph died the people of Jacob became slaves, and were now at risk of total destruction. The new Pharaoh, who did not love the people of Joseph and Jacob, oppressed the people and eventually ordered all Hebrew baby boys to be killed (Exodus 1:8-22). The Pharaoh believed by killing the boys he could reduce the growing population of Hebrews, but satan's goal was much more specific. By influencing Pharaoh to kill-off the Hebrew boys, satan sought to destroy the lineage of the future Messiah. But God always has a plan and prevented the boys from being killed. One of those babies would grow up to be Moses (Exodus 1:18-2:10). The man God used to rescue the remnant of Jacob and thereby retain the lineage of Christ by sparing those who would become the people of

Israel. But satan never gives up and Pharaoh pursued the escaping Hebrews with the intent to kill them all (Exodus 14:8). But God made a way and opened the sea, giving them passage to safety, and then closed the sea to kill their pursuers (Exodus 14:26-30). Once again, God saved the Hebrew people, the remnant and forebearers of the coming Messiah.

- But the foolish Hebrew people were disobedient, so they began to worship idols and wanted to return to their lives in Egypt. So God punished them in the wilderness for forty years. During that time all of the original people died with the exception of two - Joshua and Caleb and the children of the exiles who would go into God's promised land. But along the way the remnant of Israel constantly went through satan-influenced cycles of obedience and disobedience. For generations they worshiped idols, sacrificed their children to false gods, lost the law of God for years, were pursued by evil armies, led by poor judges, ruled by sinful kings, split into two nations and eventually captured by the Assyrians and the Babylonians to be taken from the land. Generation after generation of Israel went through cycles of obedience and disobedience, blessings and punishment and each time they did they fell away from God and put their nation at risk.
- But God selected a young shepherd boy, David, who would become the king of Israel (2 Samuel 5) and establish a throne in his name that would last forever (2 Samuel 7:13 / Isaiah 9:7). The throne that will be reestablished by Christ for His millennial rule. Most importantly, the royal lineage of David would become a cornerstone in the earthly genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:6). But satan would not give up and sought to destroy David – first through a giant Philistine, then he was pursued by Israel's evil king Saul and attacked by multiple armies. But much more destructive than the physical conflict was the temptation that drove David to the sin of lust, adultery and murder. For this Israel lost a great warrior, David lost his infant son, one of his other sons raped his half-sister, another son killed the sinful son, David fell into poor leadership and for a time his kingdom failed. --- All of this put risk on both David and Israel, and in doing so, once again put risk on the earthly lineage of the Messiah.
- At one point the earthly lineage of Jesus came down to one man - Joash. At the time Israel was going through great turmoil with evil kings who led the people in evil ways, Athaliah, the evil mother of king Ahaziah sought revenge of her son's death by trying to destroy the family of the house of Judah. This would have included Joash who was the last remaining male heir to David's royal Messianic line. But God interceded and Jehosheba took Joash and hid him for six years where he was protected by the Levites. This was done so, **“3. Behold, the**

king's son shall reign, as the Lord has said of the sons of David." (2 Chronicles 23:3). Afterwards Joash became king and ruled for 40 years. Here again the enemy sought to destroy the Messianic line of Jesus but God sustained a remnant, through one man, who would continue the earthly lineage of Christ. (2 Chronicles chapters 22-23).

- The Book of Esther chronicles the story of Israel under the rule of king Xerxes. When Haman was made a member of the royal party, the king ordered his cabinet to bow before Haman, but Mordecai the Jew, the secret uncle of queen Esther, refused to bow to anyone but God. For his insolence Haman "**6...sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus—the people of Mordecai...**" (Esther 3:6b). Convincing the king of Mardecai's betrayal Xerxes sent dispatches "**13...to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day,...**" (Esther 3:13b). Once again the future of God's people, the birth nation of the coming Messiah, hung by a thread. If they were destroyed the Messianic lineage would be destroyed as well. But God intervened and by a turn of events Esther reversed the edict and the Jews - the remnant - were once again spared.

During her long and torturous history Israel has been at war with many empires. But there are six empires satan used to persecute Israel, and these were the six most powerful. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Most conservative scholars believe these are the kingdoms described in Revelation chapter 17, where the antichrist is seen as, "**...scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.**" (Revelation 17:3). The heads and horns are then described as "**...seven kings...**" (Revelation 17:10), indicating seven empires. This passage can be confusing so let's dig a little deeper to understand how satan has worked tirelessly over the centuries to destroy Israel. This will also provide further historical context for the future antichrist.

Let's look at Revelation 17:9-11, "**...9. "Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. 10. There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. 11. The beast [the antichrist] that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.**" Here in very complex imagery John describes the seven heads of the beast [the antichrist] as "**...seven mountains...**". This has led some to believe John meant the seven hills of Rome, but that explanation seems too simple because he tells us that an understanding of this passage "**...is the mind which has wisdom.**" (Revelation

17:9). In other words, the meaning of this passage is not as straight-forward as it might appear so we need to apply spiritual wisdom in order to understand it. Or said another way, simply interpreting these “...**seven mountains...**” as the seven hills of Rome is just too easy of an answer because it wouldn't require spiritual wisdom to figure that out. As we see in Revelation 17:10, the “...**seven mountains...**” are also called “...**seven kings...**”, which most scholars believe represent the leaders of the six ancient empires who over the centuries have sought to destroy Israel plus a future seventh empire that has not yet emerged. The first six were certainly not the only kingdoms who warred with Israel over time, but they were the most powerful of the ancient empires who sought to control the world of their day.

Of these John says:

- “...**Five have fallen...**” --- These would have been the five warring nations that were already destroyed prior to John's time --- Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece.
- “...**one is...**” --- Here John is speaking in the present tense because when he wrote Revelation the Roman Empire was still in power.
- The five who had already “...**fallen...**” plus the one who “...**is...**” equals six.
- That leaves one future seventh empire.
- “...**and is of the seven...**” but “...**has not yet come...**”, This indicates a future kingdom which most conservative scholars believe will be the empire of the antichrist. A future empire that will exist during the Tribulation period and will be destroyed by Christ at His Second Coming. (Revelation chapters 18 and 19)
- And then there is an eighth kingdom, “...**is himself also the eighth...**” is also the antichrist. In Revelation 13:3-4 we are told, “...3. *And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast.* 4. *So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?”* Most scholars believe the antichrist will appear to be killed and then “resurrected” when he is, “...**mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed...**”. This would make him appear to the world as the resurrected messiah. And that will be why, “...**the world marveled and followed the beast...**”. But also, this would make the antichrist who, “...**is of the seven...**” will, “...**himself also the eighth...**”.
- These six ancient nation-states sought to control most of the known world of their day. They swept through regions, destroyed their cities, killed or enslaved their people and brought harsh rule on all they conquered. But the fifth empire,

Greece, was different. In 338 BC the 20 year old son of Phillip of Macedonia, Alexander the Great, conquered most of the Middle East, including Israel and Judea. But unlike prior conquering nations Alexander took a different tact for subjugation. Rather than killing their captives and destroying their cities Alexander instead sought to psychologically conquer the people by luring them to adopt the Greek way of life. By the time he died at 32 years old Alexander had set the stage for the Hellenistic Age which sought to "*Make all Things Greece*". As a result, conquered nations often adopted the Greek model of government, studied Greek philosophy, worshiped mythological Greek gods, and in many cases changed their traditional local language to Greek. To the point that when the first non-Hebrew translation of the Old Testament was printed, called the "*Septuagint*", it was written in the Greek language because so many Jews spoke Greek. Although Alexander's approach was to assimilate rather than destroy, it was ironically the bloodthirsty Syrian-Greek commander, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who attacked Jerusalem in 168 BC, desecrated its temple, abominated the altar and set the prophetic stage for the antichrist to do the same thing during the Tribulation. (Daniel 9:27 / 11:21 / 11:31 / 2 Thessalonians 2:4 / Matthew 24:15).

- The Greeks ruled the Middle East from 333 to 166 BC when they were eventually conquered by the expanding Roman Empire. By this point Rome was quickly becoming the most powerful empire on earth and arguably the most powerful of all the ancient cultures. Over time they conquered and occupied the territories previously controlled by the Greeks and expanded their rule into North Africa all the way to what is now Northern Europe and through the Middle East -- an area of almost two million square miles. Although Roman rule would prevail, Greek culture continued to influence Roman society. Art, architecture, and religion were heavily influenced by Greek culture and philosophy, and by the time Paul made his missionary journeys through the empire most of the people he met were Greek speakers. That's why the early New Testament scrolls and letters were written in the Greek language.
- Looking to the future, the Lord will allow satan one final attempt. Through the antichrist he will establish a seventh kingdom, more vile and sinful than all the rest. The ruler of this kingdom, the antichrist, will then fake his own death and appear as a resurrected messiah. This will result in the eighth and final empire. An empire that will be utterly destroyed by the power of God.

Do you see the pattern? Beginning in the garden and continuing without pause ever since then satan has attempted to destroy Israel and her people. But why? Because

Israel is the nation through whom God chose to bring the Messiah, and they are the nation through which He will establish His future Millennial Kingdom and a “New Jerusalem” in eternity. Therefore, satan’s logic is that by destroying Israel he can destroy the Messiah. But as we see over and over through the Bible satan fails every time, and he will continue to fail even when the whole world worships his puppet the antichrist (Revelation 13:8). But he never stops trying, which we see still happening in our society today.

In addition to using empires and sin to destroy Israel, and, satan has also attempted to attack Jesus Himself.

Here are a few examples of how:

- After Jesus was born Magi from the east traveled to Judah following a star that guided their way. There they found the young Jesus and worshiped Him. The evil king Herod the Great, an Idumean and Roman appointed ruler, heard that another king was sought by these travelers. Herod - apparently under the influence of satan - ordered the murder of all Jewish boys two years and younger. If he was successful this would have killed the future Messiah as well. But God had other plans and sent an angel to warn Joseph and Mary who took the boy Jesus into Egypt and away from the dangers of Herod. (Luke chapter 2)
- After Jesus had grown of age He was taken by the Spirit into the desert where He was tempted by satan for forty days. In that time Jesus must have gone through a terrible ordeal because at the end He was attended to by angels. But Jesus - all man but still all God, needed no protection. He defeated satan by His word. Every temptation thrown his way, which if put into action would have destroyed His earthly mission, was thwarted by the use of His words. Words we have today to use when we are tempted (Matthew chapter 4).
- At one point during His ministry Jesus returned to His parents’ home in Nazareth. There the gathering in the synagogue became furious when He claimed to fulfill scripture. They tried to kill Him by throwing Him from a cliff, ***“30. Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way.”*** (Luke 4:30).
- When Jesus told His disciples He would be put to death Peter was incensed and said ***“21. Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!”*** (Matthew 16:22b). Peter didn’t realize it, but he was basically saying, ***“You can’t die for the sins of the world”***. At this declaration Jesus turned to Peter with an extraordinary response ***“...Get behind me, satan!...”***. Why would Jesus say that? Why

wouldn't He just explain to Peter what needed to happen? Because Jesus knew it was not Peter from whom those words originated. It was the enemy, again tempting Jesus to forfeit His Messianic role (Matthew 16:21-23).

- In a similar way satan used Judas in an attempt to stop Jesus when he agreed to betray Him for thirty pieces of silver. Judas was satan's tool who would turn on Jesus (Matthew 26:20-25). But how could this happen? Because "**...satan entered Judas...**" and influenced him to turn away from the Lord (Luke 22:3a).
- Peter also denied Christ three times on the night before His crucifixion. Why? Because, "**31...Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. ...**" (Luke 22:31b).
- But satan continued to influence the leaders and people of Israel. To the point they arrested their Messiah, demanded His death, beat Him, scourged Him, and hung Him on a cross. At that point satan probably jumped for joy. Finally! After thousands of years of war, famine, sin and temptation the Lamb of God was finally dead. satan could now step in and rule God's creation. --- But...in three short days he would learn just how much he had underestimated the divine power of our Lord.

Throughout history the chosen people of God have come under attack from satan. The Egyptians, Canaanites, Perizzites, Philistines, Midianites, Amalekites, and a dozen other ancient cultures sought to destroy them. Then came the Greeks, Romans, Medo-Persians, and Ottomans. And in more recent times Adolph Hitler, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Syria, Yemen, the Hamas, Boko Horum, Hezbollah, corrupt governments, university campuses and every other source of antisemitism. And now we have the "*Replacement Theory*" movement. A modern, misguided theology promoted by a clear misunderstanding of God's word. It is their belief that God has replaced Israel with the Church as His chosen people. But in believing this they fail to understand the future which is clearly defined in scripture, "**23. Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'**" (Zechariah 8:23) This is a view of the future Millennial Kingdom, when Jesus will reign from Jerusalem and will be worshiped by Jews who will survive everything satan can throw in their way.

So why is it important to understand all of these examples? Because they are dark forces that had two things in common:

- They were all influenced by satan,

- And they were all focused on destroying the people of God, who in-turn would destroy the Son of God, and thereby destroy the blood-atoning sin-forgiving grace of God.

In other words, satan's entire focus is to have dominion over God and His creation through the destruction of Jesus. He has done this over and over through time, but every time he does he fails. But there will be a time when he will attempt one last horrendous attack of sin and destruction. And he will do so through the antichrist, but he will fail again.

Who is the antichrist?

The Bible doesn't tell us his name, but we know he's real and despite what some commentators may say, the antichrist has not yet appeared.

To be clear...he was not Antiochus Epiphanes, the evil Seleucid king who in 168BC invaded Jerusalem, made the altar of the temple into a shrine of Zeus and sacrificed a pig on it. This was the original "...**abomination of desolation...**" spoken of by Daniel and Jesus - (Daniel 9:27 / Matthew 24:15b). It is also a precursor to actions the antichrist will take at the 3 1/2 year mid-point of the Tribulation (Daniel 7:25 & 9:27 & 11:31 / Mark 13:14 / Matthew 24:15).

- He was not Titus, the Roman general and son of emperor Vespasian, who destroyed Jerusalem and much of Israel in AD70.
- He was not any of the Roman emperors who sent legions of soldiers into Israel, occupied their territory for decades and executed or imprisoned millions of Jews.
- He was not Adolf Hitler, who masterminded the vicious death of over six million Jews in the 1940's, and in doing so, turned his entire nation against God's chosen people. Although Hitler is probably the best-known example of what the antichrist may be like, the antichrist himself will be a million times more evil.
- He is not a symbol or an abstract concept.
- He is real, and he has yet to be revealed.

But all of these people, and many more like them, operated in the "...**spirit of the antichrist...**" (1 John 4:2-3), but they are not the person of the antichrist who will be revealed during the Tribulation (Daniel 9:27 / Matthew 24:15). He will be a man - a human - who will be used by satan to bring sin upon the earth in order to destroy the redemptive work of Christ so that satan can assume control of creation (Isaiah 14:12-14). He will be the ultimate culmination of all human sin and disobedience against God. He will be vile, evil, ruthless and cunning with a mind of sin beyond our understanding. But he will also be a cunning diplomat, a popular and known charismatic leader, and yet, a deceiver like no other.

The antichrist is mentioned many places in the Bible, but often in ways we might not recognize.

Here are just a few:

- The "...**beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns...**" (Revelation 13:1 / 13:8 / 14:9 / 16:2)

- The "...**man of sin, the son of perdition...**", (2 Thessalonians 2:3)
- The "...**king of Babylon**" **The "...oppressor..."** (Isaiah 14:4)
- The "...**another horn, a little one...**" (Daniel 7:8 / 24)
- The "...**the prince who is to come...**" (Daniel 9:26)
- The "...**king shall do according to his own will...**" (Daniel 11:36)

But we must look beyond his names to better understand who the antichrist is. And for that we will turn to the apostle Paul and his teaching to the church at Thessalonica. Paul wrote at least two letters to the church at Thessalonica, probably around 50 AD. It was a city he had visited on his second missionary journey (Acts 17), that was the capital city of Macedonia and under Roman rule, but was a free-city and basically allowed to rule itself within certain limits. In Paul's day it had a population of over 200,000 people and was considered "*The Mother of all Macedonia*". But Thessalonica as a whole did not accept Christianity. While a small group did, Paul's ministry was not accepted by either Jews or Gentiles so he had to escape to Berea and then to Athens (Acts 17:10-15). This left a small group of believers who were probably heavily persecuted and easily influenced. Paul's letters to them are both instructional and encouraging (1 Thessalonians 2:17). Often called "*The Eschatological Epistles*" Paul spends time in each letter describing End Times events. In 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul describes the coming Rapture, the "catching-up" of believers to Jesus. Recall from our previous lessons, we studied the four most common views of Rapture timing (Pre-Trib., Mid-Trib., Pre-Wrath, Post-Trib.). We also discussed that Revelation chapter 5 points to a Pre-Tribulational Rapture through the Twenty-Four Elders who sang a "new song" of those redeemed by the Lamb's blood. This indicates that the Twenty-Four Elders are the raptured church who are in heaven just prior to the Tribulation. That's why the timing of the Rapture in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 is important to understand as a link to the rise of the antichrist described by Paul in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2.

