

Bible Prophecy

Foundation and Future



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Preface

There is virtually no part of the Bible that hasn't been debated, analyzed, and scrutinized for centuries. Regardless of topic, there are always differences of interpretation. Some take this as proof that we should all defer to what is termed an *infallible interpreter*,¹ a person or group charged with making authoritative decisions binding upon all. Yet scripture does not grant such infallibility to anyone, but rather charges everyone with diligent study and cooperation (Prov. 15:22, Acts 17:11, 2 Tim. 2:15).

Many books have been written about Bible prophecy, and there is no shortage of controversy and disagreement on this topic. But what such books often lack is a thorough examination of the foundations, the principles by which scripture (or any other writing) should be analyzed. Those who debate prophecy often talk past each other, because they argue from fundamentally divergent bases. And even when there is no debate but only an explanation, it can be a mixture of principles, resulting in an inconsistency that confuses rather than clarifies.

So it is of the utmost importance that discussion of a given topic be prefaced by the establishment of a firm and consistent foundation, and conducted according to coherent rules of logic, grammar, and analysis. This effectively sets boundaries by which any line of reasoning will be governed, resulting in a consistent and rational explanation. This is especially vital when the topic is prophecy, since this topic is characterized by symbolism and requirement to study and search. Bible prophecy is especially challenging due to the fact that we are not always able to say which prophecies have been fulfilled completely in the past, and which remain in whole or in part.

This is why this particular book on Bible prophecy will begin with a careful study of basic principles of interpretation, and rationale for certain axioms, meaning self-evident premises or starting points. Every philosophy and belief has them; even the most naturalistic and humanistic

¹The proof-text "no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation" (2 Pet. 1:20 KJV) is frequently cited to justify an infallible interpreter. But the context concerns not the interpretation of prophecies but their origins, as stated in the very next verse: prophecies of old were not made up by the prophets but were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

arguments rely upon them. For example, the scientist begins with the assumption that whatever can be observed and repeated constitutes a scientific fact. Likewise, the student of Bible prophecy begins with considering the text as inspired of God, or else the whole exercise is merely academic and pointless.

There is no question that many will reject the axioms used in this book, and so every argument built upon those axioms will be rejected as well. But every effort will be made to argue consistently with those axioms, and to draw rational and logical conclusions from them. The goal is to present a plausible prophetic viewpoint that is not confusing or sloppy, and to accomplish this as concisely as possible. This will be done without any intent to offend, belittle, or antagonize those who hold other opinions on the matter.

Bible prophecy may, at least in part, be deliberately ambiguous. In 1 Cor. 2:8, Paul explained that God hid his plans about Jesus from “the rulers of this age”, who, if they had understood the prophecies, “would not have crucified the Lord of Glory”. And in 1 Peter 1:12, Peter says that “even angels strain to look into this”. Who before the cross could have figured out that the Messiah would first come to be a literal sacrifice, or that he would come not once but at least twice?² So we must not treat our personal understanding of prophecy as infallible or obvious, nor judge people who disagree to be defective or lost.

There are difficulties with every prophetic interpretation, which is surely related to the ambiguity already discussed. But we must try, and in trying we must not overlook details. There are many similarities in prophecies, but equally significant are the differences. For example, cities all have boundaries, buildings, and people, but this hardly means that all such descriptions refer to one particular city. And we must determine to the best of our ability which differences are simply a matter of further information (e.g. the four Gospel accounts) or are conflicting, in which case the details indicate that more than one city is being described.

We should also consider basic principles that serve as limits on the scope of a particular prophecy. For example, if one believes that there will be mortals (aging, death, and decay) on earth forever, then the presence of mortals on earth cannot be used to argue that a particular prophecy must occur before the end of the Millennium. Conversely of course, a

²Nowhere does scripture indicate that there are only two comings.

prophecy indicating the presence of mortals on earth must refer to no later than the end of the Millennium if death itself is done away with by then. Such fundamentally divergent interpretive approaches make discussion of future prophecy an exercise in futility, though of course there is always value in making each other think.

But perhaps a more important issue to resolve before discussing this or any other Biblical topic is whether a given passage is literal or figurative/spiritual. And these two things are not always mutually exclusive; something could be both literal and symbolic. If, for example, a passage gives meticulous detail about the dimensions of a temple, the reader must first decide whether this itself is an indication of literalness, or whether such details only serve the purpose of conveying the idea that the temple is enormous or ornate. As before, a discussion between individuals holding to conflicting fundamental interpretive methods will prove ultimately futile in terms of coming to any agreement or resolution.

Intended Audience and Terminology

This book presumes that the reader has at least passing familiarity with Bible prophecy. This includes terminology such as Tribulation³ and Millennium⁴, and other terms familiar to most Christians. The words “saint”, “elect”, and “holy ones” refer to the righteous of any era, not just the church age, and not only the most devout. The word “church” has come to be the most familiar, albeit not the most accurate, term for those in this age who believe Jesus rose from the dead and who have put their trust in him alone for salvation.

Acknowledgements

This book, as others I have written, was inspired by encounters with many people holding various viewpoints. Complex and controversial topics have always compelled me to write everything down and reduce the great amount of material to its simplest form. So in addition to acknowledging the grace of God and support of family and friends, I also extend gratitude to those debate opponents who caused me to double-check and cross-check everything I believe about Bible prophecy. And of course, I am indebted to the many scholars and teachers who have made their studies

³<http://christianity.about.com/od/faqhelpdesk/f/thetribulation.htm>

⁴<http://www.biblebay.org/article/178/the-words-that-make-up-the-bible/frequently-asked-questions/what-is-the-millennium>

freely available, as well as searchable online Bible texts.

Overview of Scripture

The purpose and context of the Bible as a whole

The Bible is a divinely-sanctioned collection of books on various topics and through various genres, assembled over a period of about 1500 years by about 40 writers. The unifying theme is the story of the creation, fall, redemption, and restoration of the world. In particular, it follows the history of the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob⁵ to eventually bring about the Savior of all.

So the Bible was not meant to be an exhaustive world history. But neither was it written in a vacuum, so we must consider every historical and cultural setting. At the very least, it tells us that God does not operate us like puppets or micromanage us. He made us as sentient beings, and the rebellion in the Garden of Eden could have justified God in abandoning us completely and eternally. Yet he did not do this, but rather planned for our salvation through many millennia.

One might then wonder why God would choose to allow such stretches of time to transpire, but that question has not been answered in the pages of scripture and will have to wait until history has ended. But what we can observe is that whenever God does intervene in history, he chooses the most unlikely vessels to carry out his will. Neither does God instantly and violently yank people into line when they stray, but instead patiently guides them. So the journey is as important as the destination, and our choices along the path as important as its length.

If we remember all these things and keep them in mind as we study the scriptures, we will be less inclined to misinterpret a given passage or misapply its application or lesson. This is the outer layer of context, but only one layer out of many. If we fail to consider all layers of context, we are vulnerable to stumbling over minutiae and connecting dots that were never intended to be connected. We're all familiar with the "connect the dots" pictures we drew as children. But even as children we knew that we had to follow the order of numbers or letters, rather than connecting them any way we chose and then wondering why the result was not what the designer intended. So also we must not think, as many do today,

⁵The terms Hebrew, Jew, and Israelite will not be distinguished in this book, as they all refer to descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

that we can take any given verses and join them together as we see fit. This is not a matter of *permission* but of sound reasoning.

The Old Testament begins of course with the account of creation and the fall into sin and death, and then gives a historical account of the expansion of people groups over the earth. But once we pass the accounts of the Flood and Tower of Babel and eventually meet Abraham, the focus of scripture narrows to Abraham's descendants. While other nations and peoples are mentioned, the clear purpose is to record the history of the Hebrews. This is a key aspect of context, since we cannot properly interpret prophecy if we are ignorant of the fact that the Old Testament tells nothing about the church to come.⁶ The church as a unique Christian body was not revealed completely until Jesus gave this knowledge to Paul; see Eph. 3:3–9 and Col. 1:26–27.

In the next chapter we will examine the distinction between the church and the people and land of Israel.

⁶The word *church* will be used in this book due simply to its familiarity. As used throughout scripture, it could refer to the people of Israel or even a gathering of Gentiles of any given religious or political identity.

Israel and the Church

The unique identity and destiny of each

Bible prophecy interpretation depends upon whether or not Israel was to retain its identity beyond its dispersion in 70 a.d. Those who see Israel as having been abandoned forever by God will interpret all remaining prophecies as applying to the church (yet, curiously, they focus on Israel's blessings and not its curses). But those who see Israel as having been given irrevocable promises by God interpret all remaining prophecies about Israel as literal.

So first we must know what God promised to Israel. In Jeremiah 31:37 we are told that God will never reject the people of Israel, in spite of all they have done, and in Ezekiel 36:22-23 it states very clearly that the purpose of God is to prove himself holy in spite of their habit of giving God a bad name among the nations of the world. We see in those passages, though certainly there are many others, that God is not yet finished with Israel, since *his purposes do not depend upon the faith of its people*. In fact, God states clearly that Israel has profaned his name and made him the object of scorn among the Gentiles. So the argument that Israel today is not the chosen people of God is invalid, since it has nothing to do with their merit. God has scattered them before but brought them back again, so there is no reason to presume that he will not do so in the future.

This doesn't just concern the people, either, but also the land. The original land of Israel was determined by God Himself: "the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites" (Ex. 3:8, 13:5, etc.) This area is currently known as Egypt, Sudan, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, part of Turkey, and Israel, including Gaza and the West Bank. God promised this area to Abraham's descendants.

Clearly, then, the land of Israel belongs to God, and the people of Israel belong to God. In their present state of unbelief and hostility to their own Messiah, they must be purged and purified. *But it will be by the hand of God, not the church or the Gentiles, since whoever comes against God's people comes against him (Zech. 2:8).* So while we are not obligated to support or condone what they are doing as a nation, neither are we to attack or condemn them— as if we or any other nation

has a right to point fingers at others.

There is ample archaeological evidence of these ancient Hebrew cities, culture, artifacts, and language.⁷ Yet there is no evidence for any such people as Palestinians; there is no coinage, no inscriptions, no language, nothing. It is often and loudly claimed that a so-called Palestinian people had prior occupancy, yet not even the Dome of the Rock was built until 691 a.d. A.C. Cresswell in his book *Origin of the plan of the Dome of the Rock* notes that those who built the shrine used the measurements of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre,⁸ which of course was preceded by Israel.

Now we must address the charge that none of the people in Israel today are true Jews by descendance from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but are Khazars and thus the fake Jews spoken of in the book of Revelation. Though this may be provable genetically for some of the people, it is not true of all of them. Neither is it true that all of them are atheists or Kabbalists or occultists. Yet God spares his people no matter how small the number ("remnant"), and it still remains that the land belongs to God. In addition, Gentiles were always allowed to convert to Judaism and given full rights as Jews (Isaiah 56:3-8). So even if the people of Israel today were proven to lack genetic descendance from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, this does not prevent them from being considered the people of God.

To answer yet another charge, the establishment of modern Israel by ordinary political means does not mean it isn't a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. Was God supposed to just have us all wake up one morning to see that there was a nation of Israel? How else would anyone accept that God had something to do with it? The fact that Israel's existence in the future was predicted long ago is proof enough that this is of God, but Israel did in fact appear suddenly, per Isaiah 66:8.

For Christians who say that God can and has broken his promises to Israel due to unbelief, then what makes them think God will not also break his promises to churches whose people lack faith or keep indulging in sin? Many churches today are filled with corruption and

⁷A pro-Israel source <http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/category/scholars-study> and an anti-Israel source https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archaeology_of_Israel.

⁸Book available at Amazon <http://www.worldcat.org/title/origin-of-the-plan-of-the-dome-of-the-rock/oclc/5862604>. See also Islamic Architecture <http://www.islamic-architecture.info/WA-IS/WA-IS-001.htm>.

worldly hedonism; they have relegated the Bible to myth or irrelevance in the modern world; they embrace all the depravity of the wicked and mock the few voices of rebuke and calls to holiness. If God can abandon Israel, then God can also abandon the church. Those who smugly say that God is finished with Israel should not think God won't turn his back on them, too.

