Endtimes Essentials

Book #2

The Beginning of Birth Pains

The First Endtime Events

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An online version of The *Beginning of Birth Pains* is available at: www.trainingtimothys.com

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Part I

Introduction to the Beginning of the Endtimes

The painful beginning of the end

Chapter 1

Understanding the Beginning of the Endtimes

Contents

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Primary Points

- One reason The Beginning of Birth Pains is a vital biblical topic is that The Last Generation Church will have to face these catastrophes.
- It is common in the Church today to claim God does not expect us to correctly understand the prophetic Scriptures.
- Unfortunately, the quality of clear and biblical teaching on the doctrine of the Endtimes is greatly lacking in the Church today.
- In order to obtain more detail on the Endtimes, we need to study the more obscure visions of Daniel and Revelation. This is the most difficult kind of Scripture to confidently interpret.
- God commands us to correctly interpret His Word, including the prophetic parts (cf. 2 Tim 2:15).
- God inspired the biblical prophecies in the OT and Revelation because He did want them **correctly** interpreted and **explained** (2 Tim 2:15).
- Throughout Christ's sermon on the Endtimes He said: **"Be on guard! Be alert!" … "keep watch" … "What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'"** (Mark 13:33, 34, 37 NIV). **Watch!** for what? Current events in our world that would signal the beginning of the Endtimes.

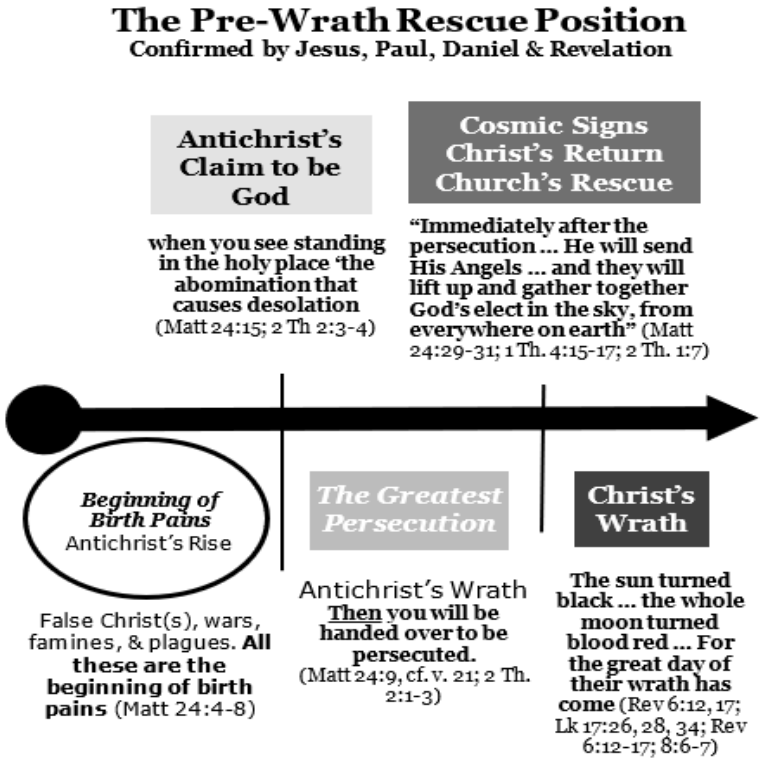
- There is a modern political, economic, and military coalition emerging for the first time in human history, that already matches 6 of the 7 biblical attributes of the predicted 10-nation Endtime Coalition. It is scheduled to fulfill the 7th biblical attribute in 2024.
- There is a person emerging in the world for the first time in human history, that already matches at least 4 of the 7 biblical attributes predicted for the Rising Antichrist.
- God has a purpose for allowing signs of the Endtimes to occur throughout history: God has wanted every generation of Christians to believe they could be the Last Generation. Including Christians in the first generation.
- Just because we cannot currently know the exact **day** or the exact **hour** of Christ's Return (Matt 24:36), does not mean that we cannot confidently **know his return is very near, right at the door** (v. 33) because we see current events fulfilling the signs He gave us.
- Christians have made mistakes in obeying Christ's command to **Watch!** for signs of His Return, including setting dates and proclaiming signs of the end that are not biblical.
- Antichrist's Resurrection seems to be the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun.
- It is common to believe that because many others have made claims about the Endtimes being near and been wrong, that the arguments presented in this book are not worth serious consideration either. But this line of reasoning is false.
- Accurately understanding the doctrine of the Endtimes, is necessary to possess the necessary confidence and clarity to glorify God in the Endtimes.
- Daniel indicates that God did not intend the meaning of his prophecies to be clear to His Church until the Endtimes were near. The book also predicts there will be increased understanding of prophetic Scripture at that time because God will provide teachers with **insight**.

- God seems to promise all Christians that if they will humbly and diligently **reflect on what** God is **saying** in prophetic Scripture, **the Lord will give you insight** (2 Tim 2:7 NIV).
- It seems God will want us to follow the biblical rule that **Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses** (Matt 18:16) to have sufficient confidence that the Endtimes have begun.
- This book may help you understand how close we may be to the Endtimes.

A) The importance of The Beginning of Birth Pains

The Church will be there!

Hopefully, you have read the previous book, *Endtimes Essentials* book #1, *Christ's Endtimes Teaching* (*CET*). In it the Pre-Wrath Rescue position was thoroughly demonstrated from Scripture. It can be portrayed in the following graphic:



The circled Beginning of Birth Pains indicates where we are at in the sequence of Endtime events in this book. Therefore, the graphic tells us one reason The Beginning of Birth Pains is a vital biblical topic. THE CHURCH WILL BE THERE. Contrary to popular views of the Endtimes, the Church's Rescue ("rapture") does not occur until Christ's visible Return and after the completion of The Greatest Persecution. Therefore, the first reason The Beginning of Birth Pains is such a vital biblical topic for the Church is because Christians in the Last Generation Church will have to face them.

B) God expects us to correctly interpret prophetic Scripture

B.1) The lack of correctly interpreting prophetic Scripture in the church today

It is common in the Church today to claim God does not expect us to correctly understand the prophetic Scriptures. Several of these popular objections were dealt with in the first chapter of *CET.* If they still influence you, then you are encouraged to reread that chapter. In this section and the next we will summarize some of these objections and responses to them.

For example, 45% of American Evangelical Christians claim: "It is impossible to know the circumstances that will precede Jesus' return." [1] Such people obviously do not believe God expects them to understand a great portion of the prophetic Scriptures. This common but false belief was corrected by the fact that Jesus Himself taught a number of "circumstances that will precede Jesus' return" in His Endtimes Sermon. Therefore, it was concluded: "So, it would seem at least 45% of American Evangelical Christians are wrong about a relatively basic teaching of Christ on the Endtimes. That is a serious error" (cf. *CET*, ch. 1, sec. A).

This "apathetic view" toward understanding prophetic Scripture is a serious problem in today's Church. Again, it was written:

> Many Christians suggest that understanding the details of the Endtimes is not important. The claim is that these things are too obscure in Scripture, or controversial in the Church, to be dogmatic about them. It is common to hear Christians

> and Pastors say that we simply need to put our hope in Christ's Return and not worry about the details surrounding it. In fact, such a view practically denies that it is God's will for us to understand what hundreds of verses of Scripture teach on the Endtimes. (*CET* ch. 1, sec. B.3)

Accordingly, John MacArthur was quoted as saying:

> [The doctrine of the Endtimes] is strangely treated with an attitude of indifference [apathy]… How can you do that? How can you think that God spoke clearly about everything but the end? That it doesn't matter. It's almost a badge of academic nobility not to have a view [on the Endtimes]… For some it seems to be a defect to take the Bible literally on this topic. [2]

It was pointed out that there are some reasons for this apathy about the doctrine of the Endtimes. For example it was written:

> This apathy also comes from the frustration and doubts caused by having 14 different and often contradictory academic systems being taught in the Church on this doctrine. It seems that many of the people teaching these 14 different views on the Endtimes are equally smart and godly Christians. Therefore, it is easy to assume it must be impossible to clearly understand this doctrine in Scripture. (*CET* ch. 1, sec. B.3)

To which it was replied:

> To my brothers and sisters who may be rather apathetic about the doctrine of the Endtimes, let me say this. Stop letting all the contradictory academic systems on the Endtimes give you an excuse for not understanding Christ's Endtimes sermon. At the very least, you can confidently believe and teach what the first 28 verses of Christ's Endtimes sermon teaches. (Ibid.)

Unfortunately, the quality of clear and biblical teaching on the doctrine of the Endtimes is greatly lacking in the Church today. This was demonstrated in several ways in *CET.*

> For example, a recent survey claimed that 50% of Protestant Pastors deny or are not sure that Scripture predicts there will be a literal and physical Antichrist in the future. 3

> This is another indication of how much confusion there is in the Church on the Endtimes and Christ's Endtimes sermon…
>
> Contrary to 50% of Protestant Pastors who cannot confidently claim the Antichrist will be a real person, the Apostle Paul did this very thing when he wrote of the Antichrist: **the man of lawlessness … will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God** (2 Thess 2:3-4 NIV). Clearly, Paul believed the Antichrist would be a real person in the future. Scripture could not be more clear on this, and the many Pastors who reject a literal interpretation of the fulfillment of biblical prophecy could not be more wrong on this. (*CET* ch. 1, sec. B.2)

Accordingly, it seems one could not trust these 50% of Protestant Pastors to even understand the basics of the doctrine of the Endtimes.

In addition, it was clearly demonstrated in *CET* that Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul taught a Pre-wrath Rescue position on the substance and sequence of Endtime events. Again, this view is illustrated in the graphic above and thoroughly supported in *CET*. If you have studied the *CET* material, then just read Matthew 24:29-31 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 to be reminded of the clarity of this teaching.

But did you know that 96% of Protestant Pastors would deny this view is biblical? Again, it was noted:

> It is alarming that in a recent survey only 4% of Protestant Pastors claimed that the Pre-wrath view of Christ's Return and the Church's Rescue reflected their own view. [4] 4%! Some may assume this reflects the weakness of this position. But with all due respect, it is one more example of how confused even Pastors are about the doctrine of the Endtimes. The Pre-wrath Rescue position argued for in the previous chapters and summarized in this chapter, deserves a lot more careful Bible study than apparently 96% of Protestant Pastors have given it. (*CET* ch. 8, sec. A.2)

Unfortunately, the Apostle Paul's prediction regarding how the Church would respond to the prophetic Scriptures has been fulfilled in our day. He warned:

> **The time will come when they will <u>not</u> <u>endure</u> sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.** (2 Tim 4:3-4 NASB)

The only remedy to all the **myths** and false teaching in the Church today regarding the Endtimes is to obey 2 Timothy 2:15 which is discussed next.

B.2) The command of 2 Timothy 2:15

As noted, the previous book *CET* clearly demonstrated the Pre-Wrath Rescue position in Christ's Endtimes Sermon (Matthew 24:1-31), Christ's Revelation, the Apostle Paul's epistles to the Thessalonians, and Daniel. In addition, alternative views were biblically and clearly refuted. This interpretation was confirmed by the testimony of at least three witnesses in Scripture. And two of those witnesses were not symbolic visions, but clear teachings by Christ and the Apostle.

However, interpreting the Scriptures addressed in this second book, *The Beginning of Birth Pains*, will be more challenging. The clear teaching of Jesus and Paul has given us a clear and general outline of Endtime events. But in order to obtain more detail on these events, we need to study the more obscure visions of Daniel and Revelation. It must be admitted that this is the most difficult kind of Scripture to confidently interpret.

Accordingly, it is necessary to approach the interpretation of Daniel and Revelation with humility. This is why the word "seem" or "seems" is used over 300 times in this book. In addition, <u>probabilities</u> of correct conclusions are suggested, not certainties.

But most misunderstand what God-pleasing humility looks like in relation to the prophetic Scriptures. Many claim it is humble to admit we are not supposed to correctly interpret these Scriptures. Many claim it is proud or arrogant to even attempt it. On the

contrary, God-pleasing humility obeys God. And God commands us to correctly interpret His Word, including the prophetic parts. Through Paul God commanded:

> **Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive his approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth.** (2 Tim 2:15 NLT)

Again, this command includes **the word of truth** in the more difficult passages of prophetic Scripture. God inspired the prophecies in the OT and Revelation because He did want them **correctly** interpreted and **explained**. Otherwise their value is very diminished, and they do not accomplish all of God's purposes for them.

God gave us hundreds of verses of Scripture about the Endtimes. Let us not dishonor God by putting these Scriptures into virtual trash cans labeled "too obscure," "too controversial," or "just symbolic." This does not please the Author of these Scriptures.

The command in 2 Timothy 2:15 exposes the unbiblical nature of the popular views addressed in *CET*. For example, apathetic Pan-tribulationism claims the biblical details of Endtime events are too obscure to understand, or to be important (cf. *CET* ch. 3, sec. A; ch. 11, sec. C). This view does not even try to **Work hard** to **correctly explain** the prophetic Scriptures. Instead, it often hides behind some kind of false humility that accuses others of arrogance for attempting to do so. But surely, God is more pleased with **a good worker** and Teacher **who does not need to be ashamed and who** does their best to **correctly explain the word of truth.** Even the **truth** in the prophetic Scriptures.

But the Apostle Paul also taught a few verses after 2 Timothy 2:15, **But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations** (v. 23 NASB). Unfortunately, when one reads Christian literature on the Endtimes, or listens to teachings on the topic, one often encounters proud-sounding people making bold and dogmatic **speculations** based on doubtful interpretations of prophetic Scripture. Such an approach often seems **foolish**, arrogant, and gives the godly endeavor of understanding the Endtimes a bad name.

There will be a great attempt in *The Beginning of Birth Pains* to avoid **foolish and ignorant speculations**. Suggested interpretations or applications of the prophetic Scriptures discussed will be supported by careful, biblical, and reasonable arguments as much as possible.

Interpreting prophetic Scripture accurately is a difficult challenge. But contrary to the practice and attitude of many in the Church today, we should diligently pursue this because God commanded us:

> **Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive his approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth.** (2 Tim 2:15 NLT)

Including **the word of truth** contained in the large part of the Bible that is prophetic Scripture.

C) God expects us to recognize the fulfillment of prophetic Scripture

C.1) The expectation that we can obey Christ's commands to recognize signs of His Return in current events

God expects us to **work hard** to **correctly explain the word of truth** in prophetic Scripture (2 Tim 2:15). But He also expects His people to recognize the fulfillment of those Scriptures if they occur in their lifetime. Why is this?

Because God wants His people to know if they are living in the Endtimes and to prepare to live accordingly. Recognizing the fulfillment of biblical prophecy in current events will enable the Last Generation Church to answer these very important questions. Has the Endtimes begun? Has the Antichrist emerged in the world? Will the unprecedented wars, famines, and plagues of The Beginning of Birth Pains occur in the near future? Am I and my Christian family and friends going to face The Greatest Persecution? These questions can only be answered if we correctly understand biblical prophecy and recognize its fulfillment in current events.

Which is why Christ commanded us to watch current events to recognize the signs of His Return and the beginning of the Endtimes. In *CET* the following was written regarding Christ's Endtimes sermon:

> **As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said … what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"** (Matt 24:3 NLT). In response Jesus very carefully and intentionally described many signs and events that will signal His Return.
>
> This is why throughout Christ's sermon on the Endtimes He said: **"Be on guard! Be alert!" … "keep watch" … "What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'"** (Mark 13:33, 34, 37 NIV). **Watch!** for what? Current events in our world that would signal the beginning of the Endtimes, and that Christ's Return is near.
>
> Elsewhere, Christ rebuked the Pharisees for not understanding biblical signs. He said, **"You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky** [to predict the weather]**, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times"** (Matt 16:1-3 NIV) to recognize Christ's First Coming. Likewise, Christ would confront Christians today who **cannot interpret the signs** of His Second Coming.
>
> Christ could not have been clearer. A repeated command in His Endtimes Teaching was to **"Watch!"** current events so that we would recognize the beginning of the Endtimes. Unfortunately, this command is widely ignored in the Church today. Popular views on the Endtimes discourage this very thing. It is the popularity of these teachings on the Endtimes that has led to the statistic that 45% of American Evangelical Christians claim: "it is impossible to know the circumstances that will precede Jesus' return." Therefore, it is impossible for such Christians to intelligently obey Christ's command to **"Watch!"** (*CET* ch. 10, sec. D)

It is especially the "apathetic" and "metaphorical" views on the doctrine of the Endtimes that have <u>not</u> encouraged or equipped Christians to obey Christ's repeated command.

God wants us to diligently, carefully, wisely, and biblically monitor current events in our world so that we can know when the Endtimes have begun, and Christ's Return is near. That is the only way to practically obey Christ's command to **"Watch!"** Accordingly, the respected Christian teacher John Piper recently wrote:

> Jesus's repeated command that we be awake, ready, on guard, watchful, and vigilant is not because the second coming will take obedient disciples off guard, but because spiritual stupor results in being oblivious to what is happening in the world…
>
> The uncertainty of the time of Christ's return functions to warn all of us to be spiritually alive and awake and sober because the alternative is a spiritual condition that will be blind to signs [of Christ's Return]… Another way to describe our zeal to be spiritually awake and sober and discerning is to say that we love the Lord's appearing (2 Tim. 4:8), or that we are "eagerly waiting for him" (Heb. 9:28; cf. 1 Cor. 1:7; Phil. 3:20). [5]

Indeed, the NT Christians had a very different perspective on the Endtimes than many in the Church today. Paul wrote to the Philippians: **We are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior** (3:20 NLT). He wrote the Corinthians, **you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed** (1 Cor 1:7 NIV). The Apostle writes of **all who have loved His appearing** (2 Tim 4:8 NASB) and in Hebrews we read of **all who are eagerly waiting for him** (9:28 NLT). This eager and vigilant expectation of Christ's Return is not the experience of many Christians today. They are far too consumed with the details of their daily lives.

Why is this? For one reason they have been discouraged from obeying Christ's command to **"Watch"** current events for signs of His Return. This is one reason Christ gave us this command. To help us to be watching expectantly for His Return. Correctly understanding the biblical signs of the Endtimes and accurately recognizing them in current events helps us to be **eagerly waiting for him to return** (Phil 3:20).

It was admitted above that obeying God's command to **work hard** so that we can **correctly explain the word of truth** in prophetic Scripture is challenging (2 Tim 2:15). So is obeying Christ's command to **Watch!** and recognize current events that may be fulfilling biblical prophecy. For example, we read in Daniel:

> **The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints** (Dan 7:24-25 NIV).

The last sentence of the prophecy is rather easy to interpret. The NT teachings of Jesus and Paul enable us to recognize this is describing **"the abomination of desolation"** (Matt 24:15) when **the man of lawlessness … sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God** (2 Thess 2:4) and begins **the greatest persecution** (Matt 24:21; cf. *CET*, chs. 4-5). But how will we confidently recognize the emergence of these **ten kings** or when the Antichrist **arise**s … **after them**? What will it look like when the Antichrist **subdue**s **three kings**? And another question. Where do these events fit into the sequence of Endtime events?

Answering these questions is challenging. But we can expect to be able to answer them. Why? Because God commanded us to correctly interpret this prophetic Scripture and recognize its fulfillment in current events. For those who doubt this is doable, this book is offered as an example of doing these very things.

More specifically, it will be demonstrated that Daniel and Revelation provide 7 biblical attributes of the **ten kings** that will make up what will be referred to as the 10-nation Endtime Coalition (cf. chs. 4-6). It will be further demonstrated that for the first time in human history, there is an organization that uniquely matches 6 of those 7 biblical attributes of this predicted Coalition, and is scheduled to fulfill the 7th attribute in 2024.

Likewise, it will be demonstrated that Daniel and Revelation provide at least 7 biblical attributes of the emerging (Rising) Antichrist (cf. chs. 8-9). It will be further demonstrated that for the first time in human history, a man has emerged that already

uniquely matches at least 4 of those biblical attributes in an extraordinary way.

Of course, the reader will be encouraged to watch for further confirmation of these things. But it is claimed that the interpretations and applications of these Scriptures presented in this book are irrefutable. That does not mean they are absolutely correct in every aspect. What it does mean is that it seems there are no biblical, historical, or reasonable arguments against these conclusions of the book. Of course, it will be up to the reader to evaluate such claims for themselves.

C.2) Unbiblical criticism about obeying Christ's command to "Watch!"

Unfortunately, it has become popular in the Church to make fun of Christians who monitor the news for signs of the Endtimes. Unbelievers of course do this, as was described long ago in the Bible. We read in 2 Peter:

> **Most importantly, I want to remind you that in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth, and following their own desires. They will say, "What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again? From before the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created."** (2 Pet 3:3-4 NLT)

Unfortunately, too many Christian scholars, Pastors, and others sound too much like these pagan **scoffers**. They criticize Christians for evaluating current events in our world to recognize biblical signs of the Endtimes. The **mocking** that comes from Christian Teachers in particular is often supported by errors in their interpretation of Christ's Endtimes Teaching. Rather shockingly, it has become common for them to actually claim Christ was not teaching us signs to look for to recognize the beginning of the Endtimes. [6] This skepticism is often based on the view that The Beginning of Birth Pains have been fulfilled throughout Church history. But as explained in *CET* (ch. 3, sec. B), this misleading teaching called Historicism does not reflect Christ's intention in His Endtimes sermon.

If we are to obey Christ's command to **"Watch!"** we must avoid the errors of pagan skepticism. We must also ignore the common scholarly skepticism in the Church that would also discourage us from honoring Christ's command.

At this point, let us answer some very important questions. Why have the things Jesus predicted for the Endtimes happened throughout human history? A related question is this. Why did the first century Christians believe Christ's Return was near? [7] For example, the Apostle Paul wrote:

> **But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this. What I mean, brothers and sisters, is that the time** [until the end of the world] **is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they do not; those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.** (1 Cor 7:28-31 NIV)

The Apostle was so certain that the end of the world was near, that it was a reason to discourage people from getting married. Was he wrong to believe this? Yes and no. Of course, on one hand, the end of the world did not occur in the first century. But on the other hand, Paul believed there was sufficient evidence in his lifetime to believe Christ's Return was near, and God was perfectly fine with that. Why?

God has a purpose for allowing signs of the Endtimes to occur throughout history: God has wanted every generation of Christians to believe they could be the Last Generation. Including Christians in the first generation. This is because there are many spiritual benefits to having evidence in your generation of the possibility of Christ's Return. And that is why God has planned it that way. Some of these benefits were explained in *CET* (ch. 2, sec. B).

Skeptics would claim the first century church was wrong to believe Christ was returning soon. No they were not. Of course it may be wrong to be absolutely certain of such things, but God wants us to **eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be**

revealed (1 Cor 1:7 NIV). And that means believing there is a good possibility it may happen in our lifetime. And that God-honoring perspective is helped by having an understanding of the biblical signs of the Endtimes and diligently monitoring current events in our world.

This is what the skeptical and critical pagans, Pastors, and scholars described above fail to appreciate. As a result, they criticize Christians for doing what God wants them to do: monitoring current events to determine if Christ's Return could be near. Which is why our Lord commanded us: **"Watch!"**

There is a second common criticism against obeying this command. Many misapply Christ's famous statement: **"No one knows the day or hour when these things will happen** [Christ's Return, cf. v. 33]**, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows"** (Matt 24:36 NLT). This is often interpreted to mean we should not be looking for signs of Christ's Return. Or that it is misguided or impossible to accurately recognize current events that are fulfilling biblical prophecy.

This common misinterpretation of Christ's statement is partly corrected by noticing that **knows** is in the present tense. In other words, Jesus was saying, **"No one** now **knows** 2,000 years ago **the day or hour when these things will happen."** Jesus did not say no one will ever know the timing of His Return. In fact a few verses earlier in the same sermon He said, **"When you see all these things** predicted in His sermon, **you can know his return is very near, right at the door"** (Matt 24:33 NLT).

Therefore, just because we cannot currently know the exact **day** or the exact **hour** of Christ's Return (Matt 24:36), does not mean that we cannot confidently **know his return is very near, right at the door** (v. 33) when we see current events fulfilling the signs He gave us. In fact, it will be demonstrated in chapter 15 of this book that when the Endtimes begin, the Last Generation Church will know the exact day of Christ's Return.

Therefore, it is wrong to allow our misinterpretation of Matthew 24:36 to give us an excuse for not obeying Christ's repeated command in the same sermon to **"Be on guard! Be**

alert!" … "keep watch" … "What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'" (Mark 13:33, 34, 37 NIV).

There is another possible objection to believing God expects us to recognize fulfillments of biblical prophecy in current events. The first century Jews failed miserably to do this regarding Christ's First Coming. Does their example mean Christians are also expected to fail to recognize the biblical signs of Christ's Second Coming? Not at all. The Pharisees certainly studied prophetic Scripture, but they were **darkened in their understanding** (Eph 4:18 NIV) because they were not indwelled with God's Spirit.

Accordingly, after the Apostles received the Spirit, they were able to correctly interpret prophetic Scripture concerning Christ's First Coming and recognize events that fulfilled them (cf. Acts 2:1-36). Likewise, **the eyes of** a Christian's **heart have been enlightened** (Eph 1:18 NET [8]) to obey the commands to correctly interpret prophetic Scripture (cf. 2 Tim 2:15) and recognize its fulfillment in current events (cf. Mark 13:37). In fact, as discussed below (sec. D), there seems to be a biblical promise that God will help us do these very things.

C.3) Common mistakes made in obeying Christ's command to "Watch!"

However, it must be admitted that many Christians make mistakes in their desire to **"Watch!"** current events for signs of the Endtimes. These extremes are one reason why Pastors and scholars have gone to the other extreme to discourage Christians from watching at all. What are some of these errors?

First is the embarrassing practice of setting dates. Cults like the Jehovah Witnesses have been especially guilty of this. But a Christian leader as well-known as Pat Robertson has done this twice. [9] He is the founder of the Christian Broadcasting Network, a foremost leader in the Pentecostal movement, and was a candidate in a U.S. presidential election. Twice he has claimed certain Endtime events would occur at certain times and twice he has been embarrassingly wrong. [10]

The first problem with obeying Christ's command to **"Watch!"** current events for signs of biblical prophecy being fulfilled is that

too many have dogmatically set dates and made predictions without careful and reasonable biblical arguments.

A second problem is that too many Christians have looked for and proclaimed signs of the end that are not biblical. For example, some popular "prophecy experts" have made a big deal about "blood moons." Of course, the instant right before Christ Returns, **the whole moon** will become **blood red** (Rev 6:12; cf. Matt 24:29). But Scripture does not teach that such a thing would be an initial sign the Endtimes have begun.

Some claim the prediction in Daniel that **Many will go here and there to increase knowledge** (12:4 NIV), points to the exponential growth of information in our day. But this prophecy is specifically referring to an **increase** in the understanding of **the words of the scroll** that contained Daniel's prophecy, when these prophecies are being fulfilled. This will be discussed further in section D below.

Some claim conspiracy theories of the world moving to a "cashless society" are evidence we are moving closer to the time when we cannot **buy or sell unless** we have **the mark … of the beast** (Rev 13:17). But there will be no problem enforcing this circumstance even if the world's physical currencies are operating.

Others claim modern technology that might make it possible for imbedded chips to contain medical and personal information are a sure sign of the Endtimes. This is because they believe such a device will become the **mark … of the beast** (Rev 13:16-17). There may be other reasons for Christians to reject such technology, but fear of taking Antichrist's **mark** is not one of them. First, the Bible says the **mark** will be **the name of the beast or the number of its name**, not your personal medical or financial information. Second, the **mark** will be visibly printed on the skin of people's **right hands or on their foreheads**, not invisibly embedded under their skin.

Third, no real born-again Christian will receive the **mark** because all who do so will be damned forever (cf. Rev 14:9-11). If you believe the Bible teaches that no predestined, irreversibly re-created, completely paid for, and spiritually sealed Christian can lose their salvation, then you know that no real Christian will take

the **mark**. This is not something that is going to "sneak up" on God's people and trick them into doing so. Christians in the Last Generation Church will know what the **mark** is, be clear on what they are being asked to do, and will refuse to do so. Therefore, embedded chip technology is probably not a biblical sign of Christ's Return.

A third common mistake is overlooking what the Bible says will be the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun. What will this event be? That is not an easy question to answer. Which is why chapters 10-12 of this book will be devoted to understanding this topic. There it will be noted that the first "birth pain" that Jesus described was the emergence of False Christs (cf. Matt 24:4-5). It will be argued that the Antichrist will be the first and foremost of these False Christs to appear. In addition, it will be the Antichrist's Resurrection that will clearly confirm his identity. Therefore, it seems the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun will be the Antichrist's Resurrection.

Unfortunately, many Christians ignore or overlook such initial biblical signs of the Endtimes and focus on events that will follow. For example, many will point to the growing threat of nuclear war as a sign that the Endtimes are near. But the world has had nuclear weapons for almost 80 years. Until we see Antichrist's emergence, the Endtime wars will probably not occur.

Likewise, some claim that famines, plagues, and earthquakes are a sign the Endtimes have begun. But these things have been occurring throughout human history. For example, some have claimed the number of earthquakes has been increasing, but the data does not support this. [11] Nevertheless, no matter how severe these catastrophes may be, until we see Antichrist's emergence, they are probably not reliable signs of the Endtimes. [12]

Unfortunately, all of the above mistakes have created a lot of skepticism about any Christians attempting to obey Christ's command to **"Watch!"** But the concern is greatly exaggerated. It is true that many people throughout history have suggested current events in their time that they thought may be fulfilling Endtimes prophecy. Many do the same today. And if such statements are

made as merely suggestions, then they are probably sincere attempts to obey Christ's command to **"Watch."**

But it must be admitted that many have neglected careful biblical exegesis and made dogmatic claims that the Endtimes are near. This is one reason that many may be skeptical about the conclusions in this book, *The Beginning of Birth Pains.* In other words, it is common to believe that because many others have made similar claims and been wrong, that the arguments presented in this book are not worth serious consideration either. But this line of reasoning is false.

In order to make this skeptical conclusion with integrity, a person would need to do at least the following three things. First, they would need to research, understand, and evaluate the biblical arguments that people have made in the past for claiming the Endtimes are near. If they do so, they will discover two things. One, that many had no biblical arguments at all, and were merely false prophets claiming revelations from God.

Secondly, it is easy to imagine that many throughout Church history have provided careful Bible studies on prophetic Scripture and reasonably applied them to current events. That assumption is wrong. You simply will not find very much of that kind of careful study available anywhere. Nonetheless, in order to be automatically and legitimately skeptical of the conclusions in this book, based on what others have claimed in the past, one would need to have a good understanding of what biblical arguments were used to support those claims.

Secondly, they would need to study, understand, and biblically evaluate the biblical arguments presented in *The Beginning of Birth Pains*. Only then would they be in a position to accomplish the third task required to be legitimately skeptical about the conclusions in this book: Compare the biblical arguments offered in this book with the arguments others offered in the past for their wrong claims?

If one undertakes the above tasks, they will find that relatively few have supported their conclusions with as many reasonable interpretations and applications of prophetic Scripture as you will find in *The Beginning of Birth Pains.* Again, that does not mean these conclusions are absolutely correct in every way. Which is why

many conclusions are shared as probabilities, not certainties. However, the reader is being asked to evaluate the arguments in this book without assuming they are based on the same shallow and misguided biblical interpretations that have been too common among Christians and even cults on this matter.

And, if the reader does not have any biblical, historical, or reasonable reasons to refute the conclusions in this book, then it is asked that these conclusions are taken seriously. [13]

Still, it can be said to all Christians: obey Christ's command to **"Watch!"** by monitoring current events for the emergence of the biblical signs of the Endtimes. This book, *The Beginning of Birth Pains*, is offered to help you biblically **interpret the signs of the times** (Matt 16:1-3 NIV) that point to Christ's Second Coming. As a result, you will be better equipped to obey Christ's repeated command to **Watch!** for His Return. In addition, this book may help you understand just how close we may be to the beginning of the Endtimes.

D) God's predictions and promises regarding the correct interpretation and application of prophetic Scripture

D.1) The prediction that the meaning of Daniel would remain hidden until the Endtimes were near *Dan 12:4a*

There may be a biblical reason that past claims about the Endtimes being near have been misguided. It is possible that God did not intend this topic to be clear to His Church until the Endtimes were near. Regarding the prophecies in Daniel, an Angel told the Prophet:

> **"But you, Daniel, keep this prophecy a secret; seal up the book until the time of the end, when many will rush here and there, and knowledge will increase"** (12:4 NIV).

The **book** referred to the entire **book** of **Daniel**. [14] Evidently at the time this **prophecy** was given, it was not God's will for His people to fully understand it. In fact, **Daniel** was told to **keep this prophecy a secret** (*satham*). The basic meaning of this Hebrew

word is to "hide" or "conceal" with a related meaning of "protect." [15] It was not God's will for Daniel to explain the meaning of his prophecies at that time. But when **the time of the end** is upon us, that will change. This seems to be referring to before the Endtime events actually happen, otherwise understanding them would have a very diminished value. God will want Last Generation Christians to understand how Daniel's **prophecy** applies to them and be helped in preparing for it. Accordingly, Wiersbe comments:

> The book [of Daniel] was to be treasured and protected and shared with the Jewish people. However, the book was "sealed" in this sense: The full meaning of what Daniel wrote would not be understood until "the time of the end" (see Matt. 24:15). Even Daniel didn't fully understand all that he saw, heard, and wrote (Dan. 12:8)! [16]

D.2) The prediction of increased study & understanding of prophetic Scripture *Dan 12:4b*

When will **many … rush here and there, and knowledge will increase** about the **prophecy** in **the book** of **Daniel**? Again, the **time of the end**. [17] More specifically, when the **prophecy** in **the book** of **Daniel** is being fulfilled. Accordingly, God knows that sufficient interest in Daniel's **prophecy** will probably require some Endtime events to occur first. When God's people see these prophecies being fulfilled before their very eyes, then the prediction in Daniel 12:4b will be fulfilled.

Hopefully, this will include the **prophecy** in **Daniel** concerning the Rising Antichrist and the 10-nation Endtime Coalition (cf. Dan chs. 2, 7-8; *BBP* chs. 4-9). But surely this predicted **rush** to **increase** Christians' **knowledge** of the **prophecy** in **the book** of **Daniel** will begin after the shocking and paradigm shifting event of Antichrist's Resurrection (cf. Rev 13; *BBP* chs. 10-17).

What will the **many** be doing at **the time of the end** with the **prophecy** in **the book** of **Daniel**? **Rush here and there** to **increase** their **knowledge**. Contrary to what many have taught, this is not talking about some increase in scientific or technological knowledge during the "information age." These **many** will **rush here and there** to **increase** their **knowledge** about **the words**

in **the book** of **Daniel** [18] because his **prophecy** about the 10-nation Endtime Coalition and the Rising Antichrist will be occurring in current events. If these predictions are not fulfilled during Antichrist's Rise, then certainly they will be after Antichrist's Resurrection.

Accordingly, Wiersbe explains the topic that will be studied by these Endtime Christians:

> "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" is not a reference to automobiles and jet planes or the advancement of education. It has reference to the study of God's Word in the last days, especially the study of prophecy.
>
> Amos 8:11-12 warns us that the day will come when there will be a famine of God's Word, and people will run here and there seeking for truth but won't find it. But God's promise to Daniel is that, in the last days, His people can increase in their knowledge of prophetic Scripture as they apply themselves to the Word of God. [19]

The need to **rush here and there** for their **knowledge** of prophetic Scripture to **increase**, suggests that a great deal of effort will be required. [20] The good news is that at **the time of the end** Christians will more faithfully obey God's commands about studying and understanding prophetic Scripture and recognizing the fulfillment of Endtime events (cf. 2 Tim 2:15; Mark 13:37).

Will the Endtime Christians' search for **knowledge** about prophetic Scripture be successful? The prophecy promises it will be. The literal Hebrew reads: **knowledge <u>will</u> be increased**, not simply sought after. Thus the NLT quoted above is accurate: **many will rush here and there, and knowledge <u>will</u> increase** (Dan 12:4). 21

D.3) The promise of teachers with insight on the Endtimes

Dan 11:33; 2 Tim 2:7

There is another prediction in Daniel that assures us that Christians' **knowledge** of prophetic Scripture **<u>will</u> increase** in the Endtimes. Elsewhere we read: **Those who have insight among the people <u>will give understanding</u> to the many** (Dan 11:33

NASB). [22] Likewise, the ESV has: **And the wise among the people shall <u>make</u> many understand**. An even fuller translation is the NCV which reads, **those who are wise will help the others understand what is happening** in the Endtimes.

Daniel makes it clear that there is a connection between **when many will rush here and there, and knowledge will increase** about the **prophecy** in **the book** of **Daniel** at **the time of the end** (12:4); and when **those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many** (11:33).

In fact, these same Endtime Teachers **who have insight** and **who** will **lead the many to righteousness** are mentioned again in Daniel 12:3, just before the prediction in verse 4. In other words, it is because God will provide the Endtime Teachers **who have insight**, that the efforts of the **many** to **increase** their **knowledge** about the Endtimes will be successful.

Who will these Endtime Teachers be? **Those who have insight** translates the Hebrew word *ūmaśkîlê*. The *TWOT* notes its verb form means:

> An intelligent knowledge of the reason… the process of thinking through a complex arrangement of thoughts … to gain insight into the words of the Law… Still another usage of the verb is to have insight or comprehension [which is] seen as God's gift to Israel through his … teachers… Another usage stresses the idea of causing to consider, give insight, and teaching. David indicates that the Lord made him understand the details of the pattern of temple furniture (1 Chr 28:19)… The noun also has the sense of insight or understanding. [23]

Unfortunately, the common translation as **the wise** (NIV, NLT, ESV, NET, etc.) suggests these men will be skilled and encouraging counselors in practical wisdom. On the contrary, they will be a special group of Endtime Teachers who will be skilled in accurately explaining the prophetic Scriptures, like the **prophecy** in **the book** of **Daniel** (12:4). Obviously, when **those who have insight among the people ... give understanding to the many** (11:33) about the doctrine of the Endtimes, it will also be encouraging, and these Endtime Teachers will also be **those who lead the many to righteousness** (12:3). [24]

Daniel reveals a connection between the character of God's people in the Endtimes and the ministry of the Endtime Teachers. Speaking of the Antichrist, we read in Daniel 11:32:

> **By smooth words he** [the Antichrist] **will turn to godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant, but the people who know their God will display strength and take action** (NASB)

Why will these **people who know their God … display strength and take action** in response to Antichrist's activities? Because in the next verse we read: **Those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many** (v. 33).

In the previous book, the reader was warned that accurately understanding the doctrine of the Endtimes, is necessary to possess the necessary confidence and clarity to glorify God in the Endtimes (cf. *CET* ch. 16). This is why Jesus was so intent on teaching the substance and sequence of Endtime events in His Endtimes sermon. It was precisely because the Thessalonians did not understand these very things, that they experienced their "panic" when they believed the Endtimes had already begun.

God intends for His people to glorify Him in the Endtimes. Therefore, He is going to cause things like the emergence of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition and the Antichrist's Rise and Resurrection to wake up Christians and compel them to **rush here and there** to **increase** their **knowledge** of the **prophecy** in **the book** of **Daniel** and other Scriptures at **the time of the end** (Dan 12:4). He is going to further enable this by raising up Endtime Teachers **who have insight** and **will understand** the prophetic Scriptures accurately and **will help the others understand what is happening**.

During the Endtimes, God will be sending unbelievers **a powerful delusion** and **false prophets** to **deceive many people** (2 Thess 2:11; Matt 24:11 NIV). In contrast, He will be sending His people Endtime Teachers who **will understand** the Endtimes so they can **help the others understand what is happening**.

During the OT Age, God's Word was communicated through Prophets. The NT revelation was given through Apostles. But the

Endtimes will be the Age of the Teachers who are finally and accurately explaining the written revelations of the Prophets and Apostles in prophetic Scripture. [25]

What will be their reward for all the effort they devoted to studying, understanding, and teaching the prophetic Scriptures to God's people, and being persecuted for it? For all eternity **Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven … like the stars forever and ever** (Dan 12:3 NASB).

Do you want to be one of these Endtime Teachers if the Endtimes occur in your lifetime? Do you want to be among **those who have insight among the people** regarding the **prophecy** of **Daniel** and the doctrine of the Endtimes? Do you want to **help the others understand what is happening** in the Endtimes? Do you want to be among **those who have insight** at **the time of the end** and **will shine as bright as the sky** and **lead many to righteousness** and whose glory **will shine like the stars forever and ever** because of this monumental ministry?

Then ask God for the necessary passion, focus, and humility to study the most emotionally challenging and intellectually complex texts and doctrine in Scripture. This is how **those who have insight** (Dan 11:33) about the prophetic Scriptures will attain it. Accordingly, you can claim the promise that Paul gave Timothy for this very kind of endeavor: **Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this** (2 Tim 2:7 NIV).

The Apostle Paul was inspired by God to describe some analogies about serving Christ (cf. vs. 3-6). In order for Timothy to sufficiently understand that divine revelation, two things needed to happen. First, Timothy would need to **reflect** on this Scripture. If Timothy sufficiently did that, then the Apostle promised **the Lord will give you insight into all this**. Therefore, Timothy needed to do his part (**reflect**), and God needed to do His part (**give insight**).

First, what was Timothy's part? **Reflect** (*noei*) translates a Greek word meaning "to think over with care." [26] MacArthur adds:

> The verb *noeō* (consider) is used only here in the New Testament. It denotes perceiving clearly with the mind, of understanding fully, of considering carefully, of pondering and

> mulling over. The form here is an imperative, indicating that Paul was giving a strong admonition, not mere advice. [27]

Reflecting on, "considering carefully … pondering and mulling over," prophetic Scripture is what we have to do to **correctly explain** it, and to recognize if it is being fulfilled in our world. Some might view this kind of focus as an obsession that actually distorts a persons' ability to understand things clearly. On the contrary, we are talking about **reflect**ing hard and long about Scripture, not speculations. Humbly meditating on Scripture will not cause greater deception. Rather, it makes our understanding of God's word become clearer and deeper.

But merely **reflect**ing on such Scripture will not be enough. If you **reflect** even on Scripture with a distorting, presumptuous, or self-centered bias, then your **reflect**ing will lead you astray. A good and humble heart is even more important for correctly interpreting God's Word than an intelligent mind.

But even humble, God-centered **reflect**ing will not be enough to understand what God wanted to communicate in biblical prophecy. Paul recognized that **the Lord** would also have to **give** Timothy **insight into** even the simple analogies Paul was giving him. Accordingly, the need for such **insight** from **the Lord** would certainly apply to the much more complex meaning of prophetic Scripture.

Reflecting and humbly meditating on God's word is our part in understanding it. God will <u>not</u> grant such **insight** to those who will not **work hard** to **correctly explain the word of truth** (2 Tim 2:15). Nor will God give such **insight** to those who refuse to intelligently and diligently obey His commands to **Watch!** current events for signs of His Return. Accordingly, what Solomon said to his son, God would say to anyone desiring to understand prophetic Scripture:

> **My child, listen to what I say, and treasure my commands. Tune your ears to wisdom, and concentrate on understanding. Cry out for insight, and ask for understanding. Search for them as you would for silver; seek them like hidden treasures. Then you will understand what it means to fear the LORD, and you**

> **will gain knowledge of God. For the LORD grants wisdom!** (Prov 2:1-6 NLT)

Surely this includes **wisdom**, **insight**, and **understanding** of prophetic Scriptures and recognizing their fulfillment in current events. But as Solomon warned, this only comes if a person will **cry out for**, **search for**, and **seek** such **insight**. If you **reflect on what** God is **saying** in prophetic Scripture, **the Lord will give you insight into** what they mean and how they will be fulfilled (2 Tim 2:7).

Insight (*synesin*) is more than knowledge. We read in the *NIDNTT*:

> The verb *syniēmi* "originally meant to bring together… Figuratively [it] means to perceive, take notice of, understand, see into, comprehend. The word thus signifies, first, perception, then, noticing, and finally, grasping, in the sense of understanding… The noun *synesis* means, first, a joining (e.g. of rivers)… The adjective *synetos* means quick at apprehending…
>
> It may be concluded that in later wisdom teaching, insight is not understood as a faculty open to every man… The OT idea that insight is a gift of God and is linked with his revelation reappears in the NT usage… In the Pauline passages the context emphasizes more strongly than in the Synoptic Gospels that lack of insight must be regarded as culpable behavior. [28]

Knowledge is obtaining several facts about prophetic Scripture and biblical prophecy. You can find some of that knowledge in biblical commentaries. But **insight** is the God-given ability to put those biblical facts together into a reconciled whole and recognize specifically how they will be fulfilled in current events. Such people are described in the OT where we read **that the men of Issachar … understood the signs of the times and knew the best course for Israel to take.** (1 Chron 12:32 NLT).

Likewise, God seems to promise that in or around the Endtimes, there will be those with such **insight** to **help the others understand what is happening** (Dan 11:33).

Granted, how God fulfills the promise Paul gave Timothy is a mystery. What is happening in a man's mind when **the Lord give**s **you insight into** a passage of Scripture? Marshall writes that this promise is a "reference to personal insight based on direct guidance from God." [29] What would such divine "guidance" look like?

Contrary to what many believe, the Bible does not support the kind of mysticism, claims of direct divine revelation, or divine-human mental telepathy so popular among Christians today. There are no Scriptures that promise God's people that He will "whisper" thoughts into their minds so they can know His will apart from Scripture. There is not even a single example of such a thing in all the Bible. Such mysticism is unbiblical. 30

However, evidently, as a person humbly and diligently **reflect**s and meditates on God's Word, the Holy Spirit can help a person think more clearly and deeply in order to put knowledge together in such a way that **the Lord give**s them greater **insight into** God's Word.

May you be willing to **reflect** hard and humbly on what God intended to communicate in the prophetic Scriptures. And as you do your part, may **the Lord give you insight into all this**. And may this book, *The Beginning of Birth Pains* be used by the Author of these Scriptures to help you.

E) Determining when the Endtimes begin

3 testimonies

A primary purpose of this book is to understand what the Bible teaches on recognizing the beginning of the Endtimes. Again, this is a challenging task. First, there is widespread confusion on this topic. As noted, 45% of American Evangelical Christians claim: "It is impossible to know the circumstances that will precede Jesus' return." Such people have little hope of clearly understanding when the Endtimes have actually begun.

Likewise, according to a recent survey by the Pew Research Center, 65% of American Evangelical Christians claimed to "believe we are already living in the endtimes." However, only about 21% of American Evangelical Protestants "say they believe Jesus will definitely or probably return during their lifetime." [31] Therefore, it

would seem a considerable number of Christians would claim the Endtimes have already begun, but they do not believe Christ will Return anytime soon. That seems to reflect a lot of confusion about what the Endtimes even is.

Of course, there is a biblical sense in which the **last days** began with Christ's First Coming (Acts 2:17; Heb 1:2; Jms 5:3; cf. 1 Cor 10:11; 1 John 2:18). Theologians call this "realized eschatology" or the "already not yet" aspect of God's Kingdom on Earth. This important but complex topic is discussed more thoroughly elsewhere. [32]

Christ's First Coming and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit have initiated some things that will be consummated in Christ's Second Coming and even after the completion of Christ's 1,000-year Reign on Earth. However, many focus so much on what can be included in "realized eschatology" that they neglect a biblical understanding of what is still to be physically fulfilled in biblical prophecy in the future. There will come a day when the first **birth pain** (Matt 24:8) occurs and **the first of the seven seals** is **opened** (Rev 6:1) and the Endtimes have truly begun.

Therefore, it is important to carefully define what we mean by the "Endtimes." From the very beginning of the *Endtimes Essentials*, the Endtimes have been defined as the events predicted in Scripture that will rather immediately precede and follow Christ's Second Coming.

Another challenge to understanding Scripture's teaching on recognizing the beginning of the Endtimes is determining what God intends to be the first certain sign this has occurred. It was noted earlier that there are several supposed signs of the Endtimes that people commonly claim. But are these what will tell us the Endtimes have begun? What does God truly want His people to **"Watch!"** for? The Church today is very unclear about this. As noted above, the popularity of false views on the Endtimes has contributed to this.

But there is another reason that Christians are unclear about what the Bible teaches regarding recognizing when the Endtimes have begun. The Bible does not clearly tell us what the first certain sign of the Endtimes will be. In addition, there is a common

misunderstanding that obscures this issue. It is easy to assume that the very first real Endtime event that will occur, will also be the very first certain sign the Endtimes have begun. But it is possible that Endtime events predicted in Scripture will actually begin before we can recognize this with absolute confidence.

Therefore, it seems God will want us to follow His own rule for confirming truth: **Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses** (Matt 18:16; cf. Num 35:30; Deut 17:6; 19:15; John 8:17; 2 Cor 13:1; 1 Tim 5:19; Heb 10:28). This is how God wants us to determine if something is true, especially if the issue lacks clarity. Therefore, it seems this is how God would want us to gain sufficient confidence the Endtimes have begun.

Here we distinguish between sufficient confidence and certain confidence. By sufficient confidence we mean that current events are fulfilling biblical prophecy to a degree that it seems reasonable to believe the Endtimes are beginning, and we should prepare for it. Certain confidence would mean we have absolutely no doubts the Endtimes have begun. As noted above, it will be argued in future chapters that the Antichrist's Resurrection will be the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun. But it will also be argued that prophesied events will occur before that to give us sufficient confidence to prepare for this.

That sufficient confidence would be based on having **two or three witnesses** or prophesied events fulfilled in current events. What would those be? It will be argued in chapters 4-6 that the formation of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition seems to be the very first predicted Endtime event to occur. Clear biblical arguments will be presented that enable us to identify its appearance with some confidence. In addition, a modern political, economic, and military coalition that is emerging today will be suggested as a reasonable candidate to fulfill the biblical prediction of a 10-nation Endtime Coalition.

Therefore, it is suggested that when a 10-nation Coalition forms that matches biblical predictions, then it will be the first **testimony** to the possibility that the Endtimes have begun. Like the first witness in a trial, their testimony is important. But before making

a final decision on such a critical matter, we will want more **testimony**.

The second **testimony** that will be suggested will be Antichrist's Rise. In chapters 8-9 biblical arguments will be provided for identifying the Rising Antichrist in the early stages of his emergence on Earth. The Bible does speak about these things. It will also be argued that there is a person emerging in the world for the first time in human history, that matches at least 4 specific biblical attributes predicted for the Antichrist in rather remarkable ways.

The emergence of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition and Rising Antichrist in the world, at the same time, both reflecting attributes in biblical prophecy, would be a rather remarkable confirmation by **two witnesses** that the Endtimes have begun. At that point, it would seem wise to make some preparations for this very thing. This will be discussed in chapter 9 (sec. D).

In the next chapter, we will discuss a general outline of the catastrophic events that will be experienced by the Last Generation Church during The Beginning of Birth Pains.

May God give you the grace to study the Scriptures discussed in *The Beginning of Birth Pains* with a clear mind and a brave heart.

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[1] https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/12/08/about-four-in-ten-u-s-adults-believe-humanity-is-living-in-the-end-times/

[2] MacArthur, "Hope for the Remnant" online at https://youtu.be/pqJRmnzQC1l.

[3] The survey of Protestant Pastors on the Endtimes can be found online at https://news.lifeway.com/2016/04/26/pastors-the-end-of-the-world-is-complicated/. It is stated in this section that: "a recent survey claimed that 50% of Protestant Pastors deny or are not sure that Scripture predicts there will be a literal and physical Antichrist in the future." This is based on the following result from the study. 49% of Protestant Pastors claimed the Antichrist will be a "Figure who will arise sometime in the future." The remaining respondents claimed various things including the Antichrist will be a "Personification of evil" (14%), "No individual Antichrist" (12%), "Not a person but an institution" (7%), "Figure who already arose sometime in the past" (6%), "None of these (7%), "Not sure" (4%). These equal 50%.

[4] The survey of the views of Protestant Pastors on the Endtimes can be found online at https://news.lifeway.com/2016/04/26/pastors-the-end-of-the-world-is-complicated/

[5] Piper, *Come,* 257-9.

[6] For more on scholarly Christian **scoffers** (2 Pet 3:3) see "Modern Christian Cynicism about Watching for Signs" in *Additional Studies on the Endtimes,* ch. 9; online at www.trainingtimothys.com.

[7] For further discussion on the NT Church's belief the end of the world was near, see *Additional Studies on the Endtimes*, ch. 15, online at www.trainingtimothys.com.

[8] See NET translation notes for an explanation of this translation of Eph 1:18.

[9] In late 1976 on his *700 Club* TV program, Robertson predicted that the end of the world would come in 1982 (Matthew Restall and Amara Solari, *2012 and the End of the World* [Rowman & Littlefield, 2011], 121). In his 1990 book *The New Millennium*, Robertson suggested April 29, 2007 would be the day the Earth is destroyed by God (Richard Abanes, *End-Time Visions* [Four Walls Eight Windows, 1998], 138).

[10] One resource describes historical examples of people predicting dates for the end of the world:

> An example in post-Reformation Britain is in the works of Charles Wesley, who predicted that the end of the world would occur in 1794, based on his analysis of the Book of Revelation. Adam Clarke, whose commentary was published in 1831, proposed a possible date of 2015 for the end of the papal [then believed to be Antichrist's] power.
>
> In 19th-century America, William Miller proposed that the end of the world would occur on October 22, 1844, based on a historicist model used with Daniel 8:14. Miller's … approach to the Book of Daniel spawned a national movement in the United States known as Millerism. After the Great Disappointment [when the end of the world did <u>not</u> occur in 1844] some of the Millerites eventually organized the Seventh-day Adventist Church… Millerites also formed other Adventist bodies, including the one that spawned the Watch Tower movement, better known as Jehovah's Witnesses.
> (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historicism_(Christianity)

[11] For data on the frequency of earthquakes see online at https://www.statista.com/statistics/263105/development-of-the-number-of-earthquakes-worldwide-since-2000/

[12] Likewise, Piper comments:

> There is no calculating how many earthquakes (Matt. 24:7), or how many famines (24:7), or how many wars (24:6), or how many false christs (24:5) or false prophets (24:10), or how much lawlessness or coldness of love (24:12), or what intensity of tribulation (24:9,

21, 29) will signal with certainty how near the second coming is. Let me say that again: most of the "signs" of the end that Jesus gives us are the kinds of events that do not lend themselves to date-setting. Quantities and intensities and frequencies of such events are not precise indicators of how close the coming of the Lord is…

The heart of the Christian should not be vulnerable to speculations about the end times. We should not be carried away by sensational predictions without solid biblical warrant. We should not be drawn into any frenzy or mania, nor into schemes built on human theorizing about signs that are no sure evidence of the Lord's imminence. (237, 263)

[13] Andersen helpfully writes:

Some people mock those who recognize the fulfillment of biblical prophecy in their own time, pointing out that all such claimed fulfillments in church history proved to be wrong. Of course all attempts before modern times to match eschatological prophecy with the interpreter's own time were a miserable failure, for the last days had not yet arrived. Yet when those attempted identifications are examined, it is obvious that they are all very stretched, and in no way does the prophecy literally resemble the purported fulfillment.

It is not fair, therefore, to say that someone who correlates prophetic entities with entities in the world today is doing exactly the same thing as failed interpreters of prophecy from generations gone by. In fact, it stands to reason that as the tribulation period draws near, entities described in prophecy will come into existence in the world. (45)

[14] The claim that the **prophecy** referred to in Dan 12 refers to the entire book is supported by K&D who write:

The revelation of these chapters is not only in point of time the last which Daniel received, but also forms the essential conclusion of all earlier revelations, then the expression used of the sealing of this last revelation refers plainly to the sealing of the whole book. (Dan12:4)

[15] *TWOT*, 636.

[16] Wiersbe, Dan 12:4.

[17] Even the Amillennialist Young writes on the fact that Dan 12:4 is referring to the Endtimes:

Evidently, Daniel had written down his revelations, as he received them… The time of the end is the consummation, when the Lord shall return from heaven. The "words" which Daniel was to shut up contained revelations which extend to the "end." The "end" therefore, is not the terminus of the reign of Antiochus. (257)

[18] Accordingly, Young writes: "Jerome (ca. A.D. 400) followed by many excellent interpreters, refers the action to the study of the book [of Daniel] itself" (258).

[19] Wiersbe, Dan 12:4.

[20] Walvoord notes regarding the Endtime **rush here and there** to **increase … knowledge** (Dan 12:4):

> John Calvin translated it, "Many shall investigate, and knowledge shall increase." Leupold interprets the verse to mean, "Many shall diligently study it [Daniel], and knowledge will increase." In the Hebrew the word "knowledge" is *hadda'at*, literally, "the knowledge," that is, understanding of this long prophecy. Some consider the sentence as referring to the eyes of a reader running "to and fro" in reading the Word of God (cf. 2 Chr 16:9). Whether or not physical wandering and travel is involved, the implication is that attempts to understand the truth will require considerable effort. (*Dan,* 291-2)

[21] It is claimed here that Dan 12:4 is predicting the Endtime search for understanding biblical prophecy will be successful. In addition, it seems Dan 11:33 supports this when it predicts: **Those who have insight among the people <u>will</u> give understanding to the many** (11:33 NASB).

However, this is debated, even in translations. The NIV has: **Many will go here and there to increase knowledge**. This is at best neutral, but surely does <u>not</u> promise success (cf. NCV, CEV). The GNT has **many people will waste their efforts trying to understand what is happening**. But the more literal NASB is clear: **many will go back and forth, and knowledge <u>will</u> increase** (cf. NLT above; ESV, NET).

Admittedly, Hebrew scholars agree with Walvoord that Dan 12:4, "is difficult to translate" (*Dan*, 291). Young adds: "The phrase is extremely difficult to interpret" (257). Accordingly, even Bible translations differ.

However, most versions have it as the NLT: **many will rush here and there, and knowledge <u>will</u> increase** (cf. NASB, ESV, CSB, NET, KJV, NKJV, cf. Walvoord, K&D, Calvin, Leupold; as usual, Wallace (*BST*) and Hill (EBC) are rather useless on the meaning of Daniel 12:4.). The difficulty of translating the Hebrew may be demonstrated by the NRSV which has: **Many shall be running back and forth, and <u>evil</u> shall increase**.

Young acknowledges that *K&D* (through Klieforth) favor the view that the **many**'s search will be successful. But he responds:

> However, I find myself unable to accept any of these views, because they do not seem faithfully to reflect the force of the Heb. verb. This verb means "to go," "to rove about." Thus Satan speaks to the Lord and says that he has come from "going to and fro in the earth" (Job 1:7b). The present occurrence seems to reflect upon Amos 8:12, "And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of

the Lord, and shall not find it." The verb appears to describe a vain travelling about in order to discover knowledge. (258)

There are problems with Young's more pessimistic view. First, he implies that the verb (*shuwt*) refers to an aimless or unproductive wandering about. But the Hebrew does not imply that. Second, the verse from Amos 8 seems to be in a different context than Daniel 12. The former will most likely be fulfilled during "the Day of Lord" when God is punishing Israel (cf. Amos 8:9-10). Dan 12 involves all of God's people, including the Church, and includes all Endtime events in Daniel's prophecy. Third, Young does not consider the promise that **Those who have insight among the people <u>will</u> give understanding to the many** (11:33 NASB).

[22] Unfortunately, several translations are again obscure at Dan 11:33 regarding the effect of the Endtime teachers. For example, the NIV has, **Those who are wise will instruct many** (cf. NET, NLT), which is at best neutral regarding the effect of the **wise**. Again, the NASB seems better which has: **Those who have insight among the people <u>will</u> give understanding to the many**.

[23] *TWOT*, 877.

[24] Goldingay is correct to explain regarding those with **insight**:

> They use this to "enlighten the multitude." The verb (בין) is a common word in Daniel, generally denoting insight into the meaning of dreams, visions, or prophecies. It suggests that the ministry of the discerning is not teaching in general or exhortation to faithfulness but the interpretation of the prophetic scriptures—and no doubt of these Danielic visions—for the persecuted community. (303)

Likewise, Tanner explains:

> The verb בִּין (*bîn*) basically means "to discern." See BDB (107a 3c) for the Hipʿil meaning, "give understanding, teach."., These would have been the ones wise in the knowledge of the Scriptures who could exhort the masses of common people. (683)

Unfortunately, Tanner's comments are marred because he believes this prophecy was essentially fulfilled in the 2nd century B.C.

Collins is simply not helpful.

In general, far too many commentators seem to misunderstand who **those who have insight** will be. Some fail to distinguish them at all. Walvoord claims, "they are illustrations of faithful saints in all ages" (290). However, Dan 11:33 makes it clear that **Those who have insight among the people** are distinguished from **the many** they will be teaching. Do all believers have equal **insight** and **knowledge** of Scripture? Of course not. This is why **Christ himself gave the teachers** [to the Church] **to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up** (Eph 4:11-12 NIV). And He will do the same in the Endtimes.

Walvoord also suggests the Endtime Teachers will be evangelists, and "those who have influenced others to [saving] faith" (290). Some derive this from the prediction that they will **lead the many to righteousness** (Dan 12:3). The NET perhaps suggests this when it has **they will teach the masses** (11:33), implying a lot of unbelievers. But the connection between Dan 11:32 and verse 33 clearly suggests otherwise. **Those with insight** (v. 33) will be teaching **the people who know their God** (v. 32), not pagans. These Endtimes Teachers **will give understanding to the many** (11:33) about **the words** and **prophecy** in **the book** of **Daniel** (12:3), instead of conducting evangelistic crusades for unbelievers.

Among commentators there is a general lack of belief or clarity that these Endtime Teachers will be helping God's people understand the doctrine of the Endtimes and the prophetic Scriptures. Some seem reluctant to call them Teachers of doctrine at all (cf. Hill, *EBC*). This is based on the fact that the Hebrew word *sākal* used to refer to them can mean, "a wise dealing and use of good practical sense" (*TWOT*, 877). Thus the common translation, **the wise** (NIV, NLT). But the context of the work of **those with insight** makes it clear that their primary ministry will be to **give understanding** of the doctrine of the Endtimes and prophetic Scripture (cf. Dan 12:4).

Calvin is confusing on this point. At Dan 11:33 he strongly denies **those with insight** are "teachers." But when commenting on Dan 12:3 he says the same Hebrew word there "means those who are endued with understanding … *the teachers*."

Young is slightly more clear when he refers to them as "the learned" and "those who instruct others in the way of truth" (256). *K&D* describe them as: "The intelligent who, by instructing their contemporaries by means of word and deed, have awakened them to steadfastness and fidelity to their confession in the times of tribulation and have strengthened their faith."

In addition, many suggest the prophecies regarding the Endtime Teachers were fulfilled in the 2nd century B.C. during the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes and as recorded in Maccabees (cf. Tanner above; Hill, *EBC*). But this is only half the truth and the least important truth. Such scholars ignore the near/final and partial/complete nature of many biblical prophecies (cf. *CET* ch. 12, sec. B; *K&D* at Dan 11:35).

Finally, it is admitted that Daniel seems to place the ministry of the Endtimes Teachers especially during The Greatest Persecution. This is the most likely period of time when **Some of those who have insight will fall, in order to refine, purge and make them pure until the end time** (Dan 11:35 NASB). But the **increase** in **knowledge** enabled by **those who have insight** will include all of the **prophecy** in **the book** of **Daniel** (Dan 12:4), including those about the 10-nation Coalition and the Rising Antichrist in Daniel chapters 2, and 7-9. Therefore, it seems their ministry will be raised up before Antichrist's Claim to be God and The Greatest Persecution, so that **the people who know their God**

will be prepared to **display strength and take action** even during The Beginning of Birth Pains after Antichrist's shocking Resurrection.

[25] Understandably many will disagree that the miraculous gifts of Apostles and Prophets have ceased in the Church. But if the reader wishes to disagree with integrity, then they are asked to biblically refute the 5 books this author has written on Apostles, miracles, and the gifts of prophecy, miracle working, and tongues. All of these books were written with the same level of scholarship demonstrated in the *Endtimes Essentials* series. All of them are also available free of charge at www.trainingtimothys.com in the "Scholar's Section" under "Biblical Critique of Charismatic Doctrines & Practices."

The author means no unnecessary offense to the many dear Christians who would disagree. But it is this author's opinion that the unbiblical doctrines and practices of the Charismatic and Pentecostal movements have severely damaged and divided the Church and will be especially dangerous in the Endtimes. Therefore, the in-depth biblical study provided in these books should be carefully considered by anyone who wants to be a Bible Teacher who can **present yourself to God as one approved** because you **correctly explain the word of truth** (2 Tim 2:15 NIV & NLT) about Charismatic and Pentecostal doctrines and practices.

[26] *BDAG* #2.

[27] MacArthur, *MNTC*, 2 Tim 2:7.

[28] *NIDNTT*, III.130-2.

[29] Marshall, *Pastorals*, 713.

[30] For a detailed biblical study on divine guidance and decision making see Kurt Jurgensmeier, *The Myth of Mega Mysticism*, in the "Scholar's Section" at www.trainingtimothys.com.

[31] https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/12/08/about-four-in-ten-u-s-adults-believe-humanity-is-living-in-the-end-times/

[32] For more on the NT Church's view on the beginning of the Endtimes see *Additional Studies on the Endtimes*, ch. 15 online at www.trainingtimothys.org.

Chapter 2

The Beginning Events of the Endtimes

Contents

A) The primary biblical texts & events of The Beginning of Birth Pains

B) The events occurring before and within The Beginning of Birth Pains *What will be the first events of the Endtimes?*

Primary Points

- Both Christ's Endtimes Teaching and Christ's Revelation contain rather identical sequential lists of the events in The Beginning of Birth Pains.
- All of these events have occurred throughout human history, but they will occur with unprecedented severity in the Endtimes.
- Daniel and Revelation give us more detail about the first events of the Endtimes. This included events that will occur even before The Beginning of Birth Pains.
- Revelation 6:1-2 reflects the emergence of the first and foremost False Christ that Jesus warned us of. It also seems to portray the Antichrist's Resurrection and Religious Covenant.
- There would seem to be six primary events within the beginning of the Endtimes.

A) The primary biblical texts & events of The Beginning of Birth Pains

In Christ's Endtimes Teaching He described The Beginning of Birth Pains as follows:

> **"Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah** [**the Christ** NASB]**,' and will deceive many.**
>
> **You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen,**

but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.

Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death (Matt 24:4-9 NIV)

Christ labeled the first events of the Endtimes as **the beginning of birth pains** (v. 8). Thus, the title of this book, *The Beginning of Birth Pains* (*BBP*). Jesus said after **the beginning of birth pains**, **"Then you will be handed over to be persecuted**.**"** This is best referred to as The Greatest Persecution.

For reasons given in a previous book, this corrects the confusing and invented labels of "the Tribulation" and the "Great Tribulation" (cf. *Endtimes Essentials* book #1, *Christ's Endtimes Teaching* (*CET*), ch. 3, sec. E). Jesus did not use that terminology. He used the labels, The Beginning of Birth Pains and The Greatest Persecution. Therefore, the same labels will be used throughout the *Endtimes Essentials* series.

The general substance and sequence of The Beginning of Birth Pains described in Christ's Endtimes Teaching (Matt 24), are repeated in chapter 6 of Christ's Revelation. The Apostle John wrote:

I watched as the Lamb [Christ] **opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider** [the Antichrist] **held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.**

When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make people kill each other [war]**. To him was given a large sword.**

When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. Then I heard what sounded

> **like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, "Two pounds of wheat for a day's wages, and six pounds of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!"** [Severe economic hardship caused by war]
>
> **When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine, and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.** [Culminating events and effects of The Beginning of Birth Pains] (Rev 6:1-8 NIV)

It was explained in the previous book that the **scroll** (Rev 5:1) that is being **opened** contains Christ's Wrath that will be unleashed on the world after His Return and the Church's Rescue (cf. *CET*, ch. 14, sec. E). That Endtime Wrath will begin after the **seven seals** (Rev 6:1) are broken. The Sixth Seal portrays Christ's Return and that **the wrath of the Lamb … has come** (6:16-17). The first five Seals prepare the world for Christ's Wrath.

Therefore, they are referred to as Seals of Preparation throughout the *Endtimes Essentials.* Accordingly, the Trumpet and Bowl Punishments of Christ's Wrath will follow the opening of the Seventh Seal (cf. Rev chs. 8-9; 15-16).

The events described in Seals 1-4 parallel the events Christ described in His Endtimes Teaching as **"the beginning of birth pains"** (Matt 24:8). They are commonly called "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse." The intentional parallel nature of Matthew 24:4-8 and Revelation 6:1-8 were also discussed in the previous book (*CET,* ch. 6, secs. B.1, B.3). These prophetic texts can be combined to reveal the substance and sequence of events in The Beginning of Birth Pains. These can be summarized in the following table:

"These are the beginning of birth pains" (Matt 24:8)

1	**False Christ(s)**	First Birth Pain First Seal	Matt 24:5 Rev 6:1-2
2	**Wars**	Second Birth Pain Second Seal	Matt 24:6-7 Rev 6:3-4
3	**Severe Economic Hardship**	Third Seal	Rev 6:5-6
4	**Famines**	Third Birth Pain Fourth Seal	Matt 24:7 Rev 6:7-8
5	**Earthquakes**	Fourth Birth Pain	Matt 24:7
6	**Plagues**	Fifth Birth Pain Fourth Seal	Luke 21:11 Rev 6:8
7	**Wild beasts**	Fourth Seal	Rev 6:8

Therefore, both Christ's Endtimes Teaching and Christ's Revelation contain rather identical and sequential lists of the events in The Beginning of Birth Pains. As noted in the Glossary for the *Endtimes Essentials* series (located in *CET,* Appendix B), The Beginning of Birth Pains can be defined as:

> Catastrophic wars, famines, and plagues that enable the Antichrist's rise to worldwide worship and power (cf. Matt 24:4-8; Rev 6:1-8). The people living on one fourth of the Earth will be killed (cf. Rev 6:8).

B) What will be the first events of the Endtimes?

B.1) The events occurring before and within The Beginning of Birth Pains

A specific substance and sequence of the first Endtime events will be argued in this book. However, it must be admitted that such things are difficult to be absolutely certain about. The seven events listed above are clearly listed in chronological order in Christ's Endtimes Teaching (Matt 24) and Revelation 6 as The Beginning of Birth Pains. However, as we study the Prophet Daniel and

Revelation further, Scripture reveals more details about the first Endtime events than Matthew 24:4-8.

For example, it seems Daniel chapters 2, 7-8 describe the initial emergence of the Antichrist and his 10-nation Endtime Coalition before the **wars** and **famines** (Matt 24:6-7) of The Beginning of Birth Pains. These can be referred to as "Endtime Pregnancy Events" that occur before The Beginning of Birth Pains. This will be discussed further in parts II and III of this book.

In addition, the Revelation gives us more details about The Beginning of Birth Pains than Christ's Endtimes Teaching in Matthew 24. Christ said the very first "birth pain" would be when **"many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many"** (Matt 24:5 NASB). The parallel description of this event in Revelation 6 is the First Seal of Preparation of which the Apostle John writes:

> **I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.** (Rev 6:1-2 NIV)

It will be argued in this book that this is describing, among other things, the emergence of the first and foremost of the False Christs that Jesus predicted. This will be the Antichrist. He will **Come!** to **conquer** the world first with deception. This is reflected by the fact that the Antichrist is portrayed in Revelation 6 as a **rider** on a **white horse** with a **crown** imitating the real Christ Who is described in Revelation 19 as also coming as a **rider** on a **white horse** wearing **many crowns** (Rev 19:11-12) at the Battle of Armageddon.

