THE LAST DAYS

A Plain Guide to the End Times,
From the Rapture to Forever



He is coming. Be ready.

ANDREW DOMINGUEZ

TRINFINITY
Enterprises

The Last Days

A Plain Guide to the End Times, From the Rapture to Forever

Andrew Dominguez

The Last Days: A Plain Guide to the End Times, From the Rapture to Forever

Copyright 2026 by Andrew Dominguez.

I own the copyright to everything in this book. I freely allow anyone to read, copy, print, quote, share, and teach from it, and to hand out or post copies, at no cost, as long as the text is not changed and this notice stays with it.

Publishing this book, meaning releasing it as an edition of your own in print or electronic form, whether sold or given away, requires my written permission first. Requests go to andrew@trinfinityenterprises.com.

The full text can be read, printed and downloaded free at trinfinityenterprises.com.

Scripture quotations are taken from the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB), with familiar English forms of personal names, copyright 2026 Andrew Dominguez. The complete SLB is free to read at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb.

Independently published.

Trinfinity Enterprises, Dayton, Nevada.

This book offers Bible teaching about future events. It does not predict dates, and it names no living person as the Antichrist.

A note before you begin. This book is written to teach the Bible and encourage faith. It shares my understanding of Scripture and is offered for study and spiritual growth. It is not counseling, medical, legal, or financial advice. If you are facing a crisis, a health problem, or a legal or money problem, please reach out to a qualified professional as well as your pastor and church family. To the fullest extent the law allows, Andrew Dominguez, Trinfinity Enterprises, and Andrew Dominguez's heirs, estate, successors, and assigns accept no liability for how this material is used.

A Note on the Bible Translation Used in This Book

My preferred Bible for personal study, teaching, and research is the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). I chose it because it is a word-for-word translation in today's language, built on the ancient Scripture sources: the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. I prepared the SLB myself, and the Scripture in this book is taken from it.

Where a literal phrase would mislead an English reader, the SLB gives the writer's meaning in plain words. Words added for sense are set in bold italics so you can see what is in the original and what is not.

The complete Steadfast Literal Bible is free to read, search, download, and print at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb. If you want to check a verse in its full setting or read the translation's preface and principles, that is the place to go.

Above all, my desire is not to promote one translation over another, but to faithfully teach the Word of God, encourage careful examination of the Scriptures, and help readers grow in their knowledge, understanding, and relationship with the Lord.

May every page of this book direct attention not to the translation itself, but to the truth of God's Word and the One whom it reveals.

Contents

Before You Begin....1

Part One: Getting Our Bearings

Chapter 1: Why God Told Us the Future....4
Chapter 2: How to Read Prophecy....7
Chapter 3: God's Plan for the Ages....10
Chapter 4: Daniel's Seventy Sevens....13
Chapter 5: Daniel's Kingdoms....17

Part Two: The Rapture of the Church

Chapter 6: The Blessed Hope....21
Chapter 7: Why I Believe the Rapture Comes First....24
Chapter 8: The Other Views, Fairly Stated....28
Chapter 9: Signs of the Times and the Danger of Date Setting....32
Chapter 10: The Judgment Seat of Christ and the Marriage of the Lamb....35

Part Three: The Seven Years

Chapter 11: The Seven Years at a Glance....39
Chapter 12: The Antichrist and the False Prophet....43
Chapter 13: The Temple, the Covenant, and the Abomination....46
Chapter 14: God's Witnesses in the Dark Days....49
Chapter 15: Gog and Magog: The Invasion From the North....52
Chapter 16: Babylon the Great....55
Chapter 17: Armageddon and the Second Coming....58

Part Four: The Kingdom and Forever

Chapter 18: The Thousand-Year Reign....62
Chapter 19: The Final Rebellion and the Great White Throne....65
Chapter 20: The New Heaven, the New Earth, and the New Jerusalem....68

Part Five: Heaven, Hell, and What Comes After

Chapter 21: What Happens When We Die....72
Chapter 22: Heaven: What the Bible Really Says....76
Chapter 23: Hell: The Truth We Would Rather Not Hear....79
Chapter 24: The Resurrections and the Judgments....82
Chapter 25: Ready or Not: Living Until He Comes....86
Appendix A: Timeline of End-Time Events....89
Appendix B: Words to Know....91
Appendix C: Where to Go Next....92
Appendix D: Sources and Credits....93
About This Book....94
Scripture Index....95

Before You Begin

*But know this, that in **the** last days difficult times will be present.*

2 Timothy 3:1 (SLB)

People have always wanted to know how the story ends. Turn on the news for a week and you will hear somebody ask whether we are living in the last days. Wars, earthquakes, plagues, the nation of Israel back in its land, a world that seems to be coming apart at the seams. Christians and non-Christians alike wonder where all of this is going.

I came to my view of prophecy by reading the Bible carefully, comparing passage with passage, and translating the Steadfast Literal Bible so the words could stand on their own. I wrote this book for believers who want a clear guide to what the Bible actually says about the end times. When Scripture interprets Scripture, prophecy stops being scary guesswork and becomes hope.

The good news is that God has not left us guessing. A large part of the Bible is prophecy, and a good share of that prophecy is about the end of this age and what comes after it. God told us ahead of time, not so we could draw charts on napkins and argue, but so we would be ready, so we would have hope, and so we would live differently today.

What This Book Is

This book is a plain guide to what the Bible says about the last days. It walks through the whole picture in order: the Rapture of the church, the seven years of Tribulation, the Antichrist, the battle of Armageddon, the Second Coming of Jesus, His thousand-year reign on earth, the final judgment, and the new heaven and new earth. Then it takes up the questions that hit closest to home. What happens when we die? What is heaven really like? Is hell real, and is it forever? And how should we live while we wait?

I wrote this book as a companion to my *Revelation Bible Study: A Verse by Verse Study*. That study goes through Revelation one passage at a time. This book steps back and puts the pieces together, pulling in Daniel, the words of Jesus, Paul's letters, and the Old Testament prophets. The two books teach the same view and use the same timeline, so you can move back and forth between them. When a subject is covered verse by verse in the Revelation study, I will point you there.

Where I Stand

I want to be up front with you. I hold the pre-tribulation view. I believe Jesus will take His church to be with Him before the seven-year Tribulation begins. I believe the Tribulation is the seventieth seven of Daniel 9, still in the future. I believe Jesus will return to earth at the end of those seven years, defeat His enemies, and reign on the earth for a literal thousand years. Bible teachers call this view dispensational premillennialism. That is a mouthful, and Chapter 3 explains what it means in plain words.

I did not come to this view because I grew up with it or because a famous preacher told me so. I came to it by reading the Bible carefully, comparing passage with passage, and asking what the words plainly mean.

Chapter 7 gives my reasons. Chapter 8 lays out the other views fairly, in the words of the people who hold them, because good and godly Christians disagree on the timing. Where you land on the timing of the Rapture will not decide your salvation. What you do with Jesus will.

How the Book Is Laid Out

Part One: Getting Our Bearings explains why God told us the future, how to read prophecy, God's plan for the ages, and the two great prophecies of Daniel that hold the timeline together.

Part Two: The Rapture of the Church covers what the Rapture is, why I believe it comes before the Tribulation, the other views, the signs of the times, and what happens to believers in heaven while the Tribulation runs its course on earth.

Part Three: The Seven Years walks through the Tribulation from start to finish: the judgments, the Antichrist and the False Prophet, the temple and the abomination of desolation, the people who turn to God during those years, the invasion of Gog and Magog, Babylon the Great, and the return of Jesus at Armageddon.

Part Four: The Kingdom and Forever covers the thousand-year reign of Christ, the final rebellion, the Great White Throne, and the new heaven, new earth, and New Jerusalem.

Part Five: Heaven, Hell, and What Comes After answers what happens when a person dies, what the Bible says about heaven, what it says about hell, how the resurrections and judgments fit together, and how to live ready.

At the back you will find a timeline of end-time events, a list of key words, a guide to my other studies, and an index of every Bible verse cited, with page numbers. There are charts all through the book. Every chapter ends with **Study Questions** for your own reading or for a small group.

A Few Notes Before We Start

Scripture quotations come from the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). Words set in bold italics inside a quotation are words added in English to make the sentence read clearly. When I don't quote a passage, I give the reference so you can read it yourself. Please do. Don't take my word for any of this. Open your Bible and check it, the way the Bereans did in Acts 17:11.

I capitalize the pronouns that refer to God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit (He, Him, His, You, Your) as a sign of reverence. Inside a Scripture quotation, I leave the capitals exactly as the translation prints them.

One more thing. This is not a book of predictions. I will not tell you who the Antichrist is, and I will not give you a date. Jesus said no one knows the day or the hour (Matthew 24:36), and every person who has ever set a date has been wrong. What I will give you is what the Bible actually says, in order, as plainly as I can.

Part One: Getting Our Bearings

Chapter 1: Why God Told Us the Future

> *Remember former things from long ago, for I **am** God, and **there is** no other God, and **there is** none like Me, declaring the end from **the** beginning, and from antiquity what has not been done, saying, "My counsel will stand, and all My desire I will do,"*
>
> Isaiah 46:9-10 (SLB)

There is something in the Bible that no other religious book even tries to do the way it does. It tells the future, in detail, hundreds of years ahead, and then it comes true. God Himself points to this as proof that He is God. Through Isaiah He said that He declares the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that have not yet been done.

No idol could do that. No fortune teller could do it. The God of the Bible does it again and again, and He does it on purpose.

About a Quarter of the Bible

Prophecy is not a small corner of Scripture. Bible scholars who have counted the predictive passages estimate that somewhere around a quarter of the Bible was prophecy at the time it was written. Some of it has already come true. Some of it is still ahead of us.

The prophecies that have already been fulfilled give us a track record. God said Babylon would conquer Judah, and it did. He said the exile would last seventy years (Jeremiah 25:11-12), and it did. He named a Persian king, Cyrus, about a century and a half before Cyrus let the Jews go home (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1). He said the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9), would be pierced (Zechariah 12:10), and would die for the sins of others and still see life afterward (Isaiah 53). Every one of those came true, and many of them came true in the life of one Man, Jesus of Nazareth.

If God was right about all of that, we have every reason to take Him seriously about the rest.

Three Reasons God Tells Us What Is Coming

The Bible gives us several reasons for prophecy. Here are three that run through the whole thing.

First, so we will know He is God. When Jesus told His disciples ahead of time that one of them would betray Him, He told them why He was saying it in advance.

> *From now on I am telling you before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe that I am **He**.* (John 13:19)

Fulfilled prophecy builds faith. When what God said happens just the way He said it, we learn that we can trust Him with what we cannot yet see.

Second, so we will have hope. After Paul described the coming of the Lord for His people in 1 Thessalonians 4, he did not tell the believers to argue about it. He told them to encourage one another with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:18). Prophecy is meant to steady us. The world is not spinning out of control. God has a plan, and it ends well for His people.

Third, so we will live holy lives now. Peter wrote about the day of the Lord, when the heavens and the earth as we know them will pass away, and then asked the obvious question.

> *Then, all these things being dissolved, what sort **of people** ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness* (2 Peter 3:11)

John said the same thing. Everyone who has this hope in Jesus purifies himself, just as He is pure (1 John 3:2-3). Prophecy is not just information. It is meant to change the way we live on Monday morning.

What Prophecy Is Not For

Prophecy is not for setting dates. Jesus was clear that no one knows the day or the hour, not even the angels (Matthew 24:36). We will talk about the long, sad list of people who ignored that in Chapter 9.

Prophecy is not for scaring people into a decision they don't understand. The Bible does warn us, and the warnings are real. But God's purpose in warning is love. A parent who tells a child not to touch the stove is not being cruel.

Prophecy is not for winning arguments. Some of the sharpest fights I have seen between Christians have been over the end times. That is a shame. We can hold our convictions firmly and still treat the brother across the table with kindness.

The Center of It All

Here is the most important thing to know about Bible prophecy. It is about a Person. When John fell down before an angel in Revelation, the angel stopped him and said the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Revelation 19:10). Prophecy is not mainly about the Antichrist, or the mark of the beast, or the order of the judgments. It is about Jesus: His first coming to save, and His second coming to reign.

> *Look, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, and those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will wail because of Him. Yes, amen.* (Revelation 1:7)

Keep that in front of you as you read this book. Every chart, every timeline, every hard passage points toward the day when every eye will see Him.

Why Study It Now

Some people think end-times study is only for experts, or that it is too confusing to bother with. But Revelation is the only book in the Bible that promises a blessing just for reading it and taking it to heart.

> *Blessed **is** the one who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things written in it; for the time **is** near.* (Revelation 1:3)

God did not write the last chapter of His book so that we would skip it. He wrote it for ordinary believers in ordinary churches, like the seven churches in Asia that first received it. You can understand it. Take it one step at a time.

Study Questions

1. Why do you think God chose to tell us so much about the future?
2. Name two prophecies that have already been fulfilled. How do they affect your trust in the ones still ahead?
3. According to 2 Peter 3:11 and 1 John 3:3, how should knowing the future change the way we live?
4. Have you seen end-times teaching used in a harmful way? What went wrong?
5. What does it mean that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy?

Chapter 2: How to Read Prophecy

> *knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from private interpretation; for prophecy was never borne by **the** will of man, but being borne by **the** Holy Spirit, holy men of God spoke.*
>
> 2 Peter 1:20-21 (SLB)

A lot of confusion about the end times does not come from the Bible itself. It comes from the way people read it. Two people can open the same chapter of Revelation and come away with completely different pictures, not because the words changed, but because they used different rules to read them. So before we get into the timeline, let's talk about the rules.

Rule One: Take It Plainly

The simplest rule is the best one. Read the Bible in its plain, normal sense unless the text itself tells you it is using a figure of speech. When a passage says "a thousand years," start by assuming it means a thousand years. When it says Jesus will return to the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4; Acts 1:11-12), start by assuming it means the real Mount of Olives just east of Jerusalem.

That does not mean the Bible has no symbols. It has plenty. Jesus is called the Lamb. Satan is called a dragon. But here is the key: the Bible usually tells us when it is using a symbol, and it often explains the symbol for us. In Revelation 1:20, Jesus Himself explains that the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and the seven lampstands are the seven churches. In Revelation 12:9, John tells us plainly that the great dragon is the devil and Satan. In Revelation 17:18, the angel explains that the woman is the great city.

So a symbol does not give us permission to make up whatever meaning we like. It points to something real, and the Bible itself is the best place to find out what.

Rule Two: Context Is King

I said this at the start of my Revelation study, and it bears repeating. Every verse sits inside a paragraph, a chapter, a book, and the whole Bible. Before you decide what a verse means, ask who wrote it, who it was written to, what came right before it, and what comes right after.

A lot of bad prophecy teaching comes from pulling a single verse out of its setting and building a whole system on it. The cure is to read the whole passage, then read what other passages say about the same thing.

Rule Three: Let Scripture Explain Scripture

Revelation has more than five hundred allusions to the Old Testament, by most scholars' counts. John was steeped in Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Zechariah, and the Psalms. When he sees a beast with ten horns,

we should go to Daniel 7, where the same picture is explained. When he sees two olive trees, we should go to Zechariah 4.

This is one reason this book spends two chapters on Daniel before it ever gets to the Rapture. Daniel gives us the frame. Revelation fills it in.

Rule Four: Watch for Near and Far

Prophets often saw future events the way you see mountain ranges from far away. Two peaks can look like they are right next to each other, when in fact there is a wide valley between them. Bible teachers sometimes call this prophetic foreshortening.

The best example comes from Jesus Himself. In the synagogue at Nazareth, He read from Isaiah 61. He read the part about proclaiming a year of favor of the Lord, and then He stopped in the middle of the sentence, rolled up the scroll, and sat down (Luke 4:18-21). He did not read the next line, "and a day of vengeance of our God" (Isaiah 61:2). Why? Because His first coming fulfilled the first part. The day of vengeance waits for His second coming. In Isaiah those two things sit side by side. In history they are separated by at least two thousand years.

Keep that in mind when you read the prophets. A single verse can jump from the first coming of Christ to the second.

Rule Five: Fulfilled Prophecy Shows Us the Pattern

How did God fulfill the prophecies about the first coming of Jesus? Just as written. He was really born in Bethlehem. He really rode a donkey. His hands and feet were really pierced. Lots were really cast for His clothing (Psalm 22:18; John 19:23-24).

That gives us a strong reason to expect the prophecies about His second coming to be fulfilled the same way. If God kept His word to the letter the first time, I see no reason to think He will switch to a looser method the second time.

Rule Six: Hold the Details With an Open Hand

Some things in prophecy are crystal clear. Jesus is coming back. The dead will be raised. Everyone will stand before God. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. Other things are less clear. Who exactly are the twenty-four elders? What is the mark of the beast going to look like? Is the great city in Revelation 17 and 18 a rebuilt Babylon on the Euphrates, or a city that plays the same role somewhere else?

On those harder questions, I will tell you the main views and which way I lean, and why. But I will not pretend to be more certain than the text allows. Neither should you. Hold the clear things tightly and the details with an open hand.

Rule Seven: Read the News in Light of the Bible

Not the Bible in light of the news. Every generation has tried to match the prophecies to the headlines of its own day. Some of the matches look convincing for a while, and then the world moves on and they look foolish. The Bible does not change. Start with what it says, and then watch the world with that in mind.

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to read the Bible in its plain, normal sense?
2. Find a symbol in Revelation that the Bible explains for us. What does it mean?
3. Read Luke 4:16-21 and Isaiah 61:1-2. Why did Jesus stop where He did?
4. How does the way God fulfilled prophecies about Jesus' first coming help us read prophecies about His second coming?
5. What end-times questions do you hold tightly, and which do you hold with an open hand?

Chapter 3: God's Plan for the Ages

> *having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Him, for **the** administration of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, both the **things** in the heavens and the **things** on the earth, in Him*
>
> Ephesians 1:9-10 (SLB)

Before we can understand the last days, we need to see where they fit in the whole story. The Bible is not a random collection of religious sayings. It is one story, from creation in Genesis to the new creation in Revelation, with God working out His plan step by step.

In project work, you cannot understand a schedule if you mix up phases that belong to different stages. The Bible works the same way. I read it as dispensational and premillennial: God administers His plan in distinct eras, and Jesus returns before His literal thousand-year reign. With that in view, the promises to Israel and the promises to the church stop colliding.

The Story in One Picture

Here is the big picture as I understand it. History moves from creation and the fall, through God's promises to Abraham and the nation of Israel, to the first coming of Christ, His death and resurrection, and the birth of the church. We are living now in the church age. That age ends when Jesus takes His church to be with Him at the Rapture. Then comes the seven-year Tribulation on earth, the Second Coming of Jesus, His thousand-year reign, the final judgment, and the eternal state, the new heaven and new earth that last forever.

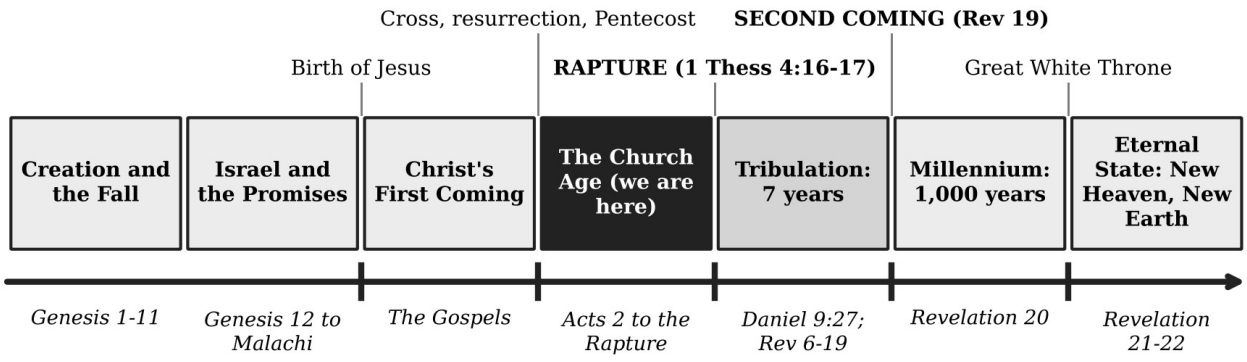


Figure 1. God's Plan for the Ages

Every part of that picture comes up again in this book. If you get lost later, come back to this chart.

What Premillennial Means

The word millennium comes from Latin and means a thousand years. Revelation 20 mentions the thousand years six times in seven verses. Christians have three main ways of reading that passage.

- **Premillennial** means Jesus returns *before* the thousand years and reigns on earth for that time. This is the view I hold.
- **Amillennial** means there is no future thousand-year reign on earth. The thousand years is a picture of the present age, with Christ reigning from heaven and in the hearts of His people.
- **Postmillennial** means Jesus returns *after* a long golden age, brought about as the gospel spreads and the world is gradually won over.

I give a fuller treatment of all three in the introduction to my Revelation study. Here I will just say why I hold the first one. When John says he saw thrones, and souls who came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years (Revelation 20:4), and that the rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were finished (Revelation 20:5), he is describing two resurrections with a period of time between them. I take that plainly. And the Old Testament is full of promises about a coming kingdom on this earth, with the Messiah ruling from Jerusalem, that have never yet been fulfilled (Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:1-10; Zechariah 14:9-11). Premillennialism gives those promises a real, future fulfillment.

What Dispensational Means

This word scares people more than it should. A dispensation is simply a way God has arranged His dealings with people in a certain period. The word comes from the old English translation of the Greek word *oikonomia*, which means stewardship or household management. Paul uses it in Ephesians 1:10 and 3:2.

Dispensational teachers sometimes divide history into seven periods, and they don't all agree on the lines. The details are not the heart of it. The heart of dispensational teaching is two simple convictions.

1. **Read the Bible plainly.** Including prophecy. When God makes a promise to Israel, He means Israel.
2. **Israel and the church are not the same thing.** God has a plan for the church, the body of Christ made up of Jews and Gentiles who believe during this age. And God still has a plan for the nation of Israel, the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

That second point matters a lot for the end times, so let's look at it more closely.

