



**Bible Teaching  
& Publications**

# **The End Times**

## **Know What the Bible Actually Says**

By

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### **A Note from the Author**

When teaching His disciples about the His return and the events of the end times, Jesus warned them to **"Take heed that no one deceives you"**, Matthew 24:4. This warning is even more needed today as we move ever closer to the end time. The best way to reduce the risk of being deceived is to **KNOW WHAT THE BIBLE ACTUALLY SAYS**.

The purpose of this series of studies is to present the reader with key bible teachings and supporting information from history and world events along with discussion of the most significant issues. Interpretation of many end time scriptures often varies significantly between Christian churches and ministries; some of these interpretations are discussed in the study.



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## The End Times - Know What the Bible Actually Says

### PART 1. WHAT LIES AHEAD

Part 1 is a brief summary of many of the main events leading up to and during the end time period. More details are presented in subsequent studies. The events are not necessarily in the order in which they are presented in the Bible, nor are they meant to be in the exact order in which they will actually take place. Much of the discussion is based on Matthew 24, when Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives and taught His disciples about His return and the end of the age.

Before He was taken up to heaven, Jesus warned the disciples in Acts 1:6-8 not to waste time speculating about when He will return. Instead He urged them to focus on being His witnesses to the end of the earth. In other words, our main focus should be on the **end of the earth** and not the end of the world, and we should concentrate on our Master's **business** rather than His return! Sadly, this warning has been frequently ignored, resulting in the shipwreck of the faith of many of God's people.

#### **Wars and rumors of wars, nations and kingdoms rising against each other**

Matthew 24:6-7

When Jesus spoke these words, Israel had been free from war for over 90 years, albeit under Roman domination. However, this prophecy was soon fulfilled when Israel was plunged into wars against Rome. Eventually the Roman Empire crumbled, and there have been "*wars and rumors of wars*" ever since. In recent times warfare has grown to a worldwide scale, and we now live under the threat of weapons of mass destruction. However, Jesus told His disciples not to be troubled as these things must take place before the end comes – good advice today when so many around us are living in worry and fear.

#### **Famines, pestilences and earthquakes in various places**

Matthew 24:7

This sounds like the TV nightly news! Despite advances in science, the threat of starvation is still prevalent in some parts of the world; while in this day of easy and rapid international travel, diseases can quickly become a worldwide threat in a way which could not have happened in the past. In addition, earthquakes appear to be becoming more frequent. Again, Jesus said these events would take place, so we should not be surprised. He called them the "*beginning of sorrows*" or "*birth pangs*" in another Bible translation, indicating that they will take place during the lead up to the end time period.

#### **Hatred, persecution and martyrdom of believers**

Matthew 24:9

This soon began to be fulfilled in the early church, has continued ever since, and is still happening today. The Book of the Revelation indicates that it will intensify during the end time period.

#### **Many will be offended (fall away), will hate and betray one another**

Matthew 24:10

Jesus Himself was the first victim of this when Judas betrayed Him. Since then, whenever times of persecution have come, some have indeed fallen away and betrayed others. Sadly, the hatred and

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persecution have all too often come from those who call themselves Christians. On a positive note, persecution has frequently led to the revival and increase of the true church.

### Many false Christs and false prophets will rise up and deceive many

Matthew 24:11

The scriptures reveal that it wasn't long before this began to happen in the early church; and it has continued over the centuries. In the Jewish uprising against Rome in AD 132-135, Simon Bar Kokhba was proclaimed to be the Messiah. As we have drawn closer to the end times, false prophets appear to have multiplied, making predictions which don't come to pass and deceiving and disappointing many believers. Others have drawn their followers into destructive cults with disastrous and sometimes deadly results.

### Because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold

Matthew 24:12

This appears to refer to pressure on believers due to the widespread rejection of our accountability to God. This has certainly occurred in modern times with attacks on the scriptures and rejection of Biblical moral laws, especially in Western countries. The faith of many young believers in particular has been shaken, if not destroyed, by humanistic teachings in schools and universities. Even worse, there are those within some of the major church dominations who undermine the authority of the Bible and approve practices which the Bible clearly calls immoral. The scriptures indicate that this pressure will get stronger in the end time period; however, Jesus went on to say that *"he who endures to the end will be saved"* – assuring us that He will always bring us through when we make up our minds to follow Him no matter what!

### This Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world

Matthew 24:14

One of the greatest positive events which will occur before the end comes is the worldwide preaching of the gospel. Clearly this is intensifying today, as new tools such as radio, TV, satellites, and now the internet, are providing the means to reach the world as never before in history.

### Rebirth of Israel

Isaiah 11:10-12

Many of the Old Testament prophets spoke of the rebirth of Israel and the gathering of the Jews from the nations of the world. Some of these referred to the return of Jews from exile in Babylon as recorded in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, but others, such as Isaiah in Isaiah 11:10-12 refer to a future event when the Jews are gathered from all parts of the world. Isaiah reveals that this will occur when the Gentiles are seeking the *"Root of Jesse"* (Jesus), clearly referring to the present Church age. These prophecies began to be fulfilled in the late 19th century when Jews started to move into what was then Palestine. The process accelerated after the Second World War and culminated in the declaration of the state with of Israel on May 14, 1948.

### Jerusalem in Israeli Hands

Luke 21:24

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For 19 years after the rebirth of Israel, Jerusalem was divided between Israel and Jordan. However, on June 7, 1977, during the Six Day War, Jerusalem was reunited under Israeli rule. This dramatically fulfilled the word of Jesus in Luke 21:24 that the day would come when Jerusalem would no longer be *"trampled by Gentiles"*. Jesus also said that when this takes place, *"the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled"*. Clearly this is the era in which we now find ourselves. This was further emphasized when The USA recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel on December 6, 2017, and moved the US Embassy there on May 14, 2018.

### The Coming of the Antichrist and False Prophet

Revelation 1, 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12

Matthew 24:24 tells us that false christs and false prophets will arise in the end time, and will reach a climax when the antichrist and the false prophet appear on the scene. Revelation 13:5-15 tells us that they will be active on the world scene over a period of 3½ years, during which time they will persecute God's people and deceive the whole world with signs and lying wonders carried out with the power of Satan. In 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 it is revealed that God will send a strong delusion to believe the lies of the antichrist upon those who *"did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness ..... that they may be condemned"*. In other words, God will use the antichrist to bring about a clear division worldwide between those who refuse to believe and true believers. Revelation 13:16-17 indicates that this will be accomplished by the antichrist requiring a mark on everyone's right hand or forehead in order to be able to buy or sell. The technology to make this possible is now becoming a reality with countries such as Sweden and South Korea moving rapidly towards a cashless society with transactions activated by mobile phones, and embedded microchip and electronic tattoo activation under development. All that would be needed to complete the picture would be the mandatory use of "666" as the access code! The resulting division will enable God to release His final wrath. Until then 2 Peter 3:9 tells us that He is longsuffering, wanting to give every opportunity for people to come to repentance. Because of this we can regard the antichrist as an "evangelist in reverse", bringing all people to a decision for or against Christ!

### The Abomination of Desolation in the Temple

Matthew 24:15, Daniel 9:27

This appears to describe the setting up of an idol in the temple in Jerusalem, which Jesus said had been spoken of by the prophet Daniel. In fact, there are four references in the book of Daniel - 8:13, 9:27, 11:31 and 12:11. It is commonly regarded that a partial fulfilment of Daniel's prophecies took place when the Syrian Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes erected an altar to an idol in the temple in 169 BC. However, Jesus was clearly referring to another event in the future, as the Antiochus event took place well before Jesus was born in Bethlehem. The Bible also tells us that the antichrist will sit in the temple and declare himself to be God, and that an image of him will be set up to be worshipped (2 Thessalonians 2:4 and Revelation 13:14-15). For this to happen, the temple would have to be rebuilt in Jerusalem, of which more will be said in a later study. For the moment we should note that the sign Jesus pointed us to is **NOT** the rebuilding of the temple, **but the setting up of the abomination in the temple**. Thus, however exciting it would be, the rebuilding of the temple itself does not necessarily mark the beginning of the Great Tribulation.

### The Great Tribulation

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Matthew 24:15-24, Revelation 16:1)

Jesus said that there is going to be a period of Great Tribulation which will start when the abomination is set up in the temple. Based on the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation, this appears to be 3½ years before the downfall of the antichrist. It is very important to distinguish between the great tribulation and the wrath of God which is to be poured out at the end of the final 3½ year period. Now there are various opinions as to whether Christians will still be on Earth during the great tribulation. One view is that the believers will be caught up to meet Christ (the Rapture) before the tribulation period starts. This was popularized by people such as J. N. Darby (1800-1882) and C.I Schofield (1843-1921) through his well-known reference bible. However, the historic view has been that believers will in fact be on Earth during the tribulation period, and will be caught up at the end of this period, but before the final wrath of God is poured out. This topic will be addressed in more detail in a later study.