The Antichrist's ultimate effort to imitate Christ will be his Resurrection from the dead (cf. Rev 13:3-4, 14). It will also be argued that this is how the Antichrist bursts onto the worldwide scene, and provides the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun. It would seem Antichrist's Resurrection is also being portrayed in the First Seal as the emergence of the first and foremost False Christ, **conquer**ing with the deception of such a miraculous event.

Therefore, it will be argued that Christ's statement that **"many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many"** (Matt 24:5 NASB) is significantly clarified and expanded in the First Seal of Preparation. Again, Revelation 6:1-2 seems to reveal that the first and foremost False Christ will be the Antichrist. In addition, the First Seal reflects several events that occur including the Antichrist's Resurrection and Religious Covenant, all intended to imitate the real Christ.

Therefore, let us note something here. Christ's Endtimes Teaching (Matt 24) does not give us the greatest detail on the very beginning of Endtime events. For example, Jesus did not even mention the emergence of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition. Why not?

Perhaps because such an event will not be painful. The initial emergence of the 10-nation Coalition will not cause Christians or the world any pain at all. Which may be why they are not a part of **"the beginning of birth pains"** (Matt 24:8). But with the supernatural, shocking, and perhaps traumatic Resurrection of the first and foremost False **Christ** (Matt 24:5), the Antichrist, the **birth pains** will begin.

Therefore, an outline of the very first primary Endtime events can be suggested. The following will contain a lot of information you may not be familiar with. But it is intended to give you a condensed summary of topics that will be explained more fully in future chapters, as indicated.

B.2) The first 6 primary Endtime events

1) The formation of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition (cf. Dan 7:7, 15-25; Rev 17:3, 12-17; Dan 2:41-44).

In Daniel we read of an Endtime kingdom:

> **The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will**

> **subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints** (Dan 7:23-25 NIV [1])

The **ten kings** in this prophecy will form what is called the 10-nation Endtime Coalition throughout the *Endtimes Essentials*. This Coalition will be the political, economic, and military base of world-wide power for Antichrist's Beast Empire (cf. Rev 17:12-14; Dan 2:41-44; 7:7, 23-25). **After them** and the Coalition is established, **another king will arise** who **will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints**. This describes the emergence of the Antichrist.

Therefore, the 10-nation Endtime Coalition will already be formed when the Rising Antichrist emerges onto the world scene (cf. Dan 7:8, 24). Accordingly, the establishment of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition in the world would seem to be the very first Endtime event to occur.

Daniel chapter 2 especially gives us details about the attributes of this 10-nation Endtime Coalition. In addition, Revelation tells us that these nations will be present at the Battle of Armageddon (cf. Rev 17:14). Also, Ezekiel 38:1-6 identifies the ancient geographical locations from which these nations will come from. Accordingly, we can identify modern nations that are predicted to be at the Battle of Armageddon and in the 10-nation Endtime Coalition.

These Scriptures will provide us with 7 attributes of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition that enable us to recognize its emergence in the world. Accordingly, it will be demonstrated that currently there is a political, economic, and military organization of nations forming today that reflects all 7 of these biblical attributes in remarkable ways. The activities, attributes, and identification of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition will be discussed in chapters 4-6 of *BBP.*

2) The Antichrist's Rise (cf. Dan 7:8, 24; 8:9-11).

Also in Daniel 7 we read:

> **While I was thinking about the** [ten] **horns** [the leaders of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition]**, there before me was <u>another horn</u>** [the Rising Antichrist]**, a <u>little one</u>, which**

came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. (v. 8)

This **little horn** portrays the Antichrist in the initial stages of his emergence on Earth. He is **another king** who **will arise** and **will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints** described in verses 24-25 quoted above. In Daniel 8 he is described as **another horn, which started small but grew in power** and **took away the daily sacrifice from the LORD, and his sanctuary was thrown down.** (vs. 9, 11 NIV). This is a reference to Antichrist's **abomination of desolation** in a rebuilt Jewish temple (Dan 9:27; Matt 24:15).

Daniel 7:8 predicts the **little horn** or emerging Antichrist will **come up among** the ten **horns** of the Coalition. This again suggests that the 10-nation Endtime Coalition is established before the Antichrist rises to significant power. This is confirmed by the fact that **three of the first horns** will be **uprooted** by the **little horn** as he emerges in the world.

It will be argued that by describing the Rising Antichrist as a **little horn** the prophecy is referring to a leader of a relatively minor country. What country might that be? Ezekiel 38:2 describes the Antichrist as **Gog, of** [from] **the land of Magog** (NIV). Therefore, it will be argued that the Antichrist will emerge as a **little horn** from the ancient geographical location of **Magog**. It will be demonstrated that this will probably be one of the less significant satellite nations of Russia.

However, this relatively insignificant leader will somehow become famous and admired enough that when he is killed and miraculously resurrected from the dead, the whole non-Christian world will worship him (cf. Rev 13:3-4, 8).

All of the above attributes of the Rising Antichrist will help us to identify him when he is emerging onto the world scene. Accordingly, it will be demonstrated that there is currently a **little horn** from **the land of Magog** that is becoming admired worldwide in unprecedented ways and who could be the Rising Antichrist. Antichrist's Rise and identification will be discussed in chapters 8-9.

3) The Antichrist's Resurrection (cf. Rev 6:1-2; 13:3-8; 17:8; 2 Thess 2:9-11).

The Apostle John wrote:

> **And I saw one of the heads of the beast** [Antichrist] **as violently slaughtered to death and the wound from the deadly strike was healed. And the whole world was amazed by this miracle and became a follower of the beast… who was killed by being struck with a sword and <u>then came back to life.</u>** (Rev 13:3, 14)

This suggested translation will be supported in chapter 13 (sec. A). As noted in the previous chapter, the Antichrist's Resurrection will enable us to be 100% confident of who the Antichrist is. As noted above, it will be argued that this event will mark the emergence of the first and foremost False Christ, and the first of the **birth pains** (Matt 24:8) that Christ said would begin the Endtimes.

Therefore, it will be argued that the Antichrist's Resurrection will be the first certain sign that the Endtimes have begun. Unfortunately, this monumental event in the Endtimes is greatly ignored in Christian Eschatology. There will be an attempt to correct this error in chapters 10-17 of this book.

4) Antichrist's Religious Covenant (cf. Dan 9:27).

We read in Daniel:

> **The ruler** [Antichrist] **will arise to successfully persuade many people to make a religious covenant with him for a period of seven years. In the middle of the seven years he will stop the sacrifices and offerings at the** [rebuilt] **Jewish Temple. And at the Temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.** (Dan 9:26-27)

This suggested translation will be supported in chapter 14 (sec. A). It will be argued that Antichrist's Resurrection will begin a worldwide religion that worships the Antichrist (cf. Rev 13:3-4, 8). Accordingly, the prophecy in Daniel 9:27 describes a religious **covenant** that will be made **with many** people in the world. This

will be one more effort in Antichrist's purpose to imitate God and Christ by making a **covenant** with his followers. The Antichrist's Religion and **covenant** will promote peace in the world and allow Israel to rebuild its **temple** in Jerusalem. This will be discussed in chapter 14.

Antichrist's Resurrection and Religion will also result in the beginning of the Great Apostasy predicted in Scripture. Jesus said, **"At that time many will turn away from the faith"** (Matt 24:10 NIV). It would seem this Great Apostasy begins with Antichrist's Religious Covenant. This will be discussed in chapter 16.

The implementation of the **covenant** will also mark the beginning of Daniel's Last Seven Years and the Endtime countdown to Christ's Return. The great significance of this for the Last Generation Church will be discussed in chapter 15.

5) Antichrist's destruction of Endtime Babylon, the world's economic super-power (cf. Rev 17-18; Jer 50-51; Matt 24:6-7; Rev 6:3-4; Dan 8:24).

In Revelation we read:

> **The ten horns that you saw** [10-nation Endtime Coalition]**, and the beast** [Antichrist] **will hate the Prostitute** [Endtime Babylon]**, and these will permanently remove all people from her and strip her naked and they will devour her body and will burn her up with fire … in one hour** (Rev 17:16; 18:10 [2])

This suggested translation and the identification and destruction of **Babylon the Great** (Rev 17:5) in the Endtimes is the subject of the third book in the *Endtimes Essentials* series entitled *Endtime Babylon.* It will be argued there that Endtime Babylon will be the economic and military super-power of the world when the Endtimes begin. As such it will suppress the Antichrist from coming to full power and being worshipped as the ruler of the world.

Therefore, the Antichrist and his 10-nation Endtime Coalition will attack and annihilate this economic and military power. Note that the prophecy states this attack **will permanently remove all people** from Endtime Babylon and **burn** it **down with fire … in**

one hour. It will be argued in chapter 18 that this is describing the use of nuclear weapons.

This will be a part of the alarming **wars** (Matt 24:6) that Jesus predicted during this time as the second of the **"birth pains"** (v. 8). It is also included in the unprecedented war predicted in the Second Seal of Preparation of which the Apostle John writes:

> **When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make people kill each other. To him was given a large sword.** (Rev 6:3-4 NIV)

Indeed, one reason that The Beginning of Birth pains will **kill** the people living in **a fourth of the earth by sword, famine, and plague** (Rev 6:8 NIV) is because the destruction of Endtime Babylon **with fire … in one hour** (Rev 17:16) will occur at this time.

Admittedly, clearly understanding Endtime Babylon's identification and destruction, and correctly interpreting Revelation chapters 17-18, is one of the most challenging topics in prophetic Scripture. Which is why an entire book will be provided for this purpose: *Endtimes Essentials* book #3, *Endtime Babylon*.

6) Unprecedented catastrophes (cf. Matt 24:7; Luke 21:11; Rev 6:5-8).

Jesus said that after the **wars** of **the beginning of birth pains**, **"There will be famines and earthquakes in various places"** (Matt 24:6-8 NIV). Luke's version adds: **"There will be great earthquakes, and there will be famines and plagues in many lands"** (Luke 21:11 NLT). Revelation 6 portrays these culminating events in The Beginning of Birth Pains when John writes of the Fourth Seal of Preparation:

> **When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the**

> **earth to kill by sword** [war]**, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.** (Rev 6:7-8 NIV)

It seems a primary cause of the **famine and plague** will be the horrific **wars** (Matt 24:6), including the annihilation of Endtime Babylon (cf. Rev 17:16). All of these Beginning of Birth Pains will result in virtually all of the people living on **a fourth of the earth to** be **kill**ed. These unprecedented catastrophes will also prepare the world for the Antichrist's Reign. These culminating events in The Beginning of Birth Pains will be discussed in chapter 18.

The first 6 primary Endtime events can be summarized in the following table:

The First 6 Primary Endtime Events

#	Event	Description & refs.	Where discussed
"Pregnancy" Events of the Endtimes			
1	**10-nation Endtime Coalition** established	Will unite with Antichrist to destroy Endtime Babylon (cf. Dan 7:7, 15-25; Rev 17:3, 12-17; Dan 2:41-44)	*BBP* chs. 4-6
2	**Antichrist's Rise**	He first emerges as the famous ruler of a small country in the vicinity of Russia (cf. Dan 7:8, 24; 8:9-11; Ezek 38:1-4; 39:1-6; Rev 16:14; 19:11-21).	*BBP* chs. 8-9
The Beginning of Birth Pains			
3	**Antichrist's Resurrection** (First Seal)	The first certain sign the Endtimes have begun (cf. Rev 6:1-2; 13:3-8; 17:8; 2 Thess 2:9-11)	*BBP* chs. 10-13, 16-17
4	**Antichrist's Religious Covenant**	A **covenant with many** to form a world-wide religion for the worship of the Antichrist (Dan 9:27)	*BBP* chs. 14-15
5	**Destruction of Endtime Babylon**	The Antichrist & 10-nation Coalition will unite to annihilate the economic super-power on Earth at the beginning of the Endtimes by consuming it with fire in one hour such that no one will ever live there again	*Endtimes Essentials* book #3: *Endtime Babylon*

		(cf. Rev 17-18; Jer 50-51; Matt 24:6-7; Rev 6:3-4; Dan 8:24)	
6	**2nd, 3rd, & 4th Seals of Preparation**	The wars, famines, and plagues unleashed during this time will combine to kill the people living on one fourth of the Earth (cf. Rev 6:3-8; Matt 24:6-8)	*BBP* ch. 18

Again, based on Daniel and Revelation there are some additions here to the events shared as **the beginning of birth pains** (Matt 24:8) in Christ's Endtimes Teaching. However, the above reflects the general sequence of events Jesus gave us. After describing some of the events in The Beginning of Birth Pains, He taught:

> **All these are the beginning of birth pains. <u>Then</u> you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me** (Matt 24:8-9 NIV)

This describes the transition from The Beginning of Birth Pains to The Greatest Persecution. The event that will cause that transition will be **the abomination that causes desolation** when the world will **see** the Antichrist **standing in the holy place** of the rebuilt Jewish temple claiming to be God (Matt 24:15; cf. 2 Thess 2:4). The Greatest Persecution will be discussed in *Endtimes Essentials* book #4, *The Greatest Persecution.*

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[1] The NIV is used here, although **holy people** is replaced with **saints** as the Hebrew *qaddish* is translated in the NIV 1984 version and the NASB. This helps us understand that these prophecies involve the same **saints** that make up the Church as repeatedly referred to in the NT. This was further explained in *Christ's Endtimes Teaching*, ch. 7, sec. A.1.

[2] For an explanation of the suggested translation of Rev 17:16 see *Endtime Babylon* ch. 1, sec. A.

Chapter 3

The Nature of the Beginning of the Endtimes

Contents

A) The primary nature of The Beginning of Birth Pains: *Increasing pain!*

B) Are The Beginning of Birth Pains Christ's Wrath? *No!*

C) God's sovereignty over The Beginning of Birth Pains

D) God's purposes & plan for The Beginning of Birth Pains

Primary Points

- The devastation that occurs during The Beginning of Birth Pains is really unimaginable. It is estimated that 2 billion people will be killed during this time.
- The nature of The Beginning of Birth Pains can be summed up in one word: PAIN.
- The wars, famines, and plagues are just The Beginning of Birth Pains. The Greatest Persecution will be an intensification of the Birth Pains. And the Trumpet and Bowl Punishments of Christ's Wrath, ending with The Battle of Armageddon, will be the climax and conclusion of the Birth Pains.
- The Beginning of Birth Pains is not Christ's Wrath, but demonic forces unleashed on the world.
- Because God is sovereign over everything in the Universe, there is always good news in everything in the Universe. Including The Beginning of Birth Pains.
- All of the painful events in the Endtimes are ultimately empowered, ordained, and controlled by God's purposes and power.
- God's good purposes for The Beginning of Birth Pains is first to purify the life and worship of Christians so they glorify God more.
- Another reason God will want His people to face The Beginning of Birth Pains is to test them.

- We must remember that a Christian's primary purpose on this Earth is not to be blessed, but **tested**.
- The most important question a Christian must answer in this life is this: Will you love God unconditionally?
- The **many trials** that Christians will have to **endure** during The Beginning of Birth Pains will test the quality of your **faith** in God and LOVE for God.
- The painful destruction of this current world is a necessary painful step to the creation of a whole New World.

A) The primary nature of The Beginning of Birth Pains: *Increasing Pain (Rev 6:8)*

The Apostle Paul wrote, **There will be terrible times in the last days** (2 Tim 3:1 NLT). However, many students of prophetic Scripture believe the real "bad stuff" does not occur until The Greatest Persecution or Christ's Wrath and the Trumpet and Bowl Punishments described in Revelation. But the devastation that occurs during The Beginning of Birth Pains is really unimaginable. It was written elsewhere:

> How will we recognize The Beginning of Birth Pains as signs of Christ's Return? They will occur with unprecedented intensity in a relatively short period of time. Revelation 6:1-8 graphically portrays these same **"beginning of birth pains**.**"** There it is explained that they will culminate in the Endtimes to have **power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth** (Rev 6:8 NIV). Some have estimated that would be about 2 billion people dying in a relatively short period of time. That has never happened before. Not even close.
>
> Can you imagine the death of 2 billion people in the world? As of this writing, our world is experiencing the Covid-19 pandemic. Its death toll is estimated to be currently over 6 million people. Its effects on society and the economy have been enormous. But the death of 2 billion people will be over 300 times the deaths that have occurred from Covid.

> In fact, how many people have been killed <u>in all of human history</u> from wars, genocides, massacres, famines, and plagues? Some have carefully estimated the total to be about 700 million people. [1] This has occurred over thousands of years of human history. But in just a few short years during The Beginning of Birth Pains, perhaps three times as many people will die from war, famine, and disease, <u>than in all of the similar catastrophes in human history combined</u>. Indeed, these kinds of catastrophes have been occurring throughout human history. But when the Endtimes begin, **the beginning of birth pains** will occur with an unprecedented intensity. (*Christ's Endtimes Teaching*, ch. 3, sec. B)

Therefore, the nature of The Beginning of Birth Pains can be summed up in one word: PAIN. And the causes of death described in The Beginning of Birth Pains are some of the most painful and gruesome imaginable. People will suffer from being cut with a **sword**, suffering the slow death of **famine and disease**, and being attacked and eaten by **wild animals** (Rev 6:8 NLT).

There is a reason Jesus called this period of the Endtimes **the beginning of <u>birth pains</u>** (Matt 24:8). As noted in *CET*:

> Of course, only women who birth a child can fully appreciate the metaphor. In Jesus' day it was relatively common for women to die a painful death in childbirth. Modern hospitals have reduced the risk, and medications can diminish the pain. Still, giving birth is among the most painful of all human experiences. That is one reason Jesus used it to represent the suffering of the Endtimes. (ch. 2, sec. A)

Indeed, throughout Scripture, birth pains illustrate the worst suffering in Creation and among humanity (cf. Isa 13:8; Jer 4:31; John 16:21-22; Rom 8:21-22; 1 Thess 5:2-3).

The extent of pain in The Beginning of Birth Pains is illustrated in the predicted response of God's people. Jesus said even Christians will be tempted to be **frightened** (Luke 21:9) and **alarmed** (Matt 24:6; **panic** NLT) at this time. So much so they might conclude **the end** has already **come** (Matt 24:6).

The **wars**, **famines**, and **plagues** (Matt 24:6-7; Luke 21:11) of The Beginning of Birth Pains will bring unprecedented pain to this

world. This is one reason the unbiblical Pre-tribulation Rapture view is so popular. It promises the Church will never experience The Beginning of Birth Pains.

Notice that Jesus labeled these events as merely **the beginning of birth pains** (Matt 24:8). The NLT is more descriptive saying: **"this is only the first of the birth pains, with more to come."** Indeed, the wars, famines, and plagues of The Beginning of Birth Pains will be horribly painful. But The Greatest Persecution (Satan's wrath against God's followers) and Christ's Wrath (against Satan's followers) will be even worse. [2]

Jesus tells us that when the Antichrist comes to full power, **"then there will be the greatest persecution of God's elect people. It will be greater than any persecution since the world began, and it will never be equaled again"** (Matt 24:21 [3]). Christ went on to say, **"If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened"** (v. 22 NIV). At this point in the Endtimes, the killing of Christians is added to the ongoing **birth pains** that are killing everyone else.

This indicates that even after the Antichrist comes to power, the **wars**, **famines and earthquakes**, and **plagues** of the **birth pains** continue (Matt 24:6-8; Luke 21:11). Indeed, in Daniel we read: **War and its destruction and horrors have been determined by God to continue to the very end of the world** (Dan 9:26 [4]).

The Beginning of Birth Pains will seem like the end of the world and as bad as things can get. But they will be neither. The worst is yet to come.

Even after The Greatest Persecution of the Church, the Birth Pains will continue after Christ's Return and the world's punishment with Christ's Wrath. All of these are Birth Pains. The wars, famines, and plagues are just The Beginning of Birth Pains.

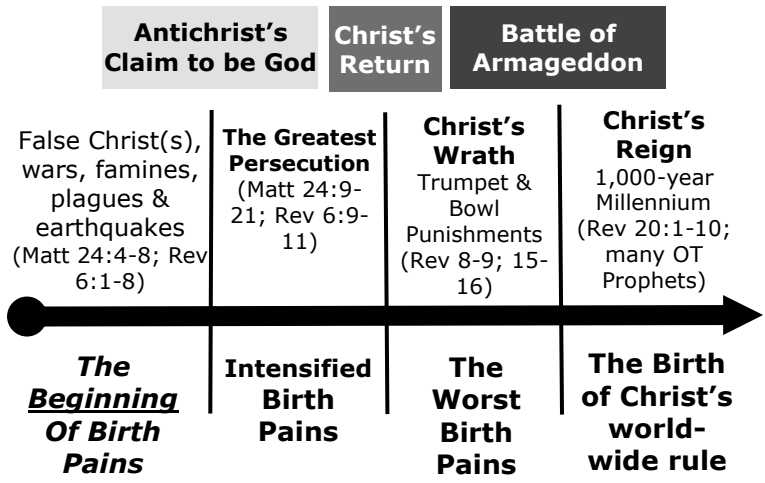
The Greatest Persecution will be an intensification of the Birth Pains. And the Trumpet and Bowl Punishments of Christ's Wrath, ending with The Battle of Armageddon, will be the climax and conclusion of the Birth Pains.

At that point, will be the birth and arrival of the new Millennial

Kingdom of Christ on Earth. And unlike the Antichrist, He will bring peace and prosperity to this world.

Of course, the Kingdom of God on Earth has been initiated in its infant stage through the establishment of the Spirit-indwelled people of the Church. And with Christ's physical presence on Earth during the Millennium, the Kingdom of God can be described as being in its toddler stages. But after the Millennium, with the creation of the New Earth and God the Father's arrival to it and living on it, the rule of God's Kingdom on Earth will be in its mature and eternal stage. Some of the above points can be depicted in the following graphic:

The Increasing Birth Pains of the Endtimes



B) Are The Beginning of Birth Pains Christ's Wrath? *No*

It will be demonstrated below that the wars, famines, plagues, and earthquakes of The Beginning of Birth Pains are ultimately allowed by God's power. But they are not Christ's Endtime Wrath. By Christ's Endtime Wrath is meant God's Endtime punishment of unbelievers on Earth for their sin. This is the Wrath all Christians are promised to be rescued from when we are told **to wait for …**

Jesus, who rescues us from <u>the coming wrath</u> (1 Thess 1:10; cf. 5:9; Rom 5:9; Col 3:6).

Claiming that The Beginning of Birth Pains is Christ's Wrath is a primary argument for the false belief that the Church's Rescue occurs <u>before</u> any of these Endtime events occur (Pre-tribulationism). The error of this view was addressed elsewhere (cf. *CET* ch. 14). There are two primary reasons to reject it.

First, Revelation 6 describes **the wrath of the Lamb!** (v. 16) as not occurring until the opening of the Sixth Seal.

Secondly, this popular but false view forces it to label the persecution of God's people described in the Fifth Seal, and elsewhere in Revelation (cf. 6:9-11; 12:17; 13:7-10), as Christ's Wrath. It is an unacceptable false teaching that the persecution of God's people occurs during Christ's Wrath.

It is true that the supernatural intensity, pain, and powers of Endtime wars, famines, plagues, and earthquakes during The Beginning of Birth Pains will be ultimately allowed by God. But that does not mean that He intends even such painful things to be His Endtime Wrath.

The same is true of catastrophic events that occur in the world today. It is normally unclear if they are simply the result of humanity's sin or the supernatural intervention of God's Wrath. Nevertheless, the specific purpose of Christ's Endtime Wrath will be to punish the unbelievers remaining on the Earth after Christ's Return and the Church's Rescue. [5]

Rather than being Christ's Wrath, The Beginning of Birth Pains seem to be empowered by demonic forces ultimately allowed by God. The "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" (cf. Rev 6:1-8, Seals 1-4) and The Greatest Persecution (Rev 6:9-11, Fith Seal) will all be led by the Antichrist to achieve his goal of worldwide dominion. But Antichrist's activities on Earth will be supernaturally empowered by **the powers of this dark world and … the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms** (Eph 6:12 NIV).

Daniel confirms this, describing Antichrist's Rise to power like this: **He will become very strong, <u>but not by his own power</u>. He will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy those who are mighty, the**

saints (8:24 NIV). There is a supernatural power at work in the Antichrist's Rise and unprecedented devastations occurring in The Beginning of Birth Pains and The Greatest Persecution. It is a demonic power that has been ultimately delegated by God. [6]

That demonic power is especially evident in the Horseman of War who is **given power to take peace from the Earth and to <u>make</u> men slay each other** (Rev 6:4 NIV). Obviously, it is God who is ultimately allowing and empowering all of these events, but such language suggests a power working that is beyond human.

Therefore, The Beginning of Birth Pains, and certainly The Greatest Persecution are <u>not</u> Christ's Wrath on His enemies, but Satan and Antichrist's work in the world and eventually wrath on their enemies.

C) God's sovereignty over The Beginning of Birth Pains

There is a lot of bad news about The Beginning of Birth Pains. But nothing happens on this Earth apart from God's permission and purpose. Because God is sovereign over everything in the Universe, there is always good news in everything in the Universe. Including The Beginning of Birth Pains.

God's permission and sovereignty over The Beginning of Birth Pains is evident in Revelation. At the very beginning of the most frightening and overwhelming book that exists on Earth, we read: **Grace and peace to you from the One Who is, and Who always was, and Who is still coming, God the Father** (Rev 1:4 [7]). Your **Father** greets you with **grace and peace** before He reveals the unprecedented and world-ending wars, famines, plagues, earthquakes, and persecutions. Why?

Because a few verses later: **The Lord God the Father says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega. I am the One Who is, and Who always was, and Who is still coming. I am the Almighty One"** (Rev 1:8 [8]). **God the Father** is the Beginning, the End, and Everything in between of everything in the Universe. Everything exists for His purposes and glory. Including the creation and destruction of this Earth. And despite the powerful evil forces that currently control this world, they are no match for **the Almighty**.

It is by His will and by His power and for His glory that everything in the Revelation will be fulfilled exactly how He says it will.

God the Father is called **the Almighty** nine times in Revelation (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22). This title for Him only occurs once elsewhere in the NT (cf. 2 Cor. 6:18). The Greek word is *pantokrator*. It comes from two words, *pantos* meaning "all" or "everything" and *kratein* meaning "to hold." God your Father is telling you 9 times throughout the book of Revelation that He holds and controls everything in His power, including the Endtimes. [9] Which is why before describing the unleashing of His punishments for Earth, we read:

> **Then I saw a scroll in the right hand of God the Father Who was sitting on the throne. There was writing on the inside and the outside of the scroll, and it was sealed with seven seals.** (Rev 5:1 [10])

Revelation reveals that this **scroll** contains the Trumpet and Bowl Punishments that **God the Father** has ordained for this world (cf. *CET* ch. 14, sec E). **God the Father** gives the **scroll** to God the Son (Rev 5:7) because He alone is **worthy to take the scroll and open its seals** (5:9). And it is Jesus Christ who breaks every one of the **seven seals** on the scroll, unleashing the disasters they contain (cf. 6:1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12, 8:1).

The intent of these revelations is to ensure we understand that God is in complete control of the devastations occurring in The Beginning of Birth Pains, and all the events predicted in the Revelation.

This is why Revelation 6 says the first horseman depicting the beginning of Antichrist's activities will be **<u>given</u> a crown … as a conqueror** (v. 2 NIV). Likewise, the horseman depicting War will be **<u>given</u> power to take peace from the earth and to make people kill each other. To him was <u>given</u> a large sword** (v. 4 NIV). The horseman of Death will be **<u>given</u> power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine, and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth** (v. 8 NIV).

Likewise, God's sovereignty in this is described in Revelation chapter 13 where we read of **the beast** Antichrist:

> **There was <u>given</u> to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was <u>given</u> to him… It was also <u>given</u> to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was <u>given</u> to him.** (vs. 5, 7 NASB)

Who **give**s these demonic forces the power to do their deeds, including **overcom**ing **the saints**? Ultimately, it is God the Father, the Creator and Ruler of the Universe. [11] In one sense, these horsemen are doing the Devil's will and derive power and authority from Him. But the Devil is only an Angel originally created by God. It is God the Father alone who ultimately grants the power and authority for anyone to do anything in His Creation. Including the demonically empowered disasters of The Beginning of Birth Pains.

D) God's purposes & plan for The Beginning of Birth Pains

As noted above, Satan of course has his purposes for the painful events in The Beginning of Birth Pains. They will help him rule the world when he indwells the human Antichrist. But God also has His purposes in The Beginning of Birth Pains for every person involved.

What are God's good purposes during The Beginning of Birth Pains? First, to purify the life and worship of Christians so they glorify God more. A purpose of God-ordained pain for His people is to help them be holier. The same wars, famines, plagues, and wild beasts were predicted in the OT as God's way of purging His people from idolatry (cf. Rev 6:8; Ezek 5:12,17; ch. 14; Jer 15:2,3; 24:10). The Beginning of Birth Pains will do this for the Christians who experience them.

There is a second reason God will want His people to face The Beginning of Birth Pains. To test them. The Apostle Peter wrote to Christians who were suffering:

> **So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when**

> **your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.** (1 Pet 1:6-7 NLT)

We must remember that a Christian's primary purpose on this Earth is not to be blessed, but to be **tested**. For all eternity on the New Earth we will only be blessed and never **tested**. But on this Earth, God wants to test our **faith**, like He did with Job. More specifically, He wants to test our LOVE for Him. The most important question a Christian must answer in this life is this: Will you love God unconditionally? Will you praise Him, serve Him, trust Him, and LOVE Him even when you are suffering? Do you LOVE Him only when He blesses you, or also when He tests you?

Contrary to what too many Christians think, it is not God's love for us that is on trial in this life. **God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.** (Rom 5:8 NLT). If that is not enough for you, then nothing else will be. We will never have a good reason to doubt God's love for us. He has already proven it for all time. There is nothing worse than Hell that He could save you from, and there is nothing better than forgiveness that He could give you.

God has proven His love for us over and over again. What still needs to be proved is how much we LOVE God. And the **many trials** that Christians will have to **endure** during The Beginning of Birth Pains will test the quality of their **faith** in God and LOVE for God. That is certainly one purpose God will have for allowing the Last Generation Church to encounter The Beginning of Birth Pains and The Greatest Persecution.

What is God's purpose for Israel during The Beginning of Birth Pains? To allow their ultimate apostasy. It is during this time that the nation of Israel agrees to Antichrist's Religious Covenant (cf. Dan 9:27; *BBP* ch. 14, sec. D).

What is God's purpose for the world during The Beginning of Birth Pains? To enable the Antichrist's Rise to power over the entire world. Eventually, He will be **given authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been**

written in the Lamb's book of life (Rev 13:7-8 NIV). The Antichrist's miraculous deceptions and the world's disasters will all lead to this.

What is God's purpose for allowing the Antichrist to Reign on this Earth? To give Satan one last opportunity in the ancient and Cosmic War for Glory. This biblical theme is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, is about the very real battle between both God's and Satan's desires to be glorified on this Earth. That Cosmic War for Glory is especially displayed in the events described in the book of Revelation. This includes Antichrist's Reign and Wrath and persecution of God's people. The Christians' refusal to worship the Antichrist in the Endtimes will glorify God greatly! [12]

There is one more primary purpose of God for The Beginning of Birth Pains. As discussed in section B above, this purpose is implied by the very words that Christ used to describe these events: **birth pains**. Why does He use this terminology? Because THE END OF THIS WORLD IS THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ONE. It was written elsewhere:

> [T]here is another reason He called this period **birth pains**. God has ordained that pain comes before blessing. Accordingly, **birth pains** are the necessary human anguish that produces the wonderful new life of a baby. Likewise, the painful destruction of this current world is a necessary painful step to the creation of a whole New World. Which is why Jesus commanded us: **"Do not be frightened. These things <u>must</u> happen first"** (Luke 21:9).
>
> There is a lot of very bad news revealed in Scripture about the Endtimes. But in all the bad news about the temporary pain experienced in this world, do not forget where everything is headed: a new, perfect, sinless, and Satan-less world where God reigns and we live forever! (*CET* ch. 2, sec. A)

What is being born during the painful period of The Beginning of Birth Pains? As noted above, the Millennial Kingdom of Christ on this Earth. After 1,000 years, this will lead to **A new heaven and a new earth** in which **the first Heaven and the first Earth** eventually and completely **pass away** such that **there will be no**

more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things [will] **pass away** and **everything** will be made **new!** forever (Rev 21:1-5 NIV).

Jesus would seem to have been alluding to this same idea when He told His disciples near the time of His death:

> **I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born, she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.** (John 16:20-22 NIV) [13]

Like a **woman giving birth to a child**, the Last Generation Church will experience a lot of **pain** during The Beginning of Birth Pains. That will be their **time of grief**. But they can be encouraged by the fact that these "birth pains" are leading to a world where they **will rejoice, and no one will take away** their **joy** for all Eternity.

Likewise, the Apostles Barnabas and Paul told Christians, **We must go through many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God** (Acts 14:22 NIV). They understood that God's people would suffer on this Earth before there would be a New Earth.

Accordingly, we are reminded that Heaven is not here yet, and we should expect great difficulty in this life. This includes experiencing unprecedented and painful tests, trials, and challenges in the Endtimes. But if we find ourselves in the greatest difficulties to come, we are to remember that Heaven is coming too, and the perfection, paradise, and pain-free life we yearn for. Our present difficulties, and the greatest difficulties to come, are just temporary birth pains preparing us for an eternity of joy.

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[1] See the Wikipedia article: "List of Wars and Anthropogenic Disasters by Death Toll." The article documents the median estimate of 380 million killed in 115 wars, 50 million in "war crimes, massacres, and ancient war atrocities," 62 million in "genocides, ethnic cleansing, and religious

persecutions," 10 million from "political purges and oppressions," and 180 million in "outbreaks of disease and famine." This equals about 700 million.

[2] Thomas writes regarding The Beginning of Birth Pains:

> After such terrifying developments, could matters get worse? How can the gloom of the fourth rider be exceeded? The remaining seals [depicting The Greatest Persecution and the beginning of Christ's Wrath] will tell. After all, these are only "the beginning of birth-pains." (715)

[3] For an explanation of the suggested translation of Matt 24:21 see *CET* ch. 3, sec. E.

[4] (Dan 9:26) **War and its destruction and horrors have been determined by God to continue to the very end of the world.**

The suggested translation has v. 26d as a separate sentence. The initial part of v. 26 refers to the **end** of the temple, not the end of the world. Therefore, the NASB reads: **The prince who is to come** [Antichrist] **will destroy the city and the sanctuary** [at **the abomination of desolation**, v. 27]**. And its** [**the sanctuary**, temple] **end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.**

Destruction and horrors translates the Hebrew word *shāmēm* which means both "desolation" and "horror." Most versions have **desolations** (cf. NIV, NASB, ESV etc.). But the meaning of this word is not well known. Therefore, **destruction** in the suggested translation (and NET) seems better. For **horror** the *TWOT* explains: "From [its use for devastation] it is not difficult to see how the second major use of the root is derived, the sense of "horror" and "shock" brought about by the vision of desolation. It is the inner response to the outward scene" (937).

Determined translates the Hebrew *hāras* meaning "decide, determine" (*TWOT*, 326). This is better and more accurate English then the more obscure and common use of **decreed** (NIV, NASB, NLT, ESV).

Very end of the world specifies what the **end** here is referring to (cf. NLT).

[5] Others recognize that The Beginning of Birth Pains and The Greatest Persecution contained in the first 5 Seals of Revelation 6 should <u>not</u> be considered Christ's Wrath in the "Day of the Lord." However, they deny these forces are demonic. Morris writes:

> The first four seals … show us the self-defeating character of sin. When the spirit of selfishness and conquest is operating, all God needs to do is let events take their course and sinners will be inevitably punished. (Rev)

Likewise, Osborne writes:

> The four horsemen flow together, as the action proceeds from lust for conquest to … war to famine to pestilence and death. In this sense

God is not so much pouring down judgment on the Earth-dwellers as allowing their depravity to come full circle (274).

However, like Morris, Osborne does not see the supernatural and even demonic nature of these events, stating: "These are not demonic forces but human" (277). For reasons shared in this section of *BBP* this does not seem to adequately reflect Scripture.

[6] For more on the nature and timing of Christ's Wrath in the sequence of Endtime events, see *CET* ch. 14.

[7] The suggested translation of Rev 1:4 is based on the NLT. Because v. 5 includes **Jesus Christ**, it is clear that the **One** being described in v. 4 is **God the Father**, thus the suggested translation inserts this meaning. Accordingly, Thomas writes:

> Though one might at first see a reference to Jesus Christ here, such a possibility is excluded by His being named as the third part of the source in 1:5 (Swete). Instead, this refers to God the Father. (131)

[8] The suggested translation of Rev 1:8 is based on the NLT. However, the identical description of God the Father in 1:4 makes it clear that **Who** is speaking here is **The Lord God the Father**.

[9] Thomas adds that the repeated mention of **the throne in heaven** (Rev 4:2) throughout the Revelation is an additional indication of God's sovereignty"

> *Thronos* is used thirteen times in the eleven verses of chapter 4 (cf. 4:2 [twice], 3, 4 [three times], 5 [twice], 6 [twice], 9, 10 [twice]), eleven of the occurrences referring to the throne of God and the other two to the thrones upon which the twenty-four elders sat (cf. 4:4). It is used thirty-seven times in the whole book. The major focus of chapter 4 upon the throne is its symbolism of God's sovereignty exercised in judgment. From this point of origination proceeds the outworking of God's wrath described in the body of the Apocalypse (cf. 6:10, 16-17; 14:7; 15:1; 16:5, 19; 18:20; 19:2, 11). Though evil reigns for a time on earth, God will ultimately prevail. (561)

[10] The fact that the **Lamb** Who **had been slain** (Rev 5:6) is portrayed as the One Who **took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne** (v. 7), makes it clear that the One **on the throne** in both Rev 5:1 and 7 is **God the Father**. Thus the suggested translation.

[11] Some want to deny that God is ultimately responsible for Antichrist's ability to afflict the saints (Rev 13:7). However, Thomas explains:

> A significant question is whether his [Antichrist's] ability is God-given or not. It relates to both occurrences of (*edothē*, "was given") in v. 5 [and v. 7]. One opinion relates the verb to (*edōken*, "gave") in vv. 2, 4, and concludes that it comes from the dragon. It reasons that the use of the same form in v. 7a could not say that God gives the beast the ability to overcome the saints (Smith). This rationale

does not appear valid, however, because vv. 5-8 have a different perspective from vv. 1-4.

The new perspective notes the providence of God that allows the beast his degree of authority so that the saints will be able to endure it for a while (Kiddle). Furthermore, if this were the provision of the dragon, he would hardly limit the operation of the beast to forty-two months (Beasley-Murray). He would have him continue indefinitely.

The better opinion is that *edothē* carries the connotation "granted by God" as it does throughout the rest of the book (cf. 6:4, 8; 7:2; 9:5) (Alford, Swete, Lenski). God allows the beast to blaspheme for a limited time [and kill **the saints**], but will still hold him accountable. One of the great lessons in Daniel from which John draws so heavily is the sovereignty of God over the world's governments (cf. Dan. 4:17, 25, 32) (Caird). The future will be no different. (1121-22)

[12] For more on the Cosmic War for Glory, see *Suffering: Why Bad Things Happen to God's People*; online at www.trainingtimothys.com.

[13] Nolland seems to miss the good purpose for the Endtime birth pains when he writes, "There is no sense in the imagery that the pain is for a good cause and is meant to have a happy outcome" (963). That is not true.

Part II

Endtime Coalition

The first Endtime event

Chapter 4

The Activities & Attributes of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition

Contents

A) Introduction to the 10-nation Endtime Coalition

B) The Coalition's activities

C) The Coalition's attributes

D) Conclusions regarding the biblical attributes of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition

Primary Points

- The 10-nation Endtime Coalition is mentioned 14 times in Daniel and Revelation. Therefore, it should be obvious that God wants us to understand what it will be.
- The emergence of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition may be the very first Endtime event that occurs. Therefore, its emergence will be one of the very first signs we are to look for to know that the Endtimes have begun.
- The 10-nation Endtime Coalition will **have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast** (Rev 17:13) Antichrist. Therefore, the Coalition will form the beginning and foundation of Antichrist's Beast Empire which will eventually rule over the Remaining World.
- It will be argued in the next book, *Endtime Babylon*, that Revelation 17-18 predicts the destruction of the foremost economic power in the Endtimes (**Babylon the Great**) with nuclear weapons possessed by members of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition.
- The culmination of these 10 kings supporting Antichrist will be their uniting with him to attack Christ at the Battle of Armageddon.
- Biblical prophecy predicts a 10-nation Endtime Coalition that will be divided, diverse, and of varying military strength.

- There are several biblical reasons to reject the popular view that the 10-nation Endtime Coalition will emerge out of the geographical limits of the ancient Roman Empire and could be fulfilled by the European Union.
- Scripture gives us at least 7 attributes of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition that will enable us to identify its emergence in the world.
- The simple fact that the Endtime Coalition will be exactly **ten kings** disqualifies other modern candidates that have been commonly suggested to fulfill this biblical prophecy.

A) Introduction to the 10-nation Endtime Coalition

In Revelation 17 we read:

> **The ten horns you saw are <u>ten kings</u> who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast** [Antichrist]**. They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast.** (vs. 12-13 NIV)

These **ten kings** are called the 10-nation Endtime Coalition throughout the *Endtimes Essentials* series. It is defined as:

> The ten leaders/nations who unite with the Antichrist to destroy Endtime Babylon (cf. Rev 17:16-18). They form the base of world-wide power for Antichrist's Beast Empire (cf. Rev 17:12-14; Dan 2:41-44; 7:7, 23-25). (*CET*, Appendix B)

There are several things that can be noted here about the 10-nation Endtime Coalition. First, it is a prominent theme of prophetic Scripture, being mentioned at least 14 times in Daniel and Revelation. Therefore, it should be obvious that God wants us to understand what it will be.

Second, throughout Daniel and Revelation these **ten kings** are portrayed as **ten horns** (Dan 7:7-8, 20, 24; Rev 12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7). In prophetic Scripture, **horns are … kings** (Dan 7:24; cf. 8:20) and the leaders of nations. [1] Therefore, the 10-nation Coalition will be a group of exactly, literally, and physically **ten** nations and their leaders. This is why it is also described as having **ten kings** (Rev 17:12; Dan 2:44; 7:24). [2]

Third, what will be God's ultimate purpose for this 10-nation Endtime Coalition? As the text above described: **They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast** Antichrist (Rev 17:12-13). Their unity with the Antichrist is portrayed throughout Scripture. In Daniel 2 their unity is illustrated by ten **toes** of the two **feet** symbolizing Antichrist's Beast Empire (Dan 2:34, 41-43). [3] This is defined as:

> The final Beast Empire that will uniquely rule the entire world (cf. Dan 7:23). It will be initially formed by an alliance between the Resurrected Antichrist and the 10-nation Endtime Coalition. (*CET,* Appendix B)

In Daniel 7 Antichrist's Beast Empire is represented by **ten horns** on the fourth **beast** (vs. 7-8, 20, 24). In Revelation 12, the unity of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition even with Satan himself is portrayed as **an enormous red dragon with … ten horns** (v. 3). In Revelation 13 and 17 this Endtime Empire is depicted as a **beast** with **ten horns** (13:1; 17:3, 7). The united activities of the Antichrist and the 10-nation Endtime Coalition will be outlined in the next section.

B) The Coalition's Activities

B.1) Where does the emergence of the Coalition fit into the sequence of Endtime events?

It will be argued in this book, *The Beginning of Birth Pains* (*BBP*) that the emergence of the Rising Antichrist as a **little horn** (Dan 7:8) will certainly be one of the very first events of the Endtimes. It seems the Antichrist will be the first and foremost of the False Christs that Jesus predicted would emerge at the very beginning of The Beginning of Birth Pains (cf. Matt 24:5; *BBP* ch. 10, sec. B).

It will also be argued that the opening of the First Seal of Preparation marking the beginning of the Endtimes is portraying the emergence of the Antichrist (cf. Rev 6:1-2; *BBP* ch. 11). Therefore, it seems the Antichrist's emergence onto the world scene is among the very first events of the Endtimes.

But Scripture indicates that the 10-nation Endtime Coalition will be established before the Antichrist is especially prominent in the

world. In Daniel 7:24 we read: **The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them, another king** [the Antichrist] **will arise** (NIV). Likewise, earlier in v. 8 Daniel said: **While I was thinking about the** [ten] **horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them** (NIV). This too implies the **ten horns** will exist before the Antichrist emerges even as a **little horn ... among them**.

The Antichrist will probably be present on Earth as a **little horn**, or leader of a relatively minor nation, even before the 10-nation Endtime Coalition is established. But before he **will arise** and become especially powerful, it would seem the Coalition will be established. [4] Accordingly, it is suggested that the emergence of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition may be the very first Endtime event that occurs. Therefore, its emergence will be one of the very first signs we are to look for to know that the Endtimes have begun.

B.2) The Coalition will align with the Antichrist to burn down Endtime Babylon in one hour *(Rev 17-18)*

We have read that **The ten horns ... are ten kings** who will **have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast** [Antichrist] (Rev 17:12-13 NIV). Likewise, it says in verse 17: **God** will **put it into their hearts** [the **ten kings**] **to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to hand over to the beast** [Antichrist] **their royal authority, until God's words are fulfilled** (Rev 17:17 NIV). That **one purpose** that God has for the 10-nation Endtime Coalition will result in several activities.

It would seem the Coalition's first activity with the Antichrist will be forming an alliance to annihilate Endtime Babylon. Endtime Babylon is derived from the numerous references of this entity as **Babylon the Great** in Revelation (14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2). It has been defined in the *Endtimes Essentials* series as:

> The economic super-power in the world when the Endtimes begin (cf. Rev chs. 17-18). It is a nation, centered in a city, that once served God, but is now a spiritual Prostitute promoting the idolatrous religion of Money in the World. (*Christ's Endtimes Teaching*, Appendix B)

Again, Scripture predicts the 10-nation Endtime Coalition will unite with the Antichrist to annihilate Endtime Babylon. In Revelation 17 we read:

> **The ten horns** [Endtime Coalition] **that you saw and the beast** [Antichrist] **will hate the Prostitute** [Endtime Babylon] **and they will permanently remove all people from her and strip her naked and they will devour her body and will burn her down with fire… in one hour** [such that no one ever lives there again] (Rev 17:16, 18:10, 17, 19 [5]).

After such destruction, the prophecy describes Endtime Babylon as never having people live there again:

> **No worker of any trade will ever be found in you again… The light of a lamp will never shine in you again… The voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again.** (Rev 18:22-23 NIV)

The best interpretation of an attack that **will burn down** a place **with fire … in one hour**, such that on one ever lives there again, is the use of nuclear weapons. Therefore, the reference above to the Coalition giving Antichrist **their power** (Rev 17:17) may include the power of nuclear weapons. The Greek word used here (*dynamin*) can refer "especially to military forces." [6]

Therefore, *dynamin* (**power**) is a good word to describe the Coalition giving the Antichrist "military forces" or even nuclear weapons to destroy Endtime Babylon. All of this will be discussed more in the next book in the *Endtimes Essentials* series, *Endtime Babylon.* The important point here is that we should expect some members of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition to possess nuclear weapons.

B.3) The Coalition will be the foundation of Antichrist's Beast Empire

A second activity of these 10 kings is giving Antichrist their **authority** (Rev 17:17). This Coalition will be the foundation of the Antichrist's Beast Empire. This is why when his Empire is described in Scripture, the Coalition is included as ten **toes** (Dan 2:41-42) or

ten horns (Dan 7:7-8, 20, 24; Rev 12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7) of the Empire.

This **beast** with **ten horns and … with ten crowns on its horns** will eventually be **given authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation** (Rev 13:1, 7 NIV) on Earth. Obviously, the 10-nation Endtime Coalition will be a part of the Antichrist's world-wide rule.

B.4) The Coalition will be among the core nations in the Battle of Armageddon

The culmination of these 10 kings supporting Antichrist will be their uniting with him to attack Christ at the Battle of Armageddon. This is what is being referred to when we read:

> **The ten horns … will wage war against the Lamb** [Christ]**, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings —and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers** (Rev 17:12, 14 NIV). [7]

What **war** will occur between **the ten horns** (10-nation Endtime Coalition) **the Lamb** (Jesus Christ)? The Battle of Armageddon. The Coalition will be among **the kings** that the **beast** Antichrist will **gather … for the battle on the great day of God Almighty** and he will **gather the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon**. (Rev 16:14, 16 NIV).

Likewise, at the Battle of Armageddon, John sees **the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to wage war against the rider on the horse** [Jesus Christ] **and his army** (Rev 19:19 NIV). Again, **the kings of the earth** will certainly include **The ten horns** who **will wage war against the Lamb** (17:12).

It is clear that the Antichrist and the 10-nation Endtime Coalition will be present at the Battle of Armageddon. Therefore, it seems important that Scripture specifically identifies by name the ancient geographical areas from which the armies at Armageddon will come from (cf. Ezek 38:1-6; Rev 16:12-16). This enables us to identify modern nations that are candidates to be at Armageddon. This then may give us significant biblical data on the identity of the

10-nation Endtime Coalition that will be at the Battle of Armageddon. This will be discussed further in the next chapter (5).

B.5) The Coalition's duration

Like virtually everything else about the Coalition, its duration is tied to the duration of the Antichrist. It was pointed out above that according to Daniel 7:8, 24, the Coalition will probably exist before the Rising Antichrist is especially prominent in the world. However, their existence and purpose are tied closely together.

We read again: **The ten horns … are ten kings** who will **have <u>one purpose</u> and will give their power and authority to the beast** [Antichrist] (Rev 17:12-13 NIV; cf. v. 17). If God's **purpose** for the Coalition is simply to **give their power and authority to the beast** [Antichrist], then it would seem their emergence will occur relatively close in time to one another. Therefore, we should not expect the 10-nation Endtime Coalition to exist for a considerable time before the Antichrist's Rise.

Likewise, the end of the Coalition and the Antichrist will occur at the same time. Again, **They will wage war against the Lamb** (Rev 17:14) which refers to their presence at the Battle of Armageddon (cf. Rev 16:14, 16; 19:19).

It is there that the **beast** Antichrist will be **captured** and **thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur** and **the rest**, including the armies of the Coalition, will be **killed with the sword coming out of the mouth of the rider on the horse** Jesus Christ (Rev 19:20-21 NIV). Therefore, the end of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition occurs at the Battle of Armageddon along with the end of the Antichrist. [8] [9]

This helps us understand the odd statement in Revelation 17:12:

> **The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who <u>for one hour</u> will receive authority as kings along with the beast** [Antichrist]**. They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast.** (vs. 12-13 NIV)

As argued elsewhere, this **one hour** should be interpreted literally. However, the above demonstrated that the Coalition will

receive authority as kings along with the beast Antichrist for several years, not just **one hour**. It will also be argued elsewhere that this **one hour** of **authority** refers specifically to the **one hour** mentioned three more times in the prophecy in which God gives the Antichrist and the 10-nation Endtime Coalition the **authority** to destroy Endtime Babylon. [10]

C) The Coalition's attributes

[Stop & read Daniel chapters 2 & 7]

C.1) The Coalition will be Daniel's fifth pagan empire

In Daniel 2 God gives **Nebuchadnezzar dreams** (v. 1 NIV) of **a large statue** of a man (vs. 31-33). In Daniel 7 we read **Daniel had a dream** (v. 1) of **four great beasts** (v. 3). These visions in Daniel depict and predict five pagan rulers and their kingdoms.

The texts explain, and scholars agree, that **the head of gold** (2:38; cf. v. 32) and the **first** beast **like a lion** (7:4) represent Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom of Babylon.

The **chest and arms of silver** (2:32) and the **second beast, which looked like a bear** (7:5) predicted Cyrus and the Persian Empire.

The **belly and thighs of bronze** (2:32) is **a third kingdom** (2:39) and a third **beast … that looked like a leopard** (7:6). This is recognized as Alexander the Great's Greek Empire.

The **legs of iron** (2:33) is **a fourth kingdom** (2:40) and a **fourth beast** (7:7) referring in some ways to the ancient Roman Empire.

But then Daniel reveals a fifth ruler and kingdom, separate from the Roman Empire. [11] However, this can easily be missed. In both Daniel chapters 2 and 7 descriptions of the **fourth kingdom** and **fourth beast** (2:40, 7:7) seamlessly merge into describing a fifth ruler and kingdom. This is portraying Antichrist's Beast Empire in the Endtimes. For example, in Daniel 2 we read:

> **Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all**

> **the others. Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom.** (Dan 2:40-41 NIV)

The difficulty of this statement is that it is describing two different empires, but the one somewhat blurs into the other. On one hand, the **fourth kingdom** is the ancient Roman Empire symbolized by **iron** (v. 40) and more specifically by **legs of iron** (v. 33).

Without clearly saying so, the text primarily describes the Antichrist's Beast Empire depicted by a separate body part, **the feet and toes** that are **partly of baked clay and partly of iron**. The fact that this is describing a separate body part on the **statue** tells us it is a separate kingdom from the **legs of iron** and the Roman Empire. This is illustrated in Daniel where we read:

> **The head of the statue was made of pure gold** (Babylon)**, its chest and arms of silver** (Persia)**, its belly and thighs of bronze** (Greece)**, its legs of iron** (Rome)**, its feet** [**and toes**, vs. 41, 42] **partly of iron and partly of baked clay** [a fifth kingdom] (Dan 2:32-33 NIV).

We see the same phenomenon in Daniel 7. As noted above, it portrays **four great beasts** (v. 3) predicting future pagan rulers and their kingdoms. After describing his vision of a third **beast** predicting Alexander the Great's Greek Empire, Daniel writes:

> **After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast—terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns.** (Dan 7:7 NIV)

Later it is explained:

> **The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it.** (Dan 7:23 NIV)

In one sense this **fourth kingdom** refers to the ancient Roman Empire because it is clearly portrayed as following the Greek Empire

(cf. 7:6-7). But again, this prophecy merges into the Endtimes by predicting that the **fourth beast** will be **different from all the former beasts**, have **ten horns** (or kings) and be a **fourth kingdom** that **will devour the whole earth**.

None of these things was ever true of the ancient Roman Empire. But it will be true of the Antichrist's Beast Empire. As explained below, the **ten horns** of Antichrist's Beast Empire depict and predict the 10-nation Endtime Coalition that will be the foundation of his world-wide rule.

Daniel's portrayal of pagan world empires can be summarized in the following table:

Table: Pagan world empires predicted in Daniel

Pagan King & Kingdom	Statue Part in Dan 2	Kind of Beast in Dan 7
Nebuchad-nezzar of Babylon	Head of gold (vs. 32, 36-38)	Lion with wings like an eagle (v. 4)
Cyrus of Persia	Chest & arms of silver (vs. 32, 39)	Bear (v. 5)
Alexander of Greece	Belly & thighs of bronze (vs. 32, 39)	Leopard with four wings and heads (v. 6)
Rome with no distinct king	Legs of iron, fourth kingdom (vs. 33, 40)	A fourth beast—terrifying and frightening and very powerful. (v. 7)
Antichrist's Beast Empire	Feet & toes of iron & clay, fifth kingdom (vs. 33, 41)	It will be different from all the former beasts, and it will have ten horns and will devour the whole earth. (vs. 7, 19, 23)

C.2) The Coalition will be 10 nations existing in the Endtimes & the foundation of Antichrist's world-wide Beast Empire

What can we know about this fifth kingdom? First, it will exist in the Endtimes. [12] This is why Daniel described the fifth and last kingdom being destroyed by Christ's Return:

> **While you were watching, a rock** [Christ] **was cut out, but not by human hands. <u>It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay</u>** [the fifth and last kingdom] **and smashed them… The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock** [Christ] **that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth** [during Christ's 1,000-year Reign]**.** (Dan 2:34-35 NIV).

This vision specifically portrayed Christ as **smash**ing the **feet of iron and clay**. As demonstrated above, this represents Antichrist's Beast Empire. Therefore, the vision portrays that this will be the last pagan empire on Earth, existing and destroyed at Christ's Return. This will lead to Christ's 1,000-year Reign which will **fill the whole earth**. [13]

Second, this fifth and last pagan empire will rule the entire Earth. Daniel 7 states the Antichrist's Beast Empire **will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it** (Dan 7:23; cf. v. 7, 19). How will Antichrist's Beast Empire **be different from all the other kingdoms**?

Contrary to many commentators, the difference is explained in this very verse. [14] Unlike any other kingdom in human history, the Antichrist's Beast Empire **will devour the whole earth**. [15] This is confirmed in Revelation which predicts the Antichrist will be **given authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation** (Rev 13:7 NIV). That is why **it will be different from all the other kingdoms** (Dan 7:23).

Third, we note that this Endtime kingdom is portrayed by **feet <u>and</u> toes** that are **partly of baked clay and partly of iron** (Dan 2:41).

The ten **toes** seem to predict that a foundational part of Antichrist's Beast Empire will be **ten** individual **kings** (Dan 7:24).

Accordingly, the statue in Daniel 2 has ten **toes** (vs. 41-42) which correspond to the **ten horns** and **ten kings** in Daniel 7.

The Aramaic word **kings** (*melek*) relates to the same word in Hebrew which is used hundreds of times in the OT to refer to the chief ruler of a people group or nation. [16] The imagery of the ten **toes** refers to the 10-nation Endtime Coalition being made up of 10 distinct countries with individual rulers. [17] Therefore, it is reasonable to expect this prophecy to be fulfilled by the leaders of 10 distinct nations in the modern world.

Accordingly, in Revelation 13 the Antichrist is described as **a beast coming out of the sea** with **ten horns and … ten crowns on its horns** (v. 1). Likewise, Revelation 17 describes the Antichrist as **a scarlet beast** with **ten horns** (v. 3). All of this suggests that the 10-nation Endtime Coalition will be the political, military, and economic foundation of the Antichrist's Beast Empire.

C.3) The Coalition will be divided, diverse, and of varying military strength

Daniel 2:41-43 describes three more attributes of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition:

> **Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.** (Dan 2:41-43 NIV)

First, there may be internal conflicts within the Coalition because it **will be a divided kingdom** and **will not remain united**. A lack of unity should be expected of anything being controlled by demonic forces.

Second, this passage describes the great diversity within these ten nations. **The people** of this Coalition **will be a mixture** of cultures, races, and languages. [18] This is another reason it will struggle to **remain united**. This is why this entity is referred to as

a Coalition, rather than a united kingdom throughout the *Endtimes Essentials*.

Third, the individual nature of these 10 countries will be manifested in their differing military strength. Some of the **toes** Daniel saw were made of **clay** and some of them were made of **iron** (Dan 2:41). This seems better than seeing all the toes being made of a mixture of **clay** and **iron**.

This is supported by what the **clay** and **iron** refer to. Some of these nations will have **the strength of iron in it** (v. 41). The meaning of the **iron** in this fifth and last kingdom is derived from its meaning in the fourth kingdom of Rome.

In Daniel 2:40 we read of the **fourth kingdom** [Roman Empire] that it was **strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes … things to pieces**. The **iron** clearly symbolized military strength to defeat and destroy others. Accordingly, the **iron** of the ancient Roman Empire was its legendary military power.

This is portrayed elsewhere when Daniel describes the Roman Empire as **a fourth beast—terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left** (Dan 7:7 NIV; cf. v. 19).

Therefore, the **toes** in the Endtime Coalition made of **iron** refer to countries that will have relatively greater military power. Other countries (**toes** made of **clay**) will have much less military power. Accordingly, the text says, the 10-nation Endtime Coalition **will be partly strong** [militarily] **and partly brittle** [weak militarily] (Dan 2:42). More specifically, it would seem the **iron** and military power of some members of the Coalition may refer to their nuclear warfare capability.

C.4 The Coalition's relationship to the Roman Empire

By far the most popular interpretation of the prophesied 10-nation Endtime Coalition is that it is a "revived Roman Empire." This is especially promoted by Pre-tribulationism. Therefore, because ancient Rome controlled some parts of modern Europe, the European Union has long been a favorite candidate among Pre-tribulationists for identifying the 10-nation Endtime Coalition. [19]

Another common view among Amillennialists is that this 10-nation Endtime Coalition was fulfilled in the past by the ancient Roman Empire. [20] Obviously, there is a relationship between the Roman Empire and Antichrist's Beast Empire, but it is not what Pre-tribulationism or Amillennialism claim.

It was noted above that the **fourth beast** (Dan 7:7) portrayed in Daniel's vision represented both the ancient Roman Empire and Antichrist's Beast Empire. The prophetic "blurring" together of these empires seems to be another example of the near/final and partial/complete aspect of the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. This is discussed further elsewhere. [21]

The ancient Roman Empire was a partial fulfillment of the **fourth beast**, but the Antichrist's Beast Empire will be the final and complete fulfillment of this prophecy.

Still, the body parts of **feet and toes** (Dan 2:41) of Antichrist's Beast Empire clearly define a separate king and kingdom from the **iron legs** (v. 33) of the Roman Empire.

In addition, the visions make it clear that the pagan kingdoms are portrayed as having a king. We read: **The four great beasts are four kings that will rise from the earth.** (Dan 7:17 NIV). However, Rome never had one king, like a Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, or Alexander portrayed by the other **beasts**. It had a series of emperors of varying political power.

In addition, the **fourth beast** is repeatedly described as having **ten horns** that represent **ten kings** who will simultaneously be ruling (cf. Dan 7:7, 19-20, 23-24). This could never be true of the ancient Roman Empire. [22] This would strongly suggest that the vision of the **fourth beast** and fourth **king** was intended to practically skip Rome altogether and project forward to the Antichrist's Beast Empire that will certainly have one king, and the Coalition which will have **ten kings** (Dan 7:24).

Therefore, any relationship between the ancient Roman Empire and the Antichrist's Beast Empire and its 10-nation Endtime Coalition is very limited. In fact, as demonstrated above, the <u>only clear</u> relationship between the ancient Roman Empire and the Antichrist's Beast Empire portrayed in Daniel's visions, is the **iron** in the **legs** of the former, and the **feet and toes** of the latter (Dan 2:33, 41). That's it.

Unfortunately, many scholars claim the **iron** in Daniel 2 (vs. 33-35, 41-43, 45) refers only or primarily to the ancestry or geographical location of the ancient Roman Empire. Therefore, they conclude that the entire makeup of the 10-nation Coalition is defined by the geographical limits of the Romans. However, it was demonstrated in the previous section that the **iron** clearly refers to Rome's military strength, not ancestry or geographical location.

This was true of depicting Babylon as a **head of pure gold** symbolizing its superior **glory** (Dan 2:32, 37; cf. v. 39). The **gold** did not refer to Babylon's geographical location or ancestry, but its internal attributes. Therefore, it should not be assumed that the **iron** of the ancient Roman Empire refers to the geographical location of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition.

A second problem with identifying the 10-nation Endtime Coalition with the **iron** of a revived Roman Empire is that some of the ten **toes** of the Coalition will be made of **clay** (Dan 2:33-35, 41-43, 45). The clay has no clear relationship to the Roman Empire at all.

Thirdly, even if the **iron** of Rome referred to its geography or ancestry, these things are not reflected in the European Union. The extremely varied ancestry of the 28 countries currently in the Union certainly does not clearly derive from Italy or the Roman Empire.

Likewise, the geographical rule of Rome only extended north to the Rhine and Danube Rivers in southern Germany. [23] Therefore, about half of the current European Union was never ruled by Rome, including the great majority of Germany itself. [24]

Again, the only clear relationship between the ancient Roman Empire and the Antichrist's Beast Empire (and the 10-nation Endtime Coalition it is founded upon), portrayed in Daniel's visions, is the **iron** portraying military strength in both. However, there may be some other relationships as well.

First, both the ancient Roman Empire and Antichrist's Beast Empire have a unique relationship to the Comings of Christ. Rome was ruling at Christ's First Coming, and the Antichrist will be ruling at Christ's Second Coming. In a sense, the Roman Empire was destroyed by Christ's First Coming when it was rather completely converted to Christianity by the 4th century. Likewise, the ten **toes**

of the Endtime Coalition will be **smashed** by the **rock** that is Christ when He Returns (Dan 2:34, cf. v. 44).

Secondly, like the Roman Empire, the Antichrist's Beast Empire and the 10-nation Endtime Coalition will be a foremost persecutor of God's people.

But again, the relationship between these entities should not be exaggerated. The above sections also demonstrated several other attributes that clearly distinguish the 10-nation Endtime Coalition from any relationship to the ancient Roman empire. These included ruling the entire world and being led by 10 kings. These things were never true of the Roman Empire.

Related to this is the prophecy that Antichrist's Beast Empire **will crush and break all the other** previous nations (Dan 2:40). Again the Roman Empire never did this. The Persian and Greek Empires that preceded the Roman Empire conquered vast areas in the East including areas of modern day Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. The Roman Empire never expanded to these areas. Therefore, it is not the Roman Empire that was predicted to **crush and break all the others**. This will be the Antichrist's Beast Empire.

Thirdly, the prophecy states the **fourth beast** will be **different from all the former beasts** (Dan 7:7 NIV). It would be difficult to say what **was different** about the Romans **from all the former beasts** of Greece, Persia, and Babylonia. All of them were powerful and cruel military powers as the text describes. So what will make this fifth kingdom different from all the others? Many of the items described above, but particularly its complete power over the entire world. [25]

All of these biblical attributes of the Antichrist's Beast Empire and its foundational 10-nation Coalition also refute the Amillennial claim that these things have already been fulfilled.

Finally, an attempt to equate the 10-nation Endtime Coalition with a revived Roman Empire is derived from Daniel 7:23-24. The text reads:

> **The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it**

> **down and crushing it. The ten horns are <u>ten kings who will come from this kingdom</u>.** (Dan 7:23-24 NIV)

Scholars commonly suggest **this kingdom** only or primarily refers to the ancient Roman Empire. Therefore, it is claimed that this text predicts that the **ten kings … will come from this** Roman **kingdom**, proving the Endtime Coalition will be derived from the Roman Empire. However, as we saw above, this description of **the fourth beast** describes things that were never true of that empire, but rather, predicts the Antichrist's Beast Empire in the Endtimes. It is out of <u>that</u> Endtime empire that the **ten kings … will come from**, not the ancient Roman Empire.

There is also a potential problem with the NIV translation above that the **ten kings … will <u>come from</u>** [Aramaic *min*] **this** fourth **kingdom**. Admittedly, virtually all versions, like the NIV, translate it like this. However, the Aramaic allows for another translation, and the book of Daniel strongly suggests one. Daniel 7 is one of the rare parts of Scripture that is written in Aramaic. The Aramaic preposition *min* has several different meanings including "from, because of, more than, <u>part of.</u>" [26]

In Daniel chapter 2 there are seven instances of cognates of *min* translated as **partly** by all English translations. These are in reference to the 10 nations of the Endtime Coalition being **partly iron** [militarily strong] and **partly clay** [militarily weak].

Accordingly, a suggested translation of Daniel 7:24 would be **The ten horns are ten kings who will be a part of this kingdom**. Again, **this kingdom** refers to the Antichrist's Beast Empire. Therefore, the prophecy would be stating that the 10-nation Coalition will be <u>a part</u> of the worldwide Antichrist's Beast Empire. This would reflect the fact that the Coalition itself will not rule the entire world, nor make up all the nations of Antichrist's Beast Empire. But again, the Coalition's political, economic, and military strength will comprise the foundation of Antichrist's world-wide rule.

This translation would also avoid another problem. Again, the NIV and other translations state: **The ten horns are ten kings who will <u>come from</u> this** [fourth] **kingdom.** This would imply that the Antichrist's worldwide Beast Empire will exist <u>before</u> the

10-nation Coalition and the latter will emerge from the former. On the contrary, as noted above, Daniel rather clearly predicts that the Coalition will be established before the Antichrist even emerges as a **little horn** (cf. Dan 7:8, 24, sec. B.1 above).

Therefore, contrary to much of modern scholarship, and as demonstrated in this chapter and the next two chapters, there are more biblical ways of determining the future countries in the 10-nation Endtime Coalition than simply equating it with the geography of the ancient Roman Empire (or European Union). [27]

D) Conclusions regarding the biblical attributes of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition

The next 2 chapters will discuss the identification of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition. The activities and attributes discussed in this chapter will be used to do so. Let us summarize the biblical attributes of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition:

1) The Coalition will be exactly **ten kings** or ten nations (Dan 2:44; 7:24; Rev 17:12; cf. ch. 4, sec. A).

2) The Coalition will emerge in the world before the Antichrist emerges (cf. Dan 7:8, 24; cf. ch. 4, sec. B.1). Therefore, it may be the first Endtime event to occur.

3) The Coalition will possess nuclear weapons that will be used by the Antichrist to **completely burn down** in **one hour** the world's foremost economic power, **Babylon the Great**, such that no people ever live there again (cf. Rev 17:5, 16, 18:10, 17, 19, cf. 21-23; cf. ch. 4, sec. B.2).

4) Some of the Coalition's members will be militarily very strong, and others very weak (cf. Dan 2:42; cf. ch. 4, sec. C).

5) The Coalition's members will be very diverse in race, culture, and language (Dan 2:43; cf. ch. 4, sec. C).

6) The Coalition's members will be divided and perhaps have internal conflicts (Dan 2:41, 43; cf. *BBP* ch. 4, sec. C).

7) The nations of the Coalition **will wage war against the Lamb** [Christ] at the Battle of Armageddon (Rev 17:14; cf. Rev 16:14, 16; 19:19; Ezekiel 38:1-6; cf. ch. 4, sec. B.4 and ch. 5).

The simple fact that the Endtime Coalition will be exactly **ten kings** (Dan 2:44; 7:24; Rev 17:12) disqualifies other modern candidates that have been commonly suggested to fulfill this biblical prophecy. This is because their membership consists of many more nations than **ten**, and it is doubtful they will ever return to that number of members. For example, the European Union currently has 28 member nations, NATO has 31, and the United Nations has 193. Even the United Nations Security Council has 15 members.

However, there is a very powerful economic, political, and military coalition forming in our world right now that fulfills all of the seven biblical attributes of the prophesied 10-nation Endtime Coalition in an extraordinary way. This will be discussed in chapter 6. But first, more can be said about the Coalition's presence at the Battle of Armageddon as a means of identifying modern nations that may be among its members. This will be discussed in the next chapter (5).

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[1] Wiersbe says of the image of **horns** (Dan 7:7), "Often in Scripture, a horn is a symbol of a ruler or of royal authority (1 Sam. 2:10; Ps. 132:17) (loc. Dan 7:7). *K&D* remark regarding the **fourth beast** (Dan 7:7): "It had ten horns, by which its terrible strength is denoted, because a horn is in Scripture always the universal symbol of armed strength. (loc. Dan 7:7 *K&D*). Fortunately, as usual in symbolic Scripture, we do not have to guess what the **horns** mean. We are told in the prophecy that **The ten horns are ten kings** [*melek*] (Dan 7:24).