God Is Not Finished With Israel

God made promises to Abraham that He called everlasting: a land, a great nation, and a blessing for all the families of the earth (Genesis 12:1-3; 17:7-8). He promised David a son who would sit on his throne forever (2 Samuel 7:12-16). He promised a new covenant in which He would write His law on the hearts of the house of Israel and the house of Judah (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

Some Christians believe the church has replaced Israel and all of these promises now belong to the church in a spiritual sense. I don't believe that. Paul faced this exact question in Romans 11 and answered it with a strong no.

> *I say then, did God reject His people? May it not be! For I also am an Israelite, of **the** seed of Abraham, of **the** tribe of Benjamin.* (Romans 11:1)

Paul goes on to say that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, and then all Israel will be saved (Romans 11:25-26). He adds that the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable (Romans 11:29). God keeps His word, even when His people don't.

This is one of the main reasons I hold the view I do. During the church age, God is calling out a people for His name from every nation (Acts 15:14). During the Tribulation, He turns His attention again in a special way to Israel. Daniel's seventy sevens are about "your people and on your holy city" (Daniel 9:24), meaning Daniel's people, Israel, and Jerusalem. The Tribulation is called the time of Jacob's trouble (Jeremiah 30:7). And at the end of it, Israel as a nation will look on the One they pierced and mourn (Zechariah 12:10).

The Church Is Something New

The church is not just Israel under a new name. Paul calls it a mystery, something hidden in past ages and now revealed, that Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the same body with Jews in Christ (Ephesians 3:4-6). Jesus spoke of the church as still future when He said, "I will build My church" (Matthew 16:18). It began on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came and believers were baptized into one body (Acts 2; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

Since the church had a definite beginning, it makes sense that it would have a definite ending to its time on earth. That ending is the Rapture.

The Two Comings

The Old Testament prophets saw the Messiah suffering and the Messiah reigning, and they wondered how both could be true (1 Peter 1:10-11). We now know the answer. He comes twice. He came the first time as the Lamb, to die for sin. He will come the second time as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, to rule (Revelation 5:5-6).

The Second Coming itself has two stages in the view I hold. First, Jesus comes in the air for His church at the Rapture. Then, after the seven years, He comes to the earth with His church to defeat His enemies and set up His kingdom. Chapter 7 explains why I see these as two separate events.

Study Questions

1. Using the chart, where are we on God's timeline right now?
2. In your own words, what do premillennial and dispensational mean?
3. Read Romans 11:1-2 and 11:25-29. What does Paul say about God's future plans for Israel?
4. Why does it matter whether Israel and the church are the same or different?
5. What did the Old Testament prophets wonder about, according to 1 Peter 1:10-11?

Chapter 4: Daniel's Seventy Sevens

> *Seventy sevens have been decreed on your people and on your holy city, to put an end to the transgression, and to complete sin, and to atone for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophet, and to anoint a holy of holies.*
>
> Daniel 9:24 (SLB)

If I could point you to only one passage to explain where the seven-year Tribulation comes from, it would be Daniel 9:24-27. These four verses are the backbone of Bible prophecy. Jesus pointed back to them. Paul built on them. Revelation measures time by them. If you understand this passage, the rest of the end times starts to fall into place.

Daniel's Prayer

Daniel was an old man in Babylon when he read in the book of Jeremiah that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years (Daniel 9:2; Jeremiah 25:11-12). He knew the seventy years were nearly up. So he did not sit back and wait. He prayed, confessing his own sin and the sin of his people, and asking God to act for the sake of His own name (Daniel 9:3-19).

While he was still praying, the angel Gabriel came to him with an answer. And the answer was bigger than Daniel's question. Daniel asked about seventy years. Gabriel told him about seventy sevens.

What a Seven Means

The Hebrew word here simply means a seven, a unit of seven. It can mean seven days, but in context it means seven years. Daniel had just been thinking in years, and Israel already counted time in sevens of years, with every seventh year a sabbath year for the land (Leviticus 25:1-8). Seventy sevens is 490 years.

Gabriel told Daniel what would happen at the end of those 490 years: transgression finished, sin ended, iniquity atoned for, everlasting righteousness brought in, vision and prophecy sealed up, and a most holy place anointed (Daniel 9:24). Some of that happened at the cross. But everlasting righteousness on earth? The end of sin? That has clearly not happened yet. So the seventy sevens are not finished.

Sixty-Nine Sevens to the Messiah

Gabriel then divided the seventy sevens into three parts.

> *And you shall know and gain insight: from the going forth of **the** word to restore and to build Jerusalem until an anointed one, a prince, **shall be** seven sevens and sixty-two sevens; it will again be built, plaza and moat, even in the distress of the times.* (Daniel 9:25)

Seven sevens and sixty-two sevens make sixty-nine sevens, or 483 years. The starting point is a command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. The ending point is an anointed one, a prince. The Hebrew word for anointed one is *mashiach*, the word we bring into English as Messiah.

There were several decrees about the Jews returning, and Bible teachers debate which one is meant. Many point to the decree Artaxerxes gave Nehemiah to rebuild the city and its walls (Nehemiah 2:1-8), because it is the one that speaks of rebuilding the city itself. In the late 1800s, Sir Robert Anderson, a British lawyer and Scotland Yard official, worked out the dates in his book *The Coming Prince*, using the 360-day year that Daniel and Revelation both seem to use. In 1977, Harold Hoehner, a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, revisited the math in *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* and placed the end of the sixty-nine sevens in the spring of A.D. 33, at the time Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and was hailed as King.

You don't have to agree with every detail of those calculations to see the main point. Daniel, writing more than five hundred years before Jesus, said the Messiah would come after sixty-nine sevens, and then be cut off.

Then the Messiah Is Cut Off

> *And after the sixty-two sevens an anointed one will be cut off, and **there will be** nothing for him; and the people of a prince who is coming will destroy the city and the sanctuary; and its end **will be** with the flood, and until **the** end **there will be** war; desolations **are** determined.* (Daniel 9:26)

Notice the order. After the sixty-two sevens, which follow the first seven, two things happen. The Messiah is cut off and has nothing, and the city and the sanctuary are destroyed. Jesus was crucified around A.D. 30 to 33. The Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70. Both happened after the sixty-ninth seven ended, but neither is said to happen during the seventieth.

That is the gap. The prophecy itself leaves room between the sixty-ninth seven and the seventieth. We are living in that gap right now. It is the church age, the mystery Paul talks about that the Old Testament prophets did not see clearly.

Notice something else. The people of the prince who is to come destroyed the city. The people who destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70 were Romans. So the coming prince, the ruler of verse 27, will come from the people of the old Roman world. That is one reason many Bible teachers, myself included, expect the Antichrist to arise from a revived form of the Roman Empire.

The Seventieth Seven

> *And he will make a covenant strong for the many **for** one seven; and **in** the middle of the seven he will cause sacrifice and grain offering to cease; and on a wing of abominations **will be** one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, and what has been decided will be poured out on the one who is desolate.* (Daniel 9:27)

The "he" in this verse is the nearest person mentioned before it, the prince who is to come. He makes a firm covenant with the many for one seven, seven years. In the middle of the seven, after three and a half years, he breaks it. He stops the sacrifices and sets up an abomination that makes desolate.

That seven years is what Bible teachers call the Tribulation. Its second half is what Jesus called the great tribulation (Matthew 24:21).

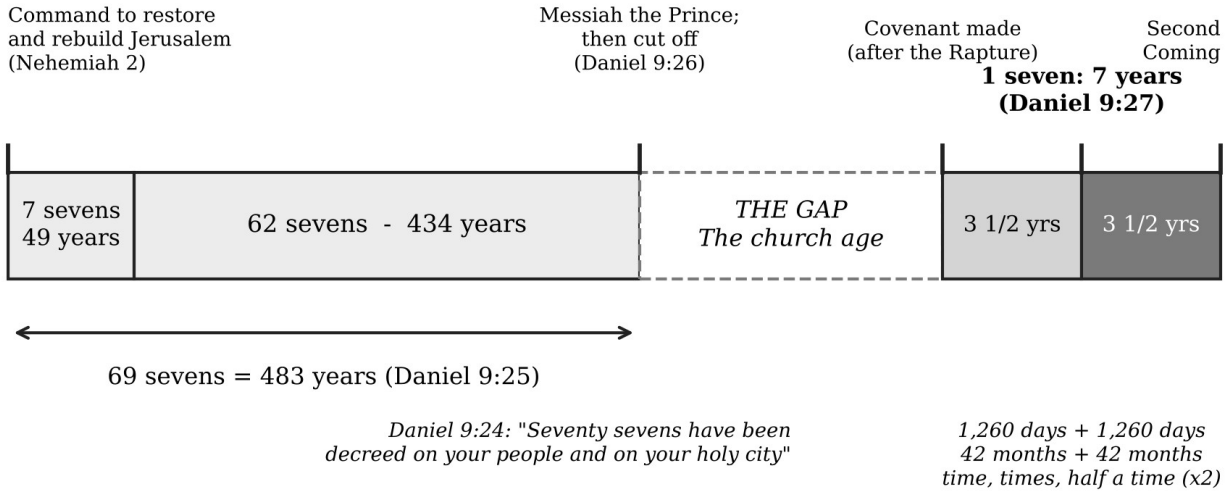


Figure 2. Daniel's Seventy Sevens

Jesus Points to the Same Midpoint

Jesus did not treat Daniel 9 as ancient history. He treated it as still future. Sitting on the Mount of Olives a few days before His death, He told His disciples what to watch for.

> *Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in **the** holy place (let the **one** reading understand), then let those in Judea flee to the mountains* (Matthew 24:15-16)

Paul says the same thing in his own words. The man of sin will take his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). Nothing in the first century fully matched that description. It is still ahead.

Revelation Measures the Halves

Revelation never uses the words "seven years." But it measures the two halves of Daniel's seventieth seven again and again, in three different ways.

Measure	Where it appears	What it describes
1,260 days	Revelation 11:3; 12:6	The two witnesses prophesy; the woman is protected in the wilderness
42 months	Revelation 11:2; 13:5	The nations trample the holy city; the beast is given authority
A time, times, and half a time	Revelation 12:14; Daniel 7:25; 12:7	The woman is nourished; the holy people are worn down

Each of these is three and a half years, figured with a 360-day year. Twelve months of thirty days gives 360 days, and 1,260 days is exactly 42 of those months. Two halves make seven years. This is the same seventieth seven Gabriel told Daniel about.

Study Questions

1. What was Daniel doing when Gabriel came to him? What can we learn from that?
2. How many years are seventy sevens? Sixty-nine sevens?
3. What two events does Daniel 9:26 say happen after the sixty-two sevens?
4. Why do many Bible teachers see a gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth sevens?
5. How do Jesus in Matthew 24:15 and Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 show that the seventieth seven is still future?

Chapter 5: Daniel's Kingdoms

> *And in the days of those kings the God of the heavens will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and the kingdom will not be left to another people; it will shatter and put an end to all these kingdoms, and it will stand forever*
>
> Daniel 2:44 (SLB)

Daniel gives us the timeline in chapter 9. In chapters 2 and 7, he gives us the map. Twice, in two different ways, God showed the whole sweep of world empires from Daniel's day to the coming of His own kingdom. Once it came as a king's dream of a great statue. Once it came to Daniel himself as a vision of four beasts. Both point to the same thing.

The Statue in Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon dreamed of a huge statue. Its head was gold, its chest and arms silver, its belly and thighs bronze, its legs iron, and its feet part iron and part clay. Then a stone cut out without hands struck the statue on its feet and crushed it, and the stone became a great mountain that filled the whole earth (Daniel 2:31-35).

Daniel told the king what it meant. The head of gold was Nebuchadnezzar himself, the king of Babylon (Daniel 2:37-38). After him would come three more kingdoms, each one lower in value but harder and stronger than the one before, until the last one crushed everything in its path. And in the days of those kings, God would set up a kingdom that would never be destroyed.

The Four Beasts

About fifty years later, Daniel had a vision of his own. Four great beasts came up out of the sea: a lion with eagle's wings, a bear raised up on one side, a leopard with four wings and four heads, and a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible and exceedingly strong, with large iron teeth and ten horns (Daniel 7:2-7). Then a little horn came up among the ten, with eyes like a man and a mouth speaking great things (Daniel 7:8).

Then Daniel saw thrones set up, and the Ancient of Days took His seat. And he saw One like a Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven, who was given dominion, glory, and a kingdom that will never pass away (Daniel 7:9-14). Jesus took that title, Son of Man, as His own favorite way of speaking about Himself, and quoted this very passage at His trial (Mark 14:61-62).

Putting the Two Together

Most Bible teachers who take Daniel plainly read the four kingdoms the same way. The Bible itself names the first three. Daniel 2:38 names Babylon. Daniel 8:20-21 names Media and Persia, and then Greece, in a related vision.

Daniel 2: the statue	Daniel 7: the beasts	Kingdom	Dates	Named in
Head of gold	Lion with eagle's wings	**Babylon**	605-539 BC	Daniel 2:38
Chest and arms of silver	Bear raised on one side	**Medo-Persia**	539-331 BC	Daniel 8:20
Belly and thighs of bronze	Leopard with four heads	**Greece**	331-63 BC	Daniel 8:21
Legs of iron	Dreadful beast with iron teeth	**Rome**	63 BC - AD 476 (west)	Daniel 7:23
Feet of iron and clay; ten toes	Ten horns; then the little horn	**Final form of Rome**	Still future	Daniel 7:24-25
Stone cut without hands	Son of Man receives the kingdom	**The kingdom of God**	At Christ's return	Daniel 2:44; 7:13-14

Figure 3. Daniel's Kingdoms: The Statue and the Beasts

The fourth kingdom, the strongest and longest, is Rome. Rome was never conquered by a fifth great empire. It split into east and west and slowly fell apart. And in Daniel's picture, the fourth kingdom has something the others don't: a final form, the feet and toes of iron mixed with clay, and the ten horns. In Daniel 7:24, the angel says the ten horns are ten kings who arise out of this kingdom, and another king arises after them who will put down three of them.

That final form has never existed in history. Rome never had ten kings ruling at once, followed by one who took over. It is still future. That is why many Bible teachers, myself included, speak of a revived Roman Empire, a future coalition of nations that grows out of the old Roman world. I don't know exactly what it will look like, and I am wary of anyone who claims to know which ten nations it will be. I just know the Bible says it is coming.

The Little Horn

The little horn of Daniel 7 is the same person as the coming prince of Daniel 9:27 and the beast of Revelation 13. Look at what Daniel says about him.

> *And he will speak words against the Most High, and he will wear out the holy ones of the Most High, and he will intend to change seasons and law; and they will be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time.* (Daniel 7:25)

He speaks against the Most High. He persecutes God's people. He tries to change the times and the law. And he is given power for "a time and times and half a time," three and a half years, the same last half of

the seventieth seven we saw in Chapter 4. Then the court sits, his dominion is taken away, and the kingdom is given to the saints of the Most High (Daniel 7:26-27).

The Stone That Fills the Earth

Here is the ending that matters most. Neither dream ends with the last human empire. Both end with God's kingdom. In the dream, a stone cut out without hands strikes the statue on its feet, in the days of the final form of the fourth kingdom, and the whole statue is crushed at once. In the vision, the Son of Man receives a kingdom that all peoples serve.

Some Christians believe the stone is the church, slowly filling the world through the spread of the gospel. I don't think the picture allows that. The stone does not slowly change the statue. It strikes it suddenly and destroys it, and only then grows to fill the earth. That is the Second Coming of Jesus, not the church age. It matches Revelation 19, where Jesus returns and destroys the beast and his armies, and Revelation 20, where He reigns.

Why Daniel Matters for You

Daniel lived his whole adult life under pagan empires, and he never compromised. He knew how the story would end, and that gave him courage in the lions' den and in the king's court. Kingdoms rise and fall. Presidents and prime ministers come and go. The stone is coming. Our job is to be faithful while we wait, the way Daniel was.

If you want to go deeper, my *Daniel Bible Study* goes through the whole book, and the *Daniel and Revelation Side by Side* handout lines up the matching passages in the two books.

Study Questions

1. What are the four metals of the statue, and what kingdoms do they stand for?
2. How does Daniel 7 add to the picture we get in Daniel 2?
3. What does the Bible say the ten horns are (Daniel 7:24)? Why do many teachers see them as still future?
4. What does the little horn do, and how long does he have power?
5. Why does it matter that the stone strikes the statue suddenly instead of slowly changing it?

Part Two: The Rapture of the Church

Chapter 6: The Blessed Hope

> *awaiting the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ*
>
> Titus 2:13 (SLB)

On the night before He died, Jesus sat with His disciples in an upper room in Jerusalem. He had just told them He was leaving, and they were troubled. So He gave them a promise.

> *Let your heart not be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In the house of My Father are many dwelling places; but if not, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will receive you to Myself, so that where I am, you also may be.* (John 14:1-3)

That is the first promise of the Rapture in the Bible. Jesus is not describing His return to the earth to fight and reign. He is describing a Bridegroom going to His Father's house to prepare a place, and then coming back to take His bride home with Him.

Now that our daughters are grown and we have granddaughters, I think more about how fast life moves. Paul calls the Rapture a comfort, because believers do not grieve like people with no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Knowing Jesus could call us home at any moment turns the fear of death into expectation.

Where the Word Comes From

The word Rapture is not in most English Bibles, and people sometimes use that to argue the idea isn't biblical. But the word Trinity is not in the Bible either, and the teaching is there on every page. The word Rapture comes from the Latin verb rapio, to seize. The old Latin Bible uses a form of it, rapiemur, to translate the Greek word *harpazo* in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. *Harpazo* means to snatch away, seize, or take by force. It is the same word used when the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away after he baptized the Ethiopian (Acts 8:39), and when Paul was caught up to the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2-4). The SLB translates it "caught away."

The Main Passage

The clearest description of the Rapture comes in Paul's first letter to the church in Thessalonica. Those believers had been taught that Jesus was coming back, and then some of their loved ones died. They were worried that the dead would miss out. Paul wrote to comfort them.

> *But I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, concerning those who have fallen asleep, so that you may not grieve, just as also the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so also God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus. For this we say to you in **the** word of **the** Lord, that we who are living, who remain until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have fallen asleep; because the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout of command, with **the** voice of an archangel and with **the***

> *trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are living, who remain, will be caught away together with them in **the** clouds to meet the Lord in **the** air; and so we will always be with **the** Lord.* (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17)

Look at the order. Jesus Himself comes down from heaven. There is a shout, the voice of an archangel, and the trumpet of God. The bodies of believers who have died are raised first. Then believers who are still alive are caught away together with them, in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. And from then on, we will always be with the Lord.

Notice what is not here. Jesus does not touch down on the earth. There is no battle. There is no judgment of the nations. He meets His people in the air and takes them to be with Him.

In the Blink of an Eye

Paul gives us more details in his first letter to the Corinthians.

> *Look, I tell you a mystery: we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in an instant, in **the** blink of an eye, at the last trumpet; for **the** trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.* (1 Corinthians 15:51-53)

Not every believer will die. Some will be alive when Jesus comes. But every believer will be changed. Our bodies will be made new, fit for eternity, in less time than it takes to blink. The word translated instant is *atomos*, from which we get the word atom. It means something so small it cannot be cut. That is how fast it will happen.

The dead in Christ get new, raised bodies. The living in Christ are changed without ever dying. And all of us together are taken to be with the Lord.

What It Will Look Like on Earth

The Bible does not describe the scene on earth after the Rapture, so I want to be careful here. But a few things follow from what it does say. Millions of people will suddenly be gone. The graves of believers will be empty. The world will be shaken and confused.

I suspect the world will come up with its own explanation. Paul says that after the restrainer is removed, God will send a strong delusion on those who refused to love the truth, so that they believe the lie (2 Thessalonians 2:7-11). We will look at who the restrainer is in the next chapter.

Why Paul Calls It an Encouragement

The Rapture is not a scary doctrine for a believer. Paul ends the passage with these words: “Therefore encourage one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:18). He calls the appearing of Christ “the blessed hope” (Titus 2:13).

I have stood at the graves of people I loved. I know what it is to grieve. But Paul says we do not grieve the way others do, who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13). The grave is not the end. The people we laid in

the ground in Christ are going to rise, and we are going to see them again, and we are going to be with the Lord together, forever.

Are You Ready?

The Rapture is for those who are “in Christ.” It is not for church members as such, or for good people, or for people who were raised in a Christian home. It is for those who belong to Jesus by faith. If you are not sure that is you, please turn to Chapter 25 before you go on.

Study Questions

1. Read John 14:1-3. What does Jesus promise to do, and why?
2. What does the Greek word *harpazo* mean? Where else is it used?
3. List the order of events in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.
4. According to 1 Corinthians 15:51-53, what happens to the bodies of believers?
5. Why does Paul call the Rapture a comfort? How does it change the way you think about death?

Chapter 7: Why I Believe the Rapture Comes First

> *because God did not appoint us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ*
>
> 1 Thessalonians 5:9 (SLB)

Almost every Bible-believing Christian agrees that Jesus is coming back. The disagreement is about timing. Will the church be taken before the Tribulation, in the middle of it, or at the end? In this chapter I want to give you my reasons for believing the Rapture comes before the Tribulation. I have tried to give the strongest ones, not every one I have ever heard.

Translating the Steadfast Literal Bible, I saw the difference between the Rapture and the Second Coming clearly. At the Rapture, Jesus meets believers in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). At the Second Coming, He returns to the earth in power to judge the nations (Revelation 19:11-16). Keeping them distinct explains why believers watch for Christ at any moment, not for the Antichrist.

Reason One: The Church Is Not Appointed to Wrath

The Tribulation is a time of God's wrath poured out on a rebellious world. When the sixth seal is opened, the people of the earth cry out to the mountains to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb, "for the great day of His wrath has come" (Revelation 6:17). The seals, the trumpets, and the bowls are all judgments that come from the throne of God.

Paul says plainly that believers are not appointed to that wrath.