Paul wrote his second letter to the Thessalonians partly because someone had confused some of the early converts about when the Rapture would occur. Remember, they did not have the whole Bible like we do today and so were "learning as they go" so to speak. Paul's letters were part of that learning but somehow the church had still been led astray by the teaching of someone else. In verse 2:1 Paul looks back at his prior teaching in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 and reminds them of, "...**our gathering together to Him** [Jesus]...", and comforts them, "...**2. not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. 3. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition.**" (2 Thessalonians 2:2-3). Paul doesn't provide any other details but obviously the church had been confused by other teaching or maybe even by a false

letter sent to them that had supposed to have come from Paul. Their confusion seems to be that the Rapture might have already occurred and they were now living in the Tribulation. Paul had already encouraged them with his teaching on the Rapture, and now he was clarifying the fact that the Tribulation will not occur until the antichrist is revealed. We also see this in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21, where Jesus provides a high-level summary of End Times events in what we know as the “*Olivet Discourse*”. There Jesus confirmed there will be wars, rumors of wars, persecution, natural disasters and false-prophets, but He explains that the full wrath of God will not be released on man until, “**15. “Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand), 16. “then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.**” (Matthew 24:15-16). This is the future revealing of the antichrist that has not come. Certainly apostasy and rebellion against God has always existed and exists in-spades today, but here Paul speaks to more than just the rebellion of man. Paul speaks of a single man, a lawless man, a man who will be doomed to destruction, “**4. who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.**” (2 Thessalonians 2:4). This singular act of proclaiming himself to be God will take place in a new temple in Jerusalem and is the event Jesus and Daniel spoke of as the “**...abomination of desolation...**” (Daniel 9:27 / Matthew 24:15). It is during this event when the antichrist will go into the temple in Jerusalem and proclaim himself to be God. Paul's point was, this has not happened yet, and the events leading up to this event have not happened either. That means they had not missed the Rapture and were not living in the Tribulation. Certainly there was great apostasy on earth, but the singularly wicked man who will be “anti” everything related to the true Christ had not yet come on the stage. Obviously, we have the benefit of history to better understand this, but over time, events in the world and the rise of powerfully evil leaders could certainly have led us to believe the revealing of the antichrist could happen at any time. Christians and Jews undoubtedly felt this way during the times of multiple occupations of Israel, during the slaughter of Jews by the Romans, the murder of six million Jews by Hitler, and even the rise of Islamic influenced antisemitism today. But as Paul indicates the end will not occur until God's restraining force is removed so that the beast of Revelation can be revealed (2 Thessalonians 2:6 / Rev 17:17).

How this will happen is revealed in 2 Thessalonians 2:7, “**7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. 8. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.**” But who is “**...He who now restrains...**” until “**...He is taken out of the way...**”? Some believe the restrainer is human government, or the preaching of the

gospel, or Israel, or the archangel Michael. But scripture indicates it is the Holy Spirit who indwells every believer, who will be removed from the earth at the Rapture. At that time, when the influence of Christianity is gone, the antichrist will be revealed in God's perfect timing at the beginning of the Tribulation. At that point satan's puppet will be in a place of unbelievable power.

In addition to focusing on who the antichrist is, it might also be beneficial to focus on who he is not. He's not a sinister figure like Darth Vader, wearing all black and with an evil voice. He's not a villain lurking in a dark corner ready to pounce on an unexpecting passer-by, and he's not some type of evil demon with a pitch-fork and horns. To the contrary, he will probably be a popular political leader; well known, charismatic, well-spoken and probably handsome. He'll be everyone's view of a powerful leader and peacemaker. He'll be so influential he'll be able to garner a truce between Israel and the world. He'll control politics as he seeks world power and at some point he'll control commerce, financing and banking. He will be fooled by all and loved by many. And then, at the mid-point of the Tribulation he will be revealed for the evil he is and he will wreak havoc on earth until he is defeated by Jesus and cast alive into hell (Revelation 19:20).

"What will the antichrist do?"

As we have discussed, the purpose of spending so much time on this one character is because no single topic related to the Last Days creates more confusion and fear than the antichrist.

In the broadest sense the antichrist will do whatever satan commands. During the Tribulation, satan will attempt to establish a parallel hierarchy to God, with himself in the Father's position, the antichrist replacing the Messianic Son and the false-prophet basically serving the role of the Holy Spirit. This conflict began in Genesis 3:15 when God put enmity between the seed of Eve (Jesus) and the seed of satan. His "...seed..." is sin that will eventually embody its evilness in the person of the antichrist. Once the church and its influence is removed at the Rapture satan will intensify his sinful influence like never before. To do so he will establish a man -- in a sin-driven messianic-type role -- to carry out his plans. In thinking about the antichrist's role we're reminded of Ephesians 6:11-12. There Paul tells us to, "...11. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.". Here Paul reminds us that our true battle in life is not against man, but is against "...principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places...". This describes the dangers of sin and our daily battles we fight against it. But even more, it describes the satanically-influenced leaders, governments and nations who will eventually culminate in the short but profoundly sinful reign of the antichrist. And that's exactly what we see emerging today as the, "...spirit of the antichrist..." that John warns us about, "...18. Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour." (1 John 2:18 / 4:3).

But who are they and how do we recognize them? The apostle Paul tells us, "13. For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. 14. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. 15. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works." (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). Today we see the "...spirit of the antichrist..." in our government, education systems, on college campuses, on social media, in "Christian" literature and even in the pulpit. It is the mindset of man being transformed on the glideslope of fallen morality as satan prepares them for the day when, "...8. All who

dwell on the earth will worship him..." (Revelation 13:8a). Today satan works in the hearts and minds of people, but at a point in the future he will work through a single demonized human who, just like so many before him, will seek to rule the world.

We get an early glimpse of the antichrist's actions in Revelation Chapter 6 when we see the first four judgment elements released on earth. These are sometimes called "*The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*", but three of the riders in these verses are not the antichrist himself. They represent the deceitful and destructive power that comes on the earth as Jesus begins His initial judgments and provides the environment for the antichrist to come on the scene. These horsemen parallel the warnings of Christ in Matthew 24:4-8 as they materialize through the first four seals:

1. The deception of peace - the rider on a white horse (the antichrist) (Matthew 24:4-5)
2. War - the rider on a red horse (Matthew 24:6-7)
3. Famine - the rider on the black horse (Matthew 24:7)
4. Death - the rider on the pale horse (Matthew 24:7)

Jesus describes these events as "**...8. All these are the beginning of sorrows....**" (Matthew 24:8a) when God's initial judgments come upon the earth. These create the environment in which the antichrist will begin to show his power. An environment planned for and executed by Jesus. These events and their sequence -- false peace, war, famine and death -- creates a situation where people will seek relief from their suffering. This will enable a false messiah, the antichrist, to come on the scene and offer his false promises to anyone who will follow him.

It is during this time of Tribulation when false peace erupts into war, followed by disease and then death as the antichrist rises as a global leader. The Bible is not entirely clear how this will happen but scripture indicates the antichrist will rise after the Rapture and will possibly emerge from a re-kindled Roman-like empire that emerges from a unified Europe. Whatever his origin, once established he will "**...27. Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; [the Tribulation] But in the middle of the week [3 ½ years] He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate.**" (Daniel 9:27). The Bible isn't clear who the "**...many...**" are but it is probably Israel and the nations fighting against her. We know this because Israel will be allowed to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem and re-establish the Old Testament sacrificial system, but then at the half-way point in the Tribulation the antichrist will, "**...bring an end to sacrifice and offering...**" when he turns on Israel to destroy them.

Once established as a supreme global leader, the antichrist will seek to rule the world. He will form a government, with worldwide and autonomous political and religious power. It will be a system of evil infrastructure and religion known in Revelation as "...**MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH...**". (Revelation 17:5) That name alone should give us a clear indication of how the world will have degraded by this point. During this time of great need the people of the earth will flock to the antichrist for help . He will convince them of his messianic-like position, "...9. **The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, 10. and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. ...**" (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10). He will then be joined by a second beast, the "false-prophet", "...13 **He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.**" (Revelation 13:13). Because of this deception literally billions of people will worship the antichrist as a god, "...4. **So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"**" (Revelation 13:4). These followers of satan will then take his mark of ownership over their souls, "...16. **He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, 17 and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.**" (Revelation 13:16-17). Without this mark people cannot buy or sell, make a living or obtain food and the essentials of life. They will be outcasts, enemies of the antichrist and will be killed because they refuse to follow the antichrist, "...7. **It was granted to him [the antichrist] to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.**" (Revelation 13:7). Interestingly, not all people during the Tribulation will follow the antichrist. Even though they had rejected the gospel prior to the Rapture, once in the Tribulation they will finally understand the truth. These will be those people who are saved after the Rapture and during the Tribulation - through the gospel shared by the 144,000 converted Jews (Revelation 7), the Two Witnesses (Revelation 11) and the proclaiming angel (Revelation 14:6). These will be the people, many of them martyrs, "...4. **who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands...**" (Revelation 20:4b). But as glorious as this will be, they will die for their faith because they failed to heed the truth prior to the Rapture. This will be the most dangerous time in history to accept Christ, but many will do so. Praise the Lord.

The cycle of war, famine, death and destruction will continue throughout the Tribulation period until its climax at what we know as The Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:16).

But prior to that, at the middle of the seven year Tribulation; the 3 1/2 year point, the antichrist will show his true colors (Daniel 11:11). At that point, "...27. ***He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate...***" (Daniel 9:27b). This is the time Jesus talks about in Matthew 24:15b, ..."15. ***when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place***" This is the antichrist who, "...4. ***sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God..***" (2 Thessalonians 2:4b). This is when Israel will flee into the mountains where God will have prepared a place for her people to escape total destruction (Matthew 24:16 / Revelation 12:14). It is then that Israel will finally recognize who Jesus really is and God takes them to a place of refuge - the remnant of His chosen people. (Zechariah 12:10).

This only scratches the surface of what the antichrist will do. Revelation Chapters 8 through 19, provide much more detail on his actions. But suffice to say, the antichrist will become the most evil and satanically-influenced person to ever live. Emerging during a time of false peace he will quickly make himself known, and as God's punishment comes upon the earth the beast will rise in a messiah-like role to form a universal government, a false world-wide religion and wreak havoc on all who confront him. It is during this time he will declare himself to be God and turn his attention to the destruction of all remnant believers; particularly Israel. War will ensue with the nations following the antichrist. At the same time this is happening Jesus continues to release the remaining Seals of judgment, the blasting destruction of the seven Trumpets, and finally He pours out His earth-destroying Bowls of cataclysmic holy wrath against all of creation. Through this Babylon, the empire of the antichrist will be destroyed. Then the beast and his global army will be destroyed by Jesus (Revelation 18/19). This battle describes Jesus in His victorious moments when He returns to stand upon the earth and bring destruction to all sin. It is then the beast and the false prophet will be thrown alive into hell to suffer forever and ever (Revelation 19:20 / 20:10).

But keep in mind, as difficult as it may be to grasp, all of these events are not only known to God, they are part of His perfect plan to bring judgment upon His disobedient and denying creation. In fact, as we see at the beginning of Revelation in Chapter 6, it is Jesus Himself who breaks the Seals, opens the scroll and releases a series of twenty-one increasingly destructive judgments upon man. And as He does one of the angelic Four Living Creatures, "...**saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see..."** (Revelation 6:1a)". It is the angels, at the command of Jesus, who calls forth the destruction. And when he does Jesus will release the antichrist and the elements he will use to establish his empire. But we must remember, no matter how powerful and influential satan and his followers are --- God is always in control. Even though God has allowed satan the opportunity to tempt man to sin, He does so while also providing the free gift of atoning grace and salvation through the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ -- our ultimate King. He will do this even during the Tribulation.

A View of The Last Days

An Eight Week Survey

Week 5

When is the Ezekiel War?

“8. After many days you will be called to arms. In future years you will invade a land that has recovered from war, whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate. They had been brought out from the nations, and now all of them live in safety. 9. You and all your troops and the many nations with you will go up, advancing like a storm; you will be like a cloud covering the land.” (Ezekiel 38:8-9)

Week 5 - Outline

- What is the Ezekiel War?
 - A future war against Israel
 - Not the war in Revelation chapter 6
 - Not the Battle of Armageddon in Revelation 19
 - Not the war in Revelation 20
 - A multinational force will come against Israel to destroy and plunder
 - Does the United States play a role?
- When will it occur?
 - When Israel is a peace
 - Two primary options to consider
 - Pre-Rapture or Post-Rapture?
- Why will it occur?
 - Geopolitical
 - Economic
 - Biblical
 - It is part of God’s plan
- Who is Gog and Magog?
 - The leader of a northern multinational army
 - Not the same Gog in Genesis or Revelation
- How will it end?
 - God will destroy Gog and his army

Week 5

When is the Ezekiel War?

“8. After many days you will be called to arms. In future years you will invade a land that has recovered from war, whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate. They had been brought out from the nations, and now all of them live in safety. 9. You and all your troops and the many nations with you will go up, advancing like a storm; you will be like a cloud covering the land.” (Ezekiel 38:8-9)

Week 5 - Narrative

Chapters 38 and 39 of the Book of Ezekiel describe a coming battle. A future time when a large multi-national force will seek to destroy Israel. This is called “*The Ezekiel War*”. Unfortunately, the Bible doesn't tell us exactly when the Ezekiel War will occur, but from its description we know it did not occur in the past. It is a future event related to the Last Days. So to get our head around the coming war lets start with a description of the attack in Ezekiel Chapter 38.

- ***“1. Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 2. “Son of man [Ezekiel], set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him, 3. and say, ‘Thus says the Lord God: ‘Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. 4. I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out, with all your army, horses, and horsemen, all splendidly clothed, a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords. 5. Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya are with them, all of them with shield and helmet; 6. Gomer and all its troops; the house of Togarmah from the far north and all its troops—many people are with you. 7. ‘Prepare yourself and be ready, you and all your companies that are gathered about you; and be a guard for them.’“ 8. After many days you will be called to arms. In future years you will invade a land that has recovered from war, whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate. They had been brought out from the nations, and now all of them live in safety. 9. You and all your troops and the many***

nations with you will go up, advancing like a storm; you will be like a cloud covering the land.” (Ezekiel 38:1-9)

This passage clearly describes a war “...***In future years...***”, but unfortunately, it doesn't tell us when that will be. So to better understand the event let's start by looking at a few commonly held views related to its timing:

Timing

Scholars differ on when the Ezekiel War will occur. This has led to some confusion and disagreement. Let's look at a few opinions:

Option 1 - The Tribulation War

- Some believe Ezekiel is describing the war at the beginning of the Tribulation which is indicated by the symbology of a red horse in Revelation 6:3-4, ***”3. When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, “Come and see.” 4. Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.”***
 - This option does not seem to be the Ezekiel War because the war described by Revelation 6 takes place during the Tribulation and describes the environment in which the antichrist will begin his conquest.
 - Secondly, it does not mention any of the details listed in Ezekiel.
 - Finally, this war in Revelation appears to be a worldwide disturbance, ***“...to take peace from the earth...”***, whereas the Ezekiel War is focused specifically on Israel and her northern aggressors.

Option 2 - The Battle of Armageddon

- Others believe Ezekiel is describing the battle in Revelation 19:19-20, ***”19. And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. 20. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.”***
 - Again, this option does not fit the description of the war in Ezekiel, but instead focuses on the post-Tribulation destruction of the army of the antichrist. Not the army of ***“...Gog of the land of Magog...”***
 - Here the army is destroyed by Jesus during His Second Coming which is not in alignment with Ezekiel's prophetic timeline.

Option 3 - The Final Revolt of satan

- Others believe Ezekiel could be describing the war at the end of the Millennial Kingdom in Revelation 20:7-10, **“7. Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison 8. and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. 9. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. 10. The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”**
 - Again, this war differs from the Ezekiel War because it takes place at the end of the Millennial Kingdom during satan's final revolt. This does not align with the prophetic timeline in Ezekiel.
 - This war also describes a worldwide conflict, **“... and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth...”**, but not a specific conflict with Israel, or a specific aggressor from the north.
 - Most of the confusion stems from the fact Revelation 20:8 uses the phrase **“...Gog and Magog...”** which is similar to the phrase in Ezekiel 38:1, **“...Gog, of the land of Magog...”**. Both of these terms describe a leader and his army, but Ezekiel 38:3 also describes him as **“...Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal...”** who comes **“...from the far north...”**. This is not the same Gog who leads the worldwide army from, **“...the four corners of the earth...”**, during satan's final revolt.

Option 4 - Pre-Rapture

- Some believe the war may be the catalyst for the Rapture.
 - In other words, the war would start and then the Rapture would occur to remove God's faithful from its path.

Option 5 - Post-Rapture

- Finally, others believe the war could be triggered by the Rapture.
 - In this scenario the Rapture would occur, world-wide confusion would result, and the chaos would trigger the war.
 - This may be indicated by the promise Jesus made to the faithful church at Philadelphia in Revelation 3:10, **“10. Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial**

which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Only two times in the Bible has God brought destruction, “***...upon the whole world...***”. The first was during the flood (Genesis 6) and the second will be during the future Tribulation. Revelation 3:10 indicates the faithful will be removed, “***...will keep you from the hour of trial...***” which describes the seven year Tribulation. This war would certainly give the antichrist an opportunity to step in and offer a treaty with Israel (Daniel 9:27 / Revelation 6:2).

Given that, either of the last two options seem possible, with the Post-Rapture potentially being the most probable.

So with that, let's dig a little deeper.

Pre-War Conditions

Could the Ezekiel War occur today? Probably not. Scripture indicates one of pre-conditions for the war will be peace in Israel. We see that in Ezekiel 38:10-12,

- “***...10. ‘Thus says the Lord God: “On that day it shall come to pass that thoughts will arise in your mind, and you will make an evil plan: 11. You will say, ‘I will go up against a land of unwalled villages; I will go to a peaceful people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates’— 12. to take plunder and to take booty, to stretch out your hand against the waste places that are again inhabited, and against a people gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell in the midst of the land.”*** (Ezekiel 38:10-12).