Having established the foundation of Bible prophecy as that God will not abandon Israel, it follows that the remaining prophecies about the people and land of Israel will be literally fulfilled. Israel and the church have separate destinies and purposes, as explained by both Peter and James in Acts 15, and by Paul in 1 Cor. 10:32 where he lists "Jews, Greeks (Gentiles), and the church of God". Though there is but one Kingdom of Heaven, there are various "provinces" depending on when a righteous person lived.⁹ *If God can break his promises to Israel, he can break them to the church, and none of his promises would mean anything.* Thus so-called Replacement Theology, whether the church replaces Israel or the church is absorbed into Israel and must obey the Levitical law, means that God does not keep his promises to glorify his name rather than ours. So everything we will read in the Old Testament applies to the people and land of Israel specifically, not to the as-yet unknown and unrevealed church.

Yet just as Israel has its own history and promises, so also does the church. *It is only in the New Testament, especially the Letters,¹⁰ where the "mystery"¹¹ of this new church is revealed.* Not even the Gospels will tell us much about prophecies concerning the church, since Jesus stated clearly that his primary mission was to "the lost sheep of Israel" (Mat. 15:24). Neither will the events of Revelation be primarily about the church, which is never addressed as such after the seven letters in chapters two and three. The church is "not appointed to wrath" (1 Thes. 5:9) and has never shared in the guilt or prophecies of Israel. And no other righteous people from any other age before or after the church were promised the Holy Spirit as a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance

⁹This is a theological view known as Dispensationalism <http://www.theopedia.com/Dispensationalism>. See also *The Israel of God* <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/israelaf.htm>.

¹⁰See Rom. 11:25, 16:25, 1 Cor. 2:7, Eph. 1:9, 3:3-9, Col. 1:26-27, 2:2, and 4:3.

¹¹The word typically rendered *mystery* in most translations is the Greek word *musterion*, but this word means *secret*. That is, it is not a riddle we have to figure out, but something formerly hidden which is now revealed.

(2 Cor. 1:22, 5:5, Eph. 1:13–14). Unlike the church, Israel was never described as the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27, Eph. 4:12).¹²

The church is a unique entity, neither Jew nor Gentile, without any detailed commands for sacred buildings or rituals. We share with Israel neither law nor priesthood (Heb. 7), prophecy nor judgment, risk of being disowned nor exiled and scattered. *Since our salvation and righteousness are found not in ourselves but in Jesus, we can no more be taken from him nor choose to leave him than he could do such things to himself* (1 Cor. 6:19b–20a).

One other important principle to establish is that there was no death or mortality before sin entered the world (Rom. 5:12). Therefore, death and mortality cannot continue after sin has been done away with, since they are part of the curse and that curse will end (Rev. 22:3). *So whenever we encounter a passage of scripture that speaks of mortality, even if people live long and happy lives, we must conclude that the passage refers to a time before the curse is taken away.* This is also true of the matter of final, personal judgment. If we read a passage about the judgment of the dead and the destruction of Death and Hades, then no one can be judged afterwards. Therefore, no one can die after that point, since they would never be judged and there is no place for them to go.

As another example, if we encounter a passage that speaks of the land of Israel, we must not apply it to the church. Or if we read about endurance to be saved, we know it does not concern the church, since we who are in Christ are credited with his righteousness, and it is a received gift rather than an earned wage (Rom. 6:14, 11:6, Eph. 2:8–9). And as noted earlier, *we are not to suffer the wrath of God, for the same reason that we are only righteous because we belong to Jesus.* This hardly means we do not suffer in this age of grace (Act 5:41, Rom. 5:3, 8:17–18, Heb. 11, etc.), but that this is not the wrath of God which will be poured out on the whole world (Rev. 3:10).

To summarize, let us list the points established so far:

- The Bible is primarily about the people and land of Israel.
- Scriptures to and about Israel are not to be applied to the church

¹²Regarding Eph. 3:6, which states that through the Gospel both Jew and Gentile are united into one Body, it also states that this unity is found “in Christ Jesus”. It does not say that Gentiles are absorbed into Israel.

or the Gentiles.

- Scriptures to and about the church are not to be mixed with or applied to the people or land of Israel, or to the Gentiles.
- Unique properties of the church include salvation as a gift, righteousness found only in Jesus and not ourselves, personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and exemption from the wrath of God.
- Since death/mortality only began as the curse earned by sin, then the end of the curse is the end of sin and mortality.
- No one can live a mortal life after all personal judgments are completed and there is no more place for the dead.

Now when we examine any prophetic passage, we need to ask questions like these:

- Does the context indicate that the passage can be taken literally, figuratively, symbolically?
- Has this event happened in history to complete fulfillment?
- Was the prophecy given before Israel existed? Before Pentecost? Before the church was revealed to Paul?
- Are the “saints”¹³ having to endure and work for their salvation? Are they being overcome by “the gates of hell” (Mat. 16:18) or suffering the wrath of God?
- Are there any mortals still on the earth?
- Is there any personal judgment after this, or any place for the dead to go?

These points will be vital to our understanding of Bible prophecy. So now, having found some of the edge pieces of this giant jigsaw puzzle, let us proceed to study the prophecies in detail.

¹³The terms “saints” or “elect” refer to the righteous of any age; they are not unique to the church. That is, everyone in the church is a saint, but not every saint is in the church.

List of Prophecies

With concise descriptions of each

This chapter will simply list all the prophecies believed to have at least a partial fulfillment remaining for the future. The items are given in the order they appear in most standard English Bibles, and the descriptions give the gist of the passage according to where they appear in the text.

Psalm 83

Enemies of Israel band together to wipe it off the map: Edom, the Ishmaelites, Moab, the Agrites, Byblos, Ammon, Amalek, Philistia, Tyre, and Assyria. These correspond roughly to modern-day Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Gaza, Syria, northern Iraq, and possibly parts of Egypt.

Isaiah 17

A prophecy against Damascus:

1. Damascus will no longer be a city (suddenly, overnight) but will lie in ruins, replaced by grazing flocks.
2. It will happen when the glory of Israel has faded almost to the point of death.
3. That day will also be when people turn back to God.

Jeremiah 30:7

1. The Day of the Lord will be a time of great trouble for Jacob, though he will survive it.
2. God will save them out of exile where they were scattered among the nations.
3. Whoever attacks Israel will be attacked.
4. The people of Israel will be numerous and prosperous.

Ezekiel 36-37

1. Though they had been unfaithful and suffered punishment, Israel is promised revenge against all enemies, and restoration of their land and people, not because they earned it but so God would be glorified.
2. God will gather them from all the nations and bring them back to their own land.
3. God will change their hearts so that they will keep his laws.
4. In the vision of the valley of dry bones, God shows that this restoration will be in stages: the bones assemble and are covered with skin, but they were not yet alive, then God breathes life into them.
5. All the tribes of Israel will join together, no longer divided in two, with David reigning over them.
6. God will permanently put his Temple there.

Ezekiel 38-39

The prophecy about Gog, of the land of Magog in the far north, ruler of Meshek and Tubal. The nations listed correspond roughly to modern Russia, Iran, northern Africa, eastern Europe, and Turkey.

1. God will put hooks in his jaw and turn him and his whole army around, including those of Persia, Cush, Put, Gomer, and Beth Togarmah from the far north.
2. They will invade a rich land that has recovered from war, whose people came from many nations to Israel and were now living securely, peacefully, and unsuspecting.
3. Mere protest will be offered by Sheba, Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish. Sheba and Dedan are roughly equivalent to modern Saudi Arabia, while Tarshish may refer to areas as far as Britain and the rest of western Europe.
4. When Gog attacks Israel there will be a great earthquake there, causing the whole world to shake with fear in the presence of God.

5. God will cause the invading army to turn on itself, and there will be plague, torrential rain, hail, and burning sulphur, destroying the army on the mountains of Israel and in the open field, where the carrion birds and wild animals will consume their bodies.
6. God will send down fire on the land of Magog and those who live safely on the coastlands.
7. This causes all Israel to know that God is the Lord, and the world to know that Israel had been punished for its sins.
8. People from the towns of Israel will collect the weapons and burn them for fuel for 7 years.
9. People of Israel will spend 7 months burying the bodies in the valley east of the sea, then conduct a more thorough search for any bodies or bones missed before.
10. God will restore Israel and remove their shame, settling them forever in the land.

Ezekiel 40-48

The vision giving details of the restored land and people of Israel, commonly attributed to the Millennium:

1. The temple is measured and described in great detail.
2. The glory of God comes upon it from the east, entering through the east gate.
3. The altar is restored and purified, and the sacrifices reinstated.
4. The priesthood is restored and dedicated.
5. The whole nation is to bring special sacrifices for purification.
6. The Passover and other festivals are reinstated.
7. Water comes out from the south side of the temple toward the east, emptying into the Dead Sea and turning it fresh, and sea life flourishes in it.
8. Trees along the banks bear fruit each month, providing food and healing leaves.

9. The boundaries of Israel are described: north as far as Damascus, south to just below the Dead Sea, west to the Mediterranean Sea, and east to the Jordan River.
10. The twelve tribes are allotted their territories, as well as a special area dedicated to God where the temple and priests reside. There is also a wide area for general pastureland, with the city in the center. The city measures about a mile and a half square and will be called "The Lord Is There".

Daniel 9:24-27

The prophecy is given of 70x7 years: to end and atone for sin, begin eternal righteousness, seal up prophecy, and anoint/dedicate the Most Holy Place.

1. 7x7 + 62x7 from command to rebuild Jerusalem until Anointed One the ruler comes.
2. Anointed One put to death.
3. The people of the coming ruler destroy Jerusalem and the Temple.
4. War and disasters will continue until the end.
5. He will confirm a treaty with many for the final 7.
6. Midway through the 7 he will end Temple sacrifice and desecrate it.
7. The end decreed upon him will come.

Daniel 11:31-45

Though this was fulfilled in the past by Antiochus Epiphanes, Jesus explicitly stated that the Abomination of Desolation was also future.

1. A blasphemous king will desecrate the Temple (the Abomination of Desolation).
2. He will exalt himself above all gods, showing no regard for the gods of his ancestors or for the one desired by women. Instead he will honor a god of fortresses.

3. He will attack strong fortresses with the help of a foreign god, and he will greatly reward all who honor him, making them rulers and distributing the land for a price.
4. He will rapidly conquer many countries, including Israel, but Edom, Moab, and the leaders of Ammon will escape his conquest.
5. Alarming news from the east and north will cause him to set out in a rage, but he will fall between the [Mediterranean] sea and the holy mountain [Zion].

Daniel 12

1. At that time, there will be unprecedented distress, but your people whose names are in the book will be delivered.
2. Multitudes who had died will arise, some to eternal life and others to eternal shame and contempt.
3. Daniel is to seal up these words until the end.
4. The fulfillment of these things will take 3-1/2 years, and will end when the power of the holy people has been broken.
5. The commencement of these things will be in the distant future from the time of Daniel.
6. 1,290 days [3.5x360] will transpire after the abolishing of the daily sacrifice and the Abomination of Desolation.
7. There is a blessing for those who wait another 45 days after this.

Amos 9:11–15

1. In that day, God will restore the fallen kingdom of David in its ancestral land, never again to be uprooted.
2. This will take place after the people are brought back from exile.

Joel 2

The Day of the Lord:

1. An extremely large army comes, laying waste to everything in its path.

2. Their appearance is like galloping horses, with the noise of chariots, they leap over mountains and swarm like locusts, striking fear into everyone.
3. The earth shakes before them, the sun and moon are darkened and the stars stop shining.
4. This army is led by the Lord.
5. A trumpet is blown, and then the bride and bridegroom are to leave their rooms.
6. God promises to drive the northern horde away, driving them into both the Mediterranean and Dead seas.
7. Then God will pour out his Spirit on everyone, male and female.
8. There will be signs in the heavens, blood and fire on the earth; the sun will go dark and the moon will turn to blood before the great Day of the Lord.

Zechariah 14

A day will come when Jerusalem is plundered and divided up.

1. All the nations surround the city, ransacking houses and raping women.
2. Half the city goes into exile.
3. Then the Lord fights against them. Their flesh will rot while they still stand, their eyes will be consumed in their sockets, their tongues will rot in their mouths, they will kill each other in great panic, and a plague will strike their animals.
4. His feet stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, splitting the mountain in half.
5. That day there will be no sun or darkness, no distinction between day and night.
6. Living water will flow from Jerusalem, half to the Dead Sea and half to the Mediterranean Sea, in summer and winter.