Wiersbe adds:

> Daniel wrote in language the people of his day could understand, and the concept of nations as we have them today would be foreign to the ancients. In Daniel's day countries were ruled by kings, but the "kingdoms" spoken of here will be nations as we know them. (7:8)

[2] MacArthur seems to doubt the literal meaning of **ten** regarding Daniel's references to the 10-nation Endtime Coalition. He writes:

> Ten fits the imagery of the fourth beast in Daniel 7:7, 24, and is a symbolic number representing all the world's political and military

might. Antichrist will rise from among these ten (Dan. 7:16–24) and will not rule merely ten nations, but the entire world (cf. Dan. 7:23). (*MNTC*, Rev, 42.)

There is truth in his statement, but the possible symbolic meaning of **ten** does not replace its literal meaning. In fact, he later admits similar prophecies have already been fulfilled in a physical and literal way. He writes:

> In addition to his ten horns, the beast is described by John as having seven heads. As will be seen in the discussion of Revelation 17 later in this volume, those seven heads represent seven [literal, physical] successive world empires: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and Antichrist's final world kingdom. (43)

The fact that the 7 heads reflect literal, individual rulers suggests the 10 horns do the same.

[3] Young makes the odd and unnecessary remark that, "Nowhere in Scripture is the image said to have ten toes" (160). The description clearly says it has **toes** which clearly depict the **ten horns** in Daniel 7. Of course the image Daniel saw had ten toes.

[4] Accordingly, *K&D* describe the Antichrist as "the king coming after them," the 10-nation Coalition (at Dan 7:24). Young and Walvoord do not comment on this.

[5] For an explanation of the suggested translation of Rev 17:16 see *Endtime Essentials* book #3: *Endtime Babylon*, ch. 1, sec. A.

[6] *BDAG* #'s 1, 2, & 4.

[7] Osborne agrees that Revelation 17:14, stating that the 10-nation Endtime Coalition **will wage war against the Lamb**, "refers to the final battle inaugurated in 16:12, 14 and executed in 19:19, where 'the beast, the kings of the Earth, and their armies gather to make war against the rider on the white horse' that is 'Armageddon' (16:16)" (623). Thomas (1344), Ladd (232), and Mounce (319) agree.

[8] The above arguments correct Young when he writes from merely a metaphorical viewpoint:

> The [ten] kingdoms need not be regarded as strictly contemporary (who will maintain that they must all begin at the same time, as a strict [e.g. literal] interpretation of the symbolism would require?) (160)

Every indication in Daniel and Revelation is that the nations in the Coalition will exist at the very same time, and there is no evidence to the contrary. This is why the **feet of iron and clay** including the **ten** toes is pictured as being simultaneously **smashed** by Christ at the Battle of Armageddon (Dan 2:34). Accordingly, the Angel explains: **"In the time of those** [ten] **kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people.**

It will crush all those [ten] **kingdoms** [simultaneously] **and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.** (v. 44).

Accordingly, Walvoord writes:

> According to Daniel's prophecy, the ten-toe stage is simultaneous, that is, the kingdoms exist side by side and are destroyed by one catastrophic blow. Nothing like that has yet occurred in history. (*Dan*, 73; cf. Thomas, 1342)

[9] There is another indication of the Coalition's relative short duration. Its first mention is in Daniel 2 and 7 where the long lasting Historical Beast Empires like Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome are predicted. These Empires lasted anywhere from 230 to 1,100 years. This is probably one reason they are depicted as consisting of metals, including gold, silver, bronze, and iron.

In contrast, the 10-nation Endtime Coalition is depicted as **toes** that will be **partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle,** and it **will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay** (Dan 2:42-43). Symbolizing the Coalition as at least **partly** made of **clay** implies a significantly shorter duration than the Empires symbolized completely with metals.

[10] For more on the meaning of the **one hour** in Revelation 17-18 see *Endtime Babylon*, ch. 8, sec. A.1.

[11] Walvoord also recognizes that Daniel is predicting a fifth kingdom (*Dan,* 175).

[12] Walvoord writes in support of seeing the 10-nation Coalition as occurring in the Endtimes:

> [T]he ten-toe stage of the image has not been fulfilled in history and is still prophetic. The familiar attempts in many commentaries to find a ten-toe stage of the image in the fifth and sixth centuries A. D. do not correspond to the actual facts of history and do not fulfill the ten-toe stage.

Thomas agrees and writes:

> We should interpret these as ten kings who with their kingdoms will join in a confederacy under the leadership of the beast in the final Gentile world empire. They will rule simultaneously with one another and with the beast. According to Dan. 7:7, 24, these are rulers who will receive their dominions in the last days (Beckwith, Smith). This is the form which the final world empire will take (Walvoord). (1342)

[13] Christ's Kingdom is described in Dan 2:44 as eternal. However, Rev 20 describes a 1,000-year Millennial Kingdom. There is no contradiction here. The Millennial Kingdom on this Earth eventually becomes the Eternal Kingdom on the New Earth, with no interruption of Christ's lordship.

[14] Walvoord says the difference in the **fourth beast** (Dan 7:23) is that the Romans crushed civilizations instead of preserving them. But this was

not so for Israel and the Jews who maintained their own government and religion.

Hill suggests the difference is: "Unlike the other three creatures, this beast seems to have asserted its independence from the Almighty as the source of dominion and power in its ability wantonly to "crush" and "devour" and "trample" its victims (v. 7c)" (loc. 4852-4853). On the contrary, Scripture is clear that this beast is given its power by God (cf. Rev 6:2; 13:7; 17:16-17).

[15] Admittedly, Alexander the Great's Greek Empire is described in similar terms when it says **a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth** (Dan 2:39 NIV). There would seem to be some metaphorical hyperbole here. But as demonstrated in this section, Revelation 13:8 makes it clear that Antichrist's Beast Empire will literally, in a political, economic, and religious sense, **devour the whole earth** (Dan 7:23).

[16] The Hebrew word *melek* referring to **the ten kings** (Dan 7:24) can mean merely "commandant, governor, chieftan" (*TWOT*, 507). However, the vast majority of its over 2500 uses in the OT mean **king** in the sense of a ruler of an empire or nation. This is always the case in Daniel. The fact that *melek* as **king** was differentiated from other types of rulers, see the Hebrew text of Prov 8:15-16.

[17] Walvoord (*Dan,* 175) offers several arguments to support the fact that these **ten kings** refer to what we define as the 10-nation Endtime Coalition.

[18] The meaning of Dan 2:43b is unclear. The more literal NASB has **they will combine with one another in the seed of men**. Likewise, the NLT has **these kingdoms will try to strengthen themselves by forming alliances with each other through intermarriage**. The NIV more simply has **the people will be a mixture**. Scholars are divided on the meaning of this obscure statement. It seems best to interpret it as a reference to **a mixture** (NIV) of cultures, even though it may involve **intermarriage** (NLT).

Some try to relate the clay to the Roman Empire by applying Daniel 2:43 which states: **And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men** (NASB). The interpretation is that because the people's/nation representing clay intermarry, that Roman ancestry will be present even in the clay. See Van Kampen's lengthy discussion (117-132).

However, this seems too obscure to put much confidence in it. For example, the NLT translates the verse: **This mixture of iron and clay also shows that these kingdoms will try to strengthen themselves by forming alliances with each other through intermarriage.** This seems to emphasize the sharing of military might rather than Roman ancestry. Nevertheless, the fact that the 10 nations are **partly clay** and

partly iron clearly indicates that some of the nations are not related to Rome.

[19] The Pre-tribulationist Wiersbe writes of Dan 7: "The scenario seems to look like this. Antichrist will be leading one of ten confederated nations in Europe" (loc. Dan 7:8).

Likewise, MacArthur is typical of those viewing the 10-nation Endtime Coalition as a revived Roman Empire when he writes:

> The kingdom of the Antichrist will basically comprise the territory once held by the ancient Roman empire, in particular a western confederacy made up of a unified Europe. Daniel mentions that it will be a ten-nation empire (7:24), which cannot help bringing to mind the present European Common Market. (*Matt*, loc. 42788; cf. Walvoord, *Dan*, 74, 175; Hitchcock, *End,* 116)

Tim Lahaye's *Left Behind Series* portrays the 10-nation Endtime Coalition as merely "ambassadors" of mostly unnamed countries.

[20] Walvoord notes that a common interpretation of the **fourth beast** (Rev 7:7) by "liberal" commentators is that it represents the Greek Empire of Antiochus Epiphanes in the 2nd century B.C. (cf. pp. 159-160). But this is clearly refuted by the fact it is later revealed that the **fourth beast ... will devour the whole earth** (Dan 7:23). Obviously, that never occurred in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes.

[21] For more on the near/final and partial/complete aspect of the fulfillment of biblical prophecy, see *Additional Studies on the Endtimes*, chs. 1-3, online at www.trainingtimothys.com.

[22] Thomas writes of another effort to make the 10-nation Endtime Coalition purely Roman:

> The explanation that sees the ten horns as ten Roman emperors of the past (i.e., Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Galba, Otho, Vitelius, Vespasian, and Titus) and the seven heads as seven of these less the three usurpers (i.e., Galba, Otho, and Vitelius), is so arbitrary that it has little to commend it. (1113-1114)

[23] For a map of the Roman Empire see online at https://visualunit.me/?s=map+of+roman+empire. For an indication of the Rhine and Danube Rivers see online at:

https://www.reddit.com/r/Maps/comments/oslsv6/quick_question_since_the_rhine_and_danube_are/

[24] For a map of the current countries in the European Union see online at: https://www.polgeonow.com/2016/06/map-which-countries-are-in-the-eu.html

[25] The unprecedented world-wide domination of the Antichrist's Beast Empire may be depicted in the fact that it is not described as any existing animal. Accordingly, *K&D* remark: "The beast was of such terrible strength and destructive rage, that the whole animal world could furnish

no representative by whose name it might be characterized." (loc. Dan 7:7)

[26] For the meaning of the Aramaic word *min* see the Aramaic dictionary online at http://cal1.cn.huc.edu/getlex.php?coord= 32000724&word=2.

[27] The commentaries of Collins and Goldingay are often touted within Evangelicalism as perhaps the best available on Daniel. Unfortunately, they both suffer from the claim that the fourth beast kingdom in Dan 7 was essentially fulfilled in Antiochus. For example, Goldingay is so biased toward this view that he writes: "in 8:17 Daniel is told that his vision of Antiochus as the small horn relates to the time of the end; the Greek empire is evidently viewed as the last." Even a phrase like "time of the end" will not make him give up or alter his view. For reasons neither Goldingay or Collins explain, they refuse to see Antiochus as merely a foreshadow of the future Antichrist who will finally and completely fulfill these prophecies. Therefore, their comments on Dan chs. 2, 7-8 are rather useless.

Collins as a commentator from a more liberal/critical bent, is often wrong. Not to be too harsh, but sometimes people are so smart it hinders them in accurately interpreting Scripture with common sense. For example, Collins spends 7 pages (312-19) trying to prove the rather bizzare idea that "the saints who inherit the kingdom forever" (Dan 7:18) are angels.

Tanner's commentary may be the best available. It is even far better on the "technical" matters of the text than Collins or Goldingay. It provides a needed and scholarly correction to the liberal scholarship that Collins and Goldingay represent and that has hurt the Church more than many think. However, Tanner's Pre-tribulationism often obscures his ability to correctly interpret the text.

Walvoord suffers from some of the same problem but is well worth consulting. Likewise, Young's commentary is at times influenced by his amillennial perspective, but he is at times correcting this view and in general this is a good commentary.

Chapter 5

The 10-nation Endtime Coalition & the Battle of Armageddon

Ezekiel 38:1-6

Contents

A) Using participants in the Battle of Armageddon to identify the 10-nation Endtime Coalition

B) Identifying the potential countries predicted to be at the Battle of Armageddon

C) Biblical candidates for membership in the 10-nation Endtime Coalition based on their predicted presence at the Battle of Armageddon.

Primary Points

- The 10-nation Endtime Coalition is specifically mentioned as being present at the Battle of Armageddon (cf. Rev 17:14).
- Ezekiel 38:1-6 tells us the ancient geographical locations of the nations present at the Battle of Armageddon.
- By identifying the modern nations within these ancient geographical locations, we have biblical data to help identify modern candidates that will be in the 10-nation Endtime Coalition.
- **Magog** refers to the ancient people group called the Scythians (cf. Col 3:11) and is located in Russia and several nations in its vicinity.
- **Rosh, Meschech, Tubal, Gomer, and Togarmah** are located in modern Russia, Turkey, and Armenia.
- **Persia, Cush, and Put** are located in modern Iran, Egypt, & Libya.
- **Kings from the East** (Rev 16:12) will probably include China & India, but could also be a specific reference to countries just **east** of the **Euphrates** like Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

- Because the 10-nation Endtime Coalition will be at the Battle of Armageddon, these nations give us a list of possible modern candidates to identify the Coalition.

A) Using participants in the Battle of Armageddon to identify the 10-nation Endtime Coalition

As noted in the previous chapter (sec. B.4), the 10-nation Endtime Coalition will be present at the Battle of Armageddon (cf. Rev 17:14). It is true that **all the rulers of the world** will **gather … for battle against the Lord** at **Armageddon** (Rev 16:14, 16 NLT). But Revelation 17 makes the point to tell us specifically that the Antichrist and his 10-nation Endtime Coalition will be at **Armageddon**:

> **They** [the **ten kings**] **will all agree to give him** [the Antichrist] **their power and authority. Together they** [the Antichrist and his 10-nation Coalition] **will go to war against the Lamb** [Christ]**, but the Lamb will defeat them** [at **Armageddon**] (Rev 17:13-14 NIV; cf. 16:16)

If **all the rulers of the world** will **gather … for battle against the Lord** at **Armageddon**, why does God specifically tell us the 10-nation Endtime Coalition will be at the Battle of Armageddon? Because this may be intended to give us a biblical clue to identify what nations will be in the Coalition.

In one of the most famous passages in Scripture, God actually predicts and specifically names ancient geographical areas that will be present at the Battle of Armageddon. [1] In Ezekiel 38 we read:

> **And the word of the LORD came to me saying, "Son of man, set your face toward Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am against you, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal… I will bring you out, and all your army, horses, and horsemen, all of them splendidly attired, a great company with buckler and shield, all of them wielding swords…**
>
> **Persia, Cush** [2] **and Put with them, all of them with shield and helmet; Gomer with all its troops; Beth-**

> **<u>togarmah</u> from the remote parts of the north with all its troops—many peoples with you.**
>
> **After many days you will be summoned; in the latter years you will come … to the mountains of Israel** (Ezek 38:1-6, 8 NASB; cf. 39:1-6)

As discussed later, **Gog** is another name for the future Antichrist. The armies of the nations named are referred to as **your army**, in the sense they will especially belong to **Gog** (Antichrist). Here we are reminded that in Revelation 17 it says **together they** [the Antichrist and his 10-nation Coalition] **will go to war against the Lamb,** at **Armageddon** (Rev 17:12-14; cf. 16:16). Here in Ezekiel we have a description of the Antichrist and several nations also united against Christ at the Battle of Armageddon.

Again, if **<u>all</u> the rulers of the world** will **gather … for battle against the Lord** at **Armageddon** (Rev 16:14, 16), why does God specifically tell us: 1) that **together they** [the Antichrist and his 10-nation Coalition] **will go to war against the Lamb** (17:14) at **Armageddon**, and 2) that **Gog** (Antichrist) and specifically the nations that belong to him above, will be at Armageddon?

It would seem because these nations will be especially attached to **Gog**, even in his last desperate battle. And these nations especially belong to the Antichrist because they will include the **ten horns** and **ten kings** that are repeatedly (14 times) described in Scripture as being attached to the **beast** Antichrist.

Therefore, it is suggested that identifying the geographical areas specifically named in Scripture, which will be united with the Antichrist (**Gog**) at the Battle of Armageddon, will tell us geographical areas from which at least some of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition will come from. Then, by identifying modern nations in those geographical areas, we can derive modern candidates that could be in the 10-nation Endtime Coalition. This will be discussed in what follows.

B) Identifying the potential countries predicted to be at the Battle of Armageddon

B.1) Identifying Magog: *Russia & surrounding countries*

First, we can establish the location of **Magog**. Scholars agree that this refers to the ancient people group called the Scythians (pronounced sy'·thee·uhnz). [3] For example, the respected 1st century Jewish historian Josephus wrote: "Magog founded the Magogians, thus named after him, but who by the Greeks are called Scythians." [4]

Remarkably, there is a NT reference to these people when the Apostle Paul writes: **Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all** (Col 3:11 NIV). One NT scholar notes: "The Scythians were from the little-known northern reaches of Asia, and were the extreme example of a barbarian, little better than savages." [5] To the Jews, Greeks, and Romans, the Scythians were legendary in their cruelty. [6]

When Ezekiel wrote ca. 600 B.C., [7] the Scythians were a powerful and well-known group of raiders in the ancient world. For the Prophet Ezekiel, **Magog** was synonymous with the Scythians. [8] Many OT scholars also see Jeremiah's and Zephaniah's warnings of an "enemy from the north" as referring to the Scythians. [9]

Where was **the land of Magog** (Ezek 38:1) and the Scythians located? One resource notes: "In the seventh century B.C., the Scythians controlled large swaths of territory throughout Eurasia, from the Black Sea across Siberia to the borders of China." [10] The *Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia* lists the following modern countries as belonging to ancient Scythia (Magog): Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, [11] Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, [12] Afghanistan. [13] Therefore, **Magog** today is located in Russia and several nations in its vicinity.

Graphic: The Land of Magog (Scythia)

B.2) Identifying Rosh, Meschech & Tubal: *Russia*

The next 3 nations mentioned in Ezekiel's prophecy of Armageddon are **Rosh, Meshech and Tubal** (38:2). Respected OT scholars Keil and Delitzsch note regarding **Rosh**:

> Gog is still further described as the prince of *Rosh*, *Meshech*, and *Tubal*. The Byzantine and Arabic writers frequently mention a people called "Rus" reckoned among the Scythian tribes, so that there is no reason to question the existence of a people known by the name of *Rosh.*" [14]

Accordingly, the name "Rus" remains in names like Russia and Belarus.

Meshech and Tubal have been traditionally recognized as also located in modern Russia. They may even be represented in modern Russian cities such as Moscow and Tobolsk. But some claim they are located in the modern nation of Turkey. It is probable that these ancient people groups migrated to both areas. [15]

B.3) Identifying Gomer and Togarmah: *Russia & Armenia*

Two other **sons of Japheth** (Gen 10:2) are mentioned in Ezekiel's list of nations/peoples present at the Battle of Armageddon. These include **Gomer** and **Togarmah** (Ezek 38:6). The Roman historian Herodotus states that the descendants of **Gomer** were the Cimmerians who settled in what is today southern Russia. [16] Josephus equated **Togarmah** with the Phyrgians who lived in the modern-day nation of Armenia. [17]

So far then, we have rather repeated references to Russia and nations in the vicinity of Russia, predicted to be present at the Battle of Armageddon.

B.4) Identifying Persia, Cush, and Put: *Iran, Egypt, & Libya*

Ezekiel goes on to mention the countries of **Persia, Cush, and Put**. [18] **Persia** primarily refers to what is today the country of Iran. **Put** is centered in the modern country of Libya, but could include several countries in Northern Africa. [19] **Cush** is more difficult to identify, but refers to the ancient area of Nubia which included areas of modern Egypt and Sudan. The common translation of "Ethiopia" has been proven inaccurate. [20]

Graphic: Location of "Cush" in Egypt & Sudan

Therefore, Ezekiel 38:5 adds several more modern countries that will be involved in the Battle of Armageddon including: Iran, Egypt, Sudan, and Libya.

B.5) Identifying "kings from the East" (Rev 16): *China & India*

Finally, Revelation mentions another group of people who attack Christ and Israel at the Battle of Armageddon. In chapter 16 we read:

> **The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for <u>the kings from the East</u> who will be gathered …**

> **together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.** (v. 12, 16 NIV).

The kings from the East seem to specifically refer to nations **east** of **the great river Euphrates**.

Of course, this could refer to many countries. But surely it includes predicting that such ungodly and populous nations as China and India will be present at The Battle of **Armageddon**. Why would we doubt that the two most populous pagan nations in the world would be mentioned in prophetic Scripture as playing a part in such a battle against Christ? Especially when China and India are among the most hostile nations against Christianity in the world.

The kings from the East could also be a specific reference to countries just **east** of the **Euphrates** like Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

C) Biblical candidates for membership in the 10-nation Endtime Coalition based on their predicted presence at the Battle of Armageddon

Let us begin to draw some conclusions from the above biblical data.

First, the 10-nation Endtime Coalition will be present, and especially belong to, the Antichrist at the Battle of Armageddon.

Secondly, the Scriptures specifically name ancient geographical areas that will be present at the Battle of Armageddon (cf. Rev 17:14; Ezek 38:1-8). It must be admitted that the biblical data above is not as precise as we would desire.

For example, **the kings from the East** (Rev 16:12) is a very broad description. But these named geographical areas give us biblical candidates for the membership of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition. These candidates would include:

- Russia
- Russian "satellite" countries (Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan)
- Armenia
- Iran

- Egypt
- Sudan
- Libya
- China
- India
- Pakistan
- Afghanistan

It is not claimed that all of these nations will be a part of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition. They are simply potential candidates based on their geographical location being specifically named in Scripture to be present at the Battle of Armageddon. However, this collection does also reflect the 6 other biblical attributes of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition discussed in the previous chapter (4). This will be demonstrated further in the next chapter (6).

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[1] It is widely accepted that the battle described in Ezekiel chapters 38-39 is the same as that described in Revelation 16:14, 16 and 19:19-20. OT scholar Daniel Block writes of the relationship between the Battle of Armageddon and Ezekiel chs. 38-38:

> The scene of the birds gathered for the great supper of God in [Rev] 19:17-21 is clearly borrowed from Ezekiel's last frame (39:17-20). Although this passage [Rev 19] never mentions Gog by name, the beast certainly represents him… John's use of Ezekiel's oracle against Gog represents a remarkable adaptation of an OT tradition for a Christian theme. An event whose timing in the original prophecy is only vaguely set "in the latter days" is now identified as the penultimate event in human history. (*The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25-48*, *NICOT* [Eerdmans, 1998], 491-492).

Likewise, Van Kampen adds regarding Ezekiel chapters 37-39:

> The sequence of events outlined from Ezekiel 37 to the end of the book demand that this passage can only relate to … end-time events, as it parallels much of what Christ revealed to John in the Book of Revelation…
>
> In chapter 38, the passage itself declares explicitly that the events described in the following chapters will take place "in the latter years" (v. 8) and "in the last days" (v. 16). Chapter 38-39 describe in detail … Antichrist's initial assault upon Jerusalem (38:8-16), God's Day of the Lord judgment upon the final beast empire of Satan (38:17-23), ending with the Battle of Armageddon (39:1-6)… The birds of Ezekiel 39:17-20 correspond to the birds in Revelation 19:17, 18, 21… The

final destruction of Gog and his armies described in Ezekiel 39:1-4 corresponds remarkably to the final destruction of Antichrist and his armies described in Revelation 19:17-21. (127)

[2] For reasons shared below, the literal rendering of "Cush" is used here instead of the common translation of **Ethiopia**.

[3] In spite of significant scholarly evidence for the presence of Magog in ancient Scythia, Block oddly writes in his commentary on Ezekiel:

> The location of … Magog is uncertain [and] may turn out to be [an] artificial creation… It seems best to interpret Magog as a contraction of an original *māt Gūgi*, "land of Gog," and to see here a reference to the country of Lydia in western Anatolia [Turkey] (434).

Apparently, Block bases his view on E. M. Yamauchi (*Foes from the Northern Frontier*, Wipf and Stock, 2003). If so, both scholars seem quite wrong.

Contrary to Block, the ancient location of Magog is quite certain. It is doubtful he has better information than Josephus who is quoted in this section. Likewise, *K&D* who were first-rate scholars, add:

> *Magog* is the name of a people mentioned in Genesis 10:2 as descended from Japheth, according to the early Jewish and traditional explanation, the great Scythian people.

More recently, Ralph Alexander, Professor at Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, writes: "The available data does argue for an identification of the most northern barbarian hordes (perhaps the Scythians) for 'Magog'" ("A Fresh Look at Ezekiel 38 and 39, *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society*, Vol. 17.3 [1974], 161).

It is unlikely that any scholar today can point to clear archeological or historical evidence the proves otherwise.

Block's claim that "Magog … may turn out to be [an] artificial creation" is pure speculation. Ezekiel was not making up a name of a people that did not exist. Alexander writes regarding the kind of "etymological" claims Block is making about Gog and Magog: "None of these proposals contains any significant support to warrant its acceptance … Further speculations are not justified on the basis of available etymological data" (Ibid.).

Block is willing to quote the respected first century Jewish historian Josephus who wrote: "Magog founded the Magogians, thus named after him, but who by the Greeks are called Scythians" (*Jewish Antiquities*, 1.6.1.). This is the correct view. But Block completely dismisses Josephus. Why? Because an "A. van den Born assumes a scribal error" in Josephus' statement about "Magogians" and claimed Josephus actually meant "the land of the Macedonians." From this, van den Born "deduces Gog to be a pseudonym for Alexander the Great." It is shoddy scholarship to dismiss Josephus with such obscure assumptions. Unfortunately, the NET notes agree with Block here.

[4] Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 1.6.1.

[5] N.T. Wright, *Colossians and Philemon, TNTC* (Eerdmans, 1999), 139.

[6] For Jewish testimony of the Scythian's cruelty see references to them in 2 Maccabees 4:47 and 3 Maccabees 4:47. The Jewish historian Josephus said of them, "They are little better than wild beasts" (*Against Apion*, 2). H. Porter writes in the *ISBE* (1st ed.):

> The description of them given by Herodotus in book IV of his *History* represents a race of savages, inhabiting a region of rather indefinite boundaries, north of the Black and Caspian seas and the Caucasus Mountains (i.e. Russia and its satellite nations). They were nomads who neither plowed nor sowed (iv.19), moving about in wagons and carrying their dwellings with them (ibid. 46); they had the most filthy habits and never washed in water (ibid. 75); they drank the blood of the first enemy killed in battle, and made napkins of the scalps and drinking bowls of the skulls of the slain (ibid. 64-65).

[7] Ezekiel claims he began receiving his visions **in the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin** (1:2). R. K. Harrison places this at 596 B.C. (833).

[8] Accordingly, the *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* notes Ezekiel's view of the Scythians (Magogites):

> According to the general testimony of classical writers (Herodotus, Eschylus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Ovid, Arrian, including later St. Jerome) the Scythians were northern barbarians full of greed and fond of war, had immense troops of cavalry, wore efficient armor, and distinguished themselves as archers, just as is narrated of Magog [in Ezekiel 38-39].

Likewise, *M&S* note regarding the Scythians:

> In the latter part of the 7th century B.C., they had become well known as a formidable power through the whole of Western Asia… The Scythians are described by classical writers as skillful in the use of the bow (Herod. i, 73; 4:132; Xenoph. *Anab.* iii, 4,15), and even as the inventors of the bow and arrow (Pliny, 7:57); they were especially famous as mounted bowmen (ἱπποτοξόται, Herod, 4:46; Thucyd. ii, 96); they also enjoyed an ill-fame for their cruel and rapacious habits (Herod. i, 106).

[9] OT scholar R.K. Harrison writes of Jeremiah's and Zephaniah's probable reference to the Scythians as "the enemy from the north":

> During the period between the time of his call and the religious reformation of 621 B.C. Jeremiah was primarily concerned with … proclaiming imminent invasion from the north… Following Herodotus, many scholars associated them with the Scythians… In the absence of compelling evidence to the contrary it appears unwise to reject entirely the tradition of the Scythian invasion of Palestine as preserved by Herodotus. (*Introduction to the Old Testament* [Hendrickson, 1999], 803)

Likewise, the Prophet Zephaniah also ministered **during the reign of Josiah** (1:1) at the same time Jeremiah was ministering. Therefore, Harrison adds:

> The majority of commentators [have dated] Zephaniah in terms of the Scythian raids, with which Jeremiah also was apparently concerned. This same majority of commentators have seen in the Scythian peril the background of [Zephaniah's] prediction of woe. In view of the eschatalogical standpoint of the prophet it is probably true to assert that … the immediate threat to security in Judah may have been the Scythians. (Ibid., 940-41).

Those who deny this (e.g. Thompson, *Jeremiah, NICOT*, *K&D*) seem to be especially motivated by critical scholars using the invasions of the Scythians to claim Jeremiah and Zephaniah wrote after these events and were not Prophets at all. But the dates of Scythian activities are not precise enough to make this determination. Some have in fact used them to prove that these Prophets accurately predicted the future.

[10] Bell-Fialkoff, Andrew Villen, ed., *The Role of Migration in the History of the Eurasian Steppe* (St. Martin's Press, 2000), 190.

[11] Regarding the presence of modern-day Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan in ancient Scythia we read:

> Beginning about 1000 B.C., large tribes collectively known as the Scythians also lived in the area of present-day Kyrgyzstan… From around 500 B.C. to A.D. 500, parts of Kyrgyzstan were inhabited by the Saka, a nomadic people linked with the Scythians… The Scythians established trade routes between Asia and Europe—the beginnings of the Silk Road—that went through present-day Kyrgyzstan.
>
> The ancient horsemen of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan are often described as Sakas. Saka was the term used in Persian and Sanskrit sources for the Scythians, a large group of Eastern Iranian nomadic tribes on the Eurasian Steppe. https://factsanddetails.com/central-asia/Kyrgyzstan/sub8_5a/entry-4744.html

[12] Regarding the presence of modern-day Tajikistan in ancient Scythia we read:

> Northern Tajikistan (the cities of Khujand and Panjakent) was part of Sogdia, a collection of city-states which was overrun by Scythians and Yuezhi nomadic tribes around 150 BC. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tajikistan)

[13] "Scythia" in *Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, Denis Senor ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[14] *K&D*, Ezek 38:2. Likewise, the eminent German OT scholar Wilhelm Gesenius wrote: "Without much doubt *Rosh* designates *the Russians*, who are described by the Byzantine writers of the 10th century" (quoted in "Rosh" in *M&S*).

Admittedly, many deny that Ezekiel intended to mention **Rosh** as a separate nation/people, as reflected in the NASB (and NKJV, NEB, JB). This is reflected in many translations that omit it from 38:2 and simply state **Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshek and Tubal** (e.g. NIV, NLT). Indeed, this is a very established meaning of the Hebrew word *rōsh* (cf. *TWOT*, 825).

However, there is one compelling reason to interpret *rōsh* here as a proper name. Whoever **Gog** will be, it is obvious he will be a mighty ruler, leading all the armies at the Battle of Armageddon. This does not fit the common translation of Ezek 38:2 that would make **Gog** merely **the chief prince of Meshek and Tubal**. Can we envision a man who only rules two territories to be the most powerful leader on the Earth at the Battle of Armageddon? Probably not. However, if we add **Rosh** to the territory he will rule, which includes Russia, then we have a ruler that better fits the military and political power predicted of **Gog**.

There are other reasons for this interpretation as well. *K&D* long ago remarked, "The argument used in support of this explanation [Rosh is not a people group], namely, that there are no people of the name of *Rosh* mentioned either in the Old Testament or by Josephus, is a very weak one." Indeed, the Arabic and Byzantine historians did write about them.

Some reject Rosh as a nation/people because it is not listed in the "Table of Nations" as directly descending from Noah's sons. But neither is **Persia** (Ezek 38:5) which is also a people group prophesied to be at the Battle of Armageddon.

Additional evidence includes the fact that the Septuagint (ancient Greek translation of the OT) translated **Rosh** as a proper name. It was Jerome's Latin Vulgate that later altered this. Also, **Rosh** is mentioned the first time in Ezekiel 38:2, then repeated in 38:3 and 39:1. If **Rosh** were simply an adjective, it would probably be dropped in these two places because when titles are repeated in Hebrew, they are generally abbreviated (*K&D*).

In more modern times, the eminent OT scholar D. J. Wiseman, Professor of Assyriology at the University of London noted that some translations omit the proper name **Rosh**, "However, the name of a northern people or country (as is Meshech and Tubal) is more probable" (*New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed., J. I. Packer, D. J. Wiseman eds. [Intervarsity, 1999], 1029; see also supporting entries in *Wycliffe Bible Dictionary* [Hendrickson, 1998, and *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* [Eerdmans, 1939]; G. A. Cooke, *The Book of Ezekiel,* who argues that the grammar of the Hebrew Bible supports the translation of **Rosh** as a proper noun denoting a geographical location).

Accordingly, it seems Block errs in denying that **Rosh** was a people group related to the Scythians. He admits that ancient "Byzantine and Arabic writings" (435) describe this very thing, but rejects it mostly

because there is not a conjunction in the Hebrew text before **Meshech**. However, even he admits it is possible this means nothing.

[15] Dr. Derek Walker writes regarding the location of Tubal and Meshech:

Tubal and Meshech are mentioned together in Ezekiel 38:2. They were the 5th and 6th sons of Japheth, the son of Noah (Genesis 10:2). Some believe these people intermarried and became known as Magog, the dominant tribe. There are two main theories for their location: (1) RUSSIA and (2) TURKEY. Whichever it is does not change the overall picture as both are identified by the other names in Ezekiel.

(1) Regarding Meshech and Tubal, some assign a Russian identification, connecting these 2 nations with the modern Russian cities of Moscow and Tobolsk. Meshech - Moscow, and Tubal - Tobolsk. The first view became well known through the Scofield Study Bible: "That the primary reference is to the Northern powers headed by Russia, all agree. The reference to Meshech and Tubal (Moscow and Tobolsk) is a clear mark of identification." Thus the name Moscow derives from the tribal name Meshech, and Tobolsk, the name of the principal state, from Tubal. This view is partly based on the similarity of sound in these names and their close proximity to Rosh (Russia). If this is so, the names Meshech and Tubal, point directly to Russia, being identified with Moscow, the capital of modern Russia, and Tobolsk in Asiatic Russia… L. Sale-Harrison corroborated this identification on linguistic grounds.

Ethnologists, historians who track the migrations of people, tell us after the Flood, the Japhethites migrated from Asia Minor to the north, beyond the Caspian and Black Seas. They settled in the area of Rosh that we know today as Russia. Wilhelm Gesenius, the world class Hebrew scholar, whose Hebrew Lexicon has never been surpassed, said Gog is undoubtedly the Russians. He also identified Meshech as Moscow, the capital of modern Russia. Tubal he identified as Tobolsk, the earliest province in Asiatic Russia to be colonised, and also the name of the city in which Peter the Great built the old fortress after the pattern of the Kremlin in Moscow. "Meshech was founder of the Moschi, a barbarous people, who dwelt in the Moschian mountains." He went on to say that the Greek name "Moschi", derived from the Hebrew 'Meshech', is the source of the name for the city of MOSCOW. In discussing Tubal he said, "Tubal is the son of Rapheth, founder of the Tibereni, a people dwelling on the Black Sea to the west of the Moschi." His conclusion was these people make up the modern Russian people.

'Meshech' the 6th son of Japheth, settled in the NE portion of Asia Minor. His posterity extended from the shores of the Black Sea along to the south of the Caucasus. He was the father of the Rossi and Moschi, who dispersed their colonies over a vast portion of

Russian territory. And their names are preserved in the names of Russians and Muscovites to this day. The Septuagint version of the Old Testament renders the term: "Meshech" by the words "Mosch" and "Rosch"; while "Moscovy" was a common name for Russia, and the city of Moscow is one of her principal cities. 'Tubal' or 'Tobal' settled beyond the Caspian and Black Seas in the eastern possessions of Russia, embracing a very large portion of these dominions. The name of this patriarch is still preserved in the river Tobal, which waters an immense tract of Russian territory; and the City of Tobalski in Russia is still a monument to him.

(2) Another line of study reveals that Meschech and Tubal are the ancient Moschi/Mushki and Tubalu/Tibareni peoples who dwelled in the area around, primarily south of, the Black and Caspian Seas in Ezekiel's day… Today these regions are in Turkey, possibly including parts of southern Russia and northern Iran. Meshech was located near what was known as Phrygia, in central and western Asia Minor, while Tubal was located in eastern Asia Minor. So Meshech and Tubal form portions of modern Turkey.

However later migrations north into Russia mean that this view is also consistent with the first theory. (Underlining added).

Herodotus, the 5th century BC Greek philosopher, mentioned Meshech and Tubal. He identified them with a people named the Sarmatians and Mushovites who lived at that time in the ancient province of Pontus in northern Asia Minor, SE of the Black Sea [Histories IV], again pointing to modern Turkey.

Josephus said that the people of his day known as the Moschevi and Thobelites were founded by Meshech and Tubal respectively [Antiquities I.6].

Assyrian texts & monuments locate Meshech (Mushku) and Tubal (Tabal) in Anatolia (W. Turkey), the areas that became known as Phyygia and Cappadocia.

Later migrations north from Turkey to Russia could mean that both identifications are valid, and indeed both Turkey and Russia are directly to the north of Israel (as required by Ezekiel 38:6, 15, 39:2).

https://www.oxfordbiblechurch.co.uk/index.php/books/the-imminent-invasion-of-israel/542-appendix-6-where-is-meshech-and-tubal?tmpl=component

As one studies resources and commentaries on this issue, there seems to be a bias against finding these ancient people groups in Russia. Perhaps scholars are tempted to do this because of abuses they perceived that have happened in modern and popular Christian literature on the Endtimes. Russia is a very big topic in modern discussions on the Endtimes. Many scholars seem motivated to diminish the importance of the topic in the Church today.

[16] *K&D* write: "Gomer is most probably the tribe of the Cimmerians, who dwelt, according to Herodotus, on the Maeotis, in the Taurian Chersonesus." Wikipedia notes: "*Tauric Chersonese* [is] a name often applied to the whole of the southern Crimea" ("Chersonesus" online at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chersonesus).

[17] Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, i.6.1.

[18] There is a possible distinction in the Ezekiel text between the armies and people groups referred to as **your** [**Gog's**] **whole army** (v. 4) and those of **Gomer with all <u>its</u> troops, and Beth Togarmah … with all <u>its</u> troops** (v. 6). Perhaps these latter groups are not attached to **Gog** like **Magog**, **Rosh**, **Meshech**, and **Tubal**. Likewise, the text says the armies of **Persia, Cush and Put will be with them** (v. 5) which may also communicate something less than these nations <u>belonging</u> to **Gog.**

This may explain why Egypt (**Cush**), Libya (**Put**), and Armenia (**Togarmah**) may not be in the 10-nation Endtime Coalition.

[19] *K&D* add to the definition of **Put**:

> Put denotes the Libyans in the wider sense of the term (old Egypt. Phet; Copt. Phaiat), who were spread over Northern Africa as far as Mauritania [a modern country in northwest Africa], where even in the time of Jerome a river with the neighboring district still bore the name of Phut. (Gen 10:10)

[20] Waltke says of **Cush**: "Possible identifications are Nubia and Northern Sudan" (*Genesis*, 168). OT scholar William S. Lasor goes into more detail:

> Cush most frequently refers to an African region, and has often been identified as Ethiopia and is often so translated in English versions. This leads to [an] erroneous interpretation that modern Ethiopia (Abyssinia) is meant… According to Ezek 29:10 the southern border of Egypt was its common boundary with Cush. Hence, there can be no doubt that Nubia, and not Abyssinia is meant. This was located by Ezekiel at Syrene (modern Aswan, Egypt). Isaiah 18:1 also indicates that Cush was on the Nile. (*ISBE*, "Cush" I.838-839)

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* describes the location of Nubia as follows:

> Nubia**,** ancient region in northeastern Africa, extending approximately from the Nile River valley (near the first cataract in Upper Egypt) eastward to the shores of the Red Sea, southward to about Khartoum (in what is now Sudan), and westward to the Libyan Desert. (online at https://www.britannica.com/Upper-Egypt).

Thus, the map provided in this section seems accurate.

Chapter 6

A Potential Modern Candidate for the 10-nation Endtime Coalition

The SCO

Contents

A) Introduction to identifying the 10-nation Endtime Coalition

B) What is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (*SCO*)?

C) How does the SCO match the 7 biblical attributes of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition?

D) The limited "window" to confirm the SCO is the 10-nation Endtime Coalition

Primary Points

- In the previous chapters seven biblical attributes were derived for the prophesied 10-nation Endtime Coalition.
- These biblical attributes will be used in this chapter to suggest a modern coalition forming in our world that may be fulfilling these biblical prophecies today.
- The prominence of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition in prophetic Scripture suggests their existence and alliance will be something public and recognizable.
- There is a modern coalition of nations emerging in our world today that possesses all 7 of the biblical attributes of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition. It is called the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). It was founded in 2001 by Russia and China and includes India and Iran. As of 2023, it has nine members.
- All ten of the expected members of the SCO are nations that exist in geographical areas specifically mentioned in Scripture as being present at the Battle of Armageddon where the 10-nation Coalition is also predicted to be.

- If the SCO turns out to be the 10-nation Endtime Coalition, then the official recognition of Belarus as its 10th member in July 2024 could be the very first event of the Endtimes.
- No one, in the past, now, or in the foreseeable future, could name a better candidate for the predicted 10-nation Endtime Coalition than the SCO. Therefore, it is suggested there is currently a 65% probability this will be confirmed.
- If God intends the SCO to fulfill biblical prophecy, then 2024 would seem to be a significant window of time to watch for the beginning of the Endtimes.

A) Introduction to identifying the 10-nation Endtime Coalition

In the previous chapters the following seven biblical attributes were derived for the prophesied 10-nation Endtime Coalition:

1) The Coalition will be exactly **ten kings** or ten nations (Dan 2:44; 7:24; Rev 17:12; cf. ch. 4, sec. A).

2) The Coalition will emerge in the world before the Antichrist emerges (cf. Dan 7:8, 24; cf. ch. 4, sec. B.1). Therefore, it may be the first Endtime event to occur.

3) The Coalition will possess nuclear weapons that will be used by the Antichrist to **completely burn down** in **one hour** the world's foremost economic power, **Babylon the Great**, such that no people ever live there again (cf. Rev 17:5, 16, 18:10, 17, 19, cf. 21-23; cf. ch. 4, sec. B.2).

4) Some of the Coalition's members will be militarily very strong, and others very weak (cf. Dan 2:42; cf. ch. 4, sec. C).

5) The Coalition's members will be very diverse in race, culture, and language (Dan 2:43; cf. ch. 4, sec. C).

6) The Coalition's members will be divided and perhaps have internal conflicts (Dan 2:41, 43; cf. *BBP* ch. 4, sec. C).

7) The nations of the Coalition **will wage war against the Lamb** [Christ] at the Battle of Armageddon (Rev 17:14; cf. Rev 16:14, 16; 19:19; Ezekiel 38:1-6; cf. ch. 4, sec. B.4 and ch. 5).

These biblical attributes will be used in this chapter to suggest a modern coalition forming in our world that may be fulfilling these biblical prophecies today.

The prominence of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition in prophetic Scripture suggests their existence and alliance will be something public and recognizable. There is biblical evidence for this.

First, in Revelation 17 The **ten horns** on the **beast** are mentioned with the **seven heads** (v. 3). As explained elsewhere, the **seven heads** include the Historical Beast Empires including Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. [1] These were certainly recognizable geopolitical entities.

Second, the **ten horns** are described as **ten kings**. It would seem at least some of these will possess considerable military **power** and political **authority** before they **give** it to the Antichrist (Rev 17:12-13). Third, these **ten kings** endure in some way throughout the Endtimes until **they will wage war against the Lamb** (v. 14) at the Battle of Armageddon. Therefore, it seems these **ten kings**, and the nations they represent, will not exist in obscurity, but will be prominent enough to clearly identify.

Therefore, it would seem God wants us to be watching current events in order to recognize the emergence of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition. Especially if their emergence is among the very first signs the Endtimes have begun. Therefore, the identification of the modern countries that are predicted in Scripture to make up the 10-nation Endtime Coalition will be the topic of this chapter.

B) What is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)?

Is there a modern coalition of nations emerging in our world today that possesses all 7 of the above biblical attributes of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition? Remarkably, the answer is yes! It is called the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Many Americans have not even heard of the SCO because they are not interested in economic alliances in far-away countries. Even most Bible prophecy students have not heard of the SCO because they have been so focused on the European Union or the United Nations as fulfilling the predictions of the 10-nation Endtime

Coalition. But the SCO seems to be a much better candidate to become the 10-nation Endtime Coalition than either of these other organizations.

The SCO is an economic, political, and military coalition founded in 2001 by China, Russia, and satellite countries of Russia. One source of information on the SCO states:

> The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a political, economic, and security [military] alliance. In terms of geographic scope and population, it is the world's largest regional organization, covering approximately 60% of the area of Eurasia, 40% (3.5 billion people) of the world's population, and over 25% (over $23 trillion) of global GDP…
>
> Military exercises are also regularly conducted among members to promote cooperation and coordination against terrorism and other external threats, and to maintain regional peace and stability…
>
> The SCO has initiated over twenty large-scale projects related to transportation, energy and telecommunications and held regular meetings on security, military, defense, foreign affairs, economics, culture, and banking. [2]

Another resource reports on the SCO:

> The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is seen as an eastern counter-balance to NATO… We are witnessing the emergence of a strong East vs. West narrative in international politics … one might wonder whether the SCO has grown to become NATO's eastern counterpart in terms of global power and influence.
>
> Although the SCO is not exclusively a military alliance, its member states do participate in joint military exercises and war games. With the induction of India and Pakistan, four SCO members have significant nuclear capabilities, and this has definitely strengthened this coalition against NATO.
>
> The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has organized a number of quasi-military exercises. At times, these drills have drawn substantial international attention and even alarm. Due largely to these exercises, the SCO, which is jointly led by China and Russia, has become the most

> prominent Eurasian regional security [military] organization. [3]

At the last SCO annual Summit on July 4, 2023, Iran was admitted as the ninth full member. At this meeting it was also announced:

> The leaders also welcomed the decision on signing the Memorandum of Obligation of Belarus to join the organization as a Member State, the process will be completed by the 2024 SCO Summit. [4]

It has been the practice of the SCO to finalize the membership of full members at the annual summit of the leaders of SCO member nations. The next annual SCO leaders summit is currently scheduled for July 2024 in Kazakhstan. [5] It would seem at that time, with the admission of Belarus, the SCO will be exactly 10 full members. [6] These will include:

1. Russia
2. China
3. India
4. Pakistan
5. Iran
6. Kazakhstan
7. Kyrgyzstan
8. Tajikistan
9. Uzbekistan
10. Belarus

Therefore, note this: If the SCO turns out to be the 10-nation Endtime Coalition, then the official recognition of Belarus as its 10th member in July 2024 could be the very first event of the Endtimes.

C) How does the SCO match the 7 biblical attributes of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition?

The 10-nation modern coalition of the SCO will be an extraordinary match for the 7 biblical attributes predicted for the 10-nation Endtime Coalition. Let us look at each one of these:

1) The Coalition will be exactly **ten kings** or ten nations (Dan 2:44; 7:24; Rev 17:12; cf. ch. 4, sec. A).

In July of 2024 the SCO is scheduled to be exactly 10 nations.

2) The Coalition will emerge in the world before the Antichrist emerges (cf. Dan 7:8, 24; cf. ch. 4, sec. B.1). Therefore, it may be the first Endtime event to occur.

It is unlikely that the Antichrist will publicly emerge before 2024. Therefore, the 10-nation SCO would have been formed before this.

3) The Coalition will possess nuclear weapons that will be used by the Antichrist to **completely burn down** in **one hour** the world's foremost economic power, **Babylon the Great**, such that no people ever live there again (cf. Rev 17:5, 16, 18:10, 17, 19, cf. 21-23; cf. ch. 4, sec. B.2).

As further discussed in the next book, *Endtime Babylon*, the best interpretation of this prophecy is that it predicts the use of nuclear weapons. Therefore, it is suggested that some countries in the 10-nation Endtime Coalition who will be used in the attack being described in Revelation 17:16, will possess such weapons.

Accordingly, we notice that 4 of the current SCO members uniquely possess nuclear weapons (Russia, China, India, Pakistan). In fact, Russia and China possess the 1st and 3rd largest nuclear weapons arsenals in the world. It would seem Iran may be on its way to having nuclear weapons as well.

4) Some of the Coalition's members will be militarily very strong, and others very weak (cf. Dan 2:42; cf. *BBP* ch. 4, sec. C).

Daniel 7 described the 10-nation Endtime Coalition as being made up of both militarily strong and weak members. This was depicted as **ten toes**, some of them being made of **iron** and some of **clay.**

Accordingly, some members of the SCO are clearly like the militarily strong **iron toes** of Daniel's statue. They are listed below

in the order of their world-wide ranking for military power out of 142 nations of the world. [7]

The five potential "iron toes" of the SCO:

1. Russia #2 (U.S. is #1 in rank of military power)
2. China #3
3. India #4
4. Pakistan #9
5. Iran #14

Some of these potential **iron toes** currently in the SCO are the most powerful military nations in the world. Only the United States is ranked higher.

On the other hand (or "foot"), some of the nations currently in the SCO are quite small and militarily weak like the **clay toes** in Daniel's vision. Again, the following is based on their military ranking among 142 nations.

The five potential "clay toes" of the SCO:

1. Belarus #52 (in rank of military power)
2. Uzbekistan #55
3. Kazakhstan #62
4. Kyrgyzstan #90
5. Tajikistan #111

Therefore, we notice a couple of things. First, the difference in military strength between one group of 5 SCO members and the other group of 5 members is very large. This seems to be a good representation of the vast difference between the strength of the **iron toes** and **clay toes** of Daniel's vision. Secondly, the militarily strong members (**iron**) of the SCO are exactly 5, perhaps reflecting one set of 5 **toes** on one "foot" of Daniel's statue. Likewise, the militarily weak members (**clay**) may reflect the other set of 5 **toes** on the other "foot" of Daniel's statue.

5) The Coalition's members will be very diverse in race, culture, and language (Dan 2:43; cf. *BBP* ch. 4, sec. C).

Daniel clearly predicted **the people** of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition **will be a** very distinct and multiple **mixture** (Dan 2:43) of cultures, races, and languages.

The SCO includes 40% of the world's population spread out over 60% of the land mass of Eurasia. Each one of its 10 members has its own national language, including the smaller countries such as Tajikistan and Belarus. There is certainly a great diversity in religion, with Russia historically being Orthodox Christian, India uniquely being Hindu, Iran staunchly Muslim, and China promoting atheism and suppressing religions. The SCO is a very diverse coalition.

6) The Coalition's members will be divided and perhaps have internal conflicts (Dan 2:41, 43; cf. *BBP* ch. 4, sec. C).

The SCO is far from being united. For example, there is currently (2023) a war going on between the member nations of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. [8] India and Pakistan rather despise one another. There have even been recent border clashes between China and India.

7) The nations of the Coalition **will wage war against the Lamb** [Christ] at the Battle of Armageddon (Rev 17:14; Ezek 38:2; cf. Rev 16:14, 16; 19:19; cf. *BBP* ch. 4, sec. B.4; ch. 5, sec. B).

This was thoroughly discussed previously in chapter 5.

All ten of the expected members of the SCO are nations that exist in geographical areas specifically mentioned in Scripture as being present at the Battle of Armageddon where the 10-nation Coalition is also predicted to be. Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Belarus all exist in the ancient Scythian Empire of **Magog** (Ezek 38:1). Iran is in ancient **Persia** (Ezek 38:5). China, India, and Pakistan would qualify for **kings of the east** of **the great river Euphrates** (Rev 16:12).

This remarkable correspondence is illustrated in the following table:

Table: A comparison of the nations predicted to be at the Battle of Armageddon, candidates for the 10-nation Endtime Coalition, & the current SCO

Ancient people groups predicted to be at the Battle of Armageddon (cf. Ezek 38; Rev 16)	**Modern nations predicted to be at the Battle of Armageddon** (cf. *BBP* ch. 5, sec B) SCO's 10 members shaded	**Nations that will be members of the SCO in 2024** (cf. *BBP* ch. 5, sec. C.1)
• Magog • Rosh • Meshech • Tubal • Persia • Cush • Put • Gomer • Beth-togarmah • Kings east of the Euphrates	• Russia • Russian "satellite" countries (Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan) • Iran • Afghanistan • Turkey • Armenia • Egypt • Sudan • Libya • China • India • Pakistan	1. Russia 2. China 3. India 4. Pakistan 5. Iran 6. Kazakhstan 7. Kyrgyzstan 8. Tajikistan 9. Uzbekistan 10. Belarus

The table summarizes how the predictions of the Battle of Armageddon relate to the SCO. The left column lists ancient people groups the Bible specifically predicts will be at Armageddon. The

middle column identifies the modern nations where those ancient people groups lived. The nations in the second column that are also currently in the SCO have been highlighted. In the third column, the modern nations that are scheduled to be full members of the SCO in 2024 are listed.

Therefore, all 10 nations scheduled to be members of the SCO are located in geographical areas specifically predicted to be at the Battle of Armageddon, which is also where the 10-nation Endtime Coalition is predicted to be.

Accordingly, it is reasonable to conclude there is a significant possibility the SCO is intended to fulfill all 7 biblical attributes of what the Bible predicted for the 10-nation Endtime Coalition. This author is not aware of any other biblical attributes of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition. It seems these 7 are all that can be discerned from its descriptions in Scripture. Therefore, the SCO potentially matches every single one of the biblical attributes of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition predicted in Scripture.

As noted in chapter 1 (sec. B), we cannot claim absolute certainty in such things. Again, we want to avoid **foolish and ignorant speculations** (2 Tim 2:23 NASB). Because this Coalition will unite with the Antichrist, the probability that the SCO will become the Coalition will increase as the probability that someone is emerging as the Antichrist also increases. Therefore, the true nature of the SCO will only be confirmed if we clearly see the Antichrist emerge in our world.

It is understandable if the reader remains skeptical of the suggestions above. Admittedly, as of this writing, the author is not aware of anyone else suggesting the SCO will become the 10-nation Endtime Coalition.

But these developments seem to be much more than coincidences. In fact, there has never been a Coalition in all of human history that potentially matched these seven biblical attributes. The SCO is the first one to do so. No one, in the past, now, or in the foreseeable future, could name a better candidate for the predicted 10-nation Endtime Coalition than the SCO. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest there is a 65% probability

that the SCO will turn out to be the prophesied 10-nation Endtime Coalition.

It has been previously noted that Daniel describes the 10-nation Endtime Coalition being established before the emergence of the Antichrist. It will be argued in future chapters that the Antichrist's initial emergence is among the very first events of the Endtimes. Accordingly, it is again suggested that the establishment of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition may be the very first Endtime event to occur. If this is so, then the Endtimes may begin when Belarus becomes the 10th member of the SCO, currently scheduled in July of 2024.

Please do not misunderstand. This is not a prediction for the date of Christ's Return (cf. Matt 24:36). This author is not dogmatically predicting anything. This chapter is simply an attempt to obey Christ's command to **"Watch!"** for signs of His Return (Mark 13:5; cf. vs. 9, 23, 33, 34, 37; *CET* ch. 10, sec. D). Therefore, it is possible God intends the SCO's emergence to be one of the **testimonies** we are looking for to confidently **establish** the critical **matter** of whether or not we are entering the Endtimes (Matt 18:16; cf. *BBP* ch. 1, sec. D).

Again, no certain predictions are being made here. But the above is not **foolish and ignorant speculations** (2 Tim 2:23 NASB).

Daniel 7:8 and verse 24 describe the emergence of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition as perhaps the very first Endtime event to occur (cf. *BBP* ch. 4, sec. B.1).

Therefore, the above suggestion is based on the fact that a Coalition is emerging in our world today that potentially matches all 7 biblical attributes of the prophesied 10-nation Endtime Coalition, for the first time in human history.

Accordingly, there seem to be biblical reasons to recognize Belarus' full membership into the SCO, currently scheduled for July 2024, as potentially a very significant event regarding God's plan for the Endtimes.

The biblical predictions about the 10-nation Endtime Coalition and their fulfillment by the SCO are summarized in the following table:

Table: The SCO's fulfillment of prophecies about the 10-nation Endtime Coalition

#	Biblical Prophecy	Description
1	The Coalition will be exactly **ten kings** or ten nations. (Dan 2:44; 7:24; Rev 17:12; cf. *BBP* ch. 4, sec. A).	The SCO is scheduled to be exactly 10 nations in July of 2024.
2	The Coalition will emerge in the world before the Antichrist emerges. (cf. Dan 7:8, 24; cf. *BBP* ch. 4, sec. B.1).	It is unlikely that the Antichrist will publicly emerge in the world before July of 2024.
3	The Coalition will possess nuclear weapons that will be used by the Antichrist to **completely burn down** in **one hour** the world's foremost economic power, **Babylon the Great**, such that no people ever live there again. (cf. Rev 17:5, 16, 18:10, 17, 19, cf. 21-23; cf. *BBP* ch. 4, sec. B.2).	4 of the current SCO members uniquely possess nuclear weapons (Russia, China, India, Pakistan). In fact, Russia and China possess the 1st and 3rd largest nuclear weapons arsenals in the world.
4	Some of the Coalition's members will be militarily very strong, and others very weak. (cf. Dan 2:42; cf. *BBP* ch. 4, sec. C).	Russia's, China's, and India's militaries are ranked #2, #3, and #4 in the world. Kyrgyzstan's and Tajikistan's militaries are ranked #90 and #111.
5	The Coalition's members will be very diverse in	The SCO includes 40% of the world's population spread out over 60% of

	race, culture, and language. (cf. Dan 2:43; cf. *BBP* ch. 4, sec. C).	the land mass of Eurasia. Each one of its 10 members has its own culture and language, and differ widely in religions.
6	The Coalition's members will be divided and perhaps have internal conflicts. (cf. Dan 2:41, 43; cf. *BBP* ch. 4, sec. C).	There is currently a war going on between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. India and Pakistan rather despise one another. There have even been recent border clashes between China and India.
7	The nations of the Coalition **will wage war against the Lamb** [Christ] at the Battle of Armageddon. (Rev 17:14; Ezek 38:2; cf. Rev 16:14, 16; cf. *BBP* ch. 4, sec. B.4; ch. 5, sec. B).	All SCO members exist in areas specifically named in Scripture as being at Armageddon. This is precisely where Scripture also says the 10-nation Endtime Coalition will be present.

D) The limited "window" to confirm the SCO is the 10-nation Endtime Coalition

There would seem to be a temporary window of time for the SCO to be confirmed as the 10-nation Endtime Coalition. The Bible is clear that the Coalition will be exactly 10 nations. In July 2024 the SCO is scheduled to be exactly 10 nations. But apart from divine intervention, it is unlikely for it to remain only 10 nations for very long.

Other nations are becoming increasingly interested in becoming a full member of the SCO. For example, the president of Turkey has already stated that he wants this for his country. [9] That may be a problem because Turkey is currently a member of NATO. It is questionable if Russia or China will accept a NATO country into the SCO.

Other nations are expected to join as well in the coming years. For example, Middle Eastern countries (e.g. Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia) are applying to be lower-level "observers" and "dialogue partners" of the SCO. [10]

Therefore, an important disclaimer can be stated here. If the SCO becomes more than 10 full members then this should significantly reduce our confidence that the SCO will be the 10-nation Endtime Coalition.

However, if God intends for the SCO to become the 10-nation Endtime Coalition predicted in Scripture, then it would seem the following are possibilities. One, God may intervene and not allow other countries to become an 11th member of the SCO. Therefore, this could lengthen the "window" of time in which the SCO remains 10 members.

A second possibility is that the Endtimes may begin sometime during the "window" that the SCO is exactly 10 members. Therefore, if God intends the SCO to fulfill biblical prophecy, and not supernaturally intervene in its membership, then we could expect to see the clear emergence of the Antichrist after July 2024 which would help to confirm the SCO is the 10-nation Coalition predicted for the Endtimes.

Again, no predictions are intended here. These suggestions are only valid if God intends the SCO to be the prophesied 10-nation Endtime Coalition.

In the next chapters we will discuss the emergence of the Antichrist and additional **testimony** the beginning of the Endtimes may be near.

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[1] For more on the Historical Beast Kingdoms see chapter in Part I of *The Greatest Persecution.*

[2] "Shanghai Cooperative Organization" at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shanghai_Cooperation_Organisation.

[3] "The SCO and NATO Compared," Richard Weitz, 2018; online at https://www.chinausfocus.com/peace-security/the-sco-and-nato-compared.

[4] https://www.republicworld.com/world-news/global-event-news/sco-summit-2023-live-updates-mea-gives-news-briefing-as-sco-summit-comes-to-an-end-liveblog.html

[5] The timing of the next Annual SCO Leaders Summit is implied in the following news report: "According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kazakhstan's chairmanship will last until July 2024 and will end with a summit in Astana, where the heads of the SCO member states will adopt a package of documents that will be developed during … the year." https://astanatimes.com/2023/02/kazakhstan-prepares-to-take-over-sco-chairmanship-this-year/.

No exact date for the 2024 SCO leaders summit has be publicized, but in 2023 it occurred during the July 4 holiday for the U.S. Perhaps a similar date will be chosen for 2024.

[6] It is actually a little surprising that Belarus' admission to the SCO was essentially delayed an entire year. As long ago as the 2022 SCO Summit it was announced that Belarus was welcome to become the 10th member. President Lukashenko said at the time that every effort would be made to meet the requirements for membership in 2023.

As late as May 17, 2023, it was reported:

> Moscow [Russia] is taking measures to help Minsk [Belarus] complete as soon as possible the procedures required for Belarus to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Wednesday.
>
> (https://tass.com/politics/1618725)

Likewise, a few days later on May 20, 2023, it was reported:

> Belarus will be admitted to the SCO in 2023. This was stated to the media representatives by the Secretary of State of the country's Security Council, Alexander Volfovich. (https://orient.tm/en/post/54148/belarus-will-be-admitted-sco-2023-secretary-state-security-council-republic)

Then about 6 weeks later, the announcement was given at the July 4, 2023 SCO Summit:

> The leaders also welcomed the decision on signing the Memorandum of Obligation of Belarus to join the organization as a Member State, the process will be completed by the 2024 SCO Summit.
>
> (https://www.republicworld.com/world-news/global-event-news/sco-summit-2023-live-updates-mea-gives-news-briefing-as-sco-summit-comes-to-an-end-liveblog.html)

Admittedly, the process of SCO membership is confusing and apparently rather complicated. Perhaps these announcements have been referring to different stages of membership.

However, given the possibility that the establishment of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition is the very first event of the Endtimes, it seems possible something occurred in the spiritual realm to delay the beginning of the Endtimes, if the SCO is confirmed to be the Coalition.

[7] Military rankings are available online at https://www.globalfirepower.com/

[8] https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/kyrgyzstan-says-border-outposts-under-tajik-fire-again-2022-09-16/

[9] https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkeys-erdogan-targets-joining-shanghai-cooperation-organisation-media-2022-09-17/

[10] https://dppa.un.org/en/shanghai-cooperation-organization#

Part III

The Rising Antichrist

His initial emergence into the world

Chapter 7
An Introduction to the Antichrist

Contents

A) The Antichrist's prominence in Scripture & neglect in modern theology

B) The Antichrist's purpose *Opposing & imitating Christ by worldwide dominion*

C) The Antichrist's strategy *Supernatural deception, catastrophic destruction, and human desperation (Rev 6:1-8)*

D) The Antichrist's 7 primary activities

Primary Points

- The Antichrist is more prominent in Scripture than many realize. In fact, apart from Peter and Paul, there is more NT Scripture devoted to the Antichrist than any other human person.
- Because of popular but false approaches to prophetic Scripture, the Church today lacks studies on the literal interpretation of the Antichrist and his persecution of the Church.
- The Antichrist's purpose will be to oppose the rule of Christ and to usurp the worship of Christ through worldwide dominion.
- The first 8 verses of Revelation 6 essentially portray the strategy the Antichrist will use to gain dominion over the world: supernatural deception, catastrophic destruction, and human desperation.
- Antichrist's opening strategy of accomplishing peace through the deception of his Resurrection is portrayed in the First Seal.
- Antichrist's second strategy to gain worldwide dominion, reflected in the Second Seal, will be catastrophic DESTRUCTION.
- The unprecedented war unleashed in the Second Seal, including the destruction of the people and wealth of **Babylon the Great** with probably nuclear weapons, leads to unprecedented worldwide DESPERATION. The kind of DESPERATION that will cause the pagan World to seek security in the supernatural DICTATORSHIP of the Antichrist.

- The Antichrist's purpose and strategies will be accomplished and reflected in 7 primary activities.

A) The Antichrist's prominence in Scripture & neglect in modern theology

The central figure of the Endtimes before Christ's Return is the Antichrist. His emergence will occur during The Beginning of Birth Pains. The Antichrist is more prominent in Scripture than many realize. In fact, apart from Peter and Paul, there is more NT Scripture devoted to the Antichrist than any other merely human person.

In the OT he is referred to as **Gog of the land of Magog** (Ezek 38:2 NASB). [1] Ezekiel devotes two chapters to the Antichrist's leadership of the Battle of Armageddon (chs. 38-39). His activities are portrayed in significant passages of Daniel chapters 7-9 and 11-12. [2] There the Antichrist is described as a **beast—terrifying and frightening and very powerful** (7:7 NIV), a **fierce-looking king** (8:23 NIV), and a **despicable man** (11:21 NLT).

In the NT, the Apostle John referred to him as **the Antichrist** who **is coming** (1 John 2:18 NLT) and used this word five times (cf. 1 John 2:18 twice, 22; 4:3; 2 John 1:7). Such terminology gave the early Church the name Antichrist. The Apostle Paul devoted much of 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 to describing the Antichrist and called him **the man of lawlessness** (v. 3, 8 NIV). Finally, Revelation refers to the future Antichrist as **the beast** almost 40 times!

With so much Scripture devoted to the Antichrist one would think that modern and helpful studies on this topic would be available. Unfortunately, such is not the case. [3]

Popular views of the Endtimes in the Church either deny that the Church will encounter the Antichrist (Pre-tribulationism), or like the Middle Ages, emphasize the metaphorical meaning of the topic (Amillennialism). [4] In fact, a recent survey claimed that 50% of Protestant Pastors deny or are not sure that Scripture predicts there will be a literal and physical Antichrist in the future. [5] Therefore, it is not surprising that the Church today lacks studies on the literal interpretation of the Antichrist and his persecution of the Church.

In contrast to today, the Early Church understood the Antichrist as a literal person that would attack the Church. The Early Church's diligence to understand the prophetic Scriptures describing the Antichrist was demonstrated as early as about the year A. D. 200 when the very influential Church leader Hippolytus wrote *On Christ and Antichrist*. [6] About a dozen other prominent Early Church leaders wrote extensively on a literal Antichrist as well. Several quotes were provided elsewhere referring to this. [7] Summarizing this, the respected Bible scholar Jerome wrote in his commentary on Daniel about A. D. 400:

> Let us say that which all ecclesiastical writers have handed down: that at the end of the world … there will be ten kings … and there will arise an eleventh little king… This is so that we may not suppose him to be a demon, as some have thought, but a man in whom Satan will dwell fully and bodily… for he is "the man of sin who sits in the temple of God, making himself as God" [2 Thess 2:4].[8]

Unfortunately, this biblical view was replaced by a metaphorical interpretation of Scripture and the Antichrist in the Middle Ages. The insistence of the Protestant Reformers that the Antichrist was the Roman Catholic Pope of their day was not an improvement and proved to be false.

In this book, *The Beginning of Birth Pains* (*BBP*), Antichrist's initial activities will be discussed. In a later book, *The Greatest Persecution*, the Antichrist's attributes and later activities will be studied. These biblical studies are offered to correct the inexcusable lack of understanding of one of the most prominent characters of Scripture.

B) The Antichrist's purpose *Opposing & imitating Christ by worldwide dominion*

As noted above, the Apostle John wrote: **the Antichrist** [*antichristos*] **is coming** (1 John 2:18 NLT). The Greek prefix *anti* can mean "against" or "in place of." [9]

Scripture confirms both meanings apply to the Antichrist and reveal his nature. He will come to oppose the rule of Christ and to usurp the worship of Christ. The Apostle Paul speaks of both when

he writes of the Antichrist: **He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God** (2 Thess 2:4 NIV). The Antichrist will **oppose** God and Christ, but also seek to replace Christ and be worshipped as God.

The Antichrist will certainly be opposed to Christ and God the Father. **He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods** (Dan 11:36 NIV). He will personally fight against Christ at the Battle of Armageddon (cf. Rev 19:19) where **He will even take on the Prince of princes in battle** (Dan 8:25 NLT).

But the Antichrist will also seek to imitate the real Christ. Hippolytus wrote of him as early as ca. A.D. 200, "In every way the Deceiver wants to become like the Son of God." [10] Satan has always wanted to usurp Christ's place in the Universe and steal His glory, power, authority, and adoration (cf. Isa 14:12-14; Ezek 28:11-17). Therefore, a foremost purpose of Satan's representative on Earth, the Antichrist, will be to imitate the Real Christ.

This is more evidence of Christ's GLORY. Satan could seek to imitate anything or anyone in the Universe. But he seeks to imitate Jesus Christ because He is the most glorious Person he could even try to imitate. No one deserves imitation more than Christ. And if Satan is so eager and devoted to imitating Christ, how much more should we be even more so!

Antichrist's purpose to both oppose and imitate Christ will be accomplished through Antichrist's ultimate goal: worldwide dominion. Notice carefully what biblical prophecy predicts the Antichrist will accomplish on this Earth: **All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life**. (Rev 13:8 NIV; cf. vs. 3-4). Accordingly, Revelation 6:2 describes the coming Antichrist as **a conqueror bent on conquest** (NIV).

The day is coming when every single person on Earth who is not a real Christian will **worship**, **follow** (v. 3), and obey the Antichrist. It will not matter if they are false Christians or atheists, Hindus or Muslims, Chinese, European, American, or African. If they

have not been born again and sealed by God's Spirit (cf. John 3:5; Eph 1:13), they will **all worship the beast**.

Daniel described the Antichrist's Beast Empire as a **kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms** [in human history] **and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it** (Dan 7:23 NIV). Indeed, the Antichrist will possess an unprecedented amount of power. No one in all of human history has been **worshipped** and **followed** by over 7 billion people (allowing for the very liberal estimate of 1 billion real Christians in the world).

The Antichrist's dominion over the pagan World will be so complete that his False Prophet (cf. Rev 13:11-15; 16:13; 19:20; 20:10) will be able to **force all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, so that they** will **not** be able to **buy or sell unless they** have **the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name.** (Rev 13:16-17 NIV). The Antichrist is coming to be **a conqueror bent on** the spiritual and political **conquest** (Rev 6:2 NIV) of the entire world.

The Antichrist will fulfill his purpose of opposing and imitating Jesus Christ by accomplishing his goal of worldwide dominion on this Earth.

C) The Antichrist's strategy *Supernatural deception, catastrophic destruction, and human desperation (Rev 6:1-8)*

How will the Antichrist accomplish his goal of worldwide dominion? Antichrist's strategy can be summarized in three basic steps: 1) Supernatural deception, 2) catastrophic destruction, and 3) human desperation. These are reflected in the "Four Horseman of the Apocalypse" described in Revelation 6:1-8. It may be helpful to read these verses again.

[Read Revelation 6:1-8]

The context here starts in Revelation chapter 5 where we are introduced to a **scroll** that only Jesus Christ can open (cf. vs. 1-5).