> *and to await His Son from the heavens, whom He raised out of **the** dead, Jesus, who is delivering us from the wrath that is coming.* (1 Thessalonians 1:10)

Look at that carefully. Paul does not say Jesus delivers us *through* the wrath to come, or *during* it. The Greek preposition is *ek*, out of, from. We are rescued from it. And right after describing the Rapture in chapter 4, Paul goes on to say in chapter 5 that God did not appoint us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

Someone might say that God can protect believers in the middle of the wrath, the way He protected Israel in Goshen during the plagues of Egypt. That is a fair point. But the Tribulation is not only wrath on the wicked. The beast is also given authority to make war with the saints and to overcome them (Revelation 13:7). If the church were on earth, believers would face both God's judgments falling all around them and the beast's war against them. That does not sound like being rescued from the wrath to come.

Reason Two: Kept From the Hour

In the letter to the church in Philadelphia, Jesus made a promise.

> *Because you kept the word of My endurance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing which is about to come upon the whole inhabited world, to test those who dwell on the earth.* (Revelation 3:10)

Jesus does not promise to keep them *through* the hour. He promises to keep them *from* it, again using the Greek *ek*. And notice that it is not a local trial. It is the hour of testing that is about to come upon the whole inhabited world, to test those who dwell on the earth. That is a worldwide event. As I said in my Revelation study, some read this as a promise only to the church in Philadelphia in the first century. But a trial that comes on the whole world is bigger than anything that church faced. I take it as a promise to the faithful church, then and now.

Reason Three: The Church Disappears From the Earth in Revelation

In Revelation 1 through 3, the word church appears nineteen times. Jesus speaks to the churches again and again. Then in Revelation 4:1, John hears a voice like a trumpet saying "Come up here," and he is taken into heaven. From chapter 4 through chapter 18, while the judgments fall on the earth, the word church never appears once on earth. The church does not show up again by that name until Revelation 22:16.

People are saved during the Tribulation, and Revelation calls them saints and slaves of God. But the church, as the church, is not on the earth in those chapters. I believe that is because it is already in heaven.

Some see the twenty-four elders in Revelation 4 and 5 as a picture of the church in heaven, crowned and clothed in white, before the first seal is opened. Others see them as angels or as representatives of Israel and the church. I gave the views in my Revelation study. Whichever is right, the church is not on earth during the judgments.

Reason Four: Something Is Holding Back the Man of Sin

Paul told the Thessalonians that the day of the Lord will not come until the man of sin is revealed. Then he said something is holding him back.

> *And now you know that which is restraining, for him to be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already working; only the one restraining now* ***will restrain*** *until he is out of the midst.* (2 Thessalonians 2:6-7)

Who is the restrainer? Paul calls it "that which is restraining" in verse 6 and "the one restraining" in verse 7, so it is both a force and a person. Many teachers believe it is the Holy Spirit, working through the church. Only God has the power to hold back Satan's man until the time God has set. Jesus said the Spirit would be with us forever (John 14:16), so the Spirit does not leave the world entirely; people are saved during the Tribulation, and no one can be saved without the Spirit. But His restraining work through the church, which is His temple (1 Corinthians 3:16), is taken out of the way when the church is taken out of the way. Only then is the lawless one revealed. That fits a Rapture before the Tribulation.

Reason Five: Two Different Pictures

When you put the passages about the Lord's coming side by side, you find two very different pictures. In some, He comes in the air for His people, to take them to His Father's house. In others, He comes to the earth with His people, to judge and to reign. I don't believe these are two ways of describing one event.

The Rapture	The Second Coming
Jesus comes in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17)	Jesus comes to the earth, to the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4)
He comes for His saints (John 14:3)	He comes with His saints (Jude 14; Revelation 19:14)
Believers are taken up to meet Him	The wicked are taken away in judgment (Matthew 24:39-41)
No signs need to come first; it could happen any time	Many signs come first, including the abomination (Matthew 24:15, 29-30)
Believers are taken to the Father's house (John 14:2-3)	Jesus sets up His kingdom on earth (Matthew 25:31-34)
Before the day of wrath (1 Thessalonians 1:10)	At the end of the Tribulation (Matthew 24:29)
A message of comfort (1 Thessalonians 4:18)	A day of mourning for the nations (Revelation 1:7)
In an instant, in the blink of an eye (1 Corinthians 15:52)	Every eye will see Him (Revelation 1:7)

Reason Six: We Are Told to Watch for Christ, Not for the Antichrist

Again and again, the New Testament tells believers to be ready, to watch, to wait for the Lord, because He could come at any time (Matthew 24:42-44; Philippians 3:20; James 5:7-9; Titus 2:13). Bible teachers call this imminence. It means the Rapture could happen at any moment, with no prophesied event that must come first.

If the church had to go through the Tribulation, we would not be watching for Christ. We would be watching for the Antichrist to sign a covenant with Israel, and then counting down seven years, or three and a half. We could know the timing almost to the day once the covenant was signed. But Jesus said the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will (Matthew 24:44). Only a Rapture before the Tribulation keeps it truly imminent.

Reason Seven: Someone Has to Populate the Kingdom

When Jesus returns at the end of the Tribulation, He judges the nations and separates the sheep from the goats. The sheep enter the kingdom in their natural bodies, and they have children during the thousand years. That is why there can be a rebellion at the end of the Millennium (Revelation 20:7-9). People born during the kingdom must still choose whether to follow Christ.

Now think it through. If every believer is raptured and given a glorified body at the end of the Tribulation, then there are no believers left in natural bodies to enter the kingdom and have children. The wicked are judged and removed. Who would be left? But if the Rapture comes before the Tribulation, then the people who come to faith during the Tribulation and survive it can enter the kingdom in their natural bodies. The picture works.

What About the Last Trumpet?

Some people say the "last trumpet" of 1 Corinthians 15:52 must be the seventh trumpet of Revelation 11, which sounds in the middle or near the end of the Tribulation. I don't think that follows. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians decades before John wrote Revelation, so the Corinthians had never heard of the seventh trumpet. The trumpets in Revelation are blown by angels and bring judgment. The trumpet in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 is "the trumpet of God," and it gathers God's people. A trumpet in the ancient world was used for all kinds of signals, and "last" in Paul's mind likely means the last one for the church, the signal that ends this age for us.

Holding It Humbly

These reasons convince me. They may not convince you, and they have not convinced every good Bible teacher. In the next chapter I will lay out the other views as fairly as I can. Whatever you conclude, here is what every view agrees on: Jesus is coming, and we need to be ready.

Study Questions

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:10 and 5:9. What does Paul say God has not appointed us to?
2. What does Jesus promise the church in Philadelphia in Revelation 3:10? Why does it matter that the hour comes upon the whole inhabited world?
3. Why is it significant that the church is not mentioned on earth in Revelation 4 through 18?
4. Look at the table. Which difference between the Rapture and the Second Coming stands out most to you?
5. What does imminence mean? How should it affect the way we live?

Chapter 8: The Other Views, Fairly Stated

> *One judges **one** day above **another** day, but another judges every day **alike**. Let each be fully assured in his own mind.*
>
> Romans 14:5 (SLB)

I have sat across the table from brothers and sisters in Christ who love Jesus as much as I do, know their Bibles well, and see the timing of the Rapture differently. I want to treat their views the way I would want mine treated. So in this chapter I will lay out each main view in the best light I can, give the main verses its holders point to, and then tell you briefly why I still land where I do.

Mid-Tribulation

What it teaches: The church goes through the first half of the Tribulation and is raptured at the midpoint, before the great tribulation and the worst of God's wrath.

Main reasons given: Holders often connect the Rapture to the seventh trumpet (Revelation 11:15), linking it with the "last trumpet" of 1 Corinthians 15:52. They point to the two witnesses being called up to heaven in Revelation 11:12. And they note that the second half is when Jesus said the great tribulation begins (Matthew 24:21).

Why I differ: I don't believe the first half of the Tribulation is free of God's wrath. The seals are opened by the Lamb Himself (Revelation 6:1), and by the sixth seal the world is already crying out about the wrath of the Lamb (Revelation 6:16-17). The seals come before the trumpets. And as I said in Chapter 7, the trumpet of God that gathers the church is not the same as the seventh trumpet blown by an angel.

Pre-Wrath

What it teaches: This view was laid out by Marvin Rosenthal in 1990. The church goes through most of the Tribulation and is raptured sometime in the second half, after the sixth seal and before the trumpets and bowls, which are seen as the true wrath of God.

Main reasons given: Holders say the seals are mostly the wrath of man and Satan, not of God, and that the word wrath does not appear until the sixth seal (Revelation 6:17). They connect the Rapture to the great multitude that suddenly appears in heaven in Revelation 7:9-14, and to the gathering of the elect after the cosmic signs in Matthew 24:29-31.

Why I differ: The Lamb opens every seal. The fourth seal gives Death and Hades authority over a fourth of the earth (Revelation 6:8). That is not just man's doing. And the great multitude in Revelation 7 is said to come "out of the great tribulation" (Revelation 7:14), which tells me they are people saved during the Tribulation, not the church raptured before it. In Matthew 24, Jesus is speaking to His disciples as representatives of faithful Israel, in a passage full of Jewish details like Judea, the Sabbath, and the holy place (Matthew 24:15-20). I take the elect gathered in Matthew 24:31 as the believers of the Tribulation, gathered at His coming to the earth.

Post-Tribulation

What it teaches: The church goes through the entire Tribulation. The Rapture and the Second Coming are one event at the end. Believers rise to meet the Lord in the air and immediately return with Him to the earth, the way a city would go out to meet a visiting king and escort him back in. Many historic premillennialists, such as George Eldon Ladd, held this view.

Main reasons given: Holders point to Matthew 24:29-31, where the gathering of the elect comes "immediately after the tribulation of those days." They note that the Greek word for "meet" in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, *apantesis*, was used for going out to greet an arriving dignitary and escort him in. They point out that the church has always suffered, and that Jesus said in the world you will have tribulation (John 16:33). And they argue that the first resurrection in Revelation 20:4-5 is placed at the end of the Tribulation.

Why I differ: The church has always suffered tribulation, and Christians are suffering terribly in many parts of the world today. I don't deny that for a second. But there is a difference between the tribulation the world gives believers and the wrath God pours out on the world. The second is what we are promised to be rescued from. On the word *apantesis*, the same word is used in Matthew 25:6 for going out to meet the bridegroom, where the bridegroom comes for his bride and takes her in to the wedding. And the post-tribulation view has trouble with the question of who enters the Millennium in natural bodies, as I explained in Chapter 7. On the first resurrection, I see it as a whole order of resurrections, beginning with Christ the firstfruits and including the church at the Rapture and the Tribulation saints at the end (1 Corinthians 15:23). Chapter 24 explains that.

Amillennial

What it teaches: There is no future seven-year Tribulation and no future thousand-year reign on earth. Christ is reigning now from heaven, and the thousand years is a symbolic picture of the church age. When Christ returns, there is one general resurrection and one general judgment of all people, followed immediately by the eternal state. This has been the most common view in the Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, and Reformed churches for many centuries, and Augustine taught a form of it.

Main reasons given: Holders point out that Revelation is full of symbols, so they see the thousand years as symbolic too. They note that the New Testament often speaks of the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked together (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15). And they say that the church is the true Israel, so the Old Testament promises to Israel are fulfilled spiritually in Christ and His people.

Why I differ: I covered most of this in Chapter 3. I take Revelation 20 to mean what it says, two resurrections separated by a thousand years. I believe God's promises to the nation of Israel are still in force, as Paul says in Romans 11. And when Jesus spoke of the righteous and the wicked rising in John 5:28-29, He spoke of an hour, but He also called the present age an hour in John 5:25, and that hour has lasted two thousand years. One "hour" can hold a long span of time.

Postmillennial

What it teaches: The gospel will gradually win over most of the world, bringing a long golden age of peace and righteousness, which some call the Millennium. Christ returns after it. Many hold that the prophecies of the Tribulation were fulfilled when Rome destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70. This view was common in America in the 1800s, during the great revivals and missionary movements.

Main reasons given: Holders point to the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven (Matthew 13:31-33), the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), and the promise that the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD (Habakkuk 2:14).

Why I differ: The New Testament does not describe the world getting better and better before the Lord returns. It describes it getting worse. Paul says that in the last days difficult times will come (2 Timothy 3:1-5) and evil men will go on from bad to worse (2 Timothy 3:13). Jesus asked whether the Son of Man will find faith on the earth when He comes (Luke 18:8). And two world wars in the twentieth century did a great deal to shake the optimism this view once had.

The Views Side by Side

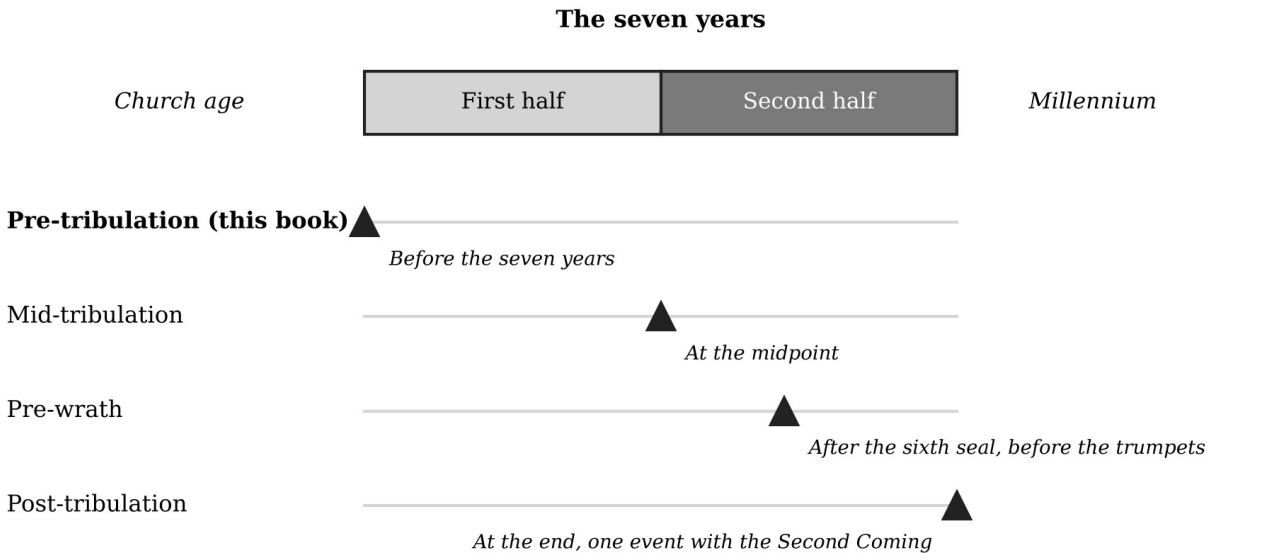


Figure 4. When Each View Places the Rapture

Is Pre-Tribulation a New Idea?

You may hear that the pre-tribulation Rapture was invented in the 1830s. It is true that the teaching was put into a full system by John Nelson Darby and the Plymouth Brethren in the 1830s, and spread widely in America through the Scofield Reference Bible in 1909 and later through schools like Dallas Theological Seminary. Some point to earlier writers, such as a sermon known as Pseudo-Ephraem, which speaks of the saints being gathered before the tribulation, but scholars argue over its date and what it means.

Here is my answer. The question is not how old the system is. The question is whether it is in the Bible. Many truths the early church believed were sharpened over the centuries as Christians studied the Scriptures more carefully. Justification by faith was there in Romans all along, but it took the Reformation to bring it back to the center. I believe the pre-tribulation Rapture is in the text. You will have to weigh that for yourself.

What Every View Agrees On

For all the debate, the things that matter most are shared by almost all of these views. Jesus is coming back personally and visibly. The dead will be raised. Every person will stand before God. Evil will be defeated forever. God will make all things new. And the time to get right with Him is now.

I said it in my Revelation study, and I will say it again: whether or not you agree with me on the timing will never stop my love for God, or my love for you.

Study Questions

1. Which of these views have you heard taught before? Which one was new to you?
2. What is the strongest argument for the view you disagree with most?
3. What difference does it make whether the seals are God's wrath or man's?
4. Why does it matter whether the world gets better or worse before Jesus returns?
5. What are the things all of these views agree on? Why are those the most important?

Chapter 9: Signs of the Times and the Danger of Date Setting

> *But concerning that day and the hour no one knows, not even the angels of the heavens, except My Father alone.*
>
> Matthew 24:36 (SLB)

"Tell us, when will these things be? And what ***is*** the sign of Your coming and of the consummation of the age?" (Matthew 24:3). The disciples asked Jesus that question on the Mount of Olives, and people have been asking it ever since. Jesus answered them, at length. But He did not give them a date. In this chapter we will look at what He did give them, and at what has happened when people tried to go further than He did.

Signs of the Tribulation, Not of the Rapture

Here is something important to understand. Most of the signs Jesus gave in Matthew 24 are signs of His coming to the earth at the end of the Tribulation, not signs of the Rapture. Wars and rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes, false christs, the abomination of desolation, the sun and moon darkened: these are things that will happen during the seven years, and they lead up to the moment when the Son of Man appears in the sky and every tribe of the earth mourns (Matthew 24:29-30).

The Rapture, as we saw in Chapter 7, has no signs that must come first. It could happen today.

So why should we pay attention to the signs at all? Because, as many Bible teachers put it, coming events cast their shadows before them. If the stage is being set for the Tribulation, then the Rapture, which comes before it, is near. Jesus said it this way.

> *Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.* (Luke 21:28)

Birth Pains

Jesus said the false christs, wars, famines, and earthquakes are "the beginning of birth pains" (Matthew 24:8). That is a helpful picture. A woman in labor does not have one contraction and then deliver. The pains come again and again, closer together and stronger, until the birth. We have always had wars and earthquakes. But the Bible pictures them building in frequency and force as the end comes near.

The Sign of Israel

I believe the most remarkable sign in our time is the nation of Israel. For nearly nineteen hundred years after the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, the Jewish people were scattered among the nations without a land of their own. Many Christians in those centuries concluded that God was finished with them. Then,

on May 14, 1948, the modern state of Israel was declared. In June 1967, during the Six-Day War, Israel took control of the old city of Jerusalem for the first time since ancient times.

The prophets said this would happen. Ezekiel saw a valley of dry bones come together, bone to its bone, and then receive breath and stand up as a great army. God told him plainly what it meant.

> *And He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are all the house of Israel. Look, they are saying, 'Our bones have dried up, and our hope has perished; we have been cut off, **as for** us.' Therefore prophesy, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: Look, I am opening your graves, and I will bring you up from your graves, O My people, and I will bring you into the soil of Israel.'" (Ezekiel 37:11-12)*

Notice that in Ezekiel's vision, the bones come together first, and the breath comes after (Ezekiel 37:7-10). I believe Israel is back in the land today mostly in unbelief, as the bones are coming together. The breath of spiritual life will come when they look on the One they pierced (Zechariah 12:10).

This matters for the end times because so many prophecies of the last days assume Israel is in the land, with Jerusalem at the center: a covenant with the many (Daniel 9:27), a temple where the man of sin sits (2 Thessalonians 2:4), and armies gathered against Jerusalem (Zechariah 12:2-3; 14:2). For most of church history, those prophecies could not have been fulfilled. Now they can.

Other Signs to Watch

Here are a few more things the Bible says will mark the last days. I give them as things to watch, not as proof of a date.

- **Moral breakdown.** Paul's list in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 reads like a description of our culture: lovers of self, lovers of money, disobedient to parents, unloving, without self-control, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding a form of godliness but denying its power.
- **Falling away from the truth.** Paul says the time will come when people will not put up with sound teaching, but will gather teachers to suit their own desires (2 Timothy 4:3-4). He also speaks of a falling away before the day of the Lord (2 Thessalonians 2:3).
- **Scoffers.** Peter says that in the last days scoffers will come, asking where the promise of His coming is (2 Peter 3:3-4).
- **Deception.** Jesus warned that many would come in His name and lead many astray (Matthew 24:4-5, 11, 24).
- **The gospel to every nation.** Jesus said this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed in the whole inhabited world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come (Matthew 24:14).
- **Like the days of Noah.** People will be going about ordinary life, eating, drinking, marrying, until judgment falls (Matthew 24:37-39).
- **A world system ready for one ruler.** Revelation 13:16-17 describes a single ruler controlling who can buy and sell. For most of history that would have been impossible. Today the technology exists to track nearly every purchase on earth. I am not saying any particular technology is the mark of the beast. I am saying the world is ready for one.

A Sad History of Date Setting

Jesus was as clear as He could be.

> *Therefore keep watch, for you do not know in what hour your Lord comes.* (Matthew 24:42)

He also said it is not for us to know times or seasons which the Father has set by His own authority (Acts 1:7). And still, people keep setting dates. Here are a few of the better-known ones.

Who	Date predicted	What happened
William Miller, a Baptist preacher in New York	1843, then October 22, 1844	Nothing happened; his followers called it the Great Disappointment
Edgar Whisenant, in *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988*	September 1988	Nothing happened; he moved the date to 1989 and later years
Harold Camping, a radio broadcaster	May 21, 2011, then October 21, 2011	Nothing happened; Camping later admitted he was wrong

My Revelation study has a longer list going back nearly two thousand years. Every single one was wrong. Every one did damage. People sold their homes, quit their jobs, and walked away from the faith in disappointment. Scoffers had one more reason to laugh.

If someone tells you they know the date, they are telling you something Jesus said He did not reveal. You can stop listening right there.

Watching Without Setting Dates

So what should we do? Jesus told a parable about a fig tree: when its branches become tender and put out leaves, you know summer is near (Matthew 24:32-33). We can see the season without knowing the day. That is the balance. Watch the world with your Bible open. Notice what God is doing. But don't build a calendar.

And most of all, be ready. Jesus followed His warnings with parables about servants who were found working when the master came home, and virgins who had oil in their lamps (Matthew 24:45-51; 25:1-13). The point of the signs is not to satisfy our curiosity. It is to wake us up.

Study Questions

1. Why are most of the signs in Matthew 24 signs of the Second Coming rather than the Rapture?
2. What does Jesus mean by "birth pains"?
3. Read Ezekiel 37:1-14. How do you see this prophecy in the history of Israel?
4. Which item from 2 Timothy 3:1-5 do you see most clearly in our culture today?
5. Why do you think people keep setting dates even though Jesus told us not to?
6. What does it look like to watch for the Lord without setting a date?