Here, several phrases indicate a nation at peace:

- “***...a land of unwalled villages...***”
- “***...a peaceful people, who dwell safely...***”
- “***...without walls, and having neither bars nor gates...***”

These reflect a nation whose people feel secure and have little or no need for defence. That's certainly not the case today. Israel is currently surrounded by her enemies and we continue to see a dramatic increase in the rise of global antisemitism. That coupled with Israel's military power and both offensive and defensive initiatives to defend themselves is anything but a people, “***...who dwell safely...***”. But recently we can start to see how that could change very quickly. The initiation of the *Abraham Accords* in 2020 brought normalization between Israel and several Arab nations. This is an unprecedented move towards a Middle East alignment that many thought was impossible. That coupled with the *Middle East Peace Summit* organized by the US in

late 2025 could be the catalyst for peace in Israel. So given that, it appears a time of peace in Israel, to some degree, is possible, which is a precursor for the Ezekiel War.

But there's another aspect of this to consider. Scripture also indicates that by the time the Ezekiel War starts Israel will be at peace but may lack strong supporters. At the time of the attack, other nations, not militarily aligned with the armies of "...**Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal...**", will question their intent, but the Bible doesn't say any of them will come to Israel's defence, "**13. Sheba, Dedan, the merchants of Tarshish, and all their young lions will say to you, 'Have you come to take plunder? Have you gathered your army to take booty, to carry away silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods, to take great plunder?'**". It's not clear who these other nations are. Some believe they could be European nations who do not align with the northern forces. Others believe the "...**young lions...**" could be the United States, a relatively recent offshoot of European exploration and settlement. Still others believe it could include Sunni Muslim Arab nations who may be at peace with Israel at that time. Although the Bible doesn't tell us who they are, it does indicate they will question why the attack is taking place, but it does not indicate they will offer any real resistance or aid.

So where is the United States in all of this? The Bible doesn't say, but it also doesn't indicate the United States will come to Israel's aid. That doesn't seem possible today, at least under the current administration, but if we look back just a couple of years we can see how quickly that could change. It's probably safe to say had the presidential elections turned out differently the United States would not be a strong ally of Israel today. We would not be seeking peace in the Middle East, we would not provide military assistance, we would not have destroyed the Iranian nuclear threat, and we would not be fighting global antisemitism. In other words, it's easy to see how quickly Israel would be standing on her own if it were not for the current administration.

So how could the current situation change? Very easily and very quickly. The United States is the most powerful nation on earth but it is mentioned nowhere in prophetic scripture. But it's important to understand that all past empires who came against Israel were eventually destroyed. As we discussed in an earlier lesson, the ancient empires of Egypt, Medo-Persia, Assyria, Babylon, Greece and Rome, were at one time the most powerful nation-states on earth. And yet, when they sought to destroy Israel and the Jewish people they were utterly destroyed themselves. This is again the fulfillment of God's prophetic warning in Genesis 12:3, "**3. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**". So, if the United States becomes an enemy of Israel in the future, or even apathetic towards Israel, we would suffer the same consequence.

But how could the United States go from being the world's greatest superpower to a nation not even mentioned in scripture?

There are a number of possible options:

- The United States could be neutralized militarily by China or Russia, or a combination of both. While this is certainly possible it's probably not probable because neither China nor Russia have much to gain by a long and costly war with the US. Particularly given the real threat that such an attack could escalate into a catastrophic nuclear event, which is something neither Russia or China would risk. China is much more interested in acquiring the nations of the Pacific Basin, and Russia would seek to re-acquire parts of Europe and reestablish itself as a post Soviet Union world superpower. But even if the US could be defeated, what long term gain would that really be for China or Russia?
- The United States could be neutralized from within. The recent focus on left-progressive ideologies that spread so quickly through our government, education systems, family structure and the media, illustrates just how quickly the United States could go from a country who proclaims "*In God we Trust*", to a country with little or no trust in God at all. Had we stayed on the same trajectory we were on just a few years ago we can see how quickly that could happen.
- But let's also consider the impact of the Rapture. When the Rapture occurs the United States will immediately lose a fairly large percentage of its population. Even if it's only 15-20 percent, that's probably a higher percentage per capita than any other nation on earth, and even that level would result in several million people being immediately removed from society. We can probably get a sense of its impact by looking back to the Covid pandemic. Fear gripped people in every walk of life, businesses closed, manufacturing facilities were shuttered and children were not allowed to attend schools. Now take that scenario and replace it with the immediate departure of 20-30 million people all at once. It's not hard to imagine the widespread chaos that would result. So given that, let's assume the Rapture occurs tomorrow and every born again Christian is taken to heaven. The initial trauma of so many people suddenly vanishing will in itself be dramatic and probably cause chaos and mass confusion. But of even greater impact is the fact that our government, education systems, and every other aspect of our national infrastructure will have no Christian influence, no Christian values, no Christian education, no Christian focus, no Christian consciousness, anywhere or through anybody. Couple that with the widespread chaos resulting from the Rapture itself,

and it's easy to conjecture how quickly the United States could fall as a relevant global superpower.

So what does all of that mean? It means the timing of the Ezekiel War hinges on several conditions that do not exist today, but could quickly occur:

- Relative peace in Israel, which does not exist today, but we're starting to see a glimmer of what is to come.
- The failure of the United States as a world superpower and a strong supporter of Israel.
- The political and military alignment between several key nations with a focus on destroying Israel.

We can clearly see how each of these scenarios is possible in the near-term with just a few political and ideological shifts. That means we need to be alert – but not afraid – to what is happening on the world's stage.

The Attackers

So who are the attacking armies? The Bible isn't clear, but for an indication let's look again at Ezekiel Chapter 38:1-7,

- ***1. Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 2. Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him, 3. and say, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. 4. I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out, with all your army, horses, and horsemen, all splendidly clothed, a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords. 5. Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya are with them, all of them with shield and helmet; 6. Gomer and all its troops; the house of Togarmah from the far north and all its troops—many people are with you. 7. "Prepare yourself and be ready, you and all your companies that are gathered about you; and be a guard for them."*** (Ezekiel 38:1-6)

Some scholars suggest the ancient terms “***...2b. Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal...***”, “***...5. Persia [Iran], Ethiopia [Sudan], and Libya...***”, “***...6. Gomer...***” and “***...the house of Togarmah [Turkey]...***” represent a multinational force from Russia, Iran and Turkey, supported by Sudan, Libya and other nations. We see an early reference to several of these people-groups in Genesis 10:2-5, “***2. The sons of Japheth were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. 3. The sons of Gomer were Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. 4. The sons of Javan were Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and***

Dodanim. 5. From these the coastland peoples of the Gentiles were separated into their lands, everyone according to his language, according to their families, into their nations." These are the descendants of Noah's son Japheth who migrated north and west into what would become Europe. So taking all of this together, the future army of Gog could be a coalition of forces, possibly led by Russia, and including other nations from the Baltic States, the Middle East and North Africa. Again, this is not clearly stated in scripture, but whoever they are they will be a large army including those "...from the far north..." (Ezekiel 38:6b) who will seek to destroy Israel.

Their Leader

Ezekiel describes the army's leader as "...**Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal...**". The terms Gog and Magog are used in 1 Chronicles 5, Ezekiel 38-39 and in Revelation 20, and is generally accepted to mean a "high" or "supreme" leader, with Magog often associated with an unknown northern kingdom. But in context, the term Gog can also be used to discuss the spirit of revolt against God we see in both battles. In both Ezekiel and Revelation the terms represent a leader and his army who are an enemy of God. In the case of the Ezekiel War the leader will come from nations to the north of Israel, and in the case of Revelation's war it will be the army of satan himself, "**7. Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison 8. and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.**" (Revelation 20:7-9). However, some scholars link the Ezekiel Gog with the Revelation Gog, and based on this, consider the battles described in both books to be the same. But as we have already discussed, there are enough differences in the two battles to indicate they will take place at different times, for different reasons and are led by different leaders. They simply use the same term to represent their evil leader.

Others believe Gog represents the antichrist although Revelation describes the antichrist initially coming with diplomacy instead of combat, "**2. I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.**" (Revelation 6:2). Here we see the antichrist emerging and, "...**bent on conquest...**" but he has a bow with no arrows - indicating a diplomatic mission. At least at first. Daniel also indicates the antichrist will initially come as a diplomat because he describes him forming a treaty with Israel and then rising up against them at the midpoint of the Tribulation, "**Then he [the antichrist] shall confirm a covenant [treaty] with many [Israel] for one week [the Tribulation]; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the**

consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate.” (Daniel 9:27). Also, the antichrist will focus on world-wide domination and not just the destruction of Israel. But also, it's clear from Ezekiel 39:1 that Gog and the army of Magog will be completely destroyed at the end of the Ezekiel War, “**1. “And you, son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal; 2. and I will turn you around and lead you on, bringing you up from the far north, and bring you against the mountains of Israel. 3. Then I will knock the bow out of your left hand, and cause the arrows to fall out of your right hand. 4. You shall fall upon the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops and the peoples who are with you; I will give you to birds of prey of every sort and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. 5. You shall fall on the open field; for I have spoken,” says the Lord God. 6. “And I will send fire on Magog and on those who live in security in the coastlands. Then they shall know that I am the Lord.”** Given that, the Gog in Ezekiel and the Gog in Revelation are not the same person, and neither one is the antichrist. But they are both End Times leaders who oppose Israel and God.

The Objective - Why Destroy Israel?

(Refer to Week #7 - *Israel's Current and Future Role*)

Throughout history Israel has been the most hotly contested nation on earth and over the centuries many empires and rulers have sought to destroy her. Jerusalem alone has been besieged 23 times, attacked 52 times, recaptured 44 times and destroyed twice. Though their enemies have been many, there were six specific ancient empires who have sought to wipe out the Hebrew people. For more information on this please refer back to our lesson on Week #4 and the heading “*Why is There an antichrist?*”. The objective of the nations will be to neutralize Israel and possibly to capture their natural resources, but prophetically it will be another attempt by satan to destroy the nation and people of God.

But why?

GeoPolitical

Israel has been a hotbed of conflict since ancient times. In fact, it's beyond understanding how the entire world has so much hate for a nation the size of New Jersey. But this has been the case ever since God established Israel in the Promised Land. As the world's only Jewish nation Israel has always had cultural and ideological differences with its neighbors who were historically pagan and today are predominantly Islamic. But as God's chosen people and the earthly source of the Messiah, Israel has

been the target of satan for centuries. So today it should not surprise us to see the increasing political and ideological tensions surrounding Israel; possibly more than at any time in history. Particularly if you consider the unanticipated rise in global antisemitism.

Economics

Israel occupies a key strategic location on the north/south route between Asia Minor and Egypt. It also borders the Mediterranean Sea on the west which provides harbors and access to important trade routes. Even today Israel continues to be viewed by its enemies as a potential source of natural resources. Some commentators believe these resources, particularly the expansive natural gas deposits, could lure the nations with, “***...hooks into your jaws...***” (Ezekiel 38:4b) to bring their armies against Israel, **“...to take booty...”** (Ezekiel 38:13).

Biblical

Israel, more than any other nation on earth, plays a prominent role in God’s plan for mankind. As His chosen nation, people, and intended messenger to the world, Israel has come under relentless attacks from satan. Throughout time satan has focused on the destruction of God’s plan, defeat of God’s Son and disillusionment of God’s chosen people. Principally because it was through Israel the Messiah would come to earth. But satan has failed over and over to physically destroy Israel so to this day he seeks to influence her people to turn away from the Messiah so they will not be the source of God’s redemptive message to the world (Isaiah 49:6). But a day will come when God’s future plans for Israel will be fulfilled, and at that point, “***...10. “And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. .”*** (Zechariah 12:10). This will be the time during the Tribulation when Israel recognizes the fact they crucified the wrong man and will realize Jesus is the true Messiah. Unfortunately, scripture indicates by the time that occurs only one-third of Israel will remain, but those who do will accept Jesus as their Savior, “***8. And it shall come to pass in all the land,” Says the Lord, “That two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, But one-third shall be left in it: 9. I will bring the one-third through the fire, Will refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them. I will say, ‘This is My people’; And each one will say, ‘The Lord is my God.’ ”*** (Zechariah 13:8-9).

The Real Objective - God's Plan

In Ezekiel 38 we're told the army will come, "*...up against a land of unwalled villages...*" in order to, "*...take plunder...*" (Ezekiel 38:11b-12b. But what does this really mean? On the surface it indicates a large force will come against Israel to destroy her and possibly to capture her natural resources and possibly establish strategic ports on the Mediterranean coast. But in reality the battle is not dependent on man's strategy, but is in fact a trap set by God. Despite their own aspirations, the real strategy will be God's tactic when He uses, "*...hooks into your jaws...*" (Ezekiel 38:4b) to lure the combined forces to Israel where they will be destroyed.

Their Destruction

Gog of Magog will think he has a strategic objective. His plan will be to conquer Israel and take what she has. But Gog will be a fool because he will suffer the consequence of Genesis 12:3b, when God fulfills His promise to, "*...curse him who curses you.*". Gog will seek to curse Israel but in doing so he will be utterly destroyed, and God will use the destruction of Gog and his multinational alliance not only to defend Israel, but more importantly, so the world may see His awesome power, "*18. And it will come to pass at the same time, when Gog comes against the land of Israel," says the Lord God, "that My fury will show in My face. 19. For in My jealousy and in the fire of My wrath I have spoken: 'Surely in that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel, 20. so that the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the field, all creeping things that creep on the earth, and all men who are on the face of the earth shall shake at My presence. The mountains shall be thrown down, the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.' 21. I will call for a sword against Gog throughout all My mountains," says the Lord God. "Every man's sword will be against his brother. 22. And I will bring him to judgment with pestilence and bloodshed; I will rain down on him, on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. 23. Thus I will magnify Myself and sanctify Myself, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the LORD."*"

Does this level of destruction sound impossible? Maybe just symbolic? If so, then let's look back to the time when God totally destroyed the regions of Sodom and Gomorrah, "*24. Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the Lord out of the heavens. 25. So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.*" (Genesis 19:24.25). We should never underestimate the power of God. Not only is He the Creator, but He also has the power of total destruction. So the next time you hear someone say, "When you

look around at the world today, where is God in all of this?". Rest assured, God is here and is fully aware of what is happening. He has a plan, which includes something we don't have. A full understanding of the future. The Ezekiel War will not only destroy the armies of Gog, but in doing so the entire world we see God's power and many more will be drawn to Him because, "***...they shall know that I am the Lord.***" .

But these events may also set the stage for the emergence of the antichrist. Although the Bible doesn't give us a specific prophetic alignment, the destruction of the multinational force by God could give the antichrist an opportunity to take credit for Gog's destruction and establish himself as a worldwide leader. This would be the time when he would, "***...confirm a covenant with many for one week...***" (Daniel 9:27a / Revelation 6:2) and establish his global dominance. The treaty will bring with it peaceful relations with Israel, a rebuilding of the third temple and re-establishment of the sacrificial system (Daniel 9:27b). This would cause both Israel and the world to view the antichrist as a messiah and set the stage for the time when, "***8. All who dwell on the earth will worship him...***" (Revelation 13:8a).

So what does all this tell us?

At some point in the future a large multinational army from the north will come against Israel. That means it should not surprise us when we see an alignment between nations with a common focus on discrediting and destroying Israel. This is in fact what we are beginning to see today in the political and ideological cooperation between Russia, Iran, Turkey and other nations. At the same time we see an unprecedented focus on globalization, multinational currency systems, a world health organization and the recent and significant rise in worldwide antisemitism. This coupled with political unrest in America, the rise of Islam in Western Europe, Biblical illiteracy, the global reaction to the Covid pandemic, the progressive climate agenda and a falling away from the true faith, all point to the type of things that must occur in order for the multinational force to be established and for the world to collectively come together against Israel. Certainly Israel has come under persecution and conquest across time, but rarely have so many prophetic variables come together at the same moment.

And yet, as equipped followers of Christ we must remember, "...***6. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.***" (Matthew 24:6)

So let's be knowledgeable and alert, but not fearful.

A View of The Last Days An Eight Week Survey

Week 6 What is the Millennial Kingdom?

“20. *“Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Peoples shall yet come, Inhabitants of many cities; “21 The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, “Let us continue to go and pray before the Lord, And seek the Lord of hosts. I myself will go also.” 22. Yes, many peoples and strong nations Shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, And to pray before the Lord.”*” (Zechariah 8:20-22)

“4. *I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”*

(Revelation 20:4)

Week 6 - Outline

- What is the Millennial Kingdom?
 - The one thousand year reign of Christ on Earth
 - A time when satan is bound
- When is the Millennial Kingdom?
 - Immediately after the Tribulation
 - Just before the Great White Throne Judgment
- What will happen during the Millennial Kingdom?
 - Jesus will reign from Jerusalem
 - Israel will play a prominent role
 - Near the end satan will be released
 - satan will form an army against Jesus and attack Jerusalem
 - satan and his army will be destroyed
 - satan will be cast into hell

- What happens after the Millennial Kingdom?
 - The earth and universe will be destroyed
 - The Great White Throne Judgment (sentencing)
 - Creation of the New Heavens, New Earth and New Jerusalem
 - Start of Eternity

Week 6

What is the Millennial Kingdom?

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(Revelation 20:4)

Week 6 - Narrative

Have you ever thought about what you are asking for in the Lord's Prayer? **"9. In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."** (Matthew 6:9-10). You're asking for God to bring His Kingdom to earth. But what does that really mean?

