

The Olivet Prophecy

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1. Preface

Over the years the question has been asked many times: ‘where are we in Biblical Prophecy?’ The Olivet Prophecy combined with the Book of Revelation provide us with a detailed description of end-time events. They also provide a very clear statement that under no circumstances are we be able to predict the ‘day or the hour’ when events will occur. We are commanded to ‘watch’ so that when they do occur, we recognize them. This article contains a review of the events outlined in the Biblical sources. The perspective is from the Olivet Prophecy. The sequence of events as outlined in the Book of Revelation is summarized in *Excursus One – The Apocalyptic Flow of Revelation*. Note that the Apostle John felt no need to add anything to the record of the Olivet Prophecy, so all references to Gospel Authors in this article apply only to Mark, Matthew, and Luke.

2. The Olivet Prophecy

Late in the afternoon on Monday, Nisan 12, two days before his crucifixion, Jesus and a group of his disciples left the Temple where they had been teaching since early morning. On the way out, there were comments about the magnificence of the Temple. Jesus replied:

Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down. (Mk13:2 ESV)

They were on their way to Bethany to spend the night but paused on the Mount of Olives. There, Mark records:

Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?"
(Mk13:3b-4 ESV)

By 'all these things' the disciples were referring specifically to Jesus' statement about the destruction of the temple. But Matthew records that the inquiry had deeper motivation:

... what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age? (Mt24:3b ESV)

Clearly the disciples perceived that the destruction of the Temple was related to the establishment of the Kingdom of God. This is what Jesus went on to elaborate.

3. Ongoing World Conditions

Jesus starts off by specifying the ongoing state of world conditions. At the first, the New Testament authors believed Christ would return very shortly and establish the Kingdom of God. After the resurrection before Jesus' ascension, the Apostles asked him:

"Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (At1:6b ESV)

Some twenty years later, Paul still asserted that some then living would see the return of Christ:

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that **we who are alive**, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. (1Th4:13-15 ESV)

By the time John the Apostle wrote his first epistle, likely in the 80's, it was clear that the return of Christ was not immanent:

Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore, **we know that it is the last hour**. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. (1Jh2:18-19 ESV)

John recognized that at the last, the 'antichrist', the beast power, would appear; but that the spirit of 'antichrist' was already at work in the heresies that were beginning to appear. So indeed, the 'last days' began with the New Testament Church and have continued now for some 2000 years.

The book of Hebrews also recognizes the 'last days' as beginning with the teaching of Christ:

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in **these last days** he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. (Hb1:1-2 ESV)

In the Olivet Prophecy, Jesus identifies five ongoing trends of the world which would impact the New Testament Church. These five trends correspond to the first five seals of Revelation Chapter 6. First, Jesus pointed out that there would be religious deception, corruption of the Gospel, and an organized effort to thwart the plan of God by false religion:

See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray. (Mt24:4-5 ESV)

The exact meaning of this statement has been much debated. Is Jesus saying that others would come and claim that they themselves are the Messiah: 'I am Christ'? Or is Jesus saying that others would

come affirming that he, Jesus, is the Messiah, but in so doing would cause deception? The Greek text of Mark is:

πολλοὶ ἐλεύσονται ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου λέγοντες ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι (Mk13:6a)
many (they) will come in the name my saying that I (I) am

Literally translated: “many will come in name my saying **that** I am he.” The particle ὅτι can be translated ‘that’, although many translations omit it making Mark and Matthew consistent. The main point of this is that both understandings are possible, and both have occurred historically. Bar-Chochba the Jewish leader in the war of 132-135AD actively claimed to be the Messiah and was recognized as such by many Rabbis. The corruption of the truth and the ascendance of the false church during the second century is well documented. That church has always affirmed that Jesus is the Messiah.

Jesus’ second point is:

And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. (Mk13:7 ESV)

Matthew follows Mark, but Luke adds a little:

And when you hear of wars and **tumults, do not be terrified**, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once. (Lk21:9 ESV)

Note that all the gospel writers affirm that Jesus said this was just the beginning – ‘the end is not yet’. This has been the steady state of the world for all human history. The difference being that today with modern communication we can be much more aware of world conditions.

Then all three gospel authors report:

Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. (Mk13:8a, Mt24:7a, Lk21:10 ESV)

This statement has been taken to specify intensification of war, which it may; but the corresponding seal in Revelation implies more:

When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come!” And I looked, and behold, a black horse! And its rider had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying, “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and wine!” (Rv6:5-6 ESV)

This is clearly talking about shortages and economic disruption which occur during trade war, or, as we are experiencing today, stoppage of economic activity due to plague.