### The Return of Jesus

Matthew 24:30

The literal visible return of Jesus is an **ABSOLUTELY CLEAR PROMISE OF THE BIBLE**, supported by numerous references. Jesus Himself spoke of it on a number of occasions including Matthew 16:27, 24:30, 25:31, Luke 21:27, and John 14:3. Other scriptures include Acts 1:11, 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 2 Thessalonians 1:7, 2:1, 1 John 2:28 and Revelation 1:7. However it is vital to note that Jesus told us that **no one knows the time, not even the angels, only God Himself** (Matthew 24:36). He went on to warn us to be always ready and watchful as He is *"coming at an hour we do not expect"* (Matthew 24:42-44). Thus we must never listen to any prediction of the date of His return, no matter who comes up with it. Despite the clear warnings of Jesus, this has been one of the main areas where believers have been led astray, and we can expect even more of the same in the future. We should also heed scriptures such as Revelation 1:7 and other similar passages which tell us that *"He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him"*. He **won't** be revealed only to some "super spiritual" group or special church!

### The Rapture

Matthew 24:40-41

Here Jesus told His disciples that at the time of His coming, some will be taken and others left. The Apostle Paul makes it clearer in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 that *"we who are alive and remain shall be caught up ..... to meet the Lord in the air"*. In 1 Corinthians 15:42-54, he reveals that those who are caught up will be instantaneously changed from having a mortal natural body to having an immortal spiritual body – surely one of the most dramatic events in the history of world! As mentioned above, there are various opinions about the timing of the rapture in relation to the other end time events, which will be discussed in more detail later.

### Israel Delivered

Romans 11:25-32, Zechariah 12-14

Although there were many Israelites among the early followers of Jesus (including the 12 Apostles and Paul) the nation and its leaders as a whole rejected Him as Messiah. However, in Romans 11:25-32, the Apostle Paul reveals that the time will come when all Israel will receive Jesus as their Messiah. This will happen when *"the fullness of the Gentiles has come in"*, indicating that it will happen at a time when no more Gentiles are being saved. In the Old Testament a time of national repentance is described in

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Zechariah 12:10 to 13:6, when *"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"*, clearly a reference to Jesus. Zechariah 13 and 14 go on to describe in detail how a remnant of Israel will escape the horrors of the final battle – but more of that later.

### The Wrath of God

Revelation 16

This passage tells us that the Great Tribulation is to be followed by the terrible wrath of God, which concludes with the battle of Armageddon (verse 16). Revelation 14:17-20 and 19:15 call it *"the great winepress of the wrath of God"*. Thankfully for believers, 1 Thessalonians 5:9 assures believers that *"God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ"*. Other scriptures which confirm that believers will not experience the wrath of God include Romans 5:9 and 1 Thessalonians 1:10, which means that the Rapture will happen first.

### The Battle of Armageddon

Revelation 19:11-21 and 16:12-16, Daniel 11:44-45

These passages prophesy that there will be a great battle at the climax of the Great Tribulation involving armies from over the whole world. At this time Jesus will return and the antichrist and the false prophet will be taken and cast into the lake of fire. The word Armageddon is generally considered to come from the Hebrew *"Har Megiddo"* which means the mountain or hill of Megiddo. The location is commonly believed to be the Jezreel Valley in Israel, which stretches southeast from the coast north of Mount Carmel to the Jordan River at Beth-shan. A view from Mt Carmel is shown below.



This valley was the site of the ancient cities of Jezreel and Megiddo, and has a long history of great battles. It was the scene of two great victories for Israel, Barak's victory over the Canaanites in Judges 4 and Gideon's victory over the Midianites in Judges 7. It was also the place where Saul and his sons died in battle against the Philistines (1 Samuel 31:8), and where King Josiah was killed by the Egyptians (2 Kings 23).

### The 1000 year rule of Christ (Millennial Kingdom)

Revelation 20:4-6

Revelation 20:2-9 tells us that at the return of Jesus, Satan will be bound for a thousand years during which time Christ will rule and reign on Earth from Jerusalem together with the resurrected believers. This is commonly referred to as the Millennial Kingdom or simply The Millennium. Although this Bible passage appears to clearly refer to a literal rule of Christ on Earth, some theologians and church groups

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believe that it is only symbolic of the church age. The passage also reveals that the rest of the dead will also be resurrected, but not until the end of the thousand years.

### The Final Battle

Revelation 20:7-10

Revelation 20:7-10 reveals that at the end of the Millennium the **final battle** in the history of this world will take place. For reasons best known to God, Satan will be released from prison and will go out to deceive the nations of the world into a final rebellion against God and lead them into battle against God's people in Jerusalem. But God will destroy them with "*fire from heaven*", and Satan will receive his final sentence to be cast into the lake of fire to join the antichrist and false prophet.

### Judgement

Revelation 20:11-16

After the final defeat and judgment of Satan at the end of the Millennium, the rest of the dead from all the ages will be resurrected to face God's judgment at the **great white throne** – a grim prospect indeed. Books recording what they did in their lives will be opened "*And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire*". As believers, we need to remember that the only reason that we will escape God's judgement is because Jesus bore the punishment for our sins on the cross!

### New Heaven and New Earth

Revelation 22, Isaiah 65:17-25, 2 Peter 3:13

Revelation 21 describes our final destination, the New Heaven and New Earth, which was prophesied by Old Testament Prophets such Isaiah and by the Apostle Peter, when we will live forever with Jesus and God our Father in the New Jerusalem. The Scriptures tell us that it will be the end of the world and the universe as we now know them, but will give way to something much more glorious.

*"And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely." Revelation 22:17*

**In subsequent studies**, we will look into what the Bible tells us about the exciting and momentous events that lie ahead in much more detail. The titles of the future studies are:

- |                          |                              |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| 2. The Man of Sin        | 8. Armageddon                |
| 3. The Missing Week      | 9. The Millennial Kingdom    |
| 4. The Great Sign        | 10. The Final Battle         |
| 5. The Great Tribulation | 11. Judgment                 |
| 6. Return and Rapture    | 12. New Heaven and New Earth |
| 7. Israel Delivered      |                              |



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### **PART 2. THE MAN OF SIN**

Part 1 was a brief summary of the main events leading up to and during the end time period, drawing largely from the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 24. We now move on to study the key end time events in more detail and start with the antichrist, or the *"man of sin"* as the apostle Paul called him in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 (Some Bible translations say "man of lawlessness"). To do this we will refer to the **WORLD'S GREATEST HISTORY BOOK** - the Book of Daniel. It's the greatest because it describes key events in world history **BEFORE** they actually happened!

The Bible tells us that as a young man Daniel was among 10,000 of the leading people of Judah exiled to Babylon prior to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 595 BC. Daniel served the then king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, and went on to have a long career serving the subsequent kings of Babylon and later the kings of the Medes and Persians in a senior governing role. At various times, through interpretations of dreams and visions and angelic visitations, Daniel received amazingly detailed prophecies about future world events. These predictions were so incredibly accurate that some critics have tried to prove that the book of Daniel was written much later. However, the weight of evidence from linguistic analysis, historical studies and Jewish tradition upholds the Bible account. For example, some have said that the fiery furnace described in Daniel 3 could not have existed at the time. But we now know that the Babylonians used such furnaces to prepare bitumen for stabilizing the banks of the river Euphrates which was vital for transportation and irrigation.

The amazing prophecies in the Book of Daniel are a **tremendous testimony to the authority and reliability of the Bible**. To the believer they are a great encouragement to grow in faith in God's Word, while to the unbeliever they point to the need to believe and accept the Bible's vital message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

#### **Daniel's Five Revelations**

The prophetic revelations came to Daniel in five dreams and visions. The first is recorded in Daniel chapter 2, the second in chapter 7, the third in chapter 8, the fourth in chapter 9 and the fifth in chapters 10-11. The first, second, third and fifth deal with future world events, including the rise of the last world leader known as the **antichrist** or the **"man of sin"**, and reveal detailed information about his origin, power base and activities. The fourth deals specifically with the future of Israel, including the intriguing "missing week" of Israel's history, which will be the subject of the next study.

We will now look at the **future world event prophecies** in more detail.

#### **Four Worldwide Empires**

Daniel 2:1-45

##### ***The Dream***

Nebuchadnezzar the King of Babylon had a disturbing dream and demanded that the wise men of Babylon (who included Daniel and his friends) interpret it under threat of death. The catch was that they had to tell him the dream as well as the interpretation – a tall order indeed! Fortunately for them, God revealed both the dream and its interpretation to Daniel in a night vision. In the dream the king had seen a great image with a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron and feet and toes partly of iron and partly of clay. A stone cut without hands struck the image on

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its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces, and the great image was crushed and swept away without trace. The stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

### **The Interpretation**

God revealed to Daniel that the golden head represented the then Kingdom of Babylon, and the silver, bronze, and iron portions represented three future worldwide kingdoms, inferior to Babylon. The fourth kingdom would eventually divide into two parts from which ten kings would arise, partly strong and partly fragile. The stone represented the Kingdom of God, which will replace all worldly kingdoms in the days of these final ten kings.

