

From Here To Eternity



**“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.
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.”
(John 14:2-3)**

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Preface

Eschatology is the study of what the Bible says is going to happen in the end times. Many treat Eschatology as an area of theology to be avoided. Of course, Eschatology is not as crucial as Christology (the study of the Person and work of Jesus Christ) or Soteriology (the study of salvation through Jesus Christ). That does not mean, though, that it is unimportant to a Biblical worldview. How we understand Eschatology has an impact on how we should live our lives and what we are to expect to occur in God's plan.

The Bible describes a terrible period of tribulation in Revelation chapters 6-18. Will this Tribulation be preceded by the Rapture, will it conclude with the Rapture, or has it in fact already occurred? These different perspectives have a great impact on what we should be preparing ourselves for.

Eschatology helps us to understand the Bible's prophetic passages and how to live our lives in response to what God is going to do in the end times. There is a great deal of controversy in Eschatology, but that does not relieve us of our responsibility to study and understand what the Bible teaches about the end times. An understanding of Eschatology will eliminate many of the fears we have about the future. Our God is sovereign, He has a plan, and it will all unfold according to His perfect will and timing.

This is a great encouragement to those who are in Christ!

Just a special note: This booklet was developed for the serious student of Bible prophecy. There are many, many, scripture references to the specific book, chapter, and verse in The Bible that substantiates many statements and projections made in this document.

Introduction

The Bible has a lot to say about the end times. Nearly every book of the Bible contains prophecy regarding the end times. Taking all of these prophecies and organizing them can be difficult. Following is a very brief summary of what the Bible declares will happen in the end times.

Christ will remove all born-again believers from the earth in an event known as the rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54). At the judgment seat of Christ, these believers will be rewarded for good works and faithful service during their time on earth or will lose rewards, but not eternal life, for lack of service and obedience (1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

The Antichrist (the beast) will come into power and will sign a covenant with Israel for seven years (Daniel 9:27). This seven-year period of time is known as the “tribulation.” During the tribulation, there will be terrible wars, famines, plagues, and natural disasters. God will be pouring out His wrath against sin, evil, and wickedness. The tribulation will include the appearance of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse, and the seven seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments.

About halfway through the seven years, the Antichrist will break the peace covenant with Israel and make war against it. The Antichrist will commit “the abomination of desolation” and set up an image of himself to be worshipped in the Jerusalem temple (Daniel 9:27; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10), which will have been rebuilt. The second half of the tribulation is known as “the great tribulation” (Revelation 7:14) and “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jeremiah 30:7).

At the end of the seven-year tribulation, the Antichrist will launch a final attack on Jerusalem, culminating in the battle of Armageddon. Jesus Christ will return, destroy the Antichrist and his armies, and cast them into the lake of fire (Revelation 19:11-21). Christ will then bind Satan in the Abyss for 1000 years and He will rule His earthly kingdom for this thousand-year period (Revelation 20:1-6).

At the end of the thousand years, Satan will be released, defeated again, and then cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:7-10) for eternity. Christ then judges all unbelievers (Revelation 20:10-15) at the great white throne judgment, casting them all into the lake of fire. Christ will then usher in a new heaven and new earth and the New Jerusalem—the eternal dwelling place of believers. There will be no more sin, sorrow, or death (Revelation 21–22).

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The End Of The World Is Coming

The end of the age (“end of the world” in the KJV) refers to the end of this present era and the commencement of the next dispensation. It is the period that precedes the second coming of the Son of Man as the Righteous Judge. The end of the age includes the rapture, the tribulation, the second coming, and the judgment of the nations, all of which help usher in the age to come.

What The Bible Says

The event usually referred to as “the end of the world” (eschaton) is described in 2 Peter 3:10: “The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.” This is the culmination of a series of events called “the day of the Lord,” the time when God will intervene in human history for the purpose of judgment. At that time, all that God has created, “the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1), He will destroy.

Jesus refers to “the end of the age” a couple times in Matthew 13, as He explains the meaning of some parables. In the parable of the wheat and the tares, Jesus warns of a judgment to come in which “the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire” (Matthew 13:40). This will happen, Jesus says, “at the end of the age” (verses 39–40). Later, Jesus likens the kingdom of heaven to a dragnet that brings up all sorts of fish. Then the sorting comes: “They sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age” (verses 48–49). In both parables, the end of the age is associated with a separation, a sorting, and a burning fire (verses 40 and 50). Jesus used the phrase the end of the age to refer to that time in the future when the kingdom of God is established, true justice reigns, and the wicked are judged.

The Battle Of Armageddon

The word “Armageddon” comes from a Hebrew word Har-Magedone, which means “Mount Megiddo” and has become synonymous with the future battle in which God will intervene and destroy the armies of the Antichrist as predicted in biblical prophecy (Revelation 16:16; 20:1-3). There will be a

multitude of people engaged in the battle of Armageddon, as all the nations gather together to fight against Christ.

The exact location of the valley of Armageddon is unclear because there is no mountain called Meggido. However, since “Har” can also mean hill, the most likely location is the hill country surrounding the plain of Meggido, some sixty miles north of Jerusalem. More than two hundred battles have been fought in that region. The plain of Megiddo and the nearby plain of Esdraelon will be the focal point for the battle of Armageddon, which will rage the entire length of Israel as far south as the Edomite city of Bozrah (Isaiah 63:1). The valley of Armageddon was famous for two great victories in Israel’s history: 1) Barak’s victory over the Canaanites (Judges 4:15) and 2) Gideon’s victory over the Midianites (Judges 7). Armageddon was also the site for two great tragedies: 1) the death of Saul and his sons (1 Samuel 31:8) and 2) the death of King Josiah (2 Kings 23:29-30; 2 Chronicles 35:22).

Because of this history, the valley of Armageddon became a symbol of the final conflict between God and the forces of evil. The word “Armageddon” only occurs in Revelation 16:16, “Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.” This speaks of the kings who are loyal to the Antichrist gathering together for a final assault on Israel. At Armageddon “the cup filled with the wine of the fury of [God’s] wrath” (Revelation 16:19) will be delivered, and the Antichrist and his followers will be overthrown and defeated. “Armageddon” has become a general term that refers to the end of the world, not exclusively to the battle that takes place in the plain of Megiddo.

When Will The World End?

The timing of this event, according to most Bible scholars, is at the end of the 1000-year period called the millennium. During these 1000 years, Christ will reign on earth as King in Jerusalem, sitting on the throne of David (Luke 1:32-33) and ruling in peace but with a “rod of iron” (Revelation 19:15). At the end of the 1000 years, Satan will be released, defeated again, and then cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:7-10). Then, after a final judgment by God, the end of the world described in 2 Peter 3:10 occurs.

What Will Happen?

The end of the age will be a great calamity for those who persist in their rejection of Christ. Judgment will fall swiftly and with finality. For the children of God alive during that time, the end of the age will be a time of salvation and fulfilled hope.

What Can Save Us?

One “age” or era leads to another. Jesus spoke of both “this age” and “the age to come” (Matthew 12:32). The current age, the one in which we live, is the age of grace, which we also call the church age. In this dispensation, all mankind is called to repent of their sin and turn to Christ for salvation. This age has lasted for 2,000 years because God “is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). But this age must eventually come to an end. At the end of the age (literally, the consummation of the age), the age of grace will be complete, and a far more glorious age will be ushered in. Until then, “now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2)—repentance should not be delayed.

Perhaps the most important part of Peter’s description of that day is his question in verses 11-12: “Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.” Christians know what is going to happen, and we should live in a way that reflects that understanding. This life is passing away, and our focus should be on the new heavens and earth to come. Our “holy and godly” lives should be a testimony to those who do not know the Savior, and we should tell others about Him so they can escape the terrible fate that awaits those who reject Him. We wait in eager anticipation for God’s “Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come” (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

Christians have the Lord’s promise that He will never forsake us
in this world, no matter what happens:

“Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age”
(Matthew 28:20).

Indications That The End Times Are Approaching

Matthew 24:5–8 gives us some important clues for discerning the approach of the end times: “Many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.” An increase in false messiahs, an increase in warfare, and increases in famines, plagues, and natural disasters—these are signs of the end times. In this passage, though, we are given a warning: we are not to be deceived, because these events are only the beginning of birth pains; the end is still to come.

Some interpreters point to every earthquake, every political upheaval, and every attack on Israel as a sure sign that the end times are rapidly approaching. While the events may signal the approach of the last days, they are not necessarily indicators that the end times have arrived. The apostle Paul warned that the last days would bring a marked increase in false teaching. “The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons” (1 Timothy 4:1). The last days are described as “perilous times” because of the increasingly evil character of man and people who actively “oppose the truth” (2 Timothy 3:1–9; see also 2 Thessalonians 2:3).

Other possible signs would include a rebuilding of a Jewish temple in Jerusalem, increased hostility toward Israel, and advances toward a one-world government. The most prominent sign of the end times, however, is the nation of Israel. In 1948, Israel was recognized as a sovereign state, essentially for the first time since AD 70. God promised Abraham that his posterity would have Canaan as “an everlasting possession” (Genesis 17:8), and Ezekiel prophesied a physical and spiritual resuscitation of Israel (Ezekiel 37). Having Israel as a nation in its own land is important in light of end-times prophecy because of Israel’s prominence in eschatology (Daniel 10:14; 11:41; Revelation 11:8).

With these signs in mind, we can be wise and discerning in regard to the expectation of the end times. We should not, however, interpret any of these singular events as a clear indication of the soon arrival of the end times. God has given us enough information that we can be prepared, and that is what we are called to be as our hearts cry out, “Come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20).

Timeline Of Events For The End Times

We take a pretribulational (the Rapture takes The Church out before The Tribulation) approach to eschatology. From that perspective, here is the order of end-times events that the Bible reveals:

1. The rapture of the church.

Christ comes in the clouds to “snatch away” all those who trust in Him (1 Corinthians 15:52). At this same time, the “dead in Christ” will be resurrected and taken to heaven, too. From our perspective today, this is the next event in the eschatological timeline. The rapture is imminent; no other biblical prophecy needs to be fulfilled before the rapture happens.

2. The rise of the Antichrist.

After the church is taken out of the way (2 Thessalonians 2:7–8), a satanically empowered man will gain worldwide control with promises of peace (Revelation 13:1; Daniel 9:27). He will be aided by another man, called the false prophet, who heads up a religious system that requires worship of the Antichrist (Revelation 19:20).

3. The tribulation.

A period of seven years in which God’s judgment is poured out on sinful humanity (Revelation 6–16). The Antichrist’s rise to power is associated with this time period. During the tribulation on earth, the Church will be in heaven. It is thought that at this time the Judgment Seat of Christ and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb will occur in heaven (2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 19:6–10).

