

51. Chronology of End-Time Events

- There is some speculation in this section as the authors attempt to interpret Bible prophecies and discern the signs of the times. Refer to other sections of this document for additional details and related Bible verses. End-time Bible prophecies and world events are converging as never before in history. Alert Christians are aware that He is right at the door.

- The rapture is imminent. Following the rebirth of Israel (14 May 1948; Yom Ha'atzmaut, 5 Iyar 5708 in the Jewish calendar), the rapture is the next major Bible prophecy to be fulfilled (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52). Millions of Christians will vanish worldwide as a result of the rapture, probably resulting in global panic. This will be a strong motivation for the world to unite and create a one-world government, which will become Babylon the Great, the end-time global empire composed of 10 kingdoms (regions) and ruled by 10 kings (Daniel 7; Revelation 17-18). The Bible describes Babylon the Great as a harlot, (false religious system) that hates and persecutes God's holy people. She will corrupt the earth with her immorality and wickedness. Babylon the Great will also be a great city that rules over the kings of the earth and will be a dwelling place for demons. She will be exceedingly powerful and "will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it" (Daniel 7:23).

- Following the rapture, the world will be in a state of shock and confusion. It is likely that the enemies of the Jewish people will see this as an opportunity to destroy Israel and "to capture great spoil" (Ezekiel 38:13). According to Ezekiel 38 and 39, Gog (probably refers to Russia) and many other nations will come up against Israel with a massive force. God will intervene and severely judge the invading armies and their nations. God's mighty display of power will leave the inhabitants of the world in awe. These nations will be devastated by God's wrath and probably represent the three kingdoms that are described by Daniel as being "pulled out by the roots" (Daniel 7:8). Even though the antichrist is not one of the original 10 kings of Babylon the Great, he will have the authority to make a firm covenant (peace treaty; Daniel 9:27) with Israel on behalf of the one-world government, thus revealing his identity. This seven-year covenant marks the official start of the Great Tribulation. God's mighty deliverance of His people during the Ezekiel 38 battle and the defeat of many of Israel's enemies will clear the way for the construction of the long-awaited temple in Jerusalem. The temple will be completed quickly during the first half of the Great Tribulation (Daniel 8) because at the midpoint, the antichrist will put a stop to sacrifice and offering and desecrate the temple (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

- At the beginning of the Tribulation period, two prophets (witnesses), appointed by God, will appear and prophesy for 1,260 days (three and a half years). If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies and they have power to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want. When they have finished their testimony in Jerusalem, the beast (antichrist) will attack and kill them. Most of the inhabitants of the world will celebrate their deaths because these two prophets will torment those who live on the earth. God will raise them from the dead after three and a half days, and they will go up to heaven in a cloud (Revelation 11:3-13).

- During the Great Tribulation, billions of people will die (Revelation 6:8, 9:15) as a result of God's 21 judgments; seven seal judgments, seven trumpet judgments and seven bowl judgments. The seven seal judgments will be first and will result in wars, famine, inflation, plagues, death of one-fourth of the world's population, persecution of believers, earthquakes and disturbances of sun, moon and stars (Revelation 6:1-17, 8:1-6). The seven trumpet judgments follow (Revelation 8:7-13, 9:1-21, 11:15-19) and the wrath of God will be finished in the seven bowl judgments (Revelation 15:1-8, 16:1-21). It appears that Israel will be largely unaffected by the devastation and persecution of the first half of the Tribulation. Apparently, God will place a hedge of protection (wall of fire) around Jerusalem and she will be prosperous and blessed until the Tribulation midpoint (Zechariah 2:4-5; Matthew 24:21; refer to Zechariah 1:12 and Revelation 17:15 commentary).

- Angels will put a seal on the foreheads of 144,000 servants of God, which will include the name of Jesus and the name of His Father. These 144,000 from all 12 tribes of Israel will be commissioned by God for His service, which may include evangelism or temple service (Revelation 7:1-8, 14:1-5).