The Millennial Kingdom is another hotly debated topic related to the Last Days, but a study of scripture helps us understand what it is. On the prophetic timeline the Millennial Kingdom will occur between the return of Christ in chapter 19 of Revelation and the New Heaven, New Earth and New Jerusalem in chapter 21. Between those milestones is a one-thousand year period of time when the victorious Jesus will reign on earth. The Kingdom is explained throughout the Bible, but unfortunately the debate continues, so the purpose of this lesson is to give us a solid scriptural basis for the Kingdom and its chronology.

Let's do a quick review of various opinions so we can better understand the approach we'll take in our study:

- Most scholars believe in a literal interpretation of the Bible. They do not believe Revelation and other supporting scripture is figurative, but means exactly what it

says. They believe the Millennial Kingdom is an actual one-thousand year period of time immediately after the Tribulation when Christ will return to the earth to reign in Jerusalem on the throne of David. Until that time they believe the moral and spiritual condition of the earth will get worse and worse until wickedness comes to an extreme state during the last seven year Tribulation period. This is the position we will take for our study,

- Others believe the one-thousand year period is more symbolic and does not really represent a literal thousand year period of time. Unlike the Premillennialist who believe mankind will get worse and worse, these Postmillennialist believe it will get better and better. They believe the "church" will spread the gospel to the point they will control governments, education and infrastructure until the Kingdom is established and Christ will return at the end to take His faithful to heaven. There are two obvious problems with this position. First, Postmillennialist discount the scriptural basis that predicts mankind will get worse until the end. Obviously their desire for the church to conquer the world and usher in the Kingdom, while admirable, is not proving itself to be possible. The other problem is a Postmillennialist view does not adhere to a strict literal interpretation of the Bible. That approach is always a dangerous path to take.
- Still others believe the world will not change. They contend the Kingdom is already here, in the church age, and this is as good as it's going to get. They believe there's no future Kingdom at all, no thousand years, no throne, no reign, no fulfillment of hundreds of Kingdom prophecies. In fact, they adhere to no literal interpretation of what the Bible actually says.
- For the purpose of our study we will assume the Premillennialist viewpoint because that's the only position that makes sense scripturally. The Bible speaks of a distinct period of time - one-thousand years - (in Latin "*Mille + Annum*" or one thousand). It doesn't say "a long time" or "many years", it specifically says one-thousand years. If we discount the literal interpretation of that figure then what do we do with creation in 6 days, 40 days and 40 nights, 40 years in the wilderness, 12 apostles, 3 days in the tomb, 7 Seals, 7 Trumpets, 7 Bowls, 1,260 days? If we believe in a literal interpretation of those biblical quantifiers then we must believe in a literal interpretation of one-thousand years. Also, and unfortunately, there is no foreseeable chance of the world getting better and better as the Postmillennialist believe, but, we can see first hand it's also not staying the same as the Amillennialism contends. Lastly, both Postmillennialism and Amillennialism focus on the end-times role of the church with ever-increasing power. But as we have seen over and over in Revelation, the church does not

gain End Times superiority but is Raptured at the point Christ's judgment begins. In addition, the apostle Paul describes the unfaithful church as "...**falling away...**" before the start of the Tribulation, "**3. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition.**" (2 Thessalonians 2:3). We have also seen that God's primary focus of the Tribulation is to bring His chosen nation Israel back into obedience, not to improve the world before Jesus returns. Given all that, there appears to be no scriptural basis for anything but a Premillennialist view of the kingdom. Particularly given the clear and logical choreography of chapter 20 in Revelation and the wealth of prophetic scripture pointing to a time when Christ will reign on earth.

So let's dig a little deeper to help us understand where the thousand year Kingdom fits in the End Times chronology:

- At a God-defined moment in the future the church of true born-again believers will be Raptured and taken into heaven by Jesus (1 Thessalonians 4:16) to the place prepared for the bride by the Groom. (John 14:3)
- This will be followed by a seven year period called the Tribulation. During that time an evil empire will be established by the antichrist to control mankind through a global government, economy, military and religion. Yet for a time God will continue to spread the gospel until mankind turns completely sinful and rejects Him entirely. This period will include twenty-one Seal, Trumpet and Bowl judgments God will use to punish mankind, but it is also the time when Israel will finally accept Jesus as the Messiah (Daniel 9:25-27 / Zech. 12:10 / Rev.12:6)
- Near the end of the seven-year Tribulation Christ will release seven Bowl judgments. These will bring horrific punishment on the remnant of mankind but will also begin to reshape the earth in preparation for the return of Christ. Jesus will then return at His Second Coming. But rather than coming as the Lamb to offer grace and healing He will come as the Warrior King to bring judgment and death. His judgement culminates in the Battle of Armageddon. (Rev. 19:11-21)
- At the end of the seven-year Tribulation Jesus will bind satan in the abyss where he will remain for a thousand years. Jesus will remain on earth where He will reign supreme during His one-thousand years Millennial Kingdom (Revelation 20:4-6).

- At the end of the Millennial Kingdom Jesus will administer the Great White Throne Judgment, cast satan and all non-believers into an eternity in hell, destroy the existing sin-scarred heavens and the earth, and create an eternal Kingdom for His followers. (Rev. 20:11-22:5)

Now, let's look at the scriptural basis for the Millennial Kingdom. Although there are dozens of verses we could cite these will give us the foundational truths we need:

- Jesus spoke of the Kingdom many times, but in the story of the rich man He provides a very clear prophecy of what will occur., **"28. So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. "** (Matthew 19:28)
- The throne Jesus spoke of is the same throne He promised to the church at Laodicea if they would repent., **"21. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne."** (Revelation 3:21)
- This is the same throne seen by John in his future view of the Kingdom., **"4. And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. "** (Revelation 20:4)
- This is the **"...forever..."** throne of David in Israel prophesied by Samuel, who gives us a view of the eternal Kingdom throne of Christ, **"12. "When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. 15. But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. 16. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever."** (2 Samuel 7:12-16)

- This is the forever throne established when David was king of Israel, but also speaking of the eternal throne from which Christ will reign., "**6. For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.**" (Isaiah 9:6-7)
- This will be the time when Jesus will rule on earth as a righteous judge, over a Kingdom that reflects His holy presence., "**1. There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. 2. The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. 3. His delight is in the fear of the LORD, And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor decide by the hearing of His ears; 4. But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. 5. Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, And faithfulness the belt of His waist. 6. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them. 7. The cow and the bear shall graze. Their young ones shall lie down together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den.** (Isaiah 11:1-8)
- The prophet Jeremiah spoke of the same time when he proclaimed, "**Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. 6. In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called.**" (Jeremiah 23:5-6)
- In his interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream Daniel told of the kingdoms of the earth who would rise and fall, but then he prophesied of a coming Kingdom, and future reign that would never be overthrown, "**44, And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break**

in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. 45. Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold—the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.” (Daniel 2:44-45)

- Daniel expanded on this vision when he tells us, *“13. I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. 14. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed. ”* (Daniel 7:13-14)
- Zechariah talks about Jesus replenishing Israel with living water flowing out of Jerusalem when, *“9. And the Lord shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be— “The Lord is one,” And His name one.”* (Zechariah 14:9).
- Joel speaks of the time when Jesus will reign, *“17. So you shall know that I am the Lord your God, Dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem shall be holy, And no aliens shall ever pass through her again.” 18. And it will come to pass in that day That the mountains shall drip with new wine, The hills shall flow with milk, And all the brooks of Judah shall be flooded with water; A fountain shall flow from the house of the Lord And water the Valley of Acacias.”* (Joel 3:17-18).
- And Zephaniah speaks of the day of judgment when Israel will be redeemed and praise their Messiah, *“14, Sing, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! 15. The Lord has taken away your judgments, He has cast out your enemy. The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; You shall see disaster no more..”* (Zephaniah 3:14-15).

This is a time spoken of often by the prophets. A time when the remnant of Israel is restored, and a time when the Groom rules with His bride. This is a time when Jesus will reign. A time when unity will be established by Jesus Himself. Not by the church and not by Israel, but by Jesus. The one on whose shoulders the government will rest (Isaiah 9:6).

A View of The Last Days An Eight Week Survey

Week 7 Understanding Israel's Current and Future Role

"17. "Therefore say: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I will gather you from the nations and bring you back from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you back the land of Israel again.".

(Ezekiel 11:17)

Week 7 - Outline

- Let's look at Israel in the past
 - God's selection of Israel
 - God's plan for Israel
 - God's warning to Israel
- Let's look at Israel today
 - God's forgiveness and regathering of Israel
- Let's look at Israel in the future
 - God's future plan for Israel
 - God's plan for Israel's eternal presence
- Why is Israel so important for Christians today?
 - They are still God's chosen nation
 - They are critical to God's End Times plan
 - They must be a key focus of all Christians

Week 7

Understanding Israel's Current and Future Role

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Week 7 - Narrative

So what role does Israel play in the Last Days? Very simply, they are the main character. In fact, very little of what the Bible says will happen in the Last Days, could happen if the Nation of Israel did not exist. That's because Israel has been, and continues to be, God's chosen nation, and even though they are currently disobedient they are the primary focus of God's future events.

So to better understand this, let's get in the right frame of mind by reviewing the Biblical basis for the past, present and future role of Israel in God's grand plan.

God's Selection of Israel

- **“I will make you a great nation [Israel]; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. 3. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”** (Genesis 12:2-3)
 - God promised a nation would come from Abraham.
 - That Nation was Israel, and through Israel God promised to bless the whole world.
 - But how? By using them to host the birth, life, death, resurrection and return of our precious King.
 - As a result, through Jesus all mankind is blessed.
 - That blessing was fulfilled when the Messiah came to earth through Israel and the Jewish people.
 - **“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting.”** (Micah 5:2)
 - But Abraham's promised blessing comes with a declared consequence.
 - Fail to bless Israel and God will not bless you.

- **"2. For you are a holy people to the *LORD* your God, and the *LORD* has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth."** (Deuteronomy 14:2)
 - o As the place chosen for the life, death, resurrection and return of Jesus, Israel is a "...**special treasure**..." to God and He will not let her perish.
- **"6. For you are a holy people to the *Lord* your *God*; the *Lord* your *God* has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. 7. The *Lord* did not set *His* love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; 8. but because the *Lord* loves you, and because *He* would keep the oath which *He* swore to your fathers, the *Lord* has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt."** (Deuteronomy 7:6-8)
 - o God didn't choose Israel because they were the largest or the strongest.
 - He also didn't choose them so everyone would like them.
 - o But He chose them to be His "...**special treasure**...", and He chose them to be His nation forever.
 - o This has never changed and Israel remains God's chosen nation today.
- **"13. And behold, the *LORD* stood above it and said: "I am the *LORD* God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. ".** (Genesis 28:13)
 - o After choosing them, God promised to give Israel a land of their own.
- **"49. Go up this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, across from Jericho; view the land of Canaan, which I give to the children of Israel as a possession."** (Deuteronomy 32:49)
 - o Then God set the boundaries of their promised land. Boundaries that have never changed.
- **"35. Thus says the *Lord*, Who gives the sun for a light by day, The ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, Who disturbs the sea, And its waves roar (The *Lord* of hosts is His name): 36. "If those ordinances depart From before Me, says the *Lord*, Then the seed of Israel shall also cease From being a nation before Me forever."** (Jeremiah 31:35-36)
 - o And God's selection of Israel is permanent.

God's Plan for Israel

- ***“6. Indeed He says, ‘It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.’ ”*** (Isaiah 49:6)
 - God chose Israel to be a light to the world by proclaiming His message of redemption.
 - But so far they have failed to share His message and continue to hold it to themselves.
 - And yet, God knew that would happen so for a time He is using the church to be that light and share the gospel until Israel turns to Jesus.
 - But a future time will come then they will recognize Jesus as the true Messiah.
 - ***“10. And I will pour on the house of David [Israel] and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.*** (Zechariah 12:10)
 - Eventually Israel will understand the one they crucified is their righteous King.
- ***“2. Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, 3. saying, “Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.” 4 And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed:”***
(Revelation 7:2-4 / see also Revelation 14:1-5)
 - During the Tribulation 144,000 Jewish men will be chosen by God to carry His plan of redemption to the world. The fact there are 12,000 from each tribe indicates they represent the entire nation of Israel who will finally share God's redemptive plan with the world.
- ***“23. “Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”*** (Zechariah 8:23)
 - By the time of the Millennial Kingdom Israel will play a major role in the earthly reign of Jesus,

God's Warning to Israel

- ***“64. “Then the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known—wood and stone. 65. And among those nations you shall find no rest, nor shall the sole of your foot have a resting place; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and anguish of soul. 66. Your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall fear day and night, and have no assurance of life. 67. In the morning you shall say, ‘Oh, that it were evening!’ And at evening you shall say, ‘Oh, that it were morning!’ because of the fear which terrifies your heart, and because of the sight which your eyes see.’*** (Deuteronomy 28:64-67)
 - God warned Israel over and over that He would punish them for disobedience,
 - As a result Israel has been punished and exiled many times over the centuries.

God's Forgiveness and Regathering of Israel

- ***“11. It shall come to pass in that day That the Lord shall set His hand again the second time To recover the remnant of His people who are left, From Assyria and Egypt, From Pathros and Cush, From Elam and Shinar, From Hamath and the islands of the sea. 12. He will set up a banner for the nations, And will assemble the outcasts of Israel, And gather together the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth.”*** (Isaiah 11:11-12)
 - But God has always forgiven Israel and brought her back to her land.
- ***“13. And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14. I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.”*** (Ezekiel 34:13-14).
 - God promised to bring them back to their land and make them prosperous.
- ***“1. Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you, 2. and you return to the LORD your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, 3.***

that the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you. 4. If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. 5. Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. 6. And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.” (Deuteronomy 30:1-6)

- o Three thousand years ago God promised to bring Israel back into her own land.
- o That prophecy was fulfilled in 1948 when Israel was once again recognized as a sovereign nation.
- o Since then she has become one of the most prosperous and feared nations
- o But why did God bring them back?
 - Because they are still His chosen people and the location of our Lord's future return.
- ***“14. I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; They shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; They shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; They shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. 15. I will plant them in their land, And no longer shall they be pulled up From the land I have given them,” Says the LORD your God.”*** (Amos 9:14-15)
 - o And God promised they will never be destroyed again.
- ***“6. Then the woman [Israel] fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.”*** (Revelation 12:6)
 - o Even during the Tribulation God will protect Israel from satan and destruction.

God's Future Plan for Israel

- ***“2. I will also gather all nations, And bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; And I will enter into judgment with them there On account of My people, My heritage Israel, Whom they have scattered among the nations; They have also divided up My land.”*** (Joel 3:2)
 - o One day in the future our Lord will judge all the nations. Not because of how big they are, how powerful they are or how prosperous they are.
 - He will judge them for how they treated Israel.

- **"2. The Lord also will roar from Zion [Israel], and utter His voice from Jerusalem: the heavens and earth will shake; but the Lord will make a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel."** (Joel 3:16)
 - But the Lord will protect Israel.
- **"9. It shall be in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. 10. And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn."** (Zechariah 12:9-10)
 - Our Lord will return to Israel at the Second Coming. He will then defeat the armies of satan and restore Israel to her glory.
 - At that time Israel will finally realize they crucified their Lord and recognize Jesus as the Messiah.
- **"3. Then the LORD will go forth And fight against those nations, As He fights in the day of battle. 4. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, From east to west, Making a very large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north And half of it toward the south."** (Zechariah 14:3-4)
 - At His Second Coming Jesus, the Warrior King, will return to Israel and re-take her for Himself,
 - That means in order for the Lord to return to Israel, then Israel must exist. She will not be destroyed. No matter what you see happening in the world today.
- **"16. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever."** (2 Samuel 7:16)
 - Jesus will then occupy the eternal throne established under David.
- **"32. He [Jesus] will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David".** (Luke 1:32)
 - The throne of Israel will be the seat of power Jesus will occupy during the Millennial Kingdom,
- **"6. For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful,**

Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7. Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.” (Isaiah 9:6-7)

- And on His throne Jesus will reign on earth for a thousand years.
- **“22. Yes, many peoples and strong nations Shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord.’ 23. ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.’”** (Zechariah 8:22-23)
 - The day will come when Israel will go from being the most persecuted people on earth to the most respected.
 - Why? Because God chose them as His favored nation and that will never change that.
 - Jesus will return to Israel for His Second Coming, and then during the Millennial Kingdom Jesus will reign from Jerusalem and the world will finally see Him as our King.

God’s Plan for Israel’s Eternal Presence

- **“1. Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. 2. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.’”** (Revelation 21:1-3)
 - In eternity the Lord will replace the current heavens and earth with a New Heavens, a New Earth and a New Jerusalem.
 - Then from the New Jerusalem the Lord will reign for eternity, and we will be there with Him..
- **“1. I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.”** (Romans 11:1)
 - God has punished Israel many times but He has never abandoned her.

- “**25. For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. 26. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; 27. For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.”** (Romans 11:25-27)
 - God’s promise to Israel will never change. It is eternal.
- “**13. For the Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His dwelling place: 14. “This is My resting place forever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it. 15. I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread. 16. I will also clothe her priests with salvation, And her saints shall shout aloud for joy. 17. There I will make the horn of David grow; I will prepare a lamp for My Anointed. 18. His enemies I will clothe with shame, But upon Himself His crown shall flourish.”** (Psalm 132:13-28)
 - If we love the Lord we must love Israel.
 - There is no other option.