7. The Lord will be king over the whole world.
8. Jerusalem will never again be destroyed.
9. Survivors from the attacking nations will visit Jerusalem each year to worship God and celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles. Those who refuse will suffer drought and plague.

The Gospels

1. The gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.
2. When you see Jerusalem surrounded by military encampments, you will know that its ruin is near.
3. When you see the Abomination of Desolation (as declared through the prophet Daniel) standing in the Holy Place, then those in Judea must run away into the mountains.
4. There will be terrible stress on the world, and great rage against this people. They will be killed in battle and taken captive to all the other nations. Then Jerusalem will be trampled on by the nations until their time is up.
5. The suffering of those days will be unlike anything that has happened since God first created the world until now, and will never be again. In fact, if the Lord didn't cut those days short, no living thing would survive. But those days will be cut short for the sake of his chosen ones.
6. Then there will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars. And on the earth, the nations will be filled with anguish and perplexity due to the roaring and turbulence of the sea. People will be deathly afraid and apprehensive of what is coming upon the whole world, for the forces of the heavens will be shaken.
7. Then they will see Jesus coming in a cloud with great power and majesty. But when you see this all coming to pass, stand up and raise your heads, for you are about to be rescued.

Acts and Letters

James at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:13-18), quoting the prophet Amos, says that “after this” God would rebuild David’s fallen tent so that all mankind would seek God, including the Gentiles bearing his name.

Paul in 1 Cor. 15:35-58 and 1 Thes. 4:13-18 says:

1. The Lord will descend from heaven.
2. The archangel will shout.
3. The trumpet will sound.
4. The dead Christians will be raised in immortal bodies.
5. The bodies of the living Christians will be instantly transformed to immortal.
6. We will all be snatched away into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.
7. This is a message of comfort and hope.

Paul in 2 Thes. 2:1-12 says:

1. The Departure happens.
2. The Detainer that had been holding back the Man of Lawlessness is taken out of the way.
3. The Man of Lawlessness is revealed and identified by his desecration of the temple and declaring himself God.
4. God sends a strong delusion on all who hated the truth, so that they will be deceived.
5. Jesus will defeat this man by the breath of his mouth and glory of his arrival.

Revelation

1. One of the letters to the churches, to Philadelphia, states that they will be kept out of the time of trial to come upon the whole inhabited world.

2. When John is first taken to heaven, he sees a group of 24 elders wearing victor's crowns and white clothing.
3. The three sequences of 7 judgments commence, with numerous references to Old Testament prophecies.
4. Jesus comes down to earth with the armies of heaven, to face the armies of the world massed against him.
5. Satan is bound for a thousand years, during which time the be-headed saints from the Tribulation will co-rule with Jesus.
6. Satan is briefly released and gathers an army from all over the world, with Gog of Magog mentioned by name.
7. The army is consumed by fire from heaven, and Satan is thrown into the Lake of Fire with the Beast and False Prophet.
8. The Great White Throne Judgment begins, and the dead are judged.
9. Death and Hades are thrown into the Lake of Fire, along with all whose names are not written in the Book of Life.
10. The present earth and heavens are done away with and replaced by new ones.
11. The New Jerusalem descends out of heaven, but nothing is said about whether it touches the earth, and it has no temple.

Next we will discuss the various passages in more detail.

The Church Age

The unknown span with a sudden end

When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost after Jesus returned to heaven, the first Christians were all Jews. But soon it became apparent that the Gentiles too were included in this new church. And with that came the first major controversy in the church: the issue of whether Gentiles had to first become Jews. So a council convened in Jerusalem, overseen by James and with the testimonies of Peter and Paul (Acts 15). And at the end of it all, James quoted the prophet Amos as saying that at a future time God would restore the fallen kingdom of David after a period of exile, and that Israel would never be uprooted again.

There are two ways to look at this statement. One is that since James cited the salvation of Gentiles as a fulfillment of Amos, it must mean that the return from exile had been accomplished and the Davidic kingdom had been restored, which was the reason for the Gentiles seeking the Lord. But there are some problems with this interpretation. First, no Jew was ruling over Judea or Jerusalem in the first century; it was administered by Rome. Second, it was not this particular return from exile that was drawing in the Gentiles. In fact, Paul stated just the opposite in Rom. 11:11; it was the salvation of the Gentiles that was to make Israel envious. Some might then argue that Amos was referring to the death and resurrection of Jesus, but this is an extremely indirect reference if true, and it has no anchor in the immediate context.

The other way to look at this is to recall a precedent set by Peter at Pentecost. He cited Joel 2:28–32, yet only part of that passage was fulfilled; there were no wondrous signs in the heavens. So though James quoted Amos, and though Israel had indeed returned from exile and the Gentiles were seeking God, not every detail was fulfilled. So the prophecy of Amos, like that of Joel, awaits a yet future completion.

Paul would later elaborate on this matter of Gentile salvation in his letter to the Romans. In chapter 11, vs. 25, Paul writes that Israel would remain partially hardened against the Gospel until “the full number of Gentiles has come in”. So the span of time God allows for this focus away from the Jews and toward the Gentiles is marked not by years or signs, but by a number. And scripture never tells us what that number

is; after all, we really have no way of knowing how many have been saved over the centuries anyway.

However, since there are signs for the prophecies for Israel, and since we have begun to see some of them unfold, the set number of Gentiles must be nearly completed. This is why the church is charged with watching and being prepared (Phil. 3:20, Heb. 9:28, 10:25, James 5:7–9, 2 Peter 3:10, 2 Tim. 4:8), just as Israel is. But the only thing we are told to watch for is Jesus; no signs, no covenants, no cosmic disturbances, no Antichrist. There are general statements about the condition the world will be in during the last days, but none of these are called signs by which the church will know when Jesus is coming.

As explained in the chapter on Israel and the Church, we look to the Letters to see specific instructions for the church. It is Paul to whom this church was revealed, and Paul was the only apostle to write details about the end of the church age. He did so in three passages: 1 Cor. 15:35–58, 1 Thes. 4:13–18, and 2 Thes. 2:1–12. The first two give details about our departure, while the third tells us what happens after that:

1. The Departure, that is, the removal of The Restrainer:
 - (a) Jesus descends from heaven
 - (b) The archangel shouts
 - (c) The trumpet¹⁴ sounds
 - (d) Dead Christians are raised to life in immortal bodies
 - (e) The bodies of living Christians are instantly transformed to immortal
 - (f) Both groups are snatched away into the clouds to meet Jesus in the air
 - (g) This is a message of comfort and hope, not making any mention of signs, disasters, or judgments
2. The Lawless One is revealed and identified by his desecration of the temple and declaring himself God

¹⁴Paul specifies this trumpet as “last” and “of God” to summon his people to meet Jesus in the air, while in Revelation the trumpet is 7th and is from an angel to bring the wrath of God onto the earth. See Ex. 19:16–19, Num. 10:2, and contrast with Rev. 11:15.

3. God sends a strong delusion on all who hated the truth, so that they will be deceived
4. Jesus will defeat The Lawless One by the breath of his mouth and the glory of his arrival

We can see that Jesus will defeat The Lawless One (after the Tribulation, as will be explained later). But before this, God sends a strong delusion on all who hated the truth. Before that delusion, the Man of Lawlessness is revealed. That revealing cannot happen until the Restraint is taken out of the way via the Departure. All of this is in the context of the Day of the Lord, and Paul is saying that this Day cannot begin until after the Departure. And as noted in the chapter on Israel and the Church, the church is “not appointed to wrath” (1 Thes. 5:9), to which we could add Rev. 3:10 and its promise that we will be kept out of the time of trial to test the entire world. Of course, this is a particular time of the wrath of God, not the normal suffering of life or the persecution common to Christians in every generation. And since the first 69 weeks of the prophecy of Daniel were not about the church, then neither will be the 70th. All generations of Christians in the past have escaped the Tribulation, so there is no reason to presume that the final generation will not escape it as well.

The word Paul uses to describe this meeting in the clouds is *harpadzo*, which means a sudden, forceful snatching away. This same word was used by Luke in Acts 8 to describe the sudden transportation of Philip from the road between Jerusalem and Gaza to the town of Azotus. The word *apostasia* is one which most translations simply transliterate¹⁵ and use to mean a departure from the faith. But the word itself only means to depart;¹⁶ context supplies additional meaning by indicating what is being departed from. And the context here is not false teachers but the Day of the Lord.

One other passage by Paul is 1 Thes. 5:1–11. Who are “they” who say “peace and safety” in vs. 3, after which there is “sudden destruction”? Whoever is not “you” in the church. And the way the church is not caught by surprise is by always being watchful and ready (Phil. 3:20),

¹⁵To transliterate is to convert the letters of a word from one language to another without regard for meaning in the original language.

¹⁶The Greek word *apostasia* was always translated as *departure* before the King James version.

rather than by somehow knowing the exact date and hour. Keep in mind that Jesus directed his comments toward the people of Israel, not the as-yet unrevealed church (Rom. 11:25, 16:25, Eph. 3:6–9, Col. 1:26–27). So what he said about watching and being ready, as well as praying to escape (Luke 21:36), was for them and not the church. But of course, Christians of all times are to be eager to see Jesus return, and to live such lives that we will not be ashamed when he does; this is taught throughout the Letters.

So the church age ends when the full number of Gentiles has been saved, and then Jesus descends from heaven and we all Depart to meet him in the air. This event in itself will be a sign for the rest of the world. But for the church, we are given no instructions beyond watching and waiting for Jesus (1 Thes. 1:10). What Paul calls “a crown of righteousness” awaits all who are found doing this when Jesus returns. This does *not* mean that only those who watch and wait will be taken; rather, it means that those believers will get a particular crown as a reward. Salvation is always by faith in the risen Jesus, not in one’s prophecy viewpoint. While other prophecies such as those at the end of Revelation certainly include Christians, the church is never again addressed as such after the seven letters (Rev. 2 and 3, with the same churches referenced again in Rev. 22:16).

Beyond speculation about where the church must fit into other prophecies by implication, we have established the fact that none of the prophecies remaining to be studied are about the church. As stated in the last footnote of the chapter on Israel and the Church, everyone in the church is a saint, but not every saint is in the church. So when we encounter this word in other prophecies, we know that they refer to the righteous outside of the church.

The Sealed Prophecies

A close look at the prophet Daniel

Though prophecies are scattered throughout the Old Testament, arguably the best-known and most remarkable of them are found in the book of Daniel. Much of its content has already come to pass, but not all, and not all completely. But the most important aspect of Daniel is that it gives a sequence, whereas the sequence or timing of the others is less clear. Since Daniel gives an overview of history in advance, we must have a good grasp of its content before considering any of the others. So this chapter will be all about the prophecies of Daniel.

An abomination in prophecy is understood to mean that an idol is set up in a holy place that belonged to another god (see Ezekiel 8 for example). Its purpose is to defile the other god's temple. Its first use in the Bible is in Daniel 9:27, immediately after "he will put an end to sacrifice and offering". The next two references are in Dan. 11:31 and 12:11 and include the phrase "profane the sanctuary". To provide additional context for use of the word, apocryphal books (between the Testaments) also use it in the context of desecrating the Temple. Antiochus Epiphanes,¹⁷ who died in 164 BC, is the only historical figure to deliberately fill the Temple with unclean things, especially a statue of Zeus with his own face on it in the Holy Place.

So Daniel's prophecy of the Abomination was indeed fulfilled by Antiochus Epiphanes. But Jesus, long after all of this, still spoke of the Abomination as referring to a yet-future event. Paul also spoke of the "man of lawlessness" (2 Thes. 2:3-4) entering the Temple and declaring himself God at some future time, and this certainly qualifies as desecration. Also, in Rev. 13:14 we are told that an image/idol will be made, which all people on earth will be forced to worship, though it doesn't say it will be put into the Temple.