Mark then reports:

There will be **earthquakes** in various places; there will be **famines**. These are but the beginning of the birth pains. (Mk13:8b ESV)

Matthew closely follows Mark, but Luke adds a little:

There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and **pestilences**. (Lk21:11a ESV)

Again, Mark and Matthew affirm that this is just “the beginning of the birth pains.” This has been and continues to be the normal progression of human history.

4. The Fifth Seal

This gets us the fifth seal – religious persecution of true Christians. This tragedy began under the Roman Emperor Nero and was intermittently continued by Roman Emperors until the time of Constantine in 323AD. Constantine made ‘Christianity’ the official religion of the Empire. By this time true Christians had long since gone underground, at least in the Western Empire, because the false church had become dominate. After Constantine, the false church had free reign to persecute and kill true Christians and in

fact anyone who would not bow down to its authority. Jesus' description of this situation is recorded in detail by all the gospel writers and is summarized in the following chart:

<u>The Fifth Seal - Persecution of True Christians</u> Mark13:9-13, Matthew 24:9-14, Luke 21:12-19		
Mark	Matthew	Luke
Be on your guard 13:9	Many false prophets will arise and lead many astray 24:11	
They will deliver you over to councils 13:9	They will deliver you up to tribulation 24:9	They will lay their hands on you and persecute you 21:12
You will be beaten in synagogues 13:9		Delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons 21:12
You will stand before governors and kings for my sake 13:9		You will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake 21:12
To bear witness 13:9	As a testimony to all nations 24:14	This will be your opportunity to bear witness 21:13
The gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations 13:10	This gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world 24:14	
When they bring you to trial and deliver you over 13:11	Put you to death 24:9	Some of you they will put to death 21:16
Do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say 13:11		Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer 21:14
Say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit 13:11		I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict 21:15
Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death 13:12	- many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another 24:10 - because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold 24:12	You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends 21:16
You will be hated by all for my name's sake 13: 13	You will be hated by all nations for my name's sake 24:9	You will be hated by all for my name's sake 21:17
But the one who endures to the end will be saved 13:13	The one who endures to the end will be saved 24:13	Not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives 21:18-19

We in this generation have not yet experienced significant persecution. Over the last two thousand years, many Christians have faced persecution and have bravely died for their faith. The most trying persecution is yet to come – may we make those proud who have gone before us.

6. The Great Tribulation

At this point Jesus changes gears, Mark records:

But when you see the abomination of desolation standing **where he ought not to be** (let the reader understand) (Mk13:14 ESV)

Matthew elaborates:

So when you see the abomination of desolation **spoken of by the prophet Daniel**, standing in the **holy place** (let the reader understand) (Mt24:15 ESV)

The description of the fifth seal in Revelation is as follows:

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the [persons] who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been. (Rv6:9-11 ESV)

The first two sentences above describe the on-going persecution of Christians over the last two thousand years. Symbolically, these dead cry out for justice. They are told to wait a little longer as a number more are about to die.

This is the beginning of the Great Tribulation:

And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority ... It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling ... Also it was allowed to **make war on the saints and to conquer them**. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. If anyone has an ear, let him hear... (Rv13:5-9 ESV)

The Great Tribulation begins with the period of time during which the beast power has control of the earth. The beast power is able to briefly bring expanded international trade, prosperity, and luxury to the world (Rv18:3, 7, 9, 11-19). There is intense persecution and death for true Christians and all who will not worship the beast (Rv13:7, 15-17, 14:13, 16:6, 17:6, 14, 18:24). The mark of the beast is enforced (Rv13:16-17). This forced worship of the beast, the idol of the beast, and the mark of the beast either in some way are the Abomination of Desolation or they are coincident with its existence.

See [*Excursus Two – The Abomination of Desolation*](#).