Chapter 10: The Judgment Seat of Christ and the Marriage of the Lamb

> *For it is necessary for all of us to be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive back the things **done** through the body, according to what he did, whether good or evil.*
>
> 2 Corinthians 5:10 (SLB)

While the Tribulation is happening on earth, something else is happening in heaven. The church, taken up at the Rapture, is with the Lord. Two great events take place there: believers stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and the marriage of the Lamb is celebrated.

I have led Bible studies, served as a lay pastor and volunteered at church camp, and I know how easy it is to get tired when nobody seems to notice. The crown of righteousness in 2 Timothy 4:8 is promised to everyone who loves Christ's appearing. You do not have to be famous to receive it. You have to stay faithful.

Not a Judgment of Condemnation

Let me clear something up right away. The judgment seat of Christ is not where God decides whether a believer goes to heaven or hell. That question was settled at the cross. Paul says it as plainly as words can say it.

> ***There is** therefore now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to **the** flesh but according to **the** Spirit.* (Romans 8:1)

Jesus said that whoever hears His word and believes Him who sent Him has eternal life and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life (John 5:24). The believer's sins were judged at Calvary, in Jesus' body.

So what is the judgment seat? The Greek word is *bema*. In Paul's day, a bema was a raised platform where a city official sat to judge cases, or where a judge sat at the athletic games to hand out prizes to the winners. Paul uses the picture of the games often (1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Timothy 4:7-8). At the bema of Christ, believers are not on trial for their lives. They are evaluated for their service and rewarded.

What Is Tested

Paul describes it in his first letter to the Corinthians. The foundation of every believer's life is Jesus Christ. But each one builds on that foundation with different materials.

> *Now if anyone builds on this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, the work of each will become manifest; for the day will make **it** clear, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire will test the work of each, of what sort it is. If the work of anyone which he built on **it***

> *remains, he will receive a reward. If the work of anyone is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.* (1 Corinthians 3:12-15)

Gold, silver, and precious stones survive fire. Wood, hay, and straw burn up. The point is not the materials themselves. The point is whether what we did for the Lord will last. Things done in faith, out of love for Him, in the power of His Spirit, will stand. Things done for show, for our own glory, or in our own strength will burn away.

Notice the last line. A believer whose work burns up will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved. Loss of reward, not loss of salvation.

Rewards and Crowns

The New Testament speaks of crowns given to believers. The Greek word for crown here is *stephanos*, the victor's wreath, not the royal crown of a king.

Crown	Given for	Where to read it
The imperishable crown	Self-control and running the race to win	1 Corinthians 9:24-25
The crown of rejoicing (boasting)	The people we led to Christ and helped grow	1 Thessalonians 2:19-20
The crown of righteousness	Loving His appearing	2 Timothy 4:8
The crown of life	Enduring trials and staying faithful to death	James 1:12; Revelation 2:10
The crown of glory	Shepherding God's flock faithfully	1 Peter 5:2-4

And what do we do with those crowns? In Revelation 4:10-11, the twenty-four elders cast their crowns before the throne and say, "Worthy are You, Lord, to receive the glory and the honor and the power" (Revelation 4:11). I believe that is what we will want to do with ours. Every reward will be laid at His feet.

Jesus also spoke of rewards in terms of responsibility in His kingdom. In the parable of the minas, the faithful servants are given authority over cities (Luke 19:17-19). What we do with what God has given us now shapes how we serve Him then.

The Marriage of the Lamb

The Bible often pictures the relationship between Christ and His church as a marriage. Paul says a husband should love his wife just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her (Ephesians 5:25-27). He told the Corinthians he had betrothed them to one husband, to present them as a pure virgin to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2).

A Jewish wedding in Jesus' day had stages. First came the betrothal, a binding agreement, often sealed with a price paid. Then the groom went back to his father's house to prepare a room for his bride. When everything was ready, often at a time the bride did not know, he came for her with his friends, and took her back to his father's house for the wedding and the celebration. That is exactly the picture Jesus used in John 14:2-3.

In Revelation 19, just before Jesus rides out of heaven on a white horse, John hears a great multitude in heaven.

> *Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." And it was given to her that she should clothe herself in fine linen, pure and bright; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.*
> (Revelation 19:7-8)

The wife has made herself ready. She is dressed in fine linen, which is the righteous acts of the saints. That tells me the judgment seat of Christ has already happened. The bride has been tested and rewarded before the wedding, and she is clothed for it.

The angel adds, "Blessed ***are*** those who have been called to the supper of the marriage of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:9). Some Bible teachers believe the wedding supper itself is a great feast at the start of the Millennium on earth, with Old Testament saints and Tribulation saints as guests. Others see it as taking place in heaven before the Second Coming. Either way, the church is with the Lord, and the next time she appears, she rides out behind Him (Revelation 19:14).

Living for That Day

Here is why this matters right now. Paul said we make it our ambition to be pleasing to Him (2 Corinthians 5:9), because we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Every act of kindness done in His name, every hour spent in prayer, every dollar given, every lonely person visited, every child taught the Bible, is seen and will be remembered. Jesus said even a cup of cold water given in His name will not lose its reward (Matthew 10:42).

You will not be rewarded for how famous you were or how big your ministry was. You will be rewarded for faithfulness with what God gave you.

Study Questions

1. Why is the judgment seat of Christ not a judgment about whether a believer is saved?
2. What do the gold, silver, and precious stones of 1 Corinthians 3 stand for? What about the wood, hay, and straw?
3. Which of the five crowns speaks to you most? Why?
4. How does the picture of a Jewish wedding help explain John 14:2-3?
5. What is one thing you could start doing this week that would last at the judgment seat of Christ?

Part Three: The Seven Years

Chapter 11: The Seven Years at a Glance

> *Alas! For that day **is** great, so that **there is** none like it; and it **is** a time of distress for Jacob, and from it he will be saved.*
>
> Jeremiah 30:7 (SLB)

After the church is taken up, the seventieth seven of Daniel begins. It is the darkest stretch of time the world will ever see. Jesus said there will be great tribulation such as has not happened from the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will (Matthew 24:21). This chapter gives you the whole seven years in one view, so the chapters that follow have a frame to hang on.

What Starts the Clock

The Rapture does not start the seven years. The signing of a covenant does. Daniel 9:27 says the coming prince will make a covenant strong for the many for one seven. “The many” in context are Daniel’s people, Israel. Many Bible teachers believe this will be a peace treaty or security agreement that lets Israel worship freely and offer sacrifices again.

That means there may be a short gap between the Rapture and the start of the Tribulation. The Bible does not say how long. It could be days, or it could be longer. What we know is that the restrainer must be removed before the man of sin is revealed (2 Thessalonians 2:6-8), and he is revealed by making that covenant.

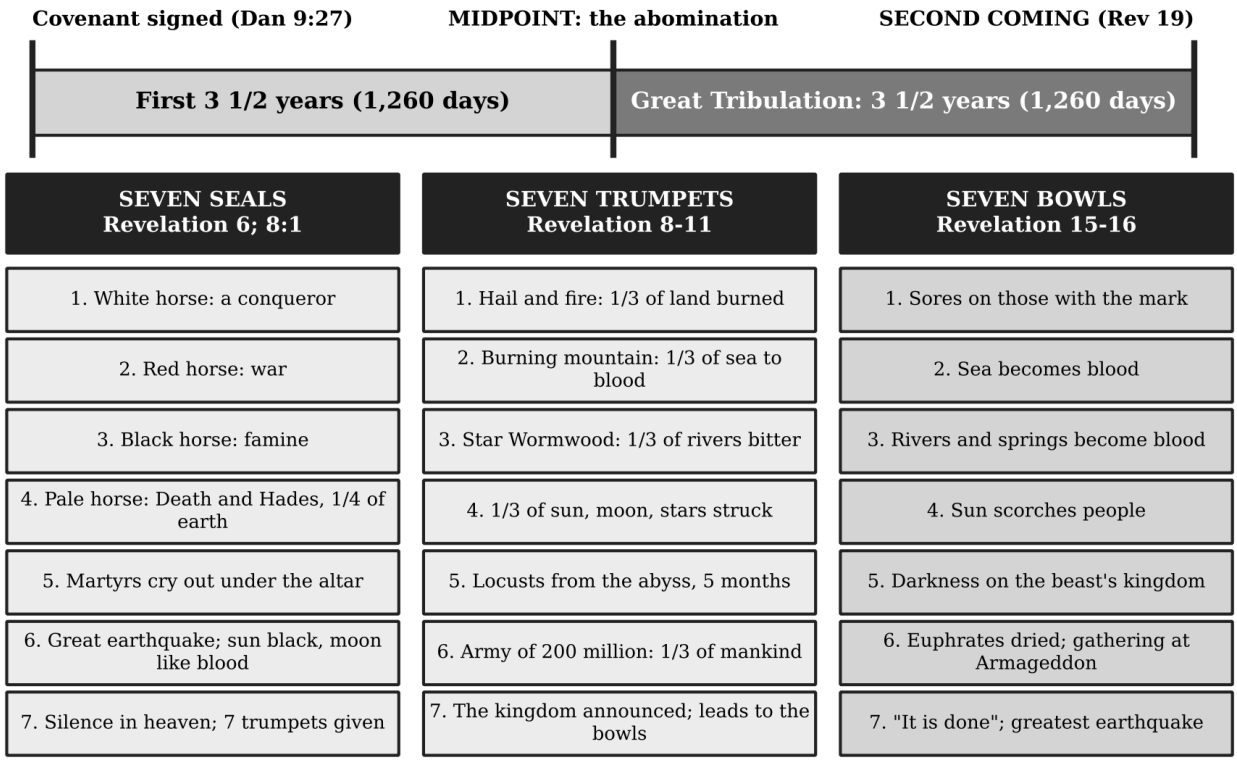
Why the Tribulation Happens

God does not pour out judgment because He enjoys it. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 33:11). The Bible gives several purposes for the Tribulation.

1. **To finish Daniel’s seventy sevens.** God promised to deal with Israel’s sin and bring in everlasting righteousness (Daniel 9:24). The Tribulation is the time of Jacob’s trouble, but Jeremiah adds, “and from it he will be saved” (Jeremiah 30:7). It ends with Israel as a nation turning to her Messiah (Zechariah 12:10; Romans 11:26).
2. **To judge a world that has rejected God.** The judgments fall on those who dwell on the earth (Revelation 3:10; 6:10), a phrase Revelation uses for people whose whole hope is in this world.
3. **To bring people to repentance.** Even in the middle of judgment, God is calling. An angel flies through the sky preaching the eternal gospel to every nation (Revelation 14:6-7). Sadly, many still refuse. After the sixth trumpet, John says the rest of mankind did not repent (Revelation 9:20-21).
4. **To defeat Satan and prepare for the kingdom.** The seven years end with the beast and the false prophet thrown into the lake of fire and Satan bound (Revelation 19:20; 20:1-3).

The Three Series of Judgments

Revelation describes three series of seven judgments: seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls. As I teach in my Revelation study, I see them as happening in order, with each series growing out of the one before it. The seventh seal opens into the seven trumpets (Revelation 8:1-2). The seventh trumpet leads to the seven bowls (Revelation 11:15; 15:1). The judgments get stronger as they go: the fourth seal touches a fourth of the earth, the trumpets touch a third, and the bowls touch everything.



Each series grows out of the one before: the 7th seal opens the trumpets, and the 7th trumpet leads to the bowls.

Figure 5. The Seven Years at a Glance

The Seals

The Lamb opens the seals of the scroll in heaven (Revelation 6:1).

- **First seal:** a rider on a white horse with a bow, going out conquering (6:1-2). Many see this as the Antichrist coming on the scene as a peacemaker. He is a counterfeit of Christ, who rides a white horse in Revelation 19.
- **Second seal:** a rider on a red horse takes peace from the earth (6:3-4).
- **Third seal:** a rider on a black horse with scales, famine and soaring prices (6:5-6).
- **Fourth seal:** a rider on a pale horse named Death, with Hades following, given authority over a fourth of the earth (6:7-8).
- **Fifth seal:** the souls of those killed for the word of God cry out under the altar (6:9-11).
- **Sixth seal:** a great earthquake, the sun black, the moon like blood, and people hiding in caves from the wrath of the Lamb (6:12-17).

- **Seventh seal:** silence in heaven for about half an hour, and the seven trumpets are given (8:1-2).

Notice how closely the seals match what Jesus described in Matthew 24: false christs, wars, famines, death, martyrdom, and signs in the sun and moon. Jesus and John are describing the same period.

The Trumpets

- **First trumpet:** hail and fire mixed with blood; a third of the earth, trees, and grass burned (8:7).
- **Second trumpet:** something like a great burning mountain thrown into the sea; a third of the sea becomes blood (8:8-9).
- **Third trumpet:** a great star called Wormwood falls on a third of the rivers and springs, and many die from the bitter water (8:10-11).
- **Fourth trumpet:** a third of the sun, moon, and stars are struck (8:12).
- **Fifth trumpet:** the abyss is opened, and locust-like creatures torment people without God's seal for five months (9:1-11).
- **Sixth trumpet:** four angels at the Euphrates are released, and an army of two hundred million kills a third of mankind (9:13-21).
- **Seventh trumpet:** loud voices in heaven say the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ (11:15).

The Bowls

The bowls come near the end, in quick succession. They are called the last plagues, because in them the wrath of God is finished (Revelation 15:1).

- **First bowl:** painful sores on those who took the mark of the beast (16:2).
- **Second bowl:** the sea becomes like the blood of a dead man, and every living thing in it dies (16:3).
- **Third bowl:** rivers and springs become blood (16:4-7).
- **Fourth bowl:** the sun scorches people with fire (16:8-9).
- **Fifth bowl:** darkness on the throne of the beast and his kingdom (16:10-11).
- **Sixth bowl:** the Euphrates dries up, and demonic spirits gather the kings of the world to Armageddon (16:12-16).
- **Seventh bowl:** a voice from the throne says, "It is done," and the greatest earthquake in history splits the great city and flattens the cities of the nations (16:17-21).

The Pauses

Between the series, Revelation pauses to show us God's people and God's plan: the 144,000 and the great multitude (chapter 7), the little scroll and the two witnesses (chapters 10 and 11), the woman, the dragon, the beasts, and the Lamb on Mount Zion (chapters 12 through 14), and the fall of Babylon (chapters 17 and 18). We will look at those in the chapters that follow.

Midpoint: The Turn for the Worse

Three things happen at or near the middle of the seven years, and they turn a hard time into a horrible one. The Antichrist breaks his covenant and sets up the abomination of desolation in the temple (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15). Satan is thrown out of heaven down to the earth, "having great fury,

knowing that he has a short time" (Revelation 12:12). And the beast is given authority to act for forty-two months (Revelation 13:5). That is why Jesus told those in Judea to flee to the mountains without even going back for a coat (Matthew 24:16-18).

Study Questions

1. According to Daniel 9:27, what event starts the seven years?
2. Which of the four purposes for the Tribulation stands out most to you?
3. Compare the seals in Revelation 6 with Jesus' words in Matthew 24:4-29. What matches do you see?
4. Read Revelation 9:20-21 and 16:9-11. What do these verses teach about the human heart?
5. What three events happen near the midpoint of the seven years?

Chapter 12: The Antichrist and the False Prophet

> *Young children, it is **the** last hour; and as you heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from which we know that it is **the** last hour.*
>
> 1 John 2:18 (SLB)

The Bible describes a coming world ruler who will be Satan's masterpiece of deception. John calls him the antichrist (1 John 2:18). Paul calls him the man of sin and the son of destruction (2 Thessalonians 2:3). Daniel calls him the little horn (Daniel 7:8) and the prince who is to come (Daniel 9:26). Revelation calls him the beast (Revelation 13:1). And beside him stands a second figure, a religious leader the Bible calls the False Prophet.

What Anti Means

The Greek prefix *anti* can mean against, and it can also mean instead of. Both fit. The Antichrist is against Christ, and he presents himself in place of Christ. He is a counterfeit. Satan has always wanted to be worshiped like God (Isaiah 14:13-14; Matthew 4:8-9), and the Antichrist is his attempt to get it.

Look at how the counterfeit works in Revelation. God is a Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Satan sets up an unholy trinity: the dragon, the beast, and the False Prophet (Revelation 16:13). Jesus died and rose again. The beast has a deadly wound that is healed, and the whole earth marvels (Revelation 13:3). The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ and seals believers. The False Prophet glorifies the beast and marks his followers (Revelation 13:12, 16).

What the Bible Tells Us About Him

Putting the passages together, here is what we know.

What the Bible says	Where to read it
He rises from the old Roman world, among ten kings	Daniel 7:7-8, 24; 9:26
He is a powerful speaker who says arrogant, blasphemous things	Daniel 7:8, 25; Revelation 13:5-6
He makes a seven-year covenant with Israel	Daniel 9:27
He breaks it at the midpoint and stops the sacrifices	Daniel 9:27
He sits in the temple and claims to be God	2 Thessalonians 2:4; Matthew 24:15
He does false signs and wonders by Satan's power	2 Thessalonians 2:9; Revelation 13:2-4
He is given authority for forty-two months	Revelation 13:5
He makes war on the saints and overcomes them	Daniel 7:21, 25; Revelation 13:7
He rules over every tribe, people, language, and nation	Revelation 13:7-8
He is destroyed by Jesus at His coming	2 Thessalonians 2:8; Revelation 19:19-20

Who Is He?

I don't know, and neither does anyone else. Over the centuries, Christians have named Nero, various popes, Napoleon, Hitler, Mussolini, and a long string of modern politicians. They were all wrong. Paul said the man of sin will be revealed in his own time (2 Thessalonians 2:6), and in the view I hold, that happens after the church is gone. So believers should not be trying to identify him. If you think you have figured out who he is, you have figured out who he is not.

John also warned that even in his day "many antichrists have arisen" (1 John 2:18). The spirit of antichrist, which denies that Jesus is the Christ come in the flesh, has been at work for two thousand years (1 John 2:22; 4:3). The final Antichrist is the full flowering of something that has been growing all along.

The Number 666

> *Here is the wisdom. The one who has understanding, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is a man's number; and its number **is** six hundred sixty-six.* (Revelation 13:18)

In Hebrew and Greek, letters doubled as numbers, so every name had a number value. Some have worked out that the name Nero Caesar, spelled a certain way in Hebrew letters, adds up to 666. Others have tried the same trick with dozens of other names. I am cautious about all of it. John says the number will be calculated by those with wisdom, and I believe it will become clear to the people living through the Tribulation when the beast is revealed. Some also note that six is one short of seven, the number of completion in Revelation, so 666 may picture man trying to be God and falling short three times over.

The False Prophet

The second beast comes up out of the earth. He has two horns like a lamb, but he speaks like a dragon (Revelation 13:11). He looks gentle and harmless, but his message comes from Satan. His whole job is to get the world to worship the first beast. He does great signs, even making fire come down from heaven, and he sets up an image of the beast that is given breath and speaks (Revelation 13:13-15).

Jesus warned that false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect (Matthew 24:24). A miracle by itself does not prove anything is from God. The test is always what it says about Jesus and whether it agrees with God's Word (Deuteronomy 13:1-4; 1 John 4:1-3).

The Mark of the Beast

> *And it causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the slaves, that it should give them a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one should be able to buy or to sell except the one who has the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of its name.* (Revelation 13:16-17)

This is one of the most talked about verses in the Bible, and one of the most misunderstood. Here is what I believe it plainly says. The mark is given on the right hand or the forehead. Without it, no one can buy

or sell. It is tied to worshiping the beast and his image. And taking it is a final, deliberate choice. An angel warns that anyone who worships the beast and his image and receives a mark on his forehead or hand will drink the wine of the wrath of God (Revelation 14:9-11).

Here is what I do not believe. I don't believe a Christian today can take the mark by accident, through a vaccine, a bar code, a chip, or a bank card. The mark is not here yet, because the beast is not here yet. It will come with an open demand to worship him. No one will take it without knowing what they are choosing. So I don't want any believer to live in fear about this. We will be with the Lord.

But the warning is real for those who are left behind. When that day comes, the cost of refusing will be enormous: no food, no work, no home, and possibly death (Revelation 13:15). And yet the cost of accepting will be eternal.

His End

The Antichrist's career is short. Paul says the Lord Jesus will kill him with the breath of His mouth and bring him to nothing by the appearance of His coming (2 Thessalonians 2:8). Revelation says the beast and the False Prophet will be thrown alive into the lake of fire (Revelation 19:20). They are the first two people sent there. A thousand years later, the devil joins them (Revelation 20:10).

Study Questions

1. What are the two meanings of the prefix *anti*? How does the Antichrist fit both?
2. List three ways Satan's unholy trinity counterfeits the true Trinity.
3. Why should believers not try to identify the Antichrist?
4. What is the test of a true sign or teacher, according to Deuteronomy 13:1-4 and 1 John 4:1-3?
5. Why do you think the mark of the beast will be a deliberate choice rather than an accident?

Chapter 13: The Temple, the Covenant, and the Abomination

> *Let no one deceive you in any way; because **it will not come** unless the apostasy comes first and the man of sin is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he sits down in the temple of God as God, displaying himself that he is God.*
>
> 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 (SLB)

Several of the clearest end-time prophecies assume there will be a temple standing in Jerusalem during the Tribulation. Daniel says the coming prince will stop the sacrifices (Daniel 9:27). Jesus says the abomination of desolation will stand in the holy place (Matthew 24:15). Paul says the man of sin will take his seat in the temple of God (2 Thessalonians 2:4). John is told to measure the temple of God and the altar (Revelation 11:1). That raises an obvious question, because there has been no Jewish temple in Jerusalem since A.D. 70.

In project management, an exact buffer between two milestones is set aside for specific work. When I read Daniel 12:11-12, the extra days beyond the 1,260 look like a real window before the kingdom begins. Taking the numbers literally fits the precision God used in Daniel's other prophecies. God's calendar never slips.

