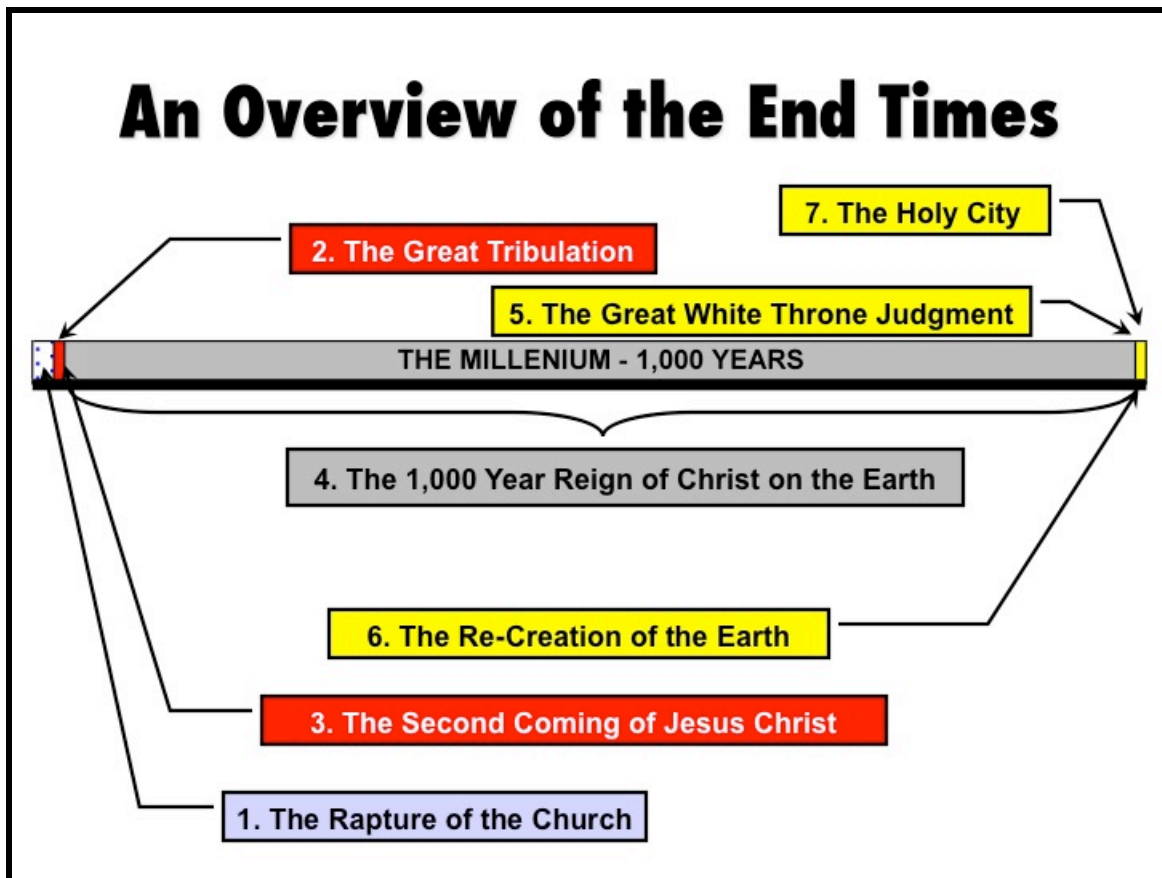


A Study on the End Times

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There will be various translations of the Scriptures used in our study. If we depart from the King James Version, which will be our standard, other versions will be identified as follows:

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At various times in this study, you may also find the following designations referring to reference material used to assist in putting together this study. Direct quotations will be shown in italicized text.

- {**Adam Clarke**} Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Whole Bible
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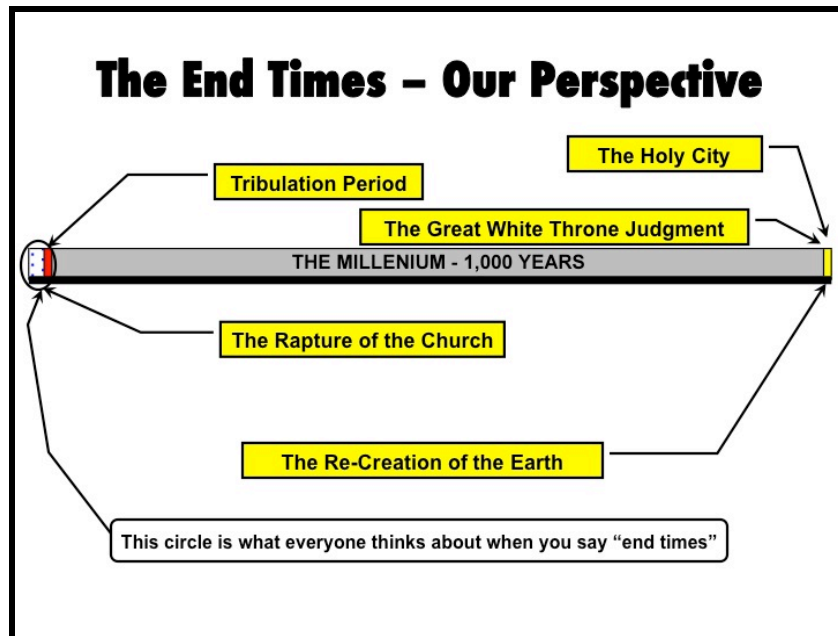
1 – Ground Rules

Introduction: In this study, we will not focus on a single book of the Bible even though you might think that we would focus on the Book of Revelation. However, there are a great many chapters and passages in the Bible that will help us gain a clearer perspective of where we're going. But we must first establish ground rules for our study and lay a foundation for what lies ahead. We must also make sure that we understand what is involved with the study of "end times".

GROUND RULES ON STUDYING THE END TIMES:

1. In our study, we will use the same ground rules that you should use with any Bible study – take everything literally (in other words, the verse means what it says) unless it's clear that it's symbolic. This is where people mess up in reading the Book of Revelation – they try to make everything a mystery when many things will really occur as written.
2. Remember the rule that Jesus used in instructing us about the end times – **Mark 13:32** *But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.* **Matthew 24:36** *But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.* In other words, no matter what you study, or how deep you get, or how much you pray, if Jesus doesn't know the day or hour, you don't either. We're trying to see what the Lord is saying but only our Father knows the time.
3. It is important to know the terms associated with end times study to keep yourself from being confused by others who have an ulterior motive. (One lure that the Jehovah's Witnesses use is to invite spiritually hungry and curious people to a Bible study on the end times.) As part of this introduction, we will go over end time terms. We will look at terms from the Scripture and define them based on the Scripture and look at terms used today.
4. **DON'T FEAR!** We will be studying some terrible passages but remember that the events there are not for the believer. These events represent punishment on those that have chosen to reject the Lord Jesus Christ.
5. Don't fall into the same trap that others do. Know what you're talking about and understand the breadth of the end times (see chart on the next page). In other words, many people focus on just the rapture of the church, the Great Tribulation period, and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The reality is, as we understand it today, that if the rapture of the church took place tonight, seven years from now, Jesus Christ will return to earth. Then there's a lot that will go on after that before we get to the Holy City.

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6. Studying the end times is very interesting because it looks more to the future than other Scriptures. We're studying for knowledge and an understanding of what lies ahead. As we study, the Word of God should encourage us to make sure that our lives are completely lined up with His Word. If this study does not help us focus more on how we please the Lord, we have failed and we have only gained head knowledge and become puffed up.

END TIMES TERMS TO KNOW

Rapture – **1 Thessalonians 4:17** *Then we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.* The Rapture is a term used to describe an event where God takes all Christians from Earth. Although almost all forms of Christianity believe that those who are “saved” will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, the term “rapture” is usually applied specifically to those theories saying that Christians alive before the end of the world will be taken into heaven, and there will be an intermediate time frame where non Christians will be still left on earth before Christ arrives to set up his earthly kingdom.” The word “rapture” comes from the Latin verb **rapere**, which means, “to carry off” or “catch up”. It was used in the Latin Vulgate (Bible translation, about 405 A.D.) translation of 1 Thessalonians 4:17, which is the primary Biblical reference to the event in question. There are three main viewpoints concerning the timing of the Rapture:

PRE-TRIBULATION

The prevalent view is referred to as the Pre-Tribulation Rapture, or simply “Pre-Trib”. This is the belief that the Rapture will occur at the beginning of the 70th Week of Daniel, the final seven years of this age. (In other words, this is the beginning of the Great Tribulation.) Christian believers will be translated into immortal bodies in the Rapture. This is the view I

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will hold in this study.

POST-TRIBULATION

The other main view is termed the Post Tribulation Rapture (or “Post-Trib”). This view admits the concept of “rapture” from 1 Thessalonians, but does not see an intervening 7-year period between the rapture and the “second coming” of Christ. This viewpoint affirms that Christian believers will be on earth as witnesses to Christ during the entire seven years and right up until the last day of this age. This includes the final three and a half years of the age believed to be the period of the Antichrist in his wicked role as the Beast. Both views hold that Christian believers will be either removed from, or protected from, the Doomsday judgment when the wrath of God falls and the wicked are carried off at the end of the age.

MID-TRIBULATION

Another view is termed the Mid Tribulation Rapture (or “Mid-Trib”). This is a view that is held by fewer. This view says that the rapture will occur at the middle of the Great Tribulation before the Antichrist assumes his most wicked role as the Beast.

The one thing about all of these views is that, unfortunately, you can come up with Scriptural support for all of these views to some degree. However, the most widely held view, a pre-tribulation rapture, also has the most scriptural support and is the view that we believe.

Second Coming of Christ – The literal return of Jesus Christ to earth. This is NOT the rapture because Jesus does not return to earth in the rapture. The key to the Second Coming is that EVERYONE will see Christ at His return. **Revelation 1:7** *Behold, he cometh with clouds; and EVERY EYE SHALL SEE HIM, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.*

Armageddon – Armageddon refers, generally, to end times or Earth ending catastrophes in various religions and cultures. “Armageddon” also refers to any great loss of life in battle, etc. The word Armageddon comes from Mount (*Har* in Hebrew) Megiddo, the site of the Battle of Megiddo and other battles. The only mention of this word in the Bible is in **Revelation 16:16** *And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.* Even though we often speak of the “Battle of Armageddon”, there is no specific mention of a battle in the Book of Revelation. However, as we put other Scriptures together with it, the fact that there will be a great battle there becomes very clear.

Millennium – **Revelation 20:4** *And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.* The Millennium refers to the earthly kingdom of Christ after His return to earth in the Second Coming. It begins right after the Battle of Armageddon.

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The Day of the Lord – **Acts 2:20** *The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come.* This term refers specifically to the final Day of Judgment when Christ returns to the earth to rule as King and it also refers to severe judgment like when the Southern Kingdom of Judah went into captivity. We'll see this term used a lot in the Old Testament.

The Tribulation – **Matt. 24:21** *For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.* The Tribulation is a seven-year period of severe judgment and persecution starting after the rapture of the church. The Tribulation is broken into two three and a half year periods with the second 3½ years known as the Great Tribulation.

The Great White Throne Judgment – **Revelation 20:11** *And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.* This is the final judgment of all unsaved mankind. It occurs at the end of the Millennium. EVERYONE that comes to this judgment will be lost. This judgment does NOT impact born again believers, those that have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Final Rebellion – This is the last global unleashing of Satan and unbelievers against God, in which Satan will be finally defeated. It occurs at the end of the Millennium and right before the Great White Throne Judgment.

2 – The Words of Jesus on The End Times

INTRODUCTION: Now that we have established our ground rules on how we'll proceed with the study, let's discuss what the Lord Jesus said on this subject. The Lord's disciples came to Him in Matthew 24 and asked Him two key questions: (1) when will the End Times occur and (2) what will be the sign of His Second Coming and of the end of the world? The signs and the times are the two main issues with any end times study. Also, we need to expose myths in the interpretation of this chapter since it is so often used by the Church to prepare us for the times ahead. With that, the focus of this lesson will be to do a detailed study of Matthew chapter 24.