### **Discussion**

From known history and other Bible passages, it is clear that the three worldwide empires which followed Babylon were the Medes and Persians, the Greeks, initially under Alexander the Great, and the Roman Empire which eventually split into west and east segments centred on Rome and Constantinople. The final ten kings have not yet arisen, but will come to power just before the time of establishment of the Kingdom of God on Earth. Some clues about these final ten kings are given in Daniel 2:

- They will arise out of both portions of the former Roman Empire.
- Some are weak and some are strong.
- They will only be loosely bound together.

Some have speculated that the E.U. (European Union) is the beginning of these ten powers. However, the Roman Empire included parts of North Africa and of the Middle East as well as southern and eastern Europe, and while the EEC has expanded into Eastern Europe, there are no signs at this stage of it extending into North Africa or the Middle East.

### **Key Points**

This dream lays an overall framework for the three subsequent revelations by revealing that:

- Four world dominating empires would arise, starting with Babylon.
- A group of ten kings will arise from the fourth world empire (Rome) and will come to power just before the establishment of the Kingdom of God on Earth.
- In the days of the final ten kings, the Kingdom of God will replace all worldly kingdoms and will last forever.

## **Introducing the Antichrist**

Daniel 7

### **The Dream**

It was Daniel himself who had a dream this time. He saw the four winds of heaven stirring up the Great Sea, and four great beasts coming up from the sea one after the other, each different from the others.

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**The first** was like a lion, and had eagle's wings. Its wings were plucked off, it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and was given a man's heart.

**The second** beast, which appeared suddenly, was like a bear. It was raised up on one side and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth and was told to devour much flesh.

**The third** beast was like a leopard which had on its back four wings of a bird. It had four heads, and dominion was given to it.

**The fourth** beast was dreadful, terrible, and exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth and was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling whatever was left with its feet. It was different from the other three, and had ten horns. Then a little horn came up among the ten horns, and three of them were plucked out by the roots before it. In the little horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words. Then thrones were put in place, and God was seated with His court, and the books were opened. The fourth beast with the ten horns was killed and its body destroyed and cast into the burning flame. The other beasts had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. Then Daniel saw one like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven. To Him was given an everlasting kingdom and all peoples, nations, and languages served Him.

### *The Interpretation*

In the dream, Daniel approached a bystander and asked him what it all meant. He was told that the four great beasts were four kings who would arise on Earth, and that the fourth kingdom would trample and devour the whole earth. The ten horns were ten kings who will arise from this kingdom, and another king will arise after them who will be different from the other ten and shall subdue three of them. He will speak pompous words against God and try to change the times and the law. He will persecute God's people and they will be under his power for three and a half years (time and times and half a time). But God's court will be seated, and will take away his dominion and destroy it forever. Then the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to God's people, and God's kingdom will be established forever.

### *Discussion*

The dream repeats the main thrust of Nebuchadnezzar's earlier dream of four kingdoms with ten kings arising out of the fourth. However, it goes further and describes the rise of another king who will overthrow three of the ten, exalt himself against God, and persecute God's people for three and a half years (time, times and half a time). This king will be judged by God, and the Kingdom of God will be established.

Daniel's dream also gives some additional descriptive information about the first four kingdoms.

**The winged Lion** used to represent Babylon may reflect the combination of power and speed of the Babylonian armies, while the plucking of the wings appears to foretell the end of the Babylonian Kingdom. Significantly, Daniel received the dream during the first year of the reign of King Belshazzar who was to be the last king of Babylon which fell to the Medes and Persians in 539 B.C. (Daniel 5 records the famous message written on the wall given by God to Belshazzar that his time was up after he used the vessels taken from the temple in Jerusalem to praise idols.)

**The bear** used to depict the empire of the Medes and Persians could reflect the more ponderous nature of their military campaigns which featured the brute force of huge numbers of troops. The

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reference to the second beast as being raised up at one side may refer to the dominance of the Persians in the relationship, while the three ribs in its mouth may refer to Lydia, Babylon and Egypt who fought against the Mede-Persian Empire and were “devoured” by it.

**The winged leopard** likely refers to the lightning fast conquests of Alexander the Great, while the four heads refer to the splitting of the Greek Empire after his death. History tells us that there was a long power struggle for Alexander’s empire which was settled in 281 BC with the eventual establishment of four territorial states:

- Egypt based at Alexandria, ruled by the Ptolemaic dynasty.
- Syria and Mesopotamia based at Antioch, ruled by the Seleucid dynasty.
- Macedon and central Greece based at Pella, ruled by the Antigonid dynasty.
- Anatolia (modern day Turkey) based at Pergamum, ruled by the Attalid dynasty.

The iron teeth and destructive nature of the fourth beast is a graphic picture of the military might and conquests of the Roman Empire which swallowed up and dominated much of the known world for centuries.

Taken together with Revelation chapters 12, 13 and 17, the king arising out of the final ten kings clearly refers to the antichrist, who will overthrow three of the ten kings at the end time and use the ten short lived kingdoms as his power base. Revelation also describes a beast with seven heads as well as ten horns. Revelation 17 tells us that the seven heads are seven kings, five of whom are fallen, one who is, and one who is to come. At the time Revelation was written the world power was Rome, which is the likely identity for the sixth king. There are no real clues as to who the previous five kings were. One theory is that they were five previous world powers - Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medes and Persians, and Greece, all of whom threatened the destruction of Israel. Another theory is that they were five previous Roman emperors.

The seventh king is clearly a future kingdom and may represent the ten-king federation that the antichrist (the eighth) will take over after displacing three of the ten.

Revelation 17 reveals that the seven heads also represent seven mountains upon which the great city (*“the Mother of Harlots”*) which reigns over the kings of the earth sits. One interpretation is that this refers to Rome which dominated the world at that time and is situated on seven hills.

### Key Points

This passage in Daniel gives further insight into the four world empires and introduces the antichrist:

- It focuses on the fourth kingdom (Rome), describing it as different and emphasizing its destructive power.
- It introduces another ruler who overthrows three of the final ten kingdoms arising out of the fourth empire and dominates the others.

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- The book of Revelation identifies this ruler as the antichrist and indicates that he will take over the seventh of a series of kingdoms, the sixth of which was Rome at the time Revelation was written. The seventh may refer to the final ten-king federation.
- The antichrist will exalt himself against God and try to change the law and purposes of God.
- He will persecute God's people and they will be under his power for three and a half years but will be defeated by Christ who will set up the everlasting Kingdom of God with His people.

### The Origin of the Antichrist

Daniel 8:1-27

#### The Vision

Two years after his dream about the four beasts, in the third year of Belshazzar (551 BC), Daniel received a vision in which he saw a ram with two horns. One of the horns was higher than the other, and the higher came up last. He then saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward. The ram was unstoppable and became great. Suddenly a male goat with a prominent horn between his eyes came from the west across the surface of the whole earth without touching the ground. He attacked the ram with rage and furious power. He broke his two horns and trampled him into the ground. The male goat grew very great then the large horn was broken and was replaced by four horns towards the four winds of heaven. Out of one of them came a little horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south and the east, and towards the Glorious Land. It grew up to the host of heaven and cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground, and trampled them. It even exalted itself as high as the Prince of the host, and caused the daily sacrifices to be taken away. Then Daniel heard a holy one say *"How long will the vision be concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation, and how long will the sanctuary and the host be trampled underfoot?"* Then he told Daniel *"For two thousand three hundred days, then the sanctuary shall be cleansed."*

#### The Interpretation

The interpretation was given to Daniel by the Archangel Gabriel who told him that it referred to the time of the end.

The ram with two horns represented the Kings of Media and Persia.

The male goat was the kingdom of Greece and the large horn between the goat's eyes was the first king of Greece.

The four horns which arose out of it and replaced it were four kingdoms of lesser power. In the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their fullness, a fierce king shall arise from the four. He will be a master of intrigue and will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause widespread destruction including the holy people. Through his cunning He shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule. He will even oppose the Prince of princes, then he will be broken but not with human intervention.

#### Discussion

History reveals that events unfolded exactly as the Archangel Gabriel told to Daniel:

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The Medes and Persians overthrew Babylon and became the premier world power. The Medean Empire came first then Cyrus the Great established the larger unified empire of the Medes and Persians.

The Greeks under Alexander the Great defeated the Medes and Persians and founded the Greek Empire with Alexander as the first king. The picture of the goat reflects the speed of Alexander's conquests.

The Greek Empire eventually became four kingdoms after Alexander's death as explained in the above discussion of Daniel 7. The main clue to the identity of the fierce king arising out of these four is that he stopped the sacrifices and desecrated the temple. According to the Jewish book of 1 Maccabees and other historical sources this was fulfilled by Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) a Seleucid king based in Syria, who set up an altar to Zeus in the Second Temple in Jerusalem, and sacrificed swine on it around the year 167 BC. Antiochus died suddenly of disease in 164 BC.