4. The Battle of Gog and Magog.

In the first part of the tribulation, a great army from the north, in alliance with several other countries from the Middle East and Africa, attacks Israel and is defeated by God’s supernatural intervention (Ezekiel 38–39). (Some commentators place this battle just before the start of the tribulation.)

5. The abomination of desolation.

At the midway point of the seven-year tribulation, the Antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel and shows his true colors. The Jews are scattered,

and many of them turn to the Lord, realizing that Jesus is their Savior. A great persecution breaks out against all those who believe in Christ (Daniel 12:11; Mark 13:14; Revelation 12:17).

6. The Battle of Armageddon.

At the end of the tribulation, Jesus returns with the armies of heaven (Mark 14:62). He saves Jerusalem from annihilation and defeats the armies of the nations fighting under the banner of the Antichrist (Revelation 19:11–21). The Antichrist and the false prophet are captured and thrown alive into the lake of fire (Revelation 19:20).

7. The judgment of the nations.

Christ will judge the survivors of the tribulation, separating the righteous from the wicked as “sheep” and “goats” (Matthew 25:31–46). (It is thought that at this time the Old Testament saints will be raised from the dead.) The righteous will enter the Millennial Kingdom; the wicked will be cast into hell.

8. The binding of Satan.

Satan will be bound and held in a bottomless pit for the next 1,000 years (Revelation 20:1–3).

9. The Millennial Kingdom.

Jesus Himself will rule the world, and Jerusalem will be the capital. This will be a 1,000-year period of peace and prosperity on earth (Revelation 20; Isaiah 60–62). Memorial sacrifices will be offered in a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem (Ezekiel 40–48).

10. The last battle.

At the end of the 1,000 years, Satan will be released from his prison for a short time. He will deceive the nations once again, and there will be a rebellion against the Lord that will be quickly defeated (Revelation 20:7–10). Satan will be cast into the lake of fire, never to reappear.

11. The Great White Throne Judgment.

All those in hell will be brought forth, and all the wicked from all eras of history will be resurrected to stand before God in a final judgment

(Revelation 20:11–15). The verdicts are read, and all of sinful humanity is cast into the lake of fire.

12. The new creation.

God completely remakes the heavens and the earth. It is at this time that God wipes away all tears and there will be no more pain, death, or sorrow. The New Jerusalem descends from heaven, and the children of God will enjoy eternity with Him (Revelation 21–22).

What Is The Rapture?

The word rapture does not occur in the Bible. The term comes from a Latin word meaning “a carrying off, a transport, or a snatching away.” The concept of the “carrying off” or the rapture of the church is clearly taught in Scripture.

The rapture of the church is the event in which God “snatches away” all believers from the earth in order to make way for His righteous judgment to be poured out on the earth during the tribulation period. The rapture is described primarily in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 and 1 Corinthians 15:50–54. God will resurrect all believers who have died, give them glorified bodies, and take them from the earth, along with all living believers, who will also be given glorified bodies at that time. “For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever” (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17).

The rapture will involve an instantaneous transformation of our bodies to fit us for eternity. “We know that when He [Christ] appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). The rapture is to be distinguished from the second coming. At the rapture, the Lord comes “in the clouds” to meet us “in the air” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). At the second coming, the Lord descends all the way to the earth to stand on the Mount of Olives, resulting in a great earthquake followed by a defeat of God’s enemies (Zechariah 14:3–4).

The doctrine of the rapture was not taught in the Old Testament, which is why Paul calls it a “mystery” now revealed: “Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51–52).

The rapture of the church is a glorious event we should all be longing for. We will finally be free from sin. We will be in God's presence forever. There is far too much debate over the meaning and scope of the rapture. This is not God's intent. Rather, the rapture should be a comforting doctrine full of hope; God wants us to "encourage each other with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:18).

What Is The Resurrection?

The Bible is clear that resurrection is a reality and this life is not all that there is. While death is the end of physical life, it is not the end of human existence. Many erroneously believe that there is one general resurrection at the end of the age, but the Bible teaches that there will be not one resurrection, but a series of resurrections, some to eternal life in heaven and some to eternal damnation (Daniel 12:2; John 5:28-29).

The first great resurrection was the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is documented in each of the four Gospels (Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20), cited several times in Acts (Acts 1:22; 2:31; 4:2, 33; 26:23), and mentioned repeatedly in the letters to the churches (Romans 1:4; Philippians 3:10; 1 Peter 1:3). Much is made of the importance of Christ's resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:12-34, which records that over five hundred people saw Him at one of His post-resurrection appearances. Christ's resurrection is the "first fruits" or guarantee to every Christian that he will also be resurrected. Christ's resurrection is also the basis of the Christian's certainty that all people who have died will one day be raised to face fair and even-handed judgment by Jesus Christ (Acts 17:30-31). The resurrection to eternal life is described as "the first resurrection" (Revelation 20:5-6); the resurrection to judgment and torment is described as "the second death" (Revelation 20:6, 13-15).

The first great resurrection of the Church will occur at the time of the rapture. All those who have placed their trust in Jesus Christ during the Church Age, and have died before Jesus returns, will be resurrected at the rapture. The Church Age began on the Day of Pentecost and will end when Christ returns to take believers back to heaven with Him (John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). The Apostle Paul explained that not all Christians will die, but all will be changed, i.e., given resurrection-type bodies (1 Corinthians 15:50-58), some without having to die! Christians who are alive, and those who have already died, will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and be with Him always!

Another great resurrection will occur when Christ returns to earth (His Second Coming) at the end of the Tribulation period. After the rapture, the Tribulation is the next event after the Church Age in God's chronology. This will be a time of terrible judgment upon the world, described in great

detail in Revelation chapters 6-18. Though all Church Age believers will be gone, millions of people left behind on earth will come to their senses during this time and will trust in Jesus as their Savior. Tragically, most of them will pay for their faith in Jesus by losing their lives (Revelation 6:9-11; 7:9-17; 13:7, 15-17; 17:6; 19:1-2). These believers in Jesus who die during the Tribulation will be resurrected at Christ's return and will reign with Him for a thousand years during the Millennium (Revelation 20:4, 6).

Old Testament believers such as Job, Noah, Abraham, David and even John the Baptist (who was assassinated before the Church began) will be resurrected at this time also. Several passages in the Old Testament mention this event (Job 19:25-27; Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:1-2; Hosea 13:14). Ezekiel 37:1-14 describes primarily the regathering of the Nation of Israel using the symbolism of dead corpses coming back to life. But from the language used, a physical resurrection of dead Israelis cannot be excluded from the passage. Again, all believers in God (in the Old Testament era) and all believers in Jesus (in the New Testament era) participate in the first resurrection, a resurrection to life (Revelation 20:4, 6).

There may be another resurrection at the end of the Millennium, one which is implied, but never explicitly stated in Scripture. It is possible that some believers will die a physical death during the Millennium. Through the prophet Isaiah, God said, "No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his days; for the youth will die at the age of one hundred and the one who does not reach the age of one hundred will be thought accursed" (Isaiah 65:20). On the other hand, it is also possible that death in the Millennium will only come to the disobedient. In either event, some kind of transformation will be required to fit believers in their natural bodies in the Millennium for pristine existence throughout eternity. Each believer will need to have a "resurrected" type of body.

It is clear from Scripture that God will destroy the entire universe, including the earth, with fire (2 Peter 3:7-12). This will be necessary to purge God's creation of its endemic evil and decay brought upon it by man's sin. In its place God will create a new heaven and a new earth (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1-4). But what will happen to those believers who survived the Tribulation and entered the Millennium in their natural bodies? And what will happen to those who were born during the Millennium, trusted in Jesus, and continued to live in their natural bodies? Paul has made it

clear that flesh and blood, which is mortal and able to decay, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. That eternal kingdom is inhabitable only by those with resurrected, glorified bodies that are no longer mortal and are not able to decay (1 Corinthians 15:35-49). Presumably, these believers will be given resurrection bodies without having to die. Precisely when this happens is not explained, but theologically, it must happen somewhere in the transition from the old earth and universe to the new earth and new heaven (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1-4).

There is a final resurrection, apparently of all the unbelieving dead of all ages. Jesus Christ will raise them from the dead (John 5:25-29) after the Millennium, the thousand-year reign of Christ (Revelation 20:5), and after the destruction of the present earth and universe (2 Peter 3:7-12; Revelation 20:11). This is the resurrection described by Daniel as an awakening “from the dust of the ground ... to disgrace and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2). It is described by Jesus as a “resurrection of judgment” (John 5:28-29).

The Apostle John saw something that would happen in the future. He saw a “great white throne” (Revelation 20:11). Heaven and earth “fled away” from the One sitting on it. This is evidently a description of the dissolution by fire of all matter, including the entire universe and earth itself (2 Peter 3:7-12). All the (godless) dead will stand before the throne. This means they have been resurrected after the thousand years (Revelation 20:5). They will possess bodies that can feel pain but will never cease to exist (Mark 9:43-48). They will be judged, and their punishment will be commensurate with their works.

But there is another book opened—the Lamb’s book of life (Revelation 21:27). Those whose names are not written in the book of life are cast into the “lake of fire,” which amounts to “the second death” (Revelation 20:11-15). No indication is given of any who appear at this judgment that their names are found in the book of life. Rather, those whose names appear in the book of life were among those who are blessed, for they received forgiveness and partook of the first resurrection, the resurrection to life (Revelation 20:6).

What Is The Tribulation?

The tribulation is a future seven-year period of time when God will finish His discipline of Israel and finalize His judgment of the unbelieving world.

The church, made up of all who have trusted in the person and work of the Lord Jesus to save them from being punished for sin, will not be present during the tribulation. The church will be removed from the earth in an event known as the rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53). The church is saved from the wrath to come (1 Thessalonians 5:9). Throughout Scripture, the tribulation is referred to by other names such as the Day of the Lord (Isaiah 2:12; 13:6-9; Joel 1:15; 2:1-31; 3:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:2); trouble or tribulation (Deuteronomy 4:30; Zephaniah 1:1); the great tribulation, which refers to the more intense second half of the seven-year period (Matthew 24:21); time or day of trouble (Daniel 12:1; Zephaniah 1:15); time of Jacob's trouble (Jeremiah 30:7).