This is just one of many prophecies that seem to have a "now but not yet" fulfillment; that is, they are fulfilled in part at one time but fulfilled

¹⁷The name Antiochus Epiphanes can be roughly translated as "the illustrious one who supports against (opposes)"; see Behind the Name <http://www.behindthename.com/name/antiochus>. That is, it is an early and less specific equivalent to the title "Antichrist".

more completely at another time. So then the question is whether the complete fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy was met in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD. And it should be understood that a complete fulfillment must meet every criterion and detail without exception.

Please take a moment to read these scripture quotes for Jesus' statements about events surrounding the future fulfillment of this prophecy. They are presented as lists for easier comparison.

Mat. 24:14-22

- Gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.
- When you see 'the abomination of desolation' (as declared through the prophet Daniel) standing in the Holy Place
- Then those in Judea must run away into the mountains. . .
- After that will be great oppression, the likes of which has never happened from the beginning of the world until now, nor will ever happen again. In fact, if those days had not been cut short, all flesh would have been wiped out, but they will be shortened for the sake of the chosen people.

Mark 13:14-20

- When you see 'the abomination of desolation' standing where it isn't supposed to
- Then those in Judea must run away into the mountains. . .
- The suffering of those days will be unlike anything that has happened since God first created the world until now, and will never be again. In fact, if the Master didn't cut those days short, no living thing would survive. But those days will be cut short for the sake of his chosen ones.

Luke 21:20-28

- When you see Jerusalem surrounded by military encampments, you will know that its ruin is near.
- Then those in Judea must run away into the mountains. . .
- For there will be terrible stress on the world, and great rage against this people. They will be killed in battle and taken captive to all the other nations. Then Jerusalem will be trampled on by the nations until their time is up.
- Then there will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars. And on the earth, the nations will be filled with anguish and perplexity due to the roaring and turbulence of the sea. People will be deathly afraid and apprehensive of what is coming upon the whole world, for the forces of the heavens will be shaken.
- And then they will see the Human coming in a cloud with great power and majesty. But when you see this all coming to pass, stand up and raise your heads, for you are about to be rescued.

History shows that the people of Judea were indeed scattered among the Gentile nations, and that Jerusalem has been trampled by them throughout. Even today there is much Gentile control over Jerusalem and the Israelis are not allowed to build their Temple in its ancient location. And there have of course been many wars and many natural disasters in the last two thousand years.

But did anyone desecrate the temple in 70AD? Though it was burned and dismantled by the armies of Titus, he did not set up any idol in it. Neither did he take his place in the Temple and proclaim himself God, per 2 Thess. 2:3-4 and Rev. 13:1-8, 14-15.

Did the people of Judea flee to the mountains when they saw Jerusalem surrounded? There is no indisputable record of any mass exodus at that time to the mountains.¹⁸ In fact, the Roman armies allowed people

¹⁸The city of Pella, where many Christians are thought to have fled before the siege, is at a fairly low altitude; see Elevation of the city of Pella <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pella>.

into Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover but refused to let them leave, in order to put great strain on their resources and supplies during the siege.¹⁹

Was the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple “sudden” (1 Thes. 5:3, Luke 21:34)? Clearly not; the events leading up to the final siege did not happen in a day.²⁰

Did Nero, whom some identify as the final fulfillment of the prophecies of both Daniel and Revelation, die as specified in 2 Thess. 2:8 and Rev. 19:19-21? No, he committed suicide.²¹ Neither did he nor any of his associates cause everyone in the world (even if limited to the Roman Empire) to take a mark on their forehead or right hand and forbid commerce without it.

Did Jesus return in the clouds, accompanied by all the signs in the sky, and set up his visible earthly kingdom for a thousand years? This should have happened at or very shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD if that event marks the final fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy and Revelation. Yet the only way to claim it happened is to completely spiritualize it, and this is inconsistent with the claim that everything else, such as the destruction and the abomination, was literal and physical.

While some aspects of the prophecy were fulfilled in 70 AD and some in the ensuing centuries, other important details have yet to occur. And we cannot presume that only the unfulfilled parts remain, since we have already seen that Jesus put events such as the Abomination in the future in spite of it having been fulfilled by Antiochus Epiphanes in the past. So the extent of the remaining prophecies of Daniel and Revelation is anyone’s guess. But we should note that the Abomination and fleeing Jerusalem is also seen in Rev. 12 and 13.

However, there are parts of the book of Daniel that have had many details fulfilled in the past. In fact, Dan. 2–7 and 11 have been the most perplexing aspects of the book to critics of Bible prophecy due to their detailed predictions of successive kingdoms. And it’s important for us to be aware of this, since some mistakenly hold all of it to be yet future and confuse it with modern events. We will now look at those, and then go

¹⁹The Battle of Jerusalem <http://balisunset.hubpages.com/hub/Battle-of-Jerusalem-70-BC>.

²⁰Destruction of the Temple <http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/jewishtemple.htm>.

²¹Death of Nero <http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/jewishtemple.htm>.

back to look at another that has yet to be fulfilled.

Chapter 2 is Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue whose head was made of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, lower legs of iron, and feet of a mixture of iron and clay. Daniel identified the head as Nebuchadnezzar himself, king of the Babylonian Empire. After him would follow a lesser kingdom (Medo-Persia, ruled by Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian), then another (the Grecian Empire, ruled by Alexander the Great), and finally one that would smash all others (Rome).

Chapter 8 is a vision about a goat and a ram, and the angel tells Daniel that the ram's two horns represent the kings of Media and Persia. It describes the conquests of Alexander the Great ("the first king of Greece"), after whose death four of his generals would rule: Lysimachus, Cassander, Seleucus, and Ptolemy. The "little horn" coming later was none other than the vile Antiochus Epiphanes, who did not die in battle but from an infestation of worms.

It is the four generals who are described in detail in chap. 11. Ptolemy I was "the king of the south". The "daughter" was Berenice (actually granddaughter, as her father was Ptolemy II), who was given in marriage to Antiochus II in a doomed plan to achieve political gains by intrigue and deception. After various raids and generations, this "king of the south" was Ptolemy IV and then Ptolemy V.

The "king of the north" was Antiochus III, who as prophesied was utterly defeated in 217 BC. The details fit historical record as with the Ptolemies, right up to the "contemptible person" Antiochus Epiphanes. It is he who is believed to have engineered the murder of "a prince of the covenant", Onias III, the high priest. The first chapter of the apocryphal book 1 Maccabees details his plundering of the temple and other acts of savagery.

Again, though these things were indeed fulfilled in the past, we cannot dogmatically state that no future fulfillments remain. But neither can we presume that these alliances and military campaigns will be repeated in the future. In all the details of the remaining prophecies given in Revelation, there is no mention of the kings of the north and south and details that would connect them to future events. So though a future fulfillment is possible, it seems most unlikely.

But starting in verse 36 we read of "the king who exalts himself" who has "no regard for the gods of his fathers or the desire of women" and

will instead “honor a god of fortresses”. We might still tie him in with the preceding discussion of Antiochus Epiphanes and the kings of the north and south, but these new details have no historical precedent. And they are tied in with chapter 12 which begins, “At that time. . .” and includes the resurrection of the dead.

So it seems that Antiochus Epiphanes is a very clear type or foreshadow of the ultimate future fulfillment in the Antichrist (popular name for the Beast in Revelation). Early in chapter 12 is where we see the phrase Jesus used, “a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then”. And there has been much terrible suffering in the world since 70 AD, such that the fall of Jerusalem at that time cannot have been the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy.

But because of this overlap and duality, teachers of Bible prophecy must exercise restraint and caution in looking for modern fulfillments. All we can be sure of is that those things without any historical match will certainly take place.

Now back to chapter 7. The first half is a dream about four beasts, and the second half is the interpretation, focusing primarily on the fourth beast. Though the first three are described as a winged lion, a bear, and a winged leopard, the fourth is not compared to any known animal. It has ten horns, three of which are replaced by another horn. And the angel states that this beast will overcome the righteous for 3-1/2 years. The description of the fourth beast exactly matches that of Revelation (e.g. 13:1, 5-8, 17:12-13). And since none of this describes the situation of 70 AD, it must be yet future.²²

Now that we have a good grasp of all that was prophesied through Daniel, we can focus on the Seventy Weeks prophecy of chapter 9, since it lays out a clear sequence for all remaining prophecies about Israel. The first 69 of those weeks was marked as completed when Jesus came.²³

²²Additional historical data about Daniel include this document on Dan. 8 <http://www.neverthirsty.org/pp/series/DAN/D013/D0136.html> and this document on Dan. 11 <http://www.ukapologetics.net/2danieltrue.html>.

²³The prophecy specifies that the 70 weeks are divided as follows: 7, then 62, then 1. The 7, being 49 years, is first and was fulfilled when the restoration of Jerusalem was complete; see Ezra and Nehemiah for details and the conditions in which it took place. The Messiah came as prophesied after the 62, being 434 years, for a total of 483 years. Some argue that the decree to restore Jerusalem was not fulfilled until the Balfour Declaration (to create modern Israel) in modern times, and they count from there in literal years rather than weeks (“sevens”) of years.

Now seven years remain, divided into two halves at the point where the 7-year treaty is broken and the Abomination is committed. *So when we see this same event in the New Testament, we know that it marks the midpoint of the seven years, such that 3-1/2 years remain before the return of Jesus to the earth and the restoration of Israel and Jerusalem.*

Be careful not to overlook the stated purpose of those Seventy Weeks: to end and atone for sin, to begin eternal righteousness, to seal up prophecy, and to anoint/dedicate the Most Holy Place. But these things are all specified as applying to “your people and your holy city”, meaning the people of Israel and the city of Jerusalem. Thus the atonement for sin and end of all prophecy will not be completed until that final seven years ends. *This is a very clear and focused prophecy to and about Israel and Jerusalem, rather than the church or the world at large.* Certainly the judgment of the nations is included on other accounts, but this particular prophecy is very exclusive.

Transitions

Gaps between prophecies

Transitions or periods of time leaving a gap between two other events are very common in Bible prophecy, but they are not always indicated in advance. For example, the promise of God in Genesis 3 regarding “the seed of the woman” gave no indication that thousands of years would pass before its fulfillment. The destruction of the Temple in 70 a.d. was four decades after Jesus predicted it. The events of the 69th and 70th Weeks of Daniel 9 have been nearly two thousand years apart, in spite of the immediate context giving no hint of any such delay. And 40 days passed between the ascension of Jesus and the arrival of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

So we have a clear precedent for expecting other transitional periods, but we must keep a sharp eye out for them. This is why we established boundaries in the early chapters of this book; without them, it is almost impossible to make sense of the many prophecies of the end times. Now just as there was a transitional period between Israel’s rejection of their Messiah and their actual destruction and dispersion, and there was a transition from an all-Jewish church to all-inclusive as recorded in Acts, so also there is likely a gap between the end of the church age and the beginning of the final seven years decreed against Israel and Jerusalem.

The rationale for this expectation comes not only from details in the Revelation, but also in consideration of other remaining Old Testament prophecies. And in studying these things, we must establish additional boundaries or “edge pieces” to the jigsaw puzzle. Just as we learned earlier to ask about the presence of mortals or any further possibility of final personal judgment, so also we must ask questions like these:

- Are the nations involved in the prophecy identifiable as people groups we know?
- Is the geography identifiable?
- Is life still going on as has been common throughout history? Is it business as usual?

- Are the mountains, islands, and cities still intact? Are the sun, moon, and stars still where they belong and shining as usual?

Now we are ready to examine prophecies from both Testaments that would seem to best fit in the transitional period between the church age and the final seven years. We are beginning to place puzzle pieces whose edges match other pieces in the center.

An event that could easily be very early in this transitional time is found in Psalm 83. It describes a battle with named nations, yet no such battle has yet taken place, so it remains as a future prophecy. It begins with the motive for the battle: to wipe Israel off the map. No one would deny that this very desire is rampant today, especially among the nations bordering Israel. These are named as Edom and the Ishmaelites, Moab and the Hagrites, Gebal, Ammon and Amalek, Philistia and the people of Tyre, as well as Assyria. Today they comprise the areas of Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Gaza, and the desert of southern Israel. This is uncannily descriptive of activities in the Middle East at the present time. Damascus still exists, though it is heavily damaged and could easily be wiped out at any time during this battle.