This entire chapter is dedicated to what theologians call “The Olivet Discourse.” (It is so named because this discourse (conversation) was held on the Mount of Olives.) Every reader of the chapter should understand that Jesus is speaking primarily to the Jewish people. There are a few points that apply to the Christian Church, which I will point out, but most of this chapter applies to the Jews. This chapter is about events that will occur in the last 3½ years of the Tribulation – this is the key to understanding this chapter. The Lord Jesus addresses His warnings to Jewish people because the unsaved Jews will suffer tremendously from the events of this chapter. (We will talk about the second half of the seven-year Tribulation when we look at Revelation 11:23, Revelation 12:6, and Revelation 13:5. As a little help, if you study ahead, in these verses, the Scriptures speak of 42 months, 3 years and 6 months, or 1,260 days, which is 3½ years when divided by 360 days.)

Matthew Chapter 24 – The Olivet Discourse

1 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple. In setting the stage of where we are, the Lord left the inner part of the Temple right after His sharp condemnation of the religious leaders in the previous chapters. He was well aware of the Temple from past visits. I wonder if the disciples gave Him this “tour” in their carnal attempt to get His mind off the events that just took place in the last two chapters? However, this worked right into the Lord's plan and He used their love for Him to express His love for them and the nation of Israel.

2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. Right away, the Lord begins to speak prophetically. His prophecy was very clear – the Temple will be destroyed to the point where there won't be one of the beautiful white marble stones left on top of another. The Jewish historian Josephus points out that in 70 A.D. when the Roman general Titus came into Jerusalem after besieging the city, he was determined to get the gold out of the walls of the Temple. Therefore, he set the Temple on fire so the gold would melt out of the walls and he had his soldiers dismantle the walls, stone by stone, fulfilling our Lord's prophecy.

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3 And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

They left the Temple area and the Lord Jesus sat in a comfortable spot in His place of refuge, the Mount of Olives. It was from here that the disciples came with our two key questions. Some offer criticism for watching the signs of our Lord's return but when the disciples came to Jesus asking about His return, He gave a clear answer. Therefore, a study of the End Times is appropriate. Now let's understand some things before we get into this chapter:

First, Jesus did not give a direct answer in the Gospel of Matthew regarding "when these things shall be" or when the Temple would be destroyed. We have one answer in verse 34, which we'll talk about when we get there but it's still not direct. Others say that you have to go to Luke 21 to see a better answer and even then, it's not clear. **Luke 21:20, 24** *And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. 24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.* Here's the problem with trying to set a timetable with these passages. We've seen Jerusalem compassed about with armies so we know the time is near. However, most Christians know from experience that "near" with God isn't the same as "near" with us. Also, these verses are really applied to events in the middle of the Great Tribulation. In our study we want to focus on when it will begin because we don't want to be here when it starts. Finally, the times of the Gentiles will be fulfilled when the Lord returns so this doesn't help us pinpoint that time.

Second, the answer He did give has to do with His Second Coming (NOT the Rapture of the Church) and the establishment of His kingdom on earth (the end of the current world system). Therefore, the signs we see here are signs that apply to His Second Coming, which is at the end of the Great Tribulation. However, they also prepare us for the Rapture, which will begin the Tribulation. They also don't have a timetable for their occurrence. In other words, there is nothing in the Scriptures to say that these will take place within a year, two years, or one hundred years before the Lord's return. Some of them began in Bible times and we see a lot of this NOW.

So with these two points about this chapter, let's establish another principle right up front: **SAINTS'**

PRINCIPLE: The Scriptures help us to understand the time of the Lord's return but we really want to know the time of the Rapture of the Church, which is seven years before His return. If we visibly see the clear signs of His return, we probably have missed the Rapture. If we don't see the clear signs of His return, we still could have missed the Rapture. Therefore, we must always be ready! Now let's look at the signs of His Second Coming.

4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. (1) DECEPTION.

The first thing that Jesus said regarding His Second Coming is the main thing that most people do –

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allow themselves to be deceived. Paul wrote an entire epistle (Second Thessalonians) to address the issue of people being deceived when it had to do with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. God will also allow deception to run rampant in the land at this time: **2 Thessalonians 2:11-12** *And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.* Before we get too excited about the fact that GOD is the one that is sending this deception (or allowing it) look at the NLT translation of this same verse for a little more clarity. **2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 NLT** *So God will send great deception upon them, and they will believe all these lies. 12 Then they will be condemned for not believing the truth and for enjoying the evil they do.* The real issue with those that are deceived is that they enjoy doing evil so they want some type of “religious experience” that allows them to keep doing evil. In other words, they are WILLINGLY deceived.

5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. (2) FALSE CHRISTS. We’ll soon look at false prophets also. Therefore, let’s understand the difference between a false Christ and a false prophet. Christ is the ONLY way to God. He is God’s anointed pathway to spiritual restoration. A false Christ offers another way to God. Before the return of Christ, there will be a time when many will make the claim to be an alternative way to God. Prior to that, society will embrace an “openness” to all beliefs and will strongly criticize those that teach one way through Jesus Christ as being “closed minded” and rigid. This spirit is already in the land.

6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. (3) WARS AND RUMORS OF WARS. We have this now. We have had wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. We have rumors of wars with Iran and Korea and rumors of wars between other nations that have no problem using nuclear weapons on each other. The period before the Lord’s return will be a time of great unrest in the earth – more than we have ever seen. This will help to usher in the Antichrist who will come as a man of peace. Again, we have this NOW.

7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. (4) UNUSUAL “NATURAL” CALAMITIES. Dake counts famines, pestilence, and earthquakes as three distinct events. I believe that the Lord is saying that nature will be in turmoil before the Lord returns. Not only will there be wars, there will be great famines (times of great hunger as a result of some natural calamity such as drought), there will be pestilence (disease from known and new sources), and earthquakes in various places. Remember that one of our ground rules was to view prophecy using the eyes of people at that time. Israel has no idea what a hurricane is because it’s not a hurricane region. However, I believe (notice who said this) that if the Lord Jesus were prophesying here in America, He would have added the type of natural disasters we see in this country. Recent events indicate that we can easily say that we’re in this time.

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8 All these are the beginning of sorrows. 9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. 10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. **(5) HATRED & PERSECUTION OF GOD'S PEOPLE.**

After the signs before are completed, some say the next step will be the persecution of the Church. Some commentators mark this verse as the beginning of the Great Tribulation and the persecution of the Jews. I believe it has a dual meaning, as do so many Scriptures dealing with End Times. The Jewish people have definitely gone through YEARS of persecution. The Church went through this right after the Lord's return to heaven but, no doubt, it will occur again. Easily, we can see that the time is ripe for the world to begin to turn against the Church. The current attitude in America is that people must embrace ALL beliefs. The Church of Jesus Christ, the Body of Christ, has never allowed this openness (see Acts 4:12) and is viewed by many as bigoted and rigid to the point of being dangerous. In addition, with the unrest in the Middle East, the mood of the world toward Israel is also turning against the Jews. As you read the rest of this chapter and put it all in context, we'll see that the rest of the Lord's discussion has to do with the impact of the Second Coming on the Jews. Don't forget that our focus is on the Jewish people, so we'll see many that used to support Israel turn against them and hate them. America, will you be one?

Before leaving this section, we talked about the term "offended" in a previous study. This word has nothing to do with having an "attitude" but means that you have chosen to turn away from God. Jesus is saying that many will backslide and turn against the Church and against Israel. Paul raised the same theme when he wrote to correct the errors in the Thessalonian church: **2 Thessalonians 2:3** *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, EXCEPT THERE COME A FALLING AWAY FIRST, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.* However, remember that the man of sin, the Antichrist, is revealed in the halfway period of the Tribulation even though he will have worldwide fame prior to that time.

11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. **(6) FALSE PROPHETS.** A false prophet gives direction claiming that it is from God but it is not. Dr. McGee said that the church is warned against false teachers while the Jew is warned against false prophets. I believe that both groups must be warned against both. At this time, "the prophetic" is such a prevalent and desired theme in the Church that we allow much misuse of the prophetic gift and many are deceived. This is occurring now. For Israel, false prophets will point them away from God and point them toward that which will destroy their souls.

12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. NLT Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold. **(7) RAMPANT LAWLESSNESS.** The word "rampant" means unchecked and out-of-control. Iniquity refers to a character with a tendency toward sin – they have their own moral code that is not God's. One living in iniquity is not even

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morally clean. They are the worst people in our societies. Because this trait will ABOUND, people will have no care for another person. Murder will be rampant and judgment on such crimes weak. You could make some comparisons to our time with this sign but as the end grows near, it will be worse and worse.

13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. Is this a Christian verse or a Jewish verse? In some ways it is both but the main theme is to the Jew living during the Tribulation. If that one can resist the deception in the land, resist the false prophets, and resist the tendency toward hatred, they will have the possibility to receive the Gospel as discussed in the next verse.

14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. **(8) WORLD-WIDE SATURATION OF THE GOSPEL.**

15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) (9) THE RESTORATION OF THE JEWISH NATION. (10) THE RESTORATION OF THE JEWISH TEMPLE. (11) THE DESECRATION OF THE TEMPLE.

As you can see, there are three things that this verse, and the verses that follow, point to. To have a rebuilt Temple, there must be a Jewish nation (which there has been since 1948). To desecrate the Temple, a Temple must be built and there is not one now.

These verses are DEFINITELY written to the Jewish people. The Jews understood this verse from the writings of Daniel: **Daniel 12:11** *And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.* This event occurs midway through the Tribulation (actually thirty days prior to the mid-point of the Great Tribulation). The reference is to someone desecrating or defiling the Temple by setting up an idol in the Temple. Others have said this can be done by sacrificing a pig or other unclean animal in the temple. This brings up the question, “Must the Temple be rebuilt before the Lord returns?” It would seem so. However, with today’s construction technology, it would not be necessary to be built before the Rapture of the Church. I believe that somewhere hidden in Israel are architectural plans that have already been drawn up for the rebuilding of the Temple.

16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: (12) JEWISH MIGRATION WITHIN ISRAEL. The prior verse is a triggering event and the Jews in Israel at the time of this event are to IMMEDIATELY flee into mountains for safety and the reason for this is in verse 21.

17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: 18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. 19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! 20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: All of these verses apply to those that are running for their lives IN Israel.

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21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. **(13) THE GREAT TRIBULATION.** I have loosely called the last seven-year period on the earth the Great Tribulation but it really begins at the halfway point of that period. It will be the worse time on earth ever since the history of the earth began and all of the events prior to this will help usher it in.

22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. **(14) MASS DESTRUCTION OF HUMAN LIFE.** In the terms of a science fiction movie, the Great Tribulation period is an “extinction level event”. In other words, if the days were not stopped, humanity would cease to exist. Who is the “elect” in this verse? It is NOT the Church because the Church has been raptured by this time. This verse refers to the obedient Jews who fled into the mountains.

23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. In the midst of this pain, if anyone says that Christ is in a certain place, DON'T BELIEVE IT. Don't use this lie to come out of hiding. Deception is starting again or will it ever end? This verse is also directed toward the hiding Jews in the mountains of Israel. (Those that miss the Rapture and desire salvation during the Great Tribulation can also use it.)

24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. **(15) INCREASED DEMONSTRATION OF SATANIC POWER.** The Book of Revelation speaks of the lying wonders that will be performed by the Antichrist and the false prophet during the Great Tribulation. These are REAL miracles but the power behind them is demonic. **SAINTS' PRINCIPLE: Beware! Don't be so caught up in desiring the supernatural that you forget that there are two forces at work and one of them is demonic. Try the spirits!**

25 Behold, I have told you before. 26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. Again, the Lord encourages the Jews to not leave their hiding place and He tells them why in the next verse.