The **scroll** contains the wrath of God that He will unleash on the world after the Seventh Seal is opened. Which is why the Sixth Seal portrays Christ's Return and the Church's Rescue. I explain more about this in the book, *Christ's Endtimes Teaching* (cf. ch. 14, sec. E).

Revelation 6:1-8 describes what is popularly known as "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse." The imagery in this passage is memorable and even shocking.

These are what Christ called **the beginning of birth pains** (Matt 24:8). One will notice that these visions display in vivid color what Christ's Endtimes Teaching in Matthew 24 portrayed in rather black and white. The relationship between these two passages of Scripture was explained previously in *Christ's Endtimes Teaching* (*CET* ch. 6, sec. B). The advantage of Christ's "black and white" teaching is that it gives us a solid foundation to correctly interpret the symbolic visions of Revelation 6 (cf. *CET*, ch. 3, sec. B).

The first 8 verses of Revelation 6 essentially portray the strategy the Antichrist will use to gain dominion over the world. That strategy will consist of supernatural deception, catastrophic destruction, and human desperation.

Let us first read about the Antichrist's supernatural deception in the opening of the First Seal:

> **I watched as the Lamb** [Christ] **opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.** (Rev 6:1-2 NIV)

Here the Antichrist is portrayed as the **rider** on a **white horse** who is **given a crown** and will be **a conqueror bent on conquest**. Most Evangelical Bible scholars agree that this imagery is referring to the Antichrist and his desire to deceitfully imitate the real Christ. It is suggested the First Seal portrays the Antichrist's **conquer**ing by supernatural DECEPTION. The primary way the Antichrist will accomplish this is through his miraculous Resurrection (cf. Rev 13:3-4, 14).

Antichrist's Resurrection will enable him to imitate Christ, and usurp His worship. Scripture predicts it will have a powerful effect on the world (cf. Rev 13:3-4). Antichrist's opening strategy of deception through his Resurrection portrayed in the First Seal will be supported in chapter 11.

Therefore, the Antichrist's first strategy will be supernatural DECEPTION portrayed in the First Seal. But to gain even greater worship in the world his second strategy will be catastrophic DESTRUCTION. We read of this with the opening of the Second Seal:

> **When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" Then another horse came out, a <u>fiery</u> red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make people kill each other. To him was given a <u>large</u>** [*mega*] **<u>sword.</u>** (Rev 6:3-4 NIV)

Accordingly, the **rider** in **the second seal** clearly depicting war, will be **given power to <u>take peace from the earth</u>**. This suggests again that during the events of the First Seal, peace was established. Jesus said these **wars** will be so horrific that Christians will be tempted to **panic** and believe **the end** of the world will **follow immediately** (Matt 24:6 NLT).

These catastrophic **wars** will probably include the complete destruction of the economic superpower of the world, **Babylon the Great** (Rev 17:5). This important and complex prophecy was introduced in chapter 2 (sec. A.5). As noted there, the third book in the *Endtimes Essentials* series (*Endtime Babylon*) is devoted to explaining its description in Revelation chapters 17-18. A key verse is Revelation 17:16 where we read:

> **The ten horns** [10-nation Endtime Coalition]**… and the beast** [Antichrist] **will hate the Prostitute and these will permanently remove all people from her and strip her naked and they will devour her body and will burn her down up with fire… in one hour** such that no one will live there again (Rev 17:16, [11] 18:10, cf. vs. 17, 19, 21-23).

Why will the Antichrist and his 10-nation Endtime Coalition attack and obliterate **Babylon the Great** (Rev 17:5) and kill all of

the people living there? Because its **great wealth** and **international businessmen** [12] who **were the important people of the world** (Rev 18:17, 23) will be a rival for Antichrist's worship in the world. This is why the prophecy predicts that, **In one hour such great wealth** will be **brought to ruin!** (Rev 18:17 NIV).

The prophecy states three times that **Babylon the Great** will be **burn**ed **down with fire … in one hour** (Rev 18:10, 17, 19). As noted previously, this implies the use of nuclear weapons. Accordingly, the Second Seal of war describes a **fiery red horse** whose **rider** is **given… a large** [*mega*] **sword** that leads to the slaughter of the people living on one **fourth of the earth** as described in verse 8. Antichrist's second strategy to gain worldwide dominion, reflected in the Second Seal, will be catastrophic DESTRUCTION through war, perhaps even nuclear war.

Thus far in Revelation 6 we see the Antichrist will gain power over the world through supernatural DECEPTION then catastrophic DESTRUCTION. Daniel describes the Antichrist using both of these strategies in the following prophecy:

> [A] **fierce king, a master of intrigue, will rise to power. He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause a shocking amount of destruction and succeed in everything he does. He will destroy powerful leaders and devastate the holy people. He will be a master of deception and will become arrogant; he will destroy many without warning.** (8:23-25 NLT)

The **intrigue** and **deception** with the **destruction** suggests the Antichrist's dual strategy for rising to power: DECEPTION then DESTRUCTION.

We have suggested that the Second Seal portrays the Antichrist unleashing a catastrophic and unprecedented war, and that this will include his attack on **Babylon the Great** with probably nuclear weapons. Such DESTRUCTION will lead to famine and the unprecedented worldwide DESPERATION reflected in the opening of the Third Seal:

> **When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of**

> **scales in his hand. Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, "Two pounds of wheat for a day's wages, and six pounds of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!"** (Rev 6:5-6 NIV)

When **the third seal** is **opened** there will be severe economic hardship. This is portrayed by the fact that **two pounds of wheat** will cost an entire **day's wages**. The catastrophes and DESPERATION intensify and accumulate when the Fourth Seal is opened:

> **When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.** (Rev 6:7-8 NIV)

At this point in the Endtimes, the people living in **a fourth of the earth** will be **kill**ed **by** the war unleashed by the Antichrist in the Second Seal, and the resulting **famine** and **plagues**. These catastrophes of what Jesus called **the beginning of birth pains** (Matt 24:8), will lead to the kind of DESPERATION that will cause the pagan World to seek security in the worldwide DICTATORSHIP of the Antichrist.

According to Revelation 6, the strategies the Antichrist will use to dominate the world include: 1) Supernatural deception, 2) catastrophic destruction, and 3) human desperation, all leading to his purpose of worldwide dictatorship.

John MacArthur is worth the following quote that summarizes the conclusions above:

> In the chaotic times of confusion, uncertainty, and unrest that will prevail during the Tribulation [better, The Beginning of Birth Pains], the world will long for a leader. People will be desperately hoping for someone powerful and influential to unite the divided and contentious nations of the world; someone to bring hope in the midst of helplessness; someone

to provide a sense of security in an unsettled time of apprehension and fear.

People will be desperately seeking a strong, charismatic, authoritative leader to pull the world back from the brink of disaster. Those longings will be fulfilled. The powerful leader people desire will come and unify the world under his rule. He will appear at first to be everything people thought they were looking for. And for a brief time he will bring peace and prosperity. But he will turn out to be far more than the world bargained for. He will be a dictator more cruel and powerful than any other leader the world has ever known.

This man, often called the Antichrist, will be the culmination of a long line of would-be world conquerors. What men like Alexander the Great and the Roman emperors in ancient times and Hitler and Stalin in modern times only dreamed of doing, the Antichrist actually will do—he will rule the entire world and receive its worship…

Some find it incredible that anyone could rise to such a position of absolute authority. But there are parallels in human history, albeit on a much smaller scale. Inevitably, turmoil in society aids such a ruler's rise to power. Dictators gain control by offering solutions to society's seemingly unsolvable problems.

Adolf Hitler, for example, took advantage of the chaotic economic and political conditions in Germany following World War I. He promised the German people that, under his leadership, their downtrodden nation would again rise to a place of prominence, power, and wealth. Desperate for a way out of their dilemma, many people believed his message. Eventually, the Nazi party grew so strong that Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany. From that position he went on to seize absolute power. Antichrist, a dictator more powerful and evil than Hitler, will rise to power amid the frightening and unprecedented chaos of the Tribulation [The Beginning of Birth Pains]. [13]

D) The Antichrist's 7 primary activities

The Antichrist's purpose and strategies will be accomplished and reflected in the following 7 primary activities.

1) Antichrist's Rising

The Scriptures indicate that the Antichrist will begin in relative obscurity. The Rising Antichrist is described as **another horn, which started small but grew in power** (Dan 8:9 NIV). In Daniel, **horns are … kings** (Dan 7:24; cf. 8:20) and the leaders of nations.

Elsewhere Daniel writes of this **horn** portraying the Antichrist: **While I was thinking about the** [ten] **horns** of the Endtime Coalition, **there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them** (Dan 7:8 NIV). Therefore, as a **little horn** we can expect the Antichrist to initially emerge as the leader of a relatively minor country.

But it seems even the Rising Antichrist will be extraordinarily successful. Again, Daniel writes of his initial activities:

> **A fierce-looking king, a master of intrigue, will arise. He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He … will succeed in whatever he does** (Dan 8:23-24 NIV).

It would seem with supernatural aid, the Rising Antichrist will be able to accomplish some rather amazing things. His supernatural success will evidently enable him to become **very strong**. As a result he will gain considerable fame and admiration in the world.

At this point in Antichrist's career it is suggested he will be assisted by demonic powers. It is possible that the Rising Antichrist will not even be aware that he is the Antichrist. He may believe that his supernatural successes are a result of God's favor on his life. He may believe he has a special calling from God to lead the world to peace. In other words, the Rising Antichrist may believe in God and believe he is serving God. The Rising Antichrist will be discussed in chapters 8-9 of *The Beginning of Birth Pains.*

2) Antichrist's Resurrection

Again, in Antichrist's Rising he will emerge in the world as a **little horn … which started small** as the leader of a minor country. But this dramatically changes with the second stage of his career which will be Antichrist's Resurrection. The Antichrist will burst onto the world scene by being undeniably killed and miraculously resurrected from the dead, resulting in his worldwide worship. John writes:

> **And I saw one of the heads of the beast as violently slaughtered to death and the wound from the deadly strike was healed. And the whole world was amazed by this miracle and became a follower of the beast.** (Rev 13:3 [14])

As a result of this astounding miracle, the admired Rising Antichrist will become the worshiped and obeyed Resurrected Antichrist. The convincing power of his miraculous resurrection is described by Paul who wrote of the Antichrist: **The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders** that will cause **a powerful delusion** (2 Thess 2:9, 11 NIV).

Antichrist's Resurrection will be among his miracles to deceive the world. While the Rising Antichrist may only be assisted by demonic powers, the Resurrected Antichrist will probably be indwelled with demonic beings.

As noted above, it seems that Antichrist's Resurrection is portrayed in **the first of the seven seals** as a **rider** on a **white horse** who will **"Come!"** to **conquer** the world through deception and the imitation of Jesus Christ (Rev 6:1-2 NIV). The Resurrected Antichrist and its worldwide effects will be discussed in chapters 10-17. In chapter 11 it will be argued that Antichrist's Resurrection will be the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun.

3) Antichrist's Religious Covenant

Antichrist's supernatural Resurrection will deceive people into thinking he is some kind of god. Therefore Antichrist's Religion will

emerge worldwide.

This religion will be formally implemented when the Antichrist **will make a firm** religious **covenant** [*berith*] **with the many** (Dan 9:27 NASB). Antichrist's Religious Covenant will include **many** in Israel and result in their freedom to rebuild their temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. This **covenant** will bring religious and political peace to the world. It will also involve the worship of statues of his image placed throughout the world by his False Prophet (cf. Rev 13:11-15).

Antichrist's Religious Covenant will begin a 7-year countdown to Christ's Return and the Church's Rescue. These events will be discussed in chapters 14-15.

4) Antichrist's Attack on Endtime Babylon

After the Antichrist's Resurrection and his worldwide worship, he will have sufficient spiritual and political power such that the **ten kings** of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition **will give their power and authority to the beast** Antichrist (Rev 17:12-13 NIV). This alliance will result in the catastrophic wars unleashed in the Second Seal.

This seems to include the complete annihilation of the world's economic superpower and wealthiest nation as described in Revelation 17:16 quoted above. Again, the identification of **Babylon the Great** and the total destruction of its people, and economic, military, and political power, will be discussed in *Endtimes Essentials* book #3: *Endtime Babylon*.

5) Antichrist's Claim to be God

Exactly 3.5 years after the implementation of Antichrist's Religious Covenant, **he will put an end to sacrifice and offering at the** [rebuilt Jewish] **temple** and **he will set up an abomination that causes desolation** (Dan 9:27 NIV). Elsewhere in Daniel we read of this monumental spiritual event: **His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation** (Dan 11:31 NIV).

Daniel says at this time, **He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods** (11:36 NIV). The Apostle Paul says of the same incident: **He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God** (2 Thess 2:4 NIV). This text is why the more obscure **abomination of desolation** is referred to as Antichrist's Claim to be God throughout the *Endtimes Essentials*. Because that is what this event will be.

It has been noted above that at the initial stages of Antichrist's career it seems he will be assisted by and even indwelled with powerful demons. But Revelation 12 indicates that at **the abomination that causes desolation** (Matt 24:15), the Antichrist will be indwelled with Satan himself (cf. Rev 12:7-17). Antichrist's Claim to be God will be discussed further in *Endtimes Essentials* book #4: *The Greatest Persecution*.

6) Antichrist's Wrath against God's people

Jesus said:

> **"So when you see** [the Antichrist] **standing in the holy place** [Jewish Temple, causing] **'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains…**
>
> **Because then there will be the greatest persecution of God's elect people. It will be greater than any persecution since the world began, and it will never be equaled again.**
>
> **If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of God's elect people those days will be shortened."** (Matt 24:15-16 NIV, 21-22 [15])

Antichrist's Claim to be God in his **abomination that causes desolation** will trigger **the greatest persecution of God's elect people** for 3.5 years. During Antichrist's Wrath, he will use his

absolute power over the World to persecute and kill God's people in the Church and Israel.

Daniel describes The Greatest Persecution when he writes the Antichrist will be **waging war against the saints and defeating them … for a time, times and half a time** [3.5 years] (Dan 7:21, 25 NIV [16]).

Revelation says that **for forty-two months** (3.5 years) the Antichrist will be **given power to wage war against God's saints and to conquer them** (Rev 13:7-8 NIV). They will be **slaughtered because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained** (Rev 6:9), **killed with the sword** (Rev 13:10 NIV), and **beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus** (Rev 20:4).

This will be The Greatest Persecution against all of God's people, including the Church.

Antichrist's Wrath and his Greatest Persecution will end with Christ's Return and the Church's Rescue (cf. Matt 24:29-31). The biblical reality that the Church will be subjected to The Greatest Persecution was demonstrated in *Endtimes Essentials* book #1: *Christ's Endtimes Teaching*. The great challenges and biblical promises experienced by Christians in the Last Generation Church will be discussed further in *Endtimes Essentials* book #4: *The Greatest Persecution*.

7) Antichrist's Defeat at the Battle of Armageddon

God will be sovereign in Antichrist's final destruction. In Daniel we read:

> **He** [the Antichrist] **will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time** [3.5 years]**. But the court** [in Heaven] **will sit, and his** [Antichrist's] **power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever.** (7:25-26 NIV)

The time of Antichrist's destruction is described in Revelation 19. At the end of the Trumpet and Bowl Punishments, Christ's Wrath will be consummated in the Battle of Armageddon.

At this place, the **ten kings** and the **beast** Antichrist, **will wage war against the Lamb** [Christ]**, and the Lamb will triumph over them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings** (Rev 17:12, 14 NIV). This will be when **the Lord Jesus will overthrow** the Antichrist **with the breath of his mouth and destroy** him **by the splendor of his coming** (2 Thess 2:8 NIV; cf. Dan 7:11).

At this time, he will be **thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur** (Rev 19:20 NIV; cf. Dan 7:11). This is where the Antichrist **will be tormented day and night for ever and ever** (Rev 20:10 NIV).

Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the saints of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.' (Dan 7:27 NIV) because the real Christ's 1000-year Reign will begin.

Antichrist's 7 primary activities can be summarized in the following table:

Table: Antichrist's 7 Primary Activities

Activities	Ref.
❶ **Antichrist's Rise** He will emerge as a **little horn** and leader of a minor country who, nonetheless, will be supernaturally successful and admired worldwide (cf. Dan 7:8, 24; 8:9, 24). He will be <u>assisted</u> by demonic powers.	*BBP* chs. 8-9
❷ **Antichrist's Resurrection** He will be undeniably killed and miraculously raised from the dead, resulting in his worldwide worship (cf. Rev 13:1-14; 2 Thess 2:9, 11). He will be <u>indwelled</u> by demonic beings.	*BBP* chs. 11-13, 15-17
❸ **Antichrist's Religious Covenant**	*BBP* ch. 14

His Resurrection will persuade **many** to make a religious **covenant** with him, resulting in a formalized Antichrist Religion and world peace (cf. Dan 9:27; Rev 13:14). This begins a 7 year count-down to Christ's Return and the Church's Rescue.	
❹ Antichrist's Attack on Endtime Babylon He will make an alliance with the 10-nation Endtime Coalition and annihilate **by fire in one hour** the people, and the economic, military, and political power of **Babylon the Great** so that the Antichrist will have no rivals on Earth (cf. Rev 17-18).	*EE* book #3 *Endtime Babylon*
❺ Antichrist's Claim to be God He will commit **the abomination of desolation** when **he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God** (Dan 9:27; Matt 24:15; 2 Thess 2:4)	*EE* book #4 *The Greatest Persecu-tion*
❻ Antichrist's Wrath against God's People He will demand absolute worship by everyone on Earth, and enforce the imprisonment or execution of all Jews and Christians who will refuse to do so (cf. Dan 7:21, 25; Matt 24:9, 15-28; Rev 6:9; 13:7-17)	
❼ Antichrist's Defeat at the Battle of Armageddon This will result in him being **thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur** where he **will be tormented day and night for ever and ever** (Rev 17:12, 14; 19:20; 20:10; 2 Thess 2:8; Dan 7:11, 25-26).	

[1] There are arguments to suggest that **Gog** is a reference to the Antichrist. Many Bible scholars understand Ezekiel 38-39 to be describing the Battle of Armageddon, led by **Gog, of the land of Magog** (Ezek 38:2; cf. Rev 16:16). Revelation makes it clear that the Antichrist is leading this battle against Christ (cf. 16:13-16; 19:19-21). Therefore, **Gog** in Ezekiel is describing the activities of the Antichrist. Accordingly, Block writes of Revelation 19:17-21: "Although the passage [in Revelation] never mentions Gog by name, the beast certainly represents him" (491).

[2] For more on the application of Daniel 11 to the Antichrist, see *Additional Studies on the Endtimes*, ch. 16, "The Relationship of Daniel 11 to the Endtimes."

[3] Detailed studies of Antichrist have been lacking in modern theology. In 1923 the influential Bible teacher A.W. Pink wrote *The Antichrist* (Kregel, 1988). This is perhaps the most comprehensive Christian study available on the topic. When it was more widely published in the 1980's, Dr. Cyril Barber wrote in the foreword that the Church lacked an in-depth study of the topic. Indeed, Pink's work is rather exhaustive. However, it is less than helpful for at least a couple of reasons.

First, Pink seems to find the Antichrist almost everywhere in Scripture. For example, he writes: "In Psalm 55 much is said of the Antichrist in his relation to Israel" (52). This is doubtful. Likewise, OT prophecies concerning Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, are assumed by Pink to be talking about the Antichrist. Secondly, Pink was a Pre-Tribulationist and did not even believe the Church would be subjected to the Antichrist.

Robert Van Kampen in a more recent book (*The Sign*) accurately portrays the place of the Antichrist in the Endtimes. However, his approach is flawed by spending a great deal of ink trying to prove that the Antichrist will be a resurrected Adolf Hitler.

Amillennialist Kim Riddlebarger has written *The Man of Sin* (Baker, 2006). Unfortunately, it only emphasizes past and present examples of antichrists as Amillennialism seems eager to do, but says hardly anything about the future Antichrist. For more commentary on Riddlebarger's book, see *CET* ch. 16, sec. E.

[4] As noted in the endnote above, a recent example of emphasizing the metaphorical meaning of the Antichrist is Kim Riddlebarger, *The Man of Sin* (Baker, 2006).

[5] The survey of Protestant Pastors on the Endtimes can be found online at https://news.lifeway.com/2016/04/26/pastors-the-end-of-the-world-is-complicated/

[6] Unfortunately, Hippolytus simply quotes large passages of scripture from Dan and Rev but makes very little comment. One of his primary purposes was supporting his claim that "For as Christ springs from the tribe of

Judah, so Antichrist is to spring from the tribe of Dan" (*On Christ and Antichrist*, 14). In addition, he uses several obscure passages from Isaiah and Jeremiah that he believes refer to the Antichrist. The greatest value of his treatise is it demonstrates a belief in the Early Church that the Church would encounter the Antichrist.

[7] For quotes from early Church leaders regarding Antichrist's future persecution of the Church see *Christ's Endtimes Teaching*, ch. 8, sec. C.

[8] See "Antichrist" in *M&S* for a list of references to over a dozen other prominent Church Fathers who wrote that Scripture teaches the coming of a personal and literal Antichrist.

[9] *Vine's* states: "*Antichristos* can mean either 'against Christ' or 'instead of Christ,' or perhaps, combining the two, 'one who, assuming the guise of Christ, opposes Christ' (Westcott)" (30).

[10] Hippolytus, *On Christ and Antichrist*, 6.1.

[11] For an explanation of the suggested translation of Rev 17:16 see *Endtime Babylon* ch. 1, sec. A.

[12] **International businessmen** translates *emporoi* which means: "one who travels by ship for business reasons … denotes *wholesale dealer* in contrast to *kapēlos* 'retailer'" (*BDAG*). For more on this translation see *Endtime Babylon*, ch. 4, sec. A.

[13] MacArthur, *Rev* II, 36, 44-45.

[14] For an explanation of the suggested translation of Rev 13:3 see *BBP* ch. 13, sec. A.1.

[15] For an explanation of the suggested translation of Matt 24:21-22 see *CET*, ch. 4, sec. C.3.

[16] The NIV 1984 version is used throughout quotes of Daniel and Revelation to preserve the word **saints** in the translation.

Chapter 8

Recognizing the Rising Antichrist

The leader of a minor country but famous & admired worldwide

Contents

A) Unbiblical and unreliable ways to identify the Antichrist

B) The Antichrist will emerge as the leader of a small country (Dan 7:8)

C) The Antichrist will come from the land of Magog (Ezek 38:2)

D) The Antichrist will be a Jew (Dan 11:37)

E) The Antichrist will be a world-famous person (Rev 13:3-4)

F) A remarkable modern example of a man matching the biblical attributes of the Rising Antichrist *Volodymyr Zelenskyy*

Primary Points

- Suggestions that Nero, Hitler, Putin, or popes could have been the Antichrist were <u>not</u> biblical.
- Many other ways Christians attempt to identify the Antichrist are unbiblical or unreliable, including his number **666**.
- This chapter addresses the recognizable biblical characteristics of the Antichrist before his Resurrection.
- It seems the Antichrist will initially emerge as the leader of a relatively minor country in the vicinity of Russia.
- Daniel clearly predicted the Antichrist will be a Jew. This is to be expected because he will present himself to the Jews as their awaited Messiah, and they would never believe him if he was not a Jew.
- It seems the Antichrist will emerge further as a very famous and admired person who will be recognized world-wide when he is killed and resurrected.
- Volodymyr Zelenskyy is the first person in all of Church history to fulfill the three primary biblical attributes of the Rising Antichrist.

A) Unbiblical & unreliable ways to identify the Antichrist

As noted in the previous chapter, the Rising Antichrist describes him when he will initially emerge in the world. Fortunately, the prophetic Scriptures reveal some attributes about him. These can enable us to make a preliminary identification of who the Antichrist may be. If such a person is miraculously resurrected, then they would be undeniably confirmed to be the Antichrist. But what are some biblical characteristics of the Antichrist before his Resurrection? This will be the topic of this chapter. But first, unbiblical, unreliable, but popular criteria will be discussed first.

A.1) The unbiblical guesses of Nero, Hitler, Putin, and popes

In this chapter a suggestion for a modern man who could turn out to be the Antichrist will be defended from Scripture. A common response to such a thing is something like, "People throughout Church history have claimed a certain person was the Antichrist, and they were all wrong." This implies that any modern suggestion will likely be wrong as well. But this entire line of reasoning is false.

Popular suggestions for who could be the Antichrist have included Nero in the 1st century, Hitler in the 20th century, and Putin in the 21st century. None of these candidates should have been suggested or considered by any Christian. None of these claims were biblical. Why is that?

Because the Rising Antichrist will be the most admired and loved man in the entire pagan world. In their day, Nero, Hitler, and Putin have been the most hated men in the entire world. They could have never become the world's beloved Antichrist. It has always been an unbiblical mistake to believe the most hated, scary, and evil person in the world could be the Antichrist.

During the Protestant Reformation it was common to teach that the Roman Catholic popes were the Antichrist. This too was an unbiblical claim. As explained in section C below, the Bible teaches that the Antichrist will emerge from **the land of Magog** (Ezek 38:2). Today this would include Russia and countries south of Russia. None of the popes during the Protestant Reformation came

from **the land of Magog.** Most of them came from Italy, and one was from the Netherlands. Still, we can note that at least the Reformers believed in a literal and physical Antichrist, contrary to many today.

The sections below will present four biblical attributes of the Rising Antichrist. Not a single person in all of human history has fulfilled those attributes until the man who will be suggested below.

A.2) Popular but insufficient ways to identify the Antichrist (Dan 8:23; 2 Thess 2:3-4)

There have been many ideas about how the Antichrist will be identified. As noted previously, the topic of the Antichrist has been greatly neglected in scholarly theology. But there have been numerous speculations about his identity in popular theology. But all of these are insufficient to confidently recognize the Antichrist.

For example, there are several things said of the Antichrist in Scripture that will not be adequate to recognize him. He is described in Daniel as **a king of bold face** (8:23 ESV). Other versions translate the Aramaic here as referring to his character as **insolent** (NASB, CSB) which means "cocky boldness." [1] Perhaps such characteristics could be identified in a person, but do we really want to put any confidence in such a prediction? Of course not. The same text predicts the Antichrist will be **one who understands riddles** (ESV). That is equally useless in identifying him.

Likewise, the Apostle Paul said the Antichrist will be **fully revealed** (*apakalyphthē* [2]) when **he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God** (2 Thess 2:3-4). But Antichrist's Claim to be God will not occur until 3.5 years after the Antichrist's Religious Covenant is implemented (cf. Dan 9:27).

Therefore, an identification of the Antichrist at such an advanced stage of Endtime events will not be helpful in initially recognizing him. Surely, his identity will be revealed to Christians a significant time before his Claim to be God. This is why the Greek Paul used means **fully revealed**.

When Paul says the Antichrist will be **fully revealed** in his Claim to be God, he seems to be primarily referring to the nation of Israel who will have been completely deceived by the Antichrist into

making a **covenant** with him (Dan 9:27). When **he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God** (2 Thess 2:4 NIV), then the Antichrist will be **fully revealed** to the nation of Israel.

But the Last Generation Church will know Antichrist's identity far sooner than the unbelieving Jews. As argued in future chapters, the Antichrist's Resurrection will occur at least 3.5 years before Antichrist's Claim to be God. Therefore, because of Antichrist's Resurrection, Christians will know at least 3.5 years before Antichrist's Claim to be God, who the Antichrist is.

There are other popular suggestions about how the Antichrist can first be identified. For example, some have speculated he will be a Muslim. Others have thought he will be a Syrian. Others have confidently claimed he will be a homosexual. [3] But all of these claims are doubtful, especially in light of the biblical exegesis offered in this chapter.

A.3) The obscurity of the number of Antichrist's name *666*

Perhaps the most well-known identification of the Antichrist is **the number of** his **name** which will be **666** (Rev 13:17-18). In Revelation we read of the False Prophet:

> **It also forced all people, great and small, rich, and poor, free and slave, to receive <u>a mark</u> on their right hands or on their foreheads, so that they could not buy or sell unless they had <u>the mark</u>, which is the name of the beast or <u>the number of its name</u>. This calls for wisdom. Let the person who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. <u>That number is 666</u>.** (Rev 13:16-18 NIV)

This is probably the best known statement in all of Revelation. It's meaning has intrigued both Christians and pagans since its first publication in the Early Church. Simply, John is saying that **the number of** Antichrist's **name** will be **666**. What does this mean?

In ancient times the Greeks introduced the practice of assigning a numerical value to letters of the Greek alphabet. As early as the Church Father Irenaeus (c. A.D. 180), Christians have attempted to interpret John's description of the Antichrist in this way. For

example, if the Greek spelling of Nero Caesar (*Neron Kaisar*) is transliterated into Hebrew (*nrwn qsr*), the numerical equivalent is 666. [4] This caused a lot of discussion in the Early Church.

But this kind of sophisticated and even manipulated calculation can produce many different names. Irenaeus said himself:

> Although we are certain of the number of the name of Antichrist, yet we should not come to rash conclusions about the name itself, because this number is capable of being fitted to many names. [5]

The flexible nature of such an identification was used by Roman Catholics in the 1500's to claim Martin Luther was the Antichrist. Indeed, NT scholar F.F. Bruce notes: "Luther is another name which with just a little ingenuity and resolve can yield the sum of 666." [6] Accordingly, the 19th century Irish theologian George Salmon wrote:

> There are three rules by the help of which I believe an ingenious man could find the required sum [of 666] in any given name. First, if the proper name by itself will not yield it, add a title; secondly, if the sum cannot be found in Greek, try Hebrew, or even Latin; thirdly, do not be too particular about the spelling. [7]

Therefore, in spite of all the attention on John's prophecy that **the number of the beast** will be the **number 666**, it is doubtful this will be valuable in initially identifying the Antichrist. At best, it may help to confirm his identity after other events make his identity clear. For example, it is possible that the Rising Antichrist will change his name after his Resurrection. But at that point, we will not need **the number** of his **name** to confirm his identity.

Finally, it is doubtful that identifying the Antichrist was John's primary reason for revealing **the number of the beast** at all. The text quoted above shows that John's purpose was to describe what the **mark … of the beast** would look like on the **right hands or … foreheads** of pagans who **receive** it. Therefore, John's purpose for revealing **the number of the beast** is clearly explained in the context. It is to enable Endtime saints to recognize the mark they will need to refuse.

Therefore, it is doubtful that God revealed **the number of the beast** as a primary or clear way to identify the Antichrist. [8] Instead, we will discuss biblical attributes of the Rising Antichrist that are more clear.

B) The Antichrist will emerge as the leader of a small country *Dan 7:8*

Several stages of the Antichrist's emergence seem to be described in Daniel 7 where we read:

> **As I was thinking about the ten horns** [the 10-nation Endtime Coalition]**, there was another one, a little horn** [the Rising Antichrist]**. It was rising up** [*cliq*: "ascending"] **among the ten horns and three of them were uprooted by it. And there were eyes in this horn, like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great and boastful things.** (v. 8 [9])

The reference to a **little horn** seems to describe the very first appearance of the Antichrist on Earth. This will be discussed further in this section. His **rising up** (*cliq*: "ascending") seems to depict the Antichrist's growing prominence in the world as the Rising Antichrist. This will be discussed in section C. The Antichrist having **a mouth speaking great and boastful things** probably refers to Antichrist's Claim to be God after his Resurrection (cf. 2 Thess 2:4).

It would seem we learn a few things about the initial emergence of the Antichrist here. First, the Rising Antichrist will not be a member of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition. He will be **another one … rising up among the ten horns** after they are established, but not be one of them.

Second, the Antichrist will emerge as a leader of some country. In Daniel, **horns are … kings** (7:24; cf. 8:20). The Antichrist will begin as the political head of some nation. The Antichrist will not initially appear as a false religious leader, but rather as a political leader.

Third, as a **little horn**, the Antichrist's home country will be rather insignificant in the world. Some might suggest the label of **little horn** could refer to a minor official in a powerful country. But a **horn** in prophetic Scripture refers to a king or ruler of some

nation or empire. The reason the Rising Antichrist is described as a **little horn** is because of the nature of his home nation, not his position in that nation.

He is described later in Daniel as **another horn, which started small** [10] **but grew in power … until … it took away the daily sacrifice from the LORD, and his sanctuary was thrown down** (Dan 8:9-11 NIV). Accordingly, OT scholar E. J. Young noted here, "The meaning then is that from small beginnings the horn grew to great power." [11] The Antichrist will first emerge in the world as a **little horn** who will **start small** as probably the leader of a small or relatively minor country.

C) The Antichrist will come from the land of Magog

Ezek 38:2

What relatively minor country will the Antichrist initially be the leader of? Some have suggested he will come from Europe. [12] Accordingly, the popular *Left Behind Series* of fiction books portray the Antichrist as coming out of Romania and becoming the leader of the United Nations. On the other hand, the Antichrist's close association with Antiochus Epiphanes, who originated from Syria, suggests to some that he may initially arise from there. [13] Others have said he will come from Israel.

All of these views ignore the clear biblical evidence that the Antichrist will emerge from **Magog**. As discussed previously (ch. 5, sec. B), the following prophecy is about the Battle of Armageddon. We read:

> **The word of the LORD came to me: Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshek and Tubal; prophesy against him and say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, Gog, chief prince of Meshek and Tubal. I will turn you around, put hooks in your jaws and bring you out with your whole army—your horses, your horsemen fully armed, and a great horde with large and small shields, all of them brandishing their swords.** (Ezek 38:1-4, 8 NASB [14])

Revelation 16 is clear that the Antichrist will be leading the armies in this Battle at **Armageddon** (v. 16, cf. v. 14; 19:11-21). Therefore, **Gog** in the Ezekiel text is another biblical name for the Antichrist. [15] The prophecy states that he will be **of the land of Magog**, or from **Magog**. OT scholar Daniel Block correctly interprets this when he writes: "Gog's homeland is identified simply as *the land of Magog*." [16] As also explained previously, **Magog** refers to the ancient Scythian Empire:

> The *Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia* lists the following modern countries as belonging to ancient Scythia (Magog): Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan. Therefore, **Magog** today is located in Russia and several nations in its vicinity. (ch. 5, sec. B.1)

What can we deduce from these Scriptures? It would seem the Antichrist will **start small** as a **little horn** (Dan 7:8; 8:9) in a relatively minor country of **Magog** (Ezek 38:2). Therefore, as a **little horn** he will not begin as the leader of Russia. Rather, he will begin as the leader of one of the relatively minor nations in the vicinity of Russia.

But as noted above, the Antichrist's home country will not be a member of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition. This may help us further identify this country in **Magog**. Arguments were made previously that the SCO is a very good candidate to become the 10-nation Endtime Coalition (cf. ch. 6). If this is true, then it would seem the Antichrist will come from ancient **Magog**, but not from a nation currently in the SCO.

It was also previously explained that the following countries are both minor countries in ancient **Magog** and will be members of the SCO by 2024:

- Kazakhstan
- Kyrgyzstan
- Tajikistan
- Uzbekistan
- Belarus

That leaves the following relatively minor countries to be both in ancient **Magog**, but not currently a prospective member of the SCO, and therefore a better candidate to be the home country of the Rising Antichrist:

Good candidates for the home country of the Rising Antichrist if the SCO is the 10-nation Endtime Coalition

- Moldova
- Georgia
- Ukraine
- Turkmenistan
- Afghanistan

Indeed, if the Rising Antichrist were the leader of one of these countries, he would be a rather obscure and **little horn** from **Magog**. In addition, if the SCO becomes the 10-nation Endtime Coalition, then he would not be leading an SCO member nation, as is indicated in biblical prophecy (cf. Dan 7:8).

D) The Antichrist will be a Jew *Dan 11:37*

In Daniel 11:37 we read of the Antichrist:

> **He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall exalt himself above them all.** (NKJV)

For reasons provided below, the NKJV (cf. KJV) is a superior translation of this text. Granted, this is perhaps the most difficult verse in all of Daniel to correctly interpret. [17] The key phrase to be discussed here is **the God** [אֱלֹהִים *ĕlōhîm*] **of his fathers**.

There are two interpretations of what the Antichrist may show no **regard** for here. One is that he will show no **regard** for the pagan "gods" that his pagan **fathers** (ancestors) worshipped. Or second, he will show no **regard** for the Jewish "God" that his Jewish **fathers** (ancestors) worshipped.

If the correct translation is the latter, then Daniel is clearly saying the Antichrist will be of Jewish descent. Accordingly, one of the foremost Daniel scholars in the world, Paul J. Tanner notes: "If the phrase in Daniel 11:37 is translated "the God of his fathers,"

this would imply that the antichrist will be ethnically Jewish." [18] In this case, the prophecy would be saying that although the Antichrist will be a Jew, he will not be practicing the Jewish religion.

The foremost argument that the correct translation of Daniel 11:37a is pagan **gods**, is that only the KJV and NKJV translate it otherwise. Virtually all English versions translate [*ĕlōhîm*] here as **gods**. For example, the NASB reads: **He will show no regard for the** [pagan] **gods** [*ĕlōhîm*] **of his fathers** (cf. NIV, NLT, NET, ESV, HCSB, NRSV, NCV).

The confidence of these translators is evidenced by the fact that only the NASB is even willing to add a textual note that the Hebrew here could be translated **God**. [19] However, it can be confidently claimed that Daniel meant the Jewish **God** when he wrote that the Antichrist **will not regard the** *ĕlōhîm* **of his fathers**.

Of course, *ĕlōhîm* is used sometimes in the OT to refer to pagan **gods**. [20] But this is quite rare. The NASB lists the following uses for *ĕlōhîm*: **God** or **God's** (2340 times), **god**, **gods**, **goddess** (251 times). That means *ĕlōhîm* is used to refer to the Jewish **God** in about 90% of its uses in the OT. Therefore, based on this lexical data, it can be suggested there is about a 90% probability that Daniel was referring to the Jewish **God** when he used *ĕlōhîm*.

The fact that Daniel meant the one true Jewish **God** in 11:37a is demonstrated in several other ways. First, Daniel 11:36-39 has at least 6 references to false pagan **god**(**s**). In the middle of this text Daniel intentionally used the obvious Jewish phrase, **God <u>of his fathers</u>**. This seems to be a decisive issue in correctly translating Daniel 11:37a.

As Tanner notes: "This is a common expression in the OT (used at least forty-five times) that <u>always</u> means the [Jewish] Yahweh God of the Bible." [21] **God of his fathers** is saying the same thing as **the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob**, a phrase used many times in the OT to refer to the Jewish God (Exod 3:6).

Therefore, as a Jew who had carefully studied the OT Bible (cf. Dan 9:2), Daniel would <u>never</u> use the phrase *ĕlōhîm* **of his fathers** to refer to a pagan god. It is never used that way anywhere in the Bible. In fact, earlier in the book, Daniel wrote: **To You, O <u>God of</u>**

my fathers, I give thanks and praise (2:23 NASB), clearly referring to the Jewish **God**. [22]

Accordingly, all of the Early Church teachers such as Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Chrysostom, and Jerome, believed that the Antichrist would be a Jew. For all the reasons above, the eminent Evangelical Daniel scholar E. J. Young agreed with them, and concluded regarding Daniel's prediction that the Antichrist **will show no regard for the God of his fathers** (11:37):

> The phrase has a Jewish emphasis and has reference to the Jewish religion. The one who has no regard for this Jewish religion is himself a Jew, the Antichrist. I fully agree [that] "Here his Jewish descent becomes evident." [23]

There is additional convincing evidence in the Hebrew text of Daniel 11 that demonstrates Daniel intended to tell us the Antichrist will be a Jew. Those are discussed elsewhere. [24] Based on the above, a suggested translation of Daniel 11:37a would be: **He will show no regard for the God of his fathers**.

Beyond the textual reasons, there are biblical reasons to believe the Antichrist will be a Jew. As explained previously, a primary purpose of the Antichrist will be to imitate the real Christ (cf. ch. 7, sec. B). In fact, as discussed in a later chapter, the Antichrist will be the first and foremost False Christ who will be **saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many** (Matt 24:5 NASB; cf. ch. 10, sec. B.2). Surely being a Jew will be one reason the world believes he is Jesus **Christ** returned to Earth.

Likewise, to the Jews, the Antichrist will be **claiming "I am the Messiah," and will deceive many** Jews of this very thing (Matt 24:5 NIV; cf. ch. 10, sec. B.2). Especially Orthodox Jews in Israel would never accept someone **claiming "I am the Messiah**," and the fulfillment of OT prophecies, unless he is a Jew.

When Daniel wrote that the Antichrist **will show no regard for the God of his fathers**, he predicted that that the Antichrist will be a Jew by ancestry, but who will not practice the Jewish religion.

How then will he convince the Jews when he is **claiming, "I am the Messiah"** if he is not practicing the Jewish religion? First of all, as also explained in later chapters, he will be miraculously raised from the dead, and like all unbelievers in the world, **God** will

send them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie (2 Thess 2:11; cf. Rev 13:3-4; *BBP* chs. 11, 13).

The Antichrist's Resurrection, his Jewish ancestry, and his ability to enable the Jews to rebuild their temple and resume OT sacrifices, will certainly convince the Jews of his **claim, "I am the Messiah**.

E) The Antichrist will be a world-famous person *Rev 13:8*

In summary thus far, it seems the Antichrist will be a Jewish man who will initially **start small** as a **little horn** in **Magog** (Dan 7:8; 8:9; Ezek 38:2). This would seem to refer to being the leader of one of the relatively minor countries in the vicinity of Russia.

But eventually, this **little horn** will become the most worshipped and powerful person on Earth. Scripture predicts: **All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life** (Rev 13:8 NIV). How does a Jewish Antichrist rise from a **little horn** to being worshipped and reigning over the entire pagan world?

The event that will propel his worship the most will be his Resurrection. Revelation tells us that the **beast** will be **fatally wounded and then** come **back to life** (Rev 13:14 NLT). Then **the whole earth** will be **amazed and follow after the beast** (Rev 13:3 NASB).

Notice here that every single unbeliever living on the Earth will be **amazed** at this man's resurrection and will immediately **follow** him as their political leader and **worship** him as their spiritual and religious leader! How could this happen to the Jewish leader of a minor country in the world?

It would seem that even <u>before</u> his death and resurrection, the Rising Antichrist will be among the most famous and recognized people in the world. This seems necessary for his resurrection to have the impact it will have. It is doubtful that the death and resurrection of an obscure person, who is little known or recognized in the world, would have this kind of worldwide effect. How would the entire world know the resurrected man was the same one who was killed, if they did not know his face beforehand?

For example, the longest serving prime minister in Japanese history, Shinzo Abe, was assassinated in July of 2022. Did you notice? Would you have known what he looked like? And if undeniable proof were given to the world that Abe had been resurrected from the dead would **the whole earth** and **all inhabitants of the earth** immediately **follow after** him and **worship** a man that the world did not even know? Probably not.

Certainly, such a response is more likely if the person is someone already famous and greatly admired all over the world. It will only be because the Rising Antichrist will be famous worldwide, that the Resurrected Antichrist will immediately be **worshipped** by **all the people who belong to this world**.

F) A remarkable modern example of a man matching the biblical attributes of the Rising Antichrist *Volodymyr Zelenskyy*

Above, we have identified five biblical and rather unique and extraordinary attributes of the Rising Antichrist. These will enable us to recognize a reasonable candidate to become the Resurrected and confirmed Antichrist. In fact, for the first time in human history, there is a man who matches the above predictions about the Rising Antichrist.

Let us summarize the biblical data above on the Rising Antichrist. The clearest biblical attributes are these:

1) He will **start small** as a **little horn** (Dan 7:8; 8:9) and the leader of a relatively minor country.

2) He will come from **the land of Magog** (Ezek 38:2) which is the modern country of Russia and nations in its vicinity.

3) The Rising Antichrist's home country will not be a member of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition (cf. Dan 7:8, 24).

4) He will be a Jew (Dan 11:37).

5) Even though he will be the leader of one of these minor countries in **Magog** (Ezek 38:2), he will become very famous and admired in the whole world because when he is killed and resurrected **the whole earth** and **all inhabitants of the earth** will be **amazed**

and immediately **follow after** him and **worship** him (Rev 13:3, 8 NASB).

Initially, it could be difficult to imagine how the Jewish leader of a relatively insignificant nation in the territory of ancient **Magog** could become so famous, admired, and influential in the world. How many leaders of minor countries in **Magog** can you even name? Do you know who is currently leading the countries of Moldova, Georgia, or Turkmenistan? Probably not.

But there is a Jewish leader of a relatively minor country in **Magog** that has become one of the most admired, influential, and famous people in the whole world. He is the leader of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy. In fact, he fits the biblical data discussed above so well, it might be supposed that there was an intentional leading up to this point.

On the contrary, Daniel 7:8, 24; 8:9, 24; 11:39; Ezekiel 38:2, and Revelation 13:3, 8 are the clearest passages of Scripture we have about the emergence of the Rising Antichrist. Therefore, there are very good reasons that are worthy of serious consideration to suggest that Zelenskyy could eventually be confirmed as the Antichrist.

First, Volodymyr Zelenskyy has risen as a **little horn** (Dan 7:8) and leader of a relatively minor country. Before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, most people in the world did not even know where Ukraine was, or who Zelenskyy was. Ukraine has ranked quite low in terms of economic or political power in the world.

Second, Zelenskyy was born in **Magog**, specifically Kryvyy Rih, Ukraine. As noted above, Ukraine is included within the geographical limits of the ancient Scythian Empire and **Magog** (cf. graphic in ch. 5, sec. B.1). Therefore, Zelenskyy is a **little horn** that has emerged from **the land of Magog** (Ezek 38:2).

Third, it was noted above that the Rising Antichrist's home country will not be a member of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition (cf. Dan 7:8, 24). If the SCO turns out to be the Coalition, then this fits Ukraine. [25] Because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, it will probably never voluntarily join anything Russia is a leading member of. This would include the SCO if it becomes the 10-nation Endtime Coalition. This is why Ukraine has formally applied to join both the

European Union and NATO, which are economic and military challengers to the SCO.

Fourth, Zelenskyy was born a Russian Jew. This is actually quite unique. Only an estimated .2% (2 tenths of 1%) of Ukraine's population are Jewish. [26] Actually being a Jew anywhere within the geography of ancient **Magog** is very rare. For example, the Jewish population of Russia is also about .2% (2 tenths of 1%). [27] Compare this with America where Jews are about 3% of the population, 15 times the estimated numbers in **Magog**. [28]

A reporter from *The Times of Israel* interviewed the Jewish rabbi in the Zelenskyy's hometown. The rabbi said Zelenskyy's father is "a highly engaged member of the Jewish community," and his mother attends "synagogue often." [29] But Volodymyr himself rarely mentions his Jewish identity and does not practice the Jewish faith. In the same article we read:

> Zelensky has posted frequently on social media about his love for his parents. But he deals differently with his Jewish roots, which he has neither denied nor frequently highlighted. In one exchange typical of his dry humor, he told an interviewer: "The fact that I am Jewish barely makes number 20 in my long list of faults." [30]

As noted above, Daniel clearly identified the Antichrist as a Jew who **will show no regard for the** Jewish **God of his fathers** (11:37). Zelenskyy has obviously abandoned the Jewish faith of his parents and fulfills this prediction rather perfectly.

However, those who know Zelenskyy claim he has high moral standards. One of his senior advisers has said, "I've always thought he is a person who has a profound sense of right and wrong." [31] However, "In responding to a petition demanding equal rights for same-sex couples, Zelenskyy echoed the view that family does not depend on sex and asked the Prime Minister of Ukraine to review partnerships for same-sex couples." [32] We would expect the Antichrist to appear to have strong morals, but appeal to worldly ones as well.

Fifth, Zelenskyy is, of course, very famous and greatly admired all over the world. This is especially true in Europe and Israel. Because of Russia's shocking invasion of Ukraine, and Zelenskyy's

remarkable leadership in the war, he has become perhaps the most admired and famous person in the world.

Of course, he has extraordinary charisma and public appeal. If you watch any interviews of him, you will probably find him to be a very likeable person. For example, David Letterman interviewed him in Ukraine for Netflix, and he came off as the kind of guy you would like to have as a friend. [33]

Immediately after Russia's recent invasion of Ukraine, one reporter wrote of Zelenskyy's persuasiveness:

> He changed the global response to Russia's aggression this week in five minutes. Some world leaders were reportedly hesitant to impose steep sanctions on Russia on Thursday night, after the first day of the country's war on Ukraine. But after meeting with Zelensky by videoconference and hearing him deliver a five-minute, emotional appeal for aid, they changed course. [34]

And because of Zelenskyy's "five-minute appeal" those "hesitant world leaders" not only decided to "impose steep sanctions on Russia," but eventually give him many billions of dollars' worth of military and humanitarian aid. And that kind of influence over world leaders has continued to grow. According to one report, over 40 different countries have contributed a total of over $180 billion to support Ukraine. [35] That kind of worldwide response to one man is unprecedented in human history.

Zelenskyy has had the great privilege of being invited by numerous countries to address their legislative assemblies, including the United States, Canada, Israel, Japan, the UK, the EU, NATO, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Finland, Norway, Romania, Poland, and Australia. One recent headline read: "Zelenskyy Dominates the G-7 Summit" of the richest countries in the world. One resource remarked:

> Zelenskyy has gained worldwide recognition as the wartime leader of Ukraine during the Russian invasion. Historian Andrew Roberts has compared him to Winston Churchill. *Harvard Political Review* said that Zelenskyy "has harnessed the power of social media to become history's first truly online wartime leader, bypassing traditional gatekeepers as he uses

> the internet to reach out to the people." He has been described as a national hero or a "global hero" by many commentators, including publications such as *The Hill, Deutsche Welle*, *Der Spiegel* and *USA Today*. [36]

In America, Zelenskyy was described in *The Atlantic* "as having [given] the world a Jewish Hero." [37] A Pew Research Center poll found that 72% of Americans would have confidence in Zelenskyy's handling of international affairs, even though he has only been the leader of a relatively minor country for a short period of time. [38]

In 2022 Zelenskyy received some of America's highest awards including the Ronald Reagan Freedom Award, the John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage, and the Philadelphia Liberty Medal. [39] A 2022 headline read: "Volodymyr Zelenskyy Wins the 2022 *TIME* Magazine Reader Poll for the Most Influential Person in the World." [40] A short time later, another headline appeared: "Volodymyr Zelenskyy is *TIME's* 2022 Person of the Year." In the magazine's explanation for the award, it said:

> This year's choice was the most clear-cut in memory. Whether the battle for Ukraine fills one with hope or with fear, Volodymyr Zelensky galvanized the world in a way we haven't seen in decades… daily speeches delivered remotely to the likes of houses of Parliament and the World Bank, and the Grammy Awards, Ukraine's President was everywhere. His information offensive shifted the geopolitical system, setting off a wave of action that swept the globe.
>
> In a world that had come to be defined by its divisiveness, there was a coming together around this cause, around this country [Ukraine] that some outside it might not be able to find on a map. At the U.N., 141 countries condemned the invasion… The former entertainer understood innately that attention is the planet's most valuable currency and all but cornered the global market. He did this through meticulous image-building and repetition in his message…
>
> Zelensky's command of the weapons of the digital age meant that business leaders and politicians everywhere were forced to take notice and take a stand, whether they liked it or not…

> For proving that courage can be as contagious as fear, for stirring people and nations to come together in defense of freedom, for reminding the world of the fragility of … peace—Volodymyr Zelensky [is] *TIME's* 2022 Person of the Year. [41]

If such a global hero were killed, the entire world would be shocked and devasted. And this is a very real possibility. One resource relates on this topic:

> According to Ukrainian government officials and news sources, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has survived a number of assassination and kidnapping attempts by Russian or pro-Russian agents during the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine… In early March 2022, the head of Ukraine's National Security Council, Oleksiy Danilov, said that Zelenskyy had survived three assassination attempts in one week. [42]

The fact that Zelenskyy has not already been killed seems to be a possible indication of supernatural protection. But what if a future assassination attempt is successful? And then what if Zelenskyy fulfills the prophecy of the **beast who was fatally wounded** then miraculously **came back to life** (Rev 13:14)? Volodymyr Zelenskyy would uniquely be recognized by most of the world and undeniably confirmed to be the prophesied Antichrist.

It is understandable if the reader remains skeptical of the conclusions above. Admittedly, as of this writing the author cannot find anyone even on the Internet who is suggesting Zelenskyy could be the Antichrist, except Russian Orthodox priests in Russia who are supporting Putin's war in Ukraine.

But judge for yourself. Are the interpretations and applications of Daniel, Ezekiel, and Revelation argued above reasonable? Can you argue or imagine a better interpretation? Have the above five criteria for identifying the Rising Antichrist been derived from a careful and accurate exegesis of Scripture?

If so, then ponder the very small probability of one man randomly matching all of these biblical criteria for the Rising Antichrist.

In light of biblical prophecy, it is extraordinary that Volodymyr Zelenskyy is very uniquely the Jewish, world-famous, greatly

admired, powerfully persuasive, and extraordinarily influential leader of a relatively minor country in ancient **Magog**. If the SCO turns out to be the 10-nation Endtime Coalition, then Zelenskyy would fulfill 5 biblical attributes of the Rising Antichrist. It is because these biblical criteria are so specific and unique that Zelenskyy is the first person in human history to match them. No one else has even come close.

It seems that because of a lack of careful Bible study, Christians do not realize how unique and extraordinary Zelenskyy really is in light of biblical prophecy. Given what Volodymyr Zelenskyy has already accomplished, it is suggested there is a 60% probability that he will turn out to be the predicted Antichrist. Therefore, Christians should be obeying Christ's command to **"Watch!"** (Mark 13:37) and monitor Zelenkyy's life for further confirmation.

For example, if he continues to **succeed in everything he does** (Dan 8:24), including being completely victorious over the Russian invasion of his country, then this would seem to increase the probability that Volodymyr Zelenskyy will turn out to be the Antichrist. This will be discussed further in the next chapter.

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[1] *Webster's.*

[2] **Fully** reflects the Greek word *apakalyphthē* which means, "to cause something to be fully known" (*BDAG*, underlining added). It should be distinguished from something simply being revealed.

[3] For more on the claim that the Antichrist will be a Jew, celibate, or a homosexual see *Additional Studies on the Endtimes*, ch. 14.

[4] For an explanation of this calculation see "Nero as the Antichrist" online at https://penelope.uchicago.edu/~grout/encyclopaedia_romana/gladiators/nero.html

[5] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, V.30.3.

[6] F.F. Bruce, "Antichrist in the Early Church" in *A Mind for What Matters: Collected Essays of F. F. Bruce* (Eerdmans, 1990), 196.

[7] George Salmon, *Historical Introduction to the Study of the Books of the New Testament* (London, 1889]), 233.

[8] Walvoord writes another suggestion about the meaning of the beast's mark:

> Endless speculation has also risen over the number 666, describing the beast out of the sea in Revelation 13:18. The most natural and simple explanation of this number, however, is that the beast is characterized by the number six, just falling short of the number seven, and signifying that he is only a man after all. Possibly the threefold occurrence of the number six is in vague imitation of the Trinity, formed by his association with the devil and the false prophet. (*Rev*, loc. 460-463)

[9] **As I was thinking about the ten horns, there was another one, a little horn. It was rising up among the ten horns and three of them were uprooted by it. And there were eyes in this horn, like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great and boastful things.**

The suggested translation basically reflects the NIV. **Thinking** translates the Aramaic *sekal* which means "consider, contemplate" (*NASEC*). The NLT **looking** is less accurate.

Rising up translates the Aramaic *cliq* which means "ascend" (*NASEC*).

Eyes in this horn is the literal text (cf. NASB text note).

[10] The literal Aramaic in Dan 8:9 is expressed in the NASB: **Out of one of them** [the Greek Empire] **came forth a rather small horn** [from Syria] **which grew exceedingly great.** Most clearly this refers to Antiochus Ephiphanes in the 2nd century B.C. But vs. 10-11 quickly identify this prophecy as also applying to the future fulfillment of the Antichrist.

Therefore, the text confirms the Antichrist will also begin small. The NASB implies what the NIV reflects more clearly: **Out of one of them came another horn, <u>which started small</u> but grew in power.**

Walvoord agrees with this description of Antichrist's beginning, stating: "The horn, small in the beginning, grows 'exceedingly great'" (*Dan*, 185). Young writes on the Hebrew word *mitstseirah* "little" used here:

> The Hebrew is very difficult. As it stands it can probably best be translated, *there went forth one horn from (the state of being) little…* The meaning then is that from small beginnings the horn grew to great power. (170)

[11] Young, 170.

[12] The belief that the Antichrist will come from Europe is based on the belief he will come from the geographical location and scope of the ancient Roman Empire. The <u>disconnect</u> between the Roman Empire and the Antichrist's Beast Empire was previously discussed in ch. 4, sec. C.4.

[13] For more on Antichrist's close association with Antiochus Epiphanes see *Additional Studies on the Endtimes*, ch. 3.

[14] The prophecy adds that **Gog** will be **the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal** (Ezek 38:2 NASB). It is suggested this reflects more of the Wrathful Antichrist after he is ruling large portions of the world. For

arguments supporting the NASB translation **prince of Rosh** (Ezek 38:2, 3) see *BBP* ch. 5, sec. B.2 and the endnotes there.

[15] There seems to be surprisingly little discussion in Christian scholarly resources that make the connection between the Antichrist and **Gog**. One small reference is Block in his commentary on Ezekiel. He writes of Revelation 19:17-21: "Although the passage [in Revelation 16] never mentions Gog by name, the beast certainly represents him" (491). Likewise, MacArthur is willing to make one small statement: "In Ezekiel 38–39, the name Gog describes the final Antichrist" (*Rev*, 241).

[16] Block, 433, underlining added. Likewise, *K&D* comment here:

> Gog of the land of Magog, is an abbreviated expression for "Gog <u>from</u> the land of Magog;" and אֶרֶץ is not to be taken in connection with פָּנֶיךָ שִׂים, as the local object ("toward Gog, to the land of Magog"), as Ewald and Hävernick would render it; since it would be very difficult in that case to explain the fact that גּוֹג is afterwards resumed in the apposition וגו׳ נָשִׂיא.

That the Antichrist will originate from **the land of Magog** is supported by descriptions of him coming from **the north** for the Battle of Armageddon or to attack Endtime Babylon (cf. Ezek 39:2; Dan 8:9; 11:40; Joel 2:20; Jer 50:2-3, 9, 41-42, 51:47-48).

[17] One difficulty in interpreting Dan 11:37 is the odd claim by many scholars that none of Dan chapter 11 applies to the future Antichrist. For a refutation of this see *Additional Studies on the Endtimes*, ch. 16. For reasons given there, the discussion of Dan 11:37 here will proceed on the virtual fact that Dan 11:31-39 clearly and ultimately refer to the Antichrist of which Antiochus was only a foreshadow.

[18] Tanner, 698.

[19] It is not surprising that rather liberal/critical scholars like Collins claim the meaning here is pagan **gods** (386). But even a conservative Evangelical scholar like Walvoord supports this view (273-4).

[20] Even Daniel used *ĕlōhîm* to refer to a pagan **god** at the very beginning of the book where we read:

> **And the Lord** [*Adonay*] **delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of** [the Jewish] **God** [*ĕlōhîm*]**. These he carried off to the temple of his** [pagan] **god** [*ĕlōhîm*] **in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his** [pagan]**god** [*ĕlōhîm*] (Dan 1:2).

Notice that in this one verse, *ĕlōhîm* is used to refer to <u>both</u> the one true **God** and a false pagan **god**! However, as documented in this section, this is relatively quite rare in the OT.

[21] Ibid. Tanner has italics instead of underlining.

[22] It is admitted that Daniel does not use the word *ĕlōhîm* in 2:23 where we read, **To You, O God** [*ĕlāh*] **of my fathers, I give thanks and**

praise (NASB). Because Dan chapter 2 was originally written in Aramaic, Daniel used the word *ĕlāh*. It is virtually a synonym for the Hebrew *ĕlōhîm*. Like its Hebrew version, it can refer to either the Jewish God or pagan gods. And like *ĕlōhîm* its overwhelmingly used to refer to the former. The NASB translates *ĕlāh* as follows: God (74 times), god (6), gods (15). Accordingly, "This is the usual word for God in Biblical Aramaic" (*TWOT*, 989). Therefore, *ĕlāh* was the only possible Aramaic synonym for the Hebrew *ĕlōhîm* which Daniel would have certainly used if he had written chapters 2-7 in Hebrew. This is confirmed by the fact that Daniel used *ĕlāh* in a phrase referring to the **God of my ancestors** (2:23), which as noted in this section is unmistakably a reference to the Jewish God.

[23] Young, 249. Young quotes A. C. Gaebelein, another Evangelical Daniel scholar who interpreted Dan 11:37 as a reference to the Jewish God and that the Antichrist would be a Jew. See also the more recent commentary by J. Paul Tanner who agrees.

[24] There is additional convincing evidence that Daniel meant the Jewish **God of his fathers** in analyzing the text of Daniel itself. That analysis is provided in *Additional Studies on the Endtimes*, ch. 14. Scholars who disagree will be addressed there as well.

[25] It is admitted that neither Moldova nor Georgia is likely to join the SCO either, as their relationships with Russia are rather hostile. See

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moldova%E2%80%93Russiarelations.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgia_%E2%80%93Russiarelations

Afghanistan already has "Observer" status in the SCO. Regarding Turkmenistan:

> Turkmenistan has previously declared itself a permanently neutral country, which was recognized by a resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, thus precluding its membership in the SCO. However, Turkmenistan head of state has been attending SCO summits since 2007 as a guest attendee.
>
> https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shanghai_Cooperation_Organisation

[26] It is estimated that the population of Ukraine is 41 million and there are an estimated 91,000 people with Jewish parents and of Jewish ancestry. This would equal .2% of the population. See online at: https://www.jpr.org.uk/countries/how-many-jews-in-ukraine

[27] The estimated population of Russia is 146 million and there are an estimated 290,000 people with Jewish parents and of Jewish ancestry. Again, this equals about .2% of the population. https://www.jpr.org.uk/countries/how-many-jews-in-russia

[28] America is estimated to have a population of 332 million with about 10 million people having Jewish parents and of Jewish ancestry. This would

equal about 3% of the population. https://www.jpr.org.uk/countries/how-many-jews-in-united-states

[29] https://www.timesofisrael.com/zelenskys-parents/

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Online at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volodymyr_Zelenskyy

[33] For Letterman's interview with Zelenskyy, see online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liooTXAF5Xo

[34] Cramer.

[35] https://www.ifw-kiel.de/topics/war-against-ukraine/ukraine-support-tracker/

[36] Wikipedia.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Online at https://time.com/6177642/2022-time100-reader-poll-winner-volodymyr-Zelenskyy

[41] https://time.com/person-of-the-year-2022-volodymyr-zelensky-ukraine-choice /

[42] See more on Zelenskyy assassination attempts here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assassination_attempts_on_Volodymyr_Zelenskyy#cite_ref-9

Chapter 9

Confirming the Rising Antichrist

The remarkable convergence of evidence in our world that the beginning of the Endtimes may be near

Contents

A) The Rising Antichrist "will succeed in everything he does" (Dan 8:24)

B) The Rising Antichrist will "uproot" 3 leaders of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition (Dan 7:8)

C) The Rising Antichrist will successfully lead the world to a period of peace

D) The remarkable convergence of evidence in our world that the beginning of the Endtimes may be near

Primary Points

- Biblical prophecy predicts the Antichrist will be extraordinarily successful even in his early career.
- Volodymyr Zelenskyy has already demonstrated this kind of success in the way he became the President of Ukraine, how he has become admired and famous worldwide, and how his country has been able to withstand the second most powerful military in the world.
- If Zelenskyy succeeds in fulfilling his boasts that Ukraine will completely defeat the Russian military, this will be more evidence that he is fulfilling biblical prophecy that the Antichrist **will succeed in everything he does**.
- The fact that Zelenskyy is accomplishing all of this, **but not by his own power**, also seems to fulfill biblical prophecies about the Rising Antichrist.
- Biblical prophecy predicts that rather early in Antichrist's career he will somehow cause the downfall of **three kings** in the 10-nation Endtime Coalition.
- If Zelenskyy's successes were somehow connected to the overthrow of the current dictators of Russia, Belarus, and Iran,

it would be truly remarkable and more evidence that he is fulfilling biblical prophecy.

- Do not be surprised if Putin uses a tactical nuclear weapon in Ukraine.
- The prophetic Scriptures indicate that the Rising Antichrist will emerge in the world as a leader of peace. If Zelensky is successful in doing this, it will be more confirming evidence that he will be revealed as the Antichrist.
- The SCO currently matches at least 7 biblical prophecies about the 10-nation Endtime Coalition. Zelenskyy has already matched three biblical prophecies about the Rising Antichrist. Therefore, there is a remarkable convergence of evidence that the beginning of the Endtimes may be upon us.
- If Zelensky fulfills additional biblical prophecies, Christians need to be preparing in practical, spiritual, and serious ways for the wars, famines, and plagues of The Beginning of Birth Pains and the following Greatest Persecution.
- If God intends the SCO to be the prophesied 10-nation Endtime Coalition, and Zelenskyy to be the Antichrist, then we could expect the Endtimes to begin in July of 2024 and Antichrist's Resurrection on Easter of 2025.

A) The Rising Antichrist "will succeed in everything he does" (Dan 8:24)

Many attributes of the Antichrist are described in the following text from Daniel:

> **A fierce king, a master of intrigue, <u>will rise to power</u>. He will become very strong, <u>but not by his own power</u>. He will cause a shocking amount of destruction and <u>succeed in everything he does</u>.**
>
> **He will destroy powerful leaders and devastate the holy people. He will be a master of deception and will become arrogant; he will destroy many without warning. He will even take on the Prince of princes in battle, but he will be broken, though not by human power.** (Dan 8:23-25 NLT)

There are many things said about the Antichrist here. First, his initiation of the devasting wars and **destruction** of The Beginning of Birth Pains. Second, his persecution of **the holy people** (literally, "the people of the saints"). Third, the Antichrist's **battle** with **the Prince** Christ at Armageddon where **he will be broken, though not by human power**.

In addition, as discussed in the previous chapter (8), some things in this passage are rather useless in identifying the Antichrist (cf. sec. A.2). This would include the fact that he will be **a fierce king, a master of intrigue**. Again, this could describe a lot of people.

However, the reference to Antichrist's **rise to power** probably refers to his initial emergence as the Rising Antichrist. The prophecy adds that his initial **rise to power** will be enabled by the fact that **He will … succeed in everything he does**. Likewise, a few verses earlier it says **The horn** Antichrist **succeeded in everything it did** (Dan 8:12 NLT). In other words, biblical prophecy predicts the Antichrist will be extraordinarily, even supernaturally successful, even in his early career.

What will the supernatural and extraordinary success of the Rising Antichrist look like?

First, it may be the extraordinary way in which he becomes the leader of a minor country in **Magog** (Ezek 38:2; cf. Dan 7:8). As noted in the previous chapter (8, sec. E), Zelenskyy's election as President of Ukraine was certainly extraordinary. As merely the actor in a TV show he received 73% of the vote and defeated an incumbent.

Second, the Antichrist's extraordinary success could be how he becomes so famous and admired in the world. Accordingly, Zelenskyy's current rise to world-wide fame and influence is arguably already unprecedented in human history.

Third, the biblical prediction that **He will … succeed in everything he does** (Dan 8:24) may be fulfilled in extraordinary military victories. Daniel 7 gives us another description of the Rising Antichrist where we read: **After them** [the **ten kings**] **another king will <u>arise</u>** (Dan 7:24). **Arise** translates an Aramaic word (*qûm*) that can mean "victory in war or struggle." [1] The Ukrainian

military's astonishing success thus far in the war would seem to be another indication Zelenskyy is the Rising Antichrist who will **succeed in everything he does**.

Before the war, Russia was ranked the #2 military power in the world. Only the United States was considered to have a more powerful military on Earth. Ukraine, on the other hand, was ranked #22 in military power. [2] This is why the best military strategists in the world believed Russia would defeat Ukraine in less than a month when it invaded. [3] The success of Zelenskyy's military has greatly surprised every military expert in the world.

Nevertheless, Zelenskyy has vowed from the very beginning of the war to take back all the land that Putin's forces have invaded and occupied in his country. This includes Crimea where Russia has amassed strongly entrenched military forces since 2014. Military experts agree regaining Crimea would be very difficult. [4] Putin may stop at nothing to defend it, including the use of tactical nuclear weapons. In addition, many of Ukraine's current supporters in America and Europe may not support Zelenskyy's desire to retake Crimea because of the risk and cost of doing so.

None of this has mattered to Zelenskyy. He has not wavered from his vow to be completely victorious over the Russian military, including retaking Crimea from Putin.

As noted in the previous chapter, the Antichrist is described in Daniel as **a king of bold face** (8:23 ESV). Other versions translate the Aramaic here as referring to his character as **insolent** (NASB, CSB) which means "cocky boldness."

While not a definitive attribute to identify the Antichrist with, it certainly describes Zelenskyy. Likewise, Daniel wrote, **"I continued to watch because of the <u>boastful</u> words the horn** Antichrist **was speaking"** (Dan 7:11 NIV; cf. v. 20). This obviously refers to what the Antichrist will say when **He will speak against the Most High** in the **abomination that causes desolation** (Dan 7:25; 9:27; cf. Rev 13:5-6). But it probably refers to a characteristic the Antichrist will display throughout his career, even as a **little horn** and the Rising Antichrist.

Listen to Zelenskyy's speeches and you will hear one of the most confident and bold political figures in modern history.

If Zelenskyy is able to take back all of Ukraine's territories, including Crimea, from the 2nd most powerful military in the world, then he will indeed be a person who is extraordinarily **succeed**ing **in everything he does**. And such military victories may be more evidence that he will eventually be confirmed as the Antichrist.

The prophecy about the Rising Antichrist adds that **He will become very strong, <u>but not by his own power</u>** (Dan 8:24). Likewise, in the next verse we read: **Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power** (v. 25). The statements **not by his own power** (v. 24) and **not by human power** are both referring most likely to supernatural **power**.

Likewise, the statements **He will become very strong** (v. 24a), and he will **succeed in everything he does** (v. 24b) are probably both referring to these things occurring by supernatural power. The Antichrist will both **succeed in everything he does** and **be destroyed** by supernatural powers.

Zelenskyy's future military success could be a fulfillment of this prophecy about the Rising Antichrist. The prophecy says, **He will become very strong** (probably including militarily), and **succeed in everything he does … <u>but not by his own power</u>**. Again, at the beginning of the war, Ukraine was ranked the #22 military in the world. But what has occurred since then?

As noted in the previous chapter, "over 40 different countries have contributed a total of over $180 billion to support Ukraine," with the majority of the aid being military weapons. Indeed, Volodymyr Zelenskyy has **become very strong**, **but not by his own power**.

It is possible this prophecy remarkably refers to the extraordinary way that Zelenskyy has **become very strong** militarily by the generous contributions of other countries, including the most powerful nation and military in the world, the United States.

However, the **power** the prophecy is speaking of is also speaking of supernatural **power**. How would the support of over 40 different countries be caused by supernatural **power**? We need to remember, **the whole** pagan **world**, including its military power and its politicians, are **under the control of the evil one** (1 John

5:19 NIV). **All the kingdoms of the world and their glory** and their power and their pagan politicians ultimately belong to **the devil** (Matt 4:8 NLT).