This brings us to the prophecy of Isaiah 17, which details the destruction of Damascus, the capitol of Syria. If this destruction is what kicks off the battle of Psalm 83, the net result will be an enlargement of the borders of Israel by the defeat of its immediate neighbors. It will also put Jerusalem fully into the hands of Israel. But most importantly, it may well be the reason Israel finally says, “Peace and security!”— which is a clear sign we will see cited in the New Testament.

But we would be naive to think that this defeat of many hostile nations would be the end of trouble for Israel. When we consider all the prophesied battles, and the fact that some have one set of nations involved while others have a different set, we can be sure that this is the perfect setup for the attack on Israel in a false sense of security. This leads us to Ezekiel 38, where in verse 11 we see that the coalition led by Gog says, “I will invade a land of unwalled villages that has recovered from war; I will attack a peaceful and unsuspecting people”. It seems obvious that Israel today is not living in security or peace, but that such a situation will only come about as a result of extraordinary circumstances like the battles of Isaiah 17 and Psalm 83.

But what about the Gog/Magog battle mentioned in Rev. 20:8–9 at

the end of the Millennium? Again, we must take note of the differences in these two passages, not just the similarities:

- In Ezekiel, a limited number of nations near Israel come against them.
- In Rev., all the nations of the world come against “the camp of God’s people, the city he loves”.
- In Ezekiel, God causes a tremendous earthquake, and then he causes the enemy soldiers to turn on each other with their weapons. Then God sends plague and bloodshed, torrential rain, hailstones, and burning sulfur on them.
- In Rev., the invaders are consumed by fire from heaven.

Clearly there must be two separate battles involving Gog/Magog, and there is no reason why the one described by Ezekiel cannot happen before the Tribulation.

Now let’s take a closer look at Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39. Make careful note of the fact that this is a battle, not a whole war, so it cannot last for years or decades. On either side of this section are prophecies of Israel’s rebirth (ch. 36-37) and a future time of permanent peace (ch. 40-48), so if we can consider that chronological (and there is no reason we can’t), then the sequence is clear: Israel is reborn as a nation, there is a great battle, and then comes a period of a thousand years of the rule of God on earth. And though we will see that other prophetic events happen before the Millennium, they do not violate this sequence.

The identities of Gog and Magog are hotly debated, but we know that Gog is the name of a ruler, and Magog is the name of his land (38:1-6). Other lands listed as under his domain are Meshech and Tubal. In addition, this ruler will be dragged into battle unwillingly, and will conscript other nations in the process: Persia, Cush, and Put, as well as Gomer and Togarmah “from the far north”. This could mean either as far north as possible (which geographically would be roughly the area of Russia), or simply the farthest norther border of Israel (which is roughly the area of Turkey).

Who are all these nations today? If we follow the spread of families in the Genesis genealogies, as well as historical record, the consensus is that Magog was populated by the descendants of Japeth who went to

the area now known as Russia, though some hold that all these nations are in Asia Minor. Meschech and Tubal refer to areas north and east of Magog, Persia is modern Iran, Cush and Put are northern Africa, Gomer settled along the Danube River in modern eastern Europe, and Togarmah settled in Turkey. The only real dispute is how far north Magog should be placed, but all agree that it is north of Israel.

One might argue that since Turkey *et al* are currently united in one religion (Islam), it makes no sense to include Russia. But Russia is currently making strong diplomatic and financial ties with various middle eastern nations, being motivated by a desire to destroy the dollar as the world's reserve currency as well as to dominate the natural gas market. And Israel has a vast amount of natural gas deposits. But keep in mind that Gog is a reluctant leader of this battle.

Now we cannot say that these two battles of Psalm 83 and Ezekiel 38 happen one right after the other. We would expect that enough time elapses between them for Israel to settle into its new, enlarged borders and to at least begin to exploit its natural resources. This, after all, is the situation in Israel which prompts the second battle.

Ezekiel 39 tells about a period of seven years when the people of the towns of Israel collect the weapons of the defeated armies and use them for fuel. They will also spend that time burying the dead. Neither of these activities make much sense if the world is still reeling from the wrath of God. But in that same chapter we are told of the great macabre feast of the dead by the carrion birds and scavenger animals, and this has similarities to the aftermath of the battle at the end of the Tribulation. Yet in Rev., there is no indication that Ezekiel is being quoted or referenced, and there is no reason there couldn't be two or more such feasts, just as there will certainly be more than one devastating earthquake.

So it is difficult to place the battle of Gog/Magog and subsequent period of seven years in Ezekiel 38–39. Both before and after the Tribulation we can accept that Israel could be living in peace and security. Yet in spite of the 7-year detail, this cannot coincide with the seven years of the Tribulation, since halfway through it the city is attacked and overpowered, with some seeing the Abomination and running to safety for the final half (Rev. 12:14). So this span of time must either end by the midpoint of the Tribulation, or it must begin after the Tribulation. Yet it seems highly unlikely that such a battle would happen at the same time

and in the same place as when all the world is massed against Jesus as he arrives from heaven.

One plausible scenario is the following sequence of events, if it all starts before the Tribulation:

1. Damascus is utterly ruined and the land inhabited only by animals.
2. The immediate neighbors of Israel plot to wipe it off the map, but they are defeated.²⁴
3. Israel gains much land mass and feels secure at last. They restore their land and develop its natural resources.
4. The more distant neighboring nations take note of this and come to invade the land of Israel.
5. God himself fights against the invaders with a variety of methods, and their dead cover the mountains of Israel.
6. The people in the vicinity of Jerusalem begin a seven-year span of burning the weapons for fuel and burying the dead. Meanwhile, the carrion birds and land scavengers feast on the unburied bodies. The area for burial is called the Valley of Hamon Gog, believed to be located south of Damascus or near the Dead Sea.

If the burning of weapons must end by the midpoint of the Tribulation, then it must begin seven years earlier, which is 3-1/2 years before the Tribulation begins. It is possible that the Seals of Rev. 6–8 are opened during this time, since the events discussed so far are localized to the Middle East. The Seals are relatively mild compared to the Trumpets and Bowls, yet will be unmistakable as the wrath of God (Rev. 6:15–17). We will examine the Revelation in more detail next.

²⁴Regardless of whether this is an actual battle or just a poetic rant, there is some event that brings about the false sense of security that makes other nations plot to invade Israel.

The Unsealed Prophecies

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Of all the prophetic literature in the Bible, only Daniel gives as clear a sequence as Revelation. The Revelation (opposite of the “sealing” Daniel was told to do) that Jesus gave to John is the only prophecy literature in the New Testament. There are of course other prophecies mentioned as parts of Gospels and the Letters, but this is the only book of the New Testament that is centered on prophecy. And though it was sent to churches, only the first three chapters refer to the church. None of the terminology used for the church anywhere else in the New Testament, except the generic terms mentioned in the Preface, are found in Revelation between chapters 3 and 21. The content between those two points is about the judgments of God upon Israel and the unbelieving world, and a brief discussion of the Millennium. However, correlations will be made with Jesus’ statements to his disciples in the Gospels as well. And because of the volume of material, it will be presented here in outline form.

Jesus’ Public Statement About the End Times

When Jesus’ disciples remarked about the magnificence of the Temple, he told them that it would be destroyed to the point where not one block rested on another (Dan. 9:26b, Mt. 24:2, Mk. 13:1-2, Lk. 21:5-6). This was said publicly, while they were still on the Temple grounds (Mt. 24:1), and it was fulfilled by the Roman ruler Titus in 70 a.d. Everything else was said privately at a later time. It is possible that the prophecy about the people of Judea fleeing when they would see Jerusalem surrounded by encampments was at least partially fulfilled at this time, though it was largely only the Christians who escaped. And it should be noted that Titus did not set up any idol in the Temple, nor go into it and declare himself God.

Jesus’ Private (Olivet) Discourse to Peter, James, John, and Andrew

Mt. 24:3a and Mk. 13:3 tell us that the Olivet Discourse was given privately to Jesus’ inner circle of disciples. They asked three questions (Mt. 24:3b, Mk. 13:4, Lk. 21:7), after which Jesus gave a lengthy

response:

1. When will these things happen?
2. What is the sign of your arrival?
3. What is the sign of the end of the age?

General Introduction (Mt. 24:33)

Jesus gave his disciples certain signs to look for as the arrival of the Kingdom of God drew near. Remember that these were signs for Israel and concern the prophecies for Israel, rather than for the church. And it is the arrival of the Kingdom of God that the disciples asked about, which is preceded by the Day of the Lord. That Day will begin suddenly and without warning, while people are going about their daily lives.

- Signs to watch for (Mt. 24:32-33, Mk. 13:28-29, Lk. 21:28-31).
When you see all these things, **the Kingdom of God** is near:
 - false Christs and prophets
 - wars near and far
 - famines
 - earthquakes
 - lawlessness and cold-bloodedness
 - gospel of the Kingdom proclaimed worldwide
 - Jerusalem surrounded
 - the Abomination of Desolation
 - the Great Tribulation
 - dark sun and moon
 - stars fall
 - the Sign of the Son of Man
 - the Son of Man coming in the clouds
 - trumpet blast for angels to gather the chosen people from all over the heavens

- This generation (Mt. 24:34-35, Mk. 13:30-31, Lk. 21:32-33) will not pass before it all takes place. Debate rages over the meaning, but it will include the appearance of “all these things”, meaning the signs Jesus had just given to signal the arrival of the Kingdom of God. And since these things did not happen in the first century, “this generation” cannot refer to the one of Jesus’ day. Then the question is whether it refers to the whole nation of that time, or to the lifespan of people born then. Even if it is the latter, we cannot say with any certainty what the length of that generation may be, or exactly when the signs began to appear. Thus date-setting is futile. It would be reasonable to take it to mean that the Day of the Lord will not span a generation; in fact, we know from Daniel that it will last seven years.
- No one knows day or hour (Mt. 24:36, Mk. 13:32-33, Lk. 21:34-35) for the arrival of the Kingdom of God.
 - Like days of Noah (Mt. 24:37-39, Lk. 17:26-27)
 - Like days of Lot (Lk. 17:28-29)
 - Taken or left (Mt. 24:40-41, Lk. 17:30-35). In context, this applies to when the people of Judea flee upon seeing the Abomination of Desolation. This context also includes the examples of Noah and Lot, where the righteous were taken and the wicked left to suffer judgment.
 - So watch (Mt. 24:42-44, Mk. 13:37, Lk. 21:36a)
 - Pray to escape (Mt. 24:20, Lk. 21:36b)
 - When least expected (Mt. 24:45-51, Mk. 13:34-36). There are two possible ways for not expecting something to happen: (1) presuming it will not come in our day, and (2) losing hope. But Jesus indicates that while the people of Israel still believe their Master will return, they expect him to come at a much later time.
 - The ten virgins analogy (Mt. 25:1-13). Again, this is not for the church but for Israel. Jesus gave another indication about some of them being excluded from the Kingdom of God in Mat. 8:11-12.
 - The good and bad servants (Mt. 25:14-30)

Beginning of Birthpangs / Seal Judgments (Mt. 24:8, Mk. 13:8d)

- False Christs (Mt. 24:4-5,11,23-28, Mk. 13:5-6, Lk. 17:23, 21:8, Rev. 6:1-2)
- Wars/uprisings (Dan. 9:26d, Mt. 24:6-7a, Mk. 13:7-8a, Luke 21:9-10, Rev. 6:3-4)
- Famines (Mt. 24:7b, Mk. 13:8c, Luke 21:11b, Rev. 6:5-6)
- Plagues (Mt. 24:7b-8, Luke 21:11c, Rev. 6:7-8)
- Earthquakes (Mt. 24:7b,9, Mk. 13:8b, Luke 21:11a, Rev. 6:12a)
- Black sun, red moon, stars fall, sky recoils (Joel 2:30-31, Rev. 6:12b-17)

The Tribulation / Seal and Trumpet Judgments (Dan. 9:26c, Mt. 24:14b)

- Treaty enforced for seven years (Dan. 9:27a)
- Beast/prince deceives the world (2 Thes. 2:9-11, Rev. 13:14)
- Persecution (Mt. 24:9, Mk. 13:9,11, Lk. 21:12-18, Rev. 6:9-11)
- False prophets (Mt. 24:11)
- Strife/coldbloodedness (Mt. 24:10,12, Mk. 13:12-13a)
- Endurance for salvation (Mt. 24:13, Mk. 13:13b, Lk. 21:19, Rev. 13:9-10)
- Gospel of Kingdom (Mt. 24:14a, Mk. 13:10, Rev. 14:6)