Daniel 8:25 tells us that this king shall even rise against the Prince of princes; But he shall be broken without human means. This could refer to Antiochus IV adopting the name Epiphanes which means manifestation of god, and that he died of sickness. However, it could also refer to the "little horn" of Daniel 7, the future antichrist, who will also desecrate the temple, exalt himself against God and will be defeated by the second coming of Christ. This would point to the region of the Seleucid kingdom as the origin of the antichrist. As this area was later part of the Roman Empire it could also be one of the 10 kingdoms in Daniel 7. This seems to be a reasonable and logical interpretation as Gabriel said that the vision referred to the time of the end. Although little information is given the 2300 days, or just over six and a quarter years, could conceivably fit into the final 7 years before the setting up of Christ's Kingdom, which will be addressed in the next study dealing with the "missing week".

Further evidence for the antichrist to arise out of the Seleucid kingdom is found in Revelation 13 in which the antichrist is depicted as a beast like a leopard with feet like a bear and mouth like a lion. The lion, leopard and bear refer to Babylon, Media-Persia and Greece in Daniel 7 as discussed earlier. And all three of these regions were included in the Seleucid domain.

### Key Points

- The Medes and Persians were specifically named as the next world power after Babylon, to be replaced in turn by the Greeks.
- There would only be one ruler (Alexander) over the entire Greek empire, then it would split into four kingdoms.
- Another king would arise from these four Greek kingdoms. He would rule with a power not his own, would exalt himself against God, defile the Jerusalem temple, and would be destroyed but not by human intervention. This was fulfilled by Antiochus IV.
- This king appears to be a forerunner of the antichrist, which indicates that the antichrist will originate from the region of the Seleucid kingdom that was based in Syria. Later, this became part of the Roman Empire and could therefore be one of the ten kingdoms of Daniel 7.

### The Power Base of the Antichrist

Daniel 10-12

#### The Vision

## The End Times - Know What the Bible Actually Says

In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, Daniel had a vision while he was at the side of the river Tigris. He saw a man clothed in linen and girded around the waist with gold. His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in colour, and his words sounded like they were spoken by a multitude.

The man said he had come in response to Daniel's prayer and fasting to give him a message about what would happen to his people in the latter days. Unlike the earlier occasions, the message was given verbally rather than by vision and interpretation.

### ***The Message***

The man told Daniel that three more kings would arise in Persia followed by a fourth, far richer than them all, who would stir up the entire the Medo-Persian Empire against Greece.

Then a mighty king would arise, who would rule with great authority, but at the height of his power his kingdom would be broken into four kingdoms to the north, south, east and west. These would not be ruled by the great king's descendants, nor would they have the same authority.

The man went on to describe in detail a long series of back-and-forth struggles, wars and intrigue between future kings of the north and south. He revealed that one of the future kings of the north would defile the temple in Jerusalem by stopping the daily sacrifices and setting up an idol. He would win over those who did not remain true to their covenant with God with flattery and deceit. However, those who remained faithful to God would put up strong resistance and carry out great exploits against him, and those having insight would instruct many of the people. For many days some of the faithful would be killed with the sword, burned alive or robbed and imprisoned.

He revealed that the king of the north would exalt himself, claiming to be greater than every god, and even blaspheme God Himself. He would succeed for a time, but only until God's anger is completed. This king would honour a god of fortresses, unknown to his ancestors, with gold, silver, precious stones, and other expensive gifts. In the name of this foreign god, he would capture the strongest fortresses, and reward all who submit to the worship of this god with wealth and positions of power.

At the time of the end, the king of the south will attack the king of the north who will launch a ferocious counter-attack with chariots, cavalry, and many ships. The northern king will penetrate the land of Israel and overrun many of the countries in the region, except for Edom, Moab and Ammon. He will then conquer and loot other countries including Egypt, Libya and Ethiopia. Then alarming news from the east and the north will cause him strike out with fury and carry out great destruction, wiping out many of the opposing forces. After this, he will set up camp between the Mediterranean Sea and Mount Zion, but there he will come to his end and no one will be able to help him.

At that time there will be an unprecedented time of trouble, and the Archangel Michael, who watches over the people of Israel, will stand up and the people of Israel will be delivered. Everyone who is found written in the book, and many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.

The man told Daniel to seal the book until the time of the end when many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.

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Then Daniel saw two other men, one on each bank of the river. One of them asked the man clothed in linen how long it would take to fulfil these events. In response, he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it will be for a time, times, and half a time, and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished. Daniel did not understand and asked the man for further explanation, but the man told him to go his way for the words are sealed till the time of the end. Many will be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked will do wickedly and will not understand what is happening. From the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be one thousand two hundred and ninety days. He who waits and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days will be blessed. Finally, he told Daniel that he will arise to his inheritance at the end of the days.

### Discussion

The identity of the messenger is not given. However, his appearance is strikingly similar to the description of Jesus when he appeared to John in Revelation Chapter 1.

The message covers similar ground to the vision in Daniel 8, though in greater detail. It describes a future power struggle between two of the four Greek kings, one to the north of Israel and one to the south, who would arise out of the division of the empire of the "mighty king" (Alexander) who would come to power after the Medio-Persian Empire. History tells us that the two kings were the Seleucids based in Syria and the Ptolemies based in Egypt. The account is so amazingly detailed and so accurate that critics have claimed that it must have been written after the events took place! It then focuses on a particular king of the north who would defile the temple in Jerusalem by stopping the daily sacrifices and setting up an idol. As stated the previous discussion dealing with Daniel 8, this king was Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) who set up an altar to Zeus in the Second Temple in Jerusalem and sacrificed swine on it around the year 167 BC, then died suddenly of disease three years later in 164 BC.

The message then makes a leap to the end time period, and focuses on a future king of the north who will invade Israel and nearby countries leading to an unprecedented time of trouble which most likely refers to the Great Tribulation mentioned in Matthew 24:21 and Revelation 7:14. As in Daniel 8, the daily sacrifice in the temple will be taken away, and the abomination of desolation set up, an event which Jesus referred to in Matthew 24:15. (In this context, the word abomination most likely refers to an idol). Then Israel will be delivered by divine intervention. These events will occur over a period of about three and one half years.

### Key Points

- This passage further supports the identity of the king who desecrates the Jerusalem temple as the Seleucid king of the north Antiochus IV.
- It provides further evidence that Antiochus IV was a forerunner of the antichrist who will set up the "abomination of desolation" in the Jerusalem temple at the time of the end.
- It identifies the Antichrist as a future king of the north, indicating that his power base will in some way be the old Seleucid Empire. At its peak it included the modern day countries of Syria, Turkey, Iraq, Persia, central Asia and parts of Pakistan, with capital cities in Syria and Iraq.





## **The End Times - Know What the Bible Actually Says**

In the **Part 3** we will focus on the apparent **"Missing Week"** in the history of Israel.

## The End Times - Know What the Bible Actually Says

### **PART 3. THE MISSING WEEK**

Daniel knew that the prophet Jeremiah had prophesied that after 70 years of captivity in Babylon the Lord would free the people to return to Jerusalem (Jeremiah 29:10). As the time for this to happen drew near, Daniel began to pray for God to fulfill His promise (Daniel 9:1-19). While he was praying, the Archangel Gabriel came to him in a vision with an **amazing message from God concerning entire future of Israel** (Daniel 9:24-27). Because of its importance, the complete passage is quoted below:

Verse 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.

Verse 25: 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; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times.

Verse 26: And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it *shall be* with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined.

Verse 27: Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; 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."

#### **Discussion**

#### **Who was the message for?**

Verse 24 clearly tells us that message was only for Daniel's people, the nation of Israel, and for their holy city, Jerusalem.

#### **What did seventy "weeks" mean?**

The Hebrew word for week also means seven, so a "week" of years means seven years. This is confirmed in Leviticus 25:8 where seven sabbaths of years are said to be forty-nine years. Thus seventy "weeks" are equivalent to 490 years.

#### **When would the seventy "weeks" begin?**

According to Daniel 9:25, they would begin at "the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem". A number of Bible references have been proposed as possible contenders for this command, including, Ezra 1:2, Haggai 1:1-8 and Nehemiah 2:1-8. The one commonly favoured is Nehemiah 2:1-8, which records the granting by King Ataxerxes of Nehemiah's request to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the city of Jerusalem and its wall, as well as the temple. The other references mention only the rebuilding of the temple. Nehemiah 2:1 tells us that Ataxerxes granted permission to rebuild in the twentieth year of his reign, which is generally agreed to be 444 BC.

#### **Who was Messiah the Prince?**

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This can only refer to Jesus who is revealed as the Messiah as well as the King of Israel in the New Testament.

### How long is a year?

A year can contain different numbers of days, depending on the type of calendar:

**Modern Calendar Year:** In the modern day (Gregorian) calendar a year has 365 days and 366 days every fourth (leap) year.

**Lunar Year:** The Hebrew calendar in Daniel's time was based on 360 days per year (12 lunar months of 30 days) with leap years of 13 months added periodically.

**Solar Year:** Over a long period of time, the length of a year in both the modern and Hebrew calendars averages out to be the same at 365.24 days, which is called a solar year.