All of these passages, and many more like them, help us understand why Israel is so important to End Times prophecy, and why Israel and her people must be important to us. In fact, for a Christian there is no historical, geopolitical or economic event more important than the rebirth of Israel as a sovereign nation. That's because it is to Israel our Lord will return at His Second Coming, and it is in Israel where our Lord will establish His Millennial throne.

But, if Israel is so important, why did the Lord allow them to be destroyed for a time?

In Mark Chapter 13 (also Matthew 24 and Luke 21) we hear a discussion between Jesus and His disciples about the temple in Jerusalem. Understandably, the disciples were amazed by the size and grandeur of the temple, which may have been the largest building in the world at that time. Impressive by any standard, it was made of stone blocks as large as 12'x40', with much of the temple covered with pure white marble and the entire eastern wall sheathed in gold plates to reflect the rising sun. Originally completed in 515 BC, the second temple replaced the first temple that had been destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 BC.

The second temple was expanded in 20 BC by Herod the Great and may have still been under construction at the time of Christ's ministry. Given its massive size and ornamentation it must have seemed unbelievable to the disciples when Jesus told them it would be destroyed. But why would it be destroyed? Because Israel had been disobedient and failed to recognize the coming of the Messiah. Earlier the same week

Jesus made His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. This should have been a momentous day when Israel would recognize and accept Him as their King, but it was not to be. Although they initially praised Him, Jesus knew their momentary celebration was short-lived and misdirected. So He made a proclamation of the city's future destruction, ***"41 Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, 42. saying, "If you had, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. 43. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, 44. and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation."'"*** (Luke 19:41-44 - see also Mark 11 and Matthew 21).

Over the centuries the Lord used many prophets to tell Israel the Messiah would come. So they should have been looking and alert, which means they should have recognized the young man Jesus as their King based on His amazing knowledge and power. But they didn't. By the time Jesus arrived on earth the Jewish leadership and their people were so self-righteous and focused on works through the Law they completely misunderstood who Jesus was even when they stood face to face. So rather than accepting Him and worshiping Him, they abandoned Him and had Him crucified. But God warned them of the consequences that would come from disobedience, and as punishment, Israel and the temple were destroyed, her people scattered across the earth for centuries, and the land God gave Abraham was temporarily occupied by other nations and people who were enemies of God.

In AD 66 Israel revolted against the Roman emperor Nero. In response, General Vespasian was ordered to restore order in the region, who then sent his son Titus as the army's commander. By AD 68 the northern provinces had been destroyed and Rome turned its attention on Jerusalem. Then in AD 70, just as Jesus had said would happen, the Roman army surrounded the city, cut off all food and water supplies, stormed the walls, destroyed the massive temple, killed an estimated one million Jews and sent hundreds of thousands to labor camps as slaves or to the coliseums for blood sport. This was the destruction Jesus predicted as punishment for Israel's disobedience. After that point the Nation of Israel would basically cease to exist for almost 2,000 years. Israel, the chosen nation of God, the place of the Messiah's birth, death and resurrection, the place of His return, and the seat of His future kingdom, was destroyed and her people scattered across the earth.

But why was such a drastic measure even necessary? Because Israel was wicked and her unfaithfulness and spiritual adultery brought death and destruction just as Jesus had said it would. God had been clear from the very beginning. If Israel was obedient they would be blessed beyond measure, but if they were disobedient they would be severely

punished. But generational cycles of obedience and disobedience finally culminated in the crucifixion of their true King because they had become so enamored with themselves. Despite God's warnings and merciful love, Israel had fallen into sin over and over again as they repeatedly turned their back on God, resisted His commands and killed His prophets. So God punished them and banished them from their homeland to wander the world, so that everywhere they went they would be the target of persecution. All because they failed to recognize the Messiah when He stood in their presence, healed their sick, raised their dead, spoke nothing but truth and fulfilled prophecy. They were so focused on themselves they failed to recognize the one who had come to give them victory. As a result, Israel was destroyed, just as the Lord had warned, "**33. I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a sword after you; your land shall be desolate and your cities waste.**" (Leviticus 26:33 / Deuteronomy 4:27 / Psalm 106:27).

After the destruction of Israel, the Jewish people were scattered to the four corners of the earth and subjected to persecution no matter where they lived. But then something extraordinary happened. After WWII, Harry Truman, President of the United States, became uneasy about the potential alignment between the emerging Soviet Union and the Arab States. Oil had been discovered throughout the Middle East and everyone wanted it. In response to this, and given the plight of the Jewish people who had been killed or scattered by the Holocaust, the US sought national sovereignty for the Jewish people and a Jewish homeland. After much debate, the United Nations General Assembly issued Resolution 181 in 1948 to re-establish Israel as a sovereign nation. This was followed in 1950 by the *Tripartite Declaration* between the US, England and France agreeing to defend the newly established territories. After two thousand years of exile and punishment the nation of Israel was re-born and 800,000 displaced Jews from around the world re-settled in the land as the Lord had promised, "**13. And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14. I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.**" (Ezekiel 34:13-14).

So why is it so important for us to understand Israel's past? Because a knowledge of their past is key to understanding Israel's future and their role in God's End Times plan. That's why Israel must be important to Christians. Despite their current disobedience, the day will come when Israel will recognize Jesus as the Messiah and will once again become the center piece of God's prophetic plan. It is to Israel Jesus will return, it is in Israel where Jesus will destroy the antichrist, and it is Israel where Jesus will reign during the Millennial Kingdom. So if Israel is that important to our Lord it has to be that

important to us. That means, as followers of Jesus we must seek to understand what Bible prophecy says about the Last Days and the role Israel will play.

So we need to remember, if Jesus is going to return to Israel, and reign from Israel, that means Israel must exist as a nation. Today, for the first time in over two thousand years Israel is a sovereign nation, their population has grown to millions of people, and for the first time since the earthly ministry of Jesus there are more Jews in Israel than any other single place on earth. Feeding that growth is the fact Israel has one of the highest birthrates in the world, their death rate is one of the lowest of all nations and their life expectancy is one of the highest. They are the 2nd most talked-about nation in the media. Second only to the United States. And supporting this growing population is one of the strongest economies in the world; 10th amongst all nations on earth. An economy that will grow even stronger with the advent of the EastMed natural gas pipeline linking Israel's "Leviathan Field" to commerce in Europe.

Now during the Last Days, and as we await the return of Jesus, we must be alert to what is happening in Israel because they are the key to God's plan. At some point in the future our Lord will Rapture His bride, usher in seven years of final destruction, establish His throne during the Millennial Kingdom, destroy satan, and then establish His new eternal kingdom for those who are faithful to Him. And what is the one thing that is key to all of this happening? Israel. Jesus will return to Israel to destroy the antichrist. He will then reign in Israel for a thousand years. Then He will create a New Heaven, a New Earth and a New Jerusalem for the eternal home of His bride. So don't let anyone fool you into believing Israel is no longer important and the "church" has somehow taken the place of Israel. The so-called "*Replacement Theology*" creeping into churches today is false and entirely unbiblical. Yes, the church is an important instrument of spreading God's will and message, but it does not replace Israel. God is serious about the role of Israel, and as believers we should be serious about Israel too.

That's why Israel should be critically important to every Christian. Because for Jesus to return to Israel there must be an Israel; a country that did not exist until just recently. But as we watch the world around us we can begin to see a clear view of the Last Days. Israel is back in her land and prospering (Deuteronomy 30:5). Yet, at the same time she is surrounded by her enemies with a global rise in open antisemitism (Luke 21:20-24). Couple that with the fall of Christian values in the United States, the influx of Islam into Western Europe and the emergence of a globalist agenda and we have a recipe for the future day when the world will be prepared to accept the antichrist (Revelation 13:8).

But as followers of Jesus we don't need to worry. Instead, we need to stand with Israel and remember, ***“...And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”*** (Genesis 12:3b).

A View of The Last Days An Eight Week Survey

Week 8

A View of Eternity - THe New Heaven, The New Earth and The New Jerusalem

“1. Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.” (Revelation 21:1)

Week 8 - Outline

- Why will God destroy His current creation?
 - How will it happen?
 - Through a series of judgment actions
 - When will it happen?
 - After the Great White Throne Judgment
- What is a New Heaven and a New Earth?
 - What will it be like?
 - Perfection. Like Eden
 - Where will it be?
 - Everywhere
- What is a New Jerusalem?
 - Why is it called Jerusalem?
 - After the earthly city that is so important to the Lord
 - Jerusalem is mentioned over 800 times in the Bible.
 - Where God called Abraham to go (Genesis 14:18).
 - Where David reigned as king (2 Samuel 5:6-7).
 - Where Solomon built the temple (1 Chronicles 28:1).
 - Where Jesus was crucified (Matthew 20:18).
 - Where Jesus was resurrected (Luke 24:8).
 - Where Jesus will return at His Second Coming (Zechariah 14:4)
 - The site of our Lord’s Millennial Kingdom (Zechariah 14:9)

- Where will it be?
 - On earth
- What will it look like?
- What does it mean to us?

Week 8

A View of Eternity - THe New Heaven, The New Earth and The New Jerusalem

“1. Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.” (Revelation 21:1)

Week 8 - Narrative

Those who study God's word do not see it as sixty-six related stories. Instead, we understand the Bible is one book, written by the Holy Spirit, who used over forty faithful men to scribe the words He gave them. Peter clarifies this in 2 Peter 1:21, ***“21. for prophecy [scripture] never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”***. That's why the Bible is not a disjointed collection of unrelated stories but is a chronology of interrelated events across time.

This connectivity across scripture is seen no more clearly than in the story of creation. Why? because the Bible starts with creation and ends with re-creation:

Creation – Genesis 1:1-5

- ***“1. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. 3. Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. 4. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. 5. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.”***

Re-Creation - Revelation 21:1-4

- ***“ 1. Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. 2. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. 4. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”***

Isn't that interesting. Revelation 21:1 tells us that in the future the current earth and heaven, "...**had passed away**...". In other words, God's original creation that we know today will no longer exist. But why would God destroy everything He created? Because the old heaven and earth - the first creation - were riddled with the sin of man and would not make a fitting eternal home for God's children and the bride of Christ. So a new creation will be required. A brand new home made by God for His people. This place, called, "...**a new heaven and a new earth**..." and the "...**New Jerusalem**..." will be our home for eternity. It is the place Jesus was talking about when He said, "...**I go and prepare a place**..." for us to live with Him (John 14:3). Jesus will not refurbish an old home, but will instead, make something brand new. A perfect and eternal home for His bride. "**5. Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new."** **And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."**" (Revelation 21:5). From this verse we know the New Heaven and the New Earth is not a metaphor. It's a fact. Because the Lord tells us "...**these words are true**...". That means there will be a New Heaven and the New Earth, made perfect like Eden in every way, and never to be marred by sin again, "**4. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.**" (Revelation 21:4). The "...**former things**..." will be gone. The former earth, the former heavens, our former life and our former nature will all be replaced. We will be made incorruptible and glorified (1 Corinthians 15:52-55) and the new place we live for eternity will be without sin and darkness. It will be a place of perpetual light because its light will come from our Lord, "**5. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.**" (Revelation 22:5).

So given that broad context let's dig a little deeper into the New Heaven, the New Earth and the New Jerusalem.

We'll start with Revelation 20:11, "**11...the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.**"

In Genesis 1:1 God commanded His initial creation. With a series of divine acts He set in motion everything we know today - the universe, the earth, time, chemistry, biology, physics, flora, fauna and mankind - all erupted at the direction of God's command. Scientists can deny it and theologians can debate how He did it, but the fact is God's actions on that day brought something from nothing. And for a time it was perfect until man sinned and God cursed His creation (Genesis 3:17-19). That's the world we live in today. As beautiful as it is, our world has been cursed by God and is no longer suitable

for His children. At least from an eternal perspective. So at a point in the future, God will destroy what exists today and make everything new. But why is that necessary? Very simply. At the end of time Jesus will destroy satan and eliminate the source of sin forever (Revelation 20:10). But that alone will be insufficient for preparing an eternal home for His followers. So the Lord will also destroy the universe and the earth - all creation - to eliminate all signs of all sin for all time. This will not be a simple restoration or relocation, but will be a complete re-creation. Why? Because nothing but perfection will do.

So where else do we see this in the Bible?

- Peter speaks of this event, "**10. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. 11. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12. looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?**" (2 Peter 3:10-12).
- Isaiah was given a similar prophecy, "**6. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, And look on the earth beneath. For the heavens will vanish away like smoke, The earth will grow old like a garment, And those who dwell in it will die in like manner; But My salvation will be forever, And My righteousness will not be abolished.**" (Isaiah 51:6).
- The writer of Hebrews also speaks to this same event, "**10. And: "You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. 11. They will perish, but You remain; And they will all grow old like a garment;..."**" (Hebrews 1:10-11).
- And in the Olivet Discourse Jesus - the One who made the original creation (John 1:1-14) - explains, "**Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.**" (Matthew 24:35).

Not only does scripture indicate the heavens and the earth will be destroyed, but it also indicates we will not remember them. "**For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.**" (Isaiah 65:17). Possibly because having earthly memories might mean we would remember sin, but

also because the New Heavens and New Earth will be so much greater than any memory of what has existed before.

Now, to go even deeper let's unpack Revelation chapter 21 to get a view of what the New Heaven, the New Earth and the New Jerusalem will be like.

“1. Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. 2. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. 4. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” (Revelation 21:1-4)

Several times in Revelation the apostle John uses the term, "...***I saw...***". In the original Greek this can be translated to words like, *watch, behold, appearing, recognizing or to perceive*. The use of this term gives his narrative authenticity and further illustrates that Revelation prophecy is much more than just imagery and allegory. John doesn't say, "...*I imagined...*", or "...*I dreamed...*". He is direct and emphatic, using the term, "...***I saw...***" to add substance and depth to what he observed. But in the context of the Last Days, the things John "...***saw...***" highlights his witness to a series of future events at the end of the Tribulation in Revelation chapters 19 and 20:

- The Second Coming

“11. Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. ” (Revelation 19:11).

- The Battle of Armageddon

“17. Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, “Come and gather together for the supper of the great God.” (Revelation 19:17). ***“19. And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.”*** (Revelation 19:19).

- Satan is Captured and Imprisoned for a Thousand Years
“1. Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.” (Revelation 20:1).
- The Millennial Kingdom
“4. And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.” (Revelation 20:4).
- The Great White Throne Judgement
“11. Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. 12. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.” (Revelation 20:11-12).
- The New Heaven, New Earth and New Jerusalem
“1. Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. 2. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” (Revelation 21:1-2).

All of these passages describe future events John “...saw...” leading up to the creation of the New Heaven, the New Earth and the New Jerusalem. But in one of these verses, Revelation 20:11, we see something profound, ***“11...the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.”***. This is the literal uncreation of all God had created before. The point in time when God will eliminate all creation in order to make it new. The eternal home for us - believers in Christ Jesus. This will not be the original creation rebuilt, restored or relocated. It will be created from scratch; all new and all glorious, a place reflecting God's ultimate perfection.

As the prophet Isaiah tells us:

- ***“17. For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. 18. But be glad and rejoice forever in***

what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, And her people a joy.". (Isaiah 65:17-18)

- **"22. For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me," says the Lord, "So shall your descendants and your name remain."** (Isaiah 66:22).

Next John introduces us to the third component of the new creation, the "...**New Jerusalem...**", **2. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.** (Revelation 21:2). It's important for us to note the fact God has chosen Jerusalem as the namesake of His eternal city. Not New York or London or any other major city on earth. God chose Jerusalem, the capital of His chosen nation of Israel, to be the seat of His Millennial reign, and then later, our eternal home.

But why is Jerusalem so important to God?

- Jerusalem is mentioned over 800 times in the Bible.
- Jerusalem is where God called Abraham to go (Genesis 14:18).
- It is where David reigned as king (2 Samuel 5:6-7).
- It is where Solomon built the temple (1 Chronicles 28:1).
- It is where Jesus was crucified (Matthew 20:18).
- It is where Jesus was resurrected (Luke 24:8).
- It is where Jesus will return at His Second Coming (Zechariah 14:4)
- It is the site of our Lord's Millennial Kingdom (Zechariah 14:9)
- And it is the namesake of His eternal dwelling (Revelation 21:2)

These verses give us an indication of how important Jerusalem is to God. So important it is the namesake of His future city, the New Jerusalem. The heavenly place God is preparing for His faithful people but it is also the earthly place from which Jesus will reign during the Millennial Kingdom. (2 Samuel 7:13). The New Jerusalem will not be a rebuilt ancient city that will be trampled during the Tribulation (Revelation 11:2). Nor will it be the restored capital of the Millennial Kingdom that will be attacked by the temporarily released satan in his last ditch but feeble effort to defeat Jesus. (Revelation 20:7-10). No. Neither of them will do, because both will have been tainted by the wickedness of man. The New Jerusalem will be a heavenly city, the namesake of "...**the beloved city...**" (Revelation 20:9), but similar in name only. The eternal city coming down to earth will be the seat of God's heavenly power for all eternity. The place prepared for His people. The place prepared for us.

The term “**New Jerusalem**” speaks to the place where God lives. The place Abraham was looking for, “**10. for he waited for the city which) has foundations, whose builder and maker is God..**” (Hebrews 11:10). And, “**...the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.**” (Hebrews 12:22). This is a real place. The real place Jesus is preparing for us. It’s not some kind of ethereal spiritual dimension. It is a real place in the “**...Father’s house..**”, (John 13:2b). The place where God lives. The New Jerusalem is literally the house of God “**...coming down...**” to earth (Revelation 21:2) so that God will be, “**...with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people...**” (Revelation 21:3b).