The Great Tribulation / Trumpet and Bowl Judgments (Mt. 24:21)

- The Abomination of Desolation (Dan. 9:27b, Mt. 24:15, Mk. 13:14a, Rev. 13:5,15 [at or after 7th trumpet])
- The ruler who commits the Abomination:
 - Called the Son of Perdition, the Lawless One, the Beast (Dan. 7:7-8,11, 2 Thes. 2:3b, Rev. 13:1-8, 17:12-13; the name Antichrist [1 John 2:18] is actually better applied to the False Prophet / Second beast of Rev. 13)

- Will perform miracles (2 Thes. 2:9-10, Rev. 19:20a)
 - Claims to be above all gods and sets himself in the Temple of God (Dan. 11:36, 2 Thes. 2:4)
 - Has no regard for the gods of his ancestors or the one favored by women (Dan. 11:37; this is not saying he will be homosexual, since the context is about gods)
 - Honors a god of forces/fortresses and a “foreign” god (Dan. 11:38-39)
 - Fights kings of north and south, invades many nations, takes great plunder (Dan. 11:40-43)
 - Alarming reports from east and north will cause him to destroy many more nations in a great rage (Dan. 11:44)
 - Will make camp near the Mediterranean Sea and “holy mountain”, but he will meet his end there and will be defeated by the breath from the Lord Jesus (Dan. 11:45, 2 Thes. 2:8)
- Judeans must flee to mountains (Mt. 24:16-20, Mk. 13:14b-18, Lk. 17:30-33, 21:20-22, Rev. 12:6 [for 1,260 days])
 - This is the time of Jacob’s trouble (Jer. 30:7)
 - Battle outside of Jerusalem (Rev. 14:19-20)
 - Jerusalem plundered (Zech. 14:1-2)
 - Unprecedented suffering (Dan. 12:1, Mt. 24:21-22, Mk. 13:19-20, Lk. 21:23-24)
 - False Christs and prophets (Mt. 24:23-26, Mk. 13:21-23)
 - Gather in Valley of Megiddo (trad. Battle of Armageddon, though no battle actually happens; Joel 3:1-2, 12-14, Rev. 16:16)

After the Great Tribulation (Mt. 24:29a, Mk. 13:24a)

- Cosmic disasters (Is. 13:10, 24:20, 34:4, Joel 2:31, 3:15, Mt. 24:29b, Mk. 13:24b-25, Lk. 21:11d,25-26, Rev. 16:18-20)
 - Sun and moon dark
 - Stars fall from sky

- Powers of heavens shaken, sky recoiled
- Fear over roaring of sea
- Mountains and islands shifted
- Sign of Son of Man in sky (Mt. 24:30a)
- Descent of Son of Man in clouds (Mt. 24:27,30b, Mk. 13:26, Lk. 17:24,21:27, Rev. 19:11-14)
- Lord's army arrives, Bride and Bridegroom leave chambers (Joel 2)
- The Lord stands on Mt. of Olives, splitting it in two, and fights against all the nations (Zech. 14:3-5)
- Defeat of Beast (2 Thes. 2:8, Rev. 19:15,21)
- Where body is, vultures gather (Mt. 24:28, Lk. 17:36-37, Rev. 19:17-21)
- Beast and False Prophet thrown alive into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 19:20b)
- Satan imprisoned (Rev. 20:1-3)
- Trumpet blast, angels harvest the elect (Mt. 24:31, Mk. 13:27)
- Sheep and goats (Mt. 7:21-23, Mk. 25:31-46, Lk. 13:24-30)

Next we will examine the scriptures concerning what is to come after Jesus has established his earthly kingdom.

The Millennium and Beyond

A thousand years of peace, then a final test

First, a brief outline:

The Millennium

- Israel re-established in land, restored earthly Jerusalem and temple (Ezk. 36-37, 40-48, Jer. 30:10, 16-24, Amos 9:11-15)
- Rule by Christ and the souls of those who refused to worship the Beast or take its mark (Rev. 20:4)

After the Millennium

- Satan released (Rev. 20:7)
- Final battle of Gog/Magog but from all nations around the world (Rev. 20:8-9a)
- Satan's world-wide army destroyed by fire (Zech. 14:12-13, Rev. 20:9b)
- Satan in Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:10)
- New heavens and new earth without any sea (Rev. 21:1)
- New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2,9-22:5)

Revelation says nothing about the Millennium except that Jesus' rule is augmented by judges comprised of those who had been beheaded during the Tribulation. This is called "the first resurrection", yet it is clearly not applicable to the resurrection of the dead in Christ, since all of these people are those who had been beheaded for refusing to take the Mark of the Beast.

Some of the remaining Old Testament prophecies transpire during this time, such as the surviving Gentiles bringing their wealth into Jerusalem (Zech. 14), and the restoration of the land of Israel and a sacrificial system (Ezekiel 40-48). The measurements of the earthly city of Jerusalem distinguish it from the heavenly New Jerusalem that will descend at the end of the Millennium; careful attention to the details will show this to

be indisputable. It may be that just as the first temple was a scale model of the one in heaven (Heb. 8:5), so also the earthly city will be a scale model of the New Jerusalem.

After the Millennium, Satan is briefly freed again to deceive the nations. This brings history full-circle from the Garden of Eden, where God proves in both cases that people will rebel against God even in a perfect environment. The world has been repopulated by righteous survivors of the judgments, but the children of these survivors will have no memory of the world run by Satan and evil people. They too will have to make a conscious choice about whether or not to live in the kingdom of God, and Satan will conscript all who choose the latter.

So at the end, Satan himself is thrown into the Lake of Fire, and all the people who ever rebelled against God are thrown in as well. Death and Hades are thrown in too, since there is no more need for them. Then, in Rev. 21, we are told many details about the New Jerusalem. It isn't stated that this huge city ever touches the earth, but only that it descends from heaven. It is called "the wife, the bride of the Lamb", and nothing is ever said about the people of the newly-rebuilt city of Jerusalem in the land of Israel moving to the New Jerusalem. It is possible that the land city is for Jews, while the new city is for Christians.

What happens after that, we are not told. But there is nothing that says we'll be stuck playing harps forever, or grow wings, or any of a hundred other tales that have been told over the years. If we love and trust God, we can be sure that there was more to all this human history than sitting on clouds for eternity. All we know is that "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived the things God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor. 2:9).

Summary and Conclusion

This study has endeavored to examine the matter of Bible prophecy, which is much like a huge jigsaw puzzle. And as anyone who has ever worked such a puzzle will agree, the best strategy to begin is to find the edge pieces and corners. This was the rationale for first establishing the scope and boundaries of the whole Bible, the distinctive identities and destinies of Israel and the church, and the conviction that since death only began as a result of the curse of sin, then the removal of that curse means the end of mortality.

It is by no means any claim to perfection or to having solved riddles that have eluded scholars and Bible students for centuries. But at the very least, it has been a sincere effort to provide guidelines for interpretation, and a plan for working toward a goal. We often miss out on the treasures found in scripture by not asking enough questions or the right questions. Or we approach the text without any plan at all, nor any effort at seeking out what God has placed before us. While it can be good for the beginning Bible student to simply listen, there is great reward in researching these things for ourselves. And of course, we need to ask for guidance from the One who inspired the text.

One might sincerely ask why the study of prophecy is of much value, since most people who have ever lived will never have experienced its fulfillment. Yet Jesus told his disciples of things to come that would never happen in their lifetime. But in spite of that, he told them to stay alert. In his parable about the master who was gone a long time (Luke 12:35–46), he showed that his return, like that of the master in the parable, would be sudden and unexpected. But scripture also teaches that for those who watch and wait, staying alert and being ready to go, this event will not take them by surprise or find them sleeping or misbehaving. Still, we do not know the precise day or hour of his return.

Another purpose of studying Bible prophecy is that its fulfillment proves its divine origin. God himself said as much in Isaiah 46:10, and it has been what sets the Bible apart from all other religious texts. We may not be able to solve every puzzle, but the effort not only causes us to know the Bible better, it also deepens our appreciation for what God has done and will do, and it can strengthen our faith. The God who

“knows the end from the beginning” is a God who can be trusted.

Appendix: A Tale of Three Cities

Jerusalem, the New Jerusalem, and The Lord Is There

To compare The New Jerusalem of Rev. 21 (NJ) and the “city” of Ezekiel 40-48 called “The Lord Is There” (L), we must first calculate their respective sizes. No dimensions are given for the Jerusalem (J) of Zech. 14.

Converting cubits to miles:

- 1 mile = 63,360 inches
- 1 cubit = 21 inches
- $(\text{cubits} * 21) / 63,360 = \text{miles}$

The “Sacred District” containing the areas for L and the priests, Levites, and workers, measures a square of 25,000 cubits, or about 8 miles. The city itself is 5000 cubits or 1-2/3 miles square. The temple inside the District (but not inside L) is 500 cubits (including 50 cubits spaces around it) or .17 mile square.

The length, width, and height of NJ are all 12,000 stadia or 1400 miles. The wall is 144 cubits or 252 feet thick.

Similarities between NJ and L

- Gates: twelve total, three on each side, named after the tribes of Israel
- Trees(s) along river: bear fruit each month for food, leaves for healing

Differences

- Name: NJ vs. L
- Size: NJ is over 800 times larger than L
- Wall: NJ is 252 feet thick, L is unknown but cannot be the same
- River:

- flows from center of NJ, but from the south side of the District temple
 - goes to unknown destination from NJ but to the Dead Sea in the District
 - NJ has one tree on either side ("the Tree of Life"), but District temple has vast numbers of trees on either side
- Sea: none in the new earth, District is bordered by the Mediterranean and Dead seas
 - No night in NJ, but "six working days" and the New Moon regarding the District temple
 - There are no mortals in NJ, but "the prince" of the District has children (Ezekiel 46:16)
 - We know the locations of J and L, but not NJ, nor anything else about the geography of the new Earth

Key Facts About J

- City is captured and ransacked, with half the population exiled
- No day or night distinction (same as NJ) when Jesus touches earth
- Living water flows from J (not a temple), half to the Dead Sea and half to the Mediterranean Sea
- City gates do not match either NJ or L

Discussion

While all three are cities and there are some similarities, the differences force us to conclude that rather than three descriptions of one city, there are indeed three separate cities: The New Jerusalem, Jerusalem, and The Lord Is There. NJ and J have a river flowing from the city, while L has none; only the District temple has a river flowing from it. NJ and J speak of no day/night distinction, while L refers to "six working days" and the New Moon regarding the temple (Ezekiel 46). And of course, NJ is far too large to fit the descriptions of either of the other cities.

J and L exist after Jesus returns to the earth to set up his kingdom at the end of the Tribulation, and NJ descends from heaven after the

Millennium. J and L are in times when people are still mortal, while the time of NJ is when “the curse is no more”. Nothing in NJ’s context limits the lack of curse to only NJ, and there is no reference to any more places for the dead or judgment seats for the dead to face. So J and L are during the Millennium, while NJ is after it.

The only other reference to a future Jerusalem is Isaiah 65:17-25, in a context where there is mortality, though in a time of great abundance and peace. This would seem to match the J of Zech. 14, except for the statement “new heavens and new earth”, which is mentioned in Rev. immediately before NJ descends from heaven. Yet the statement in Isaiah 65 does not say that this new heaven and earth precedes the restoration of Jerusalem, but that God “will create” them. Yet on the other hand, everything in that passage “will be”. But given the sequential character of Revelation as opposed to the other passages, it would seem that the order of events is clearer there and should carry more weight.

Chapters 1-24 of Ezekiel predict the captivity of Israel, chapters 25-32 predict the judgment of the other nations, chapters 33-39 predict the return of Israel to its land, and chapters 40-48 predict the Millennial Kingdom. Since all the fulfilled prophecies have been literal, there is no justification for treating the remaining prophecies as figurative or only spiritual.