27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. The Second Coming of Jesus Christ will be a visible, striking event. As the lightening illuminates the sky, so will His Second Coming be. You haven't got to go look for Him when He returns.

28 For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. This verse seems out of context until you apply this chapter with Book of Revelation. **Revelation 19:17-18** *And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; 18 That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small*

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and great. The Second Coming will not be a parade; it will be a slaughter of those that have deceived the earth (again, read Revelation 19).

29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: 30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Revelation 1:7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. (16) SIGNS IN THE HEAVENS. Don't confuse some of the things that we see in the skies now. They are just in preparation for this day. When THESE signs appear, within MOMENTS the Lord Jesus Christ will return to earth.

31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. This verse also does NOT refer to the church. The elect are those that have obeyed and gone into hiding 3½ years prior.

32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: 33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

MYTH: This brief parable by our Lord has nothing to do with whether the changing of the seasons, or confusion in the seasons, is a sign for His Second Coming. All He is saying is to watch what goes on, like you would with a fig tree, and you'll be able to tell when these events are near.

34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. {JF&B} “Whether we take this to mean that the whole would be fulfilled within the limits of the generation then current, or, according to a usual way of speaking, that the generation then existing would not pass away without seeing a begun fulfillment of this prediction, the facts entirely correspond. For either the whole was fulfilled in the destruction accomplished by Titus, as many think; or, if we stretch it out, according to others, till the thorough dispersion of the Jews a little later, under Adrian, every requirement of our Lord's words seems to be met.” In the 70's, this verse took on great meaning because of the strength of the new nation of Israel, revival in America, and “signs” (or so it seemed) in the heavens. The key was the word “generation” and well-meaning people used that word to say that a generation is 30 years, 40 years, or 70 years. Therefore, they expected the Lord to return within 30, 40, or 70 years of the establishment of Israel as a nation in 1948 or the Balfour Resolution establishing a homeland for the Jews in 1917. This would put the return of Christ somewhere between 1949 and 2018. We know the first date didn't happen but we don't know about the second date. However, here's the problem – the word “generation” comes from the Greek word, **genea**, referring to a period of time or the whole multitude of men living at the same time.

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Note: The Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917, was a simple letter written by the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Arthur James Balfour, to Lord Rothschild, a British financier, promising the Jews a “national home” in Palestine. It was written on behalf of the British government and consisted of a 67-word declaration in a 129-word letter that had MONUMENTAL impact on End Times prophecies.

35 *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.* This was directed to His audience – the Church. The words of Jesus Christ are the words of God and they shall not pass away.

36 *But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.* This is an interesting verse in light of all that the Lord has just said. He’s been giving us instruction on how to know of His return but comes to the end by saying that we won’t know the specifics. This is important and speaks to a balance that we must have as the people of God: we must watch the signs and know that His appearance is near but realize that we’re just approximating and can’t know the day or hour.

37 *But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, 39 And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.* **(17) PROCRASTINATION AND**

SCOFFING. The coming of the Lord Jesus shall occur at a time when it will be “business as usual”. Yes, there will be signs but many will miss them or ignore them as they did in Noah’s day. Noah preached for 120 years. Probably, at the beginning of his ministry, people were excited and made some changes. But when they saw things continue on as they had in the past, they went back to their old ways. **2 Peter 3:3-4 *Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. NLT First, I want to remind you that in the last days there will be scoffers who will laugh at the truth and do every evil thing they desire. 4 This will be their argument: “Jesus promised to come back, did he? Then where is he? Why, as far back as anyone can remember, everything has remained exactly the same since the world was first created.”*** This is one verse that the NLT really brings out and this is what people are saying today. People that don’t know the Lord are interested in End Times studies because they’re curious and it’s interesting but they don’t want to change and they use the words of Second Peter.

Now I want to jump to verse 44 and then recap our signs of the Lord’s return.

44 *THEREFORE BE YE ALSO READY: FOR IN SUCH AN HOUR AS YE THINK NOT THE SON OF MAN COMETH.* Our duty is to be prepared for the Lord’s return. In spite of the warnings of this chapter, He will come unexpectedly. Peter said that men count on slackness or

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delay. When we begin to do that, the next step is to allow things to come in that have no business in our lives. Then we get comfortable doing those things and the Lord appears without warning! What shall a person give in exchange for his soul?

CONCLUSION. Let's summarize with the table below. We've gone through 17 signs and most of these signs point to the events during the Great Tribulation. Some are occurring now in the Church Age so we end up looking to and expecting the wrong thing. The real key to this lesson is this – it's very difficult to see exactly when this will all come together so we must be **READY!**

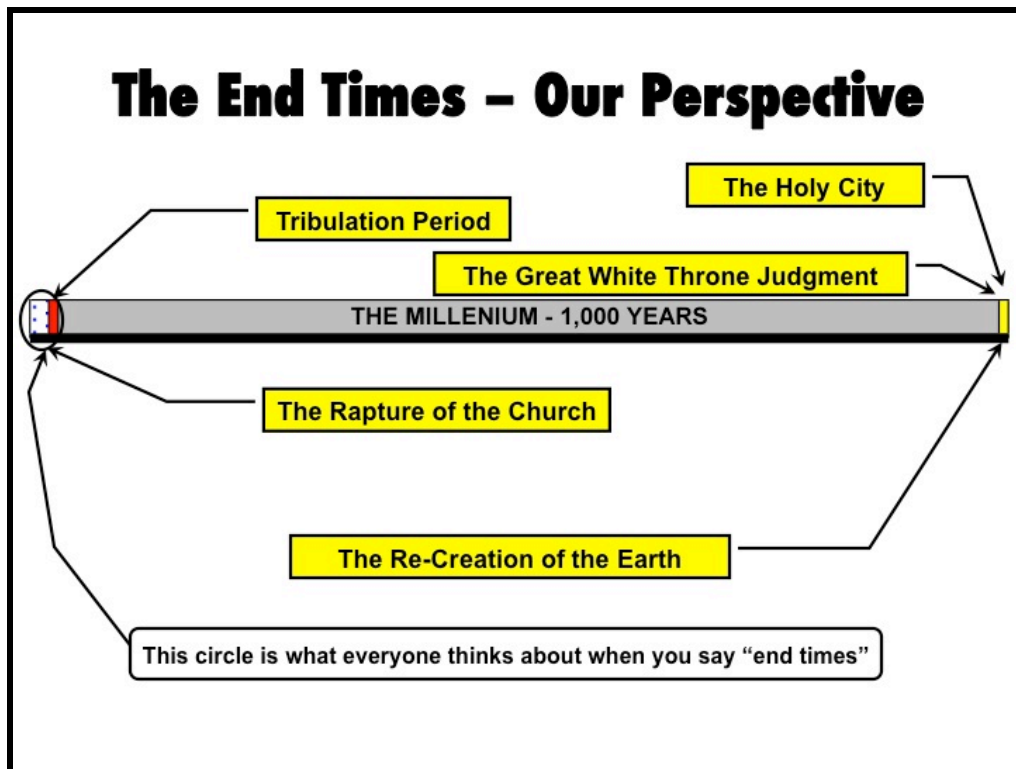
SIGN	Tribulation Event	Church Age Event
(1) DECEPTION	✓	✓
(2) FALSE CHRISTS	✓	✓
(3) WARS AND RUMORS OF WARS	✓	✓
(4) UNUSUAL "NATURAL" CALAMITIES	✓	✓
(5) HATRED & PERSECUTION OF GOD'S PEOPLE	✓	✓
(6) FALSE PROPHETS	✓	✓
(7) RAMPANT LAWLESSNESS	✓	✓
(8) WORLDWIDE SATURATION OF THE GOSPEL	✓	
(9) THE RESTORATION OF THE JEWISH NATION	✓	✓
(10) THE RESTORATION OF THE JEWISH TEMPLE	✓	
(11) THE DESECRATION OF THE TEMPLE	✓	
(12) JEWISH MIGRATION WITHIN ISRAEL	✓	
(13) THE GREAT TRIBULATION	✓	
(14) MASS DESTRUCTION OF HUMAN LIFE	✓	
(15) INCREASED DEMONSTRATION OF SATANIC POWER	✓	
(16) SIGNS IN THE HEAVENS	✓	
(17) PROCRASTINATION AND SCOFFING	✓	✓

Note: the lighter checks refer to events that are starting but have not fully come to pass.

3 - The Rapture of the Church

Introduction

Previously, we looked at the words of the Lord Jesus Christ regarding the End Times from Matthew Chapter 24. This gave us the opportunity to further establish ground rules for our study since this chapter, though often quoted by the Church, does not apply to the Church. From now on, our study will progress down our End Times “timeline” (repeated below) beginning with the Rapture of the Church.



By the completion of this section on the Rapture of the Church, we want to achieve the following:

- We should be convinced of the Scriptural truth of the Rapture. We want to leave here with Bible proof that we can share with others, not just hearsay passed down from others. **1 Peter 3:15** *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.* The Rapture is known as the “blessed hope” so we need to be able to present this with firm Scriptural foundation.
- We should understand why we believe that the Rapture triggers the beginning of the Great Tribulation. In other words, the Rapture occurs prior to any of the terrible plagues of the Great Tribulation period.

The Rapture of the Church

The whole concept of End Times studies begins with the key event in the history of man (though most will miss it) – the Rapture of the Church. We’ve already discussed where the word “rapture” comes from, but it would be good to take a quick look at it again.

The Rapture – This word refers to the event where Christians will be taken away from the earth. According to the Scripture, the process involves an immediate metamorphosis (transformation, change) from natural to spiritual. The word “rapture” is not found in our English Bibles but comes from the Latin verb *rapere*, which means, “to carry off” or “catch up”. It was used in the Latin Vulgate (Bible translation, about 405 A.D.) translation of 1 Thessalonians 4:17, which is the primary Biblical reference to this event and one of the Scriptures we will study in this lesson. There are three main viewpoints concerning the timing of the Rapture:

- **PRE-TRIBULATION** – The most popular concept of the Rapture is referred to as the Pre-Tribulation Rapture, or simply “Pre-Trib”. This view says that the Rapture will occur at the beginning of the Great Tribulation and, in fact, triggers its start. This is the view that I believe from the Scriptures and this is the view that will be taught in this lesson. (This is also the view of the majority of the Church today so this is not a “private interpretation” of the Scriptures.)
- **MID-TRIBULATION** – Another view is termed the Mid Tribulation Rapture (or “Mid-Trib”). This is a view that is held by fewer people than the previous. This view says that the rapture will occur at the middle of the Great Tribulation as the Antichrist assumes his most wicked role as the Beast. There are a lot of Scriptures that could justify this thought and we’ll talk about this also in this lesson.
- **POST-TRIBULATION** – The other, less accepted concept is referred to as the Post Tribulation Rapture (or “Post-Trib”). This viewpoint says that Christian believers will be on earth as witnesses to Christ during the Great Tribulation and right up until the last day of this age. There are a lot of problems with this idea and it’s hard to find a lot of Scriptures to support it. What’s interesting, though, is that MOST people believe this. They believe that Christians will see the end of the world. This probably comes from a misunderstanding of “the sheep and the goats” judgment of Matthew chapter 25. Being raised in the Catholic Church, I was NOT taught ANYTHING about the Rapture of the Church and it still may not be being taught at this time. Therefore, by default, they fall into the category of “post-trib”.

With this background, let’s go to the Scriptures and find out more about the Rapture of the Church. I believe that, since the above definition gives us a good foundation, it would be good to use a question and answer format to proceed with our lesson.

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WHERE IS “THE RAPTURE” FOUND IN THE BIBLE?

Three Scriptures reveal the mystery of the Rapture of the Church: John 14:1-3, 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, and 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17. The latter two Scriptures are the strongest and we’ll look at them in the most detail.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN AT THE RAPTURE?

To understand the Rapture, we’ll return to our Scriptures above and show what the Bible says about what happens at the Rapture.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52

51 Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. This Scripture uncovers a mystery that the Lord Jesus spoke of in John 14. There are some key points in this verse that should not be missed because they give us the essentials of the Rapture.