In the Olivet Prophecy, Jesus refers to the Great Tribulation as follows:

For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the **creation that God created until now**, and never will be. And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days. (Mk13:19-20 ESV)

For then there will be **great** tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the **world** until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. (Mt24:21-22 ESV)

These sayings look to the last part of the Great Tribulation when the beast power has brought the world into a state of war which threatens human extinction. The danger to Christians during the tribulation is deception and capitulation:

And then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. **But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand.**
(Mk13:21-23, ESV Matthew follows Mark very closely in this saying)

7. The Heavenly Signs

Jesus then moves on to the Heavenly Signs, spoken of many times by the Old Testament Prophets (see for example, Is13:10, Ez32:7, Joel 2:2, 10, 30-31, Am8:9). This signals the impending end of the Tribulation and the start of the Day of YHWH. Mark records:

But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.
(Mk13:24-25 ESV)

Matthew follows Mark, but elaborates a little:

Then will appear in heaven **the sign of the Son of Man**, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn (Mt24:30a ESV)

Luke describes it somewhat differently:

And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken.
(Lk21:25-26 ESV)

8. The Return of Christ

All three gospel writers then record the return of Christ:

And then they will see **the Son of Man coming** in a cloud with power and great glory. (Mk13:26, Mt24:30b, and Lk21:27 ESV)

Mark then records the first resurrection as follows:

And then he will send out the angels and **gather his elect** from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. (Mk13:27 ESV)

Matthew adds a little:

And he will send out his angels **with a loud trumpet call**, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (Mt24:31 ESV)

Luke describes it differently:

Now when these things begin to take place, **straighten up and raise your heads**, because your redemption is drawing near. (Lk21:28 ESV)

9. Conclusion:

The Olivet Prophecy provides a concise overview in sequential order of the events yet to happen. We have not yet entered the Great Tribulation. We will know when we do because the beast power will have full hegemony over the earth. Once that happens things will move very quickly to the return of Christ. Until that day, we need to heed Jesus' warnings:

See that no one leads you astray

Let the reader understand

And then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' ... do not believe it

But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand

Excursus One – The Apocalyptic Flow of Revelation

The scroll with seven seals (Rv5:5, 7, 9)

- The Book of Daniel ends with a sealed book, a scroll (Dn12:9), as the flow of Revelation begins
- In Roman times, it was customary to seal a last will and testament with seven seals
- All the seals must be removed before the scroll can be read
- The correspondence of the opening of seals with the Olivet Prophecy is well documented
- The conditions described by the opening of the seals, (religious persecution, war, famine, pestilence) have been the human condition through the ages, but an intensification of them is probable as the events of Revelation unfold – the Great Tribulation (Dn12:1, Mk13:19, Mt24:21)

The First Seal (Rv6:1-2)

- A white horse depicting religious deception (Mk13:5-6, Mt24:4-5, Lk21:8)
- This began in earnest in the second century with the corruption of the teachings of Apostolic Church and the emergence of the false church

The Second Seal (Rv6:3-4)

- A red horse depicting war, rumors, tumults (Mk13:7a, Mt24:6a, Lk21:9a)

The Third Seal (Rv6:5-6)

- A black horse depicting shortages and economic disruption (Mk13:8a, Mt24:7a, Lk21:10)

The Fourth Seal (Rv6:7-8)

- A pale horse depicting war, earthquake, famine, and pestilence (Mk13:8b, Mt24:7b, Lk21:11a)

The Fifth Seal (Rv6:9-11)

- Persecution and death of True Christians (Mk13:9-13, Mt24:9-14, Lk21:12b-19)

The Sixth Seal (Rv6:12-17)

- The heavenly signs (Mk13:24-25, Mt24:29, Lk21:25-26)
- This signals the impending beginning of the Day of the Lord (Rv6:17, Mk13:26, Mt24:30, Lk21:27)

The Seventh Seal (Rv8:1-5)

- Seven angels each with a trumpet to blow (Rv8:2, 6)
- This is the ultimate Day of YHWH as prophesized throughout the Old Testament (Obadiah 15, Joel 1:15, 2:1, Amos 5:18, Zephaniah 1:7, 14, etc.)
- Another angel with incense, depicting the prayers of the saints, throws fire on the earth resulting in lightening, thunder, and an earthquake (Rv8:3-5)

The First Trumpet (Rv8:7)

- Hail and fire, mixed with blood are thrown on the earth
- A third of the earth is burned, a third of trees are burned, all green grass is burned

The Second Trumpet (Rv8:8-9)

- A great mountain, burning with fire, is thrown into the sea
- A third of the sea becomes blood, a third of sea creatures die, a third of ships are destroyed

The Third Trumpet (Rv8:10-11)

- A great star blazing like a torch falls on rivers and springs
- A third of waters become bitter (Wormwood) and many people die