One timing difficulty is the vision in Ezekiel 43:7 where God says from within the temple, “This is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet. This is where I will live among the Israelites forever”. And to this day, the temple has not been built. Its stated purpose will be to shame the people of Israel for their former practices and defilement. It would seem unlikely that such a shaming and lesson for Israel would be perpetuated for eternity. And the sacrifices and festivals are not identical to those prescribed by Moses.

Another puzzle concerns the “prince” mentioned in chapters 40-48. Whoever this may be, this person will be mortal since the passages speak of his children. This person also does not perform the functions of a priest. Neither can this be King David, since David died long ago rather than being taken alive to heaven as were Enoch and Elijah. And David was promised that someone from his line would always be on the throne of Israel, so this person will be from his line.

Appendix: Maps

These are maps or illustrations that will aid in visualizing the various entities in Bible prophecy. Some information is from Sons to Glory ²⁵. Other nice maps and research can be found at Joel's Trumpet ²⁶ and Prophecy Newsstand ²⁷. An article and drawings concerning Ezekiel's temple can be found at Middletown Bible Church ²⁸ and Temple Mount ²⁹. Images and brief comparisons of the four temples can be found at Prophecy Signs ³⁰



²⁵<http://www.sonstoglory.com/ThirdTempleEzekielsMillennialTemple.htm>

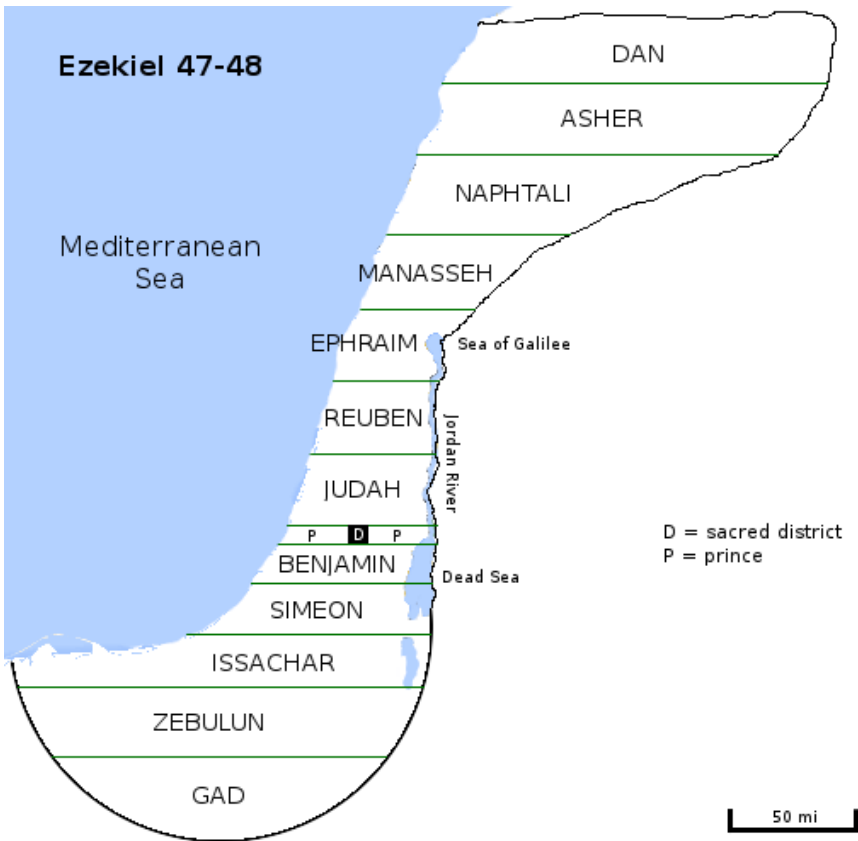
²⁶<http://www.joelstrumpet.com/?p=2681>

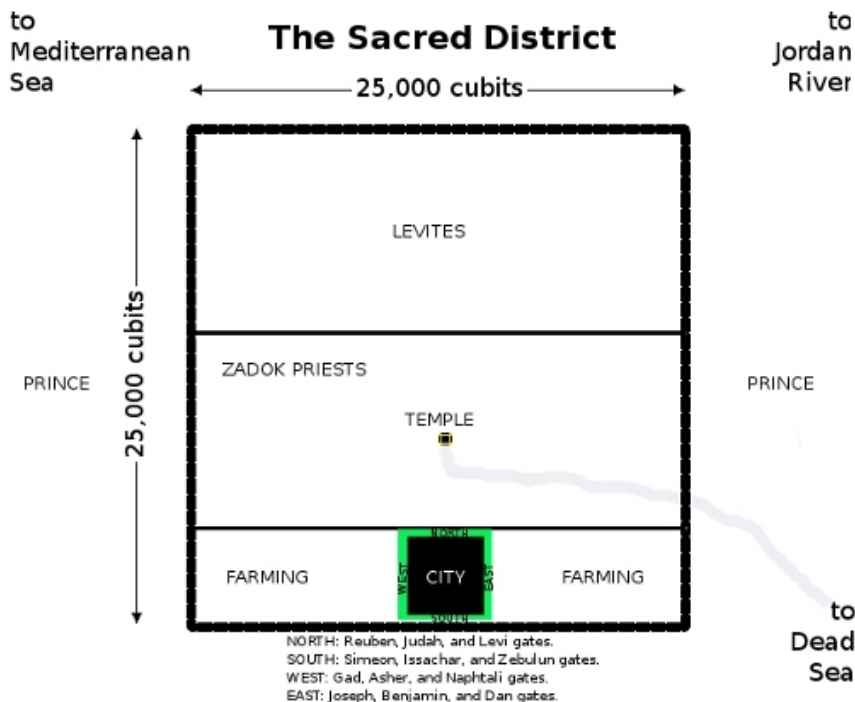
²⁷<http://prophecynewsstand.blogspot.com/2009/12/psalm-83-and-ezekiel-38-reference-maps.html>

²⁸<http://www.middletownbiblechurch.org/proph/templmi.htm>

²⁹<http://www.templemount.org/ezehtmp.html>

³⁰<http://www.prophecysigns.com/the-four-jewish-temples-of-the-bible> (caution: auto-play audio when page first loads.)





The Sacred District is about 8 miles square. The total width of the land, from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River / Dead Sea is about 50 miles, so the area of the Prince is about 21 miles on either side of the District.

This information is gleaned from Ezekiel chapters 45-48.

Appendix: Fads and Misconceptions

Bible prophecy is inherently complex, and that complexity leads to many differences of opinion on interpretation. But some teachings can be at least partially clarified with attention to detail. Here are some of the more popular interpretations and rebuttals.

The Two Witnesses

Rev. 11:1–12 describes them as individual human beings with miraculous powers, who wear sackcloth and prophesy for 3-1/2 years. This is the same description found in Zech. 4:3, 11, and 14. They are killed by the Beast during the 6th trumpet judgment, left in the center of Jerusalem for 3-1/2 days, raised back to life by God, and then taken up to heaven while their enemies watch.

Anyone and anything that doesn't match all these criteria is not either of the Two Witnesses. So it isn't Israel and the church, nor any random political leaders, nor the Old and New Testaments, nor any other random candidate.

Blood Moons, Tetrads, and Shemitah Years

A blood moon is simply a lunar eclipse where conditions are such that the moon appears reddish in color. A tetrad is when four such eclipses occur in a row. A Shemitah year is so named for the command to Israel to let their fields remain unplowed every 7th year, so the land could rest. This is strictly for Israel, not anyone else, and none of the curses for failure to observe these years apply to any other nation.

None of these concepts are part of Bible prophecy. Phrases such as “the moon will turn to blood and the sun to darkness” are indeed found in scripture, but each context shows that they are not routine astronomical events, and usually also occur with the darkening or falling of the stars. One way all of these things could happen at once is during a volcanic eruption where the sky is blocked out, and another would be divine intervention. But the normal astronomical events cannot all happen at the same time.

Theories such as these tend to leave out any tetrads that did not occur on a significant date in history, and not all of the ones that did were before the events they allegedly pointed to. This is cherry-picking

the data and fudging the dates. They also lead us to wonder why the biggest events, such as the Holocaust, were not foretold by any such signs. See this article³¹ for details.

Scripture does say that the heavenly bodies serve as signs and to count off years, but this hardly means that every alignment of stars or every tetrad is a prophetic sign. So there is no reason to think that the latest astronomical alignments or phenomena are foretelling world events. One must be careful when connecting dots; they can't be connected randomly or on a whim.

The Muslim Beast

One modern prophecy fad is to believe that the coming Beast will be the Muslim Mahdi (or Twelfth Imam). But can this be supported by scripture?

First of all, we need to distinguish between the Beast and the Antichrist. There are two beasts mentioned in Revelation: the First Beast and the Second Beast or False Prophet. The first is primarily political and will be the one possessed by Satan at the midpoint of the Tribulation, desecrating the Temple and declaring himself God. The second has to do with religion and would thus be the only one to qualify as an antichrist. This is the one who will demand that everyone worship the First Beast, and who will order the Mark to be enforced (see next section).

So the only possible connection of Islamic prophecy to the end times would be to the False Prophet. But since no Muslim would pretend to be Allah, their Mahdi would not demand that the world worship anyone on earth. But will either of the Beasts be Muslim, even if not the Mahdi? After all, the method of execution for many will be beheading (Rev. 20:4). However, this one fact is hardly enough to identify the False Prophet as a Muslim. This is during the second half of the Tribulation, after the False Prophet has demanded that the whole world worship the First Beast, who has declared himself God. Thus the beheadings of Rev. 20:4 can have nothing to do with Islam. It may well be that beheading is simply the preferred Satanic method of execution.

Then does scripture support someone of Muslim heritage who simply apostasizes? That is, can we trace the lineage of either of the Beasts arising from either Islam or a nation that practices it? In the 70 Weeks

³¹<http://bibleprophecytalk.com/bpt-blood-moon-theory-debunked-and-more>

prophecy of Daniel, we are told that there is a coming “prince”. It was to be the *people* of this prince that would destroy the Temple, which happened in 70 a.d. The Roman army often contained people of many ethnicities, but the lineage of those people does not necessarily apply to the prince himself. So who was the prince? The Roman general Titus. He was neither Arab nor Muslim, since Islam was not invented until the 600s a.d. While one might point to the Ottoman Empire as having ruled the general area out of which the Beasts might come, the Roman Empire was always ruled by Europeans. And the type or shadow of the Beast, Antiochus Epiphanes, was a Roman of Greek lineage. As for the False Prophet, nothing at all is said about his lineage or people.

But what did Jesus mean when he said in John 5:43, “I have come with the authority of my Father and you won’t accept me, but if someone comes by their own authority you’ll accept them”? Many believe this means the Antichrist will be a Jew. Now since many Jews will reject the Beast when he desecrates the Temple, it could only apply to those who remain. However, Rev. 13:1 says the First Beast arises out of the sea, which symbolizes the non-Jewish nations. Rev. 13:11 says that the Second Beast arises out of the land, which symbolizes the people of Israel. Yet it is the First Beast who enforces the 7-year treaty.

There is a book by Phillip Goodman called *The Assyrian Connection* that proposes a Syrian (Micah 5:5) as the Antichrist. He argues that the Antichrist will arise out of the eastern leg of the old Roman Empire, an area presently dominated by Islam. But none of the passages to which he appeals clearly point to the coming Antichrist or to the then non-existent religion of Islam. Not even Antiochus Epiphanes, who first fulfilled the prophecy of the Abomination of Desolation, was Assyrian. Even so, the phrase “the Assyrian” could be an expression meaning “the Assyrian people”, just as we might say that “the American” is going to rise up against tyranny. More details and theories can be found at this article.³²

But perhaps the strongest argument against a Muslim Antichrist is that the present Islamic nations will be wiped out either early in the Tribulation or just before it starts; see the chapter on Transitions. In fact, all religions will be outlawed when the Beast declares himself God,

³²http://www.lamblion.com/articles/articles_islam4.php (Disclaimer: I strongly disagree that Walid Shoebat was ever really a terrorist or is an expert on Bible prophecy.)

including the ancient Babylonian religion; see the Mystery Babylon section following. The Antichrist will not be an atheist, but neither will he be identified with any former religion. Islam certainly is serving a Satanic purpose, and supplies the motivation for the Psalm 83 coalition against Israel, but it will not be a significant entity in the Tribulation, nor will the Antichrist or either of the Beasts be Islamic.