1. ***We shall not all sleep*** – It’s one thing to resurrect dead people and have them put on a spiritual body. That could happen all of the time and we would never know about it. However, the Rapture affects the living saints also. Look at how the New Living Translation puts it – “***Not all of us will die***”.
2. ***We shall all be changed*** – The Rapture of the Church involves a metamorphosis or transformation. In our next verse, we’ll see what’s involved in this change. Because of how this transformation takes place, it *appears* that all Christians disappear but we’re actually changed and snatched away.
3. ***In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye*** – The Rapture does not happen over time, it happens instantly. Paul uses the phrase, “in the twinkling of an eye,” to signify the speed of the transformation that will take place. It will occur so quickly that there will be no time to repent – we must be ready when He comes.
4. ***For the trumpet shall sound*** – In the Scripture in Thessalonians, we’ll find that this trumpet is actually the sound of the voice of Jesus.
5. ***And the dead shall be raised incorruptible*** – At the Rapture, there will be a resurrection of the righteous dead. They will be raised with eternal bodies that cannot be corrupted (no decay or old age).

The revelation of the Rapture was progressive. First Corinthians only gives us part of the picture. Now let’s go to 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 for more of the picture.

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1 Thessalonians 4:15-17

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Even though the Rapture is instantaneous, the revelation of the Rapture was given progressively. This verse gives us some of the same details as the prior verse but also gives us a little more.

1. *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God* – The major figure in the Rapture of the Church is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He will not send an angel but He will come Himself with a shout sounding as the voice of an archangel and sounding as the trumpet of God. Look how the NLT puts it: **For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the call of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God.** I don't know if we'll physically hear this call but in our spiritual person, we will hear it. This call will trigger the transformation of the Rapture. Will this be a literal trumpet? It doesn't appear that way. This will be the same trumpet voice that John heard on the Isle of Patmos: **Revelation 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.** That Voice called John to see great things and that Voice will call us to our eternal destiny with the Lord Jesus Christ.

CAUTION: There is a myth that goes with this verse that says that Gabriel will blow his horn at the end of the world. There is nothing in Scripture that says that the Angel Gabriel ever blew a horn and this verse has nothing to do with a horn. It's the Voice of our Savior calling to His people with such intensity that it sounds as a trumpet.

2. *The dead in Christ shall rise first* – There is no real period of time between the raising of the dead in Christ to the transformation of the living saints but they will be first (we'll see this in item 3). They have waited the longest and it's only right that they would come forth first. The Lord showed me that the Rapture represents the completion of the cycle of creation that was disrupted by Adam. Adam was created to be an incorruptible being. He was able to walk with God and see God without fear of death. However, sin ruined that and part of the sin penalty was physical death. At the Rapture, the dead are raised with incorruptible bodies (and spirits!) so that they are better than Adam.
3. *Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds* – After the dead are raised, those that live on this earth and are in Christ shall be "caught up". {McGee} "[The phrase] "caught up" is the Greek **harpazō**, meaning 'to grasp hastily, snatch up, to lift, transport, or rapture.'" At the Rapture, the Church will be snatched away from the

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earth. We will meet up with the dead in Christ that have already been raised and meet together with them in the clouds.

4. ***To meet the Lord in the air*** – At the Rapture, there will be a great meeting of the saints with the Lord in the air. **THIS IS NOT THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST!** Remember from our previous lessons that everyone will see the Lord Jesus at the Second Coming. The Rapture is a special intimate meeting of the saints with their Lord.
5. ***And so shall we ever be with the Lord*** – The beauty of the Rapture is that once you’ve made the Rapture, you’ve made it! There is no turning back – eternity begins for us at the Rapture.

Now with all of the information we have from these two verses, let’s lay out the eight steps of the Rapture of the Church (all of which happen instantly):

- The Lord Jesus Christ Himself will descend from heaven with a voice as a trumpet call.
- The dead in Christ will be raised.
- The dead in Christ will have their decayed bodies instantly transformed into an eternal, incorruptible body.
- The living in Christ shall instantly have their corruptible bodies transformed to incorruptible bodies.
- The living in Christ shall be “snatched away” from the earth.
- The living and dead in Christ, with their new incorruptible bodies, shall meet together in the clouds.
- The raptured saints will meet the Lord Jesus Christ in the air.
- We will continue in the presence of the Lord FOREVER.

DOESN'T THE “LAST TRUMP” MEAN THE RAPTURE HAPPENS IN THE TRIBULATION?

I have never felt that the “last trump” of First Corinthians 15:52 had anything to do with the Seventh Trumpet of the Book of Revelation. By the time this occurs, those on earth will have been severely afflicted by the plagues of that book. Christians are used to enduring persecution but this time is a time of judgment on those on the earth that refused Christ. There is no Scriptural precedent where the righteous are judged with the wicked. Look at some examples:

- Abraham negotiated with God for the life of his nephew using this same principle in Genesis 18. As wicked as Sodom and Gomorrah were, the cities would have been spared if God had found just 10 righteous people there.
- When God judged Egypt because they refused to let His people go, the Bible gave us a number of interesting verses to let us know that God makes a difference between clean and unclean:
 - **Exodus 8:22** *And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth.*

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- **Exodus 9:26** *Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail.*
- **Exodus 10:22-23** *And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.*

We can add other examples and Scriptures to this but the point is this: If the Rapture occurs at the Seventh Trumpet then God will judge the righteous with the wicked, which He has never done. However, to give you one viewpoint on the last trump, I found an interesting article on the Internet from an unnamed author, which I feel comfortable saying, answers this question. Here are some excerpts:

There are trumpets blown all the way through the Tribulation. How can the last trump be before the Tribulation? To answer that question one would have to know something of the Jewish feasts. Sooner or later, believers who are interested in the Rapture, touch base with the Jewish feast, Rosh HaShana, because many tie the Rapture to this feast. The expectations of the Rapture rise every year in September/ October, when the feast days approach. Rosh Hashana had its beginning about 500 B.C. The Jews began celebrating this feast during the previous month by blowing a ram's horn trumpet for twenty-nine days. On the last day the blowing stopped. Then on the first day of Tishri (Rosh HaShanah), one more blowing of the trumpet occurred which consisted of three distinct series of thirty blasts each and then concluded with a blowing of ten blasts. At the end of all these blowings, there was one last, long sounding of the trumpet. These trumpet blowings are used in the Old Testament for gathering people. Rosh HaShanah ushers in the New Year. Being symbolic of the "last trump", it has implications to Christians in reference to the Rapture.

DID THE LORD JESUS EVER SAY ANYTHING ABOUT THE RAPTURE?

Some people cannot accept anything "new" that was not somewhere discussed by the Lord. This is unfortunate since the Church was built up on the apostles' doctrine. However, we have a Scripture, though it's a little obscure, which we can point to. This Scripture is usually used for everything EXCEPT for the Rapture.

John 14:3 *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.* I would have probably missed this if many commentators hadn't pointed it out. Did you miss it also? Look at this verse in the NLT and see if it's clearer: **When everything is ready, I WILL COME AND GET YOU, so that you will always be with me where I am.** This was not spoken to everyone; it was spoken at the Last Supper with those that the Lord cherished so much. Judas Iscariot had already gone to betray the Lord so it was an intimate time for the Church. He promised His Church that He would come and get us. Now we

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can use that to say many things but, as we get farther into this study, we'll see that we have to be naturally prepared to meet the Lord.

WHY IS THE RAPTURE EVEN NECESSARY?

As I see it, the Rapture serves four purposes:

1. The Rapture removes the Church from the earth so that the spirit of the enemy can have free course to usher in Antichrist. **2 Thessalonians 2:7** *For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.* **NLT** *For this lawlessness is already at work secretly, and it will remain secret until the one who is holding it back steps out of the way.* The Church of Jesus Christ is the “glue” that is holding this world together. If we are moved out of the way, who will pray for the president and those in authority? Who will pray for grace and mercy on gang members, serial killers, and other terrible forces in society? Who will pray to bind the devil? Once the Church is removed, everything the devil wants to do can be done without hindrance. In talking about the question on the last trump, I told you that just 10 righteous people could have stopped the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah. That's the power of the Church!
2. Second, it removes the Church from the judgment of the world. I also talked about this when discussing the last trump. God has always made a difference between clean and unclean. **Ezekiel 44:23** *And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.*
3. Third, it is the process for us to go from the dimension of the natural to the supernatural or spiritual. **1 Corinthians 15:50, 53** *Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. 53 For this corruptible MUST put on incorruption, and this mortal MUST put on immortality.* Look at the strength of this verse! Our corruptible bodies MUST be changed to incorruptible. Our mortal selves MUST be transformed to being immortal. This is why the Rapture is necessary. At some point, ALL who will inherit the Kingdom MUST be changed in order to do so.
4. Fourth, the Rapture removes us from this world for the judgment of the Church and to prepare us to reign with Christ during the Millennium. **1 Corinthians 3:13** *Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.* This “day” is the time of judgment for the Church and the time when rewards are received. This judgment does not cause us to lose our salvation: **1 Corinthians 3:14-15** *If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.* I also believe that this is a time of preparation for us to judge the earth with the Lord during the Millennium.

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IS THERE MORE THAN ONE RAPTURE IN THE BIBLE?

To respond to this question, we must first remember one of the purposes of the Rapture from our previous lesson: The Rapture is the process for us to go from the dimension of the natural to the dimension of the supernatural or spiritual. **1 Corinthians 15:50, 53** *Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. 53 For this corruptible **MUST** put on incorruption, and this mortal **MUST** put on immortality.* Therefore, the Rapture is the process that God uses to bring our flesh into His presence. Remember also that with the Rapture, a metamorphosis takes place that changes our corruptible flesh to an incorruptible alternative. (I won't call it flesh because it's something different, something that I can't define.) So with this brief introduction, my answer is "Yes" and I'll show you why through the Scriptures.

- The first example of the Rapture in the Old Testament was Enoch. Genesis does not bring this out very well in this one cryptic verse: **Genesis 5:24** *And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.* However, to understand what really happened with Enoch, you have to go to the New Testament where the Church has now begun to understand this process. **Hebrews 11:5** *By faith Enoch was TRANSLATED that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had TRANSLATED him: for before his TRANSLATION he had this testimony, that he pleased God.* Look at how the **Amplified Bible** translates this verse using a familiar term: **Because of faith Enoch was CAUGHT UP and transferred to heaven, so that he did not have a glimpse of death; and he was not found, because God had TRANSLATED him. For even before he was taken to heaven, he received testimony [still on record] that he had pleased and been satisfactory to God.** The word "translated" means (from Dictionary.com) "to change from one form, function, or state to another; convert or transform and to convey to heaven without death". This is the same definition we have been using for the Rapture with one difference – the Rapture is considered a "violent" act in that the Church is "snatched away". Enoch, even though his existence was in the distant past, was an early example of the end times. Jude tells us that he even gave a prophecy of the coming of the coming of the Lord that is still to come to pass (Jude 14-15).
- I could also talk about the translation of Elijah through the chariot of fire but let's move forward to the Book of Revelation because this is probably the real intent of this question. There are at least four Raptures (by my count) in the Book of Revelation.
 - **Revelation 4:1-2** *After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, COME UP HITHER, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. 2 And IMMEDIATELY I WAS IN THE SPIRIT: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.* These verses are representative of the Rapture of the Church even though it only involves the Apostle John. In order to be able to see what the Lord had for

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John he had to go through the metamorphosis (change) that comes about with the Rapture. In this chapter, you'll then see many references to the Church in the presence of God, such as the twenty-four elders.