The Fourth Trumpet (Rv8:12-13)

- A third of the sun, moon, and stars are struck darkening a third of their light
- For a third of the day and a third of the night they are kept from shining
- A 'eagle' cries out 'woe, woe, woe' to the inhabitants of the earth on account of the final three trumpets

The Fifth Trumpet (Rv9:1-12)

- A 'star' falls from heaven and 'he' is given the key to the abyss
- From the abyss smoke emerges and from the smoke 'locusts' which torment people without killing them to the point they wish for death
- People with the 'seal of God' on their foreheads are protected
- The king of the locusts is the 'angel of the abyss' named 'Destruction' or 'Destroyer'
- This is the first woe (Rv9:12)

The Sixth Trumpet (Rv9:13-21, 10:, 11:1-14)

- The four angels bound at the Euphrates are freed to prepare the way for an army of '200,000,000' by which a third of mankind is killed; those who survive refuse to repent
- Chapter 10 records that John hears the Seven Thunders, but is not allowed to record what they say – the only clue to the meaning is that John eats the scroll, as Ezekiel did (Ez3:1-3), and is told he must 'again prophecy': this would seem to imply that there is still work to be done
- Chapter 11:1-10 then records the work of the 'Two Witnesses' culminating in their deaths
- Rv11:11-12 indicates they are resurrected after three and a half days: is this the 'first resurrection' or a special resurrection?
- Finally, there is an earthquake which kills 7,000 people in Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:4?)
- This is the second woe (Rv11:14)

The Seventh Trumpet (Rv11:15-19)

- With the seventh trumpet the mystery of God announced through the prophets is fulfilled (Rv10:6-7)
- "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." (Rv11:15b)
- The final application of retributive justice occurs (Rv11:18)
- The heavenly temple becomes visible amid lightening, thunder, earthquake, and hail – the 'ark of covenant' is visible (is this a rainbow or a box?)
- Three angels proclaim messages: the first proclaims the gospel; the second announces the final fall of 'Babylon'; the third pronounces the fate of those who worshiped the Beast and took the mark of the Beast (Rv14:6-11)
- The saints are 'harvested' from the earth (Rv14:14-16) – first resurrection (Rv20:5, Mt24:31, 1Cr15:52, 1Th4:16)
- Sinners are harvested into the winepress of wrath (Rv14:17-20)

The Seven last Plagues (Rv15:1-8, 16:1-21)

- Seven angels appear out of a heavenly sanctuary and are each given a bowl containing the final wrath of God (Rv15:1, 5-8)
- The resurrected saints sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb (Rv15:2-4)
- Each of the plagues is related to the 'trumpet' of the same number:
 1. Earth
 2. Sea
 3. Water
 4. Sun
 5. Throne of Beast \equiv the angel of the abyss
 6. The battle of Armageddon
 7. Retributive justice

First Plague (Rv16:2)

- Bowl poured on earth
- Harmful and painful sores afflict those who worshipped the Beast and took the mark

Second Plague (Rv16:3)

- Bowl poured on the sea
- Sea becomes like blood and all living things die

Third Plague (Rv16:4-7)

- Bowl poured into rivers and springs, they become blood
- An angel extolls the justness of the punishment of those who 'shed the blood of the saints and prophets'

Fourth Plague (Rv16:8-9)

- Bowl poured on the sun
- People are scorched – they curse God and refuse to repent

Fifth Plague (Rv16:10-11)

- Bowl poured on throne of the Beast and his kingdom is plunged into darkness
- People gnaw their tongues in anguish – they curse God and refuse to repent