### When would the Messiah be "cut off"?

Clearly, this refers to Jesus' Crucifixion, and Daniel 9:25 tells us that this would take place after 7 "weeks" plus 62 "weeks" for a total of 69 "weeks". Converting to years gives  $69 \times 7 = 483$ . To determine the date of the Crucifixion requires knowing the "type" of year. There have been a number of varying interpretations. Two common ones are:

#### Assuming the Bible Refers to a Solar Year

Jesus would be crucified in  $483 - 444 = 39$  AD.

#### Assuming the Bible refers to a 360 day lunar year, then converting to solar years

Using a lunar year, the crucifixion then takes place after  $360 \times 483 = 173,880$  days.

Converting this to solar years gives  $173,880/365.24 = 476$  years.

This puts the date of the crucifixion at  $476 - 444 = 32$  AD.

It is generally agreed that Jesus was crucified between 26 and 36 AD which was when Pontius Pilate was governor, and popular estimates are in the range of 30-34 AD. So, bearing in mind the uncertainties of the key historical dates and the issue of the length of the year, the various calculated dates from Daniel 9 are remarkably close.

### What happens during the first 7 "weeks"?

Daniel 9:25 indicates that the wall and the city would be rebuilt during the first 7 "weeks", or 49 years. The book of Nehemiah records the commencement of this work after Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem.

### What happens after the 69th "week"?

Verse 26 tells us that after the crucifixion of Jesus, the city of Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed by the "people of the prince who is to come". We know from history that this was fulfilled by

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the Romans who destroyed the temple in 70 AD, and then totally destroyed Jerusalem in 135 AD, building a new city on the site and barring Jews from entry.

### When will the 70th week be fulfilled?

Verses 26-27 indicates that a "prince" will arise out of the Roman Empire who will "confirm a covenant with many for one week, 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".

This wording closely matches references in other portions of the book of Daniel as well as in Matthew and Revelation, and identifies this prince as the antichrist (see Part 2 "The Man of Sin"). Thus the missing 70th "week" is a 7-year period at the end time when the antichrist comes to power. This reveals that the history of Israel was "suspended" after the 69<sup>th</sup> "week", and that the clock will start ticking for the missing 70th "week" at the coming of the antichrist.

The **Part 4** will identify the "**Great Sign**" which will tell us that the end time is upon us.

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**PART 4. THE GREAT SIGN**

Part 3 referred to the “Missing Week” in Israel’s history. Part 4 now identifies a momentous event to take place during that “week” – the “**Great Sign**” given by Jesus of His imminent return. This is one of the most important pieces of information the Bible gives us about when to look for His return and to avoid being deceived.

In Matthew 24, Jesus described many things that will happen on the world scene in the run up to His return and the end of the age. However, He only pointed to **one unmistakable sign** to tell us clearly that His coming is at hand. This is given in Matthew 24:15-21:

*“Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains ..... 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.”*

This event is recorded three times in the book of Daniel – in 9:27, 11:31 and 12:11. As discussed in the earlier studies, it refers to the setting up an idol in the temple in Jerusalem by the antichrist at the midpoint of the final seven-year period of this age, about three and a half years before the end of the age.

In order for this to take place it is obvious that the temple must be rebuilt at Jerusalem. The existence of the temple at the time of the antichrist was also referred to by the Apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4:

*“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, 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.”*

Since the destruction of the last temple by the Romans in 70 AD, religious (particularly Orthodox) Jews have prayed for it to be rebuilt, at the same location in Jerusalem. The most prevalent Jewish view is that God will allow this to happen at the time when the “Jewish Messiah” appears. However, a minority believe that it should be built as soon as possible.

Opinion among Christian groups is also divided. Some say that the temple will not be rebuilt as the Church is now the “temple of the Holy Spirit”, while others, particularly evangelical, Pentecostal and charismatic groups, believe that the Bible speaks about the literal rebuilding of the temple. Certainly the words of Jesus and Paul quoted above, along with other supporting Bible references, appear to have a literal rather than a spiritual meaning.

The main current stumbling block in the way of rebuilding the temple is that the Temple Mount is one of the most holy sites in Islam as, according to Islamic tradition, it is the place from where Muhammad ascended to Heaven. Furthermore, it is the site of two significant Islamic buildings - the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The Temple Mount came under Israeli control in the Six Day War in 1967. Encouraged by this, a number of fringe Orthodox Jewish organizations have been established to promote the rebuilding of the temple and have been making preparations including the making of furniture, vessels, priestly garments and even the corner stone. However, to avoid further violence, the Israeli Government placed the site in Islamic hands and restricted access for Jews.

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### The Temple Mount in Jerusalem

Another important issue to be resolved is the design of the future temple. The most favoured option is the temple built by King Solomon for which detailed instructions are given in the Bible in 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles. Another option is the temple described in Ezekiel 40-44 which has never been built. A third option is found in the Dead Sea Scrolls which describe a temple that has never been built together with detailed regulations for temple duties including sacrifices. The origin and objective of this third design have not been established, though a number of theories have been put forward.

Undoubtedly, the decision to rebuild the temple will be sensational news. However, it is vital to remind ourselves that the Great Sign of Jesus' return is the **setting up of the abomination of desolation in the temple** and **not the rebuilding of the temple itself**. The Bible does not mention the time interval between these two events – it could be many years. Therefore, exciting as rebuilding the temple would be, caution will still be required to avoid being deceived.

**Part 5** will focus on the timing and dramatic events of **"The Great Tribulation"**.

## The End Times - Know What the Bible Actually Says

### PART 5. THE GREAT TRIBULATION

Part 5 focuses on the time of Great Tribulation which Jesus said would follow the "Great Sign" of the setting up of the idol in the Jerusalem temple as described in Part 4.

#### When is the Great Tribulation?

Parts 2-4 showed that the antichrist will come to power at the time of the end for seven years, and will set up an idol in the Jerusalem temple after three and a half years, which Jesus said in Matthew 24:15-22 marks the beginning of the Great Tribulation period. So clearly the Great Tribulation occurs during the final three and a half years.

#### The Antichrist Claims to be God

According to Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, the antichrist will sit in the temple and actually declare himself to be God:

*"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, 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."*

Revelation 13 1-4 tell us that he will be mortally wounded and miraculously healed, which will cause all the world to believe he is invincible and that he really is God, leading them to worship him and submit to his authority. However, the Scripture reveals that his power, throne, and authority came from Satan (the dragon), and so in reality the world are worshipping Satan, something he has always coveted. It is conceivable that the antichrist will use his miraculous deliverance from death as proof of his divinity.

Revelation 13:9 warn us that the acceptance of the antichrist as God will result in him having worldwide authority for the final three and a half years, during which God's people will face imprisonment or death for refusing to worship him.

#### The False Prophet

Revelation 13:11-17 reveals that a false prophet will also arise and will operate with the full authority of the antichrist. He will perform great miraculous signs in the presence of the antichrist and deceive the world into making an image of him. He will cause the image to breath and speak, and will demand everyone to worship it under penalty of death. The image may conceivably be the "idol" referred to by Jesus and Daniel.

He will also require a mark on everyone's right hand or forehead in order to be able to buy or sell. Verse 18 declares that **"His number is 666"** The technology to make this feasible is now becoming a reality, with countries such as Sweden and South Korea moving rapidly towards a cashless society, and others considering a reduced use of cash to deal with tax evasion and laundering proceeds of criminal activities. Mobile phone activation is starting to replace credit cards, while embedded microchip and electronic tattoo activation are under development. All that is needed to complete the picture would be the mandatory use of 666 as the access code!

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### The Great Separation

In 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12, it is revealed that God will send a strong delusion to believe the lies of the antichrist upon those who *“did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness ..... that they may be condemned”*. In other words, God will use the antichrist to bring about a clear division worldwide between those who refuse to believe and true believers. This will allow God’s condemnation to fall on those who refuse to believe the truth. Until then 2 Peter 3:9 tells us that He is longsuffering, wanting to give every opportunity for people to come to repentance. In a sense, we can regard the antichrist as an “evangelist in reverse”, bringing all people to a decision for or against Christ.

### Don’t Confuse Tribulation with Wrath

Revelation 16:1 and 6:12-17 reveal that the final wrath of God will be poured out on the inhabitants of the Earth near the end of the Great Tribulation period prior to the return of Jesus. This will involve worldwide cosmic events, catastrophes and war. 1 Thessalonians 5:9 clearly tell us that believers will not be exposed to wrath:

*“For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

and the only conceivable way this could happen is by being no longer present on Earth.

There are various opinions as to whether believers will still be on Earth during the Great Tribulation preceding the period of wrath. One view is that believers will be caught up to meet Christ (the Rapture) before the Great Tribulation begins, which was popularized by people such as J. N. Darby (1800-1882) and C.I Schofield (1843-1921) through his well-known reference bible. However, the historic view has been that believers will in fact be on Earth during the Great Tribulation, and will be caught up at the end of this period, but before the final wrath of God is poured out. This topic will be addressed in more detail in the next study.