Therefore, the extraordinary, (really historically unprecedented) military support that the world is giving Zelenskyy would seem to be occurring by the supernatural power of the demonic realm.

If Zelenskyy militarily **succeed**s **in everything he does**, it will probably not be merely by human **flesh-and-blood** power, but with the power of **evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world … mighty powers in this dark world … evil spirits in the heavenly places** (Eph 6:12 NLT). And again, that will be more biblical evidence that Volodymyr Zelenskyy will be eventually confirmed to be the Antichrist.

B) The Rising Antichrist will "uproot" 3 leaders of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition (Dan 7:8)

The Rising Antichrist's supernatural ability to **succeed in everything he does** (Dan 8:24) in both political and military victories, will include the fulfillment of another remarkable and important prediction in Daniel chapter 7. He writes:

> **As I was thinking about the ten horns, there was another one, a little horn. It was rising up among the ten horns and three of them were uprooted by it.** (Dan 7:8 [5])

Daniel later comments:

> **I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell--the horn that looked more imposing than the others** (7:20 NIV).

Finally, for a third time, the **uproot**ing of these **three kings** [6] is mentioned when Daniel received this explanation:

> **The ten horns are ten kings who will be a part of this kingdom** [Antichrist's Beast Empire]**. After them another king will arise** [the Antichrist]**, different from the earlier**

> **ones; he will subdue three kings** [in the 10-nation Endtime Coalition]**.** (Dan 7:24 [7])

This is an important and very specific prophecy. It's intended importance is demonstrated by the fact that Scripture describes it three times. Daniel specifically says he **wanted to know about** this vision of the Antichrist making **three** kings fall (v. 20). So should we. [8]

As noted in the previous chapter, describing the Antichrist as **rising up** seems to reflect the initial emergence of the Rising Antichrist as **a little horn** (v. 8). Also as already discussed, these prophecies suggest the 10-nation Endtime Coalition will already be established before the Antichrist will be **rising up among the ten horns** (cf. ch. 4, sec. B.1).

But notice the change in how the Antichrist is described in verse 8 and 20. In the former he is **a little horn**, but in verse 20 he has become **the horn that looked more imposing than the others**. Again, this suggests that initially the Rising Antichrist will begin as **another horn, which started small** (Dan 8:9 NIV). But by the time he is **uproot**ing **three kings** in the 10-nation Coalition, he will be **more imposing than the others**.

In summary, this prophecy predicts that even as a **rising … horn**, the Antichrist **will arise and will subdue three kings** (v. 24) in the 10-nation Endtime Coalition. Again, this is a very specific prophecy, and its fulfillment would be a significant indication that the Endtimes have begun. [9]

What will this prophecy look like when it is fulfilled? First, let us note what it does not mean. It does not mean the Rising Antichrist will replace these **three kings**, or take over **three** countries in the 10-nation Endtime Coalition. As explained previously, the 10-nation Endtime Coalition will remain intact until it is defeated at the Battle of Armageddon (cf. Rev 17:14; ch. 4, sec. B.5).

This means the Coalition will continue to have **ten kings** (Rev 17:12; cf. vs. 12-14) separate from the Antichrist throughout the Endtimes. [10] Therefore, while the **three kings** themselves even might be killed, their nations will continue with leaders who replace them and are acceptable to the Rising Antichrist.

Therefore, what will the Antichrist do to **the three kings** in the 10-nation Endtime Coalition? In verse 8 it says he will **uproot** (*ăqar*) them. In verse 20 Daniel saw that they **fell** (*nephal*). [11] [12] In verse 24 we read the Antichrist **will subdue** [*shephel*] **three kings** (NIV, NASB, NLT). [13] Essentially, this is predicting that these **three kings** will be removed from their positions of power and authority over their nations. Therefore, the prophecy in Daniel 7:8, 20, 24 predicts that rather early in Antichrist's career **he will subdue** or cause the downfall of **three kings** in the 10-nation Endtime Coalition.

Therefore, it is remarkable to note the following about these three leaders: Vladimir Putin of Russia, Alexander Lukashenko of Belarus, and Ali Khamenei of Iran:

1) Their nations are scheduled to be members of the 10-nation SCO by July of 2024 (cf. ch. 6, sec. C).

2) Their countries are among the very few in the world, (that we know of), that are currently militarily supporting Russia's invasion of Ukraine. [14]

3) Even though these leaders have been among the most enduring and entrenched dictators in the world, their positions are currently threatened, and losing their war against Zelenskyy's Ukraine could contribute to their downfall.

Regarding point 2 above, Belarus and Iran are among the very few countries in the world being reported to be militarily supporting Russia's attack on Ukraine. Belarus has uniquely allowed Russia to use its country to attack Ukraine. This includes staging Russian troops and tanks for Putin's invasion, the use of airfields to launch airstrikes, and Belarus' military installations from which to launch artillery and missiles into Ukraine. [15] Putin recently even moved tactical nuclear weapons into Belarus. [16]

Other satellite countries of Russia, including Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan are normally supportive of Russia. But none of these countries and their leaders have supported Putin's attack on Ukraine, and some of them have publicly denounced it. Except for Alexander Lukashenko in Belarus.

Iran has uniquely supported Russia's attack on Ukraine by providing military drones that have killed many Ukrainian civilians. [17] As the *Jerusalem Post* reported recently, "Iran, once a junior partner [of Russia] in Syria, is now the main [foreign] supplier of Russia's military effort in Ukraine." [18]

Let us note another biblical prophecy that is related to all of this. The Bible predicts that rather early in Antichrist's career, the **ten kings** of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition **will give their power and authority to the beast** Antichrist (Rev 17:12-13 NIV).

If the SCO turns out to be the 10-nation Endtime Coalition, and Zelenskyy turns out to be the Antichrist, then the current leaders of Russia, Belarus, and Iran would probably have to be removed before such an alliance could occur. All of these leaders are currently supporting the war against Ukraine and adamantly opposed to Zelenskyy's success. And all of this is precisely why Zelenskyy may be the cause of the downfall of these long time dictators. It would seem that only new leaders of Russia, Belarus, and Iran would **give their power and authority to the beast** Antichrist, if it turns out to be Zelenskyy.

Regarding point 3 above, there is evidence that the longtime dictatorships of Putin, Lukashenko, and Khamenei may be **uprooted** soon. Putin has ruled Russia for almost 25 years. Lukashenko in Belarus has ruled for over 30 years (since 1994), the longest of any other president in Europe. Accordingly, Lukashenko has been called "the last dictator in Europe." Khamenei in Iran has essentially led the country for over 40 years. His rule over Iran is the longest of any leader in the entire Middle East. And his rule is also a powerful dictatorship.

If Zelenskyy's successes were somehow connected to the overthrow of these three enduring dictators in a relatively short period of time, it would be truly remarkable and more evidence that he is fulfilling biblical prophecy.

Current events suggest all of this is quite possible. Several experts, including those within Russia itself, are predicting that losing the war in Ukraine would lead to the political collapse of Vladimir Putin. [19] Perhaps even his execution. Likewise, there are

reports of unprecedented protests against the dictatorships of Lukashenko in Belarus [20] and Khamenei in Iran. [21] For example, a recent report in the *Atlantic* stated:

> The investments of Russian companies keep dictators in power in Minsk [Belarus], in Caracas [Venezuela], in Tehran [Iran]. A Ukrainian victory would immediately inspire people fighting for human rights and the rule of law, wherever they are.
>
> In a recent conversation in Washington, a Belarusian activist spoke about his organization's plans to reactivate the Belarusian opposition movement. For the moment, it is still working in secret, underground. "Everyone is waiting for the counteroffensive," [of Ukraine against Russia] he said... Belarusians, Venezuelans, Iranians, and others around the world whose dictatorships are propped up by the Russians—they are all waiting for the counteroffensive too… Ukraine gets a chance to alter geopolitics for a generation. [22]

If Zelenskyy is victorious over these dictators, then he may call for their removal in retribution for their attack on Ukraine. In fact, Zelenskyy has repeatedly claimed that everyone responsible for especially the death of Ukrainian civilians in the war will be punished.

Such a demand may be helped by the extraordinary hatred the world has for especially Russia and Iran. Their unity in attacking Ukraine has made them and their leaders even more hated. To be "Russian" or "Iranian" has become a curse word in our world. No nation of people, including Russians, Belarusians, and Iranians, desire to be so hated by the rest of the world. Therefore, it will not be surprising if the people living in these countries will support Zelenskyy's demand for the removal of their current leaders if he defeats Russia in the war.

If Zelensky is responsible in some way for their downfall, then it would be very reasonable to suggest this would be a fulfillment of the biblical prophecy the Antichrist **will arise** (*qûm*) through "victory in war or struggle" to **uproot … three kings** (Dan 7:8, 24) in the 10-nation Endtime Coalition. It is remarkable that three leaders of the 10-nation SCO, a possible candidate to be the 10-

nation Endtime Coalition, will have their longtime dictatorships threatened if Zelenskyy is victorious over their military attacks on Ukraine.

It seems Zelenskyy is in a very unique position to **succeed in whatever he does** (Dan 8:24 NIV), including causing the dictators of Russia, Belarus, and Iran to be **uproot**ed. Such an accomplishment would greatly further the world's admiration and appreciation for him. Again, this is because the leaders of Russia and Iran have something especially in common: They are among the most hated and feared men on the Earth.

For example, Israel would especially appreciate any contribution Zelenskyy would have on the removal of the Supreme Leader of Iran, Ali Khamenei. Likewise, understand that the appreciation and admiration the world will have for Zelenskyy will be directly proportionate to the fear and hatred the world will have for Putin.

Putin is probably the most feared and hated person on Earth. It is likely he will continue to do things in Ukraine that make the world hate and fear him even more. Do not be surprised if Putin uses a tactical nuclear weapon in Ukraine. He has already warned the world he will do this very thing if his conventional military fails in Ukraine. [23]

If he does, then the world would be very alarmed by the capabilities of the man in charge of the largest and most modern nuclear arsenal in the world. It is not an exaggeration to say that with just a command, Putin has the power to instantly destroy the entire world.

On January 24, 2023, *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* announced its updated and famous "Doomsday Clock." It is a countdown to nuclear warfare first developed by Albert Einstein and maintained by leading scientists and historians in the world. Because of Putin's recent actions, the "Doomsday Clock" was advanced in January 2023 to 90 seconds to "midnight," marking a nuclear apocalypse. [24]

This is the closest the "Clock" has ever been set to "Doomsday" in its 76 year history. Vladimir Putin is by far the greatest reason for this unprecedented fear of nuclear warfare in the world.

Therefore, if Zelenskyy is viewed as being responsible for: 1) defeating the #2 military in the world; 2) the downfall of the most hated and dangerous man in the world; and 3) reverting the "Doomsday Clock" to reflect world peace, then he will continue to rise to unprecedented heights of appreciation and worship in our world. The kind of appreciation and worship that is predicted for the Antichrist.

C) The Rising Antichrist will successfully lead the world to a period of peace

The prophetic Scriptures indicate that the Rising Antichrist will emerge in the world as a leader of peace. This will be demonstrated in another chapter (11, sec. B.4).

If Volodymyr Zelenskyy accomplishes the political and military successes described above, he will be in a remarkable position to promote worldwide peace. Even as early as December of 2022, he was calling for an international summit that would "unite all nations of the world around the cause of global peace." [25] Even as a **little horn** in a nation of **Magog**, fighting for its very survival, Zelenskyy was offering to lead the entire world to peace.

Such a goal would certainly be advanced by the removal of the current hostile leaders of Russia, Belarus, and Iran.

D) A remarkable convergence of evidence in our world that the beginning of the Endtimes may be near

It was explained in chapter 1 that humility is necessary when making claims about the details of the Endtimes (cf. sec. B). Therefore, any confidence about recognizing the beginning of the Endtimes should be based on the biblical principle that, **"Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses"** (Matt 18:16; cf. ch. 1, sec. F). It would seem that at least **two or three witnesses** and significant evidence is emerging in our world that the beginning of the Endtimes may be upon us.

D.1) The emergence of the SCO and Zelenskyy should prompt us to obey Christ's command to "Watch!"

First, as explained in chapter 6, the SCO is currently on track to fulfill all 7 biblical prophecies about the 10-nation Endtime Coalition. These include:

1) The SCO is scheduled to be exactly **ten kings** or ten nations in July of 2024 (cf. Dan 2:44; 7:24; Rev 17:12; cf. ch. 4, sec. A).

2) The SCO will have been established in the world before the Antichrist emerges (cf. Dan 7:8, 24; cf. ch. 4, sec. B.1). Therefore, it may be the first Endtime event to occur.

3) The SCO possesses nuclear weapons to fulfill the prophecy that the 10-nation Coalition and the Antichrist will form an alliance to **burn down** in **one hour** the world's foremost economic power, **Babylon the Great**, such that no people ever live there again (cf. Rev 17:5, 16, 18:10, 17, 19, cf. 21-23; cf. ch. 4, sec. B.2).

4) Some of the SCO's members are militarily very strong, and others very weak (cf. Dan 2:42; cf. ch. 4, sec. C).

5) The SCO's members are very diverse in race, culture, language, and religion (Dan 2:43; cf. ch. 4, sec. C).

6) The SCO's members lack unity and even have significant current conflicts (Dan 2:41, 43; cf. *BBP* ch. 4, sec. C).

7) The SCO's ten members exist in countries specifically named in Scripture to be present at the Battle of Armageddon, which is where the 10-nation Endtime Coalition is also predicted to be (Rev 17:14; cf. Rev 16:14, 16; 19:19; Ezekiel 38:1-6; cf. ch. 4, sec. B.4 and ch. 5).

Because these 7 biblical predictions regarding the 10-nation Endtime Coalition have the unprecedented potential to be fulfilled by the SCO, it was suggested there is currently a 65% probability the SCO will turn out to be the predicted 10-nation Endtime Coalition (ch. 6, sec. C).

Secondly, the previous chapter (8) discussed three biblical prophecies about the Rising Antichrist. These included predictions

that he would be the leader of a minor country in **Magog**, but famous and admired all over the world.

Volodymyr Zelensky is already the first person in human history to match these three unique biblical attributes of the Rising Antichrist. The fact that he is the leader of Ukraine in **Magog**, and is arguably "the Most Influential Person in the World" (*Time* magazine), should get our serious attention. Based on this, it was suggested there is currently a 60% probability that Volodymyr Zelenskyy will be confirmed to be the Antichrist.

Some might suggest all of the above events are "man-made" and do not require supernatural power like the Antichrist's Resurrection. Accordingly, they might miss the truly miraculous nature of such events. It is not the supernatural nature of an event in and of itself that makes it supernatural evidence the Endtimes are near. It is the fact that such events fulfill specific biblical prophecy that they are miraculous signs of the Endtimes.

The same was true of prophecies of Christ's First Coming. Some obviously required divine intervention, such as the virgin birth of Christ (cf. Matt 1:22-23; Isa 7:14). But most of the predicted events in Christ's life could certainly be considered natural occurrences in and of themselves. These would include Bethlehem being Christ's birthplace (cf. Matt 2:5-6; Mic 5:2), Jesus being taken to Egypt (cf. Matt 2:15; Hos 11:1); and Jesus basing his ministry out of Galilee (cf. Matt 4:13-16; Isa 9:1-2).

So what made such seemingly "natural" events supernatural signs of Christ's First Coming? They were predicted in Scripture. The same will be true of apparently "natural" events that fulfill biblical prophecy regarding the 10-nation Endtime Coalition and the Rising Antichrist.

It seems reasonable to suggest that the emergence of a 10 member SCO with its unique characteristics is one **testimony** the Endtimes are near. It is also reasonable to suggest that the remarkable rise of someone having the unique characteristics of Volodymyr Zelenskyy onto the world scene today is a second **testimony** of this. In other words, based on the careful Bible study and research provided in the previous chapters, there is a

remarkable convergence of evidence that the beginning of the Endtimes may be upon us.

There are some things we can be certain about. The prophetic Scriptures are clear that one day there will be a 10-nation Endtime Coalition and a Rising Antichrist on the Earth. You can be absolutely certain these biblical prophecies will be fulfilled in a rather literal way in current events at some point in time. The only question is when. It is suggested there is good evidence it may be now.

Note again that there also seems to be a limited window of time on this convergence. As noted in chapter 6 (sec. D), it seems unlikely that the popular SCO will remain only 10 members for very long without divine intervention. It is also unlikely that the popular Zelenskyy will continue to have sufficient world-wide fame and admiration to be voted "the Most Influential Person in the World" year after year. Most celebrities do not remain "on top" for very long. Therefore, it seems there is a limited amount of time for these things to be confirmed.

It was noted in the previous book, *Christ's Endtimes Teaching*, that God expects us to live with the tension of waiting patiently AND watching expectantly for the Endtimes to begin (cf. ch. 10, sec. E). However, based on current events, it is suggested this biblical "tension" should lean more towards watching expectantly.

Therefore, during the time these current events exist, it seems we should be especially vigilant about recognizing the beginning of the Endtimes. In doing so, we are simply seeking to obey Christ's command to **"Watch!"** current events for signs of His Return. Earlier it was written:

> Throughout Christ's sermon on the Endtimes He said: **"Be on guard! Be alert!" … "keep watch" … "What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'"** (Mark 13:33, 34, 37 NIV). **Watch!** for what? Current events in our world that would signal the beginning of the Endtimes, and that Christ's Return is near. (ch. 1, sec. C.1)

Therefore, every Christian should be careful to **"Watch!"** for these two things:

1) Does the SCO become more than 10 full members, therefore greatly decreasing the probability it will be the 10-nation Endtime Coalition and that the Endtimes are near?

2) Does Zelensky fulfill the additional prophecies summarized next.

D.2) If Zelenskyy continues to fulfill other biblical prophecies then we should obey Christ's command to "Be dressed in readiness"

In this chapter we have discussed three more biblical prophecies regarding the Rising Antichrist. These include the predictions that he will supernaturally **succeed in everything he does** (Dan 8:24) and **will arise** (*qûm*) through "victory in war or struggle" to **uproot … three kings** (Dan 7:8, 24) of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition. These events could also lead to the Rising Antichrist promoting the accomplishment of global peace (cf. Rev 6:1-2). More specifically, Zelenskyy's potential fulfillment of these prophecies may look like this:

1) Defeating the #2 military in the world and taking back all of Ukraine's territory, including Crimea (cf. Dan 8:24).

2) Causing the downfall of three leaders in the SCO, most likely Putin, Lukashenko, and Khamenei (cf. Dan 7:8, 24).

3) Leading the world in international peace summits and agreements (cf. Rev 6:1-2).

4) All while the SCO remains exactly 10 nations (cf. Dan 2:44; 7:24).

Therefore, if Volodymyr Zelensky successfully accomplishes these extraordinary tasks, while the SCO remains 10-nations, then it is reasonable to suggest there is an 80% probability he eventually will be confirmed to be the Antichrist. At that point he will have potentially fulfilled a total of 7 biblical prophecies concerning the Rising Antichrist. [26] Likewise, the SCO will be on track to fulfill an additional 7 biblical attributes of the prophesied 10-nation Endtime Coalition. In all then, these circumstances would be potentially

fulfilling 14 separate biblical prophecies about the beginning of the Endtimes.

Even if some of these interpretations are not correct, this would rather clearly be more than a mere coincidence. The above developments would seem to be **the testimony of** at least **two or three witnesses** to **establish** the **matter** of whether the beginning of the Endtimes is near.

At that point Christians should be doing more than to **"Watch!"** current events. It will be time to obey another command of Christ in the context of His Endtimes Teaching: **"Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps lit. Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns** (Luke 12:35-36 NASB).

This command was explained in *Endtimes Essentials* book #1, *Christ's Endtimes Teaching* (ch. 10, sec. C). If Zelensky fulfills additional biblical prophecies, Christians need to be preparing in practical, spiritual, and serious ways for the wars, famines, and plagues of The Beginning of Birth Pains and the following Greatest Persecution.

However, as discussed further in later chapters (11-12), it is admitted that it will only be the Antichrist's Resurrection that will enable us to be 100% certain the Antichrist has emerged on Earth and the Endtimes have begun. These conclusions can be summarized in the following table:

Table: Increasing Confidence in Identifying the Antichrist

#	Biblical Prophecy	Potential Fulfillment	Reasonable Probability that Zelenskyy is the Antichrist
Biblical prophecies already potentially fulfilled			
❶	Will be the leader (**little horn**) of a minor country (Dan 7:8; 8:9)	Zelensky became the President of Ukraine (in **Magog**] in an extraordinary way in 2019.	**60%** Based on being the first person in human history

❷	From the **land of Magog** (Ezek 38:2)	Zelenskyy was born in **Magog** (Kryvyy Rih, Ukraine) in 1978.	to match these biblical prophecies
❸	Jewish ancestry but abandoning Jewish faith (Dan 11:37)	Zelenskyy was born to parents committed to the Jewish faith, but he has abandoned it.	
❹	Will be recognized and admired worldwide so that he is worshipped after his Resurrection (Rev 13:3, 7-8, 12)	Zelenskyy is *Time* magazine's "Most Influential Person in the World" in 2022.	
Biblical prophecies to watch for			
❺	He will succeed in everything he does (Dan 8:24)	If Zelenskyy completely defeats the #2 military in the world, even retaking Crimea, in a relatively short period of time.	**80%** Especially based on the supernatural nature of #5, the specific nature of #6, & the 10-nation SCO.
❻	He will uproot 3 leaders in the 10-nation Endtime Coalition (Dan 7:8, 24)	If Zelenskyy's victories are the catalyst for the downfall of 3 members of the SCO, particularly Putin, Lukashenko, and Khamenei.	
❼	Leading the world to peace (Rev 6:2)	If Zelenskyy is successfully leading summits and organizations pursuing world peace.	
❽	The Antichrist's Resurrection (Rev 6:1-2; 13:3, 14)	If Zelenskyy is undeniably killed and raises from the dead.	**100%** Then we will know with certainty he is

			the Antichrist & the Endtimes have begun.

D.3) Helpful analogies of readiness

The various levels of warning and readiness suggested above can be illustrated in a couple of ways. For example, the Midwest of America is especially prone to the occurrence of tornadoes. Accordingly, the National Weather Service has developed different levels of warning and encouraged readiness based on the weather conditions. One source explains:

> According to the National Weather Service, a **Watch** means people should be prepared, stay informed, and be ready to act, because severe weather is possible. A **Warning** means people should take action. They should take shelter because severe weather is happening or about to happen. [27]

More specifically, a Tornado Watch is issued when weather conditions indicate there is around a 40% probability that two or more tornados will occur in the area. A Tornado Warning is issued when an actual tornado has been identified. In this case, loud sirens alert communities that they should seek shelter. But people often do not do this. When they hear the sirens they typically go outside to look at the storm that is coming. Sometimes people will not take shelter until they actually see a tornado coming directly toward them!

How does this relate to where we are at in regard to biblical prophecy and current events? If the SCO becomes more than 10 members, or Zelenskyy's political and military exploits fade, then we are back to a forecast of merely "partly cloudy skies."

However, right now, Christians should consider themselves under a "Tornado Watch." Current conditions warrant the need to monitor developments carefully. But if Zelenskyy fulfills more biblical prophecies, then we should view ourselves as under a "Tornado Warning." Then, we should make preparations for good possibility that the Endtimes have begun.

On the other hand, if a man fulfilling all the prophesies summarized above is undeniably resurrected from the dead, then we should respond as if we see a tornado coming directly toward our house, threatening our life and everyone with us. Because the Endtimes will have certainly begun.

Another helpful analogy is the DEFCON levels of alert used by the United States military. DEFCON refers to "defense readiness condition" and reflects the perceived probability of a nuclear attack on America. This is summarized in the following table.

Table: U. S. Military DEFCON Levels

#	Description	Military Response
❺	Lowest state of alert	Normal readiness
❹	Increased intelligence watch	Above normal readiness
❸	Increase in force readiness	Air Force ready to mobilize in 15 minutes
❷	Preparing for nuclear war	All branches of the armed forces ready to deploy and engage in less than six hours
❶	Nuclear war is imminent or has already begun	Maximum readiness. Ready for immediate response.

DEFCON Level 5 means the U.S. military perceives a minimal threat of nuclear war. Weather wise it is like partly cloudy skies. Again, it is suggested this would describe the situation if the SCO becomes more than 10 members, or Zelenskyy's success and popularity end. Or if he is killed and not resurrected from the dead. In these circumstances, there would be no unique need for Christians to increase their expectation of the beginning of the Endtimes.

DEFCON Level 4 means the U.S. military has reason to be watching for more signs of nuclear war. Weather wise this would

be like a Tornado Watch. Again, it is suggested this is where we are at right now. The SCO will be 10 members in July of 2024 and Zelenskyy continues to match three unique biblical prophecies of being the leader of a minor country in Magog, but world famous. In this situation we should continue to monitor the SCO and Zelenskyy carefully.

At DEFCON level 3, the U.S. military is in the process of preparing for nuclear war. Actually, America is currently at DEFCON Level 3 because of the war in Ukraine. This means that right now Air Force jets and pilots are on constant standby to deploy within 15 minutes. If the U. S. Air Force is currently in such a heightened state of alert, perhaps Christians should be as well. Weatherwise, this would be like a Tornado Warning.

In current events, this would mean that Zelenskyy has fulfilled 3 more biblical prophecies, including succeeding in the war against Russia, causing the downfall of 3 leaders in the SCO, and leading world peace summits. If that happens, it is suggested it would be wise to take some actions to prepare for the beginning of the Endtimes.

At DEFCON level 2, the U.S. has completed preparations for nuclear war and is ready for it. Weather wise, this would be as if you see a tornado coming toward your house. In current events, this would mean that Zelenskyy has been undeniably killed and miraculously resurrected from the dead. At this point we know the Endtimes have begun.

This would be as if a tornado destroyed your house. At this point we are living in the wars, famines, and plagues of The Beginning of Birth Pains and perhaps wishing we had done more to prepare for them.

The above analogies can be summarized in the following table:

Table: Levels of Readiness & Action for Endtime Events

"DEFCON"	"Weather"	Current Signs of the Endtimes	Christian Response
5 **Minimal threat of nuclear war**	Partly Cloudy	None. The SCO becomes more than 10 members or Zelenskyy's success and popularity end, or he is killed without a resurrection.	None
4 **Watching for nuclear war**	Tornado Watch	SCO remains 10 members and Zelenskyy is rising.	This provides 2 "witnesses" that the beginning of the Endtimes is near. Therefore, continue to carefully monitor Zelenskyy & the SCO.
3 **Preparing for nuclear war**	Tornado Warning	Zelenskyy continues to "succeed in everything he does" including replacing 3 leaders in the SCO & producing world peace.	This would provide a third "witness" that the beginning of the Endtimes is near. Therefore, prepare for Endtime events to occur
2 **Ready for nuclear war**	You see a tornado coming toward your house	Zelenskyy is Resurrected from the dead	This would provide absolute certainty the Endtimes have begun. Therefore, implement plans for subsequent Endtime events to occur

1 **Experiencing nuclear war**	The tornado has destroyed your house	We are in the Last Generation Church	Survive The Beginning of Birth Pains & glorify God in The Greatest Persecution

In the first century the Apostle Paul warned, **the secret power of lawlessness** [the Antichrist] **is already at work** (2 Thess 2:7 NIV). He was specifically writing about the kind of evil **power** that would enable the Antichrist to emerge in our world. Granted, such a statement brings up the problem that the first Christians believed Christ would Return in their lifetime. This is discussed elsewhere. [28] Still, the warning that John Piper gave in his 2023 book on Christ's Return seems very relevant:

> What he [Paul] says is, "The mystery of lawlessness is already at work." The point is this: Don't relax your vigilance, thinking that the man of lawlessness (or Antichrist) is far off, because the very essence of his deceptive power is now at work and could so deceive you that you would be oblivious to the deadliness of his arrival. [29]

Let us pray that this will not happen to God's Church, but that we will continue to obey Christ's command to biblically, wisely, and diligently **Watch!** events in our world so we can recognize the beginning of the Endtimes.

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[1] The Aramaic word *qûm* (**arise**) used in Dan 7:24 "is very like its Hebrew counterpart" *qûm* (*TWOT*, 1067). *TWOT* goes on to describe the Hebrew *qûm*:

> Our root refers essentially to the physical [literal] action "rising up" [and may] entail the end of such action: standing. Also, our root is used of figurative rising and/or standing… It applies to the assumption of a particular office, e.g. religious head of a clan (Gen 37:7), prophet (Deut 34:10), judge (Jud 10:1)… Finally, our word is frequently used in warfare contexts. It refers to preparation for (Jud 7:15), engagement in (Exod 2:17), and victory in war (or struggle, Josh 7:2).

[2]https://www.globsec.org/what-we-do/publications/10-ways-ukraine-has-surprised-world-february-24-2022.

[3]https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-ukraine-invasion-predictions-wrongintelligence/32275740.html

[4] Two articles from *Politico* highlight the perceived difficulty of Ukraine retaking Crimea from Russian forces:

> A top Armed Services Democrat expressed deep concerns on Friday over the prospect of Ukrainian forces waging a bloody fight to retake Crimea. "I think there's more of a consensus out there that people realize that Ukraine is not going to militarily retake Crimea," Rep. Adam Smith (Wash.), the top Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee, said on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference.
>
> While the government in Kyiv has always said it plans to retake every inch of occupied Ukraine including Crimea, which Russia seized in 2014, the fight would likely be hard and bloody, given the defense that Russia has built on the peninsula over the years of occupation. Smith said that at some point there will be a negotiated end to the war.

https://www.politico.com/news/2023/02/17/ukraine-wont-militarily-retake-crimea-top-democrat-00083492

> Ukrainian officials told POLITICO that Western European leaders had been the most jittery about pushing on to Crimea. America's top general, Mark Milley, chairman of U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, has cast doubt about Ukraine's ability to reclaim the peninsula militarily, suggesting it would be overreach. At a Pentagon press conference on November 16, he said: "The probability of a Ukrainian military victory, defined as kicking the Russians out of all of Ukraine to include what they defined as Crimea, the probability of that happening anytime soon, is not high, militarily."
>
> https://www.politico.eu/article/crimea-annexation-russia-ukraine-war-volodymyr-zelenskyy-vladimir-putin/

[5] This suggested translation of Dan 7:8 reflects the context (**ten horns**) and the NIV and NLT translations.

[6] It is odd that some are not confident a literal **three kings** is intended (Young, 150). The many references in Scripture, in both Daniel and Revelation, to the **ten kings** of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition are surely intended to refer to a literal number. Therefore, so does the **three kings**. Even Goldingay is willing to admit, "'Ten horns,' then, might not signify an actual number [not true]. But there is less ground for taking 'three horns nonliterally" (164).

[7] For more on the translation and interpretation of Dan 7:24 see ch. 4, sec. C.4.

[8] The importance of this thrice-repeated prophecy is lost on commentators. This author could not find any who have much to say about the remarkable and very important prediction that the Rising Antichrist will **uproot three kings** in the 10-nation Endtime Coalition. Collins and Goldingay are busy trying to prove that Antiochus fulfilled this prophecy. This is possible, although Goldingay admits "it is impossible to be confident" (180). If so, it would merely be a near/partial fulfillment of the Antichrist's final/complete fulfillment. As we have noted about Preterists, they "strain a gnat and swallow a camel" regarding their priorities in interpreting prophetic Scripture.

[9] Young seems too pessimistic about the value of this prophecy as an indication the Endtimes are beginning. He writes:

> He [Antichrist] will bring low (i.e. put down) three of these kings. How this is to be accomplished is not stated, nor is sufficient [information] revealed to enable us to identify with certainty this event when it transpires" (Young, 160).

Agreed, humility always needs to be exercised in such things. But why would God tell us three times this is going to happen if he did not intend for us to recognize it when it does?

[10] The fact that the 10-nation Endtime Coalition will remain intact until it is defeated at the Battle of Armageddon (cf. Rev 17:14) means that the NLT over-translates Dan 7:8 when it has **As I was looking at the horns, suddenly another small horn appeared among them. Three of the first horns were torn out by the roots to make room for it** (cf. NET). On the contrary, the Antichrist does <u>not</u> replace these three kings in the Coalition, but merely causes them to be removed.

Likewise, the NLT translates *nephal* (**fell**) in verse 20 as **destroyed three of the other horns**. While this is a possible fulfillment of what may happen to these three leaders in the Coalition, **destroyed** is probably too strong a term for *naphal* or the other words used to describe what happens to them. Accordingly, after saying in verse 20 they will be **destroyed**, the NLT states in verse 24 the Antichrist **will subdue three of them**. How could that be if he **destroyed** them? K&D reflect the same problem when they write on 7:8: "Daniel sees another little horn rise up among them, which uproots, i.e., destroys, three of the other horns that were already there."

[11] The Aramaic word is used only here in the OT. Its Hebrew equivalent (*āqar*) is used only 7 times in the OT. Twice it has the same meaning as its Aramaic version, to "pluck or root up" (cf. Eccl 3:2; Zeph 2:4; *TWOT*, 692). However, it is also used 4 times to describe "hamstringing" horses (cf. Josh 11:6, 9; 2 Sam 8:4; 1 Chron 18:4; *TWOT*). Such imagery again suggests these **three kings** will be completely removed from power, and made powerless and useless.

[12] Tanner attempts more than once to claim *ăqar* here means "violent militaristic overthrow" and adds it "is used in Zeph 2:4 in the sense of militaristic conquest" (412). First, there is no indication in the meaning of the word itself to suggest this. Secondly, the context of Zeph 2:4 is God's destruction of **Ekron** in **the day of the LORD's wrath** (v. 2), not some conquest by an army.

[13] Both the Aramaic word and its Hebrew equivalent basically mean: "to be or become low." Accordingly, *TWOT* notes, "Its most important use is in the figurative sense of "abasement," "humbling" (950).

[14] North Korea is the only country, apart from Belarus and Iran, that has been reported thus far to be militarily supporting Russia. One report states:

> Russia is buying millions of artillery shells and rockets from North Korea, according to newly declassified American intelligence, a sign that global sanctions have severely restricted its supply chains and forced Moscow to turn to pariah states for military supplies. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/05/us/politics/russia-north-korea-artillery.html

[15] https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belarusian involvement in the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine

[16]https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/3/28/why-does-russia-want-tactical-nuclear-weapons-in-belarus

[17]https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-iran-politics-defense-intelligence-agency-drones

[18] https://www.jpost.com/international/article-732579.

[19] A recent *Newsweek* article relates regarding Putin:

> Russian President Vladimir Putin may be forced out of power should Russia be defeated in his war against Ukraine, *Newsweek* has been told… Should Putin be unable to win the war on his preferred terms, he may eventually be forced to step down as Russian leader, Boris Bondarev, a former Russian diplomat who resigned publicly over the invasion of Ukraine last year, told *Newsweek.* "If we look at history, we see that such dictators have been replaced from time to time. So usually, if they lose the war, and they could not satisfy the needs of the supporters, they usually went away," he said.
>
> Bondarev believes that if Russians understand that the war is lost, and Putin has nothing to offer them in exchange, there will be "disappointment and disagreement." "They might think they don't need Putin anymore," he said. "I think that once they say farewell to the delusions, and find themselves in a new reality where Putin cannot deliver anything—that will change the situation."
>
> Vlad Mykhnenko, an expert in the post-communist transformation

of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union at the University of Oxford laid out [a] potential [scenario] for a Russian defeat. [He said] "a striking Ukrainian offensive on one or multiple fronts" would include a "huge panic amongst 600,000 Russian settlers in Crimea, and Russian collaborators in the Donbas, trying to escape." This would result in a "rapid frontline collapse. The situation in Moscow would proceed rapidly, with the *siloviki* (an elite group of Russian businessmen and leaders) pushing Putin out of power.

https://www.newsweek.com/if-russia-loses-ukraine-war-how-putin-will-react-1787410

[20] An Associated Press article relates:

Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko has welcomed thousands of Russian troops to his country, allowed the Kremlin to use it to launch the invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022, and offered to station some of Russia's tactical nuclear weapons there… Analysts and political opponents say that further involvement over Ukraine could rekindle public anger against him and erode his iron-fisted grip on power that has lasted for nearly 29 years. Lukashenko, who meets regularly with Russian President Vladimir Putin, has relied on the Kremlin's political and economic support to survive months of protests.

Russia's invasion is deeply unpopular in Belarus, which shares a 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) border with Ukraine and has many citizens with family or personal ties there. "The Belarusians don't see any sense in this war," said Svyatlana, a 54-year-old manager in Luninets, near the border.

Belarusian military analyst Aliaksandr Alesin said that if the country's 45,000-member army is sent into Ukraine, there might be "mass refusals to follow orders." He said Lukashenko won't do it "because he fears to stir up discontent among the military, who could turn their weapons in a different direction."

This growing involvement in Belarus for the Kremlin war efforts is fomenting widespread resentment, said Belarusian political analyst Valery Karbalevich. "A broad guerrilla movement has evolved in Belarus with its members blowing up railway tracks and Russian warplanes and attacking Russian and Belarusian official websites," Karbalevich said. "Belarus' transformation into a Russian military hub and its gradual drawing into the war has caused public discontent, forcing Lukashenko to escalate repressions."
https://apnews.com/article/belarus-ukraine-russia-war-nuclear-putin-lukashenko-3b3761efabdb2f641308bc0e97ac9363

[21] Recent protests in Iran have "morphed into one of the most serious challenges to Iran's theocracy since the 1979 Islamic Revolution."
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/feb/17/iran-protests-flare-in-several-cities-amid-continuing-unrest

Another source reports:

> Seven months after 22-year-old Mahsa Amini was killed at the hands of Iran's so-called morality police in September, protests across the country calling for the rights of women and girls continue. Amini's death after she was arrested for allegedly violating the country's conservative dress code for women sparked sustained protests led by women and young people. The Iranian government has detained over 20,000 protesters and killed more than 500, according to Human Rights Activists in Iran.
>
> https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/watch-women-and-girls-are-still-protesting-in-iran-heres-why.

There has been opposition specifically to Iran's support of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. For example, Sadegh Zibakalam, a Tehran-based university professor, has posted on social media, "Contrary to the ruling regime [in Iran], many Iranians are with the Ukrainian people and condemn this aggression."

https://www.rferl.org/a/iran-criticism-ukraine-reaction/31730370.html

In addition, war has already occurred between Ukraine and Iran:

> Ukraine's top security official confirmed Israeli press reports that 10 Iranian military advisers in Crimea were killed by Ukrainian drones. "You shouldn't be where you shouldn't be," said Oleksiy Danilov, secretary of Ukraine's defense council, in an interview with the Guardian. The Ukrainians say Iranian technicians and operators have been assisting the Russians with the Shahed-136 armed drones supplied by Tehran.
>
> https://www.politico.eu/article/crimea-annexation-russia-ukraine-war-volodymyr-zelenskyy-vladimir-putin/

[22]https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2023/06/counteroffensive-ukraine-zelensky-crimea/673781/.

[23]https://reuters.com/world/europe/truth-or-bluff-why-putins-nuclear-warnings-have-west-worried-2022-09-28

[24]https://thebulletin.org/2023/01/press-release-doomsday-clock-set-at-90-seconds-to-midnight/

[25]https://www.aa.com.tr/en/russia-ukraine-war/ukrainian-president-proposes-global-peace-summit-this-winter/2767084

[26] Some may object to claiming that Zelenskyy has fulfilled <u>any</u> biblical prophecies if he does not fulfill them <u>all</u> and prove to be the Antichrist. But how are we to communicate the significant fact that his life and accomplishments match biblical prophecies? We could say that these things match predicted attributes of the Antichrist, but that is essentially saying that he has fulfilled these prophecies. In other words, perhaps this is simply a matter of semantics.

In addition, the above objection is mitigated by the fact that God has no problem with someone actually fulfilling some prophecies regarding the Antichrist, but not all of them. This was the case with Antiochus Epiphanes in the 2nd century B.C. Most scholars agree that he was an intentional precursor to the Antichrist and did fulfill biblical prophecies regarding the eventual Antichrist. Zelenskyy could be another example of this. Therefore, it would not be "unbiblical" to claim he has indeed fulfilled biblical prophecies.

[27] https://www.weather.gov/bgm/severedefinitions

[28] For more on the problem that the first Christians, and even the Apostle Paul apparently believed Christ's Return would occur in their lifetime, see *Additional Studies on the Endtimes*, ch. 15 at www.trainingtimothys.com

[29] Piper, 234.

Part IV

The Revealed Antichrist

The first certain sign that the endtimes have begun

Chapter 10
The First Birth Pain

Antichrist as the first & foremost False Christ

Matthew 24:5

Contents

A) The importance and difficulty of knowing when the Endtimes have begun

B) The Antichrist as the first & foremost False Christ (Matt 24:5)

Primary Points

- There are many important reasons for Christians to know the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun.
- What does the Bible teach will be the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun? It is admitted this is not clearly taught in Scripture. But the answer argued in Part IV of *BBP* (chs. 10-12) will be: The Antichrist's Resurrection.
- Jesus listed the first **sign** of **the beginning of birth pains** as False Christs. Therefore, He meant for us to expect this to be the first certain sign we are to be looking for to know the Endtimes have begun.
- It is possible that a multitude of False Christs emerging simultaneously in the world will be the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun. But there are several biblical problems with this interpretation.
- The many False Christs will be claiming to be Jesus Christ Himself returned to Earth.
- Jesus predicted something astounding and very perplexing. He said there will be a multitude of False Christs all over the world performing extraordinary miracles and claiming <u>simultaneously</u> to be Jesus Christ Himself returned to Earth AND convincing a multitude of people of this very thing!
- How will the Antichrist obtain his preeminent worship in a world where there will be **many** who **will come … saying, 'I am the**

Christ,' and will mislead many to believe this, because they **will show great signs and wonders** (Matt 24:5, 24)? The best answer seems to be that the Antichrist will come before the many False Christ's. Being the first False Christ will help him be the foremost False Christ.

- Christ's Endtimes Teaching suggests the ministry of the many False Christs occurs during The Greatest Persecution and after Antichrist's Claim to be God.
- Revelation 6 reveals that the Antichrist will be the first and foremost example of the False Christs Jesus warned of in Matthew 24.

A) The importance and difficulty of knowing when the Endtimes have begun

Part IV of this book (chs. 10-12), *The Beginning of Birth Pains*, addresses a rather complex matter. Its primary point is to argue that the very first certain sign the Endtimes have begun will be the Antichrist's Resurrection.

If you are willing to expect that as a good probability, the following three rather complex chapters (10-12) may not be necessary for you to study. It may be enough for you to simply know that there is biblical evidence that the Antichrist's Resurrection will be the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun. If so, then you can proceed to chapter 13 which begins to describe the effects of Antichrist's Resurrection.

Of course, as with most Endtime events, the following chapters will only be confirmed if the Antichrist's Resurrection is the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun. But if in fact the Antichrist's Resurrection is the first event that alerts Christians that the Endtimes have begun, most of them will be very shocked and confused by this event. Therefore, the following three chapters would be valuable in order to give them a biblical basis for what is happening.

If one wants to deny that the Antichrist's Resurrection will be the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun, it is asked how would they answer this vital question for God's people? What does

the Bible teach regarding what Christians should be looking for to know with certainty the Endtimes have begun, and they need to prepare and act accordingly? It will be argued in these chapters that this will be Antichrist's miraculous resurrection from the dead.

The biblical case for the claim that Antichrist's Resurrection will be the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun will proceed as follows.

First, Jesus said the first **birth pain** of the Endtimes would be False Christs (cf. Matt 24:5), indicating this will be the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun. However, for reasons given in this chapter (10), it will be argued that the Antichrist will actually be the first and foremost False Christ, emerging a considerable time before the **many will come … saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many** (NASB).

Second, in chapter 11, it will be argued that the First Seal in Revelation 6:1-2 also portrays the emergence of the first and foremost False Christ, the Antichrist, onto the world scene. Evidence will be given there that the **rider** on a **white horse** coming to **conquer** by deception will be the Antichrist imitating the real Christ in His Resurrection from the dead. Therefore, the First Seal seems to suggest the Antichrist's Resurrection will be the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun.

Third, in chapter 12, we will study Paul's description of the Antichrist's Revealing in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12. It is rather clear the Apostle intended to teach the Thessalonians what they were supposed to look for to know the Endtimes have begun. Hints of Antichrist's Resurrection will be suggested here as well. Chapters 10-12 will present the case for the claim that Antichrist's Resurrection will be the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun.

Previously, the importance of determining the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun was discussed (ch. 1, sec. C.1). Reasons included: 1) Christ repeatedly commanded His people to **"Watch!"** for biblical signs of His Return; 2) This was to help us eagerly anticipate His Return; 3)

If we are able to recognize the beginning of the Endtimes, then we will know all the other predicted events will follow rather quickly, which will help us prepare for these unprecedented catastrophes.

For these reasons, and more, it is important to understand what the Scriptures say regarding the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun.

However, it was also noted in chapter 1:

> There are several obstacles to understanding what the Bible teaches on recognizing the beginning of the Endtimes. First, is the widespread confusion on this topic. Again, 45% of American Evangelical Christians claim: "It is impossible to know the circumstances that will precede Jesus' return." Such people have little hope of clearly understanding when the Endtimes have actually begun.
>
> Likewise, according to a recent survey by the Pew Research Center, 65% of American Evangelical Christians claimed to "believe we are already living in the endtimes." However, only about 21% of American Evangelical Protestants "say they believe Jesus will definitely or probably return during their lifetime." [1] Therefore, it would seem a considerable number of Christians would claim the Endtimes have already begun, but they do not believe Christ will Return anytime soon. That seems to reflect a lot of confusion about what the Endtimes even is. (sec. D)

As also mentioned previously, popular but unbiblical teaching on the Endtimes has contributed to this (ch. 1, sec. D). But as also noted:

> There is another important reason this issue is not clearly understood. The Bible does not clearly tell us what the first certain sign of the Endtimes will be. The complexity of answering that question will become evident in this study. In addition, there is a common misunderstanding that obscures this issue. It is easy to assume that the very first real Endtime event that will occur, will also be the very first certain sign the Endtimes have begun. But it is possible that Endtime events will actually begin before we can clearly and confidently recognize this. (ch. 1, sec. D)

The previous chapters on the 10-nation Endtime Coalition and the Rising Antichrist are examples. It has been argued that the establishment of the Coalition may be the first Endtime event to

occur (cf. ch. 4, sec. B.1). Likewise, fulfillments of prophecy regarding the Rising Antichrist can provide a second **testimony** to confirm the Endtimes have begun. These two developments combined, provide very significant evidence that we may already be living in the Endtimes. That may be enough for some to take the necessary steps to prepare for the Endtimes. But it seems God will want His people to be absolutely certain of these things. Therefore, what does the Bible teach will be the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun? Again, it will be argued that this will be the Antichrist's Resurrection.

The following two chapters will address another difficult question. How can we reconcile several complex things the Scriptures say about a multitude of False Christs, and the one Antichrist? The answer argued here will be the Antichrist will be the first and foremost False Christ.

B) The Antichrist as the first & foremost False Christ (Matt 24:5)

B.1) The first birth pain, seal, and sign of Christ's Return are all described as the emergence of False Christs

In Christ's Endtimes Teaching He was answering this question from the Apostles: **"What sign will signal your return and the end of the world?"** (Matt 24:3 NLT). Christ responded with what would seem to be the <u>first</u> **sign** of His **return and the end of the world**:

> **"See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many"** (Matt 24:5 NASB).

It was demonstrated throughout the previous book, *Christ's Endtimes Teaching* (*CET*), that Jesus was intentionally teaching a specific sequence of Endtime events (cf. ch. 3, sec. A). Note then that when Christ was answering the question, **"What sign will signal your return and the end of the world?,"** the <u>first</u> Endtime event He described was the emergence of False Christs. He specifically labeled these very same people later in His teaching

when He referred to **false Christs** who **will arise and will show great signs and wonders** (v. 24 NASB).

It would seem Jesus intended to tell us False Christs will be the first certain **sign** that the Endtimes have begun and His **coming and the end of the age** is near.

A few verses later in His sermon, Jesus called these first events of the Endtimes **birth pains** (Matt 24:8). Therefore, when these events occur, they are not "false labor," or merely painful events that do not signal the Endtimes have begun. Accordingly it is significant that Jesus said the very first **birth pain** will be False Christs. This indicates that He intended to tell us this is the very first certain sign the Endtimes have begun.

This is confirmed by the fact that the Seals of Preparation in Revelation 6 gives a parallel sequence to **"the beginning of birth pains**" Jesus gave in His Endtimes Teaching (cf. *CET* ch. 6, sec. B.1). As explained more fully in the next chapter, the **first of the seven seals** clearly depicts **a rider** on a **white horse** with a **crown** deceptively imitating Jesus Christ (Rev 6:1-2). Both the first **birth pain** and the **first seal** reflect False Christs.

Therefore, when Jesus listed the first **sign** and **birth pain** of His **coming and the end of the age** as False Christs, he seemed to indicate this will be the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun.

Accordingly, an initial interpretation of Jesus would be this: a multitude of miracle-working False Christs emerging simultaneously in the world will be the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun. This interpretation is possible. [2] Perhaps the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun will be when **many … come in** Jesus' **name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and … mislead many**. But there are several problems with this interpretation.

B.2) The False Christs will be claiming to be Jesus Christ Himself returned to Earth

First, we should understand what these False Christs will be claiming. NT scholars have differed on this. The primary options include claiming to be: 1) Generic savior-like persons intending to restore morality, peace, and prosperity to the world; [3] 2)

Specifically and only the Jewish Messiah; [4] 3) Merely representatives of Jesus; [5] and 4) Jesus Christ Himself returned to Earth. [6] Which one of these options is correct?

The Greek word translated **Christ** (NASB, ESV; **Messiah** NIV, NLT) is *christos* which means 1) "fulfiller of Israelite expectation of a deliverer, *the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ*"; or 2) "the personal name ascribed to Jesus, *Christ*." [7] As noted above, some translations suggest the first meaning, **Messiah**, and others adopt the second meaning, **Christ**.

Based on the lexical data, we can probably reject option 1 above, that Christ was predicting merely "Generic savior-like persons." The Greek Lexicon (*BDAG*) lists no examples in either the NT or early Greek literature of *christos* being used in this more general sense.

There is also good reason to reject the second view that the False Christs will only be claiming to be the Jewish **Messiah**. First, Jesus said they **will mislead many**, implying **many** people all over the world, not just in Israel or only Jews. In fact, later in the teaching Jesus makes it clear that the primary target of the **false Christs** will be **to mislead … the elect** (*eklektous*), a term that always includes the Church when referring to people in the NT. [8] However, it is probable that these False Christs will also be attempting to deceive the Jews and therefore claim to be their awaited Messiah.

The third option above was that the False Christs will merely be claiming to represent Christ as in speaking for Him. The best reason to reject this view is the clear evidence in the text that the False Christs will be claiming to be Jesus Christ Himself returned to Earth, the fourth view. Obviously, this is a rather shocking statement. But As Carson puts it:

> Those who "come in my name" (v. 5) may refer to those who come as Jesus' representatives, but because of the words that follow, we must assume that their claim goes further. They claim to be Messiah, Christ himself. [9]

This is indicated in verse 5 itself in Mark's and Luke's versions which read: **"Many will come in my name** [of Jesus]**, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many"** (Mark 13:6 NIV; [10] cf. Luke

21:8). The False Christs will be using the name "Jesus" and **claiming, "I am He."** That seems to clearly indicate they will be claiming to be Jesus Christ Himself.

Jesus clearly confirmed this when He said in His Endtimes Sermon:

> **"Then** [during The Greatest Persecution, v. 21] **if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There He is,' do not believe him. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you in advance."**
>
> **"So if they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go out, or, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe them. For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of <u>the</u>** [Real] **<u>Son of Man</u> be."** (Matt 24:23-27 NASB; cf. Luke 17:22-24)

Jesus predicted in the Endtimes that **they** (probably the **false prophets**) will claim **"He is in the wilderness"** or **"He is in the inner rooms."** Who does **He** refer to? **The** real **Son of Man** who **will** be **coming** like **lightning** and who is clearly Jesus Christ Himself. Therefore, it is clear that the **false Christs** who **will arise and will show great signs and wonders** in the Endtimes will be claiming to be Jesus Christ Himself returned to Earth.

But this will also include a claim that he is the long awaited Messiah of the Jews. This is why Daniel predicted the Antichrist will be a Jew (cf. 11:37; ch. 8, sec. D). Therefore, there is no need to choose between whether the Antichrist will be **saying, "I am the Christ"** (Matt 24:5 NASB) or **claiming, "I am the Messiah"** (NIV). He **will deceive many** by claiming both.

Let us also note that the False Christs will be operating <u>simultaneously</u> all over the world. Jesus described Antichrist's Claim to be God and then the resulting Greatest Persecution (vs. 15-22). Then He said: **"<u>Then</u> … false Christs** [plural] **and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect"** (vs. 23-24 NASB). This event will happen during the Endtimes, and **false Christs**

(plural) **will arise** simultaneously during the limited time of the **birth pains**.

Unfortunately, many scholars claim the prediction of a multitude of False Christs, performing miraculous **wonders** and deceiving a multitude of people, has already been fulfilled in the past, or is being fulfilled now over a long period of time. This is not true. There have been a few people claiming to be a savior and even fewer still claiming to actually be Jesus Christ. But there have never been **many** people (especially simultaneously), performing undeniable miracles, claiming to be Jesus **Christ** Himself returned to Earth, and **mislead**ing **many** to believe them. [11] This event will happen in the Endtimes as one of the unprecedented **birth pains** (Matt 24:8).

B.3) The timing of the False Christs' emergence & ministry

After the first & foremost False Christ, the Antichrist

Jesus predicted something shocking and very perplexing. He said there will be a multitude of False Christs all over the world performing extraordinary miracles and claiming simultaneously to be Jesus Christ Himself returned to Earth AND convincing a multitude of people of this very thing!

Such a statement raises several difficult questions. First, how could the one Antichrist obtain the preeminent worship of the world if this is the case? Scripture predicts that after Antichrist's Resurrection, **The whole world** will **marvel at this miracle and** give **allegiance to the beast** [Antichrist]**... "Who is as great as the beast?" they** will **exclaim** (Rev 13:3-4 NLT [12]). The answer will be no one.

The Antichrist alone will be **given authority to rule over every tribe and people and language and nation. And all the people who belong to this world** will **worship the beast** (Rev 13:7-8 NLT [13]). Apparently, only the Antichrist will have statues erected all over the world in his image that must be worshipped (cf. Rev 13:14-15). Likewise, only the Antichrist's **mark** will be required (vs. 16-17).

The Antichrist will be considered by every non-Christian in the world to be far superior in power and authority than any of the False

Christs. His worthiness to be worshipped and obeyed will appear to surpass anyone else on Earth. How will the Antichrist obtain such superiority in a world where there will be **many** who **will come … saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many** to believe this, because they **will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead** (Matt 24:5, 24)?

The best answer seems to be that the Antichrist will come before the many False Christs. Being the first False Christ will enable him to be the foremost False Christ. If the emergence of the Antichrist follows all of the amazing and convincing miracle working **false Christs**, both the effect and worship of the preeminent Antichrist would seem to be significantly hindered and diminished. But if Antichrist's miracles will be the first the world witnesses, then he can obtain dominance over the many False Christs that will come later.

This may be especially important if the **great signs and wonders** of the **false Christs** include raising people from the dead. Like Jesus, OT prophets, and NT Apostles, this may be the case. Therefore, if their miracle-working occurs before the Antichrist's Resurrection, it would again seem to significantly hinder the worldwide and overwhelming result of this event as described in Scripture (cf. 2 Thess 2:9-11; Rev 13:1-18). This will become even more clear when the effect of Antichrist's Resurrection is explained in chapter 13 (sec. C).

The preeminent worship of the Antichrist is one reason to believe this will be established before the emergence of the multitude of miracle-working **false Christs**. Therefore, it seems the Antichrist will be the first and foremost False Christ.

A second reason for this conclusion is that Jesus described the ministry of the **false Christs and false prophets** occurring during The Greatest Persecution. For example, He described **"the beginning of birth pains"** (Matt 24:8) and then said:

> **"Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death** [during The Greatest Persecution]**, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time** [of The Greatest Persecution] **many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false**

> **<u>prophets will appear</u> and deceive many people.** (Matt 24:9-11 NIV)

Jesus said the **many false prophets will appear** (*egerthēsontai*) at the **time** of The Greatest Persecution. As noted above, verse 24 states the **false Christs and false prophets** will be operating at the same time. Therefore, verse 9 indicates that the emergence of the **false Christs and false prophets** will occur <u>after</u> Christians are being **persecuted and put to death** during The Greatest Persecution.

Likewise, Christ clearly implied that the **false Christs and false prophets will appear … to mislead … even God's elect people** <u>after</u> Antichrist's Claim to be God (cf. v. 15) and The Greatest Persecution has begun (cf. v. 21). Accordingly, in His Endtimes Teaching Jesus described **the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION … standing in the holy place** (v. 15) and then said:

> **"Because then there will be the greatest persecution of God's elect people. It will be greater than any persecution since the world began, and it will never be equaled again."**
>
> **"If those days** [of The Greatest Persecution] **had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of God's elect people those days will be shortened. <u>At that time</u> if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There He is!' do not believe it. Because false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great miraculous signs and wonders to mislead even God's elect people if they are able."** (Matt 24:21-24 [14])

Jesus indicated <u>when</u> the **false Christs and false prophets will appear**. He said this will occur **at that time**. What **time** was He referring to? <u>After</u> **the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION** and **the greatest persecution** (vs. 15, 21) begins.

Thirdly, the attempt of the **false Christs and false prophets … to mislead … even God's elect people** (v. 24) makes more sense <u>after</u> The Greatest Persecution has begun, rather than as the very first **birth pain** in Endtime events. The desperation that Christians will be experiencing in The Greatest Persecution will

certainly add to the temptation of believing the claims of **false Christs and false prophets … perform**ing **great miraculous signs and wonders to mislead even God's elect people if they are able.** Accordingly, Jesus told His disciples:

> **"The time is coming when you will long** [*epithymēsete*: "strong desire or craving"] **to see the day when the Son of Man returns, but you won't see it. People** [i.e. the false prophets] **will tell you, 'Look, there is the Son of Man** [a False Christ] **,' or 'Here he is,' but don't go out and follow them.** (Luke 17:22-23 NLT)

This "strong desire or craving" to **see** Christ's Return surely refers to the time that His people will be experiencing The Greatest Persecution.

All of the above points to the emergence and ministry of the **false Christs and false prophets** to **appear … and perform great miraculous signs and wonders to mislead even God's elect people**, to occur after the Antichrist's worldwide worship is established and the Church is experiencing The Greatest Persecution. Therefore, it seems the Antichrist will be the first and foremost False Christ. Accordingly, it seems the emergence of the Antichrist will be the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun.

More specifically, this first certain sign will be the Antichrist's Resurrection from the dead. This will be argued further in the next chapters. But there is one clear evidence for this in the first **birth pain**. The first and foremost False Christ will be claiming in the **name** of Jesus, **"I am he"** and **"I am the Christ," and will mislead many** (Matt 24:5; Mark 13:6). How could the Antichrist possibly convince **many** that he is Jesus Christ Himself returned to Earth? It would seem only by his undeniable death and miraculous Resurrection to life.

All of this brings up another question. If the Antichrist is the first and foremost False Christ, then how will his claim to be Jesus Christ be reconciled with the **many** who **will come … saying, 'I am the Christ' and … mislead many** (Matt 24:5) to believe they are Jesus Christ? Again, wouldn't the world see this as contradictory and questionable claims?

A possible solution can be offered. First, after Antichrist's Resurrection he will be claiming **"I am the Christ,"** (Matt 24:5 NASB) as in Jesus Christ Himself returned to Earth. But later (perhaps at least 3.5 years later), in the **abomination of desolation** (Matt 24:15), the Resurrected Antichrist will be **proclaiming himself to be God** (2 Thess 2:4). There will be no contradiction here. Claiming first to be **Christ** and later **God**, may simply be a way the Antichrist will be imitating the Christian doctrine of the deity of Jesus Christ.

This is another reason to believe that the ministry of the multiple False Christs emerges after Antichrist's Claim to be God and the beginning of The Greatest Persecution. His Claim to be God will complete his rise to preeminent worldwide worship. Therefore, miracle working **false Christs** afterwards can simply claim to be representing Antichrist as the one true God, even as they claim to be many sons of God, and all Jesus Christs. This scenario would allow the Antichrist to establish his pre-eminent worship as Scripture predicts, without the contradictory claims of many False Christs diminishing his worship. [15]

Finally, this sequence of events brings up another question. It was argued above that Jesus taught the emergence of False Christs (plural) would be the first **birth pain** and certain **sign** the Endtimes have begun (Matt 24:3, 5). Why did He teach this if the emergence of the first and foremost False Christ, the Antichrist, will actually occur sometime before the ministry of the **many** False Christs?

Clearly, the first reason is that Christ's primary practical point for this part of His Endtimes Sermon was to warn His people not to be deceived by these **false Christs and false prophets** (v. 24). This is why this warning is repeated several times throughout His sermon (cf. vs. 4-5, 11, 23-27). This is certainly one reason He began His response to the Apostles' question with the warning of False Christs.

Secondly, claiming that the first and foremost False Christ will be the Antichrist is no contradiction to Christ's warning of **many** False Christs. What is being argued above is that Scripture simply reveals that the Antichrist will be the first and foremost example of the False Christs Jesus warned of in Matthew 24.

Accordingly, it was noted previously: "Christ's Endtimes Teaching (Matt 24) does not give us the greatest detail on the very beginning of Endtime events" (ch. 2, sec. B.1). Therefore, it will be argued in the next chapter that the opening of the First Seal in Revelation 6 gives us more details about the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun, which will be Antichrist's Resurrection.

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[1] https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/12/08/about-four-in-ten-u-s-adults-believe-humanity-is-living-in-the-end-times/

[2] MacArthur supports the view that a multitude of miracle-working False Christs emerging simultaneously in the world will be the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun when he writes regarding Matt 24:5:

> The first birth pain to signal Christ's return will be widespread deception by a proliferation of false Christs. There were false Christs, or Messiahs, before Jesus' time, and there have been others at various times since, including many in our own day. But in the end times their number and influence will vastly increase… Their spurious gospels will mislead many, as they promise to deliver men from their problems and troubles. (*MNTC*, Matt, loc. 42737).

He seems to ignore the fact that the False Christs will be simultaneously claiming to be Jesus Christ returned to Earth. But again, MacArthur's view is possible.

[3] Most NT scholars suggest Jesus intended to predict some kind of savior-like pretenders. Wessel and Strauss write: "That Jesus said there would be *many* such false messiahs suggests that his statement should be understood broadly to refer to various kinds of 'messianic" figures." They do not correct or reconcile their view with Mark 13:21-22; Matt 24:23-27 and Luke 17:22-23.

France writes:

> A Christian reader … might think that those who will come 'in Jesus' name' claiming to be Messiah are claiming actually to *be* Jesus, returning at the end of the age. But the declaration 'I am the Messiah' would not be the most natural way to make that claim; it sounds more like a would-be liberator… He would be coming "in Jesus' name" not because he is impersonating Jesus but because he is claiming the role and title that properly belong to Jesus. (902)

France ignores all the arguments in this section of *BBP* to the contrary.

[4] Davies & Allison are among those supporting the idea that the Endtime false saviors will claim to be the Jewish Messiah. They write: "'Come in my name' appears to mean 'come as the Messiah'… Our verse is then about Jewish messianic deceivers" (338-9). Unfortunately, they do not reconcile this with their commentary on Matt 24:23-27.

[5] Other scholars suggest a general messianic figure, but add that they will be using Jesus' name as His representatives. Fitzmeyer writes: "The claim 'I am he!' means 'a representative of Jesus'" (1336). Marshall writes, "probably we should combine" both of these descriptions, and adds the possibility of a "prophet [as] an eschatalogical figure" or "men like Simon Magus" (Luke, 763).

Osborne is more obscure and writes: "'In my name' has a twofold thrust—they will come using Jesus' personal name and also his "name" or office as Messiah" (Matt*,* 1260). It is unclear if he thinks they will be claiming to be Jesus Christ Himself. He does not make his view any clearer in his commentary on Matt 24:23-27.

What Hagner writes is equally obscure:

> The statement that such persons will come "in my name," means either that they will come using the name of Jesus (see *BAGD*, 573a) or that they will come assuming the messianic office of Jesus (see *BAGD*, 573b), as is spelled out in the explicit claim that follows. Revolutionary leaders such as Judas the Galilean (Acts 5:37), Theudas (Acts 5:36), and the anonymous "Egyptian" (Acts 21:38), whose endeavors had clear eschatological overtones, might well qualify as the kind of pseudo-messiahs in view here. (690-691)

Like Osborne, Hagner does not clarify his view at vs. 23-27 and continues to refer to the False Christ's as a false "Messiah," indicating he does not believe they will be claiming to be Jesus Christ Himself returned to Earth.

Bock (*Luke*) is not helpful at all on this topic. Likewise, Nolland seems confusing if not contradictory.

[6] As noted above, Nolland is rather confusing on this point, but is among the very few NT scholars who are willing to claim that: "'Son of man'" (v. 27) is the intended meaning of "the Christ" in v. 5. and that the False Christs will identify themselves "as the coming Christ/Son of Man" (962).

[7] *BDAG* #1 & #2.

[8] For more on the meaning of *eklektous* in the NT see *CET*, ch. 3, sec. D.

[9] Carson, *Matt*, 559.

[10] The literal Greek in Matt 24:5 reads *legontes oti egō eimi* or "saying that I am." Admittedly, such a reading is odd. Some have thought this means the False Christs will be claiming to be "the I Am" or God (cf. Exod 3:14; John 8:58). For example, Morris writes:

> Mark and Luke both mention that the false teachers will say, "I AM." This probably means "I am he" and will be another way of claiming to be the Messiah, but we should not overlook the fact that there is a hint of the divine name about this form of speech and that Jesus may well be warning that some of these people will come close to claiming deity. (*Matt*, at 24:5)

This is possible and could easily refer to claiming to be Jesus Christ who was and is deity.

It is admitted that at Matt 24:5 **he** is not in the original text, but is added to all versions (cf. Mark 13:6, Luke 21:8). This is also true later in the teaching (cf. Matt 24:23; Mark 13:21). But in verse 25 **He** (*estin*) is used to refer to the same False Christs and the Greek here more strongly implies this translation. Therefore, the NASB does not put **He** in verse 25 in italics as it does elsewhere in the text as noted above. Therefore, **he** is an accurate addition to the text in those verses as well, including verse 5.

[11] Unfortunately, many Christian scholars (e.g. Historicists or Preterists) want to claim Christ's prediction was already fulfilled in the first century, or throughout Church history. But Morris is correct when he writes regarding Jesus' warning of False Christs:

> This will surely be a reference to the last days, for there is little evidence that any of the turbulent men so active preceding the fall of Jerusalem [in A.D. 70] ever claimed to be the Messiah. Some claimed to be prophets, but that is not the same thing. (*Matt*, 24:5)

Likewise, MacArthur writes:

> There were false Christs, or Messiahs, before Jesus' time, and there have been others at various times since, including many in our own day. But in the end times their number and influence will vastly increase. (*MNTC*, Matt, loc. 42737-40)

[12] The NLT of Rev 13:3-4 is slightly altered to reflect a future tense.

[13] The NLT of Rev 13:7-8 is slightly altered to reflect a future tense.

[14] The suggested translation of Matt 24:21-24 generally follows the NIV and NASB. For reasons shared elsewhere, *thlipsis* is translated as **persecution** (cf. *CET*, ch. 3, sec. E) and *eklektos* as **God's elect people** (cf. *CET*, ch. 3, sec. D). For an explanation of the translation of verse 24 see appropriate chapter in *The Greatest Persecution.*

[15] The problem of the contradictory but very successful claims of many False Christ's simultaneously claiming to be Jesus Christ is difficult. Especially in a world with satellite communications and the Internet so that these simultaneous and apparently contradictory claims would be known worldwide.

Admittedly, the suggestion in this section that the many False Christs will claim to be many sons of God, and all Jesus Christs, may not be convincing. This would be especially true for the Christians they will be trying to deceive (cf. Matt 24:24). Scripture says Jesus is God's **one and only Son** (John 1:18; 3:16).

It seems clear that at some point in the Endtimes **many** False Christs will be simultaneously **saying, "I am the Christ," and will mislead many** (Matt 24:5 NASB). In the author's opinion, how that can happen in a world with modern communications, is one of the great puzzles of the Endtimes.

Chapter 11

The First Seal

Antichrist's Imitation of the Real Christ

Rev 6:1-2

Contents

A) Introduction to the First Seal *The emergence of the Antichrist as the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun*

B) The First Seal & Antichrist's Rising

C) The First Seal & Antichrist's Revealing & Resurrection

Primary Points

- Whatever this **first of the seven seals on the scroll** is portraying, would seem to be the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun.
- What is also clear is that the individual portrayed on the **white horse** is imitating the Real Christ. Therefore, the best interpretation of this **rider** on **a white horse** is that he is the Antichrist.
- The First Seal may reflect attributes of the militarily successful Rising Antichrist.
- It seems the **bow** without arrows suggests the arrows have already been expended to win previous battles.
- One will note how all of this could apply to the description of the Rising Antichrist, and Volodymyr Zelenskyy.
- The first of seven Seals seems to reveal that the emergence of the Antichrist, especially his Resurrection, is the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun.
- Revelation 6:1-2 tells us that the first and foremost of the False Christs that Jesus warned of will be the Antichrist.
- Antichrist's Resurrection is a monumental event in the Endtimes that is often overlooked in Church doctrine.

- Revelation 6:1-2 is describing the Revealed Antichrist bursting forth onto the world scene to be noticed by EVERYONE.
- How will the Antichrist be Revealed in such an obvious way to everyone on Earth? The best answer is Antichrist's Resurrection.
- The Antichrist could do nothing that would imitate Christ more than being resurrected from the dead.
- Another way the Antichrist could imitate Jesus to the world is by being killed on a Good Friday and resurrected on Easter.
- The First Seal also portrays the Antichrist **conquer**ing the world with <u>deception</u> through his Resurrection.
- The Antichrist's Resurrection will lead to world peace.
- Several early Endtime events seem to require the Antichrist's Resurrection.

A) Introduction to the First Seal *The emergence of the Antichrist as the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun*

In the following exegetical study of Revelation 6:1-2 the following will be argued: 1) The opening of the First Seal represents the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun; 2) The individual described in the First Seal is the first and foremost False Christ, the Antichrist; 3) The event being portrayed is the Rising Antichrist's unmistakable Revealing to everyone in the world; 4) It is clear the individual portrayed in the First Seal is attempting to imitate the Real Christ; 5) The best explanation for how all of this would be accomplished is Antichrist's Resurrection.