- **Revelation 7:9,13-14** *After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; 13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? 14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* After the Rapture of the Church, many will die during the Great Tribulation. They will die because of their testimony of the salvation through Jesus Christ during the Great Tribulation. Most commentators believe that this is the ONLY way for salvation (death) during the Great Tribulation. They are mentioned in the previous chapter. **Revelation 6:9, 11** *And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: 11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.* {Dake} “They are to be translated or they could not be before the throne of God in heaven. They cannot be resurrected and translated until they are killed.” This is the second Rapture in the Book of Revelation. This is why it is so important to make the Rapture of the Church (the first Rapture) that begins the Great Tribulation. If you miss it, you will see death before you see the next Rapture and only if you have the courage to receive the Lord. **QUESTION:** **If you don't have the courage to live saved now in a “Christian” country, how will you have the courage to live saved in a godless world that is intent on killing you?**
- **Revelation 11:11-12** *And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. 12 And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.* The third Rapture in the Book of Revelation involves the resurrection and rapture of the two witnesses who will preach for 3½ years during the Great Tribulation (Revelation 11:3). It does not involve the “snatching away” of the Rapture of the Church has but it is more like the ascension of Christ into heaven at the conclusion of His earthly ministry.
- **Revelation 12:5** *And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was CAUGHT UP unto God, and to his throne.* The Greek word for “caught up” is the same word used in **2 Corinthians 12:2, 4** (*I knew a man in Christ*

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above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one CAUGHT UP to the third heaven. How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter) and our primary Rapture Scripture of **1 Thessalonians 4:17** (*Then we which are alive and remain shall be CAUGHT UP together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord*). This is the fourth Rapture in the Book of Revelation. The “*man child*” represents Christ. At His ascension into heaven, he was “caught up” to God. How do we know it is Christ? Look at the reference “who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron”. This is the same attribute given to the Lord Jesus in **Revelation 19:15** *And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.*

THE SCRIPTURE SAYS THAT THE DEAD IN CHRIST WILL RISE FIRST AND JOIN THE TRANSLATED LIVING SAINTS TO MEET THE LORD IN THE AIR. DOES THIS MEAN THAT WE'RE NOT WITH THE LORD AFTER WE DIE UNTIL THE RAPTURE? IF THAT'S SO, WHERE DO WE GO WHEN WE DIE?

Someone giving remarks at a funeral recently asked this question. (I don't understand why but I wanted to answer it just the same.) To get the answer to this question, we go right to the Source who knows of both dimensions (natural and spiritual) – the Lord Jesus Christ. We'll look at a couple of Scriptures and put them together to get our answer.

- Our first source will be the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus. Many look at this as a parable while others look at it as a true story because this is the only parable where the Lord has given someone's name. Also, if this were a parable, why would He choose the name of one of His best friends? Therefore, I side with those that say this is a true story that gives us a glimpse into the spiritual world. **Luke 16:22-25** *And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; 23 And IN HELL he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. 25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but NOW he is comforted, and thou art tormented.* My first response is this – once someone dies, according to this story, they receive a portion of their eternal destiny. Lazarus was comforted at the time of his death and the rich man was tormented at the time of his death.
- Next, when the Lord Jesus was dying on the cross, He made an important statement to one of the thieves with Him. **Luke 23:42-43** *And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, TODAY shalt thou*

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be with me in paradise. The key to this verse is those last four words: “*with Me in paradise*”. That means that the Lord Jesus was going there and the thief was going there because he believed. One Bible dictionary defined “paradise” as “*the upper regions of the heavens or heaven itself.*” This same word is used in 2 Corinthians 12:4 and Revelation 2:7. In both references, they refer back to the dwelling place of God. Before we leave this, look at when the thief would arrive there – the very day that he died.

We could look at other Scriptures but the key is this, we will immediately experience a portion of our eternal reward after we die. I say that this is only a portion of our eternal destiny because, for the lost, their ultimate destiny, unfortunately, is the lake of fire. For those that know the Lord, it is the Holy City. The Rapture resurrects our bodies and rejoins them with our souls in an incorruptible state. From that time on, we are ever with the Lord in a new physical state. However, we will have already been in a place of paradise prior to the Rapture.

4 – The Tribulation & the Great Tribulation

Now that we have dealt with the Rapture of the Church, the next important event in our end times study is the Great Tribulation period. The majority of the Book of Revelation has to do with the Great Tribulation. Instead of going into all of the gory details of the Great Tribulation, we will look at that more when we study the Book of Revelation. Instead, as we proceed in this part of our study, I want to use this opportunity to understand the background of the Great Tribulation and trying to understand God's real purpose in letting it happen

From our ground rules earlier, we established this definition: ***The Great Tribulation – Matthew 24:21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.*** The Tribulation is a seven-year period of severe judgment and persecution starting after the Rapture of the Church. The Tribulation is broken into two 3½ year periods with the second 3½ year period known as the Great Tribulation. To begin our study, let's go to the Ninth Chapter of the Book of Daniel. We're going back to this book because the Great Tribulation is not just a time of trouble for the world but Daniel tells us that it's main purpose is for the nation of Israel. Jeremiah referred to this time as "***the time of Jacob's trouble***" (Jeremiah 30:7). However, the good news that Jeremiah also shared is that the nation of Israel would be saved out of it. In this chapter of Jeremiah, we also find that the purpose of the Great Tribulation was to, once and for all, deal with all the nations that had afflicted God's chosen people and break their yoke from off the neck of Israel. Yes, it's a time of punishment but it is not punishment based on current events but on the accumulated sins of mankind against God's plan and His people since He first chose them as a nation. Look how the Lord puts it – **Jeremiah 30:11 NLT For I am with you and will save you, says the LORD. I will completely destroy the nations where I have scattered you, but I will not destroy you. But I must discipline you; I cannot let you go unpunished.**

In this chapter of Daniel, he was reading the book of Jeremiah and had determined, through his studies that the captivity of Judah was to be for 70 years. However, he had just received prophecies and visions that said that the Gentiles would continue to rule the world. How could this fit with the end of this captivity and Daniel's possible thinking that Israel would once again rise to world prominence? It was at this point that Daniel received this prophecy. Our text is **Daniel 9:20-27**.

20 And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God; As a side note, I've always found this verse interesting because Daniel, God's man for that time, was not only praying for the sins of the people but for his own sins. There is no indication in the Scripture that he was a sinful man or ever sinned but perhaps he had. Personally, I believe he wanted to make sure that he had not offended the Lord in sins of omission (things he should have done but didn't) or in presumptuous sins (taking too much for granted or showing overconfidence in himself). David

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wrote in **Psalm 19:13** *Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.* The Amplified Bible helps us understand this verse by saying at the end, “*and I shall be innocent and clear of great transgression*”. I believe that we would have less trouble in the church at all levels if we would deal with presumptuous sins (“*Not me! I could not have sinned!*”) before they grow to great transgressions.

21 *Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.* This “man Gabriel” that Daniel spoke of was actually the angel Gabriel. Gabriel is mentioned four times in the Bible and twice in Daniel. This lets us know that Daniel was very important to God. The other two times where Gabriel is mentioned is when he appeared to Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, and to Mary, the mother of the Lord Jesus. He told Zechariah that he stood in the presence of God so whatever he said was important because it came right from the mouth of God.

22 *And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. 23 At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.* I LOVE how Dr. McGee explains this verse so I must share it – {McGee} “*Notice that Daniel gets an immediate answer to his prayer. I heard Dr. Gaebelien say that it took him three minutes to read Daniel’s prayer in Hebrew. By the time Daniel finished his prayer, the angel Gabriel was there. So Dr. Gaebelien reasoned and explained with a twinkle in his eye, ‘It took Gabriel three minutes to get from heaven to earth.’ Of course, if Daniel had his eyes closed while he was praying, it may be that Gabriel was standing on one foot and then on the other for two minutes, waiting for Daniel to get finished. The Lord God has promised, ‘And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear’ (Isaiah 65:24).*” Remember, Daniel had been praying so what vision is Gabriel speaking of? Gabriel is referring to the awesome visions in the previous two chapters where Daniel is introduced to the antichrist and the kingdoms leading up to his reign. Now Gabriel is about to reveal an awesome truth to Daniel regarding the timetable of the events leading to antichrist. That’s why we are in this chapter.

24 *Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.* Daniel had been praying about the 70 years of captivity of God’s people. Gabriel brought him a message dealing with 70 WEEKS. The commentators and Bible scholars generally agree that the “seventy weeks” are seventy weeks of years. In other words, every day in each “week” represents a year. The New Living Translation brings this out better in calling it “**a period of seventy sets of seven.**” **70 x 7 = 490**. With this information, let’s restate the first part of this verse to get a better understanding: “**Seventy weeks of years, or 490 years, are decreed for your people and the**

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holy city, Jerusalem.” We’re going to need to take our time with these passages because in these four little verses, the timetable for the crucifixion of Jesus and the length of the Great Tribulation are brought out.

These 490 years are for purposes, which are also brought out in this verse. Another amazing thing I found in my studies is that the Babylonian Captivity was a turning point in the history of Israel – a turning point that they have not recovered from and will not recover from until after the Great Tribulation. {JF&B} “*The Babylonian captivity ... terminated the free Old Testament theocracy. Up to that time Israel, though oppressed at times, was, as a rule, free. From the Babylonian captivity the theocracy never recovered its full freedom down to its entire suspension by Rome; and this period of Israel’s subjection to the Gentiles is to continue till the Millennium (Re 20:1-15), when Israel shall be restored as head of the New Testament theocracy, which will embrace the whole earth.*” So what does this have to do with the Great Tribulation? The Great Tribulation represents man at his worst, intent on annihilating God’s creation and making it so that God MUST intervene. When God intervenes, He will completely change everything and restore Israel, restore the dominion that man lost through Adam, and set up the Lord Jesus Christ, the second Adam, as the ruler of the world.

These 490 years have six purposes, which are also brought out in this verse. We need to understand the purpose of this entire period before we can focus on one part of this period.

1. **To finish the transgression** – {JF&B} “*Literally ‘shut up’; remove from God’s sight, that is, abolish. The seventy years exile was a punishment, but not a full atonement, for the sin of the people; this would come only after seventy prophetic weeks, through Messiah.*” The people that JF&B are talking about are the people of God – Israel. {McGee} “*The cross provided the redemption for sin—for the sin of the nation, but not all accepted it. Today the word has gone out to the ends of the earth that there is a redemption for mankind. But in that last ‘week’ we are told that God says, ‘And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications ...’ (Zech. 12:10). And in Zechariah 13:1: ‘In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.’ That has not been opened yet.*” The transgression of Israel will be at an end and they will accept Jesus Christ as their Messiah.
2. **To make an end of sins** – The sins of Israel and the sins of all mankind will be dealt with in this 490 year period because it points to the first **and** second coming of Christ.
3. **To make reconciliation for iniquity** – During this 490-year period, God has provided a means of reconciliation back to God through the death and resurrection of Christ.
4. **To bring in everlasting righteousness** – {JF&B} “*Namely, the restoration of the normal state between God and man; to continue eternally.*” **Jeremiah 23:5-6** *Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall*

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reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. 6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. The everlasting righteousness to be brought in is not only the righteousness that we experience through Jesus Christ but Jesus Christ Himself.

5. **To seal up the vision and prophecy** – {McGee} “*All will be fulfilled, which will vindicate [prove] this prophecy as well as all other prophecies in Scripture.*”
6. **To anoint the most Holy** – {JF&B} “*Messiah was anointed with the Holy Ghost (Ac 4:27; 10:38). So hereafter, God-Messiah will ‘anoint’ or consecrate with His presence the holy place at Jerusalem after its pollution by Antichrist.*” The commentators and even the various translations disagree about this last point. Some say it is the Most Holy PLACE of the Millennial Temple while others say it is the Most Holy ONE, which is the Lord Jesus. All of this will be done through these 490 years or seventy weeks.

25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. Now we get to the actual timetable. The key to any timetable is the starting point. If the starting point is wrong, everything else is wrong. Dr. McGee brings this out very simply and I think it best to just put what he said here:

I feel that the decree of Artaxerxes in the twentieth year of his reign (Neh. 2:1–8) meets the requirements of verse 25. The commandment to rebuild the city of Jerusalem was issued in the month Nisan 445 B.C. That, then, will be our starting point. The first seven weeks of forty-nine years bring us to 397 B.C. and to Malachi and the end of the Old Testament. These were “troublous times,” as witnessed to by both Nehemiah and Malachi.