**Part 6** is devoted to one of the most exciting and yet controversial Biblical topics – **“Return and Rapture”**.



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**PART 6. RETURN AND RAPTURE**

Part 6 is devoted to one of the most exciting and yet controversial Biblical topics – the return of Jesus.

In 1 Corinthians 4:16-17, the Apostle Paul describes one of the most dramatic events in world history - when Jesus returns and His people are caught up to meet Him in the air.

*“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. 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 momentous event is commonly known as the **Rapture**, though this word is not actually found in the English language Bibles. It is derived from “rapt” which in secular medieval literature means to be “caught up” or “carried off”. “Rapt” originally came from the Latin, and in fact in the Middle Ages the Latin Vulgate Bible used the word “rapiemur” for “caught up” in 2 Thessalonians 4:17.

Jesus Himself spoke about it in Matthew 24:30-31

*“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. 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.”*

and again in verses 37-41

*But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left.*

There are a number of conflicting views among church groups as to the sequence of end time events relating to the return of Christ and the Rapture. The main viewpoints are commonly referred to as Post-tribulation, Pre-tribulation, Mid-tribulation and Pre-wrath.

**Post-tribulation:** is typically held by the mainline denominations. In it, the rapture occurs simultaneously with the (public) return of Christ at or near the end of the age. In this view believers will go through the tribulation period.

**Pre-tribulation:** is common among evangelical, Pentecostal and charismatic groups. It was formulated in about 1830 by John Darby, a founding Father of the Plymouth Brethren, and was popularized by the Scofield Reference Bible. It places the rapture before the beginning of the tribulation period, which is taken to mean the entire final seven years before the end of the age, and puts the second coming of Christ at the end of the seven-year period. Thus the return of Christ is in two stages - the first is a “secret” coming to take up believers and the second a “public” coming with His people to defeat the antichrist and his army at the Battle of Armageddon.

**Mid-tribulation:** is a less common and more recent view. Like Pre-tribulation, Christ returns in two stages. The difference is that the first “secret” coming and Rapture take place at the mid-point of the

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tribulation period, which again is believed to occupy the entire final 7 years. Thus, believers will escape the most intense tribulation and the final wrath of God during the final three and a half years.

**Pre-wrath:** was more recently proposed as a separate position primarily by Robert Van Kampen and Marvin Rosenthal in the USA (who originally held the Pre-tribulation view) and is growing in popularity. In it, the period of great tribulation begins at the midpoint of the final seven-year period immediately after the defiling of the temple in Jerusalem by the antichrist. At an undefined point during the final three and a half years, the final wrath of God is initiated. The return of Christ and the Rapture occur as a single event just before God pours out His wrath. Thus believers will go through the tribulation but escape God's wrath. Christ's return and the Rapture are said to occur when the Sixth Seal is opened as described in Revelation 6.

### Discussion

There does not appear to be support in the Scriptures for the two-stage return of Christ, a seven-year tribulation period and the avoidance of the great tribulation by believers as proposed in the Pre-tribulation and Mid-tribulation views. As discussed in Part 5, Mathew 24:15-21 indicates that the great tribulation does not begin till the midpoint of the final seven-year period, after the temple is defiled by the antichrist:

*"Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains ..... 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."*

And Matthew 24:29-31 indicates that the Christ's return and the Rapture occur after the great tribulation:

*"Immediately after the tribulation of those days.....and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 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."*

The weakness of the Post-tribulation view is that it appears to infer that believers will go through the final wrath of God, which contradicts scriptures such as 1 Thessalonians 1:10:

*"and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come."*

The Pre-wrath position appears to be the best fit with all the key scriptures. It has God's wrath beginning at the opening of the seventh seal described in Revelation 8. However, it does not include a prediction of the duration, and only states that it will start sometime during the final three-and-a-half-year period.

1 Corinthians 4:16-17 tells us that when Christ returns the dead in Christ will be resurrected, followed by the rapture of the remaining believers to meet Him in the clouds – surely the most glorious occasion in the history of God's people.

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### Predictions of the date of Jesus' return

Concerning His return, **Jesus made Himself very clear** in Matthew 24:36 and other scriptures

*"no one knows the time, not even the angels, only God Himself"*

Despite this, there have been numerous predictions which unfortunately have been embraced by many believers. The faith of those who believed them has often severely shaken and sometimes destroyed.

In many of the predictions, the six days of creation followed by a seventh day of rest are assumed to represent 6,000 years of human history followed by the establishment of the Kingdom of God on Earth. This is commonly based on 2 Peter 3:8 in which Peter states that *"with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day"*. Another scripture used as evidence is Psalm 90:4, *"a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night"*. The 6,000 years is then applied to the date of creation calculated from the chronology of the Bible in conjunction with key dates from secular history in order to arrive at the date of the end of the age. Finally, the date of Christ's return and the Rapture is determined according to Post-tribulation, Pre-tribulation, Mid-tribulation or Pre-wrath timelines.

Since about 700 AD, Christian projections for the date of creation have mostly been around 4,000 BC based on the Masoretic Text of the Old Testament, the authoritative Hebrew text of the Jewish Bible. Some well-known examples include 3951 BC by the Venerable Bede in the 8<sup>th</sup> century; 4004 BC by James Ussher, Archbishop of Ireland in the 16<sup>th</sup> century; 3961 BC by Martin Luther in the 16<sup>th</sup> century; and 4000 BC by Sir Isaac Newton in the 18<sup>th</sup> century; (There have been some notable exceptions, such as 11,013 BC by Harold Camping in 1970 who used a different basis of calculation). Applying 6000 years results in the end of the age occurring around 2000 AD which explains the proliferation of "prophecies" of Christ's return in recent times.

Earlier Christian projections put the date of creation around 5500 BC based on the then commonly used Septuagint Greek version of the Old Testament. The main reason for the difference between the early and later Christian predictions is that in Septuagint the patriarchs from Adam to Terah (the father of Abraham) appear to be 100 years older when their sons were born compared with the Masoretic text. Using 5500 BC for creation would put the end of the age much earlier at around 500 AD, which is clearly way off the mark!

Interestingly, Jewish tradition also predicts the end of the age and the coming of the Messaiah to be 6000 years after creation. The Hebrew calendar has creation at 3760 BC and the end of the age at 2239 AD (year 6000 on the Hebrew calendar).

Other date estimation methods have also been used, but are beyond the scope of this study. The main thing to note is that **they have all failed**. Whenever we are tempted to set dates, we need to take heed to Jesus' exhortation in Acts 1:7-8 for His followers to rather focus on being His witnesses to the nations!

Another key question is what happens to Israel? This will be the focus of **Part 7 - "Israel Delivered"**.

**The End Times - Know What the Bible Actually Says**

**PART 7. ISRAEL DELIVERED**

Parts 3 to 6 considered the events surrounding the “missing week” in Israel’s history. However, one other momentous event was not included – Israel’s Deliverance – which is the focus of this study.

In Romans 11:25-26 the Apostle Paul declares that Israel will eventually receive Christ as Messiah:

*“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. And so all Israel will be saved...”*

A portion of Israel embraced Christ at the time of the Apostles, but it yet remains for Israel as a whole to receive Him.

Daniel 9:27 tells us that the “missing week” starts with the antichrist making a covenant with Israel. No details are presented, but it appears to be some form of peace or protection treaty. However, after 3½ years the antichrist will break the covenant, defile the Temple in Jerusalem, and launch a time of intense persecution:

*“Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; 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”*

This is the beginning of the Great Tribulation foretold by Jesus in Matthew 24:15-21, and He warned those in Israel to immediately escape to the mountains:

*“when you see the ‘abomination of desolation ..... standing in the holy place ..... then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains ..... For then there will be great tribulation .....*

Revelation 12:6 is commonly believed to refer to the flight of Israelis into the wilderness for the final 3½ years before the return of Jesus:

*“Then the woman 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.”*

Clearly the flight will begin when the Temple is defiled and will continue as the persecution by the antichrist intensifies. The evacuation of a remnant from Jerusalem is dramatically described in Zechariah 14:5.

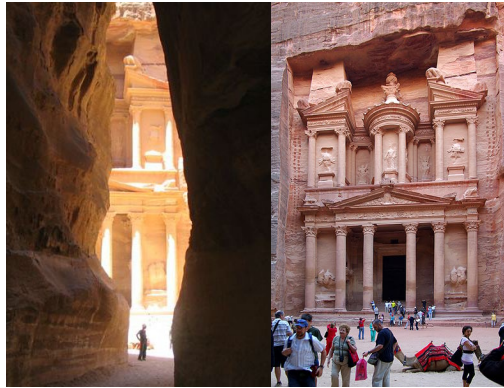
*“Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, For the mountain valley shall reach to Anal. Yes, you shall flee As you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah .....*”

The Bible does not clearly identify the location of the wilderness refuge. In fact, it is reasonable to assume that God would not want to reveal it in advance to Israel’s enemies! Some speculate that it is in the land of Edom, i.e. modern day Jordan, and in particular the ancient city of Petra. This appears to be supported by Daniel 11:41 which indicates that the Antichrist will not succeed in conquering Jordan:

*“He shall also enter the Glorious Land, and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon.”*

Petra was the capital city of the Nabateans. It is located about 20 miles from Bozrah the capital of ancient Edom. Its mountainous location with narrow ravines appear to make it a readily defensible natural shelter.