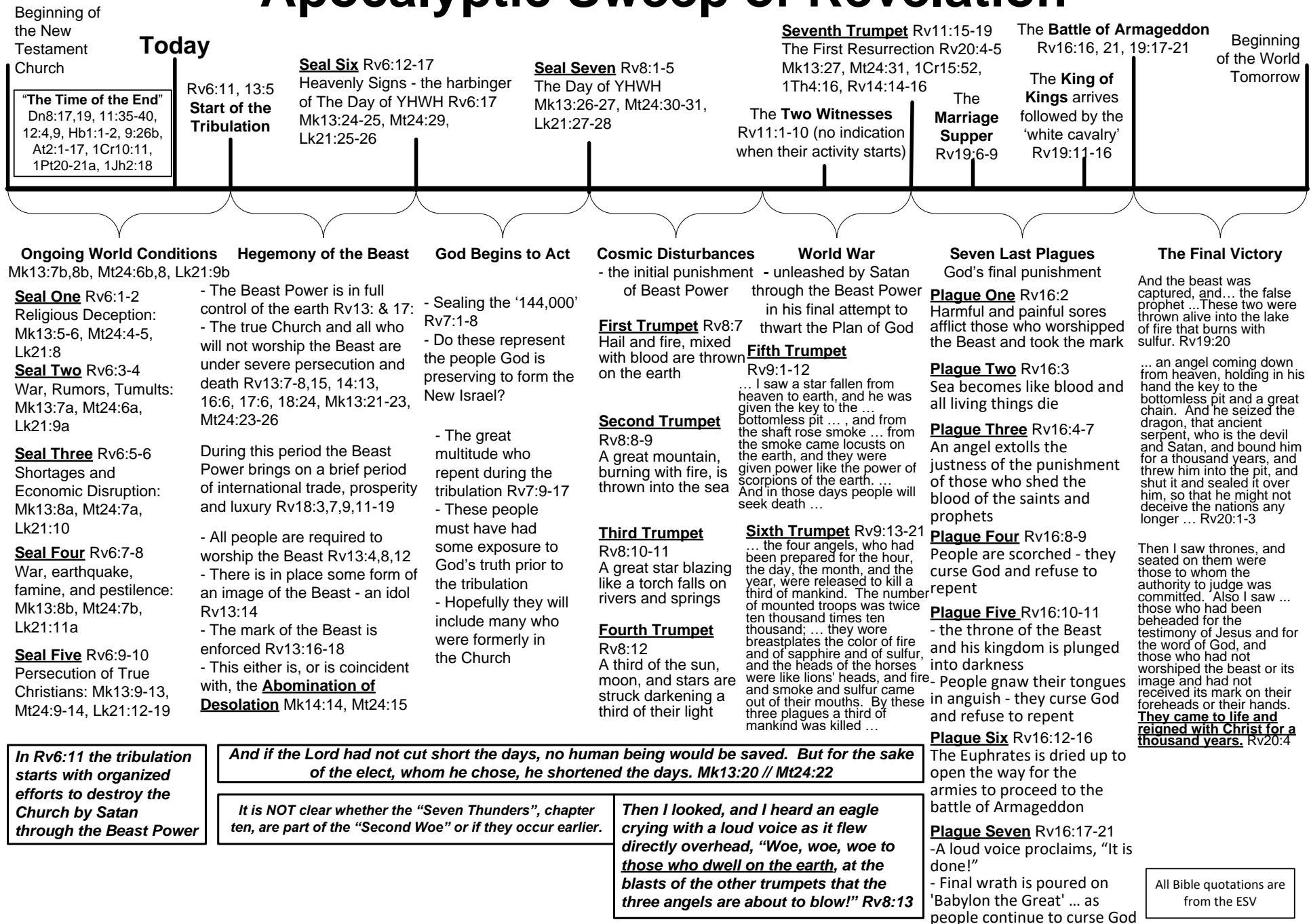
Sixth Plague (Rv16:12-16)

- Bowl poured on the river Euphrates
- The river dries up to open the way for the armies to proceed to the battle of Armageddon
- Demonic spirits emerge from the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet to assemble the armies

Seventh Plague (Rv16:17-21)

- Bowl poured into the air
- A loud voice proclaims, "It is done!"
- Amid lightening, thunder, and earthquake, the 'great city' is split into three and cities of nations fall
- Final wrath is poured on 'Babylon the Great': hail stones of 100 pounds fall on people as they continue to curse God

Apocalyptic Sweep of Revelation



All Bible quotations are from the ESV

Excursus Two – The Abomination of Desolation

Matthew asserts in chapter 24 verse 15 that the abomination of desolation was spoken of by Daniel the prophet and that it will occupy the 'holy place'. Mark in chapter 13 verse 14 says the abomination of desolation will be 'standing where he ought not'. What did Daniel say about the 'abomination of desolation'? What is the 'holy place' where he or it 'ought not to be'?