The first part of this prophecy brings us to the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the walls of the city. One thing you must understand in studying Bible prophecy is that there is not a lot of precision in Old Testament history. I’ve read various commentators and historians and they all have different ideas about which Persian king issued the order for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and which decree should be used (the decree of Cyrus, which most use, or the decree of Darius, or the decree of Artaxerxes who actually made two different decrees). However, since exact date and time precision in prophecy is rare, the key is that the 69 weeks will take us somewhere into the time of Christ regardless of what decree is used. Why is this important? If we believe the Bible and believe that Daniel received this and wrote it down nearly 500 years before the time of Christ, the last part of this prophecy is important because it will take us into the Great Tribulation.

26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof

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shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. The next part of the prophecy says that after the 69 weeks are over (7 weeks plus 62 weeks); Messiah will be cut off, but not for himself. I believe that the Lord Jesus used this prophecy (with others) to open the eyes of His disciples after His resurrection. God had warned His people nearly 500 years before it occurred that Messiah would come and be cut off and had given a timetable that they could generally follow. {Matthew Henry} “*He must be cut off, but not for himself—not for any sin of his own, but, as Caiaphas prophesied, he must die for the people, in our stead and for our good,—not for any advantage of his own; no; it was to atone for our sins, and to purchase life for us, that he was cut off.*” This prophecy does not stand by itself but supports what Isaiah said in Isaiah 53.

The second part of this prophecy is that the city and the sanctuary (Jerusalem and the Temple) would be destroyed. In two sentences, God has rebuilt Jerusalem and the Temple and, in the next, destroyed them again. **Matthew 16:21** *From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he MUST go unto JERUSALEM, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.* Jesus knew this and foretold the fact that His death (being cut off) MUST occur and that it must occur in Jerusalem. {McGee} “*Between the sixty-ninth and Seventieth Week two events of utmost importance are to take place. 1. Messiah will be cut off. This was the crucifixion of Christ. 2. [The] destruction of Jerusalem, which took place in A.D. 70, when Titus the Roman was the instrument.*” Titus the Roman General carried out the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. The antichrist is often spoken of as rising from the revived Roman Empire (Daniel had already been shown this). The prophecy was given to not only point to Christ but also to point to antichrist.

27 *And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.* This last verse is very interesting. The “classic” commentators (those that lived and died before the 20th Century such as Matthew Henry and JF&B) looked at this verse as referring to Christ. When they wrote, Israel was desolate and they viewed its desolation as the result of their sin of cutting off Messiah. Look at some of the views that JF&B brought out in their commentary:

- Tregelles translates, “upon the wing of abominations shall be that which causeth desolation”; namely, an idol set up on a wing or pinnacle of the temple by Antichrist, who makes a covenant with the restored Jews for the last of the seventy weeks of years (fulfilling Jesus’ words, “If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive”), and for the first three and a half years keeps it, then in the midst of the week breaks it, causing the daily sacrifices to cease. But thus there is a gap of at least 1830 years put between the sixty-nine weeks and the seventieth week.
- Sir Isaac Newton explains the wing (“overspreading”) of abominations to be the Roman ensigns (eagles) brought to the east gate of the temple, and there sacrificed to by the soldiers; the war,

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ending in the destruction of Jerusalem, lasted from spring A.D. 67 to autumn A.D. 70, that is, just three and a half years, or the last half week of years [Josephus, Wars of the Jews, 6.6].

These various views are part of the problem with understanding Bible prophecy and it continues. Contemporary commentators have changed their views because they see the country of Israel again and they have a better understanding or seem to. {McGee} *“The final ‘week’ (the seventieth), a period of seven years, is projected into the future and does not follow chronologically the other sixty-nine. The time gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks is the age of grace—unknown to the prophets (Eph. 3:1-12; 1 Pet. 1:10-12). The Seventieth Week is ... the final period and is yet unfulfilled.”* This final week is the Great Tribulation. The “he” at the beginning of the verse, is the antichrist. How do we know? The Scripture tells us that he is the “prince that shall come” but he is not on the scene during the prophesied time of Christ.

Now to this verse – antichrist will establish a seven-year agreement with “many” which will start the 70th week of this prophecy. Halfway through it, he will break the covenant by desecrating the Temple. {McGee} *“After the church is removed from the earth, [antichrist] will make a covenant with Israel. Israel will accept him as her Messiah, but in the midst of the ‘week’ he will break his covenant by placing an image in the temple (Rev. 13). This is the abomination of desolation [that Jesus spoke of in Matthew 24]. What Israel thought to be the Millennium will turn out to be the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:15–26). Only the coming of Christ can end this frightful period (Matt. 24:27–31).”*

Now that we know some of the background of the Great Tribulation, let’s develop a general understanding of the major events that will take place during this time. Before going forward, though, let’s take a quick “course correction” to make sure we’re all on track. Dr. Tim LaHaye, in his book *The Merciful God of Prophecy* says this about the study of end times prophecy: *“When we live in the expectation that Jesus could return at any moment, we discover a purpose for life and a passion for living far beyond anything we could know in any other way.”* This is why we’re studying this – for knowledge and especially to maintain our passion for Christ.

Remember, this period begins with the Rapture of the Church and ends with the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. It covers a seven-year period divided in two. The first half is bad but it really sets the stage for the second half, which is awful. To develop our general understanding of the Great Tribulation events, we’ll go to the main answer out of the Scriptures, the Book of Revelation. Revelation Chapter 6 deals with the opening of the seven seals. According to one modern commentator, David Guzik of Calvary Chapel, *“The first six seals are a summary of the judgments distributed over the whole book; a brief summary of what will occur in ‘the day of the Lord,’ up the time of His actual Apocalypse or Unveiling in chapter 19.”* Therefore, since Revelation 6 represents a summary of the Great Tribulation, we’ll focus this part of our study here. Also, if you’ll recall from prior lessons, Revelation 4:1 is representative of the Rapture of the Church. Chapters 4 & 5

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then deal with the events in heaven after the Rapture to usher in this period known as the Great Tribulation. Then we come to Chapter 6.

Revelation 6:1-17

1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. {Dake} “The word ‘Come’ in verses 1, 3, 5, 7 is addressed to the [4] horsemen, not to John. The words ‘and see’ in these verses are omitted in many texts for John is already present looking at every scene.”

2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer. The WHITE HORSE is a representation of authority given to antichrist. Some mistake this white horse rider for Christ Himself but He will come literally at His Second Coming discussed later in the book. Don’t focus on the horse or the rider; focus on their purpose. This horse is a symbolic representation of antichrist. Once the Church has been removed, God will open the door for him to come forth. {David Guzik} “*He rules (a crown was given); he rules with a bow, not a sword; and he exercises dominion over the earth (went out conquering and to conquer). But the results of his rule, as described in the following verses, show this is not the reign of Jesus.*” This fits with the Scripture that says **Romans 13:1b** *For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.* Dr. McGee weighs in on this verse also. {McGee} “*Christ is going to break all the seals ... right in order. He is in full charge, and every creature in heaven is moving at His command.*” **(1) The Great Tribulation will be a time of “posturing” where many leaders will fight for worldwide domination but in the end, after 3½ years, antichrist will succeed and become the dictator of the world (see Revelation 13).** This does not mean that antichrist will not be significant in the first 3½ years for it is then that he signs the covenant with Israel. However, in the second half of the Great Tribulation, he casts off all restraint because he receives his power directly from Satan (Revelation 13:2).

3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. 4 And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword. **NLT** *And another horse appeared, a red one. Its rider was given a mighty sword and the authority to remove peace from the earth. And there was war and slaughter everywhere.* The RED HORSE represents warfare. He is given authority by God to “remove peace from the earth”. {David Guzik} “*Peace between men and nations is a gift from God. It is not the natural state of relations between men. We live in the age of war and conflict. Since World War II, there have been more than 150 wars of one kind or another on the earth, and at and given time there may be some three dozen armed conflicts taking thousands of lives yearly. The nations of the world often spend more than \$1 trillion on military expenditures a year.*” If this is the state of man NOW, before the Great Tribulation, it will be much more terrible DURING the Great Tribulation. **(2) The**

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Great Tribulation will be a time of continual warfare at a level the earth has NEVER seen before. Peace will be taken even out of neighborhoods – no one will live in peace.

5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. 6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine. NLT When the Lamb broke the third seal, I heard the third living being say, "Come!" And I looked up and saw a black horse, and its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. 6 And a voice from among the four living beings said, "A loaf of wheat bread or three loaves of barley for a day's pay. And don't waste the olive oil and wine." The BLACK HORSE represents famine and times of great want.

{MacArthur} *"World wide war will destroy the food supply which spawns global hunger. [The pair of scales is a] common measuring device [that] indicates that the scarcity of food will lead to rationing and food lines."* The famine and great want described in this verse is beyond anything we have seen today. It will no longer be isolated to third world countries or poor areas of our country but, I BELIEVE, that America and all of its allies will see a widespread return to times of the Great Depression in this period. Going back to David Guzik again brings out the last part of this verse very clearly, *"These prices are about twelve times higher than normal. It means that it would cost a day's wage to buy the ingredients for a loaf of bread. This describes 'a time of famine when life will be reduced to the barest necessities.' [And see thou hurt not the oil and the wine]. Yet, the nicer things will be available for those who can afford them. There will still be the oil and the wine that should not be harmed."* Think of the recent outcry when everyone heard that natural gas was going to possibly double in price this winter. Can you imagine the outcry at food prices 12 times higher than normal? You don't have to if you'll commit your way to God. **(3) The Great Tribulation will be a time of worldwide famine and want, EVEN IN AMERICA, the likes of which has never been seen before.** Most politicians promise peace and prosperity. The antichrist will also promise this but then, according to the Scripture, sudden destruction will come upon those that believe his promise (1 Thessalonians 5:3).

7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. 8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth. NLT And when the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the fourth living being say, "Come!" 8 And I looked up and saw a horse whose color was pale green like a corpse. And Death was the name of its rider, who was followed around by the Grave. They were given authority over one-fourth of the earth, to kill with the sword and famine and disease and wild animals. The PALE HORSE represents death. It seems that each rider "compliments" each other. Death comes as a result of the conquering of the white horse, the warring of the red horse, and the famine of the black horse. However, the pale horse goes beyond anything we can imagine. Not only will this be a time of death

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by war and famine, the pale horse will use disease and wild animals. Everything will work to kill people! **(4) The Great Tribulation will be a time of death, death, and more death!** Look at the numbers! One fourth of the earth will die – at the current population of 6 Billion, in this seven-year period, approximately 1.5 Billion people will die, if not more.

9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? 11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. The fifth seal has some controversy attached to it. I believe that these souls represent those that have given their life to Christ DURING THE TRIBULATION and have been killed for their testimony as part of the death that's reigning in the land. These are not just the ones that died at a particular period but they represent all of those that were killed for the testimony of Christ during the Tribulation. **(5) The Great Tribulation will be a time of enormous success in soul winning.** Dr. McGee believes that the Tribulation will be the time of the greatest evangelism we have ever seen and with this evangelism there will be more martyrs than ever before. Think about it – there you have the person sitting in their lovely six-bedroom home with four full bathrooms and they are studying Buddhism or perhaps they don't believe in God. Once this time of political upheaval, war, famine, and widespread death shows up, I believe it's going to be difficult to muster up a prayer to Buddha or to ignore God any longer.

SIDE ROAD: A thought came to me, and I believe it was from God, at a time when I was NOT studying this lesson. Because of that thought, I believe the Holy Ghost wants me to correct a position I have stated in prior studies at this point. I have often said that the means to salvation during the Great Tribulation would be death by martyrdom (dying for the cause of Christ). However, the Scriptures do not support this – they only say that there will be many that will die for Christ. I don't see any clear indication that one cannot survive the Great Tribulation, having become saved in it, and see the Second Coming as a believer. However, I'm going to ask for your patience because as I study more and gain more light, I may change my position again. That comes with studying prophecy.