Therefore, the primary point of this chapter is: The first of seven Seals reveals that the emergence of the Antichrist, especially his Resurrection, is the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun. It will be argued that the opening of the First Seal described in Revelation 6:1-2 portrays this very thing. We read there:

> **I watched as the Lamb** [Christ] **opened the <u>first</u> of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a**

> **bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.** (NIV)

As noted in chapter 2:

> It was explained in the previous book that the **scroll** (Rev 5:1) that is being **opened** contains Christ's Wrath that will be unleashed on the world after His Return and the Church's Rescue (cf. *CET*, ch. 14, sec. E). That Endtime Wrath will begin after the **seven seals** (Rev 6:1) are broken. The Sixth Seal portrays Christ's Return and that **the wrath of the Lamb … has come** (6:16-17). The first five Seals prepare the world for Christ's Wrath. Therefore, they are referred to as Seals of Preparation throughout the *Endtimes Essentials.* Accordingly, the Trumpet and Bowl Punishments of Christ's Wrath will follow the opening of the Seventh Seal (cf. Rev chs. 8-9; 15-16). (sec. A)

In Revelation 6:1-2 Christ is opening **the <u>first</u> of the seven seals on the scroll**. Therefore, it clearly describes what will mark the very beginning of the Endtimes. In fact, whatever this **<u>first</u> of the seven seals on the scroll** is portraying, would seem to be the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun.

What is also clear is that the individual portrayed on the **white horse** is imitating the Real Christ. This will be demonstrated further below (sec. C.2). As explained previously, imitating Christ, and even claiming to be Jesus Christ, will be a foremost attribute of the Antichrist (cf. ch. 7, sec. C; ch. 10, sec. B.2). Therefore, the best interpretation of this **rider** on **a white horse** is that he is the Antichrist. [1]

In addition, the fact that this figure comes **as a conqueror bent on conquest** reflects what Scripture clearly says about the Antichrist elsewhere. Daniel describes him as a political and military **conqueror** when we read of the Antichrist's Beast Empire:

> **The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it** (Dan 7:23 NIV).

Likewise, Revelation predicts the Antichrist will be **given authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation** (13:7 NIV). The Antichrist being a **conqueror** and achieving **conquest** is certainly reflected in such predictions.

Revelation also describes the Antichrist as a spiritual **conqueror** when we read: **The whole world followed the beast … and they also worshiped the beast** (Rev 13:3-4). Using the same Greek word as in Revelation 6:2, Revelation 13 reveals that Antichrist's political, military, and spiritual **conquest** (*nikēsē,* Rev 6:2), will ultimately result in his **power to wage war against God's saints and to conquer** [*nikēsai*] **them** (Rev 13:7). Therefore, the portrayal of a **conquer**ing individual in the First Seal certainly refers to the Antichrist.

But of course, such worldwide **conquest** will require a process in Antichrist's career. This is why the text says the Antichrist will emerge in the world as an eventual **conqueror bent on conquest**. The literal Greek reads, **he went out conquering so that he could conquer**. [2] His goal to **conquer** will require a process of **conquering**. As explained previously (ch. 7, sec. B), the first five Seals of Preparation portray the Antichrist's process (and strategy) of **conquer**ing the world.

But the First Seal itself may also reflect this process of **conquering**. More specifically, it may portray both the successes of the Antichrist's initial Rise and the Antichrist's eventual and certain Revealing.

B) The First Seal & Antichrist's Rise

Like many other visions in the Revelation, the First Seal is complex and communicates a lot of meaning. It has been noted before that this is the most difficult type of Scripture to accurately interpret (cf. ch. 1, sec. B).

Therefore, we need to be careful about trying to confidently derive a lot of meaning from such symbolic language. But as also noted, the Author of these Scriptures expects us to, **Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive his approval** and **be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth** (2 Tim 2:15

NLT). Including **the word of truth** contained in the complex visions of prophetic Scripture. Accordingly, the goal of this chapter is to attempt to **correctly explain** Revelation 6:1-2.

B.1) The success symbolized by his crown

As noted, it is suggested that the First Seal reflects elements of what we have learned about the Rising Antichrist in previous chapters (8-9). For example, we are told the Rising Antichrist will **succeed in everything he does** on his way to influencing the world (Dan 8:24 NLT; cf. ch. 9, sec. A). Accordingly, there seems to be several symbols in the First Seal reflecting such success.

For example, the Greek word used here for **crown** (*stephanos*) generally meant "'the victor's crown,' the symbol of triumph in the games… 'a token of public honor' for distinguished … military success" [3] *Stephanos* referred to a "wreath worn by one of high status," [4] which was specifically given to those competing in athletic games (cf. 1 Cor 9:25; 2 Tim 2:5). Regarding the **crown** in Revelation 6:2, MacArthur explains:

> [It] refers to [being] awarded for a distinguished career of conquest… *Nikōn* ("conquering"), portrays the rider's career as one marked by a long series of victories. His crown (*stephanos*) is a winner's crown. He is no real king and has no real monarch's crown (*diadēma*), but has won a crown from the world for his triumphant achievements leading to world peace. [5]

A *stephanos* is a very appropriate symbol for the famous and militarily successful Rising Antichrist predicted in Scripture. Therefore, do not be surprised if the Rising Antichrist (or Resurrected Antichrist) is awarded some sort of "victor's crown" or wreath in appreciation for his success in bringing peace to the world.

The fact that the Antichrist is portrayed as wearing a single **crown** of victory may be another element in the First Seal that reflects the Rising Antichrist before he is the powerful Resurrected and ruling Antichrist.

In rather stark contrast, Revelation 13 pictures the Antichrist as **a beast** with **ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns**

[*diadēmata*] **on its horns** (Rev 13:1 NIV). The Greek word here refers to a "royal crown." [6] Therefore, royal **crowns** reflect the worldwide **authority** he will eventually possess **over every tribe, people, language, and nation** (13:7 NIV). The **ten crowns** reflect that at this point **the ten horns** who **are ten kings** of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition will have **give**n **their power and authority to the beast** [Antichrist] (Rev 17:12-13 NIV).

All of this is absent from the initial emergence of the Antichrist portrayed in Revelation 6 and the First Seal. As Walvoord notes regarding the *stephanos* given the Antichrist in Revelation 6: "He is given the crown of a victor, not the crown of a sovereign. The emphasis is not so much on his authority as on his victory." [7] This progression from adoration to authority will be discussed further in chapter 13.

B.2) The military victory symbolized by his horse and bow

Other symbols in the First Seal also seem to point to the Rising Antichrist's military victories. For example, regarding the **white horse**, Thomas writes:

> Horses are often connected with war and conquest in Scripture (cf. Job 39:19-25; Ps. 76:5-6; Prov. 21:31)… A popular suggestion has been that white is a symbol for [military] victory, as evidenced in the practices of both the [first century] Romans and Persians [and the Parthians]. The horse with its rider is said to represent brilliant, unchecked … victory. It must be granted that this first horse is associated with victory, as evident in the words (*nikōn*, "conquering") and (*nikēs*, "he might conquer"). [8]

Likewise Barclay wrote:

> Quite certainly, the white horse and its rider stand for conquest in war. When a Roman general [in the Apostle John's time] celebrated a triumph, that is, when he paraded through the streets of Rome with his armies and his captives and his spoils after some great victory, his chariot was drawn by white horses, the symbol of victory. [9]

Therefore, do not be surprised if the Rising Antichrist (or Resurrected Antichrist) at some point is seen literally riding **a white horse** to celebrate and be honored for his successes.

Why does the First Seal depict the Antichrist having a **bow** with no arrows? It is an odd picture. Arrows always go with bows, or the bow is rather useless. So why are there no arrows in this picture? Again, we cannot be dogmatic on the meaning of this, and some claim there is no intended meaning in this imagery. But a **bow** without arrows is odd enough that it probably suggests something. Accordingly, most commentators suggest this is the case.

Scholars generally focus their efforts on proving the symbolism of **bow** can only mean **conquer**ing by deception or by war. But the better interpretation seems to be that the Antichrist will **conquer** with both deception and war.

The idea of deception, especially through Antichrist's Resurrection, will be discussed further below (sec. C.3).

However, the theme of military victory is also rather clear in the text and a reason why many scholars conclude it symbolizes this. We have already noted the probability that this is the meaning of the **rider**'s **crown** and **horse**. Likewise, Thomas writes regarding the **bow** and its symbolism of military victory:

> This view does justice to the warlike symbolism of the bow and the horse… The bow traditionally has been associated with one who is a warrior. Frequently it is a symbol for victory (cf. Zech. 9:13-14). This is certainly the case here. [10]

Likewise, Barclay wrote:

> The rider of the horse had in this hand a *bow*. In the OT, the bow is always the sign of military power [Jer 51:56; Hos 1:5; Ps 46:9]… The bow, then, would always stand for military power… So then, the white horse and its rider with a bow stand for militarism and conquest. [11]

Likewise, Osborne writes of the first rider, "the supreme activity and purpose of this figure is military conquest." [12] Therefore, it seems the **bow** without arrows suggests the arrows have already been expended to win previous battles. [13] This military victory has also led to the peace portrayed in the First Seal, as explained further below (sec. C.4).

It has already been noted regarding the Rising Antichrist:

> The biblical prediction that **He will … succeed in everything he does** (Dan 8:24) may be fulfilled in extraordinary military victories. Daniel 7 gives us another description of the Rising Antichrist where we read: **After them** [the **ten kings**] **another king will <u>arise</u>** (Dan 7:24). **Arise** (*qûm*) can mean "victory in war or struggle" (ch. 9, sec. A).

Therefore, military victory may also help the Antichrist establish the world-wide peace established in the First Seal. Again, the **bow** with no arrows could symbolize the Rising Antichrist previously using the military weapons he had in order to accomplish that peace. Such victory may also include **uproot**ing (Dan 7:8) three evil leaders in the 10-nation Endtime Coalition as discussed previously (ch. 9, sec. B), also helping to establish peace.

One will note how all of this could apply to the description of the Rising Antichrist, and Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in chapter 9. This included his growing record of **succeed**ing **in everything he does** (Dan 8:24), his potential world-changing military victory over the Russian army, and his desire to lead the world in peace.

But note something important. The Antichrist's **bow** without arrows in the First Seal is ready to be rearmed with arrows for the massive war unleashed in the Second Seal. In chapter 18 (sec. B.2) a case will be made that Antichrist's primary target for that war will be the nuclear destruction of Endtime Babylon (cf. Rev 17:16).

In summary, it seems there may be elements of a militarily successful Rising Antichrist reflected in the First Seal. However, the **rider** on **a white horse** also surely portrays the Antichrist **conquer**ing by deception, and imitating Christ, especially in His Resurrection. Accordingly, the First Seal seems to represent <u>both</u> the Rising Antichrist who will **conquer** through war, and establish peace, <u>and</u> the Resurrected Antichrist who will **conquer** through religious deception, which also leads to world-wide peace. This will be discussed next.

C) The First Seal & Antichrist's Revealing & Resurrection

C.1) The opening of the First Seal portrays Antichrist's Revealing & Resurrection

It was noted in the previous chapter that the primary point of Part IV (chs. 10-12) of *The Beginning of Birth Pains* is to argue that the very first certain sign the Endtimes have begun will be the Antichrist's Resurrection. In the previous chapter (10) a case was made that the Antichrist will be the first and foremost False Christ that Jesus predicted would be the first **birth pain** and sign the Endtimes have begun (Matt 24:5).

In this chapter (11) it will be argued that the **open**ing of **the first of the seven seals** in Revelation 6:1-2 also portrays the emergence of the first and foremost False Christ, the Antichrist, and the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun. Evidence will be given that the **rider** on a **white horse** coming to **conquer** (Rev 6:2 NIV) by deception will be the Antichrist imitating the real Christ in His Resurrection from the dead. Therefore, the First Seal seems to suggest the Antichrist's Resurrection will be the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun.

Antichrist's Resurrection is a monumental event in the Endtimes that is often overlooked in Church doctrine. At least the respected NT scholar Grant Osborne comments, "It is the critical event in the ascension of the Antichrist to power." [14] Nevertheless, the Antichrist's Resurrection is a very neglected topic in Christian Eschatology. Many Christians do not even know the Bible predicts the Antichrist will be undeniably killed and miraculously resurrected from the dead. Some Bible scholars seek to deny or diminish the fact that this will actually happen.

Admittedly, only Revelation clearly describes the Antichrist's Resurrection (cf. 11:7; 13:3-4, 14; 17:8). Neither Jesus, the OT Prophets (including Daniel), nor the NT epistles seem to clearly mention this event. But as discussed in a future chapter (13), Revelation 13 makes it clear this will be a monumental event in the Endtimes. The Apostle John writes:

> **And I saw one of the heads of the beast as violently slaughtered to death and the wound from the deadly strike was healed. And the whole world was amazed by this miracle and became a follower of the beast… who was killed by being struck with a sword and <u>then came back to life.</u>** (Rev 13:3, 14)

The suggested translation of this text will be explained in chapter 13. Prophetic Scripture is clear that the Rising Antichrist will be undeniably killed and miraculously raised from the dead.

As argued in this chapter (sec. C.4), Antichrist's Resurrection will be the cause of so much that occurs in the Endtimes. Which is why it seems Scripture describes it as the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun. In fact, there is good biblical evidence that the opening of the First Seal in Revelation 6 reflects these very things.

As noted, it seems the First Seal portrays elements of the successful Rising Antichrist. But it also represents Antichrist's unmistakable Revealing to the world and the Church. It was concluded in a previous chapter (9, sec. D) that the biblical prophecies fulfilled by the Rising Antichrist could give us a relatively high degree of confidence in his identity. But when the First Seal is opened, his identity as the Revealed Antichrist will be absolutely certain.

Antichrist's Revealing is reflected in the heavenly command for this **conquer**ing **rider** on a **white horse** to **"Come!"** The Greek word (*erchou*) means, "making an appearance, *come before the public*." [15] It is uniquely used most often in the NT to describe the spectacular appearing of Jesus Christ at His Second Coming.

As Thomas puts it, "*Erchomai*, 'I come' is a common word for making a public appearance, especially in reference to <u>an appearance of divinity</u>." [16] Therefore, Revelation 6:1-2 is describing the Revealed Antichrist bursting forth onto the world scene to be noticed by EVERYONE.

It was noted in the previous chapter that Jesus predicted the emergence of False Christs would be the first **birth pain** of the Endtimes (Matt 24:5). It was further argued that the first and foremost of those False Christs would be the Antichrist. Therefore,

it seems that the **open**ing of **the first of the seven seals** describes the revealing of the first and foremost False Christ, the Antichrist, as the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun.

How will the Antichrist be Revealed in such an obvious way to everyone on Earth? The best answer is Antichrist's Resurrection. As also argued in the previous chapter, as the first and foremost False Christ, the Antichrist will be claiming to be Jesus Christ Himself returned to Earth (cf. Matt 24:5; ch. 10, sec. B.2). Such a claim would certainly require the Antichrist to be resurrected from the dead.

This too seems to be portrayed in the opening of the First Seal. We have already noted that the command to **"Come!"** (*erchou*) refers to "an appearance of divinity," and is uniquely used in the NT to refer to the real Christ's appearing to the whole world. Therefore, the heavenly command for the Antichrist to **"Come!"** seems to portray his appearing to the whole world through his Resurrection.

In addition, the imagery of a *stephanos* seems to also reflect the worship, glory, and life of Antichrist's miraculous Resurrection from the dead. The *NIDNTT* notes: "The *stephanos* played a part in many ancient customs, and bore diverse connotations [including] worship." [17] This reminds us of John's description of Antichrist's Resurrection when we read that **when the fatal wound** is **healed** the **whole world** will **worship the beast** (Rev 13:3-4 NIV). If the **crown** is also reflecting the **world**'s **worship** of the Antichrist, then it would seem his Resurrection has occurred in the First Seal.

In addition, *Vine's* points out that a *stephanos* referred to a person's "glory." [18] In fact, it is used that way when Peter describes the reward of church elders as **the crown of glory** (*stephanon tēs doxēs,* 1 Pet 5:4; cf. Phil 4:1; 1 Thess 2:19).

In addition, in Revelation 2:10 a *stephanos* refers to a **crown of life** (*stephanon tēs zōēs*; cf. Jms 1:12). The Antichrist will never do anything more glorious than being **fatally wounded and then** coming **back to life** (Rev 13:14 NLT). And the **crown** (*stephanos*) of the Antichrist's worship, life, and glory in the First Seal represents all of these things reflected in Antichrist's Resurrection. This will be confirmed by the fact that the Antichrist is certainly

imitating the real Christ in the First Seal. This will be discussed in the next section.

C.2) The Antichrist will imitate the Real Christ in His Resurrection

As noted previously (ch. 7, sec. B), imitating Christ is in the very name **antichrist** that the Apostle John gave him (1 John 2:18). The Greek prefix **anti** can mean "against" or "in place of." Scripture confirms both meanings apply to the Antichrist.

Antichrist's imitation of the real Christ is clearly portrayed when **the first of the seven seals** is **opened** (Rev 6:1) to begin the Endtimes. There we read that John saw, **a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest** (v. 2). The Antichrist's desire to imitate the Real Christ is made evident by comparing how the Real Christ is described in Revelation 19 where John writes:

> **I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns.** (vs. 11-12 NIV)

Both passages depict a **rider** on **a white horse** wearing a **crown** or **crowns** and coming to **conquer** and **wage war**. But Antichrist's **white horse** and **crown** (Rev 6:2) merely mimic the **white horse** Jesus will be riding, and the **many crowns** He will be wearing, and Who is rightly **called Faithful and True**. Accordingly, Thomas explains that even the color **white** in the First Seal is intended to imitate the Real Christ:

> [The] white carries the primary symbolism of righteousness and holiness. This is … consistent with usage of the color throughout the Apocalypse where it is constantly associated with Christ's righteousness or with His spiritual victory (cf. 1:14; 2:17; 3:4-5, 18; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9, 13-14; 14:14; 19:11, 14; 20:11). [19]

Clearly, the First Seal portrays the Antichrist's strategy and purpose to imitate the Real Christ. What will be the Antichrist's

greatest impersonation of Jesus Christ? His Resurrection. Indeed, the most shocking and profound example of the Antichrist's imitation of the real Christ will be the Antichrist's Resurrection. The Antichrist could do nothing that would imitate Christ more than being resurrected from the dead.

Therefore, the First Seal seems to be portraying the occurrence and timing of Antichrist's Resurrection. This is how he will **"Come!"** (*erchou*) and make "an appearance of divinity." Antichrist's Resurrection is how he will imitate the real Christ and His glory (reflected in wearing the **crown**, *stephanos*) and Christ's "spiritual victory" (reflected in riding the **white horse**). To date, what has been the most victorious and glorious event in Christ's life on this Earth? His Resurrection.

Accordingly, Revelation 13 clearly teaches that the Antichrist's Resurrection will be another attempt to imitate Christ. There the Antichrist is described as one who was **slain** (*esphagmenēn* "slaughtered;" Rev 13:3 NASB). [20] Likewise, the real Christ is described with the same Greek word twice in the Revelation as **slain** (*esphegmenon(oun)* "slaughtered;" Rev 5:6; 13:8 NASB). The parallel is obvious.

Christ's Resurrection was the supernatural foundation of His claim to be God's Son and our Savior (cf. Matt 12:38, 40; Acts 17:31; cf. Acts 2:24, 32; 13:30,33,34,37; 17:31; Rom 6:4; 8:11; 10:9; 1 Cor 6:14; 15:15; Eph 1:20; Col 2:12; Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 1:21).

Likewise, Antichrist's Resurrection will be the supernatural foundation for his Claim to be God (cf. 2 Thess 2:4). The **beast** [Antichrist] will be **fatally wounded and then** come **back to life** (Rev 13:14 NLT, cf. v. 3). As a result, **The whole world** will be **filled with wonder and follow the beast… and they** will **also worship the beast** (vs. 3-4 NIV). This one act will be a foremost reason that the Antichrist usurps the worship of the world from Christ. But it is also an obvious and intentional effort to imitate the greatest miracle of Christ.

Let us recognize another way the Antichrist could imitate Jesus to the world. The Scriptures say, **Christ died** then **he was buried** and then **he was raised on the third day** (1 Cor 15:3-4; cf. Matt

16:21; Acts 10:39-40). Accordingly, we should not be surprised if the Revealed Antichrist is killed on a Good Friday and resurrected **on the third day** the following Easter Sunday. This is only a suggestion, but it would reflect the great desire of God, Satan, and the Antichrist to have him imitate the real Christ.

Nevertheless, the following has been argued from the text of Revelation 6:1-2: 1) The opening of the First Seal represents the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun; 2) The individual described in the First Seal is the first and foremost False Christ, the Antichrist; 3) The event being portrayed is the Rising Antichrist's unmistakable Revealing to everyone in the world; 4) It is clear the individual portrayed in the First Seal is attempting to imitate the Real Christ; 5) The best explanation for how all of this would be accomplished is Antichrist's Resurrection.

C.3) The Antichrist will conquer the world through the deception of his Resurrection

It was suggested previously that Antichrist's first strategy to **conquer** the world will be deception (cf. ch. 7, sec. C). Likewise, the First Seal also portrays the Antichrist **conquer**ing the world with deception. This has already been established by the fact that the most evil person in the history of humanity is depicted as a **rider** on **a white horse** seeking to imitate Jesus Christ. That is a lot of deception!

Accordingly, biblical prophecy says of the Antichrist: **He will cause deceit to prosper** (Dan 8:25 NIV). Or as the NLT has it, **He will be a master of deception**. As noted above, even the Antichrist's **white horse** is intended to give him the appearance of moral truth and purity. The whole picture portrays him as the noble "Rescuer" coming to save the world.

But what will be the Antichrist's greatest act of deception? His Resurrection when he is **fatally wounded and then** comes **back to life** (Rev 13:14). This is what will cause **the whole world** to **marvel at this miracle and** give **allegiance to the beast** Antichrist (Rev 13:3).

As argued in the next chapter, the Apostle Paul likewise explained that the **lawless one will be revealed** with **all sorts of**

displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie and that even **God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie** (2 Thess 2:8-9, 11 NIV). It seems **the powerful delusion** Paul predicted is being described in the obvious and powerful deception being portrayed in the First Seal and best explained by the Antichrist's Resurrection.

C.4) Some early Endtime events seem to require Antichrist's Resurrection first

There is additional evidence that Antichrist's Resurrection will be the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun. This is the fact that several early Endtime events seem to require the Antichrist's Resurrection.

First, it was argued in the previous chapter that Jesus indicated the first sign of the Endtimes would be the first **birth pain** of False Christs (Matt 24:5). It was further argued that the Antichrist would be the first and foremost False Christ. Therefore, his emergence would be the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun. Finally, it was noted that Jesus rather clearly taught that the False Christs will be claiming to be Jesus Christ Himself returned to Earth.

Therefore, the first and foremost False Christ, the Antichrist, in his great desire to imitate Jesus Christ and steal His worship, will also be claiming to be Jesus Christ returned to Earth. As Jesus said, he will be claiming in the **name** of Jesus, **"I am he"** and **"I am the Christ," and will mislead many** (Matt 24:5; Mark 13:6 NASB).

As noted there, how could the Antichrist as the first and foremost False Christ possibly convince **many** that he is Jesus Christ Himself returned to Earth? It seems his undeniable death and miraculous Resurrection to life as predicted in Revelation 13 and reflected in Revelation 6:1-2 would be an important proof of his claim.

If Antichrist's emergence is the first **birth pain** as the first and foremost False Christ who is claiming to be Jesus Christ, then all of this is more evidence that Antichrist's required Resurrection is the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun.

Second, it seems the First Seal is portraying the Antichrist obtaining worldwide peace, which would also seem to require the persuasion and power of his Resurrection. A reason to claim the First Seal reflects worldwide peace, is the fact that in the Second Seal, catastrophic war will **take peace from the earth**. We read:

> **When the Lamb** [Christ] **opened the second seal … another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make people kill each other. To him was given a large sword.** (Rev 6:3-4 NIV)

The reason this **rider** will need to **take peace from the earth** is because worldwide **peace** will be significantly and remarkably accomplished by the Antichrist portrayed in the First Seal. As Thomas notes: "Worldwide peace is the condition at the end of the first-seal period, because one of the results of the second seal is to take that peace away (cf. 6:4)." [21]

Accordingly, Walvoord writes of the Antichrist in the First Seal, "He will launch his career as a great peacemaker." Indeed, Paul described the people of the world during the Endtimes as desperately calling for **"Peace and safety!"** (1 Thess 5:2 NIV). [22] The victorious Antichrist revealed in the First Seal will at least temporarily provide that. Along these lines, MacArthur writes of the Antichrist:

> He will at first appear to be everything a desperate world longs for—a man who will unify the world under his leadership and usher in a short-lived era of global peace and prosperity. [23]

Likewise, in MacArthur's summary of the First Seal he writes:

> Even as the final doom of the world approaches, Antichrist will promise a golden age of peace and prosperity. In gratitude, the world will honor him and elevate him to the position of supreme leadership… The world's desperate desire for international peace will serve as the bait for the satanic trap. That longing for security and safety will play into the hands of Antichrist, Satan's ruler, who will convince the world that he can provide them. [24]

It has been noted that we can expect the Rising Antichrist to be promoting peace in our world (cf. ch. 9, sec. C). But the Revealed and probably Resurrected Antichrist portrayed in the First Seal will actually accomplish peace as part of **conquer**ing the world with the deception that he is Jesus Christ returned to Earth.

The worldwide peace accomplished by the Antichrist is related to another early Endtime event that will probably require Antichrist's Resurrection. This will be Antichrist's Religious Covenant. Daniel 9:27 predicts the Antichrist **will make a firm covenant with the many** (NASB) in the Endtimes. It will be explained in a later chapter (14) that this will result in the formal implementation of Antichrist's Religion and worldwide worship. It is doubtful the Antichrist would have the religious and political power to **make a firm** religious **covenant with the many** before his Resurrection.

Therefore, this is more evidence that the Antichrist's Resurrection is the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun. This is because Antichrist's Religious Covenant is one of the first events in the Endtimes. It begins Daniel's Last Seven Years and the countdown to Christ's Return. This too will be explained later in chapter 15.

There will be a remarkable result of the peace the Antichrist will bring through his Religious Covenant. Daniel predicts that when he **will make a firm covenant with the many** (Dan 9:27 NASB), it will result in Israel having the freedom to resume **sacrifice and offering … at the temple** (NIV). To appease and persuade the Jews, this will have to be a rebuilt **temple** on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Again, this is the kind of achievement that would seem to require the supernatural political and religious power of the Resurrected Antichrist.

Since about the year A.D. 700, the Muslim mosque "Dome on the Rock" has existed on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Most Muslims believe it marks the spot where the Prophet Muhammad ascended to Heaven. Accordingly, it is considered the third holiest site in Islam. Therefore, Islam's fanatical opposition to allowing the Jews to resume **sacrifice and offering … at** a rebuilt Jewish **temple** is understandable. For example one resource notes:

> The 1990 Temple Mount riots, or the Al Aqsa Massacre, also known as Black Monday, took place at the Temple Mount, on Monday, 8 October 1990. Following a decision by the Temple Mount Faithful to lay the cornerstone for the [Jewish] Temple, mass riots erupted. In the ensuing clashes, 17 Palestinians died, more than 150 Palestinians were wounded by Israeli security forces, and more than 20 Israeli civilians and police were wounded by Palestinians. [25]

Nothing has changed since then. Oddly, an agreement states that Jews can visit the Temple Mount, but cannot pray there. Still, in January of 2023 an Israeli government official merely visited the Temple Mount. The following news report described the result:

> The Palestinians and many Muslim and non-Muslim supporters sharply disagreed with Israel on Thursday at an emergency U.N. Security Council meeting over the [mere and legal] visit of an ultranationalist Israeli Cabinet minister to a flashpoint Jerusalem holy site [the Temple Mount].
>
> Khaled Khiare, the U.N. assistant secretary-general for political and peacebuilding affairs … said, "it is seen as particularly inflammatory." The visit sparked widespread condemnation in the region and internationally "as a provocation that risked sparking further bloodshed." [26]

The Bible predicts that the Antichrist will one day obtain peace between Jews and Muslims to such an extent that the former will be able to conduct **sacrifices and offerings** in a rebuilt **temple** (Dan 9:27) where there is already a sacred Muslim mosque. This will likely occur when the Revealed Antichrist **will make a firm covenant with the many** and implement Antichrist's Religious Covenant. Again, all of this would seem to require the deception, power, and persuasion that will occur with the Antichrist's Resurrection. In fact, it will be explained in a future chapter (13) that Antichrist's Resurrection will deceive even all Muslims to worship the Antichrist.

Finally, there is another rather early event in the Endtimes that would seem to require the Antichrist's Resurrection. Revelation chapters 17-18 describe the destruction of Endtime Babylon by an alliance between the Antichrist and the 10-nation Endtime

Coalition. The prophecy states the **ten kings … will give their power and authority to the beast** [Antichrist] (Rev 17:12-13). The result will be:

> **The ten horns** [Endtime Coalition] **that you saw and the beast** [Antichrist] **will hate the Prostitute** [Endtime Babylon] **and they will permanently remove all people from her and strip her naked and they will devour her body and will burn her down with fire… in one hour** (Rev 17:16; 18:10 [27])

As discussed previously in chapter 4 (sec. B.2), this kind of destruction reflects the use of nuclear weapons. Therefore, it seems nuclear powers will be surrendering their weapons and **power and authority** to the Antichrist. Obviously, this will require significant, even supernatural persuasion. Therefore, there are good reasons to believe this predicted alliance between the Antichrist and the 10-nation Endtime Coalition to destroy Endtime Babylon will occur only after Antichrist's Resurrection. Why else would powerful countries entrust so much to a man if he were just a **little horn** (Dan 7:8)?

It will only be after **his fatal wound** is **healed and the whole earth** is **amazed and** will **follow after the beast and worship the beast** (Rev 13:3-4 NASB) that the **ten** leaders of the Coalition will also believe the **powerful delusion** (2 Thess 2:11), and be **amazed** by the Antichrist, and also be willing to **worship** and **follow** him and **give their power and authority to the beast** (Rev 13:3-4; 17:12-13). Including giving the Antichrist their nuclear weapons arsenal to destroy their primary political, economic, and military rival on Earth: Endtime Babylon.

Revelation 17 seems to provide additional evidence that it will be the Resurrected Antichrist that forms an alliance with the 10-nation Endtime Coalition. After an emphasis on describing the Resurrected Antichrist (cf. vs. 8, 11), the passage gives the only description of this alliance in Scripture (cf. vs. 12-13, 16).

It will be argued in chapter 18 (sec. B) that the catastrophic result of this military alliance between the Antichrist and Coalition is described in the Second Seal of massive war. Again, we read after the opening of the First Seal and Antichrist's probable Resurrection:

> **When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make people kill each other. To him was given a large sword.** (Rev 6:3-4 NIV)

Therefore, if this alliance and nuclear war is reflected in the Second Seal, and requires the Antichrist's Resurrection, then this is more evidence that this event is portrayed in the First Seal. This also again suggests that Antichrist's Resurrection, portrayed in the First Seal, will be the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun.

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[1] The identification of the **rider** on **a white horse** (cf. Rev 6:2) has been greatly debated. Walvoord writes: "more diverse explanations have been given of [Rev 6] verse 2 than probably any other portion of the entire book" (loc. 1934). Walvoord, after evaluating other views, agrees with the view argued in this section that the **rider** is portraying the Antichrist and writes:

> A more plausible explanation is that the rider of the white horse is none other than the "prince who is to come" of Daniel 9:26 … He is Satan's masterpiece and the counterfeit of all that Christ is or claims to be. He is therefore cast in the role of a conqueror, which seems to be the significance of the white horse. In biblical times, it was customary for a conqueror to ride in triumph on a white horse… his identification as the world ruler of the tribulation, the same individual described as the beast out of the sea in Revelation 13, is preferred. (loc. 1943)

Wiersbe agrees, writing:

> The rider on the white horse in Revelation 6:1-2 is the Antichrist, that final world dictator who will lead the nations astray. He will begin his career as a peacemaker, signing a covenant with Israel to protect her from her enemies (Dan. 9:27). (Matt 24:4)

However, many see in the First Seal a portrayal of general evil forces, perhaps including both the Antichrist and the many False Christ's. Accordingly, Thomas concludes:

> At the very beginning of the period, called "the beginning of birth-pains," he [the Antichrist] will be one of many impostors who constitute this anti-Christian force of which this first rider is an emblem. (693-694; cf. MacArthur, *Rev,* 178; Beale, 377; Van Kampen, 199).

But for reasons given in the previous chapter (10, sec. B), it would seem the Antichrist will be the first and foremost False Christ, emerging

even a few years before the many False Christ's who will be operating after the Fifth Seal and The Greatest Persecution.

Understandably, some have interpreted the rider on a white horse as the coming of the real Christ (e.g. Hendricksen). But this is simply a misunderstanding of the fact that the First Seal is portraying the imitation of Christ, not His arrival. For more on this see Mounce who concludes: "The arguments against Christ as the rider of the white horse are sufficient in strength to make the identification unlikely" (141).

However, Mounce argues for perhaps the most popular view in modern theology. Regarding the rider on a white horse he writes: "John has in mind military conquest in general." Aune, Morris, Metzger, and Osborne agree. The NLT translation of Rev 6:2 suggests this as well, having, **He rode out to win many battles and gain the victory**. As noted in section B of this chapter, this seems to be part of the meaning in the symbolism of the First Seal. But these commentators seem to be in error to ignore or dismiss the ideas of deception and peace in the First Seal as well.

[2] *LGEINT*.

[3] *Vine's*, 139. *BDAG* defines *stephanos* as a "wreath worn by one of high status."

[4] *BDAG.*

[5] *MNTC*, *Rev* I, 179.

[6] *BDAG*.

[7] Walvoord, *Rev*, loc. 1951.

[8] Thomas, 689, 691, 694-6. Mounce (142), Osborne (277), Morris, (102), and Beale, (378) agree.

[9] Barclay, 3-4.

[10] Thomas, 689, 691, 694-6. Mounce (142), Osborne (277), Morris, (102), and Beale, (378) agree.

[11] Barclay, 3-4.

[12] Osborne, 277.

[13] Several commentators claim that the First Seal can <u>only</u> be portraying conquering by <u>peaceful</u> means. For example, Thomas writes:

> It is better to take the absence of arrows from the description as a symbol of <u>bloodless victory</u>. The bow indicates that war is threatened, but never actually occurs because victory is accomplished through peaceful means (Scott; Walvoord)… Because death is not alluded to under this seal, this explanation of the bow without arrows is preferable. (694)

However, as pointed out in this section, there are several clear allusions to military victory in the First Seal. And contrary to Thomas, military victory <u>does</u> allude to "death" in the First Seal.

Likewise, MacArthur writes:

> He will not conquer by military force, but by cunning and deceit (cf. 2 Thess. 2:9–11). His conquest will be a "cold war" victory, a peace won by agreement, not conflict (Dan. 9:24–27). (Rev, 179; cf. Walvoord)

MacArthur's error is to assume the **conquer**ing portrayed in the First Seal can only come in one way. On the contrary, as argued in this section, the imagery can symbolize **conquer**ing by both war and deception.

The NLT translation is interesting, stating: **Its rider carried a bow, and a crown was placed on his head. He rode out to win many battles and gain the victory.** This correctly reflects the military conquest portrayed here, but again, the **bow** without arrows suggests the **battles** have already been fought and won. The NLT suggests there is war in the First Seal, but it is best to understand that war does not begin again until the Second Seal.

[14] Osborne, 617.

[15] *BDAG*, #1.b.

[16] Thomas, 687. Some liberty was taken in the quote to change Thomas' more obscure "divine epiphany" to "appearance of divinity."

[17] *NIDNTT,* I.405.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Thomas, 689. He adds:

> The obvious objection to this explanation is the possibility that the horse's rider represents the forces of evil, as will be shown below. If, however, his is only a feigned righteousness, a counterfeit of the true, the objection is overruled.

[20] Osborne writes regarding Rev 13:3a:

> This is clearly another great imitation [of Christ], for "slain to death" was used in 5:6 for the Lamb that was "as slain." The emphasis in the twice repeated "death" is on the reality of his death… [This is] a parody of Christ's resurrection… The first beast gains control by parity in Christ's death and resurrection. When he returns from the dead, his associate, the false prophet, will use the event for forging a new world religion with the beast… In the same way, the "was and is not" [Rev 17:8] parodies Jesus' death and resurrection. In 1:18 Christ says, "I am the Living One. I was dead, and behold, I am alive for eternity" (also 2:8). The beast imitates this in 13:3, 12, 14 with his "mortal wound that is healed. (495, 507, 615)

[21] Thomas, 694.

[22] For more on the world's desperate cry for **"Peace and safety"** (1 Thess 5:2), see *CET*, ch. 15, sec. B.

[23] MacArthur, *Thess*, 146.

[24] MacArthur, *Rev,* 178-180.

[25] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1990_Temple_Mount_riots#cite_note-4

[26] https://apnews.com/article/politics-israel-government-west-bank-jerusalem-

[27] For an explanation of the suggested translation of Rev 17:16 see *Endtime Babylon*, ch. 8, sec. A.1.

Chapter 12

Antichrist's Revealing

The first certain sign the Endtimes have begun

2 Thess 2

Contents

A) Paul's topic in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 *Antichrist's Revealing*

B) Paul's purpose in 2 Thessalonians 2-12 *Teaching the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun*

C) The nature of Antichrist's Revealing *Miraculous signs including Resurrection*

D) The sequence of events surrounding Antichrist's Revealing

Primary Points

- In 2 Thessalonians 2 it seems Paul wanted to answer a very important question: What will be the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun? His answer is Antichrist's miraculous Revealing.
- A central theme of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 is the emergence and revelation of the Antichrist.
- Both Revelation 6:1-2 and 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12 seem to be describing the same Endtime events.
- The fact that *apokalyptō* (vs. 3, 6, 8) means to make something or someone "fully known" should be noticed. It may imply that previous to the Antichrist's full and certain revelation, there will be evidence of his emergence that could be recognized.
- When **the man of lawlessness** (the Antichrist) **is revealed** [*apakalyphthē*] (v. 3) the entire world will know of his arrival.
- The Antichrist's **coming** ("first stage of his presence") when he is **revealed** (vs. 3, 6, 8) will occur with **all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders**.
- There is evidence that the **powerful delusion** that **God sends** to deceive the pagan world is referring to the Antichrist's Resurrection.

- It seems there are three separate events being described in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4: 1) a religious rebellion; 2) Antichrist's initial Revealing; 3) Antichrist's eventual Claim to be God.
- It seems Antichrist's initial Revealing will occur sometime before Antichrist's Claim to be God.
- It is suggested the Antichrist's Revealing will be the Antichrist's Resurrection, prompting the Antichrist's Religious Covenant, resulting in the formal implementation of Antichrist's worldwide Religion, which will certainly qualify as a **rebellion** against God.

This chapter is rather complex and some may find it tedious. But it is an effort to better understand what the Apostle Paul wrote about Antichrist's Revealing.

[Read 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12]

In this passage of Scripture, it seems Paul wanted to answer a very important question: What will be the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun? His answer is Antichrist's miraculous Revealing. Accordingly, this is the theme of these verses. As a result, they provide some of the most detailed information about the Antichrist. More specifically, about his initial and certain Revealing to the world. In essence, the Apostle seems to be describing the same event that is portrayed in the opening of the First Seal in Revelation 6 discussed in the previous chapter. Accordingly, in describing Antichrist's Revealing, there may be allusions to Antichrist's Resurrection in this text.

A) Paul's topic in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Antichrist's Revealing

A central theme of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 is the emergence and revelation of the Antichrist. [1] Paul mentions this 3 times within 6 verses when he writes:

> **Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day** [**of the Lord**, v. 2] **will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness** [the Antichrist] **is revealed** [*apakalyphthē*]. (v. 3 NIV)

> **And now you know what is holding him** [the Antichrist] **back, so that he may be <u>revealed</u>** [*apakalyphthēnai*] **at the proper time. The secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be <u>revealed</u>** [*apakalyphthēsetai*] (vs. 6-8 NIV).

Therefore, what was Paul's topic in these verses? The full revelation of the Antichrist to the whole world. The Greek word (*apokalyptō*) used here means: "to cause something to be <u>fully</u> known, *reveal, disclose, bring to light, make fully known*." [2] Greene notes, "the term was used generally during that time to speak of the revelation of a deity." [3]

Accordingly, it is the same word used in the NT to repeatedly describe Christ's Return. For example, earlier in the same letter, Paul wrote of **when the Lord Jesus is revealed** [*apokalypsei*] **from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels** (2 Thess 1:7; cf. Luke 17:30; 1 Cor 1:7; 1 Pet 1:7, 13; 4:13). In imitation of the real Christ, the Antichrist will have his own **revelation of his glory** (1 Pet 4:13 NASB). Likewise, Paul writes of **the coming** [*parousias*] **of the lawless one** Antichrist (v. 9), using the same unique Greek word used in the NT to describe Christ's coming. [4]

The revelation [*apokalypsin*] **of our Lord Jesus Christ** (1 Cor 1:7 NIV) will perhaps be the most God-glorifying event in human history. Likewise, the revelation (*apokalyptō*) of the Antichrist will perhaps be the most glorifying event for Satan.

The fact that *apokalyptō* means to make something or someone "<u>fully</u> known" should be noticed. It may imply that previous to the Antichrist's full and certain revelation, there will be evidence of his emergence that could be recognized. In other words, as there will be signs of Christ's coming before His worldwide revelation, there may be signs of the Antichrist's coming before His full revelation to the world.

Many commentators support this view. [5] For example, MacArthur writes:

> The aorist tense of the verb [*apakalyphthē*] translated **revealed** points to a definite time when this man will appear. It implies that he was previously present and known. [6]

Accordingly, this could reflect the activities of the Rising Antichrist before his certain revelation as the Revealed Antichrist.

However, when **the man of lawlessness** [the Antichrist] **is revealed** [*apakalyphthē*] (v. 3) the entire world will know of his arrival. Again, Greene comments: "The verb that describes his coming denotes that the veil will be taken off so that he will be revealed to everyone." [7] This is also an aspect of him being "fully known" at this time.

Before this revelation, non-Christians will not have any idea of the Antichrist's true identity. Knowledgeable Christians will have witnessed the predicted attributes of the Rising Antichrist in a man, and suspected his identity. But when **the man of lawlessness is revealed**, all Christians and unbelievers will know that he is not only a famous and extraordinarily successful man (as the Rising Antichrist), but that he is truly supernatural in a way never witnessed since Christ walked the Earth. As the first and foremost False Christ, the pagan world will believe he is Jesus Christ returned to Earth to save humanity (cf. Matt 24:5; *BBP* ch. 10, sec. B). Real Christians will know with certainty that he is the Antichrist and the Endtimes have begun. And again, all of this seems to rather require the Antichrist's Resurrection.

B) Paul's purpose in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Teaching the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun

As demonstrated above, Antichrist's Revealing is an important theme of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12. Therefore, we can ask why was the Apostle so focused on the emergence and revelation of the Antichrist in this passage of Scripture? Because as explained further elsewhere, the Thessalonian Christians were confused about the sequence of Endtime events. [8] More specifically, they had been deceived to think **the day of the Lord** and the Endtimes had **already come** (v. 2). Therefore, Paul wanted these Christians to know the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun. He begins that answer in verse 3 when he writes: **Don't let anyone deceive you**

in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed (NIV).

Paul's reference to **the rebellion** will be addressed below. But it seems that Paul wanted these Christians to understand that one of the first certain signs the Endtimes have begun will be when **the man of lawlessness** [the Antichrist] **is revealed**. This is perhaps more clear in the more literal translation of the NASB. It reads: **Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first** [*prōton*]**, and the man of lawlessness is revealed**. The Greek word here, *prōton*, means "being first in a sequence." [9] Therefore, it seems Paul meant that **the apostasy** and the connected event of **the man of lawlessness** being **revealed**, will actually **come first** in the sequence of events clearly marking the beginning of the Endtimes.

Likewise, when the Antichrist **is revealed** (*apakalyphthē*), it will be the first event that makes his identity certain. Again, the Greek word (*apokalyptō*) used here means: "to cause something to be fully known, *reveal, disclose, bring to light, make fully known*." Accordingly, later in the passage, Paul referred to Antichrist's revealing as **the coming** [*parousias*] **of the lawless one** Antichrist (v. 9). The Greek here means: "arrival as the first stage in presence, *coming, advent*." [10] Again, Paul's topic seemed to be the **first** (*prōton*) event that makes it fully known who the Antichrist is and that the Endtimes have begun.

In other words, Paul understood that the first and foremost False Christ will come before the Real Christ. Therefore, in order to know when the Real Christ is coming, we are first watching to see when the Antichrist comes.

C) The nature of Antichrist's Revealing *Signs & wonders*

Again, the Apostle wanted these Christians to understand this question: How can we be certain the Endtimes have begun? He seemed to point specifically to Antichrist's Revealing as the answer. Therefore, he described more details about Antichrist's Revealing. In verse 9 we read:

> **The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie.** (NIV)

The Antichrist's **coming** ("first stage of his presence") when he is initially **revealed** (vs. 3, 6, 8) will occur with **all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders**. This probably refers to miracle working. But it may also refer to Antichrist's greatest miracle and **display of power through wonders**: Antichrist's Resurrection.

Unfortunately, some versions suggest the Antichrist's miracles will be faked. For example, the NLT has **counterfeit power and signs and miracles**, and the NASB has **false wonders** (cf. ESV, NET). The literal Greek can read: **whose coming is in accordance with the working of Satan with all power and signs and wonders that are a lie** [*pseudous*]. The translation, **that are a lie**, reflects the fact that *pseudous* in the text is a noun, not an adjective as implied in the NLT (**counterfeit**) or the NASB (**false**). The Greek is actually quite awkward, but the NIV attempts to reflect the noun here when it has, **The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie** [*pseudous*, noun].

What did Paul mean by **the lie** [*pseudous*] in this text? Essentially all commentators agree it refers to the effect of the miracles rather than their nature. [11] For example, MacArthur writes, "Antichrist's miracles, signs, and wonders are false, not in the sense that they are fakery, but that they lead to false conclusions about who he is." [12] Thus, the NIV seems to best reflect the Greek text and Paul's meaning. The miracles themselves will not be fake, but rather supernatural, and as a result, deceitful.

Where will the supernatural **power** for these **displays of** miraculous **signs and wonders** come from? In verse 9, Paul says they will be **the work of Satan** (NLT). But in verse 11 he explains that these miracles are ultimately **a powerful delusion** that **God sends** (NIV). Therefore, we are reminded of God's complete sovereignty over all Endtime events as explained earlier (cf. ch. 3,

sec. C). Accordingly, it becomes obvious that ultimately **God** Himself will be giving Satan and the Antichrist the supernatural power to perform real miracles **so that** the world **will believe the lie**. [13]

Paul makes it clear that the effect of these **displays of power through signs and wonders** is to deceive. In verse 10 he writes the Antichrist **will use every kind of evil deception to fool those on their way to destruction** (NLT). These **displays of power through signs and wonders that serve <u>the lie</u>** (v. 9) is the same **powerful delusion** that **God sends** unbelievers **so that they will believe <u>the lie</u>** (v. 11 NIV).

What will be **the lie**? In the Greek, the noun *pseudous* is in the singular tense. Therefore, the Apostle is referring to one **lie** in particular. That **lie** that will be promoted by **all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie** will probably be that the Antichrist is God. As Paul notes earlier in the text, the climax of Antichrist's career will be when **He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God** (2 Thess 2:4 NIV). Again, all unbelievers will believe this **lie** that the Antichrist is actually the true Creator God of the Universe living on Earth!

Why will they believe that? Because **God sends them a powerful delusion**. [14] This translates the Greek phrase *energeian planēs* which means "a supernatural working of deceit." [15] A natural, merely human deception would never have the life-altering universal effect being described here. This will be a supernatural deception sent by **God**.

What will be this **powerful delusion** that will convince everyone to **believe the lie** that the Antichrist is God in a human body? Of course, Paul says the Antichrist will be performing **all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie**. But both *energeian* and *planēs* are in the singular tense, suggesting the **powerful delusion** will be one miraculous event in particular. What will that be? The best answer is Antichrist's Resurrection.

How will the first and foremost False Christ, the Antichrist, elevate himself above the **many** False Christs (cf. Matt 24:5, 24) operating in the Endtimes and earn the world's sole worship? Paul explains this will occur through one particular **powerful delusion** performed by the Antichrist. That would seem to at least include the Antichrist's most powerful, convincing, and unique miracle: his Resurrection.

In addition, Antichrist's Revealing described by the Apostle in 2 Thessalonians 2 seems to be the same event that is portrayed in the opening of the First Seal in Revelation 6 discussed in the previous chapter. It was argued there that the opening of the First Seal portrays: 1) The Antichrist bursting onto the world scene; 2) to **conquer** with deception.

It was also argued there that the opening of the First Seal depicts the very first certain event of the Endtimes. More specifically the Antichrist's **conquer**ing the world through supernatural deception empowered by his Resurrection. Accordingly, it is suggested that the Apostle Paul gave another description of Antichrist's Revealing portrayed in Revelation 6:1-2.

Surely, the Antichrist's **conquer**ing through deception in Revelation 6 is being described by Paul as the Antichrist's **displays of** supernatural **power through signs and wonders** and the **use** of **every kind of evil deception**, resulting in a **powerful delusion**. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-11 and Revelation 6:1-2 (and therefore in some sense Matthew 24:5) seem to describe the same Endtime event: The first certain sign the Endtimes have begun.

Accordingly, in Paul's description of Antichrist's miraculous Revealing, there seems to be allusions to Antichrist's Resurrection in this text. It is not claimed that Paul intended to describe this. It is probable that the Apostle may not have even known about Antichrist's Resurrection. It was not clearly revealed until the 90's A.D. when the book of Revelation was published. That would have been about 40 years after Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians. This would be another example of "progressive revelation" in Scripture.

However, the apparent connection between 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 and Revelation 6:1-2 suggests that Paul's description of Antichrist's Revealing can be applied to the descriptions of

Antichrist's Revealing and Resurrection in the book of Revelation. For example, Paul predicted that **God** will **send** the pagan world **a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie** that he deserves their worship (2 Thess 2:11 NIV). Likewise, the First Seal seems to portray the Antichrist **conquer**ing the world with deception, specifically through his Resurrection. Even more clearly, Revelation 13 describes the effect of Antichrist's Resurrection in this very same way. Antichrist's Resurrection will certainly be **a powerful delusion** that supernaturally deceives the world into worshipping him. [16] This will be discussed further in the next chapter.

D) The sequence of events surrounding Antichrist's Revealing

D.1) Distinction between the Antichrist's Revealing & his Claim to be God

It was noted previously that we must be careful not to dogmatically derive too much detail from prophetic Scripture, like 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 (cf. ch. 1, sec. B). What seems clear is that Paul believed the Antichrist being **revealed** would be among the first certain signs the Endtimes have begun. Other details are more difficult to discern, but some suggestions can be made.

For example, it seems there are <u>three</u> separate events being described in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4:

> **Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until** [One] **the rebellion occurs and** [Two] **the man of lawlessness is** [initially] **revealed, the man doomed to destruction.** [Three] **He will** [later] **oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.** (NIV)

First, the clearest distinction may be between when **the man of lawlessness is** initially **revealed** and when **He will** eventually **oppose and will exalt himself over <u>everything</u> that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.** It is suggested

Antichrist's initial Revealing will occur sometime before Antichrist's Claim to be God.

First, we note that Paul's purpose in this passage is to teach what the Thessalonians should be looking for to know with certainty the Endtimes have begun. Accordingly, Antichrist's Claim to be God would not be such an event. It occurs at least 3.5 years after the beginning of the Endtimes and the implementation of Antichrist's Religious Covenant (cf. Dan 9:27). This is one reason to suggest that Antichrist's Revealing occurs a considerable time before Antichrist's Claim to be God.

Second, when the Antichrist is initially **revealed** as the first and foremost False Christ, it seems he will be claiming to be Jesus Christ (cf. ch. 10, sec. B). In addition, all false religions will probably be accepted. This will be explained more in the next chapter (13). When the Antichrist is initially Revealed, he will be attempting to persuade the world that he is a peaceful, humble, and benevolent spiritual leader. But eventually sometime later, the Antichrist **will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God** and even Claim to be God. After Antichrist's Claim to be God, he will become an intolerant political ruler and the Wrathful Antichrist.

Such a progression in how the Antichrist will take over the world will require time. For example, the Seals of Preparation in Revelation 6 suggest a significant period of time between Antichrist's initial Revealing and his eventual Claim to be God. As argued in the previous chapter (11), the First Seal (cf. Rev 6:1-2) seems to clearly portray Antichrist's Revealing to the world. But it is not until the Fifth Seal that The Greatest Persecution is portrayed (cf. Rev 6:9-11). Elsewhere, Scripture indicates The Greatest Persecution is immediately preceded by Antichrist's Claim to be God (cf. Matt 24:15-21; Rev 12:7-17; 13:5-7; Dan 7:20-21, 25). Therefore, it seems Antichrist's Claim to be God occurs a significant time after the Antichrist's initial Revealing.

The above may correct the common understanding that when the Antichrist **sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God** will be the same thing, and occur at the same time, as when **the man of lawlessness is** initially **revealed**.

D.2) The Rebellion as Antichrist's Religious Covenant

Two questions will be addressed here: 1) What did Paul mean by **the rebellion**?; and 2) When will this occur? Once again, the text reads:

> **Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion** [*apostasia*] **occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.** (2 Thess 2:3-4 NIV)

The Greek word *apostasia* means: "Defiance of established system or authority, *rebellion, abandonment, breach of faith*." [17] Another lexicon has, "a defection, revolt, apostasy, is used in the N.T. of religious apostasy." [18] Erickson defines it as, "a moral, spiritual, or doctrinal abandonment of the faith." [19]

Therefore, by *apostasia* the Apostle was referring to some kind of spiritual or religious "rebellion, abandonment, breach of faith." This fits the definition of the English word "apostasy" as: "an act of refusing to continue to follow, obey, or recognize a religious faith." [20] The Greek text reads *hē apostasia* (**<u>the</u> rebellion**). MacArthur notes: "Paul's use of the definite article [the] reveals that he had in mind not a general flow or trend, but a specific, identifiable act of apostasy." [21]

What was this "specific" and "identifiable act of apostasy"? It must be admitted it is not absolutely clear. Therefore, different interpretations have been offered.

Some Pre-tribulationists have interpreted this "religious departure" as the "rapture." This of course fits nicely with their claim that the Church's Rescue occurs before the Antichrist emerges on the Earth. However, the Greek word *apostasia* cannot carry such a meaning, as it refers to a defection from a religion, not a departure from the Earth! [22]

Most claim Paul was referring to the Great Apostasy described elsewhere in Scripture. [23] However, we must remember that virtually everything in the Endtimes will involve a process that

requires some time. As described later in chapter 16, it seems the Great Apostasy of false Christians denying Christianity will occur in stages. Therefore, it is suggested **the rebellion** that **comes first** when **the man of lawlessness is** initially **revealed** (2 Thess 2:3) will be an event that begins the Great Apostasy of false Christians denying Christianity. If so, what would that event be?

First, note again the probable close relationship between **the rebellion** and the **man of lawlessness** being **revealed**. In fact, it seems likely that the Antichrist's Revealing will cause the religious and spiritual **rebellion** Paul predicted. This can be obscured by the fact that Paul lists **the rebellion** before the **man of lawlessness** being **revealed**. However, F. F. Bruce comments on the relationship between these events:

> [Some] argue curiously that the sense here is that *first* the falling away [**rebellion**] takes place and after this, the revealing of the Man of Sin follows. But *proton,* "first," in reference to the coming of the "falling away," means that it comes before the Day of the Lord; the coming of the [rebellion] and the revealing of the man of lawlessness are coincident [occur at the same time]. [24]

Likewise, Wanamaker notes after commenting on the Greek grammar of verse 3, "Paul probably taught that the apostasy was to come about through the activity of the person of rebellion." [25] Finally, Stott states the obvious: "Only when the rebel [antichrist] is *revealed* (3b) will the rebellion break out." [26]

Therefore, it seems **the rebellion** will actually be the result of the Antichrist's Revealing. More specifically, this spiritual **rebellion** and "falling away" from God will result from the **powerful delusion** that Paul said would accompany Antichrist's Revealing. As noted above, that **powerful delusion** will result in the world's unbelievers worshipping the Antichrist. Accordingly, it has been argued that this is referring to Antichrist's Resurrection.

But there will be another result of the supernatural deception that these Scriptures are describing and that fit the biblical idea of **the rebellion** and a "falling away" from God. It too is clearly a result of Antichrist's initial Revealing and probably Resurrection.

This will be the Antichrist's Religious Covenant. The only clear reference to this important Endtime event is in Daniel 9:27:

> **The ruler** [Antichrist] **will arise to successfully persuade many people to make a religious covenant with him for a period of seven years. In the middle of the seven years** [3.5 years later] **he will stop the sacrifices and offerings at the Jewish Temple. And at the Temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation** [and Claim to be God]**, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him** [at the Battle of Armageddon]**.**

This suggested translation of Daniel 9:27 will be supported in a future chapter (14, sec. A). It will be argued there that this **covenant** (*berith*) **with many** (NIV, NASB) will primarily be a religious **covenant** that will formally implement the Antichrist's Religion and world-wide **worship** that will result from Antichrist's Resurrection (Rev 13:3-4). Therefore, it is suggested the Antichrist's Revealing will be the Antichrist's Resurrection, prompting the Antichrist's Religious Covenant, resulting in the formal implementation of Antichrist's worldwide Religion, which will certainly qualify as a **rebellion** against God.

Evidence for interpreting Paul's reference to **the rebellion** as pointing to Daniel's **covenant with many** (9:27) is the fact that one important source for 2 Thessalonians 2 was the book of Daniel. For example, Paul's language to describe Antichrist's Claim to be God seemed to come from the Prophet. Accordingly, we note the similarity between 2 Thessalonians 2:4 and passages in Daniel:

> **He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.** (2 Thess 2:4 NIV)

> **He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods.** (Dan 11:36)

> **He will confirm a** [religious] **covenant with many for one** [period of] **'seven'** [years]**. In the middle of the**

> **'seven'** [years] **he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And <u>at the temple</u> he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.** (Dan 9:27 NIV)

Accordingly, when the Apostle writes of **<u>the</u> rebellion**, it would seem he was referring to a particular spiritual apostasy that was a well-known prophetic event that he had taught them about (cf. v. 5) from the prophet Daniel. More specifically, if Paul derived some of his understanding of Antichrist's Claim to be God from Daniel, then perhaps the sequence of events in Daniel 9:27 shed light on what he meant by **the rebellion** in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. In Daniel 9:27 the sequence of events is 1) Antichrist's Religious **covenant with many**, then after 3.5 years, 2) Antichrist's Claim to be God in the **abomination that causes desolation** at **the temple**.

Therefore, **the rebellion** in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 could refer to Antichrist's Religious **covenant with many**, which will be followed by Antichrist's Claim to be God in verse 4. Accordingly, Daniel refers to this **rebellion** three times in chapters 8-9 of his prophecy, which surely influenced the Apostle's understanding of this event.

Daniel describes **the rebellion** [*pesha'*] **that causes desolation** and says, **Because of rebellion** [*pesha'*]**, the LORD's people and the daily sacrifice were given over to it** (8:12-13). **It** refers to the **horn** (v. 9), the one that will take **away the daily sacrifice from the LORD** (v. 11). This same **rebellion** is referred to in Daniel 9:24 where we read: **A period of seventy sets of seven has been decreed for your people** [the Jews] **and your holy city to finish their rebellion** [*pesha'*]. The Hebrew word used for **rebellion** (*pesha'*) in Daniel is a virtual synonym for the Greek *apostasia* in 2 Thessalonians. Accordingly we read regarding *pesha'*:

> The fundamental idea of the root is a breach of relationships, civil or religious, between two parties… By analogy, but in a religious sense, Israel was accused of rebelling against her divine king and the established covenant between them (Isa 1:28; 48:8; Ezk 2:3; Hos 8:1)…
>
> The Hebrew people were the ones who were guilty of *pesha'* against the authority and covenant of their God…

> Predominantly *pesha'* is rebellion against God's law and covenant and the term is a collective which denotes the sum of misdeeds and a fractured relationship. [27]

Clearly, the **rebellion** (*pesha'*) predicted in Daniel and that **causes desolation** (8:12-13) is referring to the religious **covenant** the Antichrist will make **with many people** (9:27a) at the very start of Daniel's Last 7 Years, and will result in the **abomination that causes desolation** (Dan 9:27c). This **rebellion** and **covenant** of the Jews with the Antichrist to enable them to resume **sacrifices and offerings at** a rebuilt **Jewish Temple** will probably be prompted by the supernatural **delusion** of Antichrist's Resurrection.

But **the rebellion** will not affect only orthodox Jews in Israel. Antichrist's Resurrection will result in **the whole world** being **filled with wonder and follow**ing **the beast** (Rev 13:3 NIV). Therefore, because of Antichrist's Resurrection, all false Christians on Earth will also commit **the rebellion** and apostasy from the faith at the very beginning of Endtime events, and participate in Antichrist's **religious covenant with many people**. [28]

Accordingly, it seems the **rebellion** that Daniel said would lead to the **desolation … of the sanctuary** (8:13), is the same **rebellion** that **comes first** before **the man of lawlessness … sets himself up in in God's temple proclaiming himself to be God** (2 Thess 2:3-4). And all of this will be prompted and empowered when **the man of lawlessness is revealed** in Antichrist's Resurrection.

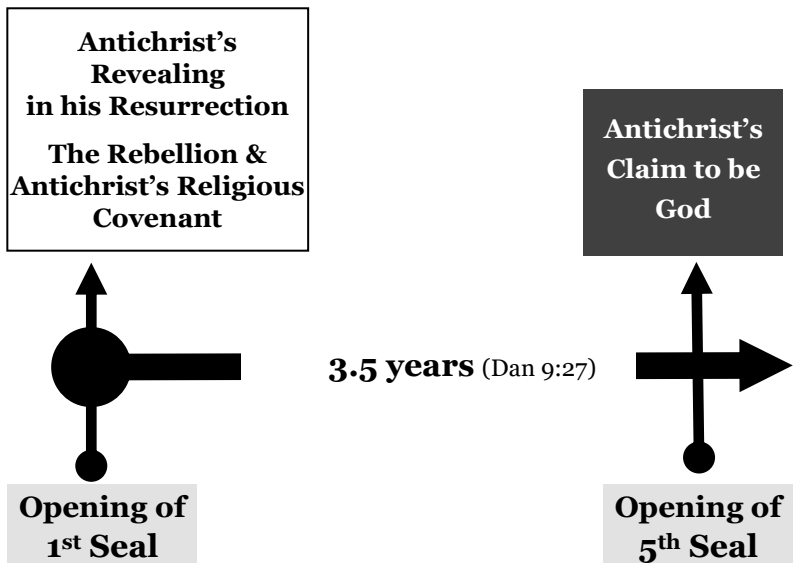
Based on the study of Revelation 6:1-2 in chapter 11 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 in this chapter, a suggested sequence of events regarding Antichrist's Revealing can be summarized in the following table which also notes the topics discussed elsewhere.

Table: Suggested Endtime Events in Relation to Antichrist's Revealing

#	Endtime Event	Description
1	**Antichrist's Rising**	Before the Antichrist is clearly revealed, he will be a very successful and famous leader of a minor country in Magog who causes 3 leaders in a 10-

		nation Coalition matching biblical attributes to fall (cf. Dan chs. 7-8; *BBP* chs. 8-9)
2	**Antichrist's Revealing in his Resurrection**	The first certain sign the Endtimes have begun (cf. Rev 6:1-2; 13:1-14; 2 Thess 2:3-12; *BBP* chs. 10-12).
3	**The Rebellion & Antichrist's Religious Covenant**	A religious **covenant with many** (Dan 9:27) that formally implements Antichrist's Religion (cf. *BBP* chs. 13-17)
4	**Antichrist's Claim to be God**	The "abomination of desolation" when Antichrist enters a rebuilt Jewish temple and proclaims himself to be God, 3.5 years <u>after</u> implementing his Religious Covenant (cf. Dan 9:27; Matt 24:15; 2 Thess 2:3; Rev 13:5-6; *Endtimes Essentials* book #4, *The Greatest Persecution*)

Graphic: Suggested Endtime Events in Relation to Antichrist's Revealing



[1] For more on the correct interpretation of especially 2 Thess 2:1-4 see *CET* ch. 5, sec. C.

[2] *BDAG.* Underlining added.

[3] Greene, 2 Thess 2:8.

[4] Morris comments on Paul's reference to **the coming** [*parousia*] **of the lawless one**, "Just as the Lord has his coming, so *the lawless one* has his. Many commentators from the earliest times have pointed out that 'the man of lawlessness' at many points counterfeits the Christ" (132-3).

[5] As noted many commentators suggest that Paul's description of the coming of the Antichrist alludes to the fact that he will be active (and perhaps recognizable) before he is fully revealed.

Morris writes that the use of *apokalyptō* in verse 3, "points to his [Antichrist's] existence before his manifestation… his beginning does not coincide with his manifestation" (128).

Likewise, Wanamaker writes: "The 'revealing' of the person of rebellion should not be thought of as the making known of some formerly unknown or unidentified figure" (245). Both scholars note the fact that this is what the *apokalyptō* (revelation) of Jesus Christ refers to, that Antichrist will imitate. Jesus has even ministered on Earth before He **is revealed** [*apokalypsei*] **from heaven** (2 Thess 1:7).

Indeed, Paul hints at this perspective when he writes **the secret power of lawlessness is already at work** (v. 7). Accordingly, Greene writes:

> The verb **at work** (*energeitai*) … implies some kind of supernatural activity… Paul does not suggest that this **secret power** is divine but only that it is supernatural, and, according to the context, malignant and satanic (v. 9). For this reason, the apostle calls this power the secret power of lawlessness. This secret power aligns itself with "the man of lawlessness" (v. 3 [Antichrist]) and represents his power in the world before the time of his revelation. (2 Thess 2:7)

[6] MacArthur, *Thess,* 273.

[7] Greene, 2 Thess 2:8.

[8] For more on the purpose of 2 Thess 2 see *CET* ch. 16, sec. B.

[9] *BDAG.*

[10] *BDAG.*

[11] NT scholar Gordon Fee agrees with the majority of commentators when he writes regarding 2 Thess 2:9:

> Paul indicates here that "signs and wonders" can accompany both truth and falsehood. By describing those of the Lawless One

> as stemming from falsehood, he does not mean that they are "counterfeit" in the sense of not really occurring…
>
> Since this is the only real meaning of "counterfeit," one wonders whether the NIV [and NLT] is not quite misleading to call them "counterfeit miracles, etc." See also RSV, which is even worse: "with pretended signs and wonders"-now corrected in NRSV…
>
> To the contrary, miracles they are indeed; but they issue from falsehood and as such are intended to deceive, to lead people astray after satan. Indeed, in Paul's view they are empowered by the "spirit" responsible for all falsehood, satan himself (cf. Eph 2:2). (Gordon Fee, *God's Empowering Presence* [Hendrickson, 1994], 76)

Commentators who agree include F. F. Bruce (*WBC*), Robert Thomas (*EBC*), John Stott (*BST*), Wanamaker (259), Morris (*TNTC*), and Greene who calls them "supernatural" (2 Thess 2:9).

Likewise, Walvoord agrees but suggests: "The signs and wonders he [the Antichrist] will do by Satan's power will not be on the same plane as the miracles Christ performed" (*Thess*, 133). Why not? God is giving Satan and the Antichrist the supernatural power to imitate Christ. For example, contrary to Walvoord, Satan will resurrect the Antichrist from the dead (cf. Rev 13:2-4). The difference between Christ's miracles and the Antichrist's will not be in their power, but in their purpose and morality.

[12] MacArthur, *Thess*, 282, underlining added. However, MacArthur is a little confusing when he writes earlier: "Antichrist's power and signs and <u>false</u> wonders will … be <u>deceptive tricks</u>, like <u>falsifying</u> his own death and resurrection." Yet as noted, a few sentences later he writes: "Antichrist's miracles, signs, and wonders are false <u>not</u> in the sense that they are fakery, but that they lead to false conclusions about who he is." (Ibid.).

[13] Many people have a problem with God granting Satan the supernatural power to perform real miracles and deceive people **so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness** (v. 12 NIV). But this reveals God's sovereignty over all Endtime events and that all supernatural power is ultimately delegated by Him for his purposes. Again, the Bible clearly teaches that God can grant real miraculous powers to Satan and his servants. For arguments concerning this see the author's books: *God's Miracles*, ch. 10.6 and *Human Miracle Working*, chs. 11.11-13.

[14] None of the Thessalonian commentaries of Greene, Stott, Wanamaker, or Morris even comment on the meaning of the **powerful delusion**. The only one that tries to describe it is F. F. Bruce who obscurely writes it will be "a power set in motion within them which makes them prone to embrace error" (174). That may be an accurate description of the <u>result</u> of the deception, but there is no comment on the cause.

Greene does comment on the emotional but unbiblical reaction some may have to God sending unbelievers a **powerful delusion** that will lead to their punishment:

> Since they did not receive the truth of the gospel, God sends them confusion so that they cannot distinguish between the truth and the lie and, in the end, they believe the lie as if it were the truth. As strange as this kind of judgment may seem to us, it is in harmony with the biblical witness, which shows the way God gives sinners over to the very sin and error they have embraced (Ps. 80.12-13 [81.12-13]; Rom. 1.24, 26, 28; 11.8; 2 Tim. 4.4). The thought is similar to that in those texts in the OT that describe how God uses malignant spirits to execute his judgments and will even employ the inspiration of false prophets (2 Sam. 24.1/1 Chr. 21.1; 1 Kgs. 22.19-23; Ezek. 14.9).

[15] Derived from *LGEINT* and *BDAG*.

[16] Greene comments on the meaning of Paul's reference to **the coming** [*parousia*] **of the lawless one** (2 Thess 2:9) and describes things that would also reflect Antichrist's Resurrection:

> In the ancient world, a god's epiphany was the manifestation of the deity by revealing himself or by some demonstration of his power. This event would be particularly associated with the coming (parousia) of the deity… The epiphany of a deity was frequently associated with the manifestation of his divine power to rescue or save a community or an individual, and it was an important component in the accreditation of the god and the establishment of worship in his honor. (2 Thess 2:8)

[17] *BDAG.*

[18] *Vine's*, 253.

[19] Erickson, *Guide*, 137.

[20] *Webster's.*

[21] *MNTC*, *Thess*, 271.

[22] Of course, the verb *apistēmi* does refer to a general "departing" in the NT, and if this was the word Paul used in 2 Thess 2:3 then perhaps the idea he was referring to the "rapture" would be worthy of discussion. But that is not the word Paul used, and the noun *apostasia* cannot carry the meaning that Pre-tribulationists want to give it. Erickson adds:

> In the context nothing seems to suggest a departure (or "rapture") of believers… The context speaks of the man of sin and of the lawlessness and unrighteousness that will accompany his appearance. [Therefore] it seems most reasonable to render *apostasia* in the usual sense of "apostasy" or "departure from the faith" (142-3).

The view is so unlikely that the Pre-tribulationist MacArthur does not even mention it in his commentary.

For further arguments against the Pre-tribulational claim that **the rebellion** in 2 Thess 2:3 refers to the "rapture," see Robert Gundry, *Church and Tribulation*, 125ff.