The abomination of desolation is explicitly mentioned twice in Daniel:

Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate.
(Dn11:31 ESV)

And from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up ... (Dn12:11 ESV)

Most commentators recognize Daniel 11 to refer to the prototypical instance of the abomination of desolation fulfilled by Antiochus Epiphanes in 167BC. Similarly, most commentators recognize Daniel 12 to refer to the anti-typical instance at the end-time, i.e. just before the return of Christ. Both instances mention the 'regular burnt offering'. That phrase is translated from the Hebrew word תָּמִיד 'tamid', this word implies more than just the 'regular burnt offering', it includes the entire temple service. (See KD page 689-690 'תָּמִיד' comprehends all that is of permanent use in the holy service of divine worship') So, the abomination of desolation in some way is related to taking away the service of God.

To the Jews in Jesus' day, the 'Holy Place' was clearly the Temple (Jh11:48, At6:13, 21:28, 25:8). But from a New Testament perspective, the 'Holy Place' is the Church (1Cr3:16-17, 6:19-20, 2Cr6:16, Ep2:19-22, 1Tm3:15, Hb3:1-6, 1Pt1:15-21, 2:4-6, 9-10).

There have historically been three typical fulfillments of the prophecy of the abomination of desolation:

Antiochus Epiphanes 167BC: The first book of Maccabees in chapter 1, verses 20-28, records that Antiochus in 169BC sacked Jerusalem and pillaged the temple. In 167BC Antiochus sent a tax collector to obtain tribute from Jerusalem – he killed many people, destroyed many buildings, took many captives and left a Syrian garrison in the city. Then Antiochus issued his decree:

... to his whole kingdom that all should be one people, and that all should give up their particular customs ... And whoever does not obey the command of the king shall die.
(1Macc1:41-42, 50 NRSV)

To the Jews this was applied as follows:

... to forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings ... to profane sabbaths and festivals, to defile the sanctuary and the priests, to build alters and sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to sacrifice swine and other unclean animals, and to leave their sons uncircumcised.
(1Macc1:45-48 NRSV)

This was an all out attack on the existence of the people of God. Satan through Antiochus was attempting to thwart God's plan of salvation by destroying the agency of God on earth. The decree was shortly followed up with the installation of an idol on the alter in the Temple, and the construction of pagan alters in Jerusalem and other towns around. Books of the Law were burned, pagan sacrifices were offered, and many people were executed. (1Macc1:54-61)

Pompey 63BC: At the death of Queen Salome Alexandra in 76BC, civil war quickly broke out between her sons Aristobulus and Hyrcanus, who in fact was little more than a tool of Antipater, the father of Herod the Great. Pompey was in Western Asia, so quickly proceeded to intervene. All parties sought his support (a general commission of the people had petitioned Pompey to do away with the monarchy all

together), but Aristobulus' soldiers refused to cooperate and entrenched themselves in the fortified Temple area. After a brief siege, Pompey took the Temple area. Josephus records:

... the priests were not at all hindered from their sacred ministrations by their fear of the siege, but did twice a day ... offer their sacrifices on the altar; nor did they omit those sacrifices if any ... accident happened by the stones that were thrown among them ... the city was taken ... and the enemy ... cut the throats of those that offered the sacrifices (Josephus, Antiquities, book 14, chapter 4, section 3)

... no small enormities were committed about the temple itself, which in former ages had been inaccessible, and seen by none; for Pompey went into it ... and saw all that which was unlawful for any other men to see, but only for the High Priests. (Josephus, Antiquities, book 14, chapter 4, section 4)

The altar of the Temple was desecrated by the blood of the priests as they served. The Holy of Holies was desecrated by entrance of a person other than a High Priest.

Titus 70AD: The circumstances of the War which began in 66AD are well documented (See Bruce pages 377-384). Josephus records in Wars, book 4, chapter 3 the factions entrenched in Jerusalem and the internecine fighting among them. He records a speech of Ananus, a High Priest, who attempts to inspire the common people to oust the factions:

Certainly it had been good for me to die before I had seen the house of God full of so many abominations ... these sacred places ... filled with the feet of these blood shedding villains ... will you bear to see your sanctuary trampled upon ... some ... born in this very country and brought up in our customs, and called Jews, do walk in the middle of the holy places, at the time when their hands are still warm with the slaughter of their own countrymen. (Josephus, Wars, book 4, chapter 3, section 10)

Josephus identifies the internecine carnage of the Jews within the Temple as the primary abomination of that time. Indeed, as the Temple was burning Titus does enter it as Pompey had done. The legions do bring their pagan insignia onto the Temple mount and offer sacrifices, but this was after the fact of the primary abomination.