12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; 13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. 14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. The sixth seal, according to many commentators, introduces the second half of the Tribulation (The Great Tribulation), the time known as the "Wrath of God". {MacArthur} *"While the first 5 seals will result from human activity God used to accomplish His purposes, at this point He begins direct intervention. There have been many earthquakes prior to this, but this will be more than an earthquake. All the earth's faults will begin to fracture*

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*simultaneously, resulting in a cataclysmic, global earthquake.” John looked and saw this GLOBAL earthquake block out the sun and the moon, cause cosmic disturbances, and shake every mountain and island out of its place. The result will be fear like there has never been before. **(6) The Great Tribulation will be a time of God forcefully and angrily stepping into the affairs of man and, as a result, letting them know that He’s still in control.***

15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; 16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: 17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? A healthy fear of God does not make you afraid of God. However, they never had a healthy fear or they would be saved. Now they realize the anger of God and they experience tormenting fear.

With the conclusion of this chapter, you can almost “fit” the rest of the Book of Revelation into those six categories. For instance, in Chapter 7, the 144,000 Jewish evangelists will be sealed and their results show up in Revelation 7:9 *After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.* This fits with the fifth seal of verse 9.

Summary

With that, let’s summarize the Tribulation and the Great Tribulation from our brief study. We have not learned enough even to be “dangerous” but have received a very general overview of this awful time that will come. We have learned:

- The Great Tribulation is an event that is not only the result of the sin of mankind TODAY but it is a time of punishment based on the accumulated sins of mankind against God’s plan and His people since He first chose Israel as a nation. Jeremiah referred to this time as “the time of Jacob’s (Israel’s) trouble” (Jeremiah 30:7).
- The Great Tribulation is not an event in Bible prophecy that is just in the New Testament. Long before Christ appeared, the Bible spoke of it.
- Since the antichrist is spoken of as the “prince that shall come”, he will be a person of such prominence that he will be able to secure a covenant with Israel at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. He will break that covenant at the middle of the Tribulation by desecrating the Temple. This will begin the most horrible 3½-year period in the history of mankind.
- The Great Tribulation represents man at his worst intent on annihilating God’s creation and making it so that God MUST intervene. When God intervenes, He will completely change everything and restore Israel, restore the dominion that man lost through Adam, and set up the Lord Jesus Christ, the second Adam, as the ruler of the world.

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In addition, we learned that the Tribulation will be a time of ...

- ... “posturing” where many leaders will fight for worldwide domination but in the end, after 3½ years, antichrist will become the ruler of the world (see Revelation 13).
- ... continual warfare at a level the earth has NEVER seen before. Peace will be taken even out of neighborhoods – no one will leave at peace.
- ... worldwide famine and want, EVEN IN AMERICA, the likes of which has never been seen before.
- ... death, death, and more death!
- ... enormous success in soul winning.
- ... God forcefully and angrily stepping into the affairs of man.

Conclusion

As I said at the beginning, we took a VERY quick look at the Tribulation. Our part of this is found in Revelation Chapters 4 & 5 where we surround the throne of God after the Rapture of the Church.

Revelation 4:4 *And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.* These 24 seats represent the Old Testament and New Testament Church snatched away to be with the Lord. If we'll prepare ourselves now by giving our lives to the Lord, we need not worry about the wrath to come.

5 – The Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ

We've now come to the most exciting event that will take place in the history of mankind – the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. This event is so notable that at one time newspapers had a special HUGE typeset called “Second Coming” font to be reserved for the most monumental events of all, including the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Second Coming signals the end of the Great Tribulation. There are many Scriptures referring to this event but the approach I want to use is to show you how they fit into Revelation Chapter 19, which is probably the most detailed and notable account of this event.

Before we go further, let's set the stage. The Second Coming will come on a day when the armies of antichrist are amassed around Jerusalem. In the Old Testament, it was known as “the Day of the Lord”. It will be an awful day for the Jews and for the armies of antichrist.

- **Isaiah 13:6** *Howl ye; for the DAY OF THE LORD is at hand; it shall come as a DESTRUCTION FROM THE ALMIGHTY.*
- **Jeremiah 46:10** *For this is the DAY OF THE LORD GOD of hosts, A DAY OF VENGEANCE, that he may avenge him of his adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood: for the Lord GOD of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates.*
- **Acts 2:20** *The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and notable DAY OF THE LORD come.*

At this point, the atmosphere is in an upheaval. The battle is going on, if it can be called a battle, and the Jews are being annihilated. Antichrist's army is vast, perhaps numbering into the hundreds of millions from Revelation 9:16. Also look at **Joel 3:14** *Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.* It is at this point that John saw something in the sky.

Revelation 19:11-21

11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. Message Bible Then I saw Heaven open wide--and oh! a white horse and its Rider. The Rider, named Faithful and True, judges and makes war in pure righteousness. John saw a great sight – a doorway appears in the sky and the Lord Jesus Christ now shows up in the sky. He comes literally riding a white horse. Don't confuse this white horse rider with the one of chapter 6 – this one is real while that one represented the introduction of antichrist. {McGee} *“The white horse on which He rides is the animal of warfare. When Jesus was on earth, He rode into Jerusalem upon a little donkey which, though an animal of kings, denoted peace, not war.”*

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How significant is this event? Earlier in this same book, John wrote these words: **Revelation 1:7** *Behold, he cometh with clouds; and EVERY EYE shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.* This is why newspapers have reserved a special news type just for this event – every eye will see Him. Not only will they see him, they will wail (howl, weep, scream, and cry) because of His appearance. Can you imagine the horror of those that will realize that they have been deceived?

KEY POINT: The Second Coming is different than the Rapture of the Church. The Rapture of the Church is done very secretly but the Second Coming is a public event – all will see it. I don't believe that the advent of worldwide news services like CNN was done by accident but is part of the preparation that the Scriptures can be fulfilled. We have now gone even further with the ability to see broadcasts through our cell phones.

12 *His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.* John begins to describe the Rider of the horse. For those that didn't understand that our Savior is Faithful and True and still don't recognize Him, John goes further to describe His physical appearance. The Scripture says that His head will hold many crowns. The Lord Jesus will return as the sole and absolute Ruler of earth.

13 *And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.* NOW we know who this Rider is! John had already revealed Him in his Gospel. **John 1:14** *And the WORD was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.* If you didn't get it in the first part of this verse ("he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood"), now you certainly know that THIS is the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ!

14 *And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.* Who are these armies that will come with the Lord Jesus? Some say they are angels. Others say they are angels and the returning saints. Jude quoted what Enoch, thousands of years before HIS time, had to say: **Jude 14 NLT** *Now Enoch, who lived seven generations after Adam, prophesied about these people. He said, "Look, the Lord is coming with thousands of his holy ones."* Wow! Enoch, back in Genesis 5, saw Christ's Second Coming before He came the first time.

15 *And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.* The Second Coming is NOTHING like His first appearance in Bethlehem. One writer said that the first part of this verse indicates that Christ rules by the power of His Word. That may be true but this Word also smites the nations that have come against God.

This verse also fulfills the prophecy of the second Psalm – **Psalm 2:7-9** *I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. 8 Ask of me, and I*

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shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. 9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. To me, the rod of iron indicates the end of grace and mercy. Judgment will be fierce and without mercy. {McGee} “*The fury of His wrath at His Second Coming is in sharp contrast to His gentleness at His first coming. However, in both is revealed the ‘wrath of the Lamb.’*”

16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. NLT On his robe and thigh was written this title: King of kings and Lord of lords. Antichrist will set himself up as the king of the world but will face the one who is King over kings and Lord over lords.

At this point, we need to insert some other events from other Scriptures that will help us see more of the whole view of the Second Coming.

1. **Matthew 24:30** *And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and THEY SHALL SEE the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.* At the beginning of the Second Coming, there will be a “sign” in heaven. Since the Second Coming is not only a significant event for all mankind but especially the Jews, this sign will be something that they can identify with. Then the Lord Jesus will be SEEN coming in the clouds, riding on a white horse, with power and GREAT glory.
2. **Zechariah 14:3-4** *Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. 4 And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.* As I said, when the Lord returns, He will arrive on a white horse but at some point He will dismount and stand on the Mount of Olives on the east side of Jerusalem. (He ascended from the Mount of Olives and He will return on the Mount of Olives – see Acts 1:11.) Once the Lord touches the Mount of Olives, there will be a monumental earthquake that will open a fissure in the earth.
3. **Zechariah 14:5** *And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.* The Jews are to run **into** the fissure that the Lord Jesus will create at His coming for safety from the events that are about to take place. {JF&B} “*Azal--the name of a place near a gate east of the city. The valley reaches up to the city gates, so as to enable the fleeing citizens to betake themselves immediately to it on leaving the city.*”

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17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; 18 That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. We now come to the last Great War of mankind – Armageddon. This is not a spur-of-the-moment battle but is directly in the plan of God. **Revelation 16:16** *And HE gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.* The “he” in this verse is the Lord Jesus who has brought them to this place that He may execute the judgment of God at His Second Coming. The cry goes out from the angel to the scavenging birds to come to a feast at the Battle of Armageddon because this is to be a bloody, gruesome one-sided battle.

19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. This is a stupid move!!! Again, let’s insert some information about this battle so that we may have more clarity:

1. Armageddon is a place, not an event, as Hollywood would like us to think. According to Dake, it comes from the Greek word, **harmagedon**, which is the mount of Megiddo on the south side of the valley of Megiddo or Esdraelon southwest of Mount Carmel in Israel. It is a vast plain where the armies of antichrist will be gathered for their final battle.
2. This will be an awful battle where the Lord Jesus Christ will completely annihilate His enemies. Look at what the Scriptures say:
 - **Zechariah 14:12-13** *And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth. 13 And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the LORD shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbor, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbor.*
 - **Ezekiel 38:22** *And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. NLT I will punish you and your hordes with disease and bloodshed; I will send torrential rain, hailstones, fire, and burning sulfur!* The fire and burning sulfur explains how those in Zechariah 14 above will have their eyes and flesh consumed.
 - **Ezekiel 39:2, 4** *And I will turn thee back, and leave BUT THE SIXTH PART OF THEE, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel: 4 Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every*

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sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. All but approximately 17% percent of the army of antichrist will die in this battle. For every 1,000 soldiers, only 167 will live. Ezekiel mentions the “feast” of Revelation 19:17-18 in this verse.

- **Revelation 14:20** *And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.* A furlong, according to Thompson, is a tenth of a mile. Therefore, the blood from the events of the prior verses will gush out as a river as high as a horse’s bridle (4-6 feet deep) for 160 miles!

20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. So many were killed but, by the plan of God, these two survived and they will be cast ALIVE into the lake of fire. {JF&B} “*Alive--a living death; not mere annihilation.*” **Mark 9:47-48** *And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: 48 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.* {Matthew Henry} “*The reflections and reproaches of the sinner’s own conscience are the worm that dieth not.*” The “worm” is their conscience reminding them of times they ignored the pleas of the saints to receive Jesus and the fact that they have full feeling of all the pain and it will not stop or become tolerable.

21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh. As we saw in a previous lesson, the Great Tribulation is a time of great death but it ends with even more deaths. These must be punished for their refusal to submit to God and their conscious decision to fight against God’s plan and deceive so many to follow them.

AFTER ARMAGEDDON

The Second Coming is to be a notable day. It is called in the Old Testament, the great and terrible Day of the Lord. Within that same day, other events will occur.