But if it is a place, and it is coming “**...down...**”, where is it coming from? From heaven, the “**...third heaven...**” (2 Corinthians 12:2) where God lives today. We get a view of this in Revelation chapter 4, “**After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.”**” (Revelation 4:1). In his description John gives us an indication of where heaven is because he was told to “**...Come up...**”. The only direction John was given was “**...up...**”. Similarly, when Paul was given a view of heaven he said he was “**...was caught up to the third heaven...**” (2 Corinthians 12:2b). Again, the key word is “**...up...**” which helps us understand why it will one day come “**...down...**”. Before then, we will be there with the Lord. Whether at the Rapture or at our passing we will enter the place where God dwells, in the place prepared for us until He brings it down to His new creation.

But the place of the New Jerusalem is not as important as its purpose. The New Jerusalem is the heavenly house of God where, “**...He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people...**” (Revelation 21:3b). In essence, this is the true focus of our salvation. Although our salvation rescues us from hell, we don’t seek salvation just to avoid eternal punishment. And although heaven will be an amazing place, its environs and benefits are not why we want to go there. We should want to be in heaven to dwell with God. God Almighty, the All Powerful and All Knowing, will bring His heaven to His new creation so He can dwell with us, and we, “**...they shall be His people...**”. No longer will we have to imagine God in our minds, or seek God in spirit, or pray to God unseen. Instead, He will be among us, physically with us, and we will be His holy and redeemed people dwelling in eternity with our Holy, Holy, Holy God.

Hallelujah!

And there’s something else exciting about this new place. And that is the fact our Lord, “**...will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor**

sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:4b). This poetic and often quoted verse, brings joy to our hearts when we think about a time when there are no tears or suffering forever. No pain and no challenges in life. It will be a time spoken of by Isaiah when he said, "...**And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces...**" (Isaiah 25:9B). A time John spoke of when he recited the praise of the heavenly host who will proclaim, "**17. for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.**" (Revelation 7:17). Some view these as tears of remorse. Maybe shame over what we have done, or guilt over what we have not done. Or maybe even tears of joy when we first see the face of our Jesus. That's certainly possible. But by this point in the End Times chronology of events we will not have shame or guilt. Paul says, "...**51. we shall all be changed. 52. in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye...**" (1 Corinthians 15:51b - 52a), and "...**raised incorruptible...**" (1 Corinthians 15:52b), clothed in a new being. A redeemed, holy and righteous being. In that state we will be unable to have those types of emotions or dwell on our past. In any case, the wiping of our tears by God may indicate how fundamentally different we will be in that future state. There will be no more sickness, death, suffering, pain, sadness, anxiety, remorse, shame or guilt. None of the things that would make us cry will be present in God's world and they will no longer impact our hearts or minds. Tears or sadness will be impossible to generate because they will have no place in God's holy heaven.

So we must be encouraged, because as Paul tells us, we are no longer citizens of this world, "**19...no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.**" (Ephesians 2:19b). As believers in Christ our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. We are already betrothed to the Groom as His bride, eagerly waiting for Him to retrieve us and take us home. But the timing of our retrieval is not our choice. It is God's. And until the day He calls for us, or comes to get us, may we stand tall and bold in His gospel and in His service, focused daily on pleasing our Lord and King.

And with that context let's continue with a verse by verse study of a portion of Revelation chapter 21 to see a detailed description of the New Jerusalem.

So why is it so important to spend so much time discussing this single topic? Well, think about how much time you've probably spent thinking about your earthly home. Doesn't it seem profitable to spend some time discussing our eternal home?

"10. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, 11. having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a

jasper stone, clear as crystal. 12. Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: 13. three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west.”

14. Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. 15. And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. 16. The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. 17. Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. 18. The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. 19. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, 20. the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. 21. The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass,”

22. But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. 24. And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. 25. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). 26. And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. 27. But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.”

Verse 10

“10. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.”

To see this amazing sight an angel takes John to a high point from where he sees something totally unexpected. A holy city named Jerusalem. Not the Jerusalem of Israel, but a New Jerusalem. The place where God dwells. It is the “...**Father’s house...**” with rooms prepared for us by Jesus. (John 14:2). The holy city of God coming down out of heaven where God will dwell with His people. This is literally

heaven. The place where God has been will come down from its current location to relocate on the “...**New Earth**...” as the dwelling place of God and His faithful children. A city, that when indwelt by God and His people takes on the character of its inhabitants - the bride - now joined in her eternal home with all believers, from all time, and together in the place where we will dwell with God for eternity. A place that will be more amazing than anything we could ever imagine in our wildest dreams. No artwork, no animation and no computer-aided image from the most creative minds on earth could ever adequately portray what awaits us in the New Heaven, New Earth and New Jerusalem. But here John does his best to give us a preview that makes us thirst for more.

Verse 11

“11. having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. ”.

Here we begin to see a description of God’s glorious dwelling place. Its brilliance is described as “...**a jasper stone, clear as crystal**...”. Typically jasper is not a crystal clear stone. It is an opaque form of microgranular silica quartz that comes in a variety of yellow, brown or red. Yet here it is described as “...**clear as crystal**...”. In one sense this could illustrate the perfection of God’s creation, but it might have a different meaning. In the original Greek, jasper comes from the root word “*laspidi*” which means a translucent stone. From this some commentators contend the word describes a diamond. They get this from the phrase “...**clear as crystal**...” which comes from the Greek word “*krystallizoni*”, that can be translated to mean, “*To shine like crystal, as brilliant as crystal or to resemble ice.*” Sort of like a diamond. Interestingly, this is the same term used in Revelation 4:3 to describe the view of God on His throne, “**3. And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.**” It is also the same word used to describe the walls of the New Jerusalem and one of its foundation stones. (Revelation 21:18-19). Whether the stone is clear jasper or diamond is not the point. The reference to its clarity is to help us visualize the glory of God as it is reflected from the city and across the New Heavens and the New Earth. John sees the city shining with the brilliant and radiant glory of God who is “...**with us**...” (Matthew 1:23), the God who “...**is able**...” (Matthew 3:9), and the God who “...**is glorified**...”. (John 13:32). The new city of Jerusalem reflects God’s glory. A glory that cannot be muted or decreased as it shines through the perfectly clear walls of His holy dwelling, but is instead magnified, “...**like a most precious stone**...”. This is the glory of God. His divine quality and splendor of our Lord. It is the magnificence we see in the Hebrew term, “*Shekinah*”, illustrating the brilliance of the glory of God in His temple. This is the place of God’s power - the very presence of an All Holy God. (Exodus 40:34 / 1 Samuel

4:22 / Hebrews 9:5). This is the glory we will see in the New Jerusalem as it shines brilliantly through a city as clear as crystal.

Verses 12-13

“12. Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: 13. three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west.”

John then gives some interesting details to help us form a mental image in our mind. Starting in verse 12 and running through verse 27 John describes the city's appearance. Although we cannot begin to understand the magnificence of what John sees, we can understand enough to develop a hunger for more when the day comes when we see it for ourselves. The fact the city has substance is seen in its ***“...great and high wall...”***. This is not a cloud or some ethereal place John imagines, but it is a real place. The term used here for ***“...great...”***, in the original Greek is the word “Mega”, which means, *mass, space and grand dimensions*, and the term ***“...high...”***, “Hyoselon”, which speaks to a lofty mountain and the heights of heaven. These give us a broad indication of its size and grandeur. John then tells us the city has twelve gates with twelve angels. One at each gate. The number twelve, “Dodeka” in Greek, is used multiple times to describe the city of God. Not only are there twelve gates, with twelve angels but there are twelve foundation stones. The number twelve is a number representing completeness and perfection. It is used over 180 times in the Bible; as in the twelve sons of Jacob, the twelve tribes of Israel, the tree of life which will produce twelve fruits, the twelve apostles, the twelve baskets of leftover loaves and fishes, even the 144,000 Jewish evangelists (Revelation 7:4) which is a multiple of 12,000 men from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. So why are the twelve gates administered by an angel? The Bible doesn't tell us why, but here are some thoughts to consider:

- First, there will be no danger in heaven. Verse 21:4 tells us there will be no death, mourning, crying or pain. Then verse 27 tells us, ***“27. But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.”***. In other words, the gates will need no guards for protection because no evil can enter. So that's probably not the angel's role.
- Second, we know from verse 25, ***“25. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there).”*** That may indicate we will be free to move about God's creation because the gates will not block anyone in, and there will be no

danger so there's no need to block out. Given that, it may indicate the angels are there for us. Remember, at this point on God's grand timeline every believer in heaven will be glorified and righteous with no sin or even the ability to sin. That means everyone of us who walk in and out of those gates will be the redeemed; those who followed Christ and through our acceptance of His work on the cross will have entered His eternal dwelling place. Can you even imagine every time you leave God's Holy City an angel will wish you well on your journey and when you return will welcome you back home.

We certainly can't be dogmatic about either of these suggestions but it's at least something to consider.

John then tells us that on the gates "***...are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel...***". Not only does God call His eternal dwelling place the New Jerusalem, but He has named each of its gates after the twelve tribes of Israel - the sons of Jacob whose name was changed to "Israel" by God, and as He did, He declared, "***...a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you...***" (Genesis 35:11b). God will write their names on the gates - inscribed by the hand of God - to represent His continued affection and commitment to His chosen people. He will not name the gates after twelve major cities of the world, or twelve seats of earthly government, or twelve historical figures, but will instead name them after the tribes of Israel.

But why? Because:

- "***4...The excellence of Jacob [Israel] whom He loves***" (Psalm 47:4),
- "***9. Blessed be the Lord your God, who delighted in you, setting you on the throne of Israel! Because the Lord has loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to do justice and righteousness.***"..." (1 Kings 10:9).
- "***2. The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. 3. Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God! .***" (Psalm 87:2).

So where are these gates located? In verse 13 John tells us they are equally dispersed on all four sides of the city; with three on each side. Three gates on each side leading out from the city to all areas of the New Heaven and New Earth. Interestingly, the Greek term used here for "gates," "Pulon," can be translated to mean, "*The passage which led from the street through the front part of the house to the inner court.*" This may indicate we will be free to transit from the inner sanctuary of God out through His New Heaven and New Earth.

Verse 14

14. Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.".

Here again we see the number twelve but this time it describes twelve foundations. The description seems to indicate a foundation with twelve layers, like a cake, stacked one upon the other, and on each layer is written a name of the apostles. If you recall, the twelve gates were identified with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. That may represent the Old Testament believers who through their faith in God's mercy and the promised Messiah received His grace and atonement of sin. But here, the foundation layers are named after the apostles which may represent the New Testament church who are followers of Christ. Those who come to Christ through the gospel that was first shared by the apostles. This is the foundation of Christ's true gospel through which the salvation and faith of believers is built. The writer of Hebrews reminds us, **"8. By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10. for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God."** (Hebrews 11:8-10). This city, the New Jerusalem, is the place of Abraham's inheritance, and of our own. Naming the foundation layers after the apostles might also be indicated by Paul who explains that our faith is built on Jesus, **"11. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."** (1 Corinthians 3:11). We also see a picture of this foundational faith in Psalm 18, **"2. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold."** (Psalm 18:2). This is the foundation of our faith, illustrated by the fact, **"19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20. having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21. in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,"** (Ephesians 2:19-21). This truth is also illustrated in a conversation between Jesus and Peter. When Jesus asked who do people think He is, the apostles answered, John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or another prophet. But Peter said, **"16. You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."**. To which Jesus replied, **"...and on this rock I will build my church."** (Matthew 16:16b&18b). Some believe Jesus was talking about Peter, whose name "Petros" can mean "stone", as if Peter was the foundation on which the church would be built. But the church is built on no man, but is built on Christ Jesus, **"...a living Stone... ..." "A chief cornerstone..."** (1 Peter 2:4b&6b). It is Jesus, and

Him alone, who is the foundation on which our faith is based. A home built on the foundation of the gospel truth. The place we see here, the New Jerusalem whose solid foundation is compared to the gospel faith of redeemed saints, proclaimed first by the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul spoke of this faith as the foundation of our relationship with Christ when he said, **"19. Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."** (2 Timothy 2:19).

Hallelujah!

Verse 15-18

"15. And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. 16. The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. 17. Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. 18. The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass."

In Revelation chapter 11 John said, **"1. Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there."** (Revelation 11:1). This required action on John's part. He was to take a reed (a rod or measuring device) and measure the temple in Jerusalem. This measurement illustrates God's ownership and supreme authority. This measurement is important because it shows God leaves nothing to chance. Whatever He does is planned to perfection and numbered in intent. It is this exactness that defines God's supreme authority. God measures because God creates and God measures because God owns. We see similar measurements being made in Zechariah chapter 2 and Ezekiel chapter 40,

- **"1. Then I raised my eyes and looked, and behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand. 2. So I said, "Where are you going?" And he said to me, "To measure Jerusalem, to see what is its width and what is its length."** (Zechariah 2:1-2).
- **"2. In the visions of God He took me into the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain; on it toward the south was something like the structure of a city. 3. He took me there, and behold, there was a man whose appearance was like the appearance of bronze. He had a line of flax and a measuring rod in his hand, and he stood in the gateway."** (Ezekiel 40:2-3)

God measures because God owns all creation, and when He declares what He owns with such precision there is no doubt it is His. So now in Revelation chapter 21 John describes another measurement. Just as the Lord did for Zechariah and Ezekiel He will now do for John. He will measure the heavenly city of God to clarify His ownership and to help us understand its size. He describes the city as a square with each side being the same length as its height - like a cube. It measures "...**twelve thousand furlongs**. **Its length, breadth, and height are equal...**". A "...**furlong...**" is also called a "...**stadia...**" or "Greek stadia" which is a little over 600 feet. Used in this context "...**twelve thousand furlongs...**" would mean the New Jerusalem is 1,400 miles on each side and 1,400 miles tall. To help us form a mental image of what that means let's compare its size to a few things we're more familiar with:

- By land 1,400 miles is about the distance from Suffolk Virginia to Houston Texas.
- It would take the average person about 60 days to walk that distance if they could maintain a steady pace for 8 hours a day.
- Typically the highest clouds we see on earth are about 8,500 feet (1.6 miles) for fluffy Cumulus clouds and up to 45,000 feet (8.5 miles) for wispy Cirrus clouds.
- By comparison, the cruising altitude of a commercial airliner is normally about 30,000 to 40,000 feet (6-8 miles).
- That means the height of the New Jerusalem is roughly 175 times higher than the highest clouds you would normally see or the highest altitude an airliner would normally fly.
- Or maybe another more compelling comparison would be the fact our visible atmosphere (the blue sky we can see) turns to black space at about 150,000 feet (28 miles). If the New Jerusalem were in that type of atmospheric environment it would mean the top 99% of the city would be in space - in the dark. But fortunately it won't be because the Lord tells us, "**23. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.**" (Revelation 21:23). In other words, in God's new creation there will be no darkness at all. Not even at 1,400 miles in the sky.

So, given the dimensions of the city some might wonder if it will be large enough to house the hundreds-of-millions of people who have been saved throughout the centuries. Of course the answer is yes because God knows exactly how big it needs to be. But just to satisfy our curiosity let's consider this thought. A city 1,400 miles square would consist of approximately 2 million square miles per floor, or about 1.3 billion acres. Compare that to New York City which houses over 8 million people in only 302 square miles. We have no idea how many "floors" the New Jerusalem will have, but just for perspective, if the ceiling height was 8 feet, like a modern American house, you could conceivably fit 92,400 floors in the cubed city, with each floor being 2 million

square miles each. Now...the Bible doesn't tell us all this but this perspective might help us get our minds around the fact the New Jerusalem is a pretty big place.

Hallelujah!

Verses 19-20

Then John gives us a measurement of the city's walls which are, "**17...one hundred and forty-four cubits...**". The term cubit is used many times in the Bible. It is an ancient form of anthropometric measurement using parts of the human body to approximate a specific distance. For example, even today we commonly use the measurement of a "foot" to measure distance, horses are measured in "hands" and sometimes distance is measured in "steps". In the ancient world other measurements were related to the length of a finger joint, the palm of your hand or the stride of a man. In this case a cubit was measured from a person's elbow to the tip of their middle finger. This comes from the Latin word "cubitum" (Greek "paykus" and Hebrew "am-mah") which means "elbow". That would make a cubit is approximately 18 inches or 1.5 feet. In days before rulers and tape measures these simple measurement terms could be understood and used by anyone. Using this conversion factor a wall of 144 cubits would be approximately 215 feet thick. But this is no simple concrete wall. Verse 18 tells us, "**18. The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.**" This helps us picture in our minds the majestic perfection of God's dwelling place. The walls will be made of jasper, and the city itself will be made of pure gold. Gold so perfect it is clear as glass. Similarly, "**19. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, 20. the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.**" A lot has been written about these stones in an attempt to explain what they mean. But since the Bible doesn't tell us, all of these opinions are conjectured to some degree. Although the names used to identify these stones may have changed through the centuries and across various languages, they serve to identify the perfection of God's dwelling place. There may also be an implied connection between these twelve stones and the twelve stones of the priests' breastplates in the Old Testament, but again, the Bible doesn't specifically say that. But in His instructions for its manufacture God commanded, "**17. And you shall put settings of stones in it, four rows of stones: The first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and an emerald; this shall be the first row; 18. the second row shall be a turquoise, a sapphire, and a diamond; 19 the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; 20. and the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper. They shall be set in gold settings. 21. And the stones shall have the names of the**

sons of Israel, twelve according to their names, like the engravings of a signet, each one with its own name; they shall be according to the twelve tribes.