An understanding of Daniel 9:24-27 is necessary in order to understand the purpose and time of the tribulation. This passage speaks of 70 weeks that have been declared against “your people.” Daniel's people are the Jews, the nation of Israel, and Daniel 9:24 speaks of a period of time that God has given “to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.” God declares that “seventy sevens” will fulfill all these things. This is 70 sevens of years, or 490 years. (Some translations refer to 70 weeks of years.) This is confirmed by another part of this passage in Daniel. In verses 25 and 26, Daniel is told that the Messiah will be cut off after “seven sevens and sixty-two sevens” (69 total), beginning with the decree to rebuild Jerusalem. In other words, 69 sevens of years (483 years) after the decree to rebuild Jerusalem, the Messiah will be cut off. Biblical historians confirm that 483 years passed from the time of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem to the time when Jesus was crucified. Most Christian scholars, regardless of their view of eschatology (future things/events), have the above understanding of Daniel's 70 sevens.

With 483 years having passed from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem to the cutting off of the Messiah, this leaves one seven-year period to be fulfilled in terms of Daniel 9:24: “to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.” This final seven-year period is known as the tribulation period—it is a time when God finishes judging Israel for its sin.

Daniel 9:27 gives a few highlights of the seven-year tribulation period: “He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.” The person of whom this verse speaks is the person Jesus calls the “abomination that causes desolation” (Matthew 24:15) and is called “the beast” in Revelation 13. Daniel 9:27 says that the beast will make a covenant for seven years, but in the middle of this week (3 1/2 years into the tribulation), he will break the covenant, putting a stop to sacrifice. Revelation 13 explains that the beast will place an image of himself in the temple and require the world to worship him. Revelation 13:5 says that this will go on for 42 months, which is 3 1/2 years. Since Daniel 9:27 says that this will happen in the middle of the week, and Revelation 13:5 says that the beast will do this for a period of 42 months, it is easy to see that the total length of time is 84 months or seven years. Also see Daniel 7:25, where the “time, times, and half a time” (time=1 year; times=2 years; half a time=1/2 year; total of 3 1/2 years) also refers to “great tribulation,” the last half of the seven-year tribulation period when the beast will be in power.

For further references about the tribulation, see Revelation 11:2-3, which speaks of 1260 days and 42 months, and Daniel 12:11-12, which speaks of 1290 days and 1335 days. These days have a reference to the midpoint of the tribulation. The additional days in Daniel 12 may include the time at the end for the judgment of the nations (Matthew 25:31-46) and time for the setting up of Christ's millennial kingdom (Revelation 20:4-6).

In summary, the Tribulation is the 7-year time period in the end times in which humanity's decadence and depravity will reach its fullness, with God judging accordingly.

What Is The Great Tribulation?

The Tribulation is a future time period when the Lord will accomplish at least two aspects of His plan: 1) He will complete His discipline of the nation Israel (Daniel 9:24), and 2) He will judge the unbelieving, godless inhabitants of the earth (Revelation 6 - 18). The length of the Tribulation is seven years. This is determined by an understanding of the seventy weeks of Daniel (Daniel 9:24-27; also see the article on the Tribulation).

The Great Tribulation is the last half of the Tribulation period, three and one-half years in length. It is distinguished from the Tribulation period because the Beast, or Antichrist, will be revealed, and the wrath of God will greatly intensify during this time. Thus, it is important at this point to emphasize that the Tribulation and the Great Tribulation are not synonymous terms. Within eschatology (the study of future things), the Tribulation refers to the full seven-year period while the "Great Tribulation" refers to the second half of the Tribulation.

It is Christ Himself who used the phrase "Great Tribulation" with reference to the last half of the Tribulation. In Matthew 24:21, Jesus says, "For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall." In this verse Jesus is referring to the event of Matthew 24:15, which describes the revealing of the abomination of desolation, the man also known as the Antichrist. Also, Jesus in Matthew 24:29-30 states, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days . . . the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory." In this passage, Jesus defines the Great Tribulation (v.21) as beginning with the revealing of the abomination of desolation (v.15) and ending with Christ's second coming (v.30).

Other passages that refer to the Great Tribulation are Daniel 12:1, which says, "And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time." It seems that Jesus was quoting this verse when He spoke the words recorded in Matthew 24:21. Also referring to the Great Tribulation is Jeremiah 30:7, "Alas! for that day is great, There is none like it; And it is the time of Jacob's distress, But he will be saved from it." The phrase "Jacob's distress" refers to the nation of Israel, which

will experience persecution and natural disasters such as have never before been seen.

Considering the information Christ gave us in Matthew 24:15-30, it is easy to conclude that the beginning of the Great Tribulation has much to do with the abomination of desolation, an action of the Antichrist. In Daniel 9:26-27, we find that this man will make a "covenant" (a peace pact) with the world for seven years (one "week"; again, see the article on the Tribulation). Halfway through the seven-year period—"in the middle of the week"—we are told this man will break the covenant he made, stopping sacrifice and grain offering, which specifically refers to his actions in the rebuilt temple of the future. Revelation 13:1-10 gives even more detail concerning the Beast's actions, and just as important, it also verifies the length of time he will be in power. Revelation 13:5 says he will be in power for 42 months, which is three and one-half years, the length of the Great Tribulation.

Revelation offers us the most information about the Great Tribulation. From Revelation 13 when the Beast is revealed until Christ returns in Revelation 19, we are given a picture of God's wrath on the earth because of unbelief and rebellion (Revelation 16-18). It is also a picture of how God disciplines and at the same time protects His people Israel (Revelation 14:1-5) until He keeps His promise to Israel by establishing an earthly kingdom (Revelation 20:4-6).

What Is The Battle Of Armageddon?

The word “Armageddon” comes from a Hebrew word Har-Magedone, which means “Mount Megiddo” and has become synonymous with the future battle in which God will intervene and destroy the armies of the Antichrist as predicted in biblical prophecy (Revelation 16:16; 20:1-3). There will be a multitude of people engaged in the battle of Armageddon, as all the nations gather together to fight against Christ.

The exact location of the valley of Armageddon is unclear because there is no mountain called Meggido. However, since “Har” can also mean hill, the most likely location is the hill country surrounding the plain of Meggido, some sixty miles north of Jerusalem. More than two hundred battles have been fought in that region. The plain of Megiddo and the nearby plain of Esdraelon will be the focal point for the battle of Armageddon, which will rage the entire length of Israel as far south as the Edomite city of Bozrah (Isaiah 63:1). The valley of Armageddon was famous for two great victories in Israel’s history: 1) Barak’s victory over the Canaanites (Judges 4:15) and 2) Gideon’s victory over the Midianites (Judges 7). Armageddon was also the site for two great tragedies: 1) the death of Saul and his sons (1 Samuel 31:8) and 2) the death of King Josiah (2 Kings 23:29-30; 2 Chronicles 35:22).

Because of this history, the valley of Armageddon became a symbol of the final conflict between God and the forces of evil. The word “Armageddon” only occurs in Revelation 16:16, “Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.” This speaks of the kings who are loyal to the Antichrist gathering together for a final assault on Israel. At Armageddon “the cup filled with the wine of the fury of [God’s] wrath” (Revelation 16:19) will be delivered, and the Antichrist and his followers will be overthrown and defeated. “Armageddon” has become a general term that refers to the end of the world, not exclusively to the battle that takes place in the plain of Megiddo.

What Is The Second Coming Of Jesus?

The second coming of Jesus Christ is the hope of believers that God is in control of all things, and is faithful to the promises and prophecies in His Word. In His first coming, Jesus Christ came to earth as a baby in a manger in Bethlehem, just as prophesied. Jesus fulfilled many of the prophecies of the Messiah during His birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection. However, there are some prophecies regarding the Messiah that Jesus has not yet fulfilled. The second coming of Christ will be the return of Christ to fulfill these remaining prophecies. In His first coming, Jesus was the suffering Servant. In His second coming, Jesus will be the conquering King. In His first coming, Jesus arrived in the most humble of circumstances. In His second coming, Jesus will arrive with the armies of heaven at His side.

The Old Testament prophets did not clearly make this distinction between the two comings. This can be seen in Isaiah 7:14, 9:6-7 and Zechariah 14:4. As a result of the prophecies seeming to speak of two individuals, many Jewish scholars believed there would be both a suffering Messiah and a conquering Messiah. What they failed to understand is that there is only one Messiah and He would fulfill both roles. Jesus fulfilled the role of the suffering servant (Isaiah chapter 53) in His first coming. Jesus will fulfill the role of Israel's deliverer and King in His second coming. Zechariah 12:10 and Revelation 1:7, describing the second coming, look back to Jesus being pierced. Israel, and the whole world, will mourn for not having accepted the Messiah the first time He came.

After Jesus ascended into heaven, the angels declared to the apostles, "Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven'" (Acts 1:11). Zechariah 14:4 identifies the location of the second coming as the Mount of Olives. Matthew 24:30 declares, "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory." Titus 2:13 describes the second coming as a "glorious appearing."

The second coming is spoken of in greatest detail in Revelation 19:11-16, “I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. ‘He will rule them with an iron scepter.’ He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”

What Is The Millennial Kingdom?

The millennial kingdom is the title given to the 1000-year reign of Jesus Christ on the earth. Some seek to interpret the 1000 years in an allegorical manner. They understand the 1000 years as merely a figurative way of saying “a long period of time,” not a literal, physical reign of Jesus Christ on the earth. However, six times in Revelation 20:2-7, the millennial kingdom is specifically said to be 1000 years in length. If God wished to communicate “a long period of time,” He could have easily done so without explicitly and repeatedly mentioning an exact time frame.

The Bible tells us that when Christ returns to the earth He will establish Himself as king in Jerusalem, sitting on the throne of David (Luke 1:32–33). The unconditional covenants demand a literal, physical return of Christ to establish the kingdom. The Abrahamic Covenant promised Israel a land, a posterity and ruler, and a spiritual blessing (Genesis 12:1–3). The Palestinian Covenant promised Israel a restoration to the land and occupation of the land (Deuteronomy 30:1–10). The Davidic Covenant promised Israel a king from David’s line who would rule forever—giving the nation rest from all their enemies (2 Samuel 7:10–13).

At the second coming, these covenants will be fulfilled as Israel is re-gathered from the nations (Matthew 24:31), converted (Zechariah 12:10–14), and restored to the land under the rule of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. The Bible speaks of the conditions during the millennium as a perfect environment physically and spiritually. It will be a time of peace (Micah 4:2–4; Isaiah 32:17–18), joy (Isaiah 61:7, 10), and comfort (Isaiah 40:1–2). The Bible also tells us that only believers will enter the millennial kingdom. Because of this, it will be a time of obedience (Jeremiah 31:33), holiness (Isaiah 35:8), truth (Isaiah 65:16), and the knowledge of God (Isaiah 11:9, Habakkuk 2:14). Christ will rule as king (Isaiah 9:3–7; 11:1–10). Nobles and governors will also rule (Isaiah 32:1; Matthew 19:28), and Jerusalem will be the political center of the world (Zechariah 8:3).