The Temples in History

The first temple was built by Solomon around 960 B.C. and destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. The second temple was built by the returning exiles under Zerubbabel, finished in 516 B.C., and later rebuilt and greatly expanded by Herod the Great. That was the temple Jesus taught in. Jesus told His disciples that not one stone would be left on another (Matthew 24:1-2), and in A.D. 70 the Roman army under Titus burned it to the ground.

Since then, the Temple Mount has had no Jewish temple. Today the site holds the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque, and it is one of the most contested pieces of ground on earth.

A Temple in the Tribulation

I believe the Bible teaches a third temple will be built, either before the Tribulation or early in it, and that sacrifices will start again. How that will happen on such contested ground, I don’t know. It may be part of the covenant the coming prince makes with Israel. The Bible does not say.

I also want to be clear about something. That temple will not be built on God’s command, and its sacrifices will not take away sin. Jesus offered one sacrifice for sins for all time (Hebrews 10:12). But God will still use it in His plan, the way He used many things His people did in unbelief. It sets the stage for the abomination.

What the Abomination Is

An abomination in the Old Testament is something God finds detestable, often an idol. An abomination of desolation is an idol or act so offensive that it leaves the holy place desolate, defiled and abandoned.

History gives us a preview. In 167 B.C., the Greek king Antiochus IV Epiphanes set up an altar to Zeus in the temple in Jerusalem and offered pagan sacrifices on it. The Jewish book of 1 Maccabees calls it "the abomination of desolation" (1 Maccabees 1:54). Daniel had foretold that event too (Daniel 11:31). But Jesus, speaking almost two hundred years after Antiochus, said the abomination Daniel spoke of was still future (Matthew 24:15). Antiochus was the preview. The Antichrist will be the real thing.

Paul says what the final abomination will be. The man of sin will take his seat in the temple of God and proclaim himself to be God (2 Thessalonians 2:4). Revelation adds that an image of the beast will be made, given breath so that it speaks, and that those who will not worship it will be killed (Revelation 13:14-15).

Run

Jesus told the people of Judea what to do when they see it.

> *then let those in Judea flee to the mountains; let the **one** on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house; and let the **one** in the field not turn back to take his garments. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those nursing in those days! And pray that your flight may not happen in winter nor on a Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not happened from **the** beginning of **the** world until now, nor by any means will happen.* (Matthew 24:16-21)

Notice how Jewish these instructions are. Judea. Housetops. The Sabbath. Jesus is speaking to believing Jews living in the land during the Tribulation. When they see the abomination, they are not to wait. Revelation 12 shows Satan trying to destroy the woman, a picture of Israel, and God carrying her into the wilderness, where she is nourished for a time, times, and half a time (Revelation 12:6, 13-14). Many Bible teachers believe this refers to a faithful remnant of Israel protected by God during the last three and a half years. Some think of the ancient rock city of Petra in Jordan as the place, but the Bible does not name it, so I hold that loosely.

The Final Seventy-Five Days

At the end of the book of Daniel, the angel gives Daniel two more numbers.

> *And from the time that the continual offering is removed and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there will be one thousand two hundred and ninety days. How blessed is the one who waits and reaches one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.* (Daniel 12:11-12)

From the abomination to the end of the seven years is 1,260 days. Daniel adds thirty more days to get 1,290, and then forty-five more to get 1,335. The Bible does not explain these extra days. Many teachers believe they cover events after the Second Coming: cleansing the temple, judging the nations, and setting

up the kingdom. Whatever they mean, there is a special blessing for those who make it to the 1,335th day. I take that as the start of the kingdom.

What This Means for Us

Some Christians get very excited about every news story concerning the Temple Mount, the red heifer, or temple preparations. I understand why. But I would encourage you to keep your eyes on Jesus. We are not waiting for a temple. We are waiting for Him. The true temple of God today is the church (1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:21), and each believer's body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). Keep that temple clean.

Study Questions

1. What four passages assume a temple will be standing during the Tribulation?
2. What did Antiochus IV Epiphanes do in 167 B.C.? Why did Jesus still speak of the abomination as future?
3. Why are Jesus' instructions in Matthew 24:16-20 so specific to Judea?
4. What do you think the extra days in Daniel 12:11-12 might be for?
5. According to 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 6:19, where is God's temple today? What does that mean for how you live?

Chapter 14: God's Witnesses in the Dark Days

> *After these things I saw, and look, a great multitude which no one was able to number, out of every nation and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches in their hands*
>
> Revelation 7:9 (SLB)

If you have been raised in church and you wonder whether God will give up on the world after the Rapture, the answer is no. Some of the greatest evangelism in history will happen during the Tribulation. God will not leave Himself without witnesses even in the darkest days the world has ever known.

People Will Be Saved

Revelation shows people coming to faith all through the seven years. The fifth seal shows martyrs under the altar, killed for the word of God and for the testimony they held (Revelation 6:9). In chapter 7, John sees a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne in white robes. The elder tells John who they are.

> *And I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."* (Revelation 7:14)

These are people saved during the Tribulation. Many of them pay for their faith with their lives (Revelation 20:4). But they are washed in the same blood that saves us today.

That also means something important. If you have loved ones who do not know Christ, and the Rapture happens, it will not be too late for them, as long as they are still alive and have not taken the mark. I pray it never comes to that. It is far better to come to Christ now. But God's mercy does not end at the Rapture.

The 144,000

Before the trumpets sound, God stops everything to seal His servants.

> *And I heard the number of those who were sealed: one hundred forty-four thousand sealed out of every tribe of **the** sons of Israel.* (Revelation 7:4)

John lists twelve thousand from each of twelve tribes (Revelation 7:5-8). I take this plainly, as I do in my Revelation study: these are Jewish believers, from the physical tribes of Israel, sealed by God for protection during the judgments. Some groups claim to be the 144,000 today, but the text says they are of every tribe of the sons of Israel, and it names the tribes.

The tribe of Dan is missing from the list, possibly because of that tribe's history with idol worship (Judges 18). Joseph stands in for Ephraim, and Manasseh is listed separately.

In Revelation 14:1-5, we see them again, standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion with His name and His Father's name on their foreheads. They are called firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. Many believe they will be powerful witnesses for Christ during the Tribulation, the way Paul, a Jewish believer, carried the gospel to the nations in the first century.

The Two Witnesses

> *And I will give to My two witnesses, and they will prophesy **for** one thousand two hundred sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.* (Revelation 11:3)

For 1,260 days, two prophets preach in Jerusalem dressed in sackcloth, the clothing of mourning and repentance. Anyone who tries to harm them is destroyed by fire from their mouths. They can shut the sky so no rain falls, turn water to blood, and strike the earth with plagues as often as they want (Revelation 11:5-6).

Who are they? As I explain in my Revelation study, the main views are that they are Moses and Elijah, Enoch and Elijah, or two new prophets God raises up. Their powers match Moses, who turned water to blood, and Elijah, who called down fire and shut the sky for three and a half years (1 Kings 17:1; James 5:17). Both Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus at His transfiguration (Matthew 17:3). And Malachi said God would send Elijah the prophet before the great and dreadful day of the LORD (Malachi 4:5). I lean toward Moses and Elijah, but I hold it loosely.

When they finish their testimony, the beast kills them, and their bodies lie in the street of the great city where their Lord was crucified, which is Jerusalem. The whole world looks at their bodies for three and a half days and celebrates, sending gifts to each other (Revelation 11:7-10). Before modern television and phones, it was hard to see how the whole world could watch. Now it is easy.

Then God raises them up. They hear a loud voice say, "Come up here," and they go up to heaven in a cloud while their enemies watch (Revelation 11:11-12). In that same hour, a great earthquake hits Jerusalem, and the survivors give glory to the God of heaven (Revelation 11:13).

An Angel With the Gospel

Here is something that has never happened before. God sends an angel to preach.

> *And I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people, saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; and worship the One who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and springs of waters."*
> (Revelation 14:6-7)

In this age, God has given the job of preaching the gospel to His people, not to angels. But in the Tribulation, the whole world will hear the gospel one more time from the sky. No one will be able to say they never heard. Jesus said the gospel of the kingdom would be proclaimed in the whole inhabited world before the end comes (Matthew 24:14). This angel helps make sure it is.

Right after, two more angels follow. One announces the fall of Babylon. The other warns that anyone who takes the mark of the beast will drink the wine of God's wrath (Revelation 14:8-11). God's final appeal comes with a clear warning.

Israel Turns to Her Messiah

The greatest harvest of all comes at the very end of the Tribulation. When the nations gather against Jerusalem and the city is about to fall, the Lord Himself fights for His people.

> *And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplications; and they will look to Me,* ***to Him*** *whom they have pierced; and they will mourn over Him like a mourning over the only* ***son****, and* ***they will*** *show bitterness over Him as* ***one*** *shows bitterness over the firstborn.* (Zechariah 12:10)

The people of Israel will look on Jesus, the One they pierced, and recognize Him as their Messiah. They will mourn the way a family mourns an only son. Zechariah 13:1 says on that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity. And Paul says, "and so all Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:26).

God keeps His promises.

Study Questions

1. Who is the great multitude of Revelation 7:9-14? What does that tell you about God's mercy during the Tribulation?
2. Why do you think God seals the 144,000 before the trumpet judgments?
3. What do the powers of the two witnesses remind you of from the Old Testament?
4. Why is it significant that an angel preaches the gospel in Revelation 14:6-7?
5. Read Zechariah 12:10 and 13:1. How will Israel come to faith at the end of the Tribulation?

Chapter 15: Gog and Magog: The Invasion From the North

> *And you shall come up against My people Israel like the cloud to cover the land; at the end of the days it shall be, and I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me, when I am sanctified through you before their eyes, O Gog.*
>
> Ezekiel 38:16 (SLB)

Ezekiel 38 and 39 describe one of the most dramatic battles in all of prophecy. A great army led by a ruler called Gog comes down from the far north, joined by nations from every direction, to attack Israel. And God Himself destroys it on the mountains of Israel. Bible teachers have argued for centuries about who these nations are and when this happens. In this chapter I will give you what the text says, the main views, and where I lean.

The Setting

These two chapters come right after Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones, where God promises to bring Israel back to her land and to put His Spirit in her (Ezekiel 37). Then, in chapter 38, God looks ahead to a time after that return.

> *After many days you shall be mustered; in the latter part of the years you shall come into a land restored from **the** sword, gathered from many peoples, on the mountains of Israel, which had been a continual waste; and it has been brought out from the peoples, and they shall dwell in security, all of them.* (Ezekiel 38:8)

Notice the details. It happens "in the latter part of the years." Israel has been brought back from many peoples to a land that had long been a waste. And Israel is living in security. Gog sees a land of open villages, without walls, bars, or gates (Ezekiel 38:11), and he decides to take it.

For most of history, no one could have pointed to a time when this fit. Israel was not even a nation. Today the Jewish people are back in the land, and the land that lay waste for centuries is farmed and built up. The stage is being set.

The Nations

> *Son of man, set your face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, and you shall say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: Look, I **am** against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal.* (Ezekiel 38:2-3)

Ezekiel names Gog, a ruler, from the land of Magog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. His allies are Persia, Cush, and Put, Gomer, and the house of Togarmah from the remotest parts of the north (Ezekiel 38:5-6).

Many of these names come from the table of nations in Genesis 10, where Magog, Meshech, Tubal, and Gomer are sons of Japheth (Genesis 10:2), and Togarmah is a grandson (Genesis 10:3). The ancient Jewish historian Josephus said that the people descended from Magog were the ones the Greeks called Scythians (Antiquities 1.6.1), the horse people who roamed the lands north of the Black Sea and the Caucasus Mountains.

Here is how many Bible teachers place these names on a modern map. I give it as the common view, not as settled fact.

Name in Ezekiel	Ancient people or place	Common modern match
Magog	The Scythians, north of the Black Sea and Caspian Sea (Josephus)	Lands of the former Soviet Union in Central Asia, and southern Russia
Meshech and Tubal	Peoples of central and eastern Asia Minor	Turkey
Persia	The Persian Empire	Iran
Cush	The land south of Egypt	Sudan and the upper Nile
Put	North Africa, west of Egypt	Libya
Gomer	The Cimmerians, in Asia Minor	Turkey
Togarmah	Eastern Asia Minor, the remotest parts of the north	Turkey and the Caucasus

You may have heard that the word Rosh in some translations means Russia. Older translations like the King James read "the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal," and that is how the SLB reads too. Others read "the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal," and some have linked Rosh to Russia because the two words sound alike. Scholars dispute that link, and I don't build on it. What we can say is that Ezekiel stresses the remotest parts of the north (Ezekiel 38:6, 15; 39:2), and the land directly north of Israel, far north, is Russia.

Notice also who protests the invasion. Sheba and Dedan, in Arabia, and the merchants of Tarshish ask Gog whether he has come to take plunder (Ezekiel 38:13). They object, but they don't stop him.

God Fights for Israel

Israel does not win this battle. God does. He shakes the land with a great earthquake. Every man's sword turns against his brother. And God rains judgment on the invaders.

> *And I will enter into judgment with him with pestilence and with blood; and an overflowing rain and hailstones, fire and sulfur I will rain on him and on his troops and on the many peoples who **are** with him. And I will magnify Myself and sanctify Myself, and I will make Myself known in the eyes of many nations; and they shall know that I **am** the LORD.'*
> (Ezekiel 38:22-23)

The clean-up takes a long time. The people of Israel spend seven months burying the dead to cleanse the land (Ezekiel 39:12), and they burn the weapons for fuel for seven years (Ezekiel 39:9). And the purpose is stated over and over: so that the nations will know that God is the LORD, and so that Israel will know Him too (Ezekiel 38:16, 23; 39:7, 22).

When Does It Happen?

This is where good Bible teachers part ways. Here are the main views.

1. **Before the Tribulation.** Gog invades after the Rapture and before the covenant of Daniel 9:27, or in the years leading up to it. The seven years of burning weapons would then fit within the Tribulation. The sudden defeat of a great northern power and its allies could also clear the way for the Antichrist to rise.
2. **In the first half of the Tribulation.** Israel is living in security because of the covenant the Antichrist makes with her. Gog comes while Israel feels safe. This is a common pre-tribulation view.
3. **At the end of the Tribulation.** Gog's invasion is part of the gathering at Armageddon.
4. **At the end of the Millennium.** Revelation 20:8 uses the names Gog and Magog for the final rebellion.

I lean toward the first or second view, before the Tribulation or early in it. Here is why. Ezekiel's battle has armies from a few named nations around Israel, while Armageddon gathers the kings of the whole world (Revelation 16:14). Ezekiel's battle ends with seven months of burying and seven years of burning weapons, which is hard to fit at the very end of the Tribulation or after the Millennium, when the earth and heaven flee from the Great White Throne. And in Revelation 20, the rebels come from the four corners of the earth, not just the north. I believe John borrowed the names Gog and Magog in Revelation 20 to say the final rebellion is like Ezekiel's, but on a worldwide scale. But I hold the timing loosely. The Bible does not give us a date, and the main point is clear either way.

What It Shows Us

Ezekiel 39 ends with a promise that goes beyond the battle.

> *And I will not hide My face from them anymore, for I have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Lord GOD.* (Ezekiel 39:29)

That is where God is taking Israel. The battle is a step toward the day when Israel knows her God and His Spirit is poured out on her, the same day Zechariah describes when they look on the One they pierced (Zechariah 12:10).

And it shows us something about God that every believer can hold onto. When the nations rage, God is not worried (Psalm 2:1-4). No army is too big for Him. He keeps His promises to His people, and He will make His name known.

Study Questions

1. What details in Ezekiel 38:8 and 38:11 describe Israel at the time of this invasion?
2. Read Genesis 10:2-3. Which names from Ezekiel 38 appear there?
3. Who protests the invasion in Ezekiel 38:13? What does that tell you?
4. Which view of the timing do you find most convincing, and why?
5. According to Ezekiel 39:7 and 39:29, what is God's purpose in this battle?

Chapter 16: Babylon the Great

> *And I heard another voice out of heaven, saying, "Come out of her, My people, so that you may not share in her sins, and so that you may not receive of her plagues;"*
>
> Revelation 18:4 (SLB)

Babylon runs through the Bible from beginning to end. It starts at the tower of Babel, where people tried to make a name for themselves and reach heaven on their own terms (Genesis 11:1-9). It shows up again as the empire that destroyed Jerusalem and carried Judah into exile. And it shows up one last time in Revelation 17 and 18, as Babylon the Great, the mother of prostitutes, and the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.

Two Chapters, Two Pictures

Revelation 17 and 18 describe Babylon in two ways. In chapter 17, Babylon is a woman, a prostitute dressed in purple and scarlet, riding a scarlet beast with seven heads and ten horns, holding a golden cup full of abominations, and drunk with the blood of the saints (Revelation 17:3-6). In chapter 18, Babylon is a city, a center of trade and luxury, and when it falls, the merchants and sea captains of the world weep because no one buys their cargo anymore (Revelation 18:11-19).

Many Bible teachers see two sides of Babylon here: a religious system in chapter 17 and a commercial and political system in chapter 18. Others see one city described two ways. Either way, it is the world's system of false worship, pride, wealth, and power, set against God.

The Woman on the Beast

The woman is called a prostitute because in the Bible, turning from God to idols is often called spiritual adultery (Jeremiah 3:6-9; Hosea 2:1-5). She sits on many waters, which the angel explains are peoples, multitudes, nations, and languages (Revelation 17:15). She is a worldwide religious system that blends together the false worship of every culture.

Notice that she rides the beast. For a while, the Antichrist uses her to hold the world together. But then the tables turn.

> *And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the prostitute, and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and burn her up with fire. For God has put into their hearts to do His purpose, and to do one purpose, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.* (Revelation 17:16-17)

I believe this means that sometime in the Tribulation, likely near the midpoint, the beast and his ten kings will destroy the world religious system, because the Antichrist wants all worship for himself. That is when he sits in the temple and demands to be worshiped as God (2 Thessalonians 2:4). And God uses even the beast's evil to carry out His own purpose.

Which City?

The angel says the woman is the great city that has a kingdom over the kings of the earth (Revelation 17:18), and that the seven heads are seven mountains on which she sits (Revelation 17:9). Bible teachers hold three main views about what city is meant.

- **Rome.** Rome was famous as the city on seven hills, and in John's day it ruled the kings of the earth. Peter seems to call Rome "Babylon" as a code name (1 Peter 5:13). Many Protestants since the Reformation have seen the woman as a picture of a corrupt church centered in Rome.
- **A rebuilt Babylon on the Euphrates.** Some believe the ancient city in what is now Iraq will be rebuilt as a great world capital. They point to prophecies like Isaiah 13 and Jeremiah 50 and 51, which describe Babylon destroyed suddenly and never inhabited again. Ancient Babylon faded slowly, so they say those prophecies are still future.
- **A symbol for the world system.** Others see Babylon as a picture of the whole godless world, whatever city may be its capital at the time.

I lean toward seeing Babylon as both a real future city that serves as the Antichrist's capital and as the center of a world system. I don't believe we can name the city for certain until the time comes. The angel also says the seven heads are seven kings, five fallen, one is, and one is yet to come (Revelation 17:10), which tells me the mountains may stand for kingdoms, as mountains often do in prophecy, not just hills. I hold this loosely.

One Hour

When Babylon falls, it falls fast. Three times in chapter 18 the mourners say, "in one hour" (Revelation 18:10, 17, 19). The kings who committed immorality with her stand far off, watching the smoke of her burning. A mighty angel picks up a stone like a great millstone and throws it into the sea, saying this is how Babylon will be thrown down, and will never be found again (Revelation 18:21).

In heaven, the response is just the opposite. A great multitude shouts "Hallelujah!" because God has judged the great prostitute and avenged the blood of His servants (Revelation 19:1-2). That word, Hallelujah, which means praise the LORD, appears four times in Revelation 19:1-6, and those are the only places it appears in the whole New Testament.

Come Out of Her

Here is the part that speaks to us today. Before Babylon falls, a voice from heaven calls out, "Come out of her, My people" (Revelation 18:4). Babylon is not only a future city. Its spirit is already at work: the love of luxury, the pride that says "I sit ***as*** queen" (Revelation 18:7), the trade in "bodies, and souls of men" (Revelation 18:13), the worship of money and pleasure.

John wrote, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world" (1 John 2:15). We live in Babylon's world, but we are not to belong to it. Every generation of believers has to hear that call to come out.

Study Questions

1. Where does Babylon first appear in the Bible? What was its sin?

2. How is Babylon described differently in Revelation 17 and Revelation 18?

3. Why does the beast turn on the woman in Revelation 17:16-17?

4. Which view of the city of Babylon do you find most convincing? Why?

5. What does it mean for you today to “come out of her”?

Chapter 17: Armageddon and the Second Coming

> *And I saw heaven opened, and look, a white horse, and the One sitting on it **is** called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.*
>
> Revelation 19:11 (SLB)

Everything in Bible prophecy has been building to this moment. The seven years are almost over. The bowls have been poured out. The armies of the world have gathered. And heaven opens.

The Gathering

Under the sixth bowl, the great river Euphrates dries up to prepare the way for the kings from the east. Then three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the False Prophet. They are spirits of demons doing signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world to gather them for the war of the great day of God the Almighty (Revelation 16:12-14).

> *And they gathered them to the place which is called in Hebrew Armageddon.* (Revelation 16:16)

Armageddon comes from the Hebrew *Har Megiddo*, the mountain or hill of Megiddo. Megiddo was a fortress city overlooking the Jezreel Valley in northern Israel, a wide plain where many battles were fought in Bible times. It is where Deborah and Barak defeated Sisera (Judges 5:19) and where King Josiah was killed (2 Kings 23:29).

Armageddon is the gathering place. But the fighting spreads much wider. Joel speaks of the valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3:2, 12). Zechariah says all the nations will be gathered against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured (Zechariah 14:2). Isaiah pictures the Lord coming from Edom, to the south, with His garments stained red (Isaiah 63:1-3). And Revelation says blood flows from the winepress as high as a horse's bridle for about two hundred miles (Revelation 14:20). This is not one battle in one valley. It is a war across the whole land.