## The End Times - Know What the Bible Actually Says



**Petra - a tourist destination today**

Zechariah 13:8-9 tells us that only one third of the inhabitants of Israel will survive by calling on the Lord:

*“two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, But one-third shall be left in it: 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.’”*

The climax to these cataclysmic events is the return of Jesus. When the survivors see Him they will realize that Jesus is in fact their long awaited Messiah. After many centuries of rejecting Him, it understandably leads to intense grief and mourning as foretold in Zechariah 12:10-11:

*“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. In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning at Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo.”*

Isaiah 63:1 appears to indicate that Jesus will meet the remnant of Israel in Edom, adding further weight to the view that Edom is the place of refuge:

*“Who is this who comes from Edom, With dyed garments from Bozrah, This One who is glorious in His apparel, Traveling in the greatness of His strength? - ‘I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save’.”*

Daniel 12:1-2 foretells the deliverance of Israel out of the Great Tribulation and links it with the resurrection which occurs at the return of Jesus:

*“there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, Everyone who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt.”*

Another great end time event is the Battle of Armageddon which will be featured in **Part 8 – “Armageddon”**.

## The End Times - Know What the Bible Actually Says

### PART 8. ARMAGEDDON

Now we come to one of the best known end time events – Armageddon. In recent times it has even become the subject of popular movies!

*“Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which 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. Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.” And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.”*

Revelation 16:12-16 tells us there is to be a great battle involving armies from around the world at a place called Armageddon. The word Armageddon is generally considered to come from the Hebrew “Har Megiddo” which means the mountain or hill of Megiddo. The location is commonly believed to be the Jezreel Valley in Israel which stretches southeast from the coast north of Mount Carmel to the Jordan River at Beth-shan. This valley was the site of the ancient cities of Jezreel and Megiddo, and has a long history of great battles. It was the scene of two great Israelite victories - Barak’s victory over the Canaanites in Judges 4, and Gideon’s victory over the Midianites in Judges 7. It was also the place where Saul and his sons died (1 Samuel 31:8), and where King Josiah was killed (2 Kings 23). The site of Biblical Megiddo was about 30Km to the south east of the modern city of Haifa, and was a key location on an important north-south trade route. Nearby hills may have led to the name “Har Megiddo”. A view from Mt Carmel is shown below.



#### The Battle in the Heavens

Many Biblical accounts of key battles reveal the “behind the scenes” involvement of God and His Angels. Dramatic examples include The Red Sea crossing in Exodus 14:19-31, the destruction of Jericho in Joshua 5:13-15, and Elisha’s subduing of the Syrian army in 2 Kings 6:14-23. God’s involvement at Armageddon is revealed in Revelation 19:11-14 which describes Jesus leading the armies of heaven into battle:

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*"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. 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. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses."*

Revelation 16:13-14 reveals that satanic forces will also be involved at Armageddon, as demonic spirits will be sent out to influence world leaders to gather for battle.

### The Battle on Earth

The battle itself is described in Daniel 11:40-44. As discussed in Part 2, the king of the North refers to the antichrist, while the king of the South is a king coming out of Egypt and the surrounding countries:

*"At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through. He shall also enter the Glorious Land, and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon. He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. He shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; also the Libyans and Ethiopians shall follow at his heels. But news from the east and the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many."*

This indicates that the battle will initially involve the Northern and Southern kingdoms, but will be joined by forces from the East and (further) North. In today's terms, Europe roughly lies to the north of the king of the North's Seleucid Empire while China, India and Central Asian countries lie to the east. Revelation 16:12 adds further evidence of the involvement of Eastern nations and reveals that their move into Israel will be aided by the drying up of the Euphrates river. It is interesting that in recent times the Euphrates has partially dried up due to a combination of numerous dams built in Turkey and Syria, drought and misuse by farmers. An article in the New York Times in July 2009 even referred to the above passage in Revelation! A photo from the article showing a dried up section of the Euphrates is included below.



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Daniel 11:44 tells us that there will be a huge death toll at Armageddon with many being annihilated, which is supported by Revelation 19:17-18:

*“Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, 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.”*

Zechariah 14:12 describes how many of them will die:

*“Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, Their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, And their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths.”*

This is exactly what happens with exposure to severe nuclear radiation, which is a strong indication that nuclear weapons will be used at Armageddon.

### The Demise of the Antichrist

Daniel 11:45 and Revelation 19:20 reveal that the antichrist himself will survive Armageddon, to be cast into the lake of fire along with the false prophet:

*“And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him.”*

*“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.”*

These accounts indicate that towards the end of the Great Tribulation period, the antichrist's empire will break up and Armageddon will be fought between forces loyal him and opposing nations from around the globe. The carnage will be ended by the return of Christ, and the antichrist will be caught and judged. Arguably, Armageddon is meant to result in victory for the antichrist, establishing him as the undisputed ruler of the Earth. Instead, it leads to his end and the victory of Jesus, **God's chosen ruler**.

**Part 9** will focus on **“The Millennial Kingdom”**, the wonderful golden age when Jesus will rule the world from Jerusalem.



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**PART 9. THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM**

Down through the ages people have dreamed about a Golden Age of universal peace and prosperity. This study describes the fulfillment of this dream during the thousand-year rule of Jesus on Earth, which has become known as the Millennial Kingdom:

*"....And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished." Revelation 20:4*

The Bible states that after His return, Jesus will rule on Earth together with his people for a thousand years, a prophesy which was taken literally by the early church. However, in the second century the view that this was only symbolic of the church age began to spread until it became dominant at the time of Augustine in the fourth century, and is still the view of most "mainline" catholic, orthodox and protestant churches today. However, most Evangelical, Pentecostal and charismatic groups believe that the Bible refers to a literal thousand-year kingdom and see no reason for a "spiritual" interpretation.

One point of contention is that the first part of Revelation 20:4 refers to the resurrection of "the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God" rather than to all believers. However, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 clearly tells us that at the return of Jesus the dead in Christ will rise and meet Him in the clouds in the air along with believers who remain alive, and will always be with the Lord. This confirms that all believers will be with Christ during the Millenium.

Revelation 20:1-3 reveals that Satan will be imprisoned at the beginning of the thousand-year period so that the world will be free from his deception and evil influence for the duration.

**Life in the Millennial Kingdom**

There are many references in the Bible which refer to a future "golden age". However, it is not always clear which scriptures refer to the Millennial Kingdom and which refer to the time of the New Earth that comes later and which will be the subject of a future study. Some of the things which are clear include:

Isaiah 2:2-4 reveals that Jesus will maintain law and order and will teach the nations how to live in peace:

*"Now it shall come to pass in the latter days, That the mountain of the LORD's house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills, And all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths'. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore."*

Micah 4:1-4 says the same thing as Isaiah and adds that there will be peace and freedom from fear in every home:

*"But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, And no one shall make them afraid"*

Romans 8:19-22 tells us that nature itself will be delivered from corruption:

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*"the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of [f]corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."*

and will be restored to its original harmonious condition as described in Isaiah 11: 6-8:

*"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. The cow and the bear shall graze; Their young ones shall lie down together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den."*

### **Satan Released**

Revelation 20:7-8 tells us that at the end of the thousand years Satan will be released and he will go out to deceive the nations once again. The reason for this is not given and we can only speculate as to God's purpose. One possibility is that he wants to give the nations another opportunity to choose between the Lordship of Jesus and Satan after enjoying the benefits of life under Jesus for a thousand years.

The rejection of Jesus' rule and the tragic aftermath is the subject of **Part 10- "The Final Battle"**.

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**PART 10. THE FINAL BATTLE**

Part 9 described the wonderful golden age of The Millennium when Jesus will reign from Jerusalem with His people. Now Part 10 shows how Satan, when released from prison, deceives the nations into once again rebelling against God, resulting in Earth's **Final Battle**:

*"Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison 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. 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. 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." Revelation 20:7-10*

It is hard to believe that after a thousand years of peace and prosperity under the direct and visible Kingship of Jesus the nations will rebel and choose to follow Satan. Yet perhaps it is not so surprising given that Adam and Eve yielded to his insinuations and lies while enjoying an idyllic life in the Garden in close fellowship with God. Just what kind of lies Satan will tell this time is not specified. One possibility is that he will again insinuate that they are being held back from becoming like God.

The words translated as "four corners" in the NKJV are translated in various ways in different versions of the Bible. The KJV and Amplified versions use "four quarters", the New Living Version uses "every corner", The Message "every nook and cranny", and the Good News Version "scattered over the whole world". Thus the implication is that nations will come from all parts of the globe to fight against God's people at Jerusalem under the leadership of Gog and Magog.

The battle will come to a dramatic climax when God destroys the invading armies with fire, and Satan is cast into the Lake of Fire forever.