What can we learn from these historical typical instances of the abomination of desolation?

1. The objective of Antiochus Epiphanes was the thwarting of the plan of God – the total annihilation of the people of God
2. Pompey's actions were incidental, but the desecration comprised spilling human blood on the altar and his entry into the Holy of Holies – both blatant violations of the Holy Place
3. Titus had little to do with the abomination in his time – the primary desecration comprised the bloodlust and impiety of the Jewish factions during their occupation of the Temple

In the end-time antitypical instance of the abomination of desolation, it is reasonable to expect to see some or all of these characteristics repeated. The Book of Revelation makes no mention of the abomination of desolation. But it does clearly identify three aspects of the hegemony of the beast which closely align to the historical types. The mark of the beast (Rv13:16-18), the requirement of all to worship the beast (Rv13:4, 12), and the existence of an idol representing the beast (Rv13:14) together clearly fit the pattern of the historical types.

Clearly Satan's objective in the end-time ascendance of the beast power is to finally thwart the Plan of God. The Church of God is the Holy Place of the New Testament. The efforts of the beast power to spill the blood of Christians and force them to capitulate and worship the beast, are surely abominations comparable to the spilled blood in the ancient Temple.

It is of course impossible for us to know exactly how these things will play out. What will the idol of the beast be like? Where will it be situated? What will actually be entailed in 'worshipping the beast'? What will the mark of the beast actually be? How will the mark of the beast be enforced? If we do as Jesus implored us 'be on guard', 'watch', when the abomination of desolation is in place, we will recognize it from the signs clearly given in the Book of Revelation.

Excursus Three – The Destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD

As discussed in the previous excursus, both Mark and Matthew mention the abomination of desolation. Luke does not. He goes directly from the ongoing persecution of Christians (first part of the fifth seal) to the impending destruction of Jerusalem:

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, **for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written.** Alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! (Lk21:20-23a ESV)

Mark records:

... let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down, nor enter his house, to take anything out, and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! Pray that it may not happen in winter. (Mk13b-18 ESV)

Mathew adds only: "Pray that your flight may not be in winter **or on a Sabbath.**" (Mt24:20 ESV)

The flight of the Jerusalem Church to Pella, a Greek city east of the Jordan, is documented by Eusebius and Epiphanius:

But the people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation vouchsafed to approved men there before the war, to leave the city and to dwell in a certain town called Pella. (Eusebius, History, book 3, chapter 5, section 3)

... all the disciples had settled in Pella after their removal from Jerusalem – Christ having told them to abandon Jerusalem and withdraw from it because of the siege it was about to undergo. And they settled ... and lived their lives there. (Epiphanius, Panarion, book 1, part 29, verse 7:8)

See also Bruce pages 375 and 376 for a discussion in a modern history of the event.

The injunction to leave the city, would seem to be an allusion to Luke 21:20-21. Josephus also records several 'signs' which appeared in Jerusalem before its destruction:

... they did not ... give credit to the signs that ... did so plainly foretell their future desolation ... there was a star resembling a sword which stood over the city, and a comet continued for a whole year ... at the ninth hour of the night, [3am] so great a light shone around the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day time ... a heifer ... brought forth a lamb in the midst of the temple ... the eastern gate of the inner court ... was seen to open by its own accord ... before sunset chariots and troops of soldiers in armour were seen running about among the clouds ... as the priests were going into the ... temple ... they felt a quaking ... they heard a sound as of a great multitude saying "Let us remove hence" (Josephus, Wars, book 6, chapter 5, section 3)

Some of these signs do sound unlikely, all sound miraculous – they serve as a type of the 'heavenly signs' (sixth seal). Given these signs and the appearance of the Roman army, the Jerusalem Church fled prior to the depredations that occurred in the city.

Both Mark and Matthew then discuss the Great Tribulation. Luke may allude to it by ‘great distress on earth’, but his main focus remains the final destruction of the last vestigial remnant of the physical nation:

For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people. They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations ... (Lk21:23b-24a ESV)

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www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

The location of “The Olivet Prophecy”

www.ucg.org

The website of United Church of God an International Association contains hundreds of articles, broadcasts, sermons, bible study aids, and booklets which discuss the Olivet Prophecy. In particular, the following booklets are especially relevant:

- Are We Living in the Time of the End?
- The Book of Revelation Unveiled
- The Middle East in Bible Prophecy
- You Can Understand Bible Prophecy