And notice why they gather. The kings of the earth may think they are coming to fight one another, or to destroy Jerusalem. But John says they assemble to make war against the One sitting on the horse and against His army (Revelation 19:19). In the end, the whole world turns on God.

The Sign of the Son of Man

Jesus described what happens next.

> *And immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.* (Matthew 24:29-30)

At the Rapture, Jesus comes in the blink of an eye, and only believers meet Him in the air. At the Second Coming, every eye sees Him (Revelation 1:7). It is the most public event in the history of the world.

The Rider on the White Horse

> *And I saw heaven opened, and look, a white horse, and the One sitting on it **is** called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. And His eyes **are** like a flame of fire, and on His head **are** many diadems, having a name written which no one knows except He Himself, and clothed with a garment dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven were following Him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure. And out of His mouth goes forth a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike the nations; and He Himself will shepherd them with a rod of iron; and He Himself treads the press of the wine of the fury and of the wrath of God the Almighty. And He has on the robe and on His thigh a name written: "King of kings and Lord of lords."* (Revelation 19:11-16)

Look at who He is. He is called Faithful and True. His eyes are like a flame of fire. On His head are many crowns, not one. He wears a robe dipped in blood. His name is the Word of God. And on His robe and on His thigh is written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

And look who follows Him. The armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and pure, ride behind Him on white horses. Two chapters earlier, we were told who is called and chosen and faithful with the Lamb (Revelation 17:14). And just a few verses before, the bride was given fine linen, bright and pure, the righteous acts of the saints (Revelation 19:8). I believe the church is in that army. We left with Him at the Rapture. We come back with Him now. Angels come too (Matthew 25:31; 2 Thessalonians 1:7).

Notice also what the army does not do. It doesn't fight. The only weapon mentioned is the sharp sword coming out of His mouth. He speaks, and it is over.

The Battle That Isn't

> *And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war with the One sitting on the horse and with His army. And the beast was captured, and with this **one** the false prophet who did the signs before it, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worship its image. The two were thrown living into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. And the rest were killed with the sword of the One sitting on the horse, which went forth out of His mouth. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.* (Revelation 19:19-21)

There is no long war. The beast and the False Prophet are captured and thrown alive into the lake of fire. The rest of the armies are killed by the sword from His mouth. The birds of the sky are called to a great supper of God (Revelation 19:17-18), a grim contrast with the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Paul says the same thing in fewer words. The Lord Jesus will kill the lawless one with the breath of His mouth and bring him to nothing by the appearing of His coming (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

His Feet on the Mount of Olives

Zechariah tells us where He lands.

> *And His feet will stand on that day on the Mount of Olives, which **is** before Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split from its middle toward the east and toward the west **into** a very great valley; and half of the mountain will move toward the north, and half of it toward the south.* (Zechariah 14:4)

When Jesus ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives, two angels told the disciples, "This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same manner as you watched Him going into heaven" (Acts 1:11). He left from the Mount of Olives in a cloud, in His glorified body, while His followers watched. He will return to the Mount of Olives in the clouds, in that same body, while the whole world watches.

What Happens Right After

Several things follow the Second Coming quickly, before the thousand years begin.

1. **Satan is bound.** An angel seizes the dragon and throws him into the abyss for a thousand years, so he can no longer deceive the nations (Revelation 20:1-3).
2. **Tribulation martyrs are raised.** Those beheaded for their testimony who did not worship the beast come to life and reign with Christ (Revelation 20:4).
3. **Old Testament saints are raised.** Daniel was told that many who sleep in the dust will awake (Daniel 12:1-2), and he himself would rise at the end of the days (Daniel 12:13).
4. **Israel is gathered.** Jesus sends His angels with a great trumpet to gather His elect from the four winds (Matthew 24:31; Isaiah 11:11-12).
5. **The nations are judged.** Jesus sits on His glorious throne and separates the people the way a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats (Matthew 25:31-46). The sheep, the righteous who survived the Tribulation, enter the kingdom. The goats are sent away into eternal punishment. Chapter 24 looks at this judgment more closely.

Study Questions

1. Why do the kings of the earth gather at Armageddon, according to Revelation 16:13-16 and 19:19?
2. How is the Second Coming different from the Rapture in who sees it?
3. List the names and titles of the rider in Revelation 19:11-16. Which one means the most to you?
4. Who rides with Jesus when He returns? Why do you think so?
5. Compare Acts 1:9-11 and Zechariah 14:4. What do they teach together?

Part Four: The Kingdom and Forever

Chapter 18: The Thousand-Year Reign

> *Blessed and holy **is** the one having a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death does not have authority, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Him a thousand years.*
>
> Revelation 20:6 (SLB)

For six thousand years, more or less, people have tried to run the world without God. Every system has been tried. Kings and emperors, democracies and dictators, philosophers and revolutionaries. Every one has ended in war, injustice, and death. In the thousand-year reign of Christ, God will show the whole universe what this world looks like when it is run by the right King.

Reading Ezekiel 40 to 48 literally, I had to stop and work out how the millennial sacrifices fit with Hebrews 10. Just as the Lord's Supper looks back at the cross without repeating it, those sacrifices would be a memorial looking back to what Christ finished. Reading the text plainly keeps God's promises to Israel intact.

Six Times in Seven Verses

> *And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them; and the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and who did not worship the beast nor its image, and did not receive the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.* (Revelation 20:4)

The phrase “a thousand years” appears six times in Revelation 20:2-7. Satan is bound for a thousand years. The martyrs reign with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead do not come to life until the thousand years are finished. Satan is released when the thousand years are over. I can’t think of a clearer way for God to tell us how long it lasts.

And the thousand years are not the first time we hear about this kingdom. They are the fulfillment of promises made all through the Old Testament. Revelation 20 tells us how long. The prophets tell us what it will be like.

Jesus Reigns From Jerusalem

> *And it will be at the end of the days that the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established at the top of the mountains, and it will be lifted up above the hills, and all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us from His ways, and that we may walk in His paths.” For from Zion **the** law will go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He will judge between the nations and will decide for many peoples, and they will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning knives; nation will not lift up sword against nation, and they will not learn war again.* (Isaiah 2:2-4)

Jesus will reign as King over the whole earth from Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:9, 16-17; Jeremiah 3:17). He will sit on the throne of His father David, just as the angel Gabriel promised Mary (Luke 1:32-33). Every promise God made to David about a son on his throne forever finds its fulfillment here (2 Samuel 7:12-16).

What It Will Be Like

The prophets paint a picture of a world healed.

- **Peace among nations.** They will beat their swords into plowshares, and they will not learn war anymore (Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3).
- **Justice.** The King will judge the poor with righteousness and decide with fairness for the humble of the earth (Isaiah 11:3-5).
- **Peace in nature.** The wolf will dwell with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the young goat, and a little child will lead them (Isaiah 11:6-9).
- **Long life.** A person who dies at a hundred will be thought of as young (Isaiah 65:20).
- **Healing.** The eyes of the blind will be opened, the ears of the deaf unstopped, the lame will leap like a deer (Isaiah 35:5-6).
- **A fruitful land.** The desert will blossom like the rose (Isaiah 35:1-2). The mountains will drip sweet wine (Amos 9:13).
- **The knowledge of God everywhere.** The earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9).
- **Israel restored.** Israel will live securely in the land God gave to Abraham, and will never be uprooted again (Amos 9:14-15; Ezekiel 37:21-28).

Who Will Be There

Two kinds of people will live in the kingdom.

First, there will be believers in resurrected, glorified bodies: the church, raptured before the Tribulation; the Old Testament saints, raised at the end of it; and the Tribulation martyrs, raised to reign with Christ (Revelation 20:4). These will reign with Him. Jesus told the Twelve they would sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28). Paul said the saints will judge the world (1 Corinthians 6:2). Revelation says believers will be a kingdom and priests, and will reign upon the earth (Revelation 5:10).

Second, there will be people in natural bodies: the believers who survived the Tribulation and entered the kingdom as the sheep of Matthew 25. They will marry, have children, grow old, and in time die, though they will live long lives. Their children and grandchildren will fill the earth.

That raises a hard question. Children born in the kingdom will still have a sin nature. They will live under a perfect King, in a world without Satan's deceit, and still each of them will have to choose whether to trust Christ. Many will. Some will only go along on the outside.

A Temple and Sacrifices?

Ezekiel 40 through 48 describes a great temple, with priests and sacrifices, and a river flowing out from it that turns the Dead Sea fresh (Ezekiel 47:1-12). Many Bible teachers, myself included, believe this

describes the Millennium. That surprises some people. If Jesus died once for all, why would sacrifices come back?

I believe they will not take away sin, any more than the old sacrifices did (Hebrews 10:4). They will be a memorial, looking back to the cross the way the old sacrifices looked forward to it, much the way the Lord's Supper looks back to the cross for us today. Some godly teachers read Ezekiel's temple as a symbol instead. I respect that, but I take it plainly as I do the rest of the prophets.

Why a Thousand Years?

Why not go straight from the Second Coming to the new heaven and new earth? I think the Bible gives us at least three reasons. God keeps His promises to Israel and to David on this earth, in this history, the way He said He would. Jesus is shown to be the rightful King over the same world that rejected Him. And the human heart is shown for what it is. Even after a thousand years of perfect government, peace, and plenty, with Satan locked away, some people will still rebel when given the chance. The problem with the world was never only the system. It was the heart. We will see that in the next chapter.

Study Questions

1. How many times does Revelation 20:2-7 mention a thousand years? Why does that matter?
2. Which Old Testament description of the kingdom do you look forward to most?
3. Who will live in the Millennium in glorified bodies? In natural bodies?
4. Why might there be sacrifices during the Millennium? What do you think of that view?
5. What does the Millennium show about the human heart?

Chapter 19: The Final Rebellion and the Great White Throne

> *And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the **book** of life. And the dead were judged out of the things written in the books, according to their works.*
>
> Revelation 20:12 (SLB)

At the end of the thousand years, two things happen that close the books on human history as we know it. Satan gets one last chance to deceive the nations, and he takes it. Then every person who has died without Christ stands before God.

Satan Released

> *And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released out of his prison, and will go out to deceive the nations which **are** in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for war, whose number **is** like the sand of the sea. And they went up over the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city; and fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.* (Revelation 20:7-9)

It is one of the most sobering passages in the Bible. After a thousand years of Christ reigning in person, of peace and justice and plenty, a huge number of people born during the kingdom follow Satan the moment he is set free. The number is as the sand of the sea.

How could that be? Because the problem was never only outside us. A perfect environment does not make a perfect heart. Jeremiah said the heart is more deceitful than all else and desperately sick (Jeremiah 17:9). Those who rebel had lived under Christ's rule outwardly, but had never given Him their hearts.

The name Gog and Magog comes from Ezekiel 38 and 39, which describe an invasion of Israel from the far north. Many Bible teachers, myself included, see Ezekiel's battle as a separate event, sometime before or early in the Tribulation (see Chapter 15), with John borrowing the names as a picture of the same kind of rebellion on a worldwide scale. Others see them as the same battle. Either way, the result here is the same. There is no fight. Fire comes down from heaven and consumes them.

> *And the devil who deceives them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet **are**; and they will be tormented day and night to the ages of the ages.* (Revelation 20:10)

Notice that the beast and the False Prophet are still there, a thousand years after they were thrown in. The lake of fire does not burn up its prisoners. We will come back to that in Chapter 23.

The Great White Throne

> *And I saw a great white throne and the One sitting on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged out of the things written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them; and they were judged, each one according to their works. And Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And if anyone was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.* (Revelation 20:11-15)

This is the final judgment of the lost. Here is what I see in the passage.

The Judge. John sees God on the throne. Jesus said the Father has given all judgment to the Son (John 5:22, 27). The One who sits on that throne is the One who was nailed to the cross for those who stand before Him.

The setting. Earth and heaven flee from His presence. There is nowhere to hide. No one can argue, delay, or escape.

Who stands there. The dead, great and small. I believe these are the unbelieving dead of all of history. Believers have already been raised in the first resurrection and have stood before the judgment seat of Christ. Revelation 20:5-6 says that over those who share in the first resurrection, the second death has no authority.

The books. Books are opened, and the dead are judged by what is written in them, according to their works. Every deed, word, and secret will be laid open (Ecclesiastes 12:14; Matthew 12:36; Romans 2:16). God is perfectly fair. No one will be punished for something they did not do. Jesus taught that there are degrees of punishment, depending on what a person knew and did (Luke 12:47-48; Matthew 11:21-24).

The book of life. Then another book is opened, the book of life. And here is the deciding question. The works do not save anyone, because no one's works are good enough (Romans 3:20, 23). The only thing that matters is whether your name is written in that book. It belongs to the Lamb (Revelation 13:8; 21:27).

The Second Death

Death and Hades give up their dead, and then death and Hades themselves are thrown into the lake of fire. The Bible calls this the second death (Revelation 20:14). The first death is the separation of the soul from the body. The second death is the final separation of the whole person, body and soul, from God and from all that is good, forever.

I wrote this in my Revelation study, and I will write it again here. At this throne there is one question: is your name written in the book of life? If it is, you will never stand at this throne. If it isn't, there is still time today. You don't have to wait until Chapter 25. You can turn there right now.

Study Questions

1. Why do you think so many people follow Satan at the end of the Millennium?

2. What does Revelation 20:10 tell us about the lake of fire?

3. Who sits on the Great White Throne, according to John 5:22?

4. What is the difference between the books and the book of life?

5. What is the second death? How can a person be sure to escape it?

Chapter 20: The New Heaven, the New Earth, and the New Jerusalem

> *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and the sea is no longer.*
>
> Revelation 21:1 (SLB)

The Bible begins in a garden, with God walking with man in the cool of the day (Genesis 3:8). Sin broke that. The rest of the Bible is the story of God working to make it right. And in the last two chapters of the Bible, He does. The story that began in a garden ends in a city with a garden at its heart, and God living with His people again.

I hold that God's promises to Israel will still be kept, and I love seeing how God brought Gentiles like me into His church. The New Jerusalem has the twelve tribes on its gates and the twelve apostles on its foundations (Revelation 21:12-14). God never erased Israel and never replaced the church. He kept His word to both.

All Things New

> *And I heard a loud voice out of heaven, saying, "Look, the tabernacle of God **is** with men, and He will tabernacle with them, and they will be His peoples, and God Himself will be with them, their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death will not be any longer, nor mourning nor crying nor pain will be any longer, because the first things passed away." And the One sitting on the throne said, "Look, I make all things new." And He says to me, "Write, because these words are true and faithful."* (Revelation 21:3-5)

Peter says the present heavens and earth are being kept for fire, and that the elements will be destroyed with intense heat. But then he adds that according to God's promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:10-13). Isaiah saw it too: "For look, I am creating new heavens and a new earth" (Isaiah 65:17).

Christians differ on whether God will destroy this creation completely and make a new one, or purify and renew this one, the way our bodies will be raised and renewed. Paul says the creation itself is waiting to be set free from its slavery to corruption (Romans 8:19-22), which suggests renewal. Either way, the curse is gone. Revelation 22:3 says, "And ***there*** will no longer be any curse."

No More

I love the list of things that will not be there.

- No more tears (21:4).
- No more death (21:4).
- No more mourning, crying, or pain (21:4).

- No more sea (21:1). For John, a prisoner on an island, the sea was what separated him from the people he loved. In the Bible, the sea is often a picture of chaos and danger.
- No more night (21:25; 22:5).
- No more curse (22:3).
- No more sin. Nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, will ever enter (21:27).
- No temple, because the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple (21:22).
- No sun or moon needed, because the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb (21:23).

The Holy City

John sees the New Jerusalem come down out of heaven from God, made ready like a bride adorned for her husband (Revelation 21:2). It is huge. The angel measures it at twelve thousand stadia in length, width, and height (Revelation 21:16). That is roughly fourteen hundred miles each way. Laid on a map of the United States, it would stretch from Canada to Mexico and from the Atlantic coast well past the Mississippi.

Its wall is made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, like clear glass. Its twelve foundations are decorated with precious stones and carry the names of the twelve apostles. Its twelve gates are each made of a single pearl and carry the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (Revelation 21:12-21). Israel and the church are both there, named on the gates and the foundations of the same city. God's people from every age live together in one home.

Some read these measurements and materials as symbols of perfection, beauty, and security. I take them as real. But I also think that whatever is real there will be more wonderful than any words can hold, not less.

The River and the Tree

> *And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, flowing out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and of the river, on this side and on that,* ***was*** *a tree of life producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit according to each single month; and the leaves of the tree* ***are*** *for the healing of the nations.* (Revelation 22:1-2)

The tree of life was last seen in Genesis 3, guarded by cherubim with a flaming sword so that fallen man could not eat from it and live forever in his sin (Genesis 3:22-24). Now it is back, open to all of God's people. What was lost in the first garden is restored in the last city.

We Will See His Face

Here is the best part.

> *And* ***there*** *will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His slaves will serve Him. And they will see His face, and His name* ***will be*** *on their foreheads.* (Revelation 22:3-4)

Moses asked to see God's glory and was told that no one can see God's face and live (Exodus 33:20). In the new creation, we will see His face. That is the heart of heaven. Not the gold, not the gates, not even the end of pain, as good as all of that is. The heart of it is being with God, face to face, forever.

Not a Cloud and a Harp

A lot of people picture eternity as floating on a cloud playing a harp, and frankly, it sounds boring. The Bible's picture is nothing like that. There will be a real city, on a real new earth, with real bodies. His servants will serve Him (Revelation 22:3). They will reign forever and ever (Revelation 22:5). The kings of the earth will bring their glory into the city (Revelation 21:24-26). There will be work to do that never wears us out, worship that never grows old, and discoveries about God that never run out. We will have forever to know Him, and we will never get to the end of Him.

Study Questions

1. How do Genesis 1 through 3 and Revelation 21 and 22 mirror each other?
2. Which item on the "no more" list means the most to you? Why?
3. Why do you think both the tribes of Israel and the apostles are named on the New Jerusalem?
4. What does it mean that we will see God's face?
5. How does the Bible's picture of eternity differ from the popular idea of floating on clouds?

Part Five: Heaven, Hell, and What Comes After

Chapter 21: What Happens When We Die

> *For to me, to live **is** Christ, and to die **is** gain. But if to live in **the** flesh, this **is** fruit of work for me; and what I will choose, I do not make known. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having the desire to depart and to be with Christ, **which is** very much better*
>
> Philippians 1:21-23 (SLB)

Every one of us will die unless the Lord comes first. It is the one appointment no one misses (Hebrews 9:27). Most people try not to think about it. But the Bible does not avoid the subject, and neither should we. This part of the book takes up the questions people ask me most: What happens the moment I die? What is heaven really like? Is hell real? In this chapter we start with the moment of death.

You Are More Than Your Body

The Bible teaches that a human being is both body and soul, or spirit. When God made Adam, He formed his body from the dust and breathed into him the breath of life (Genesis 2:7). At death, the two are separated. The body returns to the dust, and the spirit returns to God who gave it (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Jesus said not to fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul (Matthew 10:28). The real you does not stop existing when your heart stops beating.

Before the Cross: Sheol and Hades

In the Old Testament, the place of the dead is called *Sheol*. In the New Testament, the Greek word is *Hades*. Both words can simply mean the grave, or the realm of the dead in general. The Old Testament saints spoke of going down to Sheol, but they also expected God to deliver them from it (Psalm 16:10; 49:15).

Jesus pulled back the curtain on this in His account of the rich man and Lazarus.

> *And it came to pass that the poor man died and was carried away by the angels into the bosom of Abraham; and the rich man also died and was buried. And in Hades, having lifted up his eyes, being in torments, he sees Abraham from afar, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he, having called out, said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus, so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in anguish in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you received your good things in your lifetime, and Lazarus likewise the bad things; but now he is comforted, and you are in anguish. And besides all these things, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to cross over from here to you may not be able, nor may those from there pass over to us.'* (Luke 16:22-26)

Some say this is only a parable. Even if it is, Jesus would not build a story on a false picture of the afterlife. And notice that, unlike His parables, it gives a person's name, Lazarus. Here is what it teaches. After death, both men were conscious. They remembered their lives. The rich man was in torment. Lazarus was

comforted at Abraham's side. And there was a great chasm between them that no one could cross. There was no second chance.

Many Bible teachers believe that before the cross, Hades had two parts: a place of comfort, sometimes called Abraham's bosom or paradise, for the righteous; and a place of torment for the wicked. Jesus told the thief on the cross, "Today you will be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

After the Cross: Absent From the Body, Present With the Lord

Something changed when Jesus died and rose again. Many teachers believe that when He ascended, He led the Old Testament saints out of Hades into the presence of God (Ephesians 4:8-10). I hold that view, but I hold it loosely, because the Bible does not spell out every detail. What the New Testament makes very clear is where believers go now when they die.

> *we are confident, and we are pleased rather to be absent out of the body and to be at home with the Lord.* (2 Corinthians 5:8)

Paul did not expect to sleep, or to wait in some holding place. He expected to be with Christ, which he said was very much better (Philippians 1:23). When Stephen was being stoned, he saw heaven opened and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:56, 59). Paul himself was caught up to the third heaven, which he also calls paradise (2 Corinthians 12:2-4). Paradise is now in heaven, in the presence of the Lord.

	Before the cross	Now (after the resurrection)	After the Great White Throne
The righteous	Sheol/Hades, the side of comfort, in the bosom of Abraham; paradise (Luke 16:22; 23:43)	With Christ in heaven, at home with the Lord (2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23)	Raised bodies; the new heaven, new earth, and New Jerusalem (Rev 21-22)
The unbelieving	Sheol/Hades, the side of torment (Luke 16:23-26)	Hades, conscious torment, awaiting judgment (Luke 16:23; 2 Peter 2:9)	Raised and judged; the lake of fire, the second death (Rev 20:13-15)

A great chasm is fixed between the two; no one crosses it after death (Luke 16:26).

Figure 6. Where the Dead Go

What About Soul Sleep?