(Exodus 28:17-21). Here we see a similar pattern of stones in both the foundation stones of the city and the twelve ephod stones of the chosen tribes of Israel. This further illustrates the fact that God's kingdom is built on the solid foundation of the gospel as first proclaimed through the sacrificial system and then by the twelve apostles. A foundation with layers made of precious stones; each being a perfect creation of God. Much like the walls of clear jasper and the streets of glass-like gold the foundation is made of twelve different colors of precious stones that would reflect and magnify the brilliance of the glory of God. (Revelation 21:11&21). Can you just imagine the blinding radiance of God's glory shining through the walls and foundation of His city in a rainbow of dazzling colors. It is a scene our human minds cannot clearly comprehend. The glory of God in all His brilliant splendor:

- It is the glory John saw in chapter one when he saw Jesus in His divine glory (Revelation 1:15).
- It is the glory John saw at the throne of God, "***...3. And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.***" (Revelation 4:3).
- It is the glory of a God sung by the heavenly host proclaiming, "***...Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!***." (Revelation 4:8).
- It is the face of Moses made radiant by simply being in the presence of God. (Exodus 34:30).
- It is the church, the bride, made radiant and holy through its cleansing by Jesus, the Groom. (Ephesians 5:27).
- It is the glory of the Lord that shone around the angels who announced the long awaited birth of the Messiah shouting, "***Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!***" (Luke 2:14).
- It is the Psalmist' proclamation, "***1. O Lord, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth, Who have set Your glory above the heavens!***" (Psalm 8:1).
- It is the undisputed, undeniable and unstoppable glory of God. It is the love and grace and mercy manifest in His dwelling, with His people. It is the glorious light

of His power through His Son Jesus, the light cast upon the new creation and refracted in a rainbow of colors through His holy city.

Verse 21

And if that wasn't enough to give you goose bumps, John then tells us, "**21. The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.**". Of all the building materials listed here, only one (at least in an earthly sense) requires an additional action of creation. In nature, a pearl is the byproduct of an injured oyster. When a grain of sand or other potentially dangerous substance becomes lodged in an oyster it will protect itself by forming a multi-layer ring of calcium carbonate around the grain. This covering becomes a pearl which acts to seal the irritant away from the oyster. Similarly, Jesus, through His own blood atoning sacrifice covers us in His grace as an insulating barrier to our sin. Maybe this is an overly poetic thought, but it will remind us of our Lord's substantial suffering every time we walk through one of those gates.

And where do these gates lead? To "**21...the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass,**" When we enter those gates we will walk on streets of gold. A thought often cited in song lyrics and poetic literature, but here we see it is real. Our feet, glorified in our heavenly form, will walk the hallowed halls of God.

Hallelujah!

Verses 22-27

But then John tells us something that's even more fascinating. Although New Jerusalem will be the place we dwell with the Lord, it has no temple - no central place of worship. But why? John tells us.

22. But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. 24. And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. 25. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). 26. And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. 27. But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life."

But how can there be no temple? All through the Bible we see references to God's temple; the place where He dwells.

- On earth it was represented by the tabernacle:
 - The place in which God came down to dwell and meet with man. The place where God's glory settled on earth. (Exodus 33:9 / 40:34-35).
 - The temple housed the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place - the Holy of Holies. A sanctuary for God separated from man by a curtain that restricted access to God's most holy place except under specific circumstances. (Exodus 40:3).
 - It was the place where the ark of the covenant was kept, and a place filled with the glory of the Lord. (I Kings 8:6-11).
- We also see reference to His temple in heaven:
 - Habakkuk declares, "**20. But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him.**" (Habakkuk 2:20).
 - Isaiah, in a vision very similar to John's, proclaimed, "**1. In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.**" (Isaiah 6:1).
 - To the church at Philadelphia Jesus made a promise we see fulfilled in Revelation, "**12. He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.**" (Revelation 3:12).
 - In Revelation John saw the temple several times:
 - "**15. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.**" (Revelation 7:15).
 - "**19. Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.**" (Revelation 11:19).
 - "**5. After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.**" (Revelation 15:5).

- **“6. And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands.”** (Revelation. 15:6)

It seems clear from these references there appears to be a physical temple in heaven. The place where God sits on His throne, where the heavenly ark of the covenant is kept, where angels come and go. But now, in Revelation 21:22 John states it is no longer there. The temple he saw so many times in his glorious vision is seen no more. But where did it go? Scripture does not specifically say but there are some clues we can consider to understand why a physical temple will not be needed in eternity.

- In one sense the earthly temple has already been replaced by the indwelt soul of the believer, **“16. Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17. If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.”** (I Corinthians 3:16-17).
- Paul clarifies this even further in his second letter to the Corinthians, **“16. And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.”** (2 Corinthians 6:16). Does that sound familiar? A time when God will come down and dwell among His people. The time John saw in the future when he said, **“3. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.”** (Revelation 21:3).
- It appears that in the New Jerusalem God will no longer dwell separated in His temple. The need for separation was removed by Jesus (Matthew 27:51 / Luke 23:45), so in eternity there is no need for a Most Holy Place to separate God from His sinful people. Instead, there will be no sinful people or sin at all in the New Jerusalem. God will dwell with His people, we will see His face and worship Him wherever we go (Revelation 21:3 and 22:4).

But also consider the words of Jesus, **“19. Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”** (John 2:19). Jesus is the temple. He is the place and focus of our worship and no other physical temple will be required. John confirms this at the end of verse 22, **“22....for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.”** When this happens a physical temple will no longer be

needed. For God Himself, the Lamb and the Spirit will be the temple. Remember, Jesus said He was going to prepare a place for us so that where He is we can be also. (John 14:3). In order to be where He is does not require us to enter a temple to see Him. For no temple will be needed. We will be totally indwelt and in-place with God, **“And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”** (1 Thessalonians 4:17b).

And with our Lord as our temple,” **23. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. 24. And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it.”**

In the beginning there was light before there was a sun and moon. When God said **“...Let there be light...”** (Genesis 1:3a) light was given but it was not the sun and the moon because they were not created until the fourth day (Genesis 1:14-19). God’s original action separated the light from the darkness but not through natural means. So what light was God talking about? Scripture tells us:

- **“6. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”** (2 Corinthians 4:6).
- **“13. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14. in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.”** (Colossians 1:13).
- **“1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2. He was in the beginning with God. 3. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.”** (John 1:1-5)

Jesus is the light, **“9...the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.”** (John 1:9b) Jesus Himself declared this for all time when He proclaimed, **“12...I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”** (John 8:12 / 9:5 / 2 Peter 1:19). God’s eternal city will need no external or created light because, **“...God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.”** (1 John 1:5b). Isaiah also saw a view of this in his prophecy of God’s eternal Jerusalem., **“Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you...”** and **“The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. “The sun shall no longer be your light by day, Nor**

for brightness shall the moon give light to you; But the Lord will be to you an everlasting light, And your God your glory. Your sun shall no longer go down, Nor shall your moon withdraw itself; For the Lord will be your everlasting light, And the days of your mourning shall be ended." (Isaiah 60:1 and 19-20).

"24. And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. 25. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there)."

Here the word "...**nations**..." means the inhabitants of the future New Jerusalem. It is us. This term comes from the Greek word "*Ethne*", which can mean "*a multitude living together*". No longer will mankind be defined as, "...**peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues**..." (Revelation 17:15b), but will instead be all as one people; righteous before God., "...9. **But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;**" (I Peter 2:9). This will be a time Isaiah saw when, "**The Gentiles shall come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising.**" (Isaiah 60:3). But note something interesting in verse 25, "**25. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there).**". Two points seem to be made here; free access and perpetual days.

- Gates that are never shut indicates we will be free to come and go. God will be everywhere and dwelling with us, so we won't have to go to a specific place at a specific time to worship Him. We will be in constant worship because we will be in the constant presence of God. The gates always being open is an invitation to come and go from the great city.
- We don't really know what a "...**day**..." will be like in heaven. There will be no night (darkness) but there will also be no sun or moon to gauge the time of day. Probably because we will have no need to measure time. By its very nature eternity has no time limits and needs no time measurement. We will not need schedules or deadlines and we'll never have to be at a certain place by a certain time. By using the word "...**day**...", but clarifying there is no "...**night**...", helps us understand the eternal state of a continuous and unchanging existence.

"26. And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. 27. But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life."

Isaiah foresaw a similar view during the Millennial Kingdom, when Jesus will reign in Jerusalem on a reconstructed earth, "**11. Therefore your gates shall be open**

continually; They shall not be shut day or night, That men may bring to you the wealth of the Gentiles, And their kings in procession." (Isaiah 60:11). Now in Revelation 21 John sees the final future state of creation when God will dwell in the New Jerusalem on a recreated earth. An earth with no sin. An earth inhabited only by the Justified (saved), who became Sanctified (spiritually mature) in life, and will now be Glorified in our eternal life. And as such we will have no sin, no temptation of sin, and no ability to sin. But our glorified state will not be the result of anything we have done on our own. Just as we were Justified and Sanctified by faith, our glorified state will be our heavenly condition as a result of the work of Christ. This "...**glory and the honor...**"; will be our glorification through Jesus and the honor of redeemed saints. Every time we enter the city we will bring our glory and honor with us and lay it before our All Holy God. Never again will we be distracted by life or brought down by sin. We will bring all that we have to the Lord because He will be the source of all we need.

Now we come to Revelation chapter 22 and the conclusion of God's word. In chapter 21 John gave us a fairly detailed description of the exterior of God's eternal city, the New Jerusalem, to help us understand its size, shape and materials. We also saw how God's glory will shine through its perfect composition. Now John will take us inside the city, which like his description of the exterior is challenging for our human minds to fully comprehend. But whatever understanding we take away will lift our hearts with the glorious truths of our eternity with the Lord.

Chapter 22 is not only the end of Revelation but it is the end of God's spoken word to man. Years before, a much younger apostle John recorded in his gospel, "**24. This is the disciple [John] who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true. 25. And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.**" (John 21:24-25). But God didn't fill the world with inspired books. Instead, He gave us one book, His holy word, the Bible. A single condensed volume that gloriously chronicles God's supreme authority, creative power and redemptive work, and provides everything we need to know how to accept His saving grace. Now, in Revelation chapter 22, we come to the end of God's holy word. An ending that as we will see includes His most impassioned plea to mankind.

And with that let's begin our conclusion of the beautiful Book of Revelation and its description of our eternal home.

"1. And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. 2. In the middle of its street, and on

either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. 4. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. 5. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.”

Verse 1

“1. And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.”

The prophet Zechariah foresaw a similar vision, “**6. It shall come to pass in that day That there will be no light; The lights will diminish. 7. It shall be one day which is known to the Lord— Neither day nor night. But at evening time it shall happen that it will be light. 8. And in that day it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and half of them toward the western sea; In both summer and winter it shall occur. 9. And the Lord shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be— “The Lord is one,” And His name one.**” (Zechariah 14:6-9). Although this passage speaks to the Second Coming of Christ and the nourishing river that will bring life to Israel during the Millennial Kingdom, it also serves as a preview of what we will see in God’s final and eternal New Jerusalem. In both cases the water is the source of refreshment for God’s faithful followers. Much is said in the Bible about water. In Revelation 21:6, the Lord said of those who enter His eternal kingdom, “**6...I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.**” The thirsty are those of us who recognize our spiritual need and crave nourishment that can only come from God.

- In the Beatitudes Jesus said His followers will be blessed because we, “**...thirst for righteousness...**” (Matthew 5:6b). Here He was speaking of those who are not satisfied by the cesspool of contaminated worldly waters, but who, “**...shall be filled....**” with the water of life. With the result being, “**37...Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. 38. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.**” (John 7:37b-38).
- This is the same promise given to the multitudes before the throne in Revelations chapter 7 - those who will, “**...nor thirst anymore.**” (Revelation 7:16b).

- It is also the promise Jesus made to the Samaritan woman at the well, "**13. Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, 14. but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."**" (John 4:13-14). This spring of water, the water of life, is the presence of God in our lives through our faith in Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit. As the Psalmist declares to God, "**For with you is the fountain of life for with You is the fountain of life...**" (Psalm 36:9a), and as Jeremiah proclaimed, God is, "**...the fountain of living waters...**" (Jeremiah 2:13b). A spring that comes to those who, "**14...washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.**" (Revelation 7:14b). "**16 They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; 17. for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.**" (Revelation 7:16-17).

Just as He is today, in eternity Jesus will be our spiritual river of life. He is the living water that wells-up from a dry and parched soul to wash us clean and nourish our sin-ridden lives. Through Him and only Him will we never thirst again. It is Him alone we must crave -- with all our hearts. It is in Him we must be totally immersed. It is by Him we must be nourished. It is the Lord who will, "**11...satisfy your soul in drought, and strengthen your bones; you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.**" (Isaiah 58:11b). Clearly, Jesus is our water of life, but here in verse 1 John may also be talking about the role of the Holy Spirit. He references, "**...the throne of God and of the Lamb...**", but doesn't mention the Holy Spirit - the third part of the Holy Trinity. Some commentators believe the Holy Spirit is represented here by the perfectly clear river of life flowing from the throne. We see an indication of this perspective in John's gospel when Jesus indicates the Spirit of God is the "**...water...**" that nourishes our redeemed soul. "**37. On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. 38. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."** 39. But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." (John 7:37-39). Later, when Jesus ascended to heaven He was replaced on earth by the Holy Spirit who was sent to indwell all believers. (Luke 11:13 / John 14:16-17 / John 16:13). The Holy Spirit indwells in our spirit and brings Jesus into our lives. It is the Holy Spirit who first testified of Jesus when He inspired the words of the prophets and apostles, (2 Peter 1:21). The water that flows from the throne of God is the water of life, the eternal washing and nourishing for those who have the testimony of Jesus. Those of us who acknowledged

the sinful drought of our earthly lives and gave ourselves to the Lord. No longer will we thirst. No longer will we be spiritually dry. For we will be continuously nourished by the Spirit of God.

The healing and nourishing waters of God flow from the throne. Not an oxygen and hydrogen composition we know of as water, but the life giving refreshment of God through the Holy Spirit. This water is not a created element but is God's continual gift to His faithful children of the living waters of an eternal life. We will be in the city because of our earthly faith in Christ, "**22...having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.**". (Hebrews 10:22b). This is what the Psalmist foresaw when he said, "**4. There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High.**" (Psalm 46:4). This is the river that makes its way through the streets of the new city of Jerusalem. Not only a physical water flowing over golden pavement, but a permeating, engulfing and everlasting gift of eternal life flowing over us, from God.

Verse 2

"2. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

There was a tree of life in the Garden of Eden - the first perfectly created place, "**9. And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.**" (Genesis 2:9 and 17). "**17. but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.**" (Genesis 2:17) And therein lies the proverbial choice of man -- the single commandment that would separate victory from failure, and obedience from sin. This gave man the freewill choice to either be obedient and enjoy eternity with God, or disobey and suffer the consequences of eternal death. God placed both trees in the center of the garden but did not force man to choose either one. He left that decision entirely up to us. Both trees were equally visible and accessible, and both could be eaten from. One tree offered promise and one resulted in sin. One gave life and one took life away. One represented man's choice of God as his eternal Savior and one as his eternal Judge. Man was given free access to both trees and was given the intelligence needed to make the right decision. But mankind failed. Both man and woman, and when they did, 100% of the population of earth opted to disobey God and in doing so fell into sin. By choosing the forbidden fruit mankind fell to temptation and thereby fell into the curse of God. The curse of death on earth and the risk of eternal

damnation unless he repented of what he had done and accepted the grace payment of substitutional death. For his insolence man was banished from God's perfect place and could no longer live there (Genesis 3:22).

And so there will be a tree of life in heaven - the final perfect created place. Maybe more than one tree because John says the tree stands, “**...on either side of the river...**” But this tree may also represent the eternal gift from God to the people who will dwell with Him for eternity. The tree is fruitful, always giving an endless bounty of fruit for God’s people. Constantly being renewed, it is always fresh, always available and always sustaining for eternity. Notably, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is absent. There will be no more temptation, no more sin and no need to have a knowledge of evil. It is only the tree of life that is seen in heaven. The tree of life that is a constant refreshment from God for eternity.

Interestingly, the Psalmist also writes of trees representing the righteous people of God, **“1. Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; 2. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. 3. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.”** (Psalm 1:1-3). Jeremiah saw a similar view of God’s people, **“7. Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord. 8. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit.”** (Jeremiah 17:8). Although these verses are not directly related to the tree of life in heaven, what more perfect description is there of a resident of God’s holy dwelling place. There we will have no fear, no drought, nor the burning stress of life. We will be nourished by the eternal waters of life and bear righteous fruit daily as we meditate on God and continuously worship His holy presence.

Verse 3

“3. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.”

The curse of man's sinful failure will be gone. The curse that separated the obedient Adam from the fallen Adam. (Romans 5:12). The curse placed on the earth, mankind and satan that was punctuated by the promise of a redeeming Messiah. We see this in the dichotomy of God’s prophetic promise, that, **“15...He [Jesus] shall bruise your head, and you [satan] shall bruise His heel.”** (Genesis 3:15). This promise of

redemption comes to those who believe in Christ as a counter to the curse of death for anyone who failed to repent of their sin. God cursed satan to be the lowest, slithering and vile creature of all creation, woman was cursed with pain that would occur during the most beautiful time of her life, man was cursed with toil in order to survive, the earth was cursed with thorns and thistles, and they were all cursed with eternal death unless atoned by the Lamb. (Genesis 3:16-19). In heaven there will be no curse. All of God's promises and judgment actions will have been fulfilled. The only inhabitants of His eternal kingdom will be those of us who were victorious over our sin through the work of Christ on the cross. Those who thirsted after Him to quench our spiritual needs. (Revelation 21:6-7).