Revelation 20:2-7 gives the precise time period of the millennial kingdom. Even without these scriptures, there are countless others that point to a literal reign of the Messiah on the earth. The fulfillment of many of God’s covenants and promises rests on a literal, physical, future kingdom. There

is no solid basis for denying the literal interpretation of the millennial kingdom and its duration being 1000 years.

What Is The Final Judgement?

The first thing to understand about the final judgment is that it cannot be avoided. Regardless of how we may choose to interpret prophecy on the end times, we are told that “it is appointed to men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). We all have a divine appointment with our Creator. The apostle John recorded some details of the final judgment:

“And I saw a great white throne, and Him sitting on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And a place was not found for them. And I saw the dead, the small and the great, stand before God. And 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. And the sea gave up the dead in it. And death and hell delivered up the dead in them. And each one of them was judged according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the Lake of Fire. This is the second death. And if anyone was not found having been written in the Book of Life, he was cast into the Lake of Fire” (Revelation 20:11-15).

This remarkable passage introduces to us the final judgment—the end of human history and the beginning of the eternal state. We can be sure of this: no mistakes will be made in our hearings because we will be judged by a perfect God (Matthew 5:48; 1 John 1:5). This will manifest itself in many undeniable proofs. First, God will be perfectly just and fair (Acts 10:34; Galatians 3:28). Second, God cannot be deceived (Galatians 6:7). Third, God cannot be swayed by any prejudices, excuses or lies (Luke 14:16-24).

As God the Son, Jesus Christ will be the judge (John 5:22). All unbelievers will be judged by Christ at the “great white throne,” and they will be punished according to the works they have done. The Bible is very clear that unbelievers are storing up wrath against themselves (Romans 2:5) and that God will “give to each person according to what he has done” (Romans 2:6). (Believers will also be judged, at a different judgment called the “judgment seat of Christ” (Romans 14:10), but since Christ’s righteousness has been imputed to us and our names are written in the Book of Life, we will be rewarded, not punished, according to our deeds.)

At the final judgment the fate of the unsaved will be in the hands of the omniscient God who will judge everyone according to his soul's condition.

For now, our fate is in our own hands. The end of our soul's journey will be either in an eternal heaven or in an eternal hell (Matthew 25:46). We must choose where we will be by accepting or rejecting the sacrifice of Christ on our behalf, and we must make that choice before our physical lives on this earth come to an end. After death, there is no longer a choice, and our fate is to stand before the throne of God, where everything will be open and naked before Him (Hebrews 4:13). Romans 2:6 declares that God "will give to each person according to what he has done."

What Is The New Heaven & New Earth?

The Bible consistently warns us that this world will not last forever. “Heaven and earth will pass away,” Jesus said in Matthew 24:35. His statement was in the context of end times’ prophecies and the eternal nature of Jesus’ words: “My words will never pass away.” This means that trusting Jesus is wiser than trusting anything in this world.

Jesus also refers to the passing away of heaven and earth in Matthew 5:18. In Revelation 21:1, John writes of a new heaven and a new earth in the eternal state, having seen that “the first heaven and the first earth had passed away” (cf. Isaiah 65:17 and 2 Peter 3:13). To “pass away” is to disappear or be no more. This refers to the physical heaven and earth—the material world and all it contains—but not to the spirits/souls of the inhabitants of those places. Scripture is clear that people will outlast the current material universe, some in a state of eternal bliss and some in a state of eternal misery, and that the current universe will be replaced by another that will never know the contamination of sin.

The method of this world’s destruction is revealed in 2 Peter 3:11–12: “The day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire. . . . That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.” In Noah’s day, the world was destroyed with water, but God promised to send no more global floods (Genesis 9:11). In the Day of the Lord, the universe will be destroyed by fire.

The prophet Isaiah foretold the passing away of heaven and earth, too. “All the stars in the sky will be dissolved and the heavens rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shriveled figs from the fig tree” (Isaiah 34:4). The Lord assures His people that, even as the heaven and earth are passing away, His salvation is secure: “The heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment and its inhabitants die like flies. But my salvation will last forever, my righteousness will never fail” (Isaiah 51:6).

Knowing that heaven and earth will pass away gives us perspective in life. This world is not our home. “We are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13). Jesus tells us to

have the proper priorities: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth. . . . But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven” (Matthew 6:19–20). And Peter, after reminding us of the temporary nature of this world, says, “Dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with Him” (2 Peter 3:1).

People, Places, And Things

The 144,000 Jews

The book of Revelation has always presented the interpreter with challenges. The book is steeped in vivid imagery and symbolism which people have interpreted differently depending on their preconceptions of the book as a whole. There are four main interpretive approaches to the book of Revelation:

1) preterist (which sees all or most of the events in Revelation as having already occurred by the end of the 1st century);

2) historicist (which sees Revelation as a survey of church history from apostolic times to the present);

3) idealist (which sees Revelation as a depiction of the struggle between good and evil);

4) futurist (which sees Revelation as prophecy of events to come). Of the four, only the futurist approach interprets Revelation in the same grammatical-historical method as the rest of Scripture. It is also a better fit with Revelation's own claim to be prophecy (Revelation 1:3; 22:7, 10, 18, 19).

So the answer to the question "who are the 144,000?" will depend on which interpretive approach you take to the book of Revelation. With the exception of the futurist approach, all of the other approaches interpret the 144,000 symbolically, as representative of the church and the number 144,000 being symbolic of the totality—i.e., the complete number—of the church. Yet when taken at face value: "Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel" (Revelation 7:4), nothing in the passage leads to interpreting the 144,000 as anything but a literal number of Jews—12,000 taken from every tribe of the "sons of Israel." The New Testament offers no clear cut text replacing Israel with the church.

These Jews are "sealed," which means they have the special protection of God from all of the divine judgments and from the Antichrist to perform their mission during the tribulation period (see Revelation 6:17, in which

people will wonder who can stand from the wrath to come). The tribulation period is a future seven-year period of time in which God will enact divine judgment against those who reject Him and will complete His plan of salvation for the nation of Israel. All of this is according to God's revelation to the prophet Daniel (Daniel 9:24–27). The 144,000 Jews are a sort of “first fruits” (Revelation 14:4) of a redeemed Israel which has been previously prophesied (Zechariah 12:10; Romans 11:25–27), and their mission seems to be to evangelize the post-rapture world and proclaim the gospel during the tribulation period. As a result of their ministry, millions—“a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language” (Revelation 7:9)—will come to faith in Christ.

Much of the confusion regarding the 144,000 is a result of the false doctrine of the Jehovah's Witnesses. The Jehovah's Witnesses claim that 144,000 is a limit to the number of people who will reign with Christ in heaven and spend eternity with God. The 144,000 have what the Jehovah's Witnesses call the heavenly hope. Those who are not among the 144,000 will enjoy what they call the earthly hope—a paradise on earth ruled by Christ and the 144,000. Clearly, we can see that Jehovah's Witness teaching sets up a caste society in the afterlife with a ruling class (the 144,000) and those who are ruled. The Bible teaches no such “dual class” doctrine. It is true that there will be people ruling in the millennium with Christ. These people will be comprised of the church (believers in Jesus Christ, 1 Corinthians 6:2), Old Testament saints (believers who died before Christ's first advent, Daniel 7:27), and tribulation saints (those who accept Christ during the tribulation, Revelation 20:4). Yet the Bible places no numerical limit on this group of people. Furthermore, the millennium is different from the eternal state, which will take place at the completion of the millennial period. At that time, God will dwell with us in the New Jerusalem. He will be our God and we will be His people (Revelation 21:3). The inheritance promised to us in Christ and sealed by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13–14) will become ours, and we will all be co-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17).

People, Places, And Things

The Antichrist

What Is The Antichrist?

First John 2:18 speaks of the Antichrist: “Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.” The specific term antichrist is used seven times in Scripture, twice here in 1 John 2:18 and also in 1 John 2:22; 4:3; and twice in 2 John 7. So, what is this Antichrist that the apostle John refers to?

The meaning of the term antichrist is simply “against Christ.” As the apostle John records in First and Second John, an antichrist denies the Father and the Son (1 John 2:22), does not acknowledge Jesus (1 John 4:3), and denies that Jesus came in the flesh (2 John 1:7). There have been many “antichrists,” as 1 John 2:18 states. But there is also coming the Antichrist.

Most Bible prophecy/eschatology experts believe the Antichrist will be the ultimate embodiment of what it means to be against Christ. In the end times/last hour, a man will arise to oppose Christ and His followers more than anyone else in history. Likely claiming to be the true Messiah, the Antichrist will seek world domination and will attempt to destroy all followers of Jesus Christ and the nation of Israel.

Other biblical references to the Antichrist include the following:

- The imposing, boastful king of Daniel 7 who oppresses the Jews and tries to “change the set times and the laws” (verse 25).
- The leader who establishes a 7-year covenant with Israel and then breaks it in Daniel 9.
- The king who sets up the abomination of desolation in Mark 13:14 (cf. Daniel 9:27).
- The man of lawlessness in 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12.
- The rider on a white horse (representing his claim to be a man of peace) in Revelation 6:2.

- The first beast—the one from the sea—in Revelation 13. This beast receives power from the dragon (Satan) and speaks “proud words and blasphemies” (verse 5) and wages war against the saints (verse 7).

Thankfully, the Antichrist/beast, along with his false prophet, will be thrown into the lake of fire, where they will spend all eternity in torment (Revelation 19:20; 20:10).

What is the Antichrist? In summary, the Antichrist is the end-times false messiah who seeks, and likely achieves, world domination so that he can destroy Israel and all followers of Jesus Christ.

Who is the antichrist?

There is much speculation about the identity of the Antichrist. Some of the more popular targets are Vladimir Putin, Prince William, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and Pope Francis I. In the United States, former President Barack Obama and current President Donald Trump are the most frequent targets. So, who is the Antichrist, and how will we recognize him?

The Bible really does not say anything specific about where the Antichrist will come from. Many Bible scholars speculate that he will come from a confederacy of ten nations and/or a reborn Roman empire (Daniel 7:24-25; Revelation 17:7). Others see him as having to be a Jew in order to claim to be the Messiah. It is all just speculation since the Bible does not specifically say where the Antichrist will come from or what ethnicity he will be. One day, the Antichrist will be revealed. Second Thessalonians 2:3-4 tells us how we will recognize the Antichrist: “Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.”