Some teach that when we die, we are unconscious until the resurrection. They point out that the Bible often calls death sleep (John 11:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13). But the Bible uses sleep to describe the body, which lies still in the grave and will wake up at the resurrection. It never says the soul is unconscious. The souls under the altar in Revelation 6:9-11 are awake, crying out, and given white robes. Moses and Elijah talked with Jesus on the mountain (Matthew 17:3). And Paul would not call unconsciousness very much better than serving Christ here.

What About Purgatory?

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that many believers go through a time of purification in purgatory before entering heaven. I respect my Catholic friends, but I don't find this in the Bible. The book usually given for it, 2 Maccabees, is not part of the Hebrew Scriptures, and even it does not describe purgatory. The thief on the cross went to paradise the same day. Paul said absent from the body is present with the Lord. And the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7). Not most of it. All of it. If anything had to be added to what Christ did, He would not have said, "It has been finished" (John 19:30).

What About the Lost Who Die Now?

Unbelievers who die now go to Hades, the place of torment Jesus described in Luke 16. It is a real place, and a conscious one. But it is not the final place. At the Great White Throne, Hades gives up its dead, and they are judged and thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:13-15). Hades is the jail. The lake of fire is the prison.

Our Bodies Are Waiting

Being with the Lord without a body is wonderful, but it is not the end of the story. Paul says we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven (2 Corinthians 5:1-4). God made us to have bodies. At the Rapture, the bodies of believers who have died will be raised and joined to their spirits again, made new and glorious like the risen body of Jesus (Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Corinthians 15:42-44). We will look at that in Chapter 24.

Will We Know Each Other?

I believe we will. David said of his baby son who died, "I am going to him, and he will not return to me" (2 Samuel 12:23). The disciples recognized Moses and Elijah on the mountain. Paul comforted the Thessalonians with the promise that they would be caught up together with their loved ones (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Heaven will not erase who we are. It will make us who we were meant to be.

Study Questions

1. According to Ecclesiastes 12:7 and Matthew 10:28, what happens to a person at death?
2. What does the account of the rich man and Lazarus teach about life after death?
3. Where do believers go now when they die? Give two verses that show it.

4. How would you answer someone who believes in soul sleep? In purgatory?

5. Why will believers still need resurrected bodies, even after being with the Lord?

Chapter 22: Heaven: What the Bible Really Says

> *But just as it has been written, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not come up into **the** heart of man, things which God has prepared for those who love Him."*
>
> 1 Corinthians 2:9 (SLB)

Ask ten people what heaven is like and you will get ten answers, most of them from movies, greeting cards, and cartoons. Pearly gates with Saint Peter checking names. People turning into angels and earning their wings. Fluffy clouds. The Bible's picture is far better, and far more solid, than any of that.

Three Heavens

The Bible uses the word heaven in three ways. There is the sky, where the birds fly and the rain comes from (Genesis 1:20; Matthew 6:26). There is outer space, where the sun, moon, and stars are (Genesis 1:14-17; Psalm 19:1). And there is the place where God's throne is, where He makes His presence known in a special way. Paul called it the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2). Jesus taught us to pray, "Our Father who ***is*** in the heavens" (Matthew 6:9).

When believers die today, they go to that third heaven, into the presence of Christ. Bible teachers sometimes call this the intermediate heaven, because it is where believers are between death and the resurrection. In the end, as we saw in Chapter 20, heaven comes down to earth. The New Jerusalem descends, and God makes His home with His people on a new earth (Revelation 21:2-3). So our final home is not floating somewhere far away. It is a renewed creation, with God in the middle of it.

What Heaven Is Like Now

The Bible gives us glimpses of heaven as it is today.

- **God's throne is at the center.** John saw a throne, with One sitting on it who looked like jasper and sardius, with a rainbow around the throne like an emerald (Revelation 4:2-3).
- **Worship never stops.** The living creatures do not rest day and night, saying, "Holy, holy, holy" (Revelation 4:8). Myriads of angels sing that the Lamb who was slain is worthy (Revelation 5:11-12).
- **Jesus is there in His risen body.** He is at the right hand of the Father, praying for us (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25).
- **Believers who have died are there.** Conscious, comforted, with the Lord (Philippians 1:23).
- **They know what is happening.** The martyrs under the altar know that their blood has not yet been avenged (Revelation 6:10). Jesus said there is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:10).

What We Will Be Like

We will have real bodies. Jesus rose with a body that could be touched, that ate fish, and that still carried the marks of the nails (Luke 24:39-43; John 20:27). Paul says He will transform our lowly bodies

to be like His glorious body (Philippians 3:21). Our new bodies will be imperishable, glorious, powerful, and spiritual, meaning fully alive to God, not ghostly (1 Corinthians 15:42-44).

We will still be ourselves. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be at the table in the kingdom (Matthew 8:11), still Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Moses and Elijah were recognized on the mountain. You will still be you.

We will not become angels. People do not turn into angels. Angels are a different kind of being God created. Jesus said that in the resurrection people do not marry, but are like the angels in heaven (Matthew 22:30). Like them in that one way, not turned into them. Paul even says we will judge angels (1 Corinthians 6:3).

We will be free from sin. When He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is (1 John 3:2). No more struggle with temptation. No more regret.

What We Will Do

The Bible does not picture eternity as endless rest with nothing to do. Here is some of what it says.

- **Worship.** Not just singing, but a whole life of love and praise given to God (Revelation 7:9-12).
- **Serve.** "His slaves will serve Him" (Revelation 22:3). Work was part of the good world before the fall (Genesis 2:15). In the new creation, work will be joy, not toil.
- **Reign.** "And they will reign to the ages of the ages" (Revelation 22:5).
- **Rest.** Those who die in the Lord rest from their labors (Revelation 14:13). There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God (Hebrews 4:9).
- **Learn.** Paul says now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully (1 Corinthians 13:12).
- **Enjoy fellowship.** With God, and with believers from every nation, tribe, people, and language (Revelation 7:9).

Questions People Ask

Will there be marriage in heaven? Jesus said no (Matthew 22:30). That can be hard to hear for someone who loves their spouse. But I don't think it means we will love less. Earthly marriage is a picture of Christ and His church (Ephesians 5:31-32). In heaven we will have the real thing the picture pointed to, and our love for one another will be deeper, not weaker.

Will there be animals? The Bible does not say whether our own pets will be there. It does say there will be animals in the kingdom (Isaiah 11:6-9; 65:25). God made animals and called them good. I would not be surprised to see them, but I can't promise you anything the Bible doesn't.

Will we be sad about people who are not there? This is the hardest one. God will wipe away every tear (Revelation 21:4). I don't fully understand how. I do know we will see things the way God sees them, with perfect understanding of His justice and His mercy, and we will not doubt Him. That is also why it matters so much that we tell people about Jesus now.

Will heaven be boring? Not if God is there. He is infinite. We will never get to the end of knowing Him.

How to Get There

Heaven is not for good people, because there are no good enough people (Romans 3:10-12, 23). It is for forgiven people. Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). The gates of the city are open to those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life (Revelation 21:27). Chapter 25 tells you how to be sure your name is there.

Study Questions

1. What are the three ways the Bible uses the word heaven?
2. Where do believers go now when they die? Where will they live forever?
3. What will our resurrected bodies be like? Use Luke 24:39-43 and 1 Corinthians 15:42-44.
4. Which of the things we will do in eternity do you look forward to most?
5. Which popular idea about heaven did this chapter correct for you?

Chapter 23: Hell: The Truth We Would Rather Not Hear

And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

Matthew 25:46 (SLB)

I don't enjoy writing this chapter. No one who loves people should enjoy talking about hell. But I would not be honest with you if I skipped it, and I would not be faithful to Jesus either, because Jesus talked about hell more than anyone else in the Bible. He did it because He loved people and wanted them to escape it.

Jesus Talked About It

Most of what we know about hell comes straight from the mouth of Jesus. He spoke of the fire of hell (Matthew 5:22), of the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 8:12; 25:30), of the place where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched (Mark 9:47-48), and of the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41).

The Words the Bible Uses

Word	Meaning	Where to read it
Sheol (Hebrew)	The place of the dead; sometimes the grave	Psalm 16:10; 49:15
Hades (Greek)	The place of the dead now; for the lost, a place of torment until the final judgment	Luke 16:23; Revelation 20:13-14
Gehenna (Greek, from Hebrew)	The final hell of fire; named after the Valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem	Matthew 5:22, 29-30; 10:28; Mark 9:43-48
Tartarus (Greek)	A prison where certain fallen angels are held	2 Peter 2:4
The abyss	A pit where demons are held; Satan is locked there during the Millennium	Luke 8:31; Revelation 9:1-2; 20:1-3
The lake of fire	The final place of punishment for Satan, his angels, and the lost	Revelation 19:20; 20:10, 14-15

The Valley of Hinnom has a dark history. In the days of the wicked kings of Judah, children were burned there as sacrifices to the false god Molech (2 Kings 23:10; Jeremiah 7:31). It became a cursed place. By Jesus' time, the name Gehenna had become the word for the final place of judgment.

What Hell Is

It is real. Jesus spoke of it as a real place, as real as heaven.

It is conscious. The rich man in Hades could see, feel, remember, and speak (Luke 16:23-28). Revelation 14:11 says those who worship the beast have no rest day and night.

It is separation from God. Paul says the lost will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His strength (2 Thessalonians 1:9). Every good thing in this

life, every sunrise, every meal, every kindness, every moment of love, is a gift from God (James 1:17). Hell is the place where all of that is gone.

It is punishment. It is not just the natural result of bad choices, though it is that too. It is God's just response to sin, which is rebellion against an infinitely holy God.

It has degrees. Jesus said it would be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for the towns that saw His miracles and did not repent (Matthew 11:21-24). The servant who knew his master's will and did not do it receives more lashes than the one who did not know (Luke 12:47-48).

It is forever. Look again at the verse at the top of this chapter. Jesus uses the same word, *aionios*, eternal, for the punishment of the lost and for the life of the saved, in the same sentence (Matthew 25:46). If the life is forever, the punishment is too.

Fire and Darkness

How can hell be fire and also outer darkness? Many Bible teachers believe these are pictures meant to tell us that hell is far worse than anything we can imagine, not that it is less. Others take the fire as literal. I would say this. The Bible uses the strongest words human language has. Whatever the full reality is, it is not better than the words. Jesus did not use those images to exaggerate. He used them to warn.

Answering Three Objections

"A loving God would not send anyone to hell." God is love (1 John 4:8). He is also holy and just. A judge who let every criminal go free would not be loving. He would be corrupt. The real wonder is not that God punishes sin. It is that He took the punishment Himself. God does not want anyone to perish, but for all to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). C. S. Lewis put it in a way I have always found helpful, in his book *The Great Divorce* (1945): in the end there are only two kinds of people, those who say to God, "Thy will be done," and those to whom God says, in the end, "Thy will be done." No one ends up in hell who did not, at bottom, choose to be without God.

"Hell is not forever. The lost are simply destroyed." This view is called annihilationism, and some sincere Christians hold it. They point to words like destruction and perish. But in the Bible, destroyed does not have to mean ceasing to exist. The beast and the False Prophet are still in the lake of fire a thousand years after they were thrown in, and Revelation says they will be tormented day and night forever and ever (Revelation 20:10). And again, the punishment is called eternal in the same breath as eternal life (Matthew 25:46).

"In the end everyone will be saved." This is called universalism. I understand the wish behind it. But Jesus said the gate is narrow and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few find it (Matthew 7:13-14). He said some will go away into eternal punishment. If everyone is saved in the end, the cross was unnecessary, and Jesus' warnings were empty.

Why This Matters

I believe in hell because Jesus did. And because I believe in it, I can't keep quiet about Him. If you are a believer, let this truth break your heart for the people around you. Paul said, "Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Corinthians 5:11). If you are not yet a believer, please hear me. You do not have to go there. Jesus came to rescue you from it. The next chapter puts all the judgments together, and the last chapter shows you the way out.

Study Questions

1. Why do you think Jesus talked about hell so often?
2. What do Sheol, Hades, Gehenna, and the lake of fire each mean?
3. What does Matthew 25:46 teach about how long hell lasts?
4. How would you answer someone who says a loving God would never send anyone to hell?
5. How should the reality of hell affect the way you treat the people around you?

Chapter 24: The Resurrections and the Judgments

> *Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth, those who have done the good **things** to a resurrection of life, and those who have practiced the wicked **things** to a resurrection of judgment.*
>
> John 5:28-29 (SLB)

Every person who has ever lived will be raised from the dead. Every person will stand before God. That much is clear in the Bible. What can be confusing is how the different resurrections and judgments fit together. This chapter puts them side by side, so you can see the whole order of events in one place.

An Order of Resurrections

Paul gives us the key in 1 Corinthians 15.

> *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ **the** firstfruits, after that those of Christ at His coming, then the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He brings to nothing all rule and all authority and power.* (1 Corinthians 15:22-24)

Each in his own order. The word Paul uses was used for ranks of soldiers marching in a parade. The resurrection is not one single moment. It comes in ranks. First is Christ, the firstfruits. Then those who are Christ's at His coming. Then the end.

The firstfruits was the first part of the harvest, brought to God as a promise that the rest of the harvest was coming (Leviticus 23:9-14). Jesus rose on the day after the Sabbath, the very day of the feast of firstfruits. His resurrection is God's guarantee that ours is coming.

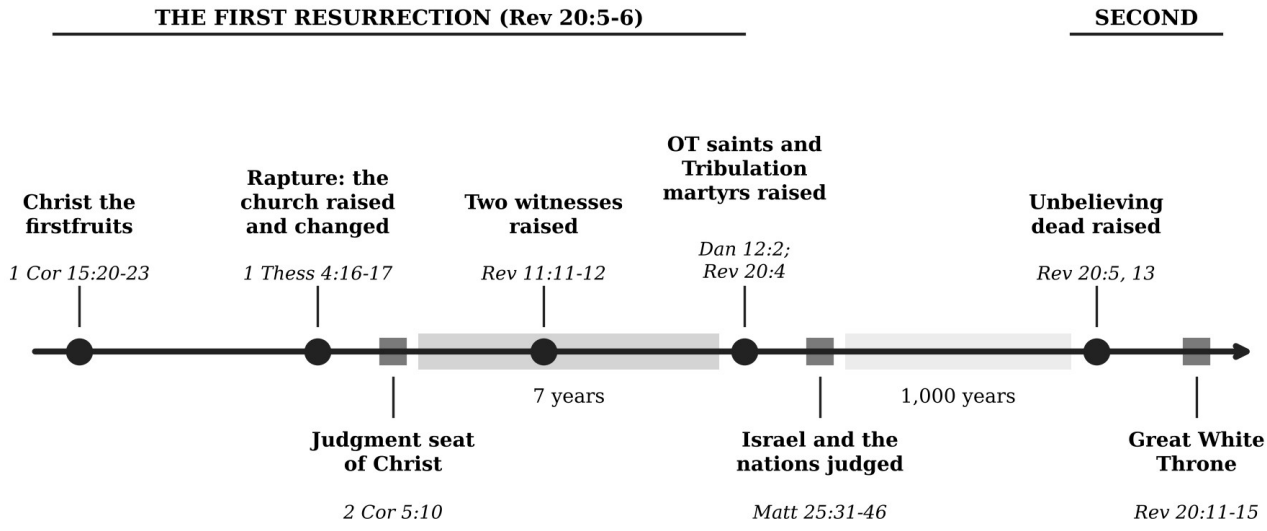
The First Resurrection

Revelation 20:5-6 speaks of "the first resurrection" and says that those who share in it are blessed and holy, and the second death has no authority over them. I understand the first resurrection to be the resurrection of all the righteous, in several stages, like the harvest in Israel.

- **Christ the firstfruits**, raised on the third day (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23). Matthew also tells us that some saints were raised at His resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many (Matthew 27:52-53).
- **The church at the Rapture**, the dead in Christ raised first and then the living changed (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).
- **The two witnesses**, raised in the middle of the Tribulation, or near it (Revelation 11:11-12).
- **The Old Testament saints and Tribulation martyrs**, raised at the end of the Tribulation, when Christ returns (Daniel 12:1-2; Revelation 20:4).

The Second Resurrection

The rest of the dead do not come to life until the thousand years are finished (Revelation 20:5). This is the resurrection of the unbelieving dead of all history, to stand at the Great White Throne. Jesus called it the resurrection of judgment (John 5:29). Daniel said some will awake to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt (Daniel 12:2).



Circles: resurrections. Squares: judgments. Not drawn to scale.

Figure 7. The Resurrections and Judgments in Order

The Judgments

The Bible describes several different judgments. They differ in who is judged, when, where, and on what basis.

Judgment	Who is judged	When	Basis	Result	Where to read it
Sin judged at the cross	Jesus, in our place	About A.D. 30 to 33	The sin of the world	Believers forgiven and declared righteous	John 5:24; Romans 8:1; 2 Corinthians 5:21
The judgment seat of Christ	Believers of the church age	After the Rapture, in heaven	Their works as believers	Rewards gained or lost; salvation is not in question	Romans 14:10-12; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10
Israel judged	Israel living at the end of the Tribulation	At the Second Coming	Faith in the Messiah	The rebels purged; the faithful enter the kingdom	Ezekiel 20:33-38; Zechariah 13:8-9
The nations judged (sheep and goats)	Gentiles living at the end of the Tribulation	At the Second Coming, on earth	How they treated Christ's brothers, showing faith or unbelief	Sheep enter the kingdom; goats go to eternal punishment	Matthew 25:31-46
Fallen angels judged	Satan and the angels who sinned	After the Millennium	Their rebellion	The lake of fire	Matthew 25:41; 1 Corinthians 6:3; Jude 6; Revelation 20:10
The Great White Throne	The unbelieving dead of all history	After the Millennium	Their works, and whether their names are in the book of life	The lake of fire	Revelation 20:11-15

The Sheep and the Goats

This judgment is often misunderstood, so let me say a word about it. Jesus says the sheep fed Him when He was hungry, gave Him drink, took Him in, clothed Him, and visited Him in prison. When they ask when they did that, He answers, "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did ***it*** to one of these My brothers, the least ***ones***, you did ***it*** to Me" (Matthew 25:40).

Some read this to mean that people are saved by doing good works. But the rest of the Bible says plainly that no one is saved by works (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5). I believe "these My brothers" are the persecuted believers of the Tribulation, likely including Jewish believers like the 144,000. During those years, helping a follower of Jesus could cost you your life. Anyone who took in a hunted believer would be showing by that act that they had turned to Christ. Their works show their faith. They don't replace it.

Every Knee Will Bow

Here is how it all ends.

> *Therefore God also highly exalted Him and granted to Him a name, the **one** above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of **those** in heaven and **those** on earth and **those** under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ **is** Lord, to **the** glory of God **the** Father.* (Philippians 2:9-11)

Every person who has ever lived will one day bow before Jesus and confess that He is Lord. Every single one. The only question is whether you will bow now, in love and faith, and be saved, or bow later, at the Great White Throne, when it is too late.

Study Questions

1. What does Paul mean by “each in his own order” in 1 Corinthians 15:23?
2. Why is Jesus called the firstfruits?
3. Using the table, which judgments will believers face? Which will they never face?
4. Who are “these My brothers” in Matthew 25:40? Why does that matter?
5. Read Philippians 2:9-11. What is the difference between bowing now and bowing later?

Chapter 25: Ready or Not: Living Until He Comes

> *The One who testifies these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Yes, come, Lord Jesus!*
>
> Revelation 22:20 (SLB)

We have covered a lot of ground. Daniel's seventy sevens. The Rapture. The seven years. The Antichrist. Armageddon. The thousand-year reign. The Great White Throne. Heaven and hell. If you have read this far, you know more about the end times than most people ever will. But knowing is not the point. Jesus did not give us prophecy to fill our heads. He gave it to change our hearts.

In about 40 years of work, I have worked beside plenty of hardworking people who rarely think about eternity. Most of them do not need a lecture. They need a friend who listens and shares honestly what Christ has done. Look this week for a natural opening, over lunch or a conversation at work, to ask what they think happens after this life (1 Peter 3:15).

The Most Important Question

Before anything else, I have to ask you the question that matters most. Do you know Jesus? I don't mean, do you know about Him. I mean, have you trusted Him as your Lord and Savior?

Here is the good news, as plainly as I can say it. God made you, and He loves you (John 3:16). But every one of us has sinned and falls short of His glory (Romans 3:23). The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23). Jesus, the Son of God, took our sin on Himself on the cross, died in our place, was buried, and rose again on the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). And He offers forgiveness and eternal life to anyone who will turn from their sin and put their trust in Him.

> *that if you confess with your mouth Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God raised Him out of **the** dead, you will be saved; for with **the** heart it is believed for righteousness, and with **the** mouth it is confessed for salvation.* (Romans 10:9-10)

You can't earn it. You can only receive it. Salvation is by grace through faith, and not of yourselves; it is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8-9).

And it is urgent. You don't know how much time you have. None of us does. The Rapture could happen today. Your own life could end today. Paul says, "Look, now ***is*** a well-accepted time; look, now ***is*** a day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

If you haven't yet entered into a relationship with Jesus, or if you want to deepen the one you already have with Him, I invite you to pray this prayer with me:

Lord Jesus, You are the Savior of the world, and You forgive all who come to You. I come before You to confess that I have sinned against You. I have rebelled against You and put myself first above You and all others. I want to have a deep, meaningful relationship with You where I can show others by my demeanor and character that You are first in my life. I am asking for Your forgiveness for all my sins. You died for me on the cross so that I could be forgiven and made right with God. Please help me not forget that You gave Your very life for me. I am asking that You take control of my life and make me a new creation, the person You want me to be. I thank You, Lord, and I love You. Amen.

If you prayed this prayer, tell another believer, ask a pastor about being baptized, and find a church where you can devote yourself to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer (Acts 2:41-42).

If You Are Reading This After the Rapture

I have to say this, because it is possible. If millions of people have disappeared and you are reading this book, everything in it is true, and it is not too late for you. God is still saving people. Turn to Jesus now, today, with all your heart. Do not take the mark of the beast or worship his image, no matter what it costs (Revelation 14:9-12). Get a Bible and read Revelation, Daniel, and Matthew 24. Find other believers. Jesus is coming back at the end of these seven years, and those who belong to Him will reign with Him. Hold on.