And in the New Heaven, New Earth and New Jerusalem we will serve God for eternity. It's unclear what "...**serve him...**" will entail, but whatever it is will be glorious beyond anything we can imagine today. Our service will be continuous, as we praise the Lord who rescued us from an eternity in hell to give us an eternity nourished by the waters of life. It will be service without weariness, service without toil, service without sweat, or pain, or stress, or strain, or any other way we can describe work on earth. It will be the true fulfillment of Colossians 3:23, "**23. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.**"

Verse 4

"4. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads."

Never will a more beautiful thought ever cross our minds -- the fact we will see our Lord face to face. We will see the love in His eyes and hear the fountain of His voice. As we discussed earlier, when we think of heaven and try to imagine what it will be like to stand in awe before our glorious King, we cannot adequately put into words all the amazing thoughts that run through our mind. But can you imagine what it will be like to see His face, hear His voice and be able to sit in His holy presence while we bask in the brilliant radiance of His glory.

Jesus is, "...**the image of the invisible God...**" (Colossians 1:15). The Father in heaven, in His glorious state, cannot be seen by man in his inglorious state. That's why Jesus came and took on flesh to dwell among us, (John 1:14) in order to be our tangible earthly image of God. But that will change when we, in our glorified state, dwell in the presence of God. There we will see His face. A sight we can scarcely imagine. To see the face of God, to bow before Him, to worship Him not only in heart but in sight. What a glorious eternity that will be. His name will be on our foreheads, signifying we are owned by God. We are His people, His children and His property. Much like the

144,000 Jewish evangelists who will testify of Christ during the Tribulation, we will also be marked as God's own. (Revelation 14:1 / 7:3-4). This is the authentication mark - like a royal seal - bearing witness that we are subjects of, and subject to, God and God alone for eternity.

Verse 5

“5. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.”

In Revelation chapter 21 John brought to our attention the fact there will be no created or external light in God's eternal world. Instead, Jesus, the *Light of the World*, reflecting the glory of God will be the light. ***“23. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.”*** (Revelation 21:23). How could there ever be night or darkness in a place where we can see God's face? His radiant face is like that seen in our Lord's transfigured state, ***“2. and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.”*** (Matthew 17:2). It is the glory of God seen in the face of Moses when he had been in the Lord's presence, ***“29. Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses' hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him.”*** (Exodus 34:29). And amazingly, it will be our radiance as well. The radiant light shining from those who put our faith in Christ Jesus. ***“5. Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame. They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed.”*** (Psalm 34:5). But to be clear, the radiance we will have is not our own. It is the reflected glory of Christ, ***“6. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”*** (2 Corinthians 4:6). The radiance of God will light His eternal dwelling. A light reflected in and through His people. Those of us who will serve Him and reign with Him forever.

Hallelujah!!

Conclusion

“20. He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.”
(Revelation 22:20)

World events indicate we are probably living in the Last Days. Unfortunately, we don't know how long that will be. The Lord is in no hurry because He already knows exactly when He will come to gather His bride and begin the seven years of Tribulation. Until then, we are to do as Paul tells Titus, ***“11. For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12. teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13. looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”*** (Titus 2:11-13). We should be eagerly anticipating the return of Jesus, not fearing what we see happening around us. Why? ***“20. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”*** (Philippians 3:20). We must eagerly await for the Lord's return, with the understanding that each day He delays presents another opportunity to lead someone to Christ and change their eternity.

So don't fear what you see happening in the world. God knows what is happening and in some way it is part of His grand plan. So with that understanding you can walk confidently knowing our God is in control.

A View of The Last Days An Eight Week Survey

Appendix God's Prophetic Timeline

Timeline Overview:

The timelines shown here are fairly self-explanatory. They begin with Genesis and end at the beginning of eternity in God's New Heaven, New Earth and New Jerusalem. Between those bookends are many scriptural references and events that in one way or another provide a connection between End Times prophecy and its fulfillment.

Chart 1 - Creation Through Silence

This chart covers several thousand years from the time of God's initial creation through the end of the *"Intertestamental Period"* between the Old Testament and New Testament. It starts with our first view of Jesus in Genesis 1:1-2 (see also John 1:1-14). From there it highlights scripture related to key events or Biblical prophecy. The beginning of the chart shows the emergence of sin and the curses that followed (on satan, on man, on the earth). We will see reference to this all through the Bible culminating in the completion of the curses in the Book of Revelation. The top half of the chart tracks the emergence of Israel, the Law, the first blood atonement and the Prophets. The bottom half highlights events such as the flood and the critically important prophecy of Daniel. This page ends at the 400 years of silence between the ministry of Malachi and the arrival of John the Baptist.

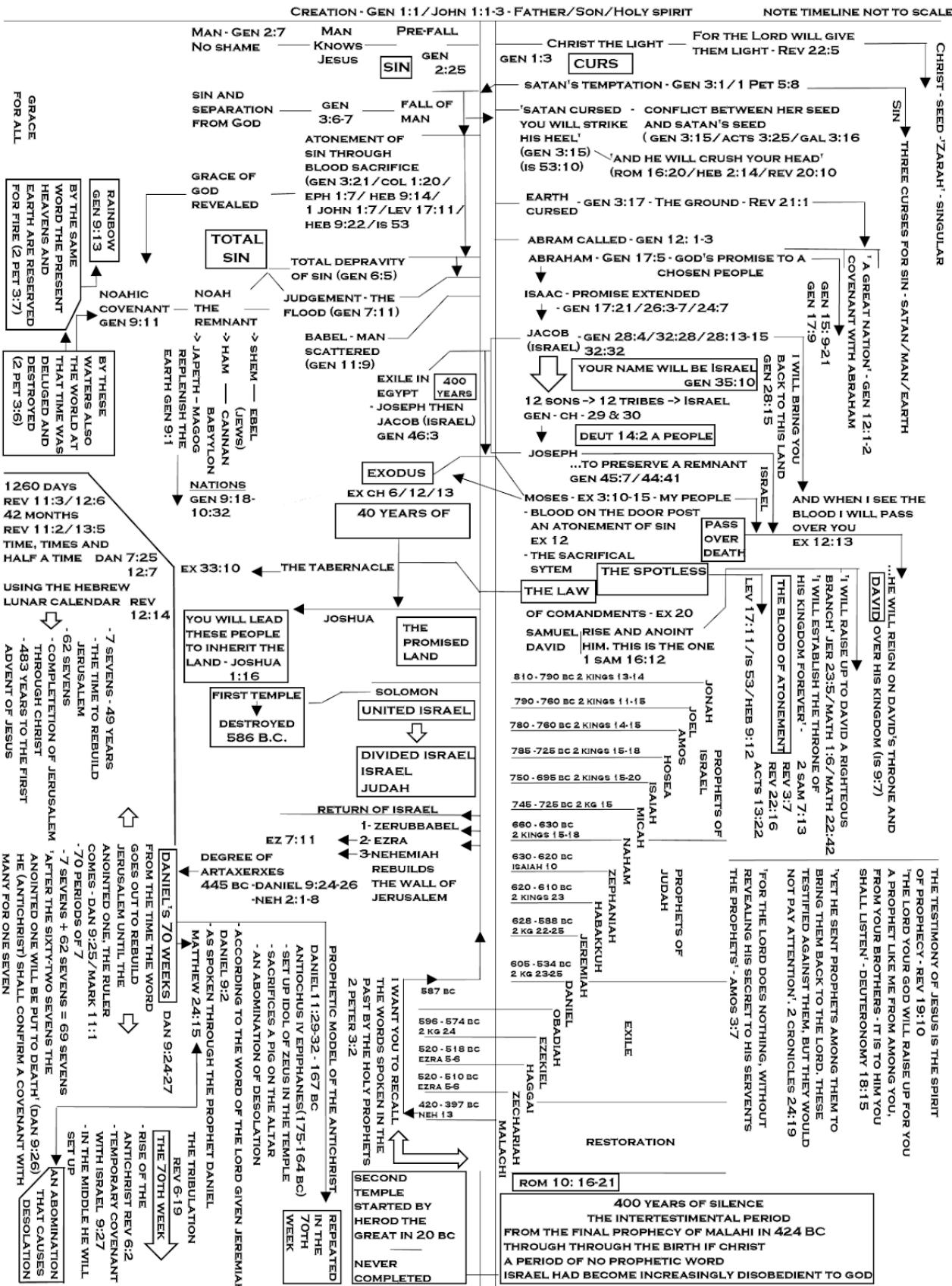


Chart 2 - The Prophet John Through the Rapture

The Bible doesn't tell us how long this time period will last because it covers the time from John the Baptist (the last Messianic Prophet) announcing the arrival of the Messiah, through the current Age of Grace and then to the future Rapture. Certainly, events seem to be lining up for the Rapture to occur soon but the exact timing is up to God. This chart covers the life of Jesus which was the fulfillment of over 300 prophecies in the Old Testament related to the earthly life of Christ.

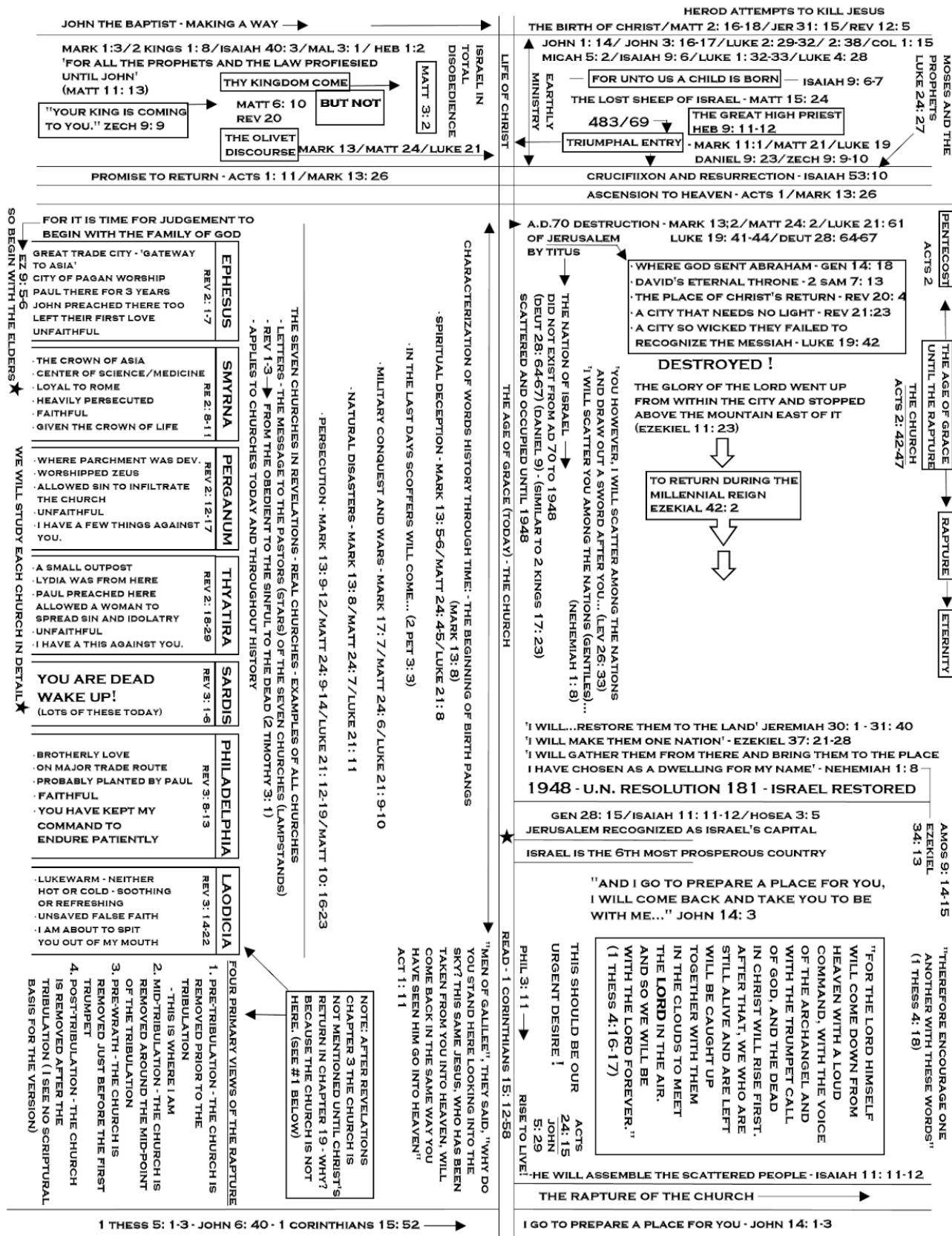


Chart 3 - The Beginning of the Tribulation

This chart covers the first half of the seven year Tribulation Period. From the emergence of the antichrist to the period just before the great Abomination of Desolation.



Chart 4 - The Abomination Through the Second Coming

This chart may be the most difficult to understand but it may also be the most exciting. Here we see a view of Jesus we don't normally see in the rest of the Bible. The last three Seals, culminating in the seven Trumpet judgments and seven Bowl judgments span the most evil period in history just prior to the glorious return of our Warrior King and His vengeance on satan and his followers.

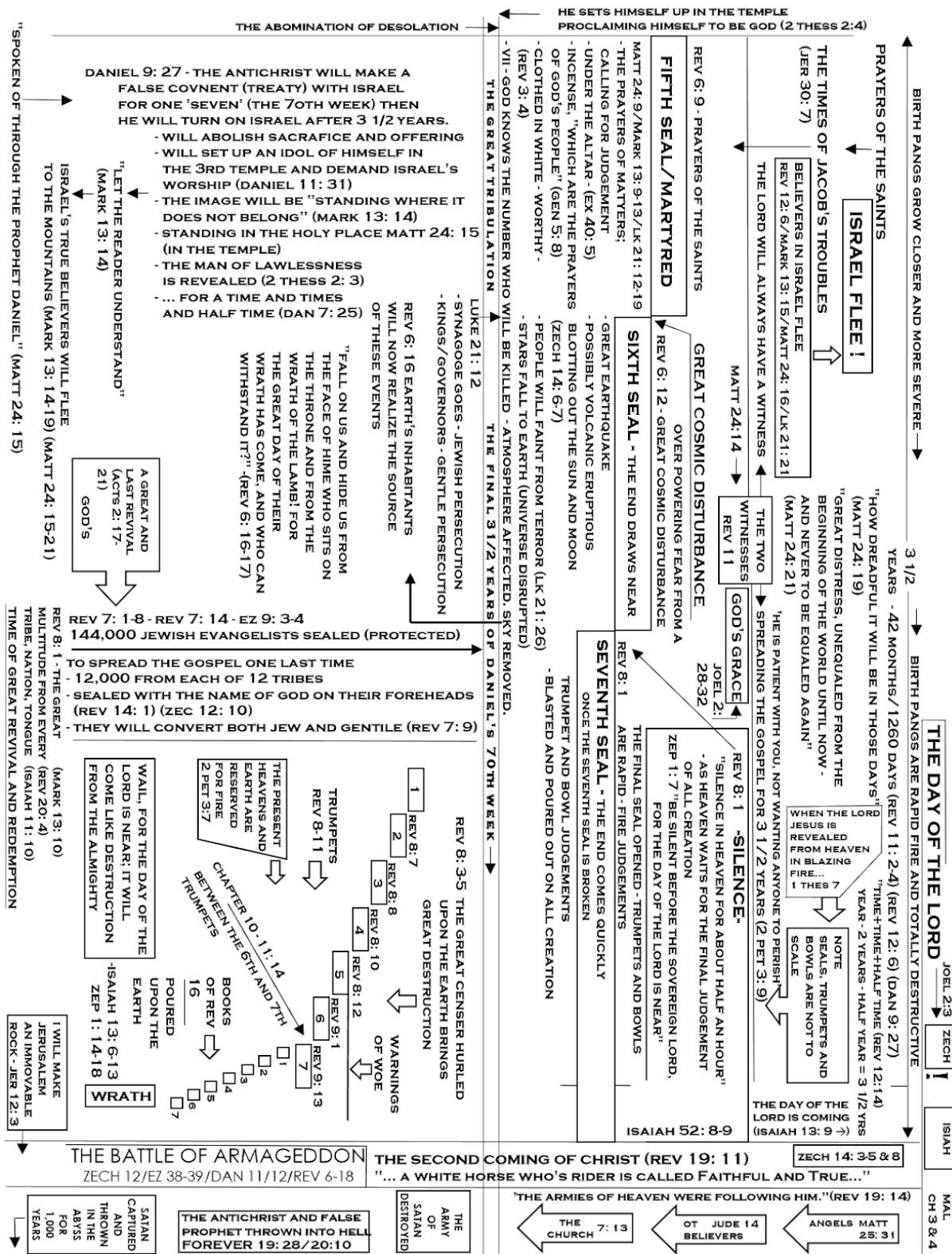


Chart 5 - The Millennial Kingdom Through Eternity

The final chart is one of victory. First for our victorious King and then for us, His faithful followers. Following the Tribulation and destruction of the antichrist, Jesus will establish His reign on earth for a thousand years. At the conclusion He will destroy satan and the remnant of all who follow him and will then usher us into our final eternity in the New Heaven, New Earth and New Jerusalem.

Thank you Lord.