It is likely that most people who are alive when the Antichrist is revealed will be very surprised at his identity. The Antichrist may or may not be alive today. Martin Luther was convinced that the pope in his time was the Antichrist. During the 1940s, many believed Adolph Hitler was the

Antichrist. Others who have lived in the past few hundred years have been equally sure as to the identity of the Antichrist. So far, they have all been incorrect. We should put the speculations behind us and focus on what the Bible actually says about the Antichrist. Revelation 13:5-8 declares, “The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.”

People, Places, And Things

The Apocalypse

The word “apocalypse” comes from the Greek word apokalupsis which means “revealing, disclosure, to take off the cover.” The book of Revelation is sometimes referred to as the “Apocalypse of John” because it is God’s revealing of the end times to the apostle John. Further, the Greek word for “apocalypse” is the very first word in the Greek text of the book of Revelation. The phrase “apocalyptic literature” is used to describe the use of symbols, images, and numbers to depict future events. Outside of Revelation, examples of apocalyptic literature in the Bible are Daniel chapters 7–12, Isaiah chapters 24–27, Ezekiel chapters 37–41, and Zechariah chapters 9–12.

Why was apocalyptic literature written with such symbolism and imagery? The apocalyptic books were written when it was more prudent to disguise the message in images and symbolism than to give the message in plain language. Further, the symbolism created an element of mystery about details of time and place. The purpose of such symbolism, however, was not to cause confusion, but rather to instruct and encourage followers of God in difficult times.

Beyond the specifically biblical meaning, the term “apocalypse” is often used to refer to the end times in general, or to the last end times events specifically. End-times events such as the second coming of Christ and the battle of Armageddon are sometimes referred to as the Apocalypse. The Apocalypse will be the ultimate revealing of God, His wrath, His justice, and, ultimately, His love. Jesus Christ is the supreme “apocalypse” of God, as He revealed God to us (John 14:9; Hebrews 1:2).

People, Places, And Things

The False Prophet

The false prophet of the end times is described in Revelation 13:11-15. He is also referred to as the “second beast” (Revelation 16:13, 19:20, 20:10). Together with the Antichrist and Satan, who empowers both of them, the false prophet is the third party in the unholy trinity.

The apostle John describes this person and gives us clues to identifying him when he shows up. First, he comes out of the earth. This could mean he comes up from the pit of hell with all the demonic powers of hell at his command. It could also mean he comes from lowly circumstances, secret and unknown until he bursts on the world stage at the right hand of the Antichrist. He is depicted as having horns like a lamb, while speaking like a dragon. The horns on lambs are merely small bumps on their heads until the lamb grows into a ram. Rather than having the Antichrist’s multiplicity of heads and horns, showing his power and might and fierceness, the false prophet comes like a lamb, winsomely, with persuasive words that elicit sympathy and good will from others. He may be an extraordinary preacher or orator whose demonically empowered words will deceive the multitudes. But he speaks like a dragon, which means his message is the message of a dragon. Revelation 12:9 identifies the dragon as the devil and Satan.

Verse 12 gives us the false prophet’s mission on earth, which is to force humanity to worship the Antichrist. He has all the authority of the Antichrist because, like him, the false prophet is empowered by Satan. It is not clear whether people are forced to worship the Antichrist or whether they are so enamored of these powerful beings that they fall for the deception and worship him willingly. The fact that the second beast uses miraculous signs and wonders, including fire from heaven, to establish the credibility of both of them would seem to indicate that people will fall before them in adoration of their power and message. Verse 14 goes on to say the deception will be so great that the people will set up an idol to the Antichrist, "the image of the beast," and worship it. This is reminiscent of the huge golden image of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 3) before which all were to bow down and pay homage. Revelation 14:9-11, however, describes the ghastly fate that awaits those who worship the image of the Antichrist.

Those who survive the terrors of the tribulation to this point will be faced with two hard choices. Those who refuse to worship the image of the beast will be subject to death (Revelation 14:15), but those who do worship him will incur the wrath of God. The image will be extraordinary in that it will be able to “speak.” Whatever the image is (a statue? a hologram? an android? a human-animal hybrid? a clone?), it will have some kind of ability to breathe forth the message of the Antichrist and the false prophet. Along with being the spokesman for them, the image will condemn to death those who refuse to worship the unholy pair. In our technological world, it is not hard to imagine such a scenario.

Whoever the false prophet turns out to be, the final world deception and the final apostasy will be great, and the whole world will be caught up in it. The deceivers and false teachers we see today are the forerunners of the Antichrist and the false prophet, and we must not be deceived by them. These false teachers abound, and they are moving us toward a final satanic kingdom. We must faithfully proclaim the saving gospel of Jesus Christ and rescue the souls of men and women from the coming disaster.

People, Places, And Things

The Four Horsemen Of The Apocalypse

The four horsemen of the Apocalypse are described in Revelation chapter 6, verses 1-8. The four horsemen are symbolic descriptions of different events which will take place in the end times. The first horseman of the Apocalypse is mentioned in Revelation 6:2: "I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest." This first horseman likely refers to the Antichrist, who will be given authority and will conquer all who oppose him. The antichrist is the false imitator of the true Christ, who will also return on a white horse (Revelation 19:11-16).

The second horseman of the Apocalypse appears in Revelation 6:4, "Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other. To him was given a large sword." The second horseman refers to terrible warfare that will break out in the end times. The third horseman is described in Revelation 6:5-6, "...and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, 'A quart of wheat for a day's wages, and three quarts of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!'" The third horseman of the Apocalypse refers to a great famine that will take place, likely as a result of the wars from the second horseman.

The fourth horseman is mentioned in Revelation 6:8, "I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth." The fourth horseman of the Apocalypse is symbolic of death and devastation. It seems to be a combination of the previous horsemen. The fourth horseman of the Apocalypse will bring further warfare and terrible famines along with awful plagues and diseases. What is most amazing, or perhaps terrifying, is that the four horsemen of the Apocalypse are just "precursors" of even worse judgments that come later in the tribulation (Revelation chapters 8-9 and 16).

People, Places, And Things

The Mark Of The Beast

The main passage in the Bible that mentions the “mark of the beast” is Revelation 13:15-18. Other references can be found in Revelation 14:9, 11, 15:2, 16:2, 19:20, and 20:4. This mark acts as a seal for the followers of Antichrist and the false prophet (the spokesperson for the Antichrist). The false prophet (the second beast) is the one who causes people to take this mark. The mark is literally placed in the hand or forehead and is not simply a card someone carries.

The recent breakthroughs in medical implant chip and RFID technologies have increased interest in the mark of the beast spoken of in Revelation chapter 13. It is possible that the technology we are seeing today represents the beginning stages of what may eventually be used as the mark of the beast. It is important to realize that a medical implant chip is not the mark of the beast. The mark of the beast will be something given only to those who worship the Antichrist. Having a medical or financial microchip inserted into your right hand or forehead is not the mark of the beast. The mark of the beast will be an end-times identification required by the Antichrist in order to buy or sell, and it will be given only to those who worship the Antichrist.

Many good expositors of Revelation differ widely as to the exact nature of the mark of the beast. Besides the implanted chip view, other speculations include an ID card, a microchip, a barcode that is tattooed into the skin, or simply a mark that identifies someone as being faithful to the Antichrist's kingdom. This last view requires the least speculation, since it does not add any more information to what the Bible gives us. In other words, any of these things are possible, but at the same time they are all speculations. We should not spend a lot of time speculating on the precise details.

The meaning of 666 is a mystery as well. Some speculated that there was a connection to June 6, 2006—06/06/06. However, in Revelation chapter 13, the number 666 identifies a person, not a date. Revelation 13:18 tells us, “This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.” Somehow, the number 666 will identify the Antichrist. For centuries Bible interpreters have been trying to identify certain individuals with 666.

Nothing is conclusive. That is why Revelation 13:18 says the number requires wisdom. When the Antichrist is revealed (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4), it will be clear who he is and how the number 666 identifies him.

People, Places, And Things

The Marriage Supper Of The Lamb

In his vision in Revelation 19:7–10, John saw and heard the heavenly multitudes praising God because the wedding feast of the Lamb—literally, the “marriage supper”—was about to begin. The concept of the marriage supper is better understood in light of the wedding customs in the time of Christ.

These wedding customs had three major parts. First, a marriage contract was signed by the parents of the bride and the bridegroom, and the parents of the bridegroom or the bridegroom himself would pay a dowry to the bride or her parents. This began what was called the betrothal period—what we would today call the engagement. This period was the one Joseph and Mary were in when she was found to be with child (Matthew 1:18; Luke 2:5).

The second step in the process usually occurred a year later, when the bridegroom, accompanied by his male friends, went to the house of the bride at midnight, creating a torchlight parade through the streets. The bride would know in advance this was going to take place, and so she would be ready with her maidens, and they would all join the parade and end up at the bridegroom’s home. This custom is the basis of the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1–13. The third phase was the marriage supper itself, which might go on for days, as illustrated by the wedding at Cana in John 2:1–2.

What John’s vision in Revelation pictures is the wedding feast of the Lamb (Jesus Christ) and His bride (the Church) in its third phase. The implication is that the first two phases have already taken place.

The first phase was completed on earth when each individual believer placed his or her faith in Christ as Savior. The dowry paid to the bridegroom’s parent (God the Father) would be the blood of Christ shed on the Bride’s behalf. The Church on earth today, then, is “betrothed” to Christ, and, like the wise virgins in the parable, all believers should be watching and waiting for the appearance of the Bridegroom (the rapture).

The second phase symbolizes the rapture of the Church, when Christ comes to claim His bride and take her to the Father's house. The marriage supper then follows as the third and final step. It is our view that the marriage supper of the Lamb takes place in heaven between the rapture and the second coming (during the tribulation on earth).

Attending the wedding feast will be not only the Church as the Bride of Christ, but others as well. The "others" include the Old Testament saints—they will not have been resurrected yet, but their souls/spirits will be in heaven with us. As the angel told John to write, "Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:9). The marriage supper of the Lamb is a glorious celebration of all who are in Christ!

People, Places, And Things

The Meaning of 666

At the close of Revelation 13, which discusses the beast (the Antichrist) and his false prophet, we read, “This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666” (Revelation 13:18). Somehow, the number 666 is a clue to the identity of the beast. Revelation 13 also mentions the “mark of the beast” (verses 16–17), and popular thought often links 666 with the mark; however, the mark of the beast and 666 appear to be two different things. The mark of the beast is something people must receive in order to buy and sell. The number 666 is somehow associated with the beast/Antichrist as “his” number.

The meaning of 666 is a mystery, and it appears that the apostle John, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, intended it to be that way. Calculating it, John says, requires “wisdom.” Some, using gematria (assigning a number value to each letter of a name or word and then combining the number values to arrive at a total number), have identified the Antichrist as various people in world history. Some of the popular targets have been “Caesar Nero,” “Ronald Wilson Reagan,” “Mikhail Gorbachev,” and various popes in Roman Catholic history. The lengths some will go to in order to get a person’s name to add up to 666 are amazing. Virtually any name can add up to 666 if enough mathematical gymnastics are employed.