- **THE CORONATION OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AS RULER OF THE EARTH** – **Zechariah 14:9** *And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.*
- **THE CONFESSION OF THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS CHRIST** – **Philippians 2:9-11** *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11 And that EVERY TONGUE should confess that Jesus Christ is*

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Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Who will confess Him? The saints have done this and lived this through their lives. No, those that will survive the Great Tribulation and Armageddon will do this. This includes the Jews that were saved in the midst of Armageddon and those left on the earth that have not given their lives to the Lord Jesus. According to Zechariah, there will yet be people on the earth that are not surrendered to Jesus but they MUST confess Him as Lord.

Zechariah 14:16-17 *And it shall come to pass, that EVERY ONE THAT IS LEFT of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. 17 And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.* How do we know that these are not saints?

Verse 17 shows us that some will not obey God and will continue to rebel against God's plan.

Finally, the Second Coming does not end world history. There are some events that will carry on into the Millennium period, but that we will leave for our next section.

6 – The Millennial Reign and Our Final Destiny

We've now come to the end of our brief journey into the End Times. Though the majority of our End Times timeline is ahead, there is not a lot of Scriptural insight about these events. After the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, I see seven major events that will lead us to our final destiny and guide this last section:

- 1. Satan will be bound for 1,000 years. Revelation 20:1-3**
- 2. The Lord Jesus Christ will reign for 1,000 years as the ruler of the earth. His kingdom will finally come. Revelation 20:4-6**
- 3. Satan will be loosed and, because of this, mankind will engage in its final rebellion against God and be quickly stopped. Revelation 20:7-9**
- 4. Satan will meet his eternal destiny along with his entire demonic horde and be cast into the lake of fire FOREVER! Revelation 20:10**
- 5. Those that have rejected Christ through the ages will be judged at the Great White Throne judgment. This event does not effect the saints at all. Everyone who comes to this judgment will be eternally lost. Revelation 20:11-15**
- 6. The earth will go through a re-creation process. 2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1-2**
- 7. Those that are Christ's will spend eternity with Him in the Holy City! Revelation 21:3-4; 22:3-5**

One thing I have learned from our journey is that there are an abundance of opinions regarding what will or will not take place in the future. I really expected the Millennial Reign of Christ to be a very straightforward topic. Wow, was I wrong! Again, there are many, many opinions on this topic. Just like the doctrine of the Rapture of the Church, there are various ideas when it comes to the Millennial Reign of Christ. Let's first take a quick look at these various views and then move on to the Scripture. Please remember that this is provided for information so that you can see some of the thoughts regarding this subject. Do not use this as ammunition to argue about the Scriptures. This is foolish and not edifying. Everyone one of us may have missed it!

There are four main viewpoints regarding the millennium. We will only look at the three main ones because the last two are very close to each other. This comes from www.blueletterbible.org.

Postmillennialism *“The postmillennialist believes that the millennium is an era (not a literal thousand years) during which Christ will reign over the earth, not from a literal and earthly throne, but through the gradual increase of the Gospel and its power to change lives. After this gradual Christianization of the world, Christ will return and immediately usher the church into their eternal state after judging the wicked. This is called postmillennialism because, by its view, Christ will return after the millennium.”* This is the view held by the Catholic Church.

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Amillennialism *“The amillennialist believes that the Kingdom of God was inaugurated at Christ’s resurrection at which point He gained victory over both Satan and the Curse. Christ is even now reigning at the right hand of the Father over His church. After this present age has ended, Christ will return and immediately usher the church into their eternal state after judging the wicked. The term ‘amillennialism’ is actually a misnomer for it implies that Revelation 20:1-6 is ignored; in fact, the amillennialist interprets it non-literally [strictly as figurative].”*

Premillennialism Premillennialism is also divided into two views, Dispensational and Historical Premillennialists. There is such a subtle difference between the two that we’ll only look at the dispensational premillennialists. *“Dispensational premillennialists hold that Christ will come before a seven-year period of intense tribulation to take His church (living and dead) into heaven. After this period of fulfillment of divine wrath, He shall then return to rule from a holy city (i.e., the New Jerusalem) over the earthly nations for one thousand years. After these thousand years, Satan, who was bound up during Christ’s earthly reign, will be loosed to deceive the nations, gather an army of the deceived, and take up to battle against the Lord. This battle will end in both the judgment of the wicked and Satan and the entrance into the eternal state of glory by the righteous. This view is called premillennialism because it places the return of Christ before the millennium.”* This is the view that we believe, the view that the majority of the evangelical churches believe, and the view that we will focus on in this last lesson on the End Times.

Should you remember these terms? No, that’s not necessary or edifying. Just remember that we are looking forward to reigning with the Lord Jesus Christ on this earth.

So in our End Times timeline, the next event will be the conclusion of the battle of Armageddon which ushers in the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ ON THIS EARTH. It’s called the Millennium because the term comes from two Latin words meaning, “a thousand years”.

1. SATAN WILL BE BOUND FOR 1,000 YEARS

Revelation 20:1-3

1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. Our Scripture takes place right after the physical return of Christ to the earth and the conclusion of the Battle of Armageddon. It is at this point that John saw this great sight.

*2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him **a thousand years**,* Throughout this text, I’m going to highlight the term “a thousand years” because

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of an interesting view I found in my studies. One writer claimed that there was no biblical mention of a thousand year reign of Christ. I'm not sure what book he was reading. Another writer claimed that since it's only mentioned in this Scripture (*and six times at that!*), you can't use this passage to establish a doctrine. I'll defer to Dr. McGee here: "*How many times does [God] have to say a thing before it becomes true? He mentions it more than He mentions some other things that people emphasize and think are important just because they occur once or twice in Scripture.*" {MacArthur} "*Never in Scripture when 'year' is used with a number is its meaning not literal.*"

KEY POINT: While Satan is bound, he can no longer deceive. However, this does not stop sin. The only thing that stops sin is to eliminate the sin nature, which only comes through the blood of Jesus Christ. There will still be people on the earth at this time that have not surrendered their lives to Christ and are still bound with the sin nature. However, the entire atmosphere of the earth will be dramatically different with Satan out of the picture.

*3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till **the thousand years** should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.* The King James Version is very strong here when it says, "he MUST be loosed". I don't know why he must be loosed but whatever he does will have no impact on those that have achieved the first resurrection.

2. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST WILL REIGN FOR 1,000 YEARS AS THE RULER OF THE EARTH

Revelation 20:4-6

*4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ **a thousand years**.* I read this verse a number of times and thought that maybe it referred to the fact that the Tribulation Saints would be the only ones to reign with Christ. However, the more I studied I came across two great reasons for pointing them out from Pastor David Guzik: "*They are specifically mentioned so as to encourage them, while not implying others will be left out. [Also,] this is special vindication for Tribulation saints; they suffered under Antichrist who had said, 'I will rule the earth;' now they are in authority and Antichrist is destroyed.*"

*5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until **the thousand years** were finished. This is the first resurrection.* The first resurrection is the resurrection of the saints, those that have died in Christ or the living saints caught up in the rapture. I BELIEVE (note the emphasis because I could be wrong) that the first resurrection is progressive or it is an order of resurrection that began with Christ. After all, we have already seen from prior lessons that there are a number of raptures so there has to be a means of including the Tribulation Saints with those saints included in the Rapture of the Church.

1 Corinthians 15:20-23 *But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. 21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.*

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22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. This resurrection continues up until this very last day, the day of the return of Christ. At this point, all of the saints will have been resurrected.

*6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him **a thousand years.*** This is one of the most exciting promises in the Bible – the second death has no power on those that achieve the first resurrection. What does that mean? When you are caught up in the Rapture of the Church, you are THEN eternally secure with Christ.

KEY POINT: Everyone that takes part in the first resurrection has two great promises: (1) the second death (eternal damnation) has “no power” over them; (2) they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him during the Millennium.

Since we will be priests of God and of Christ, there must be a Temple for these priests. It is at this point that the Temple of Ezekiel 40-48 will be in place.

3. SATAN WILL BE LOOSED & MANKIND WILL HAVE ITS FINAL REBELLION AGAINST GOD

Revelation 20:7-9

*7 And when **the thousand years** are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,* After a thousand years of peace and harmony, in spite of the presence of sinners on the earth, Satan gets one more chance. {McGee} “*The Millennium is a time of testing of man under ideal conditions, as this passage demonstrates. As soon as Satan is released, a great company, who have been under the personal reign of Christ under ideal circumstances, goes over to Satan. From where did such a company come is a worthy question. The answer lies in the fact that not only do multitudes enter the Millennium, but multitudes also are born during the Millennium (see Isaiah 11:6; 65:20). This will be the time of the earth's greatest population explosion. Disease will be eliminated. Since the curse of sin will be removed from the physical earth, it will produce enough foodstuffs to feed its greatest population. The human heart alone remains unchanged under these circumstances, and many will turn their backs on God and will go after Satan. This seems unbelievable, but what about today? Satan is doing pretty well in our day.*”

QUESTION: If Satan gets one more chance to deceive, does man get one more chance to repent even though it's now the end of the world? I don't know the answer but I thought I'd throw it out.

8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. The “Gog and Magog” of this verse are not the same as the ones in Ezekiel 38. Ezekiel is speaking of events that will take place either during the Great Tribulation or at the Battle of Armageddon. John uses the same term but these are not the same (just like there are a number of people named John in the

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Scriptures). All of these people are those that are living on the earth and have not given their lives to Christ.

9 *And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.* This vast multitude (“as the sand of the sea” in the previous verse) will get no opportunity to put in place whatever war machinery they have devised for this war. This battle calls to mind the promise that God gave to Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20:15-17. He told him that he would not have to fight in the battle and that the battle was God’s not his. This will be a “battle” which God will quickly win.

4. SATAN WILL MEET HIS ETERNAL DESTINY

Revelation 20:10

10 *And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.* The language of this verse is very interesting and very frightening. It says that the devil will be thrown into the lake of fire where the beast (antichrist) and the false prophet ARE. After 1,000 years, the verse does not say that this is where they WERE but where they still ARE. At this point, they will have suffered 1,000 years of punishment but they have an eternity ahead.

5. THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

Revelation 20:11-15

11 *And I saw a Great White Throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.*

12 *And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*

13 *And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.*

14 *And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.*

15 *And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.* The Great White Throne judgment occurs at the end of the Millennium. There is no indication of how long it will last but ALL of those who are lost except antichrist and the false prophet will be judged here. (They will have already been cast into the lake of fire and will have experienced the second death – eternal damnation.) {David Guzik} “*This is not a trial, trying to determine what the facts are. The facts are in; here is the sentencing of someone already condemned. Their standing posture means that they are now about to be sentenced.*”

KEY NOTE: Remember these words from early in our study: “EVERYONE that comes to this judgment will be LOST. This judgment does NOT effect the saints” because the second death has no power on those that meet the first resurrection.

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6. THE RE-CREATION OF EARTH

2 Peter 3:10-13

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

11 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. After the renovation of the hearts of man through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and the renovation of Israel in the Millennium, now the earth itself must be renovated in order for it to be a place “*wherein dwelleth righteousness.*” This will be done with “*fervent heat*” which will not only melt the elements of the earth but will change the heavens also because they will also be on fire. This will usher in a time of complete righteousness.

Revelation 21:1-2

1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. {MacArthur} “No more sea – currently three-fourths of the earth’s surface is water, but the new environment will no longer be water based and will have completely different climatic conditions.” {JF&B} “The sea was once the element of the world’s destruction, and is still the source of death to thousands, [but] after the millennium, at the general judgment, it is specially said, ‘The sea gave up the dead . . . in it.’ Then it shall cease to destroy, or disturb, being removed altogether on account of its past destructions.”

2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. The holy city came down already prepared. **John 14:2** *In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.* This prepared place is the holy city – the final destination of the saints.

7. THE FINAL DESTINY OF THE SAINTS

Revelation 21:3-4

3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

Revelation 22:3-5

3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:

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4 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. We shall look on the face of our Savior without the Old Testament fear of death. We shall see Him as He is. **1 John 3:2** *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and THEY SHALL REIGN FOREVER AND EVER.

Revelation 22:20 *He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*