[23] As noted, most scholars suggest **the rebellion** (2 Thess 2:3) is referring in general to the Great Apostasy. For example, Walvoord writes: "Paul was declaring that the day of the Lord cannot come until there is first a pervasive, global departure from the faith" (*Thess,* 123; cf. Bruce, 166; Greene). Likewise, Osborne writes of the effect of the false saviors says: "This will be the 'great apostasy' predicted in [Matt 24:] 10–12, 23–24; 2 Thess 2:3" (*Matt,* 1261).

MacArthur and Wiersbe claim **the rebellion**, **man of lawlessness** being **revealed**, and his **proclaiming himself to be God** are all essentially the same event (cf. *MNTC*, 271-2). In other words, the claim is that it is the Antichrist's **rebellion** that Paul is referring to. It is admitted that all of these views are possible, and that the brevity of Paul's reference does not make his meaning clear.

[24] Bruce, 167.

[25] Wanamaker, 242-243.

[26] Stott, *Thess,* 158.

[27] *TWOT,* 741.

[28] Wannamaker relates several things regarding the meaning of *apostasia* that would seem to fit very well with what happens in Antichrist's **religious covenant with many people** (Dan 9:27):

> Although *apostasia,* signifying the state of apostasy or rebellion, was used in both a political and a religious sense, the latter dominates in the Greek Bible (cf. LXX Josh 22:22; 2 Chron 29:19; 33:19; Jer 2:19; 1 Macc 2:15; and in NT see Acts 21:21; see also the use of the cognate verb *apistamai* in Luke 8:13; 1 Tim 4:1; Heb 3:12). In the apocalyptic context of 2 Thessalonians 2, the rebellion referred to is a religious one directed against God…
>
> While Paul may have thought of certain Christians being involved, the reference to the temple in v. 4 suggests he is working with a traditional apocalyptic understanding in which it was maintained that many of the people of God, that is the Jews, would rebel against God and the Law at the time of the end [cf. Dan 8:12, 13; 9:27]. (244)

Part V

The Resurrected Antichrist

Chapter 13

The Effects of Antichrist's Resurrection on Unbelievers

Amazement, deception, worship, discipleship, & submission

Revelation 13

Contents

A) Introduction to the Antichrist's Resurrection *Rev 13*

B) How will the Rising Antichrist be killed? *Perhaps public beheading*

C) The effects of the Antichrist's Resurrection on the unbelieving world *Universal amazement, deception, worship, submission & probably reprobation*

Primary Points

- The clearest and primary description of the Antichrist's Resurrection is given in Revelation 13.
- Antichrist's miraculous Resurrection will shock the entire world like no other event in history. There will be no more irreligious people on the Earth anywhere, anymore.
- Contrary to some, the Apostle John was clearly describing a literal, physical, and real death for the Antichrist.
- The Antichrist's death may be a public and undeniable live videotaping of his beheading.
- The Antichrist's Resurrection will result in the unbelieving world's universal amazement, deception, worship, and submission.
- Every single non-Christian on the Earth will be immediately and completely convinced the Resurrected Antichrist is a supernatural being deserving their worship and allegiance. How will this happen? The best biblical answer is that **God will send them a powerful delusion** (2 Thess 2:11).
- When well over 7 billion people are worshipping the Antichrist, it

will be the largest religion that has ever existed on Earth at one time.

- The worship of the Resurrected Antichrist will not require anyone to give up their false religion. Satan has inspired the idea of an Endtime Savior in all major world religions.
- In order to further pursue his desire to imitate Christ, the Antichrist will want his worldwide worship to become a worldwide rulership.

A) Introduction to the Antichrist's Resurrection *A real death & miraculous resurrection*

As noted in chapter 11, the Antichrist's miraculous and deceptive Resurrection seems to be portrayed in the First Seal Preparation depicting the very beginning of the Endtimes (cf. Rev 6:1-2; ch. 11, sec. A).

In chapter 12 (sec. C) it was suggested there are allusions to Antichrist's Resurrection in Paul's description of the Antichrist's Revealing (cf. 2 Thess 2:3-12). This seems especially so in Paul's prediction that in the Endtimes **God sends** the unbelieving world **a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie** of Antichrist's Claim to be **God** (2 Thes 2:11; v. 3 NIV).

Chapters 10-12 provided biblical arguments to suggest Antichrist's Resurrection will be the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun. For that reason alone, it is a monumental event in the Endtimes. But as also noted previously, Antichrist's Resurrection is also a very neglected topic in Christian eschatology (cf. ch. 11, sec. A).

Antichrist's miraculous Resurrection will shock the entire world like no other event in all of human history. It will convince all unbelievers of the reality of the supernatural. There will be no more irreligious people on the Earth anywhere, anymore, after Antichrist's Resurrection. All unbelievers will believe that God has sent Jesus Christ back to Earth to save the world. At the time it occurs, Antichrist's Resurrection will change the world more than any other event in human history at the time it occurred. This is even true of Christ's Resurrection, and it will be true until Christ's Return.

All of which is why it is very surprising and disappointing that there is so little in scholarly Christian literature about Antichrist's Resurrection. The following chapters are offered as a careful Bible study of this very astonishing and pivotal event in the Endtimes.

The clearest and primary description of the Antichrist's Resurrection is given in Revelation 13. [1] We will begin our study in verse 3 which in the literal Greek reads:

> **And one of its heads as slaughtered to death and its wound of death had been healed and the whole earth was astonished after the beast.** [2]

A suggested translation of Revelation 13:3 would be:

> **And I saw one of the heads of the beast as violently slaughtered to death and the wound from the deadly strike was healed. And the whole world was amazed by this miracle and became a follower of the beast.** (Rev 13:3)

I saw is not in the Greek text of verse 3, but is in both verses 1 and 2, and can be carried into verse 3. Therefore, the addition of **I saw** is in the NASB and NLT. [3]

<u>One</u> of the heads of the beast reflects the complex nature of **the beast** in the Revelation. The **beast** with **seven heads** (13:1) refers to both the Antichrist's Beast Empire and the Antichrist himself. This **one head** that is **violently slaughtered to death** refers specifically to the Antichrist. [4]

As translates the relatively complex Greek adverb *hōs*. It's most basic meaning corresponds to the English word "as" and this is its primary translation in the NT. But it can be used in a comparative sense and is sometimes translated as "like."

Unfortunately, some translations of *hōs* in Revelation 13:3 give the impression that the death of the Antichrist will be faked and not real. For example, the NIV has: **One of the heads of the beast <u>seemed</u>** [*hōs*] **to have had a fatal wound** (NIV, cf. NLT, ESV, NRSV). Accordingly, even a rightly respected scholar such as MacArthur argues that Antichrist's death will not be real. [5]

However, there are several reasons to confidently conclude that the Apostle John was clearly describing a literal, physical, and real death for the Antichrist. First, regarding the meaning of *hōs* in

Revelation 13:3, Revelation scholar G. K. Beale is correct to point out:

> The conditional translation of [*hōs esphagmenēn*, "as slain"] in virtually all English versions (e.g., NASB: "as <u>if</u> it had been slain;" NIV: "<u>seemed</u> to have a mortal wound") is <u>misleading</u> and makes it appear as if the beast only <u>looked</u> slain but was not. "As slain" is a <u>much better translation</u>. [6]

Accordingly, the KJV reads: **And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death**, dropping the "misleading" addition of **if** in the NASB. The suggested translation above does the same.

Secondly, we should notice the use of the exact same Greek words to describe Christ's death earlier in Revelation. There we read in the NIV: **Then I saw a Lamb** [Christ]**, looking as if** [*hōs*] **it had been slain** [*esphagmenon*] (Rev 5:6). Of course, we know here that the Greek is referring to a real death. The exact same Greek phrase (*hōs esphagmenēn*) is used to describe Antichrist's death in 13:3.

Therefore, there should be no doubt that John was describing Antichrist's death as real. This will be one more way that God gives the Antichrist the power to imitate the real Christ.

In these texts John is describing what he **saw** in a vision. John did <u>not</u> see something that "seemed" to be a death of Christ or Antichrist, but he **saw** real deaths. He simply **saw** this in a vision and was relating his best description of it. Accordingly, the NET translates the Greek in Revelation 13:3 as:

> **One of the beast's heads appeared** [*hōs*, in John's vision] **to have been killed, but the lethal wound had been healed.** (Rev 13:3 NET; cf. HSCB, NCV)

A third reason to believe John is referring to a real death is that he used 3 Greek words that mean death in this one verse. Again, the literal Greek reads: **one of its heads as** [*hōs*] **slaughtered** [*esphagmenēn*] **to death** [*thanaton*] **and its wound** [*plēgē*] **of death** [*thanatou*] **had been healed**. Do we still doubt John **saw** the Antichrist killed? [7]

There is also a practical reason to believe the Antichrist will literally and physically die. We live in a very skeptical world. If this is not a real death and miraculous resurrection then **the whole**

world will not be **amazed by this miracle** as the prophecy states. The great failure of modern fake "faith healers" to convince the **world** with their fake miracles demonstrates this. [8]

There are additional explanations for the suggested translation of Revelation 13:3 above. The suggested translation has, **violently slaughtered to death and the wound from the deadly strike was healed.**

The Greek word for **violently slaughtered** (*esphagmenēn*, used 9 times in the NT) is not the normal Greek word for "kill" (e.g. *apokteinō*, used 74 times in the NT). Rather, the word used here means: "slaughter … killing a person by violence … butcher or murder someone." [9]

In addition, Mounce points out, this "is not the normal word for death in battle." [10] It suggests more of a violent execution.

Therefore, common translations of *esphagmenēn* in Revelation 13:3 as merely **slain** (NASB), **fatal wound** (NIV), or **wounded beyond recovery** (NLT), do not accurately reflect the violent nature of the Antichrist's death. The suggested translation of **violently slaughtered** reflects the Greek better.

The wound from the deadly strike translates the Greek *plēgē tou thanatou* or "wound of death." But *plēgē* means more than merely "wound." A common meaning in ancient Greek was "a sudden hard stroke with some instrument, *blow, stroke*." [11]

Relatedly, it also meant, "wound caused by a blow." [12] Accordingly, Antichrist's **deadly wound** will result from a "hard" and "violent" "strike" to his **head**. As explained below, verse 14 reveals this will occur with a **sword**. Therefore, the suggested translation is **the wound from the deadly strike.**

The suggested translation of Revelation 13:3 ends with, **And the whole world was amazed by this miracle and became a follower of the beast.** This generally follows the NLT. As all versions reflect, **follower** is implied by the Greek word *opisō* which literally means "after." But as *BDAG* explains, the Greek can mean "*come after someone, follow someone*, be an adherent/follower… have pledged allegiance." [13] It is the same Greek word that Jesus is translated using to call His disciples to **"follow** [*opisō*] **me"** (Matt 4:19; 10:38; 16:24).

Therefore, in another imitation of the real Christ, the Antichrist will have his own disciples after his Resurrection. However, it will be many, many more than Jesus ever had when He was on Earth.

In summary then, the suggested translation of Revelation 13:3 is:

> **And I saw one of the heads of the beast as violently slaughtered to death and the wound from the deadly strike was healed. And the whole world was amazed by this miracle and became a follower of the beast.** (Rev 13:3)

John confirmed his meaning of Revelation 13:3 in verse 14. A suggested translation would be:

> **He** [the False Prophet] **ordered those living on the earth to make a statue of the first beast** [Antichrist]**, who was killed by being struck with a sword and <u>then came back to life.</u>** (Rev 13:14)

The literal Greek of 13:14a is: **the beast who has the wound** [*plēgēn*] **of the sword** [*machairēs*] **and lived** [*ezēsen*]. The suggested translation **being struck**, reflects the meaning of *plēgēn* discussed above and the use of **a sword** (*machairēs*). **Killed** reflects that this is the same event described in verse 3 that resulted in death. Thus the NLT has **fatally wounded** in verse 14.

Came back to life [*ezēsen*] also reflects the NLT and the NASB (**has come to life**) in Revelation 13:14. The Greek word *ezēsen* can simply mean "live." But the exact same Greek word is translated by all versions in the phrase **came to life again** three other times in Revelation (cf. 2:8; 20:4, 5). For example, we read in 2:8, **These are the words of him** [Christ] **who is the First and the Last, who died and** [*ezēsen*] **came to life again** (NIV).

Once again the language regarding the Antichrist is intended to be a parody of the real Christ. [14] The Greek text makes it clear that John described the Antichrist as coming **back to life**.

Unfortunately, in Revelation 13:14 the NIV (and ESV, NET) translators still cast doubt on the Antichrist's death by having, **the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived**. This clearly implies a wound that did <u>not</u> kill him. Which again, for all

the reasons above, is a misleading mistake. All of these versions translate the same Greek in 2:8 as **came to life again.**

Why isn't it translated that way in 13:14? Again, it seems these translators impose their assumption that the Antichrist will not really die into their translation of Revelation 13:14.

Another clear reference to the Resurrected Antichrist is in Revelation 17 where we read:

> **The beast** [Antichrist] **you saw** [in John's vision of the Endtimes] **was once alive** [in the Endtimes] **but isn't now** [in John's vision of the Endtimes]**. And yet** [in the Endtimes] **he will soon come up** [and be resurrected] **out of the bottomless pit** [**Abyss**, NIV] **and go to eternal destruction. And the people who belong to this world, whose names were not written in the Book of Life before the world was made, will be amazed at the reappearance of this beast who had died.** (Rev 17:8 NLT)

The interpretation of this vision can be difficult because John saw the future in the present tense over 2,000 years ago. Accordingly, when it says the Antichrist **isn't now** (**now is not**, NIV), it is referring to in the vision of the future. Therefore, in the Endtimes there will be a time when the Rising Antichrist (who **was once alive** in the vision of the future), will be killed (and **isn't now** in the vision of the future), **and yet will come up out of the Abyss** (NIV) to be the Resurrected Antichrist.

This same description of the Resurrected Antichrist is given in Revelation 11:7 where we read of **the beast that comes up from the Abyss** (NIV). The Greek word for **Abyss** (*abyssou*) means "a transcendent place associated with the dead and hostile powers." [15] Both Revelation 11:7 and 17:8 are clearly describing the Antichrist being resurrected from the place of the dead. [16]

Therefore, the NLT captures John's meaning very well in 17:8 when it reads: **the people who belong to this world … will be amazed at the reappearance of this beast who had died**. [17] This again confirms the Antichrist will experience a real death and miraculous resurrection.

The miraculous nature of Antichrist's resurrection may not just be that he will come **back to life** (Rev 13:14). His resurrected body

itself may be supernatural in some way. Remember one of his primary purposes will be to imitate Jesus Christ returned to Earth in such a way as to **mislead even God's elect people if** he is **able** (Matt 24:24 [18]; cf. ch. 10, sec. B.2).

Therefore, the Antichrist will probably not appear merely as the humble human Jesus, but the glorified Jesus. **Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light** (2 Cor 11:14 NLT). Likewise, the Apostle Paul predicted that the Antichrist **will be revealed** (probably through his resurrection), and **he will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie** (2 Thess 2:8-9 NIV) that he is divine.

Therefore, we should not be surprised if Antichrist's resurrected body has some attributes of Christ's resurrected body. Perhaps there will be times that he is **transfigured** and **His face** will shine **like the sun, and his clothes** will become **as white as the light** (Matt 17:2 NIV). Perhaps his stature will even be bigger and taller.

Nevertheless, like the resurrected Jesus, the Resurrected Antichrist will look enough like the Rising Antichrist that his undeniable death and miraculous resurrection will be evident to all.

However, the Resurrected Antichrist will be a different person than the Rising Antichrist. It is probable that if he had a wife and children that they will be killed with him in his execution. An Antichrist who is a family man seems unlikely. His miraculous powers suggest that he will be indwelled with powerful demons.

As discussed further elsewhere, it does not seem that he will be personally indwelled by Satan until his Claim to be God and the beginning of The Greatest Persecution (cf. Rev ch. 12 [19]).

B) How will the Rising Antichrist be killed? *Perhaps public beheading*

It has been argued above that Revelation 13:3 tells us the Antichrist will be **violently slaughtered to death** from a **deadly strike** to his **head**. As noted, the Greek words used are not even the normal word for death in battle. Therefore, it has been suggested this is predicting a violent execution of the Antichrist.

How would such a violent execution be carried out? Again, verse 14 describes the **beast** [Antichrist]**, who was killed by being**

struck with a sword [*machaira*] **and then came back to life.** (Rev 13:14). When people read **sword** here they immediately think of a long and large **sword** used in battle. But that may not be what is intended here. The Greek word *machaira* means "a relatively short sword or other sharp instrument, *sword, dagger* … knife." [20] *Vine's* also notes the word can mean "possibly a knife." [21] Although this would probably not refer to a small knife, but a rather large one.

Machaira can certainly be distinguished from another Greek word used in Revelation and throughout the NT for **sword**. It is *rhomphaia* and means, "a large and broad sword." [22] This word is used throughout Revelation to refer to the **sword** coming from Christ's **mouth** (Rev 2:16; 19:15, 21). *Rhomphaia* is also used where we read: **Death, and Hades … were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword** [*rhomphaia*]**, famine and plague**.

Therefore, it seems if John meant a typical **sword** in Revelation 13:14, he would have also used *rhomphaia*. But instead he used *machaira* which can mean a large "knife."

How would the Antichrist be killed with a **sword** or large knife? There is evidence that this is specifically referring to having his head cut off. The Greek word used to describe his **violent slaughter** (*esphagmenēn*, Rev 13:3) is the same word used to describe the death of the martyrs earlier in Revelation. There we read: **I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been violently killed** [*esphagmenōn*] **because of the word of God and because of the testimony they had given** (Rev 6:9 NET).

How were these martyrs **violently killed**? They had their heads cut off. Later in Revelation these same martyrs are described when we read:

> **And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded** [*pepelekismenōn*, "behead" [23]] **because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands.** (Rev 20:4 NIV)

Therefore, Revelation says that both these martyrs and the Rising Antichrist will be **violently killed** using the exact same unique Greek word *esphagmenōn*. In the case of the Endtime martyrs this meant their heads were cut off. It seems this will be the case with the execution of the Rising Antichrist as well.

We have some idea of what this might look like. In recent years, the world has been horrified by militants of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) broadcasting live executions of hostages who are having their heads cut off. [24] There is reason to believe something similar would occur with the death of the Rising Antichrist.

The suggestion of a live broadcast of a public beheading would help us answer another important question about the Rising Antichrist's death. How could it possibly be proven beyond anyone's doubt that he actually died?

A mere report that he was killed in battle, or by a secret murder, or even publicly presenting his dead body, could all be faked. It would seem an effective way to prove a death that no one would doubt would be the live broadcast of an "ISIS"-like beheading. People would need to see a close up video of the gruesome sight of his head actually being cut off from his body.

Again, we have modern examples of this very thing. Even more so, we should not ignore the possibility that the Antichrist's body will be publicly cut into pieces (cf. Judges 19:29).

How then would **the whole world** (Rev 13:3) personally view the Rising Antichrist's execution and beheading?

Today, 7.26 billion people on the **earth** own a smart phone. [25] That's over 90% of the world's population. Such an event may be the most watched spectacle in all of history. Especially if it was announced ahead of time when it was going to occur and was filmed live. A live broadcast may also help eliminate any deception that could occur with modern filming and editing technologies. [26]

C) The Effects of the Antichrist's Resurrection on the unbelieving world *Universal amazement, deception, worship, discipleship, & submission*

The prophetic Scriptures clearly predict the Antichrist will be killed. They also say he will be miraculously resurrected as the

beast who was killed by being struck with a sword and then came back to life (Rev 13:14). What will be the results of such a shocking and epic event?

This question will be addressed by discussing several groups of people. In this chapter and the next (13-14), the universal effect of Antichrist's Resurrection on unbelievers will be discussed. In chapter 16, the resulting painful exposure of false Christians will be described. Finally, in chapter 17, the shocking effects the Antichrist's Resurrection will have on Christians will be explained.

First, let us discuss the effects of Antichrist's Resurrection on unbelievers. Again, we read:

> **And I saw one of the heads of the beast violently slaughtered to death and the wound from the deadly strike was healed. And the whole world was amazed by this miracle and became a follower of the beast** (Rev 13:3)
>
> **They also worshiped the beast. "Who is as great as the beast?" they exclaimed. "Who is able to fight against him?"… And all the people who belong to this world worshiped the beast.** (vs. 4, 8 NLT)

According to these prophecies, all unbelievers will have these five universal and life-altering responses to the Antichrist's Resurrection: amazement, deception, worship, discipleship, and submission.

C.1) The universal effect on unbelievers

First, the effect will be universal. [27] Every single non-Christian on the Earth will be rather immediately and completely convinced the Resurrected Antichrist is a supernatural being deserving their worship and allegiance. This includes every fake Christian in the world.

Everyone on Earth that is not a born again believer in the Real Christ, will believe in the Antichrist because of his Resurrection. These prophecies seem intentional about making it clear there will be no exceptions. **All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the**

foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb (v. 8 NASB).

What other person, or even thing, could be described as the object of **worship** for every single non-Christian in the world? Not all unbelievers worship, adore, or feel dependent even on themselves.

On the contrary, many distrust and even despise themselves. Not all unbelievers even worship or value money. Some willingly live with little. It would seem such complete, universal, and world-wide worship, unity, and agreement has never occurred on Earth in all of human history. But it will occur with Antichrist's Resurrection. And it will not occur again until Christ's 1,000-year Reign on Earth.

Why will the effect of the Antichrist's Resurrection be so universal? It was noted above that smart phones will enable virtually everyone on Earth to witness the Rising Antichrist's death, perhaps in the form of a live broadcast of his execution and beheading. Likewise, with the same smart phones, everyone will have video of the Resurrected Antichrist fully alive and perhaps with his head now attached to his body!

This will be quite a contrast to Christ's Resurrection that occurred in relative obscurity. It was initially experienced by a little more than a dozen people, and then eventually **he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time** (1 Cor 15:6). But the Resurrected Antichrist will surely be seen by almost every one of the billions of people on Earth. This is a reason the effect of Antichrist's Resurrection will be universal.

C.2) The amazement & deception of unbelievers

The prophecies say twice that the world will be universally **amazed** (13:3 NASB, 17:8 NLT) by Antichrist's Resurrection. The Greek word (*thaumasthēsontai*) means: "to be extraordinarily impressed or disturbed by something… *wonder, marvel, be astonished…* be amazed." [28] This same word is used frequently in the Gospels to describe how the crowds were **amazed** at the miracles of Jesus (Matt 8:27; 9:33; 15:31; Mark 5:20).

Antichrist's Resurrection will be the most shocking event the world has ever experienced. Again, it will be an obvious

intervention and revelation of the supernatural into the natural world. The worldview of the whole world, and their understanding of the Universe itself, will be radically and permanently altered.

The world's universal amazement will lead to their universal deception. This deception will apparently occur in a couple of different stages. It seems he will first claim to be Jesus Christ, then he will claim to be God.

It has been argued in previous chapters (10, 11) that Antichrist will be the first and foremost False Christ. Accordingly, as stated in chapter 11:

> Let us remember from the previous chapter that the False Christs will be literally claiming **"I am the Christ,"** (Matt 24:5 NASB) as in Jesus Christ Himself returned to Earth. Therefore, it seems the first and foremost False Christ, the Resurrected Antichrist, will also be claiming **"I am the Christ,"** as in Jesus Christ Himself returned to Earth in some way. (cf. Matt 24:5, 23-26; *BBP* ch. 10, sec. B.1)

Admittedly, that is challenging to believe. The Antichrist claiming to be Jesus Christ?

This is how committed he will be to imitating the real Christ. Jesus is a well- known historical figure. The Antichrist will be the Jesus that the world wants. He will be tolerant of all kinds of sin, and claim to bring new revelation from God about what He wants from people. The Antichrist's Resurrection and miracle-working is going to give him the spiritual authority to say like Jesus, **"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago… But I tell you"** (Matt 5:21-22 NIV). And the world will love what he says.

But at some point, the Antichrist's deception will go beyond claiming to be Jesus, to claiming to be God Almighty in the flesh. As also noted in a previous chapter:

> Later, in the **abomination of desolation** (Matt 24:15), the Resurrected Antichrist will be **proclaiming himself to be God** (2 Thess 2:4). There will be no contradiction here. Claiming first to be **Christ** and later **God**, may simply be a way the Antichrist will be imitating the Christian doctrine of the deity of Jesus Christ. (ch. 10, sec. B.3)

How will the whole world be completely convinced that the Antichrist is first Jesus Christ returned to Earth, and later, God Almighty Himself in the flesh? Paul provided the best biblical answer when he wrote:

> **The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie... For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie** (2 Thess 2:9, 11 NIV)

Accordingly, it was argued in the previous chapter that the **powerful delusion** will be, or at least include, the Antichrist's Resurrection (cf. ch. 12, sec. C). But the deceptive and persuasive power of the Antichrist will include **all sorts of** supernatural **power through signs and** miraculous **wonders that serve the lie**.

The real Christ was a powerful miracle worker. Since then many people have claimed to be miracle workers, but have never been able to convincingly match the miraculous power of Jesus Christ. [29] No one has raised people from the dead (cf. Luke 7:11-15; 8:49-56; John 11:38-44) and caused a powerful storm to stop (Luke 8:22-25) or a tree to instantly whither (cf. Matt 21:18-19).

But the Antichrist will probably do all of these things. And this will be part of the **powerful delusion** that **God sends** the world **so that they will believe the lie** about who the Antichrist is. Antichrist's miracle-working powers will ultimately be given by God for His purposes. Which is why they will be such powerful miracles.

Therefore, we must not underestimate the power of such miracles on the minds and hearts of humans. Scripture repeatedly describes their powerful effect on people (cf. Matt 8:27; 9:8, 33; 15:31; 21:20; Mark 5:42; Luke 5:9; Acts 3:10-11; 2 Thess 2:9).

In addition, Scripture clearly and repeatedly teaches that miracle working is God's own authentication of people who speak for, and represent Him (cf. John 2:11; 10:25, 37-38; Acts 2:43; 14:3; Rom 15:18-19; 2 Cor 12:12; Heb 2:3-4). This is because of the God-ordained power of miracles to persuade and convince the human heart and mind.

The effect of Antichrist's Resurrection will be especially powerful. There is only one other time in all of human history that

such a miracle has happened: the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Of course, several people in the Bible were brought back to life. Some were resurrected at the time of Christ's Resurrection (cf. Matt 27:50-53). But only Christ and the Antichrist will be resurrected from the dead without the act of a miracle worker. Therefore, a primary cause of the universal and **powerful delusion** that will occur at this time will be Antichrist's supernatural Resurrection.

C.3) The worship & discipleship of unbelievers

Because of the universal amazement and deception caused by the supernatural Resurrection of the Antichrist, Revelation repeatedly says it will also result in his universal **worship** (Rev 13:4, 8; cf. 13:12; 14:9, 11; 20:4). In addition, it repeatedly mentions the worship of Antichrist's statues (cf. 13:15; 14:9, 11; 16:2; 19:20).

The Greek word used (*prosekynēsan*) means: "To express in attitude or gesture one's complete dependence on or submission to a high authority figure." [30] There is not a stronger word in the Greek (or English!) language to convey an absolute adoration and allegiance to someone. In other words, Antichrist's Resurrection will result in Antichrist's Religion. As argued in the next chapter (14), this will be formally implemented by Antichrist's Religious Covenant.

We can expect the worldwide **worship** of the Antichrist to be rather immediate because its cause will be the miracle of his Resurrection and its effects will be rather immediate.

However, as with a Christian's growth in the **worship** of God, Antichrist's followers will be led into greater degrees of "dependence" on him. The opening of the First Seal depicts his initial **worship** caused by his Resurrection. But the desperation caused by the **wars**, **famines**, **earthquakes**, and **plagues** (Matt 24:6-7; Luke 21:11) unleashed in the Second, Third, and Fourth Seals (cf. Rev 6:3-8) will increase the world's "dependence" and **worship** of the Antichrist.

For example, it will be for the purpose of increasing such **worship** and "dependence" that he will attack and annihilate the

political, economic, and military power of Endtime Babylon in the massive war depicted in the Second Seal (cf. Rev 6:3-4; 17:16; *Endtime Essentials* #3: *Endtime Babylon*).

As a result, the prophecy states the world's **merchants** (*emporoi*, **international businessmen**) will **cry out, "In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!"** (Rev 18:15-17 NIV). The loss of the foremost economic super-power nation in the world will certainly reduce the world's idolatrous worship of **money** (Matt 6:24), and increase its dependence and **worship** of the Antichrist.

In the Endtimes Antichrist's **worship** and Religion will be by far the largest religion the world has ever seen. The prophecy predicts that when the world **worships the beast** they will be saying, **"Who is as great as the beast?"** (Rev 13:4 NLT). In the eyes, hearts, and minds of every unbeliever on Earth, the resounding answer will be "No one!" When an estimated 7 billion people are worshipping the Antichrist, it will be the largest religion that has ever existed on Earth at one time (this allows for the liberal estimate of 1 billion real Christians in the world).

The Antichrist's Religion will not initially require anyone to give up their false religion. For example, as discussed in the next chapter (14), as part of Antichrist's Religious Covenant, he will be helping orthodox Jews restore their OT religion by enabling them to rebuild a **temple** and restore the practice of **sacrifices and offerings** (Dan 9:27 NLT).

Again, this demonstrates that the Resurrected Antichrist will claim to be both Jesus Christ to the Gentile nations, and the Messiah to the Jews (cf. ch. 10, sec. B.2). Jesus predicted he will be the first and foremost False Christ who will be **claiming, "I am the Messiah"** (Matt 24:5 NIV). As explained next, the Antichrist will appeal to every major religion in the world, fulfilling prophecies of their coming savior. This will certainly include Judaism.

As Israel's False Messiah, he will initially lead them to rebuild their temple and resume their sacrificial offerings. As the most powerful person on the Earth, the Antichrist will appear to be the ruling, rescuing, and restoring Messiah the Jews have been waiting for. Again, this is why Daniel predicted he would be a Jew (cf. Dan

11:37; ch. 8, sec. D). But again, he will not only be claiming to be the Jews' Messiah. His worship will be worldwide.

Accordingly, Antichrist's Religion will probably not prohibit Hindus, Buddhists, or Muslims from continuing to practice their religions. It is interesting to note that Satan has inspired the idea of an Endtime Savior in all of these world religions.

In Hinduism, there is the story of the god Vishnu returning in the last cycle of time as a figure called Kulki, who rides a white horse and destroys the forces of evil (cf. Rev 6:1-2!). [31] Buddhists predict that after the complete degeneration of human society, the Earth will enter a new era in which the next Buddha will appear. [32]

There are some remarkable prophecies in Muslim literature outside of the Koran, predicting the arrival of their Mahdi (savior). These prophecies are very influential among many sects of Muslims. For example, one reference states:

> The Mahdi (Arabic: "the Guided One") is a messianic figure in Islamic eschatology who is believed to appear at the end of times to rid the world of evil and injustice. He is said to be a descendant of Muhammad and will appear shortly before the prophet Īsā (Jesus)… Although the concept of a Mahdi is not an essential doctrine in Islam, it is popular among Muslims. It has been a part of the *ʿaqīdah* (creed) of Muslims for 1400 years. [33]

Different sects of Islam have different views on the coming of the Mahdi, Jesus, and the Antichrist. One sect is referred to as Twelver Shi'ism because it believes in a coming Twelfth Imam who will restore peace in the world. Some Sunni Muslims believe the Mahdi will actually be Jesus Christ returned to Earth.

It is likely Muslims will believe the Resurrected Antichrist is some version of this prophesied Mahdi. It will be because of the religious authority of such a figure that he will be able to persuade Muslims to allow Israel to rebuild their temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem which Islam currently controls.

In addition, the supernatural nature of Antichrist's Resurrection and the **powerful delusion** that **God** will **send them so that they will believe the lie** (2 Thess 2:11 NIV) will convince spiritually empty atheists and Communists that the Antichrist is worthy of

their worship. It is tempting to doubt that such spiritually hardened people could worship anyone claiming to be Jesus Christ.

But the Apostle John confronts all such doubts when he writes: **All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast**. And as if he anticipated our doubts about such a universal statement, he added for clarification that Antichrist's worshippers will include, **all whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life** (Rev 13:8 NIV). That clearly means every single unbeliever on **the earth will worship the beast**. We should not expect any exceptions. [34]

C.4) The submission of unbelievers

The Antichrist's deception through his Resurrection will lead to his worldwide worship and Religion by every non-Christian on Earth regardless of their beliefs. But that will not be enough. In order to further pursue his desire to imitate Christ, the Antichrist will want his worldwide worship to become his worldwide rulership.

Accordingly, after describing that unbelievers will be **amazed** at the Antichrist and **worship** Him as his disciples in Revelation 13:3-4, we read in verse 7: **he was given authority to rule over every tribe and people and language and nation** (NLT). Again, there will probably be a progression and process for this to occur. Antichrist's Resurrection will begin his worship and implement his Religious Covenant with the world. About 3.5 years later his Claim to be God will implement his rulership and begin The Greatest Persecution. Accordingly, this process and the nature of Antichrist's rulership will be discussed in more detail in the book, *The Greatest Persecution.*

The important question of whether or not unbelievers can be saved after worshipping the Antichrist because of his Resurrection will also be addressed elsewhere. [35]

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[1] Unfortunately, there is a surprising number of scholars who deny that Revelation 13 is predicting the literal resurrection of the Antichrist in the Endtimes. It is not surprising that Dr. Beale's rather allegorizing

approach leads to the conclusion that the **heal**ing of the **fatal wound** (Rev 13:3) refers to "the victory over the devil at the cross" (688).

It is more surprising to see Mounce and Osborne deny a future and more literal fulfillment as well. The former writes of the beast's recovery:

> It could refer to the reestablishment of [political] order under Vespasian (A. D. 69-79)… Or perhaps no historical [or literal, future] allusion is intended and the purpose of the figure is to underscore the tremendous vitality of the beast [empires] (248-9).

The unbiblical and misleading nature of such Preterism and Historicism have been dealt with elsewhere (cf. *CET*, ch. 3, sec. B; ch. 12, sec. B)

Osborne supports the view that John is referring to the well-known myth that Nero was to raise from the dead (pp. 495-6). There are two fatal problems to such a view. First, even as Osborne admits, this would mean "John believed the myth and thought Nero was the antichrist," which is especially ridiculous in light of the second problem: Nero never came back from the dead.

Others claim Revelation 13:3 is predicting the re-establishment of the Roman Empire in the Endtimes. But as explained previously in this book, there is probably a very limited relationship between the ancient Roman Empire and Antichrist's Beast Empire (cf. *BBP* ch. 4, secs. C.3-C.4).

For a refutation of the claims that the **beast** in Revelation 13 is referring to Caligula, Nero, or the Roman Empire, see Thomas (1110-12) and MacArthur (*Rev* II, 45ff; cf. Mounce, 247-9). After Thomas effectively disproves several alternatives, he writes regarding Rev 13:3:

> It is best to identify this restoration to life with an end-time satanically controlled king who will come to the world as a false Christ… The climax of history will include a healing (*etherapeuthē*) of an individual that closely approximates the resurrection of Christ from the dead… His feat in overcoming the fatal wound will win for him worldwide admiration. (1117-1119)

[2] *LGEINT*.

[3] Thomas notes regarding the addition of **I saw** in Rev 13:3: "A finite verb (*eidon*, "I saw") is not in the text, but the force of [it] in v. 1 [and v. 2] continues into v. 3, requiring an accusative case (*mian*, "one") as its direct object" (1117).

[4] In general, scholars understand **the beast** to be the Antichrist throughout the Revelation. However, in Revelation 13 its more complex meaning is revealed. MacArthur explains:

> The beast must be understood as representing both a kingdom and a person. The beast must represent a kingdom, because of the complex description of him in the latter half of verse 1 [Rev ch. 13]. Yet the beast must also represent a person, since he is always described with personal pronouns (e.g., "his," "him," "he"; cf. vv. 1–8; 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2, 10). Daniel (Dan. 7:25; 8:24–25; 11:36–45) and Paul (2 Thess. 2:4) also describe the Antichrist as a person.

> In this manner, Scripture views the final world empire as inseparable from its ruler. (*Rev* II, 41)

The images of the **leopard**, **bear**, and **lion** are clear references to Daniel 7 where they are used to portray historical, anti-God empires as discussed earlier (cf. *BBP* ch. 4, sec. C.1). Therefore, Antichrist's Beast Empire will be a culmination of all of these anti-God rulers and kingdoms in the Endtimes. The **ten horns** with **ten crowns** portray the 10-nation Endtime Coalition that will be the political and military base for Antichrist's Beast Empire (cf. *BBP* ch. 4, sec. B.3).

But as MacArthur and others explain, "Scripture views the final world empire as inseparable from its ruler." More specifically, **one of the heads of the beast** (v. 3) represents the last **beast**, the Antichrist.

[5] MacArthur's denial of a real death for the Antichrist seems evident when he writes:

> The head whose fatal wound will be healed can only be the future Antichrist. Whether his death is real or fake (cf. v. 14; 2 Thess. 2:9) is not clear. It may be that Antichrist is really killed, and God, for His own purposes, allows him to be resurrected. More likely, Antichrist's alleged death and resurrection will be a counterfeit of Christ's death and resurrection, staged, as one of the "lying wonders" perpetrated by the false prophet (13:12–15; 2 Thess. 2:9 NKJV). Antichrist's resurrection will also be phony, since he never really died. (*Rev* II, 45-46)

Unfortunately, MacArthur ignores the commentary that Rev 5:6 provides on the Greek text of 13:3. Secondly, he offers no comments on Rev 13:14 which clearly speaks of the Antichrist as one **who was fatally wounded and then came back to life** (NLT; cf. NASB **come to life**). Third, his claim here that the "lying wonders" (cf. 2 Thess 2:9) will be "counterfeit" seems to contradict his own commentary on that passage when he writes elsewhere: "Antichrist's miracles, signs, and wonders are false, <u>not</u> in the sense that they are fakery, but that they lead to false conclusions about who he is" (*Thess*, 282, underlining added). Finally, MacArthur's interpretation that Satan's "wonders" described in 2 Thessalonian are fake, is corrected elsewhere (cf. ch. 12, sec. C, esp. Endnote #11).

Walvoord also doubts the Antichrist's death because "It is questionable whether Satan has the power to restore to life one who has died" (205). Of course Satan does <u>not</u> have such power. Which is why Antichrist's Resurrection is ultimately accomplished by God's power delegated to the Antichrist. This is why Paul described the Antichrist's miracle working (cf. 2 Thess 2:9), as **a powerful delusion** that **<u>God</u> sends** the world **so that they will believe the lie** (2 Thess 2:11 NIV). For more on this see the previous chapter (12, sec. C).

Osborne (495) vaguely claims this will be a real death by referring to the fact that the exact same Greek words used to describe Antichrist's

death is used earlier in Revelation to describe Christ's death (5:6). As noted in this section, even the metaphorical interpreter Beale argues that a real and physical death is meant here.

Both Mounce and Thomas are inconclusive on whether John described a real death of the Antichrist. The latter writes:

> The question of whether Satan has the power to restore a dead person to life (Walvoord) requires no answer here. Whether the beast performs this marvelous feat through deception or through power permitted by God, it still brings him into the limelight as never before. (1119)

On the contrary, the great failure of modern and false "faith healers" to convince the world they are supernatural proves that mere deception will not be enough to cause the predicted effect of Antichrist's Resurrection. For more on the deception of the modern "faith healing" movement, see the book, *Human Miracle Workers* in the "Biblical Critique of Charismatic Doctrine & Practices" section, under the "Scholar's Section" online at www.trainingtimothys.com.

[6] Beale, 688-89, underlining added.

[7] The NET translators comment on Rev 13:3 that the Greek literally means "killed to death," describing it as "an expression emphatic in its redundancy."

[8] For more on the unconvincing, non-miraculous, and unbiblical attributes of modern "faith healers" see the book *Human Miracle Working* in the "Biblical Critique of Charismatic Doctrines & Practices" under the "Scholar's Section" at www.trainingtimothys.com.

[9] *BDAG*.

[10] Mounce, at Rev 6:4.

[11] *BDAG* #1.

[12] *BDAG* #2.

[13] *BDAG* #2a. Osborne writes: "Aune notes correctly that *opisō* ("after") implies a verb like 'went' or 'followed,' thus meaning their amazement led them to 'follow after' the beast as his disciples" (497).

[14] Osborne points out regarding the translation of *ezēsen* in Rev 13:14:

> [This] is a clear parody of the resurrection of Christ, with *ezēsen* (lived) meaning "came to life" as in [Rev] 2:8; 20:4, 5. In 13:3, 12 the beast is "healed," but here [v. 14] he "lives again." (515)

Likewise, Thomas writes here of "the beast's recovery from death" and "a return to life… The resurrection terminology here is an inspired interpretation of the healing mentioned in vv. 3, 12." (1145).

[15] *BDAG* #2.

[16] Rev 13:1 is also probably referring to the Antichrist's Resurrection. It describes the **beast** as **rising up out of the sea**. What does this mean? MacArthur explains:

> There has been much discussion about what the sea symbolizes. Some argue, based on such passages as Isaiah 17:12, 57:20, and Revelation 17:15, that it refers to the Gentile nations. But since 11:7 and 17:8 state that the beast comes up out of the abyss, it is best to equate the sea with the abyss. That interpretation is in harmony with the Old Testament, which also uses the metaphor of the sea to picture the realm of satanic activity (cf. Job 26:12; Pss. 74:13–14; 89:9–10; Isa. 27:1). Some of the demons are currently incarcerated in the abyss (cf. 9:1–11; Luke 8:31), and Satan will be imprisoned in that abyss during the millennial kingdom (20:1–3). (*Rev* II, 41; cf. Osborne, 490; Thomas, 1110).

It seems many commentators make the mistake of assuming the imagery of the **sea** cannot mean both "the Gentile nations" and "the abyss." The imagery of the unbelieving, anti-God nations reflects the macro-view of the **beast** and the origin of the Antichrist's Beast Empire. The imagery of the abyss reflects the origin of the individual Resurrected Antichrist. Thus, portraying the **beast** as **rising up out of the sea** (**Abyss**) in Rev 13:1 is an expected introduction to a chapter that describes the rising of Antichrist's Beast Empire and the Resurrected Antichrist.

[17] Thomas writes of the meaning of Rev 17:8:

> The words "is not" refer to the beast's death, and his ascent from the abyss means he will come to life again (cf. 13:14). This is the same as his reappearance as an eighth king in 17:11…
>
> An understanding of the past-present-future description of the beast requires the establishing of a point of reference for the designation. When is "now," the point of the beast's "not being"? [After refutations of other views, Thomas concludes] It is better to locate the "is-not" state of the beast entirely in the future and make that the point of reference for the total description. That state must coincide with the death wound of the beast in 13:3, 12, 14. (1330-31; cf. Osborne, 615)

[18] For an explanation of the suggested translation of Matt 24:24 see appropriate chapter in *The Greatest Persecution.*

[19] For more on the indwelling of the Antichrist by Satan see appropriate chapter in *The Greatest Persecution.*

[20] *BDAG.*

[21] *Vine's,* 613.

[22] *BDAG*.

[23] *BDAG*.

[24] For an example of a video of an ISIS execution see at about minute 4:25 online at https://storyful.s3.amazonaws.com/video/syfl-8700-597657b3.mp4

[25] "The number of people that own a smart phone is 7.26 Billion, making up 91.00% of the world's population." (Source: https://www.bankmycell.com/blog/how-many-phones-are-in-the-world)

[26] For example, "deepfakes" have recently begun to emerge on the Internet. One resource notes they are: "a video, image or audio created with Artificial Intelligence, which imitates the appearance and/or voice of a person (synthetic media)."

https://www.telefonica.com/en/communication-room/blog/what-is-a-deepfake-and-how-to-detect-it/.

The article offers several ways to detect "deepfakes" and adds: "In processes that require more thorough verification, deepfake detection software or online detection systems (e.g., taking a selfie or video link in real time) can be used. The latter seems to be referring to a live videotaping of a person and event. All of which is why this is a suggestion for how the Antichrist's death will occur.

[27] Thomas notes:

> The prophecy anticipates the almost universal success the beast will have in attracting worshipers. The only limiting factor will be the refusal of the elect to comply (cf. Matt. 24:24) (Moffatt)… The addition of πάντες (*pantes*, "all") to the usual technical expression brings out the universality of beast worship in that future time (Smith). (1126-27)

[28] *BDAG* #1 & #2.

[29] See endnote #8 above.

[30] *BDAG*.

[31] https://www.history.com/topics/religion/religions-on-the-end-of-the-world

[32]https://www.cnn.com/2017/03/09/world/gallery/believer-end-of-world-prophecies/index.html

[33] See online at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahdi

[34] Some claim that Daniel 11:40ff. describe people revolting against the Antichrist and attacking him in battle. Given that Antichrist's Resurrection probably occurs rather early in the Endtimes and results in the worldwide worship of every unbeliever, this seems unlikely. For arguments that these battles refer to Antiochus Epiphanes rather than the Antichrist, see *Additional Studies on the Endtimes*, ch. 16, "The Relationship of Daniel 11 with the Endtimes," online at www.trainingtimothys.com.

[35] For more on the topic of whether or not unbelievers can be saved in the Endtimes see *Additional Studies on the Endtimes*, ch. 10; online at www.trainingtimothys.com.

Chapter 14
Antichrist's Religious Covenant

Contents

A) The nature of Antichrist's Covenant *a religious covenant*

B) The timing of Antichrist's Religious Covenant

C) The Antichrist's False Prophet

D) The significance of Antichrist's Religious Covenant for Israel *Finish their rebellion & build their temple*

Primary Points

- Daniel 9:27 describes the Antichrist's Religious Covenant with all unbelievers in the world, reflecting his worldwide worship and a religion dedicated to him.
- The popular assumption that this is merely a political or military "peace treaty" with only Israel is unlikely. However, the implementation of Antichrist's Religious Covenant will certainly include bringing peace to the world.
- It seems Antichrist's Resurrection will result in Antichrist's Religious Covenant which will formally implement Antichrist's Religion.
- It is possible that Antichrist's Religious Covenant will include the publication of its own "Bible" and the voluntary acceptance of "the mark of the beast."
- It is possible that the seven year limitation of the covenant will not be publicly communicated.
- The First Seal represents Antichrist's Resurrection and perhaps his Religious Covenant.
- It has been argued that the Antichrist may be resurrected on an Easter Sunday in order to enhance his claim to be Jesus Christ. If he desires to continue to use Jewish and Christians holidays, we might expect him to implement his Religious Covenant 50 days from Easter on Pentecost. This day has been used by God in the past to implement both the Old and New Covenants.

- The Antichrist's Religious Covenant will enable the Jews to rebuild a temple that the Antichrist will later desecrate.
- Revelation 13:11-17 is the most extensive description of the False Prophet given in Scripture.
- It seems the False Prophet emerges on the Earth after Antichrist's Resurrection.
- The False Prophet will be the first and foremost of the other miracle working **false prophets** Jesus said will be operating in the Endtimes (cf. Matt 24:23-27).
- The False Prophet's purpose will be to lead **all the people who belong to this world … to worship the first beast** Antichrist.
- He will do this by performing **astounding miracles**.
- The False Prophet will be **commanding all unbelievers on the earth to make statues of the beast** [Antichrist] and to facilitate Antichrist's Religious Covenant and world-wide Religion.
- During The Beginning of Birth Pains we can expect to see the rebuilding of a Jewish temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

A) The nature of Antichrist's Covenant *a religious covenant*

In the previous chapter the worldwide effects of Antichrist's Resurrection on unbelievers was discussed. Those effects will result in another monumental Endtime event: Antichrist's worldwide Religious Covenant. This event is described in the following suggested translation of Daniel 9:27:

> **The ruler will arise to successfully persuade many people to make a religious covenant with him for a period of seven years. In the middle of the seven years he will stop the sacrifices and offerings at the Jewish Temple. And at the Temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.** [1]

The ruler who **will arise** is the Antichrist [2] who will rule in the Endtimes. [3] The key phrase in the translation is **successfully**

persuade many people to make a religious covenant. **Successfully persuade** reflects the Hebrew word *gabar*. The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (*TWOT*) defines it as:

> In Arabic the basic meaning of the root is "to rise, raise, restore," with the idea of being strong, or prevailing over… The Hebrew root is often associated with warfare and has to do with the strength and vitality of the successful warrior. [4]

The use of *gabar* in Dan 9:27 is in the perfect (Hiphil) tense. [5] This use of *gabar* is used only one other time in the OT where we read:

> **May the LORD silence all flattering lips and every boastful tongue—those who say, "By our tongues we will prevail** [*naḡbîr*, derived from *gabar*]**"** (Ps 12:3-4 NIV)

In both *TWOT* and NIV (cf. NASB, ESV) **prevail** is a repeated meaning of *gabar*. Indeed, the NASB translates *gabar* as **prevail** or **prevailed** 14 times in its 25 uses. In addition, there are other Hebrew words that are much more commonly used to mean merely "strong" or "great" instead of *gabar* (cf. *gadal*, *chazaq*). Therefore, the "prevailing" part of the meaning of *gabar* seems to be intended here.

Webster's defines "to prevail" as: "to gain ascendancy through strength or superiority: TRIUMPH; to use persuasion successfully." Accordingly, the NET Bible translates *naḡbîr*, derived from *gabar*, as **We speak persuasively** at Psalms 12:4. Its textual note says:

> The Hiphil of *gabar* occurs only here and in Dan 9:27… Here in Ps. 12 the evildoers "make their tongue strong" in the sense that they use their tongue to produce flattering and arrogant words to accomplish their purposes.

Therefore, the Antichrist will not merely **make** (NASB, NLT) or **confirm** (NIV) this **religious covenant**. [6] He will conquer **many people** with this **covenant** as a conqueror. Accordingly, *BDB* gives *gabar* the meaning of "compel, force; overbearing behavior, mighty in power." Likewise, Baldwin notes that the use of *gabar* here, "has the implication of forcing an agreement by means of superior strength." [7] Accordingly, the suggested translation above is, **The**

ruler will arise to successfully persuade many people to make a religious covenant with him.

Prevailing (conquering, persuading) is an important meaning of the word *gabar* used in Daniel 9:27, and it reminds us of another biblical prophecy regarding the Antichrist:

> **I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a <u>conqueror</u>** [*nikōn*] **bent on <u>conquest</u>** [*nikēsē*]**.** (Rev 6:1-2 NIV)

The Hebrew word *gabar* used in Daniel 9:27 is a virtual synonym of the Greek word *nikōn* in Revelation 6 meaning, "to win in the face of obstacles, *be victor, conquer, overcome, prevail*." [8]

The *TWOT* notes as well regarding *gabar* in the sense used in Daniel 9:27: "the idea is to raise oneself up in arrogance and stand in God's face." [9] This too reflects the attempt of the Antichrist to arrogantly imitate the real Christ in his **religious covenant** with **many people**.

This relationship between Daniel 9:27 and Revelation 6:1-2 is evidence that the Antichrist's Religious Covenant is being portrayed as a result of Antichrist's Resurrection, with both being portrayed in the First Seal. This will be discussed further below.

Again, the suggested translation is: **successfully persuade many to make a religious covenant with him**. The Hebrew word translated **religious covenant** is *berith*. It is sometimes used in the OT to mean "a treaty between nations, alliance of friendship between individuals, a pledge or agreement." [10] This idea fits well with the common belief that this prophecy is speaking specifically of a <u>peace</u> **treaty** (NLT) with Israel. [11] No doubt, this **covenant** will promote peace in Israel and throughout the world.

As described elsewhere, one of the Antichrist's initial strategies will be to lead the world in establishing a temporary period of peace (cf. ch. 9, sec. C; ch. 11, sec. C.4).

However, it seems more probable that this will be primarily a <u>religious</u> **covenant** rather than only or merely a <u>political</u> peace

treaty. First, the NIV translates the Hebrew word *berith* as a **treaty** between people only 26 times (NASB 4 times).

In contrast the word is translated as a **covenant** 246 times (NASB 275 times). Some of these instances describe a **covenant** between people. But by far the most common and important use of *berith* in the OT refers to God's religious **covenant** with Israel. [12]

Likewise, *berith* is used 5 times in Daniel in addition to its use in 9:27. In all the other references (9:4; 11:22, 28, 30, 32) it refers to the **holy covenant** (11:28, 30) between God and Israel.

This includes the first use of *berith* in Dan 9 (v. 4) which reads: **"Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant** [*berith*] **of love with those who love him and keep his commandments."** Therefore, it is likely that the use of *berith* in the same book and chapter also refers foremost to a religious **covenant**, not just a political or military peace treaty. [13]

The **religious** nature of this **covenant** is demonstrated by the fact that it most clearly will have religious consequences in Israel. They will renew the practice of the **sacrifices and offerings at the Jewish Temple**. Notice that the specific and stated result of this **covenant** is a religious one. In fact, in the previous sentence the prophecy states **War will continue until the end**.

Therefore, it would be rather contradictory to say the primary purpose or result of the **covenant** being described in the next sentence is peace.

In addition, the Antichrist's Religious Covenant will not be made with only Jews in Israel as is often assumed. [14] Obviously, the entire prophecy begins with the Angel Gabriel explaining that it applies to **your** [Daniel's] **people and your holy city** (Dan 9:24), referring to the Jews and Jerusalem.

But as discussed elsewhere, **the Anointed One** [Christ being] **put to death** (v. 26) clearly applies to more than the Jews. [15] This seems to be the same for the **many people** who will **make a religious covenant** with the Antichrist. If Gabriel had meant only the Jews, it seems he would have described it as a **religious covenant** with "your people." Instead, he says this will be a **religious covenant** with **many people**.

Accordingly, the Hebrew word for **many** (*rab,* "abundance") is used several times in Daniel to refer to people that are more than just the Jews (cf. 8:25; 11:14, 18, 26, especially 11:33, 39). Therefore, **many people** suggests a larger scope than merely one race or nation. For example, the **religious covenant** will clearly include the Palestinians and Muslims who will allow the Jews to rebuild a temple on the Temple Mount as a result of this **religious covenant**.

The Antichrist's ability to **successfully persuade many people to make a religious covenant with him**, reflects the biblical prediction that the Antichrist will **succeed in everything he does** (Dan 8:24 NLT). A worldwide religion will be an unprecedented event in human history and a monumental accomplishment for the Antichrist.

The **seven years** (*shabua,* "week") refers to Daniel's Last Seven Years ("Daniel's 70th Week"). Scholars agree that the **week** (NASB) refers to **seven years**. [16] Therefore, this **religious covenant** marks the beginning of God's plan for His people before Christ's Return. More will be said about this in the next chapter.

To summarize, the suggested translation of the pivotal text of Daniel 9:27 is:

> **The ruler will arise to successfully persuade many people to make a religious covenant with him for a period of seven years. In the middle of the seven years he will stop the sacrifices and offerings at the Jewish Temple. And at the Temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.**

For all the reasons above, Antichrist's Religious Covenant being predicted in this prophecy is a monumental event in the Endtimes.

As noted previously (ch. 12, sec. D.2) there are other references to Antichrist's Religious Covenant in Daniel and probably 2 Thessalonians 2. Because this **religious covenant** with the Antichrist will result in a departure from faith in the true God by both Jews and false Christians, it is repeatedly referred to as a spiritual **rebellion** (2 Thess 2:3 NIV). Accordingly, Daniel describes the Jews' participation in Antichrist's Religious Covenant as a

rebellion that leads to the desecration of the Jewish Temple in Antichrist's Claim to be God. We read:

> **Because of rebellion the LORD's people and the daily sacrifice** [at the rebuilt temple] **were given over to it** [a **horn**, v. 9, the Antichrist]**... the rebellion that causes desolation, the surrender of the sanctuary and the trampling underfoot of the LORD's people.** (Dan 8:12-13 NIV) [17]

This same **rebellion** is referred to in Daniel 9:24 where we read: **A period of seventy sets of seven has been decreed for your people** [the Jews] **and your holy city to finish their rebellion** [*pesha'*]. Again, it was argued elsewhere that this **rebellion** leading to the **desolation ... of the sanctuary** (Dan 8:13), is the same **rebellion** that Paul referred to and that **comes first** before **the man of lawlessness ... sets himself up in in God's temple proclaiming himself to be God** (2 Thess 2:3-4; cf. ch. 12, sec. D.2).

Another reference to Antichrist's Religious Covenant is found in Daniel 11:32 which says of the Antichrist (cf. vs. 31, 35), **With flattery he will corrupt <u>those who have violated the covenant</u>, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him** (NIV). This seems to refer to Endtime Jews abandoning the Old **covenant** by participating in Antichrist's Religious Covenant. [18]

Next, we will address the question of what this **religious covenant** with **many people** will look like? It would seem to be a result of the worldwide **worship** of the Resurrected Antichrist described in the previous chapter (Rev 13:4; cf. ch. 13, sec. C). But the prophecy states that **the whole world** will not only **worship** the Antichrist, but will also become his **follower** (Rev 13:3, *opisō*). In the previous chapter it was noted:

> As all versions reflect, **follower** is implied by the Greek word *opisō* which literally means "after." But as *BDAG* explains, the Greek can mean "*come after someone, follow someone*, be an adherent/follower… have pledged allegiance." It is the same Greek word that Jesus is translated using to call His disciples to **"follow me"** (Matt 4:19; 10:38; 16:24). Therefore, in

> another imitation of the real Christ, the Antichrist will have his own disciples after his Resurrection. However, it will be many, many more than Jesus ever had when He was on Earth. (ch. 13, sec. A)

All of this reflects a worldwide Religion dedicated to the Antichrist. MacArthur writes: "This counterfeit Christ will … institute a new religion (the worship of himself; cf. Dan. 11:36–37; 2 Thess. 2:4). [19]

Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the Antichrist's **religious covenant** with **many people** is connected to his worldwide worship following his Resurrection. In fact, it may be a way of establishing Antichrist's worldwide Religion. Therefore, it seems Antichrist's Resurrection will result in Antichrist's Religious Covenant which will formally implement Antichrist's Religion.

It was argued previously that the Antichrist will be the first and foremost False Christ who **will mislead many** (Matt 24:5; cf. ch. 10, sec. B). Therefore, it is suggested that the **many people** that the Antichrist will **successfully persuade … to make a religious covenant with him** is referring to the same **many** that Jesus said the first and foremost False Christ **will mislead** (Matt 24:5). Both prophecies are describing **many people** being deceived by a False Christ.

But this **religious covenant** will <u>not</u> include everyone in the world. This is because real Christians in the world will <u>not</u> be participating in Antichrist's worship. The prophecy states: **all the people <u>who belong to this world</u> worshiped the beast. They are the ones whose names were <u>not</u> written in the Book of Life that belongs to the Lamb** (Rev 13:8 NLT).

Therefore, the **many people** with whom the **religious covenant** is made will be all the unbelievers in the world, but not the Christians. In addition, the **many people** will include the **many** who are predicted to **turn away from the** Christian **faith** (Matt 24:10 NIV) during the Endtimes. This will be discussed further in chapter 16.

Accordingly, it would seem *K&D* interpret Daniel 9:27 correctly when they write:

> [The Hebrew *rab,* "many"] with the article signifies the many, i.e., the great mass of the people in contrast with the few, who remain faithful to God; cf. Matt. 24:12. Therefore the thought is this: That ungodly prince shall impose on the mass of the people a strong covenant that they should follow him and give themselves to him as their God. [20]

It has been argued above that our understanding of the **covenant** should not be limited to merely a political or military "peace treaty." However, surely an indirect result of Antichrist's Religious Covenant and Religion will be some level of worldwide peace.

For example, this will be necessary to sufficiently reconcile Jews, Palestinians, and all Muslims in order for Israel to rebuild their Temple on the Temple Mount. No doubt Antichrist's worldwide Religion will also bring some level of peace to the rest of the world.

All of the above seems rather clear. There are some additional possibilities. It was noted above that Antichrist's Religious Covenant will result in Antichrist's Religion and **followers** like Jesus. An important part of being a disciple is to be a learner. In other words, like Jesus, the Antichrist will be a very influential teacher of his Religion. This may include the production of videos and books.

In addition, it is possible the implementation of Antichrist's Religious Covenant will involve the writing of some Scriptures explaining Antichrist's Religion. God's **covenant**s (*berith*) with His people have always resulted in Scripture being written to explain the **covenant**. Perhaps the Antichrist will produce his own Bible for the same purpose. This would be another attempt to imitate Christ and Christianity. As described in section C below, Antichrist's Religion will even have a prophet to promote and communicate it to the world.

Also, it seems possible that taking the **mark of the beast** (cf. Rev 13:16-17) may be voluntarily practiced even with the initial implementation of the Antichrist's Religious Covenant. It is probable that later, during The Greatest Persecution, all unbelievers will be forced to do this. But even some 3.5 years earlier, this phenomenon may begin as well. [21]

Finally, the prophecy states the Antichrist will **successfully persuade many people to make a religious covenant with him <u>for a period of seven years</u>**. This specified time period is rather odd. Why would the Antichrist publicly make a **religious covenant** (or even a peace treaty) for only a limited time? It is doubtful he would. For example, the Antichrist's intention to **stop the sacrifices and offerings at the Jewish Temple … in the middle of the seven years** will certainly <u>not</u> be revealed in its public description.

Therefore, it seems more likely that Antichrist's Religious Covenant will <u>not</u> be publicly communicated as having a **seven year** limit. The revelation of this temporary duration may only be revealed to God's people in Scripture, and not to the world. This was certainly the case with the other time elements in the Daniel 9 prophecy.

The world did not know God ordained **a period of seventy sets of seven** (v. 24 NLT) years to complete part of His Endtime plan. Nor was the world aware there would be **seven sets of seven plus sixty-two sets of seven** years **from the time the command is given to rebuild Jerusalem until a ruler—the Anointed One—comes** (v. 25), and **after this period of sixty-two sets of seven** years **the Anointed One will be killed** (v. 26).

Again, none of that was revealed to the world, but only to God's people in Scripture. Such will probably be the same when the Antichrist **will arise to successfully persuade many people to make a religious covenant with him for a period of** the last **seven years** (v. 27) of this prophecy.

In fact, God may only intend knowledgeable Christians in the Last Generation Church to know the **seven year** limit on this **covenant**. This is because as explained in the next chapter, it will mark the beginning of a seven-year countdown to Christ's Return and the Church's Rescue.

Publicly, Antichrist's Religious Covenant will probably be communicated as something enduring, maybe even for eternity. It can also be noted that even after the Antichrist ends Jewish religious practices at the **abomination that causes desolation**,

the **covenant** will continue to be accepted and enforced by the rest of the unbelieving world.

B) The timing of Antichrist's Religious Covenant

When Antichrist's Religious Covenant occurs in the sequence of Endtime events is not easy to determine with certainty. But there is evidence that it occurs toward the beginning of the Endtimes. As noted above, it seems that the **many people** that the Antichrist will **successfully persuade … to make a religious covenant with him** is referring to the same **many** that Jesus said the first and foremost False Christ **will mislead** (Matt 24:5). If this is so, this would be an indication that the Antichrist's Religious Covenant is among the first Endtime events.

Second, the Antichrist's Religious Covenant seems to be closely tied to Antichrist's Resurrection. It is reasonable to believe that only after Antichrist's Resurrection will he have the religious and even political clout to **successfully persuade many people to make a religious covenant with him**. Before this, the Antichrist is described in Scripture as merely a **little horn** (Dan 7:8) **which started small** (Dan 8:9).

In addition, it was noted above that the Hebrew word *gabar* used in Daniel 9:27 is a virtual synonym of the Greek word *nikōn* in Revelation 6 meaning, "to win in the face of obstacles, *be victor, conquer, overcome, prevail*." Again, this relationship between Daniel 9:27 and Revelation 6:1-2 is evidence that the Antichrist's Religious Covenant is being portrayed as a result of Antichrist's Resurrection, with both being portrayed in the First Seal.

Therefore, it seems the Resurrected Antichrist in Revelation 6 who appears on the Earth **as a conqueror** (*nikōn*) with deception, is the same Antichrist who spiritually "conquers" (*gabar*) the world by **successfully persuad**ing **many people to make a religious covenant with him** in Daniel 9:27. Likewise, as noted, Antichrist's Religious Covenant will probably promote world peace, as also reflected in the First Seal (cf. ch. 11, sec. C.4).

Finally, there is another piece of biblical evidence that Antichrist's Religious Covenant occurs at the beginning of the Endtimes and even during the opening of the First Seal. Daniel

clearly states that Daniel's Last Seven Years begins with the implementation of Antichrist's Religious Covenant. It is likely that the beginning of Daniel's Last Seven Years should be understood as the beginning of the Endtimes in general. Therefore, Antichrist's Religious Covenant would seem to be at least one of the very first events of the Endtimes.

However, as argued previously (cf. *BBP* chs. 11-12), it still seems that Antichrist's Resurrection will be the first clear sign the Endtimes have begun. Another reason for this is that as noted above, it would seem the Antichrist's Resurrection will be necessary before Antichrist's Religious Covenant. But we should expect the Covenant to follow the Resurrection rather quickly.

The relationship between Antichrist's Resurrection and Religious Covenant may give us even more specific information about the timing of these things. It was argued previously that we could expect the Antichrist's Resurrection to occur on an Easter Sunday (cf. ch. 11, sec. C.2) in his effort to claim he is Jesus Christ. If the implementation of his Covenant followed this, when could it be expected? If the Antichrist continues to demonstrate a desire to follow both Christian and Jewish holidays then Pentecost may be important.

For the Jews, this is the day they celebrate Moses receiving the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai. Essentially, this was the day the Old Covenant was implemented. Likewise, Pentecost for Christians was the first day they were indwelled with the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2:1-4). Essentially, this too could be viewed as the day the New Covenant was implemented. When the Antichrist implements his Covenant, he will **persuade many** that it is a third Covenant to replace the previous two. What better day to do that than Pentecost, 50 days after his Resurrection.

C) The Antichrist's False Prophet

C.1) Biblical texts describing the False Prophet

Not only will the Antichrist have his own religion, but also the False Prophet to support that religion. We read in Revelation 13:

> **Then I saw another beast come up out of the earth. He had two horns like those of a lamb, but he spoke with the voice of a dragon. He exercised all the authority of the first beast** [Antichrist]**. And he required all the earth and its people to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed.**
>
> **He did astounding miracles, even making fire flash down to earth from the sky while everyone was watching. And with all the miracles he was allowed to perform on behalf of the first beast, he deceived all the people who belong to this world. He ordered the people to make a great statue of the first beast** [Antichrist]**, who was fatally wounded and then came back to life.** (vs. 11-14 NLT)

This passage is the most extensive description of the False Prophet given in Scripture. He is described as a **second beast** (v. 11 NIV) in addition to the Antichrist. Although this **second beast** is not named the False Prophet in this passage, it is clear he is being described here. Later, this second **beast** is referred to as the **false prophet** in Revelation 16:

> **Then I saw three impure spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon** [Satan]**, out of the mouth of the beast** [Antichrist] **and out of the mouth of the false prophet. They are demonic spirits that perform signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle** [at] **Armageddon.** (Rev 16:13-14, 16 NIV)

Notice these evil beings are described as an unholy Endtime trinity of Satan (**the dragon**), the Antichrist (**the beast**), and **the false prophet**. These three will be united and working together to fulfill God's purposes for them during the Endtimes. [22]

The final mention of the False Prophet describes his end with the Antichrist. At the Battle of Armageddon, **the beast** Antichrist will be **captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed the signs on its behalf... The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur** (Rev 19:20 NIV).

It would appear that the False Prophet's emergence will occur rather soon after Antichrist's Resurrection, at the very beginning of the Endtimes. This is suggested by the close relationship between the False Prophet's emergence and the Antichrist's Resurrection in the following text:

> **Then I saw another beast** [the False Prophet] **come up out of the earth … He exercised all the authority of the first beast** [Antichrist]**. And he required all the earth and its people to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed** [in Antichrist's Resurrection] (Rev 13:11-12 NIV). [23]

It has been argued previously that the Antichrist will be the first and foremost false **Christ** (Matt 24:5 NASB) among the **many … false Christs** (vs. 5, 24) that will emerge in the Endtimes (cf. ch. 10, sec. B). Likewise, the **false prophet** will be the first and foremost among the **many false prophets** that **will arise and will mislead many** (v. 11).

C.2) The False Prophet's purpose & activities in The Beginning of Birth Pains *Promoting Antichrist's worship with statues*

Revelation 13 clearly describes the purpose of the False Prophet. He will lead **all the people who belong to this world … to worship the first beast** Antichrist (vs. 12-14 NLT). How will he do this?

First, **He** will do **astounding miracles, even making fire flash down to earth from the sky while everyone** is **watching. And with all the miracles he** will be **allowed to perform on behalf of the first beast** [Antichrist]**, he** will **deceive all the people who belong to this world** (Rev 13:13-14 NLT). As with the Antichrist's miracle working, the miraculous powers of the False Prophet will be truly supernatural. [24]

Second, along with miracle-working, the False Prophet will probably be preaching, and being an important spokesman for the Antichrist. Both his preaching and **astounding miracles** will help to promote Antichrist's world-wide Religion. As Osborne puts it, "When he [Antichrist] returns from the dead, his associate, the

false prophet, will use the event for forging a new world religion with the beast [Antichrist] as its focus." [25]

Third, we read of the False Prophet:

> **And with all the miracles he was allowed to perform on behalf of the first beast, he deceived all the people who belong to this world. He ordered the people to make a great statue of the first beast, who was fatally wounded and then came back to life. He was then permitted to give life to this statue so that it could speak.** (Rev 13:14-15 NLT)

This is a remarkable prophecy. Evidently, the False Prophet will be **order**ing **all the people who belong to this world** to **make a great statue of the** Antichrist. The importance of these **statue**s is reflected in the fact that their worship is mentioned 10 times in Revelation (cf. 13:14, 15 [3x]; 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4).

First, it is clear that the prophecy refers to **statue**s. **Statue** translates the Greek word *eikona* which means "an object shaped to resemble the form or appearance of something, *likeness, living image.*" [26]

Accordingly, many translations and scholars suggest the prediction refers to merely an **image** like on a coin (cf. NIV, NASB, ESV, NET). But it is not likely that a mere image or picture of the Antichrist on a coin or elsewhere would be given the ability to **speak** (v. 15). Such a speaking "object" clearly implies **statue**s of some kind (cf. NLT). Accordingly, Osborne writes, "It is almost certainly an idolatrous statue, since it is given life and speaks (Rev 13:15)." [27]

Also, the NLT implies that only one **statue** of the Antichrist will be erected. The Greek word used here (*eikona*) is in the singular tense. But this is because it will be one and the same **statue** of the likeness of the Antichrist. However, it will not be just one **statue** in one place. **The people** whom the False Prophet will **order … to make a great statue of the first beast** refers to **all the people who belong to this world**. Therefore, **statue**s (plural) will be set up all over the world.

It seems that rather immediately after the Antichrist's Resurrection, **statue**s of him will be constructed all over the world

bearing his likeness. These will be another way that the Antichrist's Religious Covenant and Religion will be promoted worldwide. These **statue**s will give everyone in the world a place to **worship** the Resurrected Antichrist. Which is why the False Prophet will **order** their construction.