- Of the original 10 kings of Babylon the Great, three will fall shortly after her formation. The antichrist will replace one of the remaining seven and five of these kings will fall before the Tribulation midpoint (Daniel 7; Revelation 17), preparing the way for him to become the supreme ruler of Babylon the Great. Just before the Tribulation midpoint, the antichrist (beast) will be killed (possibly by the two witnesses) and resurrected (Revelation 13:3, 12, 14). It is likely that Satan will possess the antichrist at this point and give him the authority and power to continue his rule as king of Babylon the Great. Ten new kings will be chosen to rule over the 10 kingdoms (regions) of the world and to serve under the beast. These rulers will pledge their loyalty to the antichrist (Revelation 17:12-13). With his satanic powers, the antichrist will kill the two witnesses in Jerusalem (Revelation 11:3-13). The Jerusalem Tribulation temple will be completed quickly during the first half of the Tribulation because at the midpoint, the antichrist will put a stop to sacrifice and offering, desecrate the temple (abomination of desolation; Daniel 9:27, 12:11; Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14) and proclaim himself to be God (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). At that time, Jerusalem will be surrounded by armies and many Jews will be killed, led captive into all the nations and driven from the land (Daniel 9:27; Luke 21:24; Revelation 11:2). The Gentiles will take control of Jerusalem (and Israel) during the second half of the Tribulation (Luke 21:20, 24). The antichrist (beast) will hate the false religious system (harlot) and will eliminate it during the second half of the Tribulation (Revelation 17:16). The false prophet (the second beast) will demand that everyone worship the beast (Revelation 13:12).

- The great city of Babylon the Great will be destroyed, probably close to the Tribulation midpoint. In one day there will be plagues, pestilence, mourning and famine and she will be burned up with fire (Revelation 14:8, 18:2, 8). A new world capital will then be chosen. It is likely that Jerusalem will be the new capital (Revelation 11:2, 16:19).

- After the temple desecration, the antichrist will declare war on the Jews and believers in Jesus Christ (Daniel 7:21; Revelation 13:7). The false prophet will require everyone to receive the mark of the beast in order to buy or sell (Revelation 13:16-17). The beast will use this mark to expose believers and to tighten his grip on the world. Those who receive the mark of the beast and worship his image will be judged severely by God (Revelation 14:11, 16:2, 19:20). God will miraculously save a remnant of Jews from the wrath of the beast and will provide a safe haven for them throughout the second half of the Tribulation (Revelation 12:6, 14; Isaiah 63:1-6). Toward the end of the Tribulation period, some Jews will return to Jerusalem and inhabit the city (Zech 12:6-7). Shortly after this, the war of Armageddon will begin. All the nations of the earth will be gathered against Jerusalem and God will give His people special strength and protection as they fight against the forces of evil (Zechariah 12:3, 8).

- Jesus Christ, the "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" will return to earth on this final day of the Great Tribulation to rescue His people, to judge the wicked and to rule His earthly kingdom. The antichrist, the kings of the earth and their armies will gather to make war against God. The beast and false prophet will be seized and thrown alive into the lake of fire and the armies of the earth will be destroyed. Satan will then be bound for a thousand years and thrown into the abyss. All the nations will be gathered before Jesus for judgment. Non-believers will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life (Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 19-20).

- Jesus will establish His earthly kingdom where He will reign over all the people and nations of the world for a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-6). His kingdom will be characterized by justice, righteousness and His unfailing love. There will be harmony in all creation as the earth becomes a lush paradise, like the Garden of Eden. Wolves will dwell with lambs and lions will be led by little boys (Isaiah 11:6-9). People will be healed and healthy, will live in peace and will multiply and fill the earth.

- When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from the abyss and will come out to deceive the nations. Many will follow Satan and attempt to defeat Jesus Christ. Fire from heaven will devour them and the devil will be thrown into the lake of fire. Non-believers will then be judged before the great white throne and death and Hades will be thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20). The old heaven and the old earth will be destroyed (2 Peter 3:7, 10-13).

- God will reveal a new heaven and a new earth, unstained by sin. New Jerusalem will come down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. It will shine with the glory of God, and its brilliance will be like that of a precious jewel. The holy city will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will be its light. "And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them'" (Revelation 21:3). He will wipe every tear from their eyes and there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for God will make all things new (Revelation 21-22).