Living Ready

For those of us who belong to Christ, here is what the Bible says to do while we wait.

1. **Stay awake.** Jesus said to be on the alert, because you do not know what day your Lord is coming (Matthew 24:42). Don't let your faith get sleepy and comfortable.
2. **Live pure.** Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure (1 John 3:3). If Jesus came this afternoon, would you be glad to see Him walk in on what you are doing?
3. **Keep working.** Jesus said blessed is that servant whom his master finds doing his job when the master comes (Matthew 24:46). The end times are no excuse to quit your job, stop raising your kids, or sit on a hill waiting. Keep doing what God has given you to do, and do it well.
4. **Tell others.** The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few (Matthew 9:37). If you believe what this book says about hell, you can't keep the good news to yourself.
5. **Don't be afraid.** Jesus said these things will happen, and then He said, "see, do not be alarmed" (Matthew 24:6). God is in control. The ending is already written, and we win.
6. **Encourage one another.** Paul ended his teaching on the Rapture by telling the church to encourage one another with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:18). Use what you have learned to give hope to someone who is grieving or afraid.
7. **Stay in the Word.** The best protection against deception is knowing the truth (2 Timothy 3:14-17). Keep studying. My *Revelation Bible Study* and *Daniel Bible Study* are a good next step.

8. **Love His appearing.** Paul said the crown of righteousness is for all who have loved His appearing (2 Timothy 4:8). Don't just believe He is coming. Long for it.

Come, Lord Jesus

The last promise in the Bible is from Jesus Himself: "Yes, I am coming quickly." And the last prayer in the Bible is the church's answer: "Amen. Yes, come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20).

That is where I want to leave you. Not with charts, or debates, or fear. With a Person. He is coming. He could come today. And when He does, everything will finally be made right.

Amen. Yes, come, Lord Jesus!

Study Questions

1. Have you trusted Jesus as your Lord and Savior? If not, what is holding you back?
2. If you knew Jesus was coming back next week, what would you change?
3. Which of the eight ways to live ready do you most need to work on?
4. Who in your life needs to hear about Jesus? How could you start that conversation this week?
5. What has this book changed in the way you think about the future?

Appendix A: Timeline of End-Time Events

This table gathers the main events covered in this book, in the order I understand them. Where the Bible does not give a clear order, I say so in the chapter.

Order	Event	Main passages	Chapter
1	The church age, from Pentecost to the Rapture	Acts 2; Ephesians 3:4-6	3
2	The Rapture of the church: the dead in Christ raised, the living changed	John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18	6, 7
3	In heaven: the judgment seat of Christ and the marriage of the Lamb	2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 19:7-9	10
4	The restrainer removed; the man of sin revealed	2 Thessalonians 2:3-8	7, 12
5	The covenant with Israel signed; the seven years begin	Daniel 9:27	4, 11
6	The invasion of Gog and Magog from the north (timing debated; likely before or early in the seven years)	Ezekiel 38-39	15
7	The seal judgments	Revelation 6; 8:1	11
8	The 144,000 sealed; the great multitude saved	Revelation 7	14
9	The two witnesses prophesy for 1,260 days	Revelation 11:3-13	14
10	The trumpet judgments	Revelation 8:2-9:21; 11:15-19	11
11	The midpoint: the covenant broken, the abomination of desolation, Satan cast down	Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15; Revelation 12:7-13	11, 13
12	The great tribulation: the beast rules 42 months; the mark of the beast	Matthew 24:21; Revelation 13	12
13	The faithful remnant of Israel protected in the wilderness	Matthew 24:16-20; Revelation 12:6, 14	13
14	The angel preaches the eternal gospel	Revelation 14:6-7	14
15	The bowl judgments	Revelation 15-16	11
16	Babylon the Great destroyed	Revelation 17-18	16
17	The armies gather at Armageddon; Jerusalem attacked	Zechariah 14:2; Revelation 16:12-16	17
18	The Second Coming of Jesus to the Mount of Olives	Zechariah 14:4; Matthew 24:29-31; Revelation 19:11-16	17
19	The beast and the False Prophet thrown into the lake of fire	Revelation 19:19-21	17
20	Israel looks on Him whom they pierced and is saved	Zechariah 12:10; Romans 11:26	14
21	Satan bound in the abyss	Revelation 20:1-3	17
22	Old Testament saints and Tribulation martyrs raised	Daniel 12:2; Revelation 20:4	24
23	Israel and the nations judged (sheep and goats)	Ezekiel 20:33-38; Matthew 25:31-46	17, 24
24	The thousand-year reign of Christ from Jerusalem	Isaiah 2:2-4; Revelation 20:4-6	18
25	Satan released; the final rebellion crushed	Revelation 20:7-10	19
26	The unbelieving dead raised and judged at the Great White Throne	Revelation 20:11-15	19

Order	Event	Main passages	Chapter
27	The new heaven, the new earth, and the New Jerusalem	2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21-22	20

Appendix B: Words to Know

- **Abomination of desolation:** the idol or act that defiles the temple at the midpoint of the Tribulation (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15).
- **Abyss:** a pit where demons are held, and where Satan is locked away during the Millennium.
- **Amillennial:** the view that there is no future thousand-year reign on earth.
- **Antichrist:** the final world ruler who opposes Christ and claims to be God; also called the beast, the man of sin, and the little horn.
- **Armageddon:** from the Hebrew Har Megiddo, the hill of Megiddo, where the armies of the world gather (Revelation 16:16).
- **Bema:** the Greek word for the judgment seat, a raised platform where judges sat or prizes were given.
- **Church age:** the present time, from Pentecost to the Rapture.
- **Dispensation:** a stewardship, or the way God arranges His dealings with people in a period of history.
- **Dispensational premillennialism:** the view held in this book: read prophecy plainly, keep Israel and the church distinct, and expect Christ to return before a literal thousand-year reign.
- **False Prophet:** the second beast of Revelation 13, who leads the world to worship the Antichrist.
- **Gehenna:** the word Jesus used for hell, named for the Valley of Hinnom south of Jerusalem.
- **Great White Throne:** the final judgment of the unbelieving dead (Revelation 20:11-15).
- **Hades:** the place of the dead; for the lost, a place of torment until the final judgment.
- **Harpazo:** the Greek word for "caught away" in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, the source of the word Rapture.
- **Imminence:** the teaching that the Rapture could happen at any moment, with no prophesied event that must come first.
- **Lake of fire:** the final place of punishment for Satan, his angels, and the lost; also called the second death.
- **Mark of the beast:** the mark on the right hand or forehead required to buy or sell under the Antichrist (Revelation 13:16-17).
- **Millennium:** the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth (Revelation 20:1-7).
- **Post-tribulation:** the view that the church goes through the whole Tribulation and is raptured at the end.
- **Postmillennial:** the view that Christ returns after a golden age brought about through the spread of the gospel.
- **Premillennial:** the view that Christ returns before a literal thousand-year reign on earth.
- **Pre-tribulation:** the view held in this book, that the church is raptured before the seven-year Tribulation.
- **Pre-wrath:** the view that the church is raptured in the second half of the Tribulation, before the trumpets and bowls.
- **Rapture:** the moment Jesus comes in the air and catches away His church to be with Him.
- **Restrainer:** the one who holds back the man of sin until he is taken out of the way (2 Thessalonians 2:6-7).
- **Second Coming:** Jesus' visible return to the earth at the end of the Tribulation to defeat His enemies and set up His kingdom.
- **Seventy sevens:** the 490 years of Daniel 9:24-27; the last seven years are still future.
- **Sheol:** the Old Testament word for the place of the dead.
- **Tribulation:** the seven years of Daniel's seventieth seven; its second half is the great tribulation.

Appendix C: Where to Go Next

These are my other free studies that go deeper into the subjects in this book. They can be read free at trinfinityenterprises.com.

- **Revelation Bible Study: A Verse by Verse Study.** The companion to this book. It walks through all twenty-two chapters of Revelation and teaches the same timeline.
- **Daniel Bible Study.** The whole book of Daniel, including the statue, the four beasts, and the seventy sevens.
- **Daniel and Revelation Side by Side.** A short handout that lines up the matching passages in the two books.

Appendix D: Sources and Credits

Scripture quotations are from the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). Other works named in this book are listed here so you can look them up for yourself.

- Robert Anderson, *The Coming Prince* (London: Hodder and Stoughton; many editions since the late 1800s).
- Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977).
- Marvin Rosenthal, *The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990).
- George Eldon Ladd, *The Blessed Hope* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), a classic statement of the post-tribulation view.
- C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (1945).
- C. I. Scofield, ed., *The Scofield Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1909).
- 1 Maccabees 1:54, on Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the altar in the temple in 167 B.C.
- Edgar C. Whisenant, *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988* (1988).
- The historical dates for Israel (May 14, 1948, and June 1967), William Miller (1844), and Harold Camping (2011) are matters of public record.

About This Book

The Last Days is a plain guide to what the Bible says about the end of this age and what comes after it. It puts the whole picture in order: Daniel's seventy sevens and four kingdoms, the Rapture of the church, the seven years of Tribulation, the Antichrist and the False Prophet, Babylon the Great, Armageddon and the Second Coming, the thousand-year reign of Christ, the Great White Throne, and the new heaven and new earth.

It also answers the questions that hit closest to home: what happens when we die, what heaven is really like, whether hell is real and forever, and how to live ready for the Lord's return.

The book teaches the pre-tribulation, premillennial view, gives the reasons for it, and lays out the other views fairly. It is written as a companion to the *Revelation Bible Study: A Verse by Verse Study* and uses the same timeline. Charts and tables throughout show how the pieces fit, and every chapter ends with study questions for personal reading or small groups.

Scripture Index

This index lists every Bible reference in the book with the pages where it appears.

Genesis 1:14-17 (76); 1:20 (76); 2:7 (72); 2:15 (77); 3:8 (68); 3:22-24 (69); 10:2 (53); 10:2-3 (54); 10:3 (53); 11:1-9 (55); 12:1-3 (11); 17:7-8 (11)

Exodus 33:20 (69)

Leviticus 23:9-14 (82); 25:1-8 (13)

Deuteronomy 13:1-4 (44, 45)

Judges 5:19 (58)

2 Samuel 7:12-16 (11, 62); 12:23 (74)

1 Kings 17:1 (50)

2 Kings 23:10 (79); 23:29 (58)

Nehemiah 2:1-8 (14)

Psalms 2:1-4 (54); 16:10 (72, 79); 19:1 (76); 22:18 (8); 49:15 (72, 79)

Ecclesiastes 12:7 (72, 74); 12:14 (66)

Isaiah 2:2-4 (11, 62, 89); 2:4 (63); 11:1-10 (11); 11:3-5 (63); 11:6-9 (63, 77); 11:9 (63); 11:11-12 (60); 14:13-14 (43); 35:1-2 (63); 35:5-6 (63); 44:28 (4); 45:1 (4); 46:9-10 (4); 61:1-2 (9); 61:2 (8); 63:1-3 (58); 65:17 (68); 65:20 (63); 65:25 (77)

Jeremiah 3:6-9 (55); 3:17 (62); 7:31 (79); 17:9 (65); 25:11-12 (4, 13); 30:7 (12, 39); 31:31-34 (11)

Ezekiel 20:33-38 (84, 89); 33:11 (39); 37:1-14 (34); 37:7-10 (33); 37:11-12 (33); 37:21-28 (63); 38:2-3 (52); 38:5-6 (52); 38:6 (53); 38:8 (52, 54); 38:11 (52); 38:13 (53, 54); 38:15 (53); 38:16 (52, 53); 38:22-23 (53); 38:23 (53); 39:2 (53); 39:7 (53, 54); 39:9 (53); 39:12 (53); 39:22 (53); 39:29 (54); 47:1-12 (63)

Daniel 2:31-35 (17); 2:37-38 (17); 2:38 (17); 2:44 (17); 7:2-7 (17); 7:7-8 (43); 7:8 (17, 43); 7:9-14 (17); 7:21 (43); 7:24 (18, 19, 43); 7:25 (15, 18, 43); 7:26-27 (19); 8:20-21 (17); 9:2 (13); 9:3-19 (13); 9:24 (12, 13, 39); 9:24-27 (13, 91); 9:25 (13); 9:26 (14, 16, 43); 9:27 (14, 18, 33, 39, 41, 42, 43, 46, 54, 89, 91); 11:31 (47); 12:1-2 (60, 82); 12:2 (83, 89); 12:7 (15); 12:11-12 (47, 48); 12:13 (60)

Hosea 2:1-5 (55)

Joel 3:2 (58); 3:12 (58)

Amos 9:13 (63); 9:14-15 (63)

Micah 4:3 (63); 5:2 (4)

Habakkuk 2:14 (30)

Zechariah 9:9 (4); 12:2-3 (33); 12:10 (4, 12, 33, 39, 51, 54, 89); 13:1 (51); 13:8-9 (84); 14:2 (33, 58, 89); 14:4 (7, 26, 60, 89); 14:9 (62); 14:9-11 (11); 14:16-17 (62)

Malachi 4:5 (50)

Matthew 4:8-9 (43); 5:22 (79); 5:29-30 (79); 6:9 (76); 6:26 (76); 7:13-14 (80); 8:11 (77); 8:12 (79); 9:37 (87); 10:28 (72, 74, 79); 10:42 (37); 11:21-24 (66, 80); 12:36 (66); 13:31-33 (30); 16:18 (12); 17:3 (50, 74); 19:28 (63); 22:30 (77); 24:1-2 (46); 24:3 (32); 24:4-5 (33); 24:4-29 (42); 24:6 (87); 24:8 (32); 24:11 (33); 24:14 (33, 50); 24:15 (16, 26, 41, 43, 46, 47, 89, 91); 24:15-16 (15); 24:15-20 (28); 24:16-18 (42); 24:16-21 (47); 24:16-20 (48, 89); 24:21 (15, 28, 39, 89); 24:24 (33, 44); 24:29 (26); 24:29-30 (26, 32, 58); 24:29-31 (28, 29, 89); 24:31 (28, 60); 24:32-33 (34); 24:36 (2, 5, 32); 24:37-39 (33); 24:39-41 (26); 24:42 (34, 87); 24:42-44 (26); 24:44 (26); 24:45-51 (34); 24:46 (87); 25:1-13 (34); 25:6 (29); 25:30 (79); 25:31 (59); 25:31-34 (26); 25:31-46 (60, 84, 89); 25:40 (84, 85); 25:41 (79, 84); 25:46 (79, 80, 81); 27:52-53 (82); 28:18-20 (30)

Mark 9:43-48 (79); 9:47-48 (79); 14:61-62 (17)

Luke 1:32-33 (62); 4:16-21 (9); 4:18-21 (8); 8:31 (79); 12:47-48 (66, 80); 15:10 (76); 16:22-26 (72); 16:23 (79); 16:23-28 (79); 18:8 (30); 19:17-19 (36); 21:28 (32); 23:43 (73); 24:39-43 (76, 78)

John 3:16 (86); 5:22 (66, 67); 5:24 (35, 84); 5:25 (29); 5:27 (66); 5:28-29 (29, 82); 5:29 (83); 11:11 (74); 13:19 (4); 14:1-3 (21, 23, 89); 14:2-3 (26, 36, 37); 14:3 (26); 14:6 (78); 14:16 (25); 16:33 (29); 19:23-24 (8); 19:30 (74); 20:27 (76)

Acts 1:7 (34); 1:9-11 (60); 1:11 (60); 1:11-12 (7); 2:41-42 (87); 7:56 (73); 7:59 (73); 8:39 (21); 15:14 (12); 17:11 (2); 24:15 (29)

Romans 2:16 (66); 3:10-12 (78); 3:20 (66); 3:23 (66, 78, 86); 6:23 (86); 8:1 (35, 84); 8:19-22 (68); 8:34 (76); 10:9-10 (86); 11:1 (11); 11:1-2 (12); 11:25-26 (12); 11:26 (39, 51, 89); 11:29 (12); 14:5 (28); 14:10-12 (84)

1 Corinthians 2:9 (76); 3:11-15 (84); 3:12-15 (35); 3:16 (25, 48); 6:2 (63); 6:3 (77, 84); 6:19 (48); 9:24-27 (35); 9:24-25 (36); 12:13 (12); 13:12 (77); 15:3-4 (86); 15:20 (82); 15:22-24 (82); 15:23 (29, 82, 85); 15:42-44 (74, 77, 78); 15:51-53 (22, 23, 89); 15:52 (26, 28)

2 Corinthians 5:1-4 (74); 5:8 (73); 5:9 (37); 5:10 (35, 84, 89); 5:11 (81); 5:21 (84); 6:2 (86); 11:2 (36); 12:2 (76); 12:2-4 (21, 73)

Ephesians 1:9-10 (10); 1:10 (11); 2:8-9 (84, 86); 2:21 (48); 3:4-6 (12, 89); 4:8-10 (73); 5:25-27 (36); 5:31-32 (77)

Philippians 1:21-23 (72); 1:23 (73, 76); 2:9-11 (84, 85); 3:20 (26); 3:20-21 (74); 3:21 (77)

1 Thessalonians 1:10 (24, 26, 27); 2:19-20 (36); 4:13 (22, 74); 4:13-17 (21); 4:13-18 (89); 4:16 (27); 4:16-17 (23, 82); 4:17 (21, 26, 29, 74, 91); 4:18 (5, 22, 26, 87); 5:9 (24)

2 Thessalonians 1:7 (59); 1:9 (79); 2:3 (33, 43); 2:3-4 (15, 46); 2:3-8 (89); 2:4 (16, 33, 43, 46, 47, 55); 2:6 (44); 2:6-7 (25, 91); 2:6-8 (39); 2:7-11 (22); 2:8 (43, 45, 59); 2:9 (43)

2 Timothy 3:1 (1); 3:1-5 (30, 33, 34); 3:13 (30); 3:14-17 (87); 4:3-4 (33); 4:7-8 (35); 4:8 (36, 87)

Titus 2:13 (21, 22, 26); 3:5 (84)

Hebrews 4:9 (77); 7:25 (76); 9:27 (72); 10:4 (64); 10:12 (46)

James 1:12 (36); 1:17 (80); 5:7-9 (26); 5:17 (50)

1 Peter 1:10-11 (12); 5:2-4 (36); 5:13 (56)

2 Peter 1:20-21 (7); 2:4 (79); 3:3-4 (33); 3:9 (80); 3:10-13 (68); 3:11 (5, 6); 3:13 (90)

1 John 1:7 (74); 2:15 (56); 2:18 (43, 44); 2:22 (44); 3:2 (77); 3:2-3 (5); 3:3 (6, 87); 4:1-3 (44, 45); 4:3 (44); 4:8 (80)

Revelation 1:3 (5); 1:7 (5, 26, 59); 1:20 (7); 2:10 (36); 3:10 (24, 27, 39); 4:1 (25); 4:2-3 (76); 4:8 (76); 4:10-11 (36); 4:11 (36); 5:5-6 (12); 5:10 (63); 5:11-12 (76); 6:1 (28, 40); 6:8 (28); 6:9 (49); 6:9-11 (74); 6:10 (39, 76); 6:16-17 (28); 6:17 (24, 28); 7:4 (49); 7:5-8 (49); 7:9 (49, 77); 7:9-14 (28, 51); 7:9-12 (77); 7:14 (28, 49); 8:1-2 (40); 8:2-9 (89); 9:1-2 (79); 9:20-21 (39, 42); 11:1 (46); 11:2 (15); 11:3 (15, 50); 11:3-13 (89); 11:5-6 (50); 11:7-10 (50); 11:11-12 (50, 82); 11:12 (28); 11:13 (50); 11:15 (28, 40); 12:6 (15, 47, 89); 12:7-13 (89); 12:9 (7); 12:12 (42); 12:13-14 (47); 12:14 (15, 89); 13:1 (43); 13:2-4 (43); 13:3 (43); 13:5 (15, 42, 43); 13:5-6 (43); 13:7 (24, 43); 13:7-8 (43); 13:8 (66); 13:11 (44); 13:12 (43); 13:13-15 (44); 13:14-15 (47); 13:15 (45); 13:16 (43); 13:16-17 (33, 44, 91); 13:18 (44); 14:1-5 (50); 14:6-7 (39, 50, 51, 89); 14:8-11 (51); 14:9-11 (45); 14:9-12 (87); 14:11 (79); 14:13 (77); 14:20 (58); 15:1 (40, 41); 16:12-14 (58); 16:12-16 (89); 16:13 (43); 16:13-16 (60); 16:14 (54); 16:16 (58, 91); 17:3-6 (55); 17:9 (56); 17:10 (56); 17:14 (59); 17:15 (55); 17:16-17 (55, 57); 17:18 (7, 56); 18:4 (55, 56); 18:7 (56); 18:10 (56); 18:11-19 (55); 18:13 (56); 18:17 (56); 18:19 (56); 18:21 (56); 19:1-2 (56); 19:1-6 (56); 19:7-8 (37); 19:7-9 (89); 19:8 (59); 19:9 (37); 19:10 (5); 19:11 (58); 19:11-16 (59, 60, 89); 19:14 (26, 37); 19:17-18 (59); 19:19 (58); 19:19-20 (43); 19:19-21 (59, 89); 19:20 (39, 45, 79); 20:1-3 (39, 60, 79, 89); 20:1-7 (91); 20:2-7 (62, 64); 20:4 (11, 49, 60, 62, 63, 82, 89); 20:4-5 (29); 20:4-6 (89); 20:5 (11, 83); 20:5-6 (66, 82); 20:6 (62); 20:7-9 (26, 65); 20:7-10 (89); 20:8 (54); 20:10 (45, 65, 67, 79, 80, 84); 20:11-15 (66, 84, 89, 91); 20:12 (65); 20:13-15 (74); 20:13-14 (79); 20:14 (66); 20:14-15 (79); 21:1 (68); 21:2 (69); 21:2-3 (76); 21:3-5 (68); 21:4 (77); 21:12-21 (69); 21:16 (69); 21:24-26 (70); 21:27 (66, 78); 22:1-2 (69); 22:3 (68, 70, 77); 22:3-4 (69); 22:5 (70, 77); 22:16 (25); 22:20 (86, 87)