Six hundred, sixty-six will somehow identify the beast, but precisely how 666 is connected to the beast is not the main point of Revelation 13:18. The Bible often uses the number 7 to refer to God and His perfection. Traditionally, 6 is thought to be the number of man, created on the sixth day and always “falling short” of God. The beast/Antichrist will strive to be like God. He will likely even claim to be God. But, just as the number 6 falls short of the number 7, so will the beast/Antichrist, with his “trinity” of 6’s, ultimately fail in his effort to defeat God.

People, Places, And Things

The Seven Churches

The seven churches described in Revelation 2-3 are seven literal churches at the time that John the apostle was writing Revelation. Though they were literal churches in that time, there is also spiritual significance for churches and believers today. The first purpose of the letters was to communicate with the literal churches and meet their needs at that time.

The second purpose is to reveal seven different types of individuals/churches throughout history and instruct them in God's truth.

A possible third purpose is to use the seven churches to foreshadow seven different periods in the history of the Church. The problem with this view is that each of the seven churches describes issues that could fit the Church in any time in its history. So, although there may be some truth to the seven churches representing seven eras, there is far too much speculation in this regard. Our focus should be on what message God is giving us through the seven churches. The seven churches are

(1) Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7) - the church that had forsaken its first love (2:4).

(2) Smyrna (Revelation 2:8-11) - the church that would suffer persecution (2:10).

(3) Pergamum (Revelation 2:12-17) - the church that needed to repent (2:16).

(4) Thyatira (Revelation 2:18-29) - the church that had a false prophetess (2:20).

(5) Sardis (Revelation 3:1-6) - the church that had fallen asleep (3:2).

(6) Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7-13) - the church that had endured patiently (3:10).

(7) Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22) - the church with the lukewarm faith (3:16).

People, Places, And Things

The Tribulation Saints

The tribulation saints are, quite simply, saints living during the tribulation. We believe that the church will be raptured before the tribulation, but the Bible indicates that a great number of people during the tribulation will place their faith in Jesus Christ. In his vision of heaven, John sees a vast number of these tribulation saints who have been martyred by the Antichrist: “There before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands” (Revelation 7:9). When John asks who they are, he is told, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (verse 14).

The tribulation will be a time of great trouble for the wicked, because of God’s judgments. It will also be a time of great persecution for the believers—or saints—because of the Antichrist’s persecution (Revelation 13:7). Daniel saw the Antichrist “waging war against the saints and defeating them” (Daniel 7:21). Of course, the saints’ eternal salvation is secure: Daniel also saw that “the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom” (Daniel 7:22; cf. Revelation 14:12–13).

The tribulation saints will hear the gospel from several possible sources. The first is the Bible; there will be many copies of the Bible left in the world, and when God’s judgments begin to fall, many people will likely react by finding a Bible to see if prophecies are being fulfilled. Many of the tribulation saints will also have heard the gospel from the two witnesses (Revelation 11:1–13). The Bible says these two individuals “will prophesy for 1,260 days [three and a half years]” (verse 3) and perform great miracles (verse 6). And then there are the 144,000 Jewish missionaries who are redeemed and sealed by God during the tribulation (Revelation 7:1–8). Immediately following the description of their sealing in Revelation 7, we read of the multitudes of tribulation saints who are saved from every corner of the world (verses 9–17).

The tribulation saints will serve their Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of desperate surroundings. Faithful to the end, many of these believers will die for their faith. But in their death, they overcome; “They overcame [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death” (Revelation 12:11). And God will reward them: “He who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (Revelation 7:15–17).

We praise the Lord that the great day of trouble will also be a great day of grace. Even as God is meting out His just punishment on an unbelieving world, He will be restoring Israel to faith and extending grace to all who believe, both Jew and Gentile. God has always been in the business of saving people, and that salvation will still be available during the tribulation. Don’t wait until then, however; receive Jesus now (John 1:12).

People, Places, And Things

The Twenty-four Elders

Revelation 4:4 declares, “Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.” The book of Revelation nowhere specifically identifies who the twenty-four elders are. However, they are most likely representative of the Church. It is unlikely that they are angelic beings, as some suggest. The fact that they sit on thrones indicates that they reign with Christ. Nowhere in Scripture do angels ever rule or sit on thrones. The Church, however, is repeatedly said to rule and reign with Christ (Revelation 2:26-27, 5:10, 20:4; Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30).

In addition, the Greek word translated here as “elders” is never used to refer to angels, only to men, particularly to men of a certain age who are mature and able to rule the Church. The word elder would be inappropriate to refer to angels, who do not age. Their mode of dress would also indicate these are men. While angels do appear in white, white garments are more commonly found on believers, symbolizing Christ’s righteousness imputed to us at salvation (Revelation 3:5,18; 19:8).

The golden crowns worn by the elders also indicate these are men, not angels. Crowns are never promised to angels, nor are angels ever seen wearing them. The word translated “crown” here refers to the victor’s crown, worn by those who have successfully competed and won the victory, as Christ promised (Revelation 2:10; 2 Timothy 4:8; James 1:12).

Some people believe these twenty-four elders represent Israel, but at the time of this vision, Israel as a whole nation had not yet been redeemed. The elders cannot represent tribulation saints for the same reason—not all had yet been converted at the time of John’s vision. The most likely option is that the elders represent the raptured Church which sings songs of redemption (Revelation 5:8-10). They wear the crowns of victory and have gone to the place prepared for them by their Redeemer (John 14:1-4).

People, Places, And Things

The Two Witnesses

In Revelation 11:3–12 is a description of two individuals who will help accomplish God’s work during the tribulation: “I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth” (verse 3). Nowhere does the Bible identify these two witnesses by name, although people through the years have speculated.

The two witnesses in Revelation will have miraculous powers to accompany their message (Revelation 11:6), and no one will be able to stop them in their work (verse 5). At the end of their ministry, when they have said all they need to say, the beast will kill them and the wicked world will rejoice, allowing the bodies of the fallen prophets to lie in the streets (verses 7–10). Three and a half days later, however, God’s two witnesses will be resurrected and, in full view of their enemies, ascend to heaven (verses 11–12).

There are three primary theories on the identity of the two witnesses in Revelation: (1) Moses and Elijah, (2) Enoch and Elijah, and (3) two unknown believers whom God calls to be His witnesses in the end times.

(1) Moses and Elijah are seen as possibilities for the two witnesses due to the specific miracles that John says the witnesses will perform. The witnesses will have the power to turn water into blood (Revelation 11:6), which duplicates a famous miracle of Moses (Exodus 7). And the witnesses will have the power to destroy their enemies with fire (Revelation 11:5), which corresponds to an event in Elijah’s life (2 Kings 1). Also giving strength to this view is the fact that Moses and Elijah both appeared with Jesus at the transfiguration (Matthew 17:3–4). Further, Jewish tradition expects Moses and Elijah to return, based on the prophecy of Elijah’s coming in Malachi 4:5 and God’s promise to raise up a prophet like Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18), which some Jews believe necessitates Moses’ return.

(2) Enoch and Elijah are seen as possibilities for the two witnesses because of the unique circumstances surrounding their exit from the world. Enoch and Elijah, as far as we know, are the only two individuals whom God has taken directly to heaven without experiencing death (Genesis

5:23; 2 Kings 2:11). Proponents of this view point to Hebrews 9:27, which says that all men are appointed to die once. The fact that neither Enoch nor Elijah has yet experienced death seems to qualify them for the job of the two witnesses, who will be killed when their job is done. In addition, both Enoch and Elijah were prophets who pronounced God's judgment (1 Kings 17:1; Jude 1:14–15).

(3) Two unknowns are seen as possibilities for the two witnesses because of the lack of specificity in Revelation 11. Scripture does not identify the two witnesses by name, and no well-known person is associated with their coming. God is perfectly capable of taking two "ordinary" believers and enabling them to perform the same signs and wonders that Moses and Elijah did. There is nothing in Revelation 11 that requires us to assume a "famous" identity for the two witnesses.

There is an interesting passage in Zechariah 4 that gives us a prototype of the two witnesses of Revelation. Zechariah has a vision in which he sees a solid gold lampstand. On top is a bowl of oil, and an olive tree stands on each side (verses 3–4). The lampstand gives its light without human maintenance, being constantly supplied by the olive oil flowing from the trees into the bowl. God's message to Zechariah was that God's work (rebuilding the temple) would be accomplished "not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit" (verse 6).

Zechariah asks about the meaning of the olive trees and the branches supplying the oil, and the angel who speaks to him says, "These are the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth" (Zechariah 4:14, ESV). In other words, God's power to sustain His work is flowing through two individuals set apart for the task. In Zechariah's context, these two individuals are Joshua (the current high priest) and Zerubbabel (the current governor of Judah). We can also see a foreshadowing of Jesus Christ here, as the Messiah would combine the offices of priest and king. Then we come to Revelation 14:4. In the description of the two witnesses, John says, "They are 'the two olive trees' and the two lampstands, and 'they stand before the Lord of the earth.'" John quotes from Zechariah 4. The two witnesses of Revelation, like Joshua and Zerubbabel, will have God's power flowing through them to accomplish God's work.

So who are the two witnesses of Revelation? The Bible does not say. All three views presented above are valid and plausible interpretations that Christians can have. The identity of the two witnesses is not an issue Christians should be dogmatic about.

What To Know About Surviving The End Times

Often, people experience anxiety when they think about the future; however, it does not have to be that way. For those who know God, thoughts of the future bring eagerness and comfort. For example, describing a woman who knows and trusts God, Proverbs 31:25 says, “She smiles at the future.”

Two key thoughts to keep in mind about the future are, first, God is sovereign and in control over everything. He knows the future and absolutely controls what will happen. The Bible says, “Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, ‘My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure’ . . . Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it” (Isaiah 46:9–11, emphasis added).

The second thing to remember about the future is that the Bible outlines what will occur in “the end times” or “latter days.” Because the Bible is God’s revelation to humankind, and because God knows and controls the future (as Isaiah says above), then it stands to reason that when the Bible speaks about what will occur in the future, we can believe it. Concerning predictions about the future, the Bible says, “No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Peter 1:21). This truth is evident in the fact that, unlike the false prophecies made in other religions or by individuals such as Nostradamus, the Bible has never once been wrong – every time the Bible has predicted a future event, it happened exactly as Scripture said it would.

When considering how to understand and survive in the end times, answer these three questions:

1. How should I interpret what the Bible says about the future (biblical prophecy)?
2. What does the Bible say will happen in the end times?
3. How should what the Bible says about the future affect the way I live today?