The Mark of the Beast

Revelation 13:17 so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name.

Revelation 14:9 A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives its mark on their forehead or on their hand. . .

What is the Mark? The beast's name or number. It is *not* our personal ID. Even if the world went back to using beads for currency, this mark would still be required to do business. So technology doesn't matter, it's whether this Mark represents your willing citizenship in the Beast's kingdom.

How is the Mark given? Etched on the forehead or right hand. Why these two locations? The most likely reason is that it refers to the Beast's withered right arm and blind right eye (Zech. 11:17).

When is it given? After the seventh trumpet (Rev. 11:15). How do we know when the 7th trumpet has been sounded? Here are the judgments of the trumpets in order, by chapter and verse in Revelation. We will not see the Mark of the Beast until after all of those things have happened. So since not even the 1st trumpet has sounded, we aren't even close to seeing the Mark of the Beast.

1. 8:6-7 (1) Hail, fire, 1/3 earth burned
2. 8:8-9 (2) Blazing mountain, 1/3 sea destroyed
3. 8:10-11 (3) Burning star Wormwood, 1/3 rivers embittered
4. 8:12-13 (4) Heavenly bodies' light reduced by 1/3
5. 9:1-12 (5) First woe on earth: Locusts from the Abyss torment enemies of God for five months

6. 9:13-21 (6) Second woe on earth: Four Messengers, 200 million soldiers, 1/3 population killed
7. 11:1-14 Temple measurements and two witnesses
8. 11:15-14:20 (7) Third woe on earth: the two Beasts

Some people think that any and all references to beasts in the Bible can be applied to this context, such that pretty much anyone and anything can be called the Mark of the Beast. By this method, even Israel or Jesus would qualify. The foolishness of this idea is obvious, and is only being mentioned because there are actually people who think this is how the Bible should be interpreted.

Mystery Babylon: The Beast, the Harlot, and the Prophet

In this section we will focus on three particular entities in Bible prophecy, and speculate on the identities of each.

Outline:

- the Red Beast
- the Harlot on the beast / Babylon the Great
- the False Prophet (2nd beast)
- Where Is The Beast?

The Red Beast

Be careful to understand that not every beast in scripture denotes the same entity, such that great care should be taken in connecting a beast from one context into that of another. Take note as well that where there is a kingdom, there must be a king, though a kingdom can span many kings in succession. Also, when the angel tells the apostle John that someone “was, is, will be”, it may be referenced from John’s time, which was the late first century A.D., or it could be a poetic way of describing existence. For example, “was, is, will come” may refer to eternity, while “was, is not, will come” may refer to an entity which, literally or figuratively, had lived, died, then come back to life.

... I will explain to you the secret of the woman and the seven-headed, ten horned beast that carries her. The beast you saw was, and is not now, and is about to ascend from the Abyss and then be taken into oblivion. . .

The seven heads are seven mountains the woman sits upon. These are seven kings: five have fallen, one is now, and the other has not yet come. But when he does, he will only remain for a short time. The beast that was and is not now, is an eighth that comes from the seven but is proceeding to oblivion.

The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet acquired a kingdom, but they will share royal jurisdiction with the beast for one hour. They will all be in agreement and give their power and jurisdiction to the beast. They will battle the Lamb, but the Lamb will conquer them, since he is the Master of Masters and King of Kings, and those with him are appointed and chosen and trustworthy.

Focusing on the Beast and not the woman, we see that it existed before John's day, did not exist in his day, and would exist once again after his day, though no indication is given as to the length of time from his day to the time of this Beast. It has 7 heads which are a line of 7 kings, 5 of whom had fallen before then. The 6th was alive in his day, and the 7th was to come later but only reign for a short time. Connected with the 7 but distinguished from them is the 8th and final king, who is equated with the Beast itself. However, this is a king rather than the Beast system, since "he" rather than "it" will "go to his destruction".

The key to this entity is in vs. 8, which specifies that the Beast will ascend from the Abyss. This ascension takes place at the midpoint of the Tribulation, as either part of the 7th Trumpet or between it and the 1st Bowl. The "short time" is the 2nd half of the Tribulation, meaning 3-1/2 years. Yet this Beast had to have existed before the 1st century A.D., so it will be a king of the past who is brought back to life. It will be one who has a useless right eye and right arm (see Zech. 11:17 and Rev. 13:2-3), wounds which either happened in the distant past or will happen 3-1/2 years after enforcing the treaty of Dan. 9:27 (the one who enforces the treaty is the same one who breaks it and declares himself God). The latter seems more plausible since at first he will be mistaken

by the people of Israel as the Messiah rather than the easily-identified “false shepherd” of Zech. 11:17. Perhaps he will claim to be King David, a scenario which could lead Israel to say “Peace and security!” and lay down their arms, setting the stage for Gog to attack them (Ezk. 38:8–12).

The Harlot on the Beast / Babylon the Great

Now we focus on the woman riding the Beast. She is not the Beast itself but is using it and depending upon it. And for the Beast to carry her, she must have something it needs.

Rev. 17:1–7, 15–18

Then one of the seven Messengers with the bowls came and talked with me. He said, “Here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot sitting on many waters. The kings of the earth have been promiscuous with her, and the earth dwellers have been made drunk with the wine of her promiscuity.”

He carried me away in spirit to the desert, and there I saw a woman riding a red beast covered with slanderous names and having seven heads and ten horns. She was clothed in purple and red, and adorned with gold, precious stones, and pearls. She had in her hand a golden chalice filled with the disgusting filth of her promiscuity. On her forehead was written a secret name: “Babylon the Great, mother of harlots and the disgusting things of earth.”

I saw that she was drunk with the blood of the holy people and those who testify of Jesus, and I was aghast at the sight of her. Then the Messenger said to me, “Why are you shocked? I will explain to you the secret of the woman and the seven-headed, ten horned beast that carries her.”

Then he says to me, “The waters you saw which the harlot is sitting upon are peoples, multitudes, nations, and languages. The ten horns you saw, and the beast, will despise the harlot; they will obliterate her, strip her naked, consume her flesh, and set her on fire. This is because God put it in their hearts to do his bidding, and to unite in giving their kingdom to the beast until the words of God are fulfilled. And the woman

you saw is the great city that has sovereignty over the kings of the earth.”

The woman has many detailed characteristics:

- She sits on many waters, which symbolize “peoples, multitudes, nations and languages”
- She has committed adultery with the kings of the earth and intoxicated the earth dwellers, a term used throughout Revelation for the unbelieving world
- She is in the desert, which is not necessarily a sandy area but simply deserted, uninhabited
- She rides the red Beast with 7 heads and 10 horns which is covered with blasphemous names
- She is dressed like royalty (purple, scarlet, gold, gems, and pearls) and carries a golden chalice containing the filth of her promiscuity
- She has written on her forehead a secret or mysterious name, “Babylon the Great, the Mother of Prostitutes and of the Abominations of the Earth”
- She is drunk with the blood of the holy people and witnesses/martyrs of Jesus
- She is “the great city that rules over the kings of the earth”

Remembering that the woman is neither the Beast nor any of the kings, but rather has been using and depending upon it/them, we can rule out her being a government. Yet she has been associated with the Beast and its kings, apparently for a long time, since the Beast has come to loathe and resent her. When her usefulness to the Beast has expired, it turns on her and utterly destroys her.

Since the angel is telling John what the woman symbolizes, we cannot take these characteristics as more symbolism. She has deceived the entire world through its rulers, she is in a desolate location, she is “queen of the world”, she is charged with all the debauchery and spiritual rebellion of the world, she is guilty of the blood of followers of Jesus and all God’s holy people, and she is a city with authority over all the world’s rulers.

Many who try to identify her seem to overlook the very clear characteristic of her being a city. But in the further discussion of her demise in the next chapter in Revelation, we see additional details about this city: a demon-infested place of great wealth and the hub of world-wide commerce, which includes not only luxuries but also human trafficking. Calling herself a queen matches Isaiah 47 almost exactly, and in that passage God mocks her by daring her to rely one last time on her sorceries and incantations, which of course means that she is steeped in the occult and the dark arts. That passage also calls her “virgin daughter of Babylon”, which is an important tie to the ancient Babylonian religion.

Though there are several possible candidates in the world today that might fit many of these characteristics, we must insist that the real candidate fill them all completely. Thus, we can rule out particular nations or ethnic groups, and her religious aspects must also match a literal city. But she is called Babylon for a reason, so we would expect her to use symbols, colors, and names associated with ancient Babylonian religion, even if the city is not literally ancient Babylon.

According to Harry Ironside in *Babylonian Religion*, the destruction of Babylon forced the religious practitioners to flee, and they first went to Pergamos (Pergamum)— exactly where Jesus said the throne of Satan was in the first century. From there they moved on to Italy and settled in Rome. Not the least bit coincidentally, this Roman headquarters used the symbols of Dagon, the fish god, and its priests wore fish-head hats and “the fisherman’s ring”.

So this entity is a city which is the seat of Babylonian religion, has spilled the most blood of followers of Jesus, is the hub of world commerce and human trafficking, and is the seductive power controlling all the world’s governments. But she is not the Beast, or “the son of perdition”, or Satan himself.

The False Prophet (2nd beast)

There is more than one Beast in Revelation, but the second one is more commonly known as the False Prophet; Revelation uses both names to describe this person. This one is not part of the Beast itself or its heads, but is the highest-ranking person below the Beast. He is in charge of worship of the first Beast and is the one who actually orders “the mark of the Beast”. At that point (the midpoint of Daniel’s 70th Week), the Beast has dispensed with the Harlot and now demands all the world’s

worship as God.

We are shown two beasts in Rev. 13: one out of the sea (presumably the first Beast discussed earlier), and one out of the land. It is this passage which speaks of the first Beast being given Satanic authority and power, and that one of its heads (a king, not one person's literal head) had received a mortal wound that was healed, which is why the whole world worships the dragon who gave the Beast its power. That is, this "head wound" is an individual king who was apparently ("it looked as if...") killed and then raised to life again. This act is what fools the world into thinking the Beast must truly be God, by seemingly raising the dead.

Starting in vs. 11 we see the second beast, and this one is described as the proverbial wolf in sheep's clothing: "two horns like a lamb but spoke like a dragon". Combined with its role of forcing the world to worship the first Beast, this person is clearly a religious and governmental authority. Because of the description "lamb", he clearly poses as a Christian leader in some sense. And both these Beasts are seen between the 7th Trumpet judgment and the 1st Bowl judgment, the midpoint of the seven years remaining from the prophecy in Daniel 9. (That and Revelation give several indications of the 3-1/2 year reign of this Beast.)

Where Is The Beast?

We have seen three major personages in prophecy yet to come: the Beast, the Harlot riding the Beast, and the False Prophet. Can we possibly tie them to entities or events in today's world?

We certainly can, in many respects, but many uncertainties still remain. Prophecy passages not covered here give more details, with a particularly significant one in Ezekiel 38-39. This is where we read about Gog of Magog and its desire to plunder "a nation recovered from war, living securely, a people gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate." The plunderers come "from the far north, you and many nations with you, all riding horses." But God Himself destroys this vast army with an earthquake, plague, torrential rain, hailstones, and burning sulfur.

Daniel 11 speaks of "the king of the north", but this may have been at least partially fulfilled in the past, as some details bear strong resemblance to historical events. Yet vs. 40 says, "At the time of the end the king of the south will engage him in battle." Many see a break between vs.

35 and 36, since vs. 35 has the phrase “until the time of the end”, so it could well mean that vs. 36-45 are yet future. And Revelation 16 speaks of “the kings of the east” coming to battle at the 6th Bowl judgment.

So we have kings of the north, south, and east— but what of the west? Does this omission imply that the Beast’s kingdom will arise from the western world? Daniel’s prophecy of 70 Weeks implies that “prince that shall come” is the first Beast of Revelation, and given the scope of war and battle from the other three directions, it would seem that the only place left for the kingdom of the Beast is the west. Keep in mind also that though the Harlot is associated with Babylon’s religion and a powerful city, the Beast will hate her and destroy her. So it seems fairly certain that the west is not Babylon, but it may well be the kingdom of the Beast.