**Who Are Gog and Magog?**

There are a variety of opinions as to the identity of Gog and Magog. According to the 1st century Jewish historian and scholar Josephus, the Jews in New Testament times identified Gog and Magog with the Scythians. These were groups of nomadic horse riding pastoralists who inhabited the vast steppes of modern day Central Asia, Southern Russia and the Ukraine.

**Ezekiel's Prophecy**

In Ezekiel 38 there is a prophecy which also talks about the invasion of Israel in the latter times involving Gog and Magog. It tells us that Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince (or chief) of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal will lead a coalition of nations against Israel including Persia, Ethiopia, Libya, Gomer and Togarmah from the far north, and many other nations.

Ezekiel lived in the 6th century BC and he would have known that Meshech, Tubal, Gomer and Beth Togarmah were kings or kingdoms of Anatolia which corresponds to modern day Turkey. From historical records and other scriptures Persia clearly refers to what is known today as Iran, while ancient Cush and Put refer to Sudan and Lydia.

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Some Bible scholars believe that Gog was Gyges (or Gogu) who was King of Lydia in Anatolia (Turkey) at the time of Ezekiel, while Josephus identified Magog with the Scythians in Central Asia.

### **The Same Gog and Magog?**

Some believe that Ezekiel's prophecy refers to the same Gog and Magog and the same battle as Revelation 20, and therefore sheds more light on the identity of the invading armies. However, others believe it refers to the antichrist and the battle of Armageddon.

Ezekiel 38 says that the invading armies will come up against a people **"dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates"**, which tends to support the view that this is during The Millennium rather than the turbulent time of the antichrist. Further support comes from the reference in Revelation 20:9 to fire being rained on the invading armies, which is not mentioned in the description of Armageddon.

**Part 11** will focus on the **Judgment** of those who will rebel against God in The Millennium together with all those down through the ages whose names are not written in the Book of Life.

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**PART 11. JUDGEMENT**

Part 11 focuses on the terrible Great White Throne judgment that most people avoid thinking about. It also looks at other judgments referred to in the Bible, namely the Judgment of the Sheep and Goats and the Judgment Seat of Christ.

**The Great White Throne Judgement**

*"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. 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. 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. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire." Revelation 20:11-15*

In this passage, the Bible tells us that after the Final Battle at the end of the Millennium, the dead who were not raptured at the return of Jesus will be resurrected and judged at the throne of God according to their works. Anyone whose name is not in the Book of Life will be cast into the Lake of Fire.

This appears to indicate that some names will be found in the Book of Life despite not being resurrected and raptured with Jesus. One possibility is that these may be Gentiles who died before the first coming of Christ who didn't know the Law but obeyed the voice of their conscience according to Paul in Romans 2:12-16. Likewise, it may also include those in the Christian era who have never heard the gospel but obey the voice of their conscience. Another possibility is that it includes children who die before they know how to distinguish between good and evil (Deuteronomy 1:39 and Isaiah 7:15-6).

**Who Will be the Judge?**

In the following passages the Bible makes it clear that the Lord Jesus Christ will be the judge and not God the Father:

*"For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honour the Son, just as they honour the Father." John 5:22*

*"In the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." Romans 2:16*

**What is the lake of fire?**

There are a variety of interpretations among denominations, churches and ministries which can broadly be categorized into either literal or symbolic. However, the fact that the Bible describes the final punishment for sin in a number of quite different ways tends to support a symbolic interpretation. Some example references include:

- Fire and torment – Mark 9:42-48
- Second death – Revelation 20:14
- Eternal destruction and separation from God – 2 Thessalonians 1:9

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- Outer darkness. Matthew 8:12 and 22:13
- Place of weeping and gnashing of teeth – Matthew 13:42

While these references may emphasize different aspects of what the final punishment will be like, the key concept appears to be separation from the presence of God along with Satan and his followers. Jesus experienced this on our behalf on the Cross when He cried out *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"* (Matthew 27:46)

### Other Judgements

#### Judgment of the Sheep and the Goats

In Matthew 25:31-46 Jesus taught:

*"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'"*

He went on to say that the basis for His judgment will be what they had done to "one of the least of these My Brethren". He said that this was the same thing as doing it to Him.

There are various views about the timing and who is involved in this passage. Some believe that this is in fact another description of the Great White Throne judgment, based mainly the reference to the sentence of everlasting punishment being meted out. Others believe that it refers to another occasion as there is no mention of resurrection of the dead or the opening of books. Also it refers to the coming of Jesus whereas at the time the Great White Throne judgment Jesus will have already been reigning in Jerusalem for a thousand years. If it occurs at second coming of Jesus, it may involve those left alive on earth at that time and how they treated God's people during the rule antichrist inspired persecutions in the final seven-year period.

#### Judgment Seat of Christ

This is commonly considered to refer to the appearance of believers before the Lord after His return. Various Bible passages bring out different aspects of the purpose of this event:

**Romans 14:10-12:** *"For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ ..... each of us shall give account of himself to God."*

**1 Corinthians 4:5:** *"the Lord ..... will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God"*

**1 Corinthians 3:13-15:** *..... fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."*



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Thus the emphasis is on evaluation and rewards and does not involve punishment for sin as Romans 8:1 declares that *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."*

In **Part 12**, we arrive at our glorious final eternal destination **The New Heaven and New Earth**.

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### **PART 12. NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH**

Part 12 brings us to our final destination, the New Earth and New Jerusalem, where God's people will live forever in the presence of Father God and the Lord Jesus.

Revelation 21 and 22 describe the glorious final abode of believers, as promised in 2 Peter 3:11:

*"Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."*

There are various views among denominations, churches and ministries and as to whether the description is meant to be literal or symbolic or a mixture of both. Here are key verses with some comments and conclusions about what they tell us about our wonderful future home.

Verse 21:1 *"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."*

This tells us that:

- The New Earth will have no seas. About 70% of the present earth is covered with water of which only 2.5% is fresh, the rest being sea water. So on the New Earth there will be much more dry land to live on.
- Because of the absence of seas, the climate will be totally different.
- There will also be a new heaven which appears to tell us that there will be a different universe.

Verse 21:2-4 *"Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."*

- On face value, this tells us that a new city of Jerusalem will descend from heaven.
- Some believe that John saw a vision of the actual city just as it will be, and that it is called the bride due to the presence of the believers who dwell in it.
- Others believe that it is a symbolic representation of the city.
- Still others believe it is symbolic of the church due to it being called the bride, the Lamb's wife in verse 9.

Verse 21:3 *"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.'"*

Verse 22:3 *".....the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it....."*

- God the Father as well as the Lord Jesus will dwell on the New Earth and rule from the New Jerusalem.
- This is different from the Millennium when Jesus alone dwells on Earth and the Father remains in Heaven.



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Verse 22:4 *“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.”*

- There will be no more suffering or pain on the New Earth.
- There will be no more death.
- Satan, the author of suffering and death, will no longer be present.
- The present world with its conflict, crime and wars will be totally replaced by the Kingdom of God.

Verse 21:10-25 *“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.....etc.....”*

These verses give us detailed information about the New Jerusalem including its size and construction. Again, there are differing opinions as to what is literal and what may be symbolic. Some believe it will be just as described. Others believe that the description is symbolic of something which cannot be expressed in today's language. Still others say that it represents a spiritual city built with believers as living stones with the 12 apostles as the foundation and Jesus as the Cornerstone. (Ephesians 2:19-22).

Some of the features of the New Jerusalem include:

- It is cubic in shape and huge – the length, width and height being estimated at 1,400 miles (2,200 kilometers) in modern day units. The city and its streets are made from pure gold like transparent glass.
- It is surrounded by a great and high wall constructed with jasper, with 12 foundations each adorned with a different precious stone and bearing the names of the 12 apostles. The wall has 12 gates (3 on each side – i.e. east, north, south and west) each made from one pearl and bearing the names of the 12 tribes of Israel. An angel is stationed at each gate which will be permanently open.
- There is no temple in the city. God and Jesus are its temple.
- The throne of God and of Jesus will be in the city. A pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeds from the throne. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, is the tree of life, which bears twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. There shall be no more curse.
- The city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for it is illuminated with the glory of God, so there will be no night.
- God's servants shall serve Him and shall see His face and shall reign forever.
- Its gates shall always be open. The nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth shall bring glory and honour into it.
- Anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie shall not enter it; only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

## **The End Times - Know What the Bible Actually Says**

Apart from how much of the description of the city is literal or symbolic, there are other unanswered questions concerning life on the New Earth and in the New Jerusalem:

- Who are the nations, as all those whose names are not in the Book of Life were sent to the Lake of Fire at the end of the Millennium? Does it mean that God's people in the New Earth will be divided into nations?
- Who are those who will reign in the New Jerusalem, and whom do they reign over?
- Why is there a need for leaves to heal the nations as there is no more curse and Satan is no longer present?

Perhaps we will have to wait till we see Jesus for the answer to these and the long list of other questions about the Scriptures that each of us has accumulated!

**This brings this series to an end.**

**May the studies help you to avoid the pitfalls and deceptions along the way to the wonderful future lying ahead for all God's people.**