How to Interpret Biblical Prophecy

There are a number of viewpoints on what methods should be used when interpreting passages concerning the end times. While there are good people espousing different beliefs, there is good reason to believe that biblical prophecy should be interpreted (1) literally, (2) with a futurist view, and (3) in what is called a “premillennial” manner.

Encouraging a literal interpretation is the fact that there are over 300 prophecies that concern the first coming of Christ, all of which were literally fulfilled. The predictions surrounding the Messiah’s birth, life, betrayal, death and resurrection were not fulfilled allegorically or in a spiritual manner. Jesus literally was born in Bethlehem, performed miracles, was betrayed by a close friend for 30 pieces of silver, was pierced in His hands and feet, died with thieves, was buried in a rich man’s tomb, and was resurrected three days after His death. All these details were predicted hundreds of years before Jesus was born and were literally fulfilled. And, while there is symbolism used in various prophecies (e.g., dragons, horsemen, etc.), all of it portrays literal beings or events, in much the same way as Jesus is spoken of as a lion and a lamb.

Regarding a futurist view, the Bible clearly states that prophetic books like Daniel and Revelation contain not only accounts of historical events, but also predictions of future events. After John was given his messages for the churches of his day, he received visions concerning what would occur in the end times. John was told, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things” (Revelation 4:1, emphasis added).

Perhaps an even stronger argument for a futurist view involves the promises God made to Abraham (Genesis 12 & 15) concerning the land of Israel. Since God’s covenant with Abraham was unconditional, and His promises have not yet been fulfilled to Abraham’s descendants, then a futurist view of the promises to Israel is warranted.

Lastly, with respect to prophecy being interpreted in a “premillennial” manner, this means that, first, the church will be Raptured, then the world will experience a seven-year Tribulation period, and then Jesus Christ will return to reign over the earth for 1,000 literal years (Revelation 20).

What Does the Bible Say Will Happen in the End Times?

Sadly, the Bible predicts a downward spiral of catastrophes, human sin, and religious apostasy before Christ returns. Paul writes, “But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. . . . Evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Timothy 3:1, 13). The world will continue to reject God, His Word, and His people.

Some day in the future – a day no one knows – God will end the Church Age which began in the first century on Pentecost (Acts 2) with an event known as the Rapture. At that time, God removes all believers in Christ from the earth in preparation for His final judgments. Of the Rapture, Paul says, “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:14–18).

The erosion of peace and increase of turmoil that precedes the Rapture will reach epic proportions when untold numbers of people disappear from the earth. Such an event will cause panic and demands for a strong leader who will have answers to all the world’s problems. Preparation for this leader has been in progress for some time, as historian Arnold Toynbee has noted, “By forcing on mankind more and more lethal weapons, and at the same time making the world more and more interdependent economically, technology has brought mankind to such a degree of distress that we are ripe for the deifying of any new Caesar who might succeed in giving the world unity and peace.” Out of a revived Roman Empire, one that is organized in a European ten-constituency fashion (Daniel 7:24; Revelation 13:1), the Antichrist will arise and sign a covenant with the nation of Israel, which will officially begin God’s prophetic seven-year countdown to Christ’s second coming (Daniel 9:27).

For three and a half years, the Antichrist will reign over the earth and promise peace, but it is a false peace which will entrap the people of the earth. The Bible says, “While they are saying, ‘Peace and safety!’ then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape” (1 Thessalonians 5:3). Wars, earthquakes, and famines will escalate (Matthew 24:7) until the end of the Antichrist’s 3.5-year reign, when he will enter a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem and proclaim himself to be God and demand worship (2 Thessalonians 2:4; Matthew 24:15). It is at that point that the true God responds to the challenge. For another 3.5 years, a Great Tribulation will occur, such as has never before been seen. Jesus predicted, “For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short” (Matthew 24:21–22).

Untold loss of life and destruction of the earth will occur during the Great Tribulation. Also, large numbers will come to faith in Christ, yet many will do so at cost of their lives. God will still be in control as He gathers the unbelieving armies of the world in order to judge them. Of this event, the prophet Joel wrote, “I will gather all the nations And bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat. Then I will enter into judgment with them there on behalf of My people” (Joel 3:2). John records the battle this way: “And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon [Satan] and out of the mouth of the beast [the Antichrist] and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. . . . And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon” (Revelation 16:13–16).

At this point, the Messiah Jesus will return, destroy His enemies, and claim the world, which is rightfully His. “And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may

strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, 'KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.' Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in mid-heaven, 'Come, assemble for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great.' And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh" (Revelation 19:11–21).

After Christ has defeated all the armies gathered in the valley of Armageddon, He will reign with His saints for one thousand years and fully restore Israel to her land. At the end of a thousand years, a final judgment of the nations and all remaining mankind will occur, which is then followed by an eternal state: either spent with God or separated from Him (Revelation 20-21).

The above events are not speculations or possibilities – they are what will take place in the future. Just as all the Bible's prophecies of Christ's first coming came true, so will all the Bible's prophecies of His second coming.

Given the truth of these prophecies, what impact should they have on us now? Peter asks this question: "Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! " (2 Peter 3:11–12).

The Effect of Bible Prophecy on Us Today

There are four responses we should have to Bible prophecy. The first is obedience, which is what Peter speaks of in the verses above. Jesus continually tells us to be ready for His coming, which could happen at any time (Mark 13:33-37) and to live in such a way that we are not ashamed of our behavior.

The second response is worship. God has provided a way to escape His end-time judgments—His free gift of salvation offered through Jesus. We must be sure we receive His salvation and live in gratitude before Him. Our worship on earth will one day become worship in heaven: “And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation’” (Revelation 5:9).

The third response is proclamation. The message of God’s salvation and the truth of His second coming need to be proclaimed for all to hear, especially to those who don’t yet believe. We must give everyone the chance to turn to God and be saved from His coming wrath. Revelation 22:10 says, “And he said to me, ‘Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.’”

The last response to God’s prophetic Word is service. All believers should be diligent about carrying out God’s will and performing good works. Part of Christ’s judgments will be of the works performed by believers. They do not determine a Christian’s acceptance into heaven, but they do show what each believer did with the gifts given him or her by God. Paul says of this judgment, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

In summation, God is sovereign over all events and people of the world. He is firmly in control of everything and will bring a perfect end to everything He has started. An old Christian song puts it like this: “All is God’s creation ... Fashioned by One hand ... Satan and Salvation ... Under One command.”

Fulfilled prophecy is one proof that the Bible is a supernatural book. Hundreds of Old Testament prophecies have already been fulfilled, and it is reasonable to conclude that what it says about the end times will be fulfilled as well. For those who know Jesus and have trusted Him as their Lord and Savior, His coming will be their blessed hope (Titus 2:13). But for those who have rejected Christ, He will be their holy terror (2 Thessalonians 1:8). The bottom line is this: to survive the end times, make sure you are a believer in Christ: "For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:9)

How To Overcome Fear Of The End Of Days

The best way to overcome a fear of the end of days is to be spiritually prepared for it. First and foremost, you must have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ in order to have eternal life (John 3:16; Romans 10:9-10). Only through Him can you receive forgiveness of sin and have eternity with God. If God is your Father, there's really nothing to worry about (Luke 12:32).

Second, every Christian should live a life worthy of the calling we have in Christ. Ephesians 4:1-3 teaches, "Walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Knowing Christ and walking in His will go a long way towards diminishing fear of any kind.

Third, Christians are told what will happen in the end, and it's encouraging. First Thessalonians 4:13-18 notes,

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Rather than fear the future, we are called to anticipate the future with joy. Why? In Christ, we will be "caught up" to meet Him and we "will always be with the Lord."

Further, Scripture says we do not need to fear Judgment Day: "By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. There is no fear

in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love” (1 John 4:17-18).

The apostle Peter reveals that, even if our future holds suffering, we need not fear: “But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed” (1 Peter 3:14). Peter and many other early believers endured much hardship and even death because of their faith in Christ. Suffering is not to be feared; it is a blessing when it is borne for the name of Jesus.

“Those who do not know Christ do not have the promise of peace for the future. For them, there is a real concern because they have not settled the issue of where they will spend eternity. Those who do know Christ do not fear the end of days. Instead, we strive to live a life worthy of our calling, live with confidence, suffer patiently, anticipate Jesus' return, and rest in the knowledge that our times are in His hands”

Psalm 31:15

End Time Promises to Give You Hope Not Fear

When I watch the news, my heart beats a little faster, and I start to feel anxious and concerned about the future. Alarming news of natural disasters, political upheaval, vicious wars, and indescribable suffering and pain strikes fear in our hearts. Is this the end of time?

We are not to know the time of Jesus' return, but there are signs to heed as the time draws near. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all tell how Jesus warned the disciples about the end of time. Jesus told them there would be false prophets, Christ-pretenders who come in His name. Wars and rumors of wars will leave countries desolate, thousands will suffer famine and pestilence, and great earthquakes will tremble across the globe (Matthew 24:3-7). "All these are but the beginning of the birth pains," Jesus declares (Matthew 24:8).

As the earth shudders in advance of Jesus' return, men's hearts will turn toward evil as well. The apostle Paul writes to his beloved friend Timothy warning the time will be difficult (2 Peter 3:1). In this passage, Paul identifies more than 20 ungodly traits that will mark men as the time draws near: pride, arrogance, abusiveness, and unholiness to name a few (2 Timothy 3:2-7).

If we look around, we notice the world looks a lot like these warning signs and people are understandably fearful. Perhaps they fear God's judgment. Maybe they are unsure about the future or their salvation. For the children of God, however, the end of time is not a fearful prospect but a time of rejoicing.

"God's promises never fail."

Scripture tells us believers look forward to receiving beautiful promises when Jesus returns. Trusting in these promises in the midst of troubled times encourages us to look toward the heavens with anticipation, not anxiety. Sometimes, though, fear overtakes us, and we struggle to find peace in the middle of this turmoil.

When we feel those pangs of despair and dread as we witness tumultuous times and encounter evil, let's remember God's promises that give us hope,

not fear. For God's promises never fail (Joshua 23:14). Here are a few promises we have for hope:

Eternal life is ours.

As believers, assurance of eternal life began the moment we surrendered our lives to Jesus. We believe in our hearts that Jesus is the Son of God who lived a perfect life, and then, obediently died the death we deserve so we could be reconciled with God. Then He defeated death when he rose from the dead on the third day just as He said He would. As Christ followers, we have the promise of eternal life.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

Our citizenship is heavenly.

As God's children, we enjoy dual citizenship. We live on this earth, but our citizenship is in heaven. If we visit another country, we do not become citizens of that country because we cross its borders. We are merely visitors and remain a citizen of our home country. The same is true for the kingdom of God. Our time on this earth is temporary, and our real home is heaven. We have the promise of heavenly citizenship.

"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ." (Philippians 3:20)

We move into a new house.

During His last night with the disciples, Jesus told them He was leaving and would return. He was going to prepare a place for them in His Father's house. In that house are many rooms, He told them (John 14:2). Wanting to get there soon, Thomas wanted directions. So, Jesus told him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Jesus is the only way to our heavenly home. Our limited imaginations cannot begin to picture this glorious house. Whatever the home design, we are promised Jesus is preparing it just for us (John 14:2-7).

The old body is made new.

Our earthly bodies are fragile. Our bones break, and disease causes pain and suffering. Even if we have health, aging exacts a toll. When Jesus returns, however, we receive new glorious bodies. Paul looked forward to his new body. He encourages the Philippians by reminding them that although men turn to evil and the world is discouraging, “the Lord Jesus Christ will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body” (Philippians 3:21). Through Jesus, we have hope in the promise of a glorious eternal body.

Nothing can break us apart.

In Paul's letter to the Roman church, he asks, “who can separate us from the love of Christ?” The answer: no one and nothing. Not life or death, angels nor demons, no power or living creature, nothing can separate us from the love of Christ (Romans 8:35).

Even when the world is spinning out of control, despair and tragedy all around, we are carefully in the grip of God's love. If He is for us, who, or what can come against us (Romans 8:31)? Nothing. God promises that we will never be without His love.

An inheritance awaits.

In Peter's first letter, he writes to the scattered Christians suffering persecution. Then, as now, the people feared the world and Peter wanted to encourage them to have hope. He reminds them of the precious inheritance that awaits us in heaven. This eternal inheritance will not perish, spoil or fade and God himself is the guard (1 Peter 1:3-5).

It seems that everything that was once valuable in this world is waning. What is important today will be replaced with something more important tomorrow. For us, however, a precious inheritance awaits that never tarnishes or depletes. This inheritance is not silver or gold but the promise of everlasting life with Christ.

Sin and suffering disappear.

As the apostle John records the revelation of the new earth and a new Jerusalem, a loud voice tells him that God will dwell with His people and He will lovingly wipe away every tear. The old order of things that included pain, suffering, sickness, sin, temptation, and death is erased (Revelation 21:1-4). The new order of things promises eternal worship and rejoicing as we sit in the presence of God.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." (Revelation 21:3-4)

There will be a heavenly celebration.

As we await Jesus' return, we ready ourselves as a bride prepares for her wedding. Our preparations and details include loving others, sharing God's grace and mercy, learning more about God, and turning away from temptation and sin. We are not to simply peer into the clouds looking for Jesus' return. We are to prepare for His return.

Once that day arrives and the necessary things take place, there will be a great feast, a banquet, and as God's children, we are all invited. Nothing to wear, you say? Jesus will give us fine linen robes of white worn only by God's people (Revelation 19:6-9). We have the promise of heavenly celebration with Christ.

We win!

In the book of Revelation, there are several explicit descriptions of war. Nation will go against nation, son against father, friend against friend. At one point, it will seem the enemy is winning. Scripture tells us how that ends. We win! God destroys the enemy, and he no longer whispers lies, condemns and tempts. He will never again cause pain or destruction (Revelation 19:19-21). We don't have to wait until the end of times to

receive this victory. Through our faith in Jesus, we win over sin, and its destruction. We have the promise of triumph over the enemy.

God moves in.

According to scripture, many tragic events must take place at the end of time. Wars, earthquakes, and worse will come to pass, but once God has reckoned with the enemy, God will dwell among us. One Bible paraphrase says, "God will move into the neighborhood..." (Revelation 21:3-5) Another version says, "God's home is now with his people. He will live with them..." (Revelation 21:3).

Either way, our Creator will live with us and among us. The prospect of walking and talking with God the Father is a beautiful promise that gives us hope and anticipation of things to come.

Maybe the time is tomorrow, we are not told, but the signs clearly point in the direction to Jesus' return. Some become fearful at the prospect.

Without a doubt, the description of the end of time in scripture is unsettling. As children of God, however, we do not have to despair in these difficult times. We have the promises of eternal life in a heavenly home in the presence of God for all time. We have hope for the future, not fear.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can We Trust The Bible To Predict The Future?

The main reason we can trust biblical prophecy is that it, like the rest of Scripture, was written—literally “God-breathed”—by the Creator of the universe. It is inerrant, perfect, and true. We must understand that before we can understand the role of biblical prophecy.

Biblical prophecy plays two roles. It foretells the future, and it explains what the positive or negative results of future events will be. Prophecy may announce events that bring joy and pleasure or fear and foreboding. When prophecy is ignored, it is usually because the hearers don't like what they hear for one reason or another. Biblical prophecy is not usually general in nature. It normally is very specific as to how it will affect someone or something. But it is always dependable and worthy of our complete trust. We can allow prophecy to help shape our lives, giving us direction and guidance in serving our Lord. It should be a source of strength and instruction for us. Unlike what we hear called “prophecy” today, both in the church and outside the church, true biblical prophecy is always accurate and precise. What God prophesies always occurs.

The prophecy of the Flood in Genesis 6 is an example. God explains His reasons for the flood, gives specific instructions for Noah to build the ark to preserve lives, then produces this first great worldwide catastrophe.

God even prophesied that He would never do it again, in Genesis 9:12-16. Joseph's dreams in Genesis 37:5-10 contain prophecies which came to pass in chapter 39 through the end of the book.

Deuteronomy 18:18 says, “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him.” This prophecy, pointing to Moses, also foreshadows the Jewish Messiah, our Lord Jesus, and is quoted in Acts 3:22-26. It's in this same chapter that we're told (Deuteronomy 18:20) what was done to false prophets in Moses' time. If their prophecy was false, they were executed.

Isaiah chapter 53 contains a compelling prophecy of Jesus Christ: His youth, His ministry, His sin-bearing and suffering, and His offering of Himself. Psalm 22 gives us another prophecy of our Lord's suffering, couched in a description of King David, Christ's foreshadow.

In our Lord's own prophecies, in Matthew 24, He spoke of wars, famines, earthquakes, persecutions, apostasy and betrayals, and finally of His own return, unexpected and widely rejected today. This and other end-time prophecies are as dependable as Noah's warning of the Flood. Similar predictions of catastrophic events still to come are found in 2 Peter chapters 2–3, together with a prediction (2 Peter 3:7) of God's intervention. And in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Christians are promised a rescue or a resurrection appointment, whether we're alive or dead. Biblical prophecy provides us a roadmap of the future. To fail to understand these prophecies of the rapture is to miss one of the greatest gifts of God.

Finally, since we can trust John 3:16, that God loves us and gave us His Son, surely we can rely on Him as Author of biblical prophecy to predict, to encourage, to direct and provide for our future physical and spiritual needs. Our Lord said, in John 14:2, "In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you." And that should be a prophecy of assurance and encouragement for all Christians. So place your trust in God's prophecies, just as you placed your trust in His Son.

Is The USA In Bible Prophecy?

The United States of America is never explicitly mentioned in the Bible. In regard to the end times, the only nation the Bible seems to be concerned with, specifically, is Israel. Revelation does not mention any countries or nations, other than Israel (Revelation 7:4; 21:12). It mentions Babylon (Revelation 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2,10,21), but beyond that, it does not name specific places. Bible scholars debate whether this refers to a literal city of Babylon or whether Babylon is being used symbolically. Again, Israel is the focus of end-times Bible prophecy.

Why is the United States of America never mentioned in Bible prophecy? This could be for several reasons: (1) Perhaps the United States does not play an important role in the end times. (2) Perhaps the United States does

not exist any more once the end times begin. (3) Perhaps the United States is included with all the other nations that reject God in the end times (Revelation 10:11; 11:18; 12:5; 14:8; 15:4; 16:19; 17:15; 18:3,23; 19:15). Option (3) is the most likely answer. The United States of America is the biggest supporter of Israel in the world today.

This might not always be the case.

Will Babies & Children Be Taken In The Rapture?

The Bible does not specifically say what will happen to babies, infants, and children when the rapture occurs. This causes many Christians to worry that they will be taken in the rapture, and their young children will be left behind to face the terrible tribulation. Is this possible? No, we do not believe it is. As we explain our viewpoint, please understand that this is, at best, informed speculation. Again, the Bible does not specifically address this issue.

It is our view that children who are under the age of accountability will be taken in the rapture. If a child has not reached the point that he/she can make a decision for or against Christ, we would hold that if he/she dies, he/she will be granted entrance into heaven. We also hold that this principle, based entirely on God's mercy, applies to the rapture. Some propose that only the children of believers will be raptured. We disagree. If a child's salvation while under the age of accountability is not based on the faith-status of his/her parents, neither is the child's participation in the deliverance of the rapture. It is our belief, albeit not explicitly taught in Scripture, that all those under the age of accountability will be taken in the rapture.

Will There Be A Second Chance For Salvation?

Many Bible interpreters believe that there will be absolutely no chance for anyone to achieve salvation after the Rapture. However, there is no place in the Bible which says everyone or even hints to it. There will be many people who come to Christ during the Tribulation. The 144,000 Jewish witnesses (Revelation 7:4) are Jewish believers. If no one can come to Christ during the Tribulation, then why are people being beheaded for their

faith (Revelation 20:4)? No passage of Scripture states that no one will have a chance to be saved after the Rapture.

There is scripture that states that those who hear the gospel and reject it before the Rapture cannot be saved. Those saved during the Tribulation, then, are those who had never heard the gospel before the Rapture. The “proof text” for this view is 2 Thessalonians 2:9-11, which says the Antichrist will work miracles to deceive “those who are perishing” and that God Himself will “send them a powerful delusion” to confirm them in their unbelief. The reason given is that “they refused to love the truth and so be saved” (verse 10). Granted, those who are hard-hearted toward the gospel before the Rapture are likely to remain so. And the Antichrist will deceive many (Matthew 24:5). But “those who refused to love the truth” refers to people who heard the gospel before the Rapture. It could be anyone who wholly rejects God’s salvation, at any time.

Revelation 6:9-11 speaks of those martyred during the Tribulation “because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained.” These martyrs will correctly interpret what they see during the Tribulation and will believe the gospel themselves and call on others to repent and believe as well.

The Antichrist and his followers will not tolerate their evangelism and will kill them. All of these martyrs are people who were alive before the Rapture, but who were not believers until afterward. Therefore, there must be opportunity for some to come to Christ in faith after the Rapture.