In addition, the False Prophet will be **permitted** by God **to give life to** these **statue**s all over the world **so that** they will **speak** (Rev 13:15 NLT). This will be an unprecedented display of demonic power working on the Earth. The Antichrist and False Prophet will probably use the **statue**s as a means of communication around the world to again promote Antichrist's Religion at the very beginning of the Endtimes.

But eventually, these **statue**s of the Antichrist will be used to enforce his worship. The prophecy states, **Then the statue of the beast commanded that anyone refusing to worship it must die** (v. 15 NLT). And during The Greatest Persecution, those worshipping the Antichrist will carry out the **statue**s' orders. [28]

Eventually, the False Prophet will have the same God-like authority over the Earth that the Antichrist will possess. Seeing a vision of his activities during The Greatest Persecution, John writes: **He required everyone—small and great, rich and poor, free and slave—to be given a mark** of the Antichrist's name **on the right hand or on the forehead. And no one could buy or sell anything without that mark** (Rev 13:16-17 NLT). That is a lot of power.

The False Prophet's activities will lead to the eternal punishment of all unbelievers in the world. Because **they have worshiped the beast and his statue and have accepted the mark of his name**, all of which are activities the False Prophet will command, **they will be tormented with fire and burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb. The smoke of their torment will rise forever and ever, and they will have no relief day or night** (Rev 14:10-11 NLT). The False Prophet will be the worst kind of prophet, leading the entire world to their eternal **torment**.

In summary, several supernatural events will result in the absolute and complete worship of the Antichrist by every unbeliever

living on the Earth when the Endtimes begin. The Antichrist's miraculous Resurrection will amaze and deceive all non-Christians to worship and follow the Antichrist (cf. Rev 13:3-4). The Antichrist's and False Prophet's miracle working will further empower Antichrist's worship (cf. 2 Thess 2:9), leading all unbelievers to submit to Antichrist's Religious Covenant (cf. Dan 9:27). As followers of the Antichrist's Religion, the entire non-Christian world will become his disciples.

Eventually, all unbelievers will be led and deluded to completely obey the Antichrist such that they will willingly participate in the betrayal, hunting, imprisonment, and execution of all Christians as their moral duty. **"In fact**," Jesus said, **"the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God"** (John 16:2 NIV)) as they serve the Antichrist whom they will believe is God. Such will be the supernatural deception and eventual power of the Antichrist and his False Prophet on the unbelieving world in the Endtimes.

D) The significance of Antichrist's Religious Covenant for Israel *Finish their rebellion & build their temple*

Again, the primary text for describing Antichrist's Religious Covenant is Daniel 9:27:

> **The ruler will arise to successfully persuade many people to make a religious covenant with him for a period of seven years. In the middle of the seven years he will stop the sacrifices and offerings at the Jewish Temple. And at the Temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.**

As noted, many claim Antichrist's Religious Covenant will only apply to Israel. But for reasons shared above, this is unlikely. However, it will certainly have a special significance for the Jews.

Daniel was told earlier in the prophecy that Daniel's Last Seven Years was **decreed for your people** [the Jews] **and your holy city** [Jerusalem] **to finish their rebellion** (Dan 9:24 NLT). **Their rebellion** will certainly include being **persuade**d by the Antichrist

to **make a religious covenant with him** so that they can resume **sacrifices and offerings at** a rebuilt **Jewish Temple**. Obviously, it will be primarily the minority of Orthodox Jews in Israel who will be especially motivated to do this. They will be deceived by the Jewish Resurrected Antichrist that he is their awaited Messiah.

Accordingly, in their efforts to restore OT religion to their nation, they will welcome Antichrist's help in doing so. However, sinfully rejecting their God, and forming a covenant (*berith*) with Christ's archenemy, the Antichrist, will be a climactic act of **rebellion** for the nation of Israel that will lead to the destruction and desecration of the very **temple** they will rebuild (cf. Dan 8:12-13).

Why will Israel do this? The primary reason will be the **powerful delusion** that **God sends** through the deceiving power of Antichrist's Resurrection. Again, they will believe the claim of the first and foremost False Christ, **"I am the Messiah"** (Matt 24:5 NIV). The Jewish Antichrist will convince Israel that he is here to protect them. Accordingly, he will appeal to their idolatry.

What has Israel desired since they became a nation in 1948? Peace with their enemies. The Resurrected Antichrist will be willing and able to obtain this. And because the unregenerated Jews will **worship the beast** along with **all the people who belong to this world** (Rev 13:8 NLT), they will trust him instead of their God.

The prophecy of Israel making an alliance with an antichrist figure was partially fulfilled ca. 135 B.C. with Antiochus Epiphanes. At the time, there was a threat of war in the land. In this context we read the following from the Book of I Maccabees:

> [Antiochus] came to Jerusalem with a large force. Deceitfully he spoke peaceable words to them, and they believed him…
>
> In those days certain renegades came out from Israel and misled many, saying, "Let us go and make a covenant with the Gentiles around us, for since we separated from them many disasters have come upon us." This proposal pleased them, and some of the people eagerly went to the king [Antiochus], who authorized them to observe the ordinances of the Gentiles. So they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, according to Gentile custom, and removed the marks of

> circumcision, and abandoned the holy covenant. They joined with the Gentiles and sold themselves to do evil. (cf. 1:11-15, 20-30)

Likewise, some Jews may abandon Jewish practices even more than they already do.

However, Antichrist's Religious Covenant will enable the Orthodox Jews among them to resume **sacrifices and offerings at** a rebuilt Jewish **temple** (Dan 9:27 NIV). This is clear from the text because **in the middle of the seven years** of the **religious covenant … he will stop the sacrifices and offerings at the Jewish Temple**. This will happen exactly 3.5 years after the start of Antichrist's Religious Covenant when **at the Temple** the Antichrist **will set up an abomination that causes desolation** (Dan 9:27). Both Jesus and Paul made it clear this event occurs in a rebuilt **Jewish Temple** (Dan 9:27; cf. Matt 24:15; 2 Thess 2:3-4).

Therefore, during The Beginning of Birth Pains we can expect to see the rebuilding of a Jewish temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

In fact, it will be Antichrist's Religious Covenant that will lead to Antichrist's Claim to be God in the rebuilt Jewish temple. We read: **Because of rebellion, the LORD's people and the daily sacrifice were given over to it** [the Antichrist]**. It** [the Antichrist] **prospered in everything it did, and truth was thrown to the ground**. (Dan 8:11-12 NIV).

Antichrist's Religious Covenant with the Jews will be the beginning of God's Endtime plan **decreed for** the Jewish **people and** their **holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy Place** (Dan 9:24 NIV).

The day that Antichrist's Religious Covenant is officially and publicly implemented will be a monumental day in God's prophetic plan for Israel. In the next chapter, it will be explained that it will also be a monumental day for the Church.

[1] Scholars agree that the Hebrew text of Dan 9:27 is difficult to accurately translate. For an explanation, see Walvoord, 235-6. Hill writes regarding Dan 9:27:

> Baldwin, 163, considers Daniel 9: 24–27 "the most difficult text in the book," and Miller, 252, regards this section as "four of the most controversial verses in the Bible." Such comments only serve to lend support to the often-quoted remark of Montgomery, 400, that "the history of the exegesis of the 70 Weeks of Daniel is the Dismal Swamp of O.T. criticism." (loc. 5766)

Commentaries on Dan 9:27 are generally disappointing. Which is surprising for such an important text of prophetic Scripture.

Walvoord helpfully spends most of his commentary arguing against non-literal and non-futurist views of the prophecy. He concludes in one paragraph the futurist and literal view claimed in *The Beginning of Birth Pains* that predicts a literal Antichrist in the future.

Young also effectively disproves the Preterist view that Dan 9:27 is only or primarily a reference to Antiochus Epiphanes. However Young (and D. M. Lloyd-Jones) argues for an Amillennial view that this individual is actually Christ, not the Antichrist, and therefore the prophecy has already been fulfilled. However, any allusions to Christ in this text can be interpreted as future efforts on the part of the Antichrist to imitate Christ. See Wiersbe's refutation of this view below in endnote #2.

Wallace (*BST*) is too shallow and brief to be much help in any part of Daniel, and he commits to a Preterist view of Dan 9:27 suggesting it was fulfilled by Antiochus Epiphanes.

Hill (*EBC*) merely presents the questions an interpreter needs to address, but does not even offer any answers.

K&D's commentary is characteristically dense, and spends most of its text on refuting Amillennial views, even though they argue the "weeks of years" are not to be calculated literally, but are merely symbolic. Nonetheless, they too conclude that the prophecy refers to a future Antichrist and write: "Therefore the thought is this: That ungodly prince shall impose on the mass of the people a strong covenant that they should follow him and give themselves to him as their God."

[2] For detailed arguments for interpreting the **ruler** in Dan 9:27 as the future Antichrist, see Walvoord, *Dan*, p. 228-237. Unfortunately, many Amillennialist have actually made a claim that this **ruler** is referring to Jesus Christ. However, Wiersbe succinctly refutes this when he writes:

> To make "Messiah, the Prince" (v. 25) and "the prince that shall come" (v. 27) the same person is to confuse Daniel's words. Those who hold to an amillennial interpretation of prophecy take this approach and apply verses 24-27 to the earthly life and ministry of Christ. But His earthly ministry was three years long, not seven years, and the only covenant He established was the New covenant in His blood, a covenant He did not break. While His death on the

cross ended the Old Testament economy in the plan of God, the Jewish sacrifices continued for nearly forty years. Jesus did not bring any "abomination of desolation" into the temple; instead, He sought to purge it of its defilement. It takes a great deal of stretching the text to put it into the past tense. (at Dan 12:24)

[3] The prophecy in Dan 9:26-27 is about the Antichrist and the Endtimes. The destruction of **the city** of Jerusalem **and the sanctuary** have had a couple of partial fulfillments in the history of the Jews. But this prophecy will be fully and finally fulfilled in the Endtimes by the Antichrist. This is why Christ also predicted this in the context of the Endtimes when He said: **"When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near"** (Luke 21:20 cf. vs. 25-26; Matt 24:15).

The fact that this entire prophecy will be completely and finally fulfilled in the Endtimes is reflected in the fact that **the end** is mentioned three times in its description. We read that **the end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end** (NIV). Also, the Antichrist will experience **the decreed end** for him at the end of the Endtimes when he is destroyed at the Battle of Armageddon (cf. Rev 19:19-20). Finally, the Antichrist's **abomination that causes desolation** will obviously occur in the Endtimes (cf. Matt 24:15; 2 Thess 2:3-4). Therefore, **the ruler who will come** (NIV) is also referring to the Antichrist. Preterism suggests that the prophecies concerning **the abomination that causes desolation** were completely and finally fulfilled in A. D. 70. Preterism is biblically refuted in *Christ's Endtimes Teaching*, ch. 12, sec. B.

[4] *TWOT,* (148). Underlining added.

[5] *BDB.*

[6] The NLT merely has **make** at Dan 9:27a which does not accurately reflect the full meaning of *gabar*. The idea of "restore" in *gabar* evidently leads some to translate it in Dan 9:27 as **confirm** (cf. NIV, NET, *BDB*, *K&D*, Young). This has suggested to some that the Antichrist will re-establish an existing covenant or treaty.

Young makes a great deal of this view in order to argue this covenant refers to the NT covenant already made by Christ (209-213). *TWOT* notes regarding *gabar*: "In Arabic the basic meaning of the root is "to rise, raise, restore" (148). But it never mentions "restore" as a meaning in the Hebrew, nor are there any instances in the OT where it is clearly used this way.

The *BDB* notes that *gabar* at Dan 9:27 is in the Hithpael *perfect* tense and translates it as "*confirm a covenant* Daniel 9:27." But the perfect tense could just as well refer to something being "accomplished" not necessarily being "confirmed." Which, again, is why the *TWOT* never mentions "confirm" as a meaning for *gabar.*

[7] Hill quotes Baldwin at loc. 5881.

[8] *BDAG*.

[9] *TWOT,* 148.

[10] *TWOT*, 128.

[11] Wiersbe supports and describes the common idea that the **covenant** is merely a peace treaty:

> The event that triggers this last seven-year period is the signing of a covenant between the Antichrist and the Jewish nation. At this time, the Antichrist is a key political figure in Europe–one of the ten toes of the image in Daniel 2, and the "little horn" who emerges from the ten horns in 7:8, 24ff.–and he has the authority and ability to end the "Middle East problem." (Dan 9:24; cf. Walvoord, 234-5).

On the contrary, in the beginning of Antichrist's career, and as a result of his Resurrection, he will be a spiritual leader, not so much a political one. And the **covenant** will be with **many** people, not just "the Jewish nation."

[12] *Vine's* states: "The great majority of occurrences of *berith* are God's 'covenants' with men.'" (50).

[13] *K&D* support the religious nature of the **covenant** when they write: "The reference to the covenant of God with man is thus indeed suggested, yet it is not rendered necessary, but only points to a relation analogous to the concluding of a covenant emanating from God." Likewise, Amillennialist scholars such as Young who claim Dan 9:27 is referring to Christ and the New Covenant, would indirectly support the view that this is a religious **covenant** rather than merely a peace treaty as most Dispensationalists teach.

[14] Walvoord gives a very common traditional view of **the many** when he writes: "This is a clear reference to [only] unbelieving Jews who will enter into alliance with the *prince that shall come*." That they are [only] Jews is indicated by *thy people* in verse 24" (234). However, like all Pre-tribulationists, Walvoord overlooks the reference to Christ's crucifixion in verse 26 which clearly applies to the Church, and in one sense to the whole world. For more on who the prophecy of Dan 9:25-27 applies to, see *Christ's Endtimes Teaching*, ch. 7, sec. B.1.

[15] For arguments that Dan 9:24-27 applies to more than Israel, see *Christ's Endtimes Teaching* ch. 7, sec. B.1.

[16] Regarding the **weeks** (NASB) in Dan 9:24-27, Hill writes: "It is generally understood that the 'seventy sevens' represent seventy weeks or heptads of years by analogy to the 'seven weeks of years' associated with the Year of Jubilee (cf. Lev 25: 8)" (loc. 5770).

[17] Young agrees with all commentators regarding Dan 8:12: "the language of the text is extremely difficult" (172). But he concludes with several other OT scholars that the text can be translated: "a host (i.e. many of the Israelites), on account of transgression (i.e. apostasy from God), will

be given up together with (at the same time) the continual sacrifices" (Ibid). Such a translation would suggest the sinful **rebellion** being predicted here is the Jews' complete abandonment of God, and allegiance to the Antichrist, demonstrated in their reception of the Religious Covenant from him.

Walvoord disagrees and says, "conservative scholars generally interpret it to mean that the people of Israel along with their worship are given over to the power of Antiochus Epiphanes (cf. 1 Macc 1:44-49)" (188). This is an odd view for a futurist like Walvoord. Of course, Antiochus fulfilled many things predicted in Dan 8 and 11. But it is explained a few verses later that **the vision concerns the appointed time of the end** (Dan 8:19). In conclusion, it is suggested that the **rebellion** described in Dan 8:12 is probably an allusion to Antichrist's Religious Covenant.

[18] *K&D* perhaps strengthen the claim that Dan 11:32 is referring to Antichrist's Religious Covenant when they add that the **flattery** of the Antichrist here refers to "deceitful promises of earthly advantage."

Others suggest Israel's **covenant with death** mentioned in Isaiah 28:15, 18 is another reference to Antichrist's Religious Covenant (cf. Van Kampen, *Sign*, 188-9). But in these very verses the **covenant with death** is described as **your agreement with the realm of the dead**. Therefore, **death** should be interpreted here literally. Accordingly, the Isaiah commentaries of Oswalt, Motyer, and *K&D* make no mention of this.

[19] MacArthur, 37.

[20] *K&D*, at Dan 9:27.

[21] It is possible that Paul was describing additional elements of Antichrist's Religion when he wrote:

> **Now the Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some will turn away from the true faith; they will follow deceptive spirits and teachings that come from demons. These people are hypocrites and liars, and their consciences are dead. <u>They will say it is wrong to be married and wrong to eat certain foods</u>.** (1 Tim 4:1-3 NLT)

For more on this see *Additional Studies on the Endtimes*, ch. 17, "Some Possible Elements of Antichrist's Religion *1 Tim 4:3*" online at www.trainingtimothys.com.

[22] Thomas writes of the False Prophet described in Rev 13:

> A view that goes all the way back to Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Victorinus is that this beast is the main religious assistant or henchman of the first beast or the end-time false Christ (Swete, Morris).
>
> All of chapter 13 is a parody of the Christian era, with a counterfeit trinity, a death and resurrection, and a universal church with its mark of membership (Seiss, Sweet).

> So the [second] beast has an outwardly Christian image. This agrees with his role as false prophet in contrast to the two true prophets of chapter 11. Like them, he performs great signs, stands before the one he represents (11:4; 13:12), has special power over fire (11:5; 13:13), has a connection with resurrection (11:11; 13:14-15), convinces men of their superior's supreme power (11:5-6; 13:17), and directs men to worship the one they designate (11:13; 13:15) (Kiddle). It is apparent that the second beast captures organized religion in the service of the first beast (Ladd). (1139)

[23] Osborne agrees that the False Prophet's emergence will occur rather soon after Antichrist's Resurrection when he writes:

> The first beast gains control by parity in Christ's death and resurrection. When he returns from the dead, his associate, the false prophet, will use the event for forging a new world religion with the beast. (507)

[24] Thomas notes regarding the nature of the False Prophet's miracle working:

> These will be genuine miracles, supernatural accomplishments, not mere trickery or skill in pyrotechnics… It is particularly the persuasive power of the signs performed that accomplish the ulterior designs of the false prophet and his superior. (1143).

[25] Osborne, 507.

[26] *BDAG* #1.

[27] Osborne, 514; cf. Mounce, 258. Thomas writes regarding the nature of these statues of Antichrist:

> Whether this is an image of an emperor on a coin as that of Caesar in Christ's time (Matt. 22:20), or a statue to which people must bow down, such as that of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 3 (Scott) is not clear. Since the pattern of this demand for worship comes from Daniel (Dan. 3:4-6), the latter appears more probable. In John's day, the cities of Asia, Pergamum in particular, had temples erected for the worship of emperors (Thomas, Revelation 1-7, pp. 179-80). Why should this great ruler of the future not have at least a full-blown statue toward which people could direct their worship? (1145)

[28] Thomas comments on Rev 13:15 regarding the activities of the False Prophet:

> Though God alone can give life, the *edothē* ("it was given") indicates that He permits the beast to do it in this instance. *Pneuma* ("Breath") is not the same as *zōē* ("life"), so some feel that the beast made the image only appear to be breathing (Smith, Walvoord). But the remainder of v. 15 indicates that the image spoke and caused the execution of those who refused to worship the image. The *pneuma*

is therefore the equivalent of *pneuma zōēs* ("the breath of life") so recently encountered in connection with the two witnesses (11:11). So this beast exceeds all earlier idolaters in blaspheming God and usurping His power to bestow life (1146).

Chapter 15

The Surprising! Significance of Antichrist's Religious Covenant for the Last Generation Church

It begins God's 7-year countdown to Christ's Return

Contents

A) The 8 times Scripture says The Greatest Persecution will last exactly 1,260 days

B) God's desire for the Last Generation Church to know the exact day Christ will Return

C) Refuting the objections

Primary points

- Scripture clearly states 6 times that The Greatest Persecution will last exactly 3.5 Jewish years.
- God wants the Last Generation Church to know exactly when The Greatest Persecution will end, and when Christ's Return and the Church's Rescue will occur.
- When the Last Generation Church sees Antichrist's Claim to be God, it can know that this begins a 3.5 year countdown (or 42 months or 1,260 days) to the very day that Christ's Return and the Church's Rescue will occur!
- Even before that, when Antichrist's Religious Covenant is implemented, Christians will know that Christ's Return and the Church's Rescue will occur exactly 7 years (2,520 days) later!
- A supposed objection to these conclusions is based on wrongly interpreting Christ's statement that, **"But about that day or hour** [of His Return, cf. vs. 29-31] **no one knows** [present tense 2000 years ago]**"** (Matt 24:36). This does not mean "no one will ever know.
- Jesus said in the next verse, **"As it was in the days of Noah, so it** [Christ's Return] **will be at the coming of the Son of**

Man" (Matt 24:37). Did you know that Noah knew exactly 7 days in advance when the Flood and God's wrath would begin, and he and his family would be rescued from that wrath?

- Jesus said **When you see all these things, you can know his return is very near, right at the door"** (Matt 24:33 NLT). So it is <u>not</u> true that Jesus intended to say that His people will never know when His Return **is very near**.
- No Christian is going to be surprised by even the **hour** that Christ returns. Why is that? Because they will know **the day** of Christ's Return.

A) The 8 times Scripture says The Greatest Persecution will last exactly 1,260 days

What will be the significance of Antichrist's Religious Covenant for the Last Generation Church living on the Earth at this time? It will begin a 7-year countdown to Christ's Return and the Church's Rescue!

Daniel's prophecy states that the Covenant will be **for a period of seven years**. **In the middle of the seven years**, exactly 3.5 years later, the Antichrist will commit **the abomination that causes desolation** (Dan 9:27). This will begin Antichrist's Wrath and The Greatest Persecution (cf. Matt 24:15-29).

It is important to understand that Scripture clearly states <u>6 times</u> that The Greatest Persecution will last exactly 3.5 Jewish years. The first two of these references to the length of The Greatest Persecution are in Daniel:

> **He** [the Antichrist] **will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be delivered into his hands for <u>a time, times and half a time</u>.** (Dan 7:25 NIV [1])

> **It will be <u>for a time, times and half a time</u>. When the power of the saints has been finally broken, all these things will be completed.** (Dan 12:7 NIV)

First, we see that these two texts are referring to The Greatest Persecution when **the saints will be delivered into** the **hands** of the Antichrist, and **the power of the saints** will be **broken**.

Secondly, we see that this period of time will last exactly **a time, times and half a time**. Bible scholars agree that this refers to a year, plus two years, plus one half of a year. This equals 3.5 years. [2] As we will see, references to this same time period in Revelation will confirm this.

Revelation has four descriptions of the length of The Greatest Persecution. Three of them are as follows:

> **But exclude the outer court** [of the temple in Jerusalem]**; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They** [with the Antichrist] **will trample on the holy city <u>for 42 months</u>.** (3.5 years; Rev 11:2-3 NIV)
>
> **The woman** [Israel] **fled into the wilderness to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of <u>for 1,260 days</u>.** (Rev 12:6 NIV)
>
> **The woman** [Israel] **was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for <u>a time, times and half a time</u>, out of the serpent's reach.** (Rev 12:14 NIV)

Let us briefly explain these texts. First, remember that The Greatest Persecution will begin in Israel when the Antichrist Claims to be God in a rebuilt Jewish temple (cf. Matt 24:15-16). Secondly, Revelation 12 is predicting that God will rescue a remnant of the Jews, **out of the serpent's reach** at that time. The **serpent** is **Satan** (cf. v. 9) who will be cast to Earth and indwell the Antichrist at this time, and begin the 3.5 years of The Greatest Persecution (cf. vs. 7-9, 12, 17).

Thirdly, we see clearly in Revelation 12 that **a time, times and half a time** equals **1,260 days** or 3.5 Jewish years. Jewish years are based on a lunar calendar which has months of exactly 30 days and years of exactly 360 days. The solar (Roman) calendar used in the world today has months of various lengths and years of 365 days, except for "leap year" which is 366 days. Prophetic time periods in Scripture are based on the lunar and Jewish calendar of years that have exactly 360 days.

The sixth clear reference to The Greatest Persecution lasting exactly 3.5 years is in Revelation 13 where we read:

> **The beast** [Antichrist] **was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for <u>forty-two months</u>… It was given power to wage war against the saints and to conquer them.** (Rev 13:5, 7 NIV)

So we see that The Greatest Persecution will eventually include **the saints**, which is the Church, and again, last exactly 3.5 Jewish years or **forty-two months**. [3]

In addition to these texts, God says in Revelation that **I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days** (Rev 11:3 NIV), during the same time **the Gentiles … will trample on the holy city <u>for 42 months</u>** (v. 2). As argued elsewhere, these events will also occur during The Greatest Persecution. [4]

Finally, we could derive that same 3.5 years for The Greatest Persecution from Daniel 9:27. The prophecy says the Antichrist will **persuade many people to make a religious covenant with him for a period of seven years. In the middle of the seven years** [3.5 years later] **he will stop the sacrifices and offerings at the Jewish Temple** and begin The Greatest Persecution for the remaining 3.5 years of Daniel's Last Seven Years. [5]

B) God's desire for the Last Generation Church to know the exact day Christ will Return

This is a total of <u>8</u> references to the exact same time period of 3.5 years in prophetic Scripture. Obviously, this is important for us to understand. [6] What is God's purpose for telling His people <u>8 times</u> that The Greatest Persecution will last exactly **1,260 days**?

Because <u>God wants the Last Generation Church to know exactly when The Greatest Persecution will end, and when Christ's Return and the Church's Rescue will occur.</u> For those enduring The Greatest Persecution, it will be a great encouragement to know exactly how long it will last.

This conclusion is based on the following. First, Scripture clearly teaches The Greatest Persecution will begin with Antichrist's Claim

to be God (**abomination of desolation**, Matt 24:15; Dan 9:27). Then Scripture repeatedly predicts The Greatest Persecution will last exactly 3.5 years (cf. Dan 7:25; 12:7; Rev 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5). Therefore, it needs to be asked: What event will end The Greatest Persecution? What will happen when the 3.5 years of The Greatest Persecution is completed?

The Prophet Daniel explained that Christ's Return is what will end The Greatest Persecution. He wrote:

> **I kept looking, and that horn** [Antichrist] **was waging war with the saints and overpowering them <u>until</u> the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom.** (7:21-22)

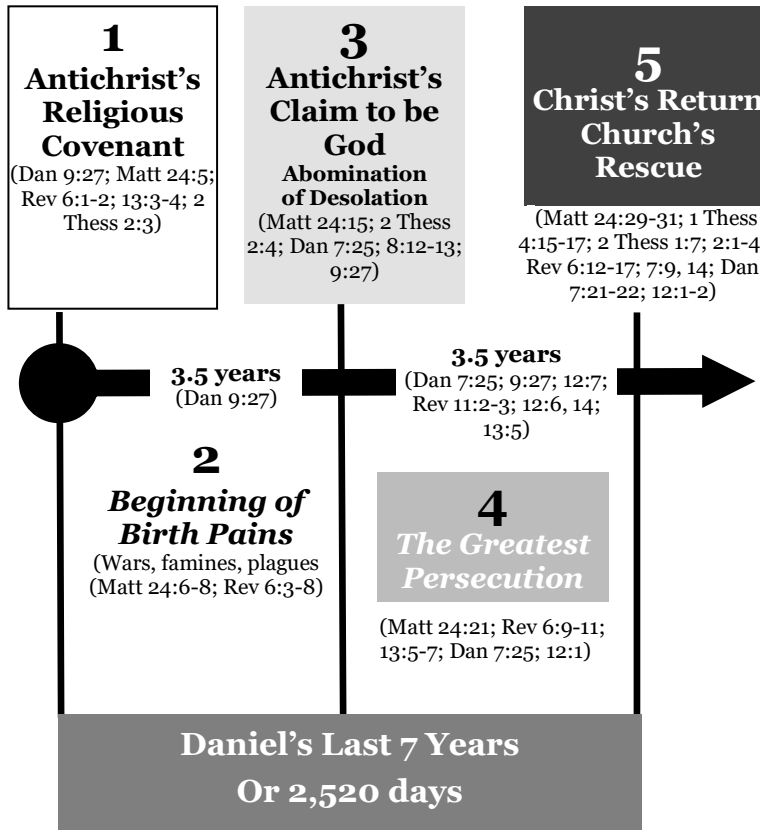
Jesus elaborated on these events in His Endtimes sermon when He said:

> **"<u>Immediately after the completion of the greatest persecution</u> of those days, then 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'**
>
> **Then the sign that the Son of Man is coming will appear in the sky. And then all the peoples of the Earth will mourn when they <u>see the Son of Man coming</u> on the clouds of Heaven, with power and great glory** [Christ's Return]**.**
>
> **And He will send out His angels with a loud trumpet sound, and they <u>will lift up</u> and gather together <u>God's elect people</u> from one end of the <u>sky</u> to the other, from everywhere on Earth"** [the Church's Rescue] (Matt 24:29-31 [7])

Clearly, Christ's Return and the Church's Rescue ends The Greatest Persecution by removing the Church from the Earth. [8] Therefore, when the Last Generation Church sees Antichrist's Claim to be God, it can know that this begins a 3.5 year countdown (or **42 months** or **1,260 days**) to the very day that Christ's Return and the Church's Rescue will occur!

Even before that, when Antichrist's Religious Covenant is implemented, Christians will know that Christ's Return and the Church's Rescue will occur exactly 7 years (2,520 days) later! This is because Antichrist's Claim to be God (**the abomination of desolation**) will occur exactly **in the middle of the seven years** of Antichrist's **religious covenant** (Dan 9:27). [9] These conclusions can be summarized in the following graphic:

The 7-year Countdown to Christ's Return



As noted in the previous message, Antichrist's Religious Covenant will mark the beginning point of Daniel's Last 7 Years. Exactly in the middle of that 7 years, the Antichrist will Claim to be God in the **abomination of desolation**. And Scripture states

multiple times that the resulting Greatest Persecution will last exactly another 3.5 Jewish years. Jesus also taught that The Greatest Persecution will be ended by His Return and the Church's Rescue.

Therefore, on the day the Antichrist's Religious Covenant is implemented, the Last Generation Church will know that exactly 7 years later (or 2,520 days), Christ will Return and any who are still living will be Rescued.

C) Refuting the objections

Of course, the immediate objection to the above conclusions is Christ's statement over 2,000 years ago: **"But about that day or hour** [of His Return, cf. vs. 29-31] **no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father"** (Matt 24:36 NIV). Unfortunately, most wrongly interpret Jesus as saying "No one will ever know" when He is returning. But that is not what Christ said. He said **no one knows**, present tense, 2,000 years ago, when Christ would return. But at a certain point in the Endtimes, both Christ and the Church will know the exact **day** of Christ's Return.

Accordingly, Jesus said in the next verse, **"As it was in the days of Noah, so it** [Christ's Return] **will be at the coming of the Son of Man"** (Matt 24:37). Did you know that **Noah** knew exactly 7 days in advance when the Flood and God's wrath would begin, and he and his family would be rescued from that wrath? After Noah had completed the ark, God told him:

> **Go into the ark, you and your whole family… Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made… And after the seven days the floodwaters came on the earth.** (Gen 7:1, 4, 10 NIV)

Noah knew the exact day that the wrath of God would begin, and his family would be rescued from that wrath. [10] Jesus said His coming, the beginning of His wrath, and the Church's Rescue would be just like **it was in the days of Noah**. One way this will be true is that just like Noah, the Last Generation Church will know the

exact day when Christ's Wrath will begin, and it will be Rescued from that Wrath.

Jesus said it this way in His Endtimes sermon: **When you see all these things, you can know his return is very near, right at the door"** (Matt 24:33 NLT). **All these things** refers to all the Endtime events He had just described including The Beginning of Birth Pains, Antichrist's Claim to be God, and The Greatest Persecution. Jesus said when the Last Generation Church sees those things, they will know His Return **is very near**. So it is <u>not</u> true that Jesus intended to say that His people will never know when His Return **is very near**.

Jesus went on to say something that most Christians ignore or do not understand:

> **The master of that** [**wicked**, cf. Matt 24:48] **servant will come on <u>a day</u> when he does not expect him and <u>at an hour</u> he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers.** (Luke 12:46 NIV; cf. Matt 24:50)

Did you hear Jesus? He warned that if He Returns **on a day**, or even **at an hour** that you do **not expect him**, **He will cut** you **to pieces and assign** you **a place with the unbelievers** which is Hell. Ask yourself an important question. If Christ returned right now, even while you are reading about His Coming, would you be surprised that Christ returned at this very **hour**? Of course you would. [11] Therefore, no Christian is going to be surprised by even the **hour** that Christ returns. [12]

Why is that? What is the only way God's people <u>will</u> be able to **expect** Christ's Return **on the day** and even at the very **hour** it occurs? They will know **the day** because God said multiple times there will be exactly **1,260 days** from **the abomination that causes desolation** to the end of Antichrist's Greatest Persecution and Christ's Return. More than that, Scripture clearly teaches that the implementation of Antichrist's Religious Covenant will be a 7-year countdown to Christ's Return and the Church's Rescue.

Some have recognized the apparent contradiction between the repeated prediction that The Greatest Persecution will last exactly **1,260 days** and Christ's statement 2,000 years ago that **no one**

knows when He will return (Matt 24:36). Because they have wrongly interpreted Christ to mean "no one will ever know" the timing of Christ's Return, they have offered a different solution to this problem.

Regarding The Greatest Persecution, Jesus said in His Endtimes Sermon: **"If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened"** (Matt 24:22 NIV). It has been claimed that Jesus meant the repeatedly predicted **1,260 days** for The Greatest Persecution **will be shortened** and therefore, Endtime Christians will not know the exact day of His Return. [13]

Understandably, the language of something being **cut short** and **shortened** could be understood this way. The Greek word used here (*koloboō*) means "to cause something to not be full length, to reduce the duration of something, to shorten." [14] So then, was Jesus saying that even though God repeatedly predicted and promised in Scripture that The Greatest Persecution would last exactly **1,260 days**, that God had changed His mind? No.

First of all, it is borderline heresy to claim that God would go back on something He repeatedly promised and clearly predicted. Scripture says several times:

> **God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?** (Num 23:19 NIV; cf. 1 Sam 15:29; Ps 33:11; 89:34; 110:4; Mal 3:6; Tit 1:2)

Essentially, what some seem to claim is that God lied repeatedly when He predicted The Greatest Persecution would last exactly **1,260 days**. Prophets in the OT were to be stoned to death if they predicted something that did not come true (cf. Deut 18:20-22). All of this is why there are no examples in Scripture of God changing a prediction He has made concerning the Endtimes.

Secondly, even after Jesus said The Greatest Persecution **will be shortened**, the Revelation later repeatedly predicted it will last exactly **1,260 days** (Rev 12:6) or **42 months** (Rev 13:5; cf. 11:2-3; 12:14). Obviously, the prediction had not been changed.

Thirdly, there is no reason to accuse God of lying or changing His prediction because Jesus never said Christians will never know the day of His return. Instead, Jesus taught **"When you see all these things** in the Endtimes**, you can know his return is very near, right at the door"** (Matt 24:33 NLT).

For all of these reasons, we can be certain that God has not shortened the repeatedly predicted 3.5 year duration of The Greatest Persecution. Accordingly, MacArthur comments on Matthew 24:22:

> *Kolobo* (cut short) can carry the idea of stopping instantly, and that could be the meaning in this context. Since the length of the Great Tribulation is repeatedly stated as being divinely ordained at three and one half years, its length could not be reduced without God's contradicting His own Word. The idea would therefore be that God has predetermined that those days of calamity will stop short of total destruction. [15]

So what did Jesus mean when He said of the Greatest Persecution, **"If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened"** (Matt 24:22)? He simply meant this: **If those days** of the persecution were not **cut short** or stopped, no Christians **would survive** and be alive for the Church's Rescue.

There is no need to read into Christ's statement that the **1,260 days** of The Greatest Persecution **will be shortened**. He simply meant the duration of the persecution **will be shortened** from what the Antichrist would desire and enforce without the intervention of God.

Therefore, we see the surprising! significance of Antichrist's Covenant for the Last Generation Church. It begins God's 7-year countdown to Christ's Return.

Because Endtime Christians will know the exact **day** of Christ's Return, they will be expectantly waiting that entire **day** for the very **hour** He Returns. Only in this way will the Last Generation Church have the necessary focus and expectation to be **like servants** who are doing nothing except **waiting for their master to return from the wedding feast, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him** (Luke 12:36 NIV).

Jesus went on to say:

> **"Happy and blessed will be those servants the master will find on the alert and watching when he comes!... Whether he comes in the middle of the night or just before dawn, those servants who are alert and watching will be happy and blessed!"** (vs. 37-38 [16]).

Endtime Christians will be **happy and blessed** and **alert and watching when** Christ **comes** because they will know the exact **day** He is coming, **whether he comes** at an hour **in the middle of the night or just before dawn**. Can you imagine being one of the relatively few Christians whom God will enable to live to the end of The Greatest Persecution when Christ's Return, the Church's Rescue, and the First Resurrection will occur? They will know it is **the last day** (John 6:40) and certainly **will be happy and blessed!** [17]

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[1] **Saints** reflects the 1984 version of the NIV and the NASB in quotes of Daniel and Revelation.

[2] These prophesies in Daniel are referring to the future Antichrist. But it is remarkable that evidently the persecution of Antiochus Ephiphanes, the forerunner of the Antichrist also predicted in Daniel lasted exactly 3.5 years. Accordingly, Beale writes:

> The initial fulfillment of the 'abomination of desolation" in the temple occurred during Antiochus Epiphanes' oppression from 167 to 164 B. C. (1 Maccabees 1-3; 2 Maccabees 5; cf. 1 Macc. 1:20-64 with 4:5ff.; Josephus, *War* 1.19 and 5.394 summarize the period as "three years and six months"). (566)

[3] The metaphorical approach of Beale leads him astray when he remarks regarding the repeated length of The Greatest Persecution in the Revelation:

> The number of the "forty-two months" is not literal… All the references in Revelation to the period appear to be general allusions only to a figurative three and a half years based on *all* the references throughout Daniel. (565, 567)

[4] For more on the meaning of Rev 11:1-14 and the Endtime ministry to God's Two Prophets see *Additional Studies on the Endtimes*, ch. 13; online at www.trainingtimothys.com.

[5] For an explanation of the suggested translation of Dan 9:27 see *BBP*, ch. 14, sec. A.

[6] There is another possible reason God has ordained that the Antichrist will be **given** exactly **forty-two months … to exercise its authority** (Rev 13:5 NIV). Scholars are generally agreed that: "the ministry of Jesus extend[ed] over a period of three years and the months that preceded the Passover of [John] 2:23" (*ISBE*, I.688-89). If that period was six months, then Antichrist's **forty-two months** (3.5 years) **to exercise its authority** would be one more way he will imitate the real Christ.

[7] For an explanation of the suggested translation of Matt 24:29-30 see *CET*, ch. 3, sec. E. For v. 31 see ch. 4, sec. C.

[8] As early as ca. A.D. 180 the early Church Father Irenaeus wrote that Christ's Return would occur at the end of 3.5 years of the Antichrist's Reign:

> But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father. (*Against Heresies*, V.30.4)

[9] The suggested translation of Dan 9:27 is:

> **The ruler will arise to successfully persuade many people to make a religious covenant with him for a period of seven years. In the middle of the seven years he will stop the sacrifices and offerings at the Jewish Temple. And at the Temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.**

It might be concluded that **the end that is decreed** for **the ruler** Antichrist occurs at the end of Daniel's **seven years**. However, Antichrist's activities on Earth do not end with Christ's Return and 1st Appearance.

For example, **the throne of the beast, and its kingdom** (Rev 16:10) will still exist in the 5th Bowl Punishment and the Antichrist will be among those who **go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle** at **Armageddon** (Rev 16:14, 16). Therefore, it is some years after the end of Daniel's 7 Last Years, at the end of Christ's Wrath at the Battle of Armageddon, and at Christ's 2nd Appearance, that the Antichrist **the beast** will be **captured** and **thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur** where **the devil … the beast** Antichrist **and the false prophet … will be tormented day and night for ever and ever** (Rev 19:20; 20:10).

[10] As noted, Gen 7:1, 4, 10 make it clear that Noah knew the exact day that the wrath of God would begin, and his family would be rescued from that wrath. Therefore, Walvoord makes many errors in the following quote regarding the repeated prediction in Scripture that The Greatest Persecution will last exactly 1,260 days:

> While all of these should be interpreted as literal time periods, they do not reveal the day or the hour of Christ's return… While Noah was

> building the ark, it was obvious that the flood would not come until he had completed the project… But the day or the hour still was not clear [On the contrary, the day certainly was]… Using this OT illustration, Christ compares it to the events which will occur at the second coming of Christ. Like the flood, the second coming will be preceded by specific signs which indicate the approach but not the day or the hour of the coming of the Lord. ("Is a Posttribulational Rapture Revealed in Matthew 24?," *Grace Theological Journal* 6, no. 2 (1985): 263).

Again, this simply is not true.

[11] For more discussion on Matt 24:32-51 see *CET*, ch. 9, sec. B.

[12] Unfortunately, MacArthur could not be more wrong in his commentary on Christ's Endtimes sermon and particularly Matt 24:36:

> Of that day and hour [of Christ's Return] no one knows, Jesus declared categorically. The signs He had just been describing will be conclusive
>
> proof that His arrival is very near. Once they have begun, the general time period of His return will be known, because one of the key purposes of the signs will be to make it known. But even during those sign-days the precise day and hour of Jesus' appearing will not be known, a truth He reiterates several times in this Olivet discourse (see 24:42, 44, 50; 25:13). (*MNTC*, *Matt,* loc. 43905ff)

First, like most Christians, MacArthur misinterprets Christ in Matt 24:36 to mean "no one will <u>ever</u> know." Secondly, he misinterprets the other verses he references. They are all describing how <u>unbelievers</u> will experience Christ's Return, <u>not</u> believers (cf. *CET* ch. 9, sec. B). MacArthur goes on to write something that would be offensive to Christians in the Last Generation Church:

> As far as believers are concerned, knowledge of that specific time might also make them careless, causing them to withdraw and become spiritually sedentary, thinking it would be pointless to make plans for serving the Lord or to make further effort to win the lost. No one, believer or unbeliever, could think or function normally knowing the exact day and hour of Christ's coming.

All of this reveals the distorting influence of MacArthur's Pre-tribulational view of Christ's Return. No Christian during The Greatest Persecution will act as he describes. In addition, MacArthur's argument is the same one Pre-tribulationists use for promoting their unbiblical doctrine of the "imminency" of Christ's Return. No good Christians need this error to motivate them to serve and love the Lord.

[13] The view that the prophesied **1,260 days** of The Greatest Persecution **will be shortened** is taught in the traditional Pre-Wrath <u>Rapture</u> view. In fact, perhaps the only difference between this view and the Pre-Wrath <u>Rescue</u> position taught in the *Endtimes Essentials* is this very point.

Contrary to the Pre-Wrath Rapture view, the Pre-Wrath Rescue position maintains that The Greatest Persecution will last exactly 1,260 days and the Last Generation Church will know the exact day of Christ's Return and the Church's Rescue.

[14] *BAGD.*

[15] *MNTC*, *Matt*, 24:22.

[16] The suggested translation of Luke 12:37-38 is:

> **"Happy and blessed will be those servants the master will find on the alert and watching when he comes!... Whether he comes in the middle of the night or just before dawn, those servants who are alert and watching will be happy and blessed!"**

Happy and blessed translates the Greek word *makarioi* which means: "being fortunate or happy because of circumstances" (*BDAG*). Unfortunately, Bible versions consistently and completely ignore the fact that that **blessed** (*makarios*) includes the meaning of feeling "happy."

Alert and watching translates *grēgorountas* which means: "to stay awake, *be watchful*" (*BDAG* #1) or "to be in constant readiness, *be on the alert*" (*BDAG* #2). Likewise, the NLT translates it with two words, having **ready and watching**. The NIV emphasizes the first definition and has **watching** (cf. ESV **awake**). The NASB emphasizes the second meaning and has **alert** (cf. NET). The suggested translation includes both ideas because both are probably intended. Not only will Endtime Christians be very **alert** on the predicted day of Christ's Return, but if it is nighttime in their part of the world, they will also be staying **awake** (ESV) and **watching**.

In the middle of the night or just before dawn reflects the NLT's helpful explanation of the obscure **second watch, or even in the third** in the more literal NASB.

[17] The above interpretation of these biblical prophecies, and the wonderful encouragement it will provide for the Last Generation Church during The Greatest Persecution, will be discussed more in the book, *The Greatest Persecution*.

Chapter 16

The Effects of Antichrist's Resurrection on False Christians

The shock & pain of the Great Apostasy

Contents

A) The prediction of the Great Apostasy *Matt 24:10*

B) The nature of the Great Apostasy *Matt 7:21-23*

C) The progression of the Great Apostasy

D) The pain of the Great Apostasy

Primary Points

- When Jesus warned that in the Endtimes **many will turn away from the faith**, He was predicting what can be called the Great Apostasy.
- Jesus clearly predicted the number of real Christians would be relatively very **few**. On the other hand, He predicted the number of false Christians would be **many**.
- If the Endtimes began anytime soon, and the Great Apostasy occurred, an estimated 187 million false Christians in America would be exposed. That would be well over half of all the people living in America.
- If Antichrist's Resurrection occurred today, the Great Apostasy would include an estimated 2 *billion* false Christians worldwide rather immediately and clearly exposing their true spiritual condition.
- Jesus pointed to one specific group within Christendom as a place where there will especially be **many** fake Christians. That group would be those who promote and value **prophes**ying, **cast**ing **out demons**, and **perform**ing **miracles**. Therefore, it is alarming to note that these are the very things that are foremost and uniquely promoted and valued in the Charismatic and Pentecostal movements today.
- What people can accomplish with a false faith in Christ is astounding and its deception is enormous.

- It is only supernatural unconditional love, even for those who hate you, that is the best proof one is a real Spirit-indwelled and sealed Christian.
- There is a great lack of biblical understanding and discernment regarding false Christians in modern Christianity. Even worse is the popular but false teaching that a real Christian could lose their salvation.
- Even early in Judas' ministry, Jesus called this miracle-working preacher of the Gospel **a devil**.
- For our instruction, the NT describes other false Christians, including Simon who **believed and was baptized**, and Demas who was a **fellow worker** of the Apostle Paul.
- It seems the Great Apostasy of false Christians denying Christianity will occur in stages, beginning with deception, division, and departures during The Beginning of Birth Pains, and eventually leading to false Christians participating in the arrest and execution of real Christians during The Greatest Persecution.
- The Great Apostasy will begin in a massive, shocking, and painful way with the supernatural deception that will occur as a result of Antichrist's Resurrection.
- When the first and foremost False Christ is revealed and **will deceive many**, causing the Great Apostasy, it will perhaps be the first **birth pain** of the Endtimes.
- Antichrist's Resurrection will cause the beginning of great divisions in families and churches.
- Such Endtime divisions and departures in Christendom will be precisely what God wants. In the Endtimes it will be God's desire to purify His people from false Christians.
- Today, false Christians cause a great deal of trouble in Christianity and in local churches. But after the Antichrist's Resurrection, multitudes of false Christians will clearly expose themselves by worshipping the Antichrist. The current harmful deception of false Christians in Christianity will be essentially ended at the beginning of the Endtimes.

- It is often thought the greatest cause of the Great Apostasy will be The Greatest Persecution. On the contrary, the first and greatest cause of the Great Apostasy will be the supernatural deception that occurs with Antichrist's Resurrection at least 3.5 years before The Greatest Persecution begins.
- Both the magnitude and the utter surprise of the Great Apostasy will make it one of the very first shocking and painful events of **the beginning of birth pains** (Matt 24:8). This is because some our moms, dads, husbands, wives, sons, daughters, friends, and Pastors will be among those who, **will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate** us (Matt 24:10).
- When Christians in the Last Generation Church experience the broken relationships occurring because of the Great Apostasy, it will help to remember that godly men like David, Paul, and Jesus experienced the same thing.

A) The prediction of the Great Apostasy

In chapters 13 and 14 the effects that Antichrist's Resurrection will have on unbelievers in the world was discussed. These effects seem to be two: 1) They will rather immediately **worship the beast** (Rev 13:8) and 2) Will accept Antichrist's **religious covenant** with **many people** (Dan 9:27) and become followers of Antichrist's Religion. As argued there, this will include people of all religions or no religions.

The same will be true for false Christians. All false Christians will abandon Christianity after Antichrist's Resurrection. Again, the prediction states:

> **The whole world** will be **amazed by this miracle and** will become **a follower of the beast… All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb** (Rev 13:3, v. 8 NASB).

False Christians have never had their **name … written … in the book of life**. Therefore, all of the many false Christians in "Christian" churches will rather immediately worship the Antichrist after His resurrection. Like all unbelievers, false Christians will not

be indwelled with God's Spirit to protect them from such a **powerful delusion** (2 Thess 2:11 NIV) and will believe that the Antichrist is the real Christ he will claim to be. Therefore, Antichrist's Resurrection will result in false Christians agreeing to Antichrist's Religious Covenant, partly because it will initially be tolerant of liberal, unbiblical, and false Christianity.

Obviously, Revelation 13 is describing a massive departure of false Christians from Christianity at the time of Antichrist's Resurrection, and will probably be encouraged with Antichrist's Religious Covenant occurring at that time.

This Great Apostasy from Christianity by false Christians is predicted elsewhere in Scripture. For example, Jesus warned regarding the Greatest Persecution:

> **"Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith** [*skandalisthēsontai*] **and will betray and hate each other."** (Matt 24:9-11 NIV).

The Greek word translated **turn away from the faith** (*skandalizō*) is used elsewhere to refer to a complete departure from the Christian **faith** [1] (cf. its translation as **fall away** at Matt 13:21; Mark 4:17; 14:27, 29; John 16:1). Therefore, when Jesus warned that in the Endtimes **many will turn away from the faith**, He was predicting what can be called the Great Apostasy.

This important and painful Endtime event is also predicted elsewhere in the NT. Paul writes:

> **Now the Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some will turn away from** [*apostēsontai*] **the true faith; they will follow deceptive spirits and teachings that come from demons.** (1 Tim 4:1 NLT)

Using essentially the same Greek word, Paul wrote elsewhere: **Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day** [**of the Lord** v. 2] **will not come until the rebellion** [*apostasia*] **occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed** (2:3 NIV). In chapter 12 it was argued that Paul may have been referring to the first stages of the Great Apostasy, a point that will be discussed further

below. Regarding the Greek word used here it was explained previously:

> The Greek word *apostasia* means: "Defiance of established system or authority, *rebellion, abandonment, breach of faith*." Another lexicon has, "a defection, revolt, apostasy, is used in the N.T. of religious apostasy." Erickson defines it as, "a moral, spiritual, or doctrinal abandonment of the faith."… This fits the definition of the English word "apostasy" as: "an act of refusing to continue to follow, obey, or recognize a religious faith." (ch. 12, sec. D.2)

Accordingly the noun *apostasia* is used six times in the Septuagint (LXX, 2nd century B.C. Greek translation of the OT) and "always connotes a departure from God." [2]

In general these texts are describing apostasy, or abandoning a religious faith such as Christianity. Regarding the apostasy predicted in 1 Timothy 4:1 MacArthur writes:

> An apostate is <u>not</u> someone struggling to believe, but one who willfully abandons the biblical faith he had once professed. As already noted, the faith refers to the content of divine revelation that constitutes what Christians believe (cf. Jude 3). This phrase, then, describes an apostate, a rejector of Christ from within the ranks of the church…
>
> As the revelation from the Spirit in Scripture shows, apostasy is predictable, and inevitable. There will always be those who make a temporary response to the gospel, but have no genuine faith in God. Such people abandon Christ's visible church because they were <u>never</u> a part of His invisible church. They forsake God's earthly family because they were <u>never</u> born into His heavenly family. [3]

Daniel seems to also predict the Great Apostasy when we read of the Antichrist:

> **He will flatter and win over those who have violated the covenant** [with God]**. But the people who know their God will be strong and will resist him** (Dan 11:32 NLT).

Those who will **violate the covenant** obviously refer to the orthodox Jews who will abandon their Jewish faith and **make a**

religious covenant with the Antichrist (Dan 9:27). He will be **claiming, "I am the Messiah," and will deceive many** Jews of this very thing (Matt 24:5 NIV). But remember, Antichrist's Religious Covenant will be with **many people**, not just the Jews. He will also be **saying, "I am the Christ," and will mislead many** false Christians (Matt 24:5 NASB). Therefore, the Antichrist **will** also **flatter and win over those who** will **violate the** New **covenant**. Again, Daniel 11:32 seems to be another reference to the Great Apostasy. Accordingly, the prophecy states: **But the people who know their God** and are born again Christians **will be strong and will resist him**.

Therefore, Daniel 9:27 is also a reference to the Great Apostasy. We read there, **The ruler** [Antichrist] **will arise to successfully persuade many people to make a religious covenant with him**. Those **many people** will include all false Christians in the world, causing the Great Apostasy. Notice that both Antichrist's Resurrection and Antichrist's Religious Covenant are described being causes of the Great Apostasy (cf. Rev 13:3; Dan 9:27). This is another indication that these events occur together.

Another reference to the Great Apostasy appears to be in Jude where we read:

> **But you, my dear friends, must remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ predicted. They told you that in the last times there would be scoffers whose purpose in life is to satisfy their ungodly desires. These people are the ones who are creating divisions among you. They follow their natural instincts because they do not have God's Spirit in them.** (Jude 1:17-19 NLT; cf. 2 Pet 3:3)

Once again, Jude noted that elements of **what the apostles … predicted** was already being fulfilled in the first century. But surely in **the last times** these Endtime **scoffers** will be **creating divisions among** churches. The fact that these people will be **among** the Christians indicates they were professing Christians. But their divisive nature will expose them as false Christians. As Paul wrote:

> **Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them. You may be sure that such people are warped and sinful; they are self-condemned.** (Tit 3:10-11 NIV)

What will the Endtime **divisions** Jude warned of look like? Great and painful **divisions** between real and false Christians in the Church, all caused by the Antichrist's deception of the latter. This too will be discussed further below.

B) The nature of the Great Apostasy *Matt 7:21-23*

B.1) The magnitude of the Great Apostasy

As noted, the Great Apostasy will affect a very large number of people and therefore, be very painful for Christianity and Christians.

Many real Christians do not recognize how many false Christians there are in our world. For example, as of 2021, about 63% of Americans (210 million) still claimed to be Christians. [4] But in surveys that do a better job of identifying real Christians, the figure is closer to 7% (23 million). [5] This better fits Christ's prediction about the number of people that would become real Christians when He said:

> **"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to** [eternal] **destruction, and <u>many</u> enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to** [eternal] **life, and <u>only a few</u> find it."** (Matt 7:13-14 NIV)

Here Jesus clearly predicted the number of <u>real</u> Christians would be relatively very **few**. Elsewhere He predicted the number of <u>false</u> Christians would be **many** when He said a few verses later:

> **"Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. On judgment day <u>many</u> will say to me, 'Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' But**

I will reply, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God's laws.'" (Matt 7:21-23 NLT)

That word **many** should sober us. Jesus predicted there will be **many** people claiming to be Christians who are not. Many resist Christ's predictions because they seem too pessimistic. We struggle with feeling that Christians are such a minority already, so we are tempted to want to claim all the Christians we can. But the Endtimes will reveal that there are really even far fewer real Christians than we thought or hoped for.

The ministry of Jesus Himself illustrated this. In John 6 we read that Jesus gave **a hard teaching** (v. 60). It included His statement that: **"No one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them"** (v. 65). As a result, **From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him** (v. 66 NIV).

The same kind of massive apostasy will occur in the Endtimes, and especially be true of America. Again, 63% of Americans (210 million) still claim to be Christians. Yet, better studies put this number closer to 7% (23 million). Therefore, if the Endtimes began anytime soon, and the Great Apostasy occurred, an estimated 187 million false Christians would be exposed in America. That would be well over half of all the people living in America.

The effect will be similar in Europe. About 64% (288 million) of those in the European Union claim to be Christians, the same percentage as America. [6] Considering the spiritual state of real Christianity in Europe, including the epidemic of empty churches, how many of that 64% are really Christians? We may have some indication by the fact that only 9% claim to be Protestants, but even that is certainly no guarantee of saving faith. If we put the real percentage of Christians at 7% again, this would mean about 260 million false Christians in Europe would be exposed in the Great Apostasy.

Likewise, the Great Apostasy will be relatively massive in Israel. It is suggested the biblical predictions of Endtime apostasy include Orthodox and practicing Jews who are at least attempting to keep the Old Covenant. These make up 45% of Israel's population (or over 4 million [7]). The majority of them will abandon their Jewish

faith and worship the Antichrist because they would not have God's Spirit either.

Of course, there will be similar results all over the world, especially in areas dominated by Roman Catholicism such as Latin America. There is an estimated 2.5 *billion* people claiming to be Christians in the world today. [8] If we put the real number at even 20% of that, and Antichrist's Resurrection occurred today, the Great Apostasy would include an estimated 2 *billion* false Christians worldwide clearly exposing their true spiritual condition.

It is important to notice that in Matthew 7:21-23 quoted above, Jesus intentionally described a specific kind of person or group of people who will be exposed as false Christians. Jesus did <u>not</u> say **many** religious people in general will be fake Christians. He did not even specifically describe mainline denominations or Roman Catholicism, which many Evangelicals feel are full of self-deceived people falsely believing they are Christians. No, he pointed to one specific group within Christendom as a place where there will especially be **many** false Christians. And that group would be those who promote and value **prophes**ying, **cast**ing **out demons**, and **perform**ing **miracles** (Matt 7:22).

Therefore, it is alarming to note that prophesying, exorcisms, and "faith healing" are the very things that are foremost and uniquely promoted and valued in the Charismatic and Pentecostal movements today. Surely, there are many genuine Christians within this sect of Christianity. But Jesus was a Prophet. And it seems He was giving a prophecy about Charismatic and Pentecostal churches centuries before they became a majority segment of Christianity.

Understandably, many may disagree with this interpretation. But it cannot be ignored that Christ specifically warned of false faith among those who practice and promote the very things uniquely practiced and promoted in these sects of Christianity. Therefore, it seems Christ was warning us that among these churches in particular, there are, and will be, **many** false and self-deceived Christians.

Jesus said, **"<u>many</u> will say to me, 'Lord! Lord! <u>We</u> prophesied … cast out demons … and performed many**

miracles.**"** And these **many** will not be doing the **will of** the **Father**, and will in fact be **evildoers** (NIV). But it is unlikely that this condemnation will only apply to those who are actually performing these deeds. The **we** seems to include those who would identify with these practices and be spiritually led by those performing them. By doing so, they too expose themselves as false Christians.

Not only will they be deceived about their salvation, but they will also be deceived about their prophesying and miracle working. As fully demonstrated elsewhere, Charismatic and Pentecostal teaching and practice on these matters is not biblical, and much of the supposed miraculous revelations and miracle-working among them is faked. [9]

Therefore, just because these unbelievers will be claiming they did miraculous things in Christ's name, does not mean their works were actually supernatural. And if they were, then it was demonic power, not divine power, that enabled them.

All of this is especially ironic because those in Charismatic and Pentecostal churches often believe and claim they are in many ways more spiritual and superior to other Christians. This is primarily based on their claims to be experiencing more prophesying and miracle working. But in fact, this sect of Christianity simply seems to be more emotional, which may explain their greater level of deception. Contrary to what Pentecostals and Charismatics take such pride in, Jesus said that **many** of those claiming to **prophes**y, **cast out demons**, or **perform many miracles**, even in the **name** of Christ, are not those **who actually do the will of my Father**, and therefore, they **will** not **enter ... heaven** either.

The magnitude of the Great Apostasy among Pentecostals and Charismatics is evidenced by the fact that, "Together, worldwide Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity numbers over 644 million adherents," [10] and "Pentecostalism is believed to be the fastest-growing religious movement in the world." [11] If Jesus will eventually tell **many** of this sect, **"I never knew you**,**"** then it will probably contribute a large portion of the multitude of false Christians who will be exposed in the Greatest Apostasy.

[Personal note: The author does not say these things with joy or pride. I have friends that I greatly respect who are members of these sects of Christianity. But I have written 5 books that biblically evaluate Charismatic and Pentecostal doctrines and practices. The shortest is entitled *The Truth about Tongues* and is over 300 pages. I can confidently tell you that much in these movements is unbiblical. And if anyone wants to disagree, I would humbly ask them to biblically refute what I have written in those 5 books. They are located in the "Scholar's Section" of my website at www.trainingtimothys.com. A summary of those biblical arguments can be found in the *Theological Journal* section, articles #16 and #17].

B.2) The deception of false faith

False faith is an important and complex topic is Scripture. Its detection and how to be sure one is a real Christian are discussed elsewhere. [12] Notice in Christ's warning above the depth of the deception involved in false faith. **Many** of those who supposedly **prophesied in** Jesus' **name and cast out demons in** Jesus' **name and performed many miracles in** Jesus' **name** will not be **actually do**ing **the will of** the **Father**, and therefore, they **will** not **enter … heaven** either. That is a lot of deception!

At least these deceived people will be attempting great spiritual things for Jesus. Many professing Christians do much less and still want to claim they are a Christian. If even trying to **cast out demons** and **perform many miracles** in Christ's **name** does not guarantee your salvation, then why would so many claim that merely attending church or giving money is proof of their salvation?

In short, it is only supernatural unconditional love, even for those who hate you, that is the best proof one is a real Spirit-indwelled and sealed Christian (cf. Matt 5:43-48; John 13:34-35; 1 John 4:7-8, 19-21). In fact, an inability to forgive those who have hurt you and have compassion for them, is perhaps the clearest sign that exposes a false Christian (cf. Matt 6:14-15).

Still, what people can accomplish with a false faith in Christ is astounding and its deception is enormous. Jesus described false

Christians when He explained His parable about the "sower and the seed":

> **"The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since they have no root** [or real saving faith]**, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away** [*skandalizetai*]**.**
>
> **The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful.**
>
> **But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."** (Matt 13:20-23 NIV)

The great lack of biblical understanding and discernment regarding false Christians is demonstrated by the number of Teachers and Christians who believe all of the above are describing real, but "backsliding" Christians. On the contrary, if a person does not persevere in the faith, even in **trouble or persecution**, they were <u>never</u> a born-again, Spirit-sealed believer. Likewise, if a professing Christian worships **wealth**, they too expose the fact they <u>never</u> trusted Christ for salvation.

Even worse is the popular but false teaching that a real Christian could lose their salvation. But did you notice how Jesus described false Christians above? He said, **"I <u>never</u> knew you"** (Matt 7:23). It is not that these false believers were real Christians at one time and then "fell away." They were **never** Christians, which is true of all false Christians.

Of course, false Christians have been a perplexing and painful problem since the very founding of the Church. Judas Iscariot was the first. Like the other authentic Apostles, Judas was personally chosen and commissioned by Jesus to **"proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near,'"** and to **"Heal the sick,** [even!] **raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy,** and **drive out demons"** (Matt 10:7-8 NIV). As the Apostle Peter

would later say, **"Judas was one of us and shared in the ministry with us"** (Acts 1:17 NLT).

But even early in Judas' ministry, Jesus called this miracle-working preacher of the Gospel **a devil**. We read: **Jesus said, "I chose the twelve of you, but one is a devil." He was speaking of Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, one of the Twelve, who would later betray him** (John 6:70-71 NLT).

For our instruction, the NT describes other false Christians. For example, Luke tells us:

> **Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed** [*existanōn*] **all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, "This man is rightly called the Great Power of God." They followed him because he had amazed** [*exestakenai*] **them for a long time with his sorcery.** (Acts 8:9-11 NIV)

The Greek word used here for **amazed** is used elsewhere to describe peoples' responses to Christ's miracles. It seems Simon was a demonically empowered individual. Which is why we might be initially impressed when Luke writes that Simon **believed Philip's message of Good News concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. As a result … Simon himself <u>believed and was baptized</u>** (Acts 8:12-13 NLT). Such actions and description would unfortunately lead many to be convinced such a man was a real Christian.

But a short time after Simon's "conversion," he attempts to bribe the Apostle Peter to give him miraculous powers (cf. Acts 8:18-19). For Simon, the work of the Holy Spirit was not the true God working salvation, but just another god working magic. The Apostle Peter revealed the man's true heart when he said to Simon:

> **You have no part or share in this ministry, because <u>your heart is not right before God</u>. Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. <u>Perhaps He will forgive you</u> for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that <u>you are full of bitterness and captive to sin</u>.** (Acts 8:21-23 NIV)

This clearly is not a description of a born-again Christian, and indeed early Church history bears this out with a good deal more to say about the activities of Simon Magus. [13] This same Simon the Sorcerer who appears in Acts, started what would become a very popular cult known as the Simonians who, "were both active and influential for several centuries after the death of their founder." [14] While there may be some legend mixed in with the historical accounts of this man, it is clear that he continued to attract many followers with his amazing miracle-working even as an influential opponent of early Christianity. [15]

Yet, the man is described as one who **believed Philip's message of Good News concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ** and **as a result … Simon himself believed and was baptized**. Such is the deceptive and horrific nature of false faith. The example of Simon Magus should be a warning to those who easily assume that a person who can perform supernatural deeds is from God. Reader remember: Not everything supernatural is holy. Especially our brothers and sisters in the Charismatic and Pentecostal movements need to be more discerning about this.

The deceptive power of false faith is demonstrated in another false Christian in the NT named Demas. Accordingly, we are astonished by the Gospel preaching, sacrificial ministry, and holy life, that Demas no doubt lived as a close companion of the Apostle Paul. What kind of commitment to Christ would you have to display for someone like the Apostle Paul to refer to you as **my fellow worker** with **Luke** (Phlm 1:24; cf. Col 4:14)? As MacArthur puts it, Demas was, "one of the apostle's closest associates." [16] And not for just a few months, but for years. The Apostle referred to Demas in this way in the late A. D. 50's to early 60's.

But in A.D. 67-68, writing to Timothy, Paul says, **Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me** (2 Tim 4:10). The Apostle's description of Demas leaves little doubt that he was not saved, as the Apostle John points out elsewhere that, "**If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him**" (1 John 2:15). [17] Therefore, there was at least a period of 5-10 years in which Demas labored in the Gospel with Paul. And yet, in

the end, abandoned his faith, demonstrating he never had the saving kind. Once again, we see that the power and deception of false faith is immense.

In the end, no amount of supernatural deeds, sacrificial service, or Savior-honoring words can prove one is a Christian. All such things can be empowered by the sinful nature or even demons. The one thing that neither the sinful nature nor demons can empower a person to do is unconditionally love people, which will always be the ultimate proof that someone is a real Christian.

C) The progression of the Great Apostasy

It was noted previously that virtually everything in the Endtimes will involve a process that requires some time (cf. ch. 12, sec. D.2). Likewise, it seems the Great Apostasy of false Christians denying Christianity will occur in stages. The following are merely suggestions, but they seem reasonable.

The Great Apostasy will begin in a massive, shocking, and painful way with the supernatural DECEPTION that will occur as a result of Antichrist's Resurrection. Again:

> **The whole world** will be **amazed by this miracle and** will become **a follower of the beast… <u>All who dwell on the earth</u> will worship him, <u>everyone</u> whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb** (Rev 13:3, v. 8 NASB).

Again, false Christians will not have the spiritual ability and discernment to protect themselves against this **powerful delusion** (2 Thess 2:11 NIV). Charismatic and Pentecostal people will be especially vulnerable as they already demonstrate a great lack of spiritual discernment and are deceived by false miracle-workers today.

Antichrist's Resurrection will immediately result in a multitude of false Christians accepting Antichrist's Religious Covenant because it will initially be tolerant of unbiblical Christianity. Therefore, who is a real Christian, and who is a false one, will be rather immediately revealed at the very beginning of the Endtimes, based on how people respond to Antichrist's Resurrection.

This is contrary to what many believe. It is often claimed that the Great Apostasy will not occur until after Antichrist's Claim to be God and the Greatest Persecution begins. Accordingly, it is thought the greatest cause of the Great Apostasy will be the Greatest Persecution.

On the contrary, the first and greatest cause of the Great Apostasy will be the supernatural deception that occurs with Antichrist's Resurrection at least 3.5 years before The Greatest Persecution begins. Again, as a result of Antichrist's Resurrection, **All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb**, which is all false Christians.

Therefore, the first stage of the Great Apostasy will be DECEPTION. This deception will lead to unprecedented DIVISION. People in churches all over the world will be immediately and painfully divided on their opinion of the Resurrected Antichrist. Real Christians will be amazed at how gullible a multitude of professing Christians will be to actually **worship** the Antichrist and adopt his new Religion into their perverted form of Christianity. False Christians will be condemning toward the real Christians whom they will perceive as narrow-minded and legalistic Pharisees because they will reject the tolerant new Religion of the Antichrist.

No real Christian, **whose name has … been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life** (Rev 13:8) will worship the Antichrist. Indeed, the Antichrist **will flatter and win over** false Christians **who have violated the** New **covenant** [with God]**. But the people who** really **know their God will be strong and will resist him** (Dan 11:32 NLT). And that difference will result in clear DIVISIONS within Christendom.

Real and false Christians may remain in the same local churches for a while. But eventually, their doctrinal DIVISIONS about the Antichrist's Religion will result in unprecedented DEPARTURES. True and false Christians will not tolerate one another and will form their own congregations. The Apostle John reflected this period of time when he wrote:

> **Dear children, the last hour is here. You have heard that the Antichrist is coming, and already many such**

> **antichrists have appeared. From this we know that the last hour has come. These people left our churches, but they never really belonged with us** [or Christ]**; otherwise they would have stayed with us. When they left, it proved that they did not belong with us** [or Christ]**.** (1 John 2:18-19 NLT)

Such Endtime divisions and departures in Christendom will be painful. However, they will be precisely what God wants. In the Endtimes it will be God's desire to purify His people from false Christians. Real Christians and real Christian churches will be more enabled to obey commands such as:

> **Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God.**
>
> **As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." Therefore, "Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." And, "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."**
>
> **Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.** (2 Cor 6:14-7:1 NIV)

In the Endtimes, real Christians will do this very thing.

It is suggested that the deception, division, and departures of the Great Apostasy will occur early in The Beginning of Birth Pains, with the opening of the First Seal which reflects Antichrist's Resurrection and implementation of his Religious Covenant (cf. Matt 24:4-8; Rev 6:1-2, *BBP* chs. 10-11). But when Antichrist's Claim to be God occurs and the Fifth Seal is opened for The Greatest

Persecution (cf. Matt 24:15-21; Rev 6:9-11), the Great Apostasy will reach its advanced stage.

In terms of their deception, false Christians will eventually completely renounce Christianity, **receive** the **mark … of the beast** (Rev 13:16-17), and believe Antichrist's Claim to be God and that he is the one true religion (cf. 2 Thess 2:3-4). In terms of their relationship with real Christians, false Christians will eventually deeply hate real Christians and even participate in their capture, arrest, imprisonment, and execution. Paul reflected this progression in deception and cruelty by false Christians in the Endtimes when he wrote:

> **In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus** [particularly in the Endtimes] **will be persecuted, while evildoers and impostors** [false Christians] **will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.** (2 Tim 3:12-13 NIV)

Eventually, false Christians will be among those who Jesus described when He warned about the Endtimes:

> **"The time is coming when those who kill you will think they are doing a holy service for God. This is because they have <u>never</u> known the Father or me. Yes, I'm telling you these things now, so that when they happen, you will remember my warning."** (John 16:2-4 NLT)

Therefore, false Christians will go from sharply disagreeing and even departing from real Christians, to eagerly engaging in the persecution, betrayal, arrest, and execution of real Christians. This advanced stage of the Great Apostasy seems to be what Christ described <u>after</u> **the beginning of birth pains**:

> **"Then you will be arrested, persecuted, and killed. You will be hated all over the world because you are my followers. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people."** (Matt 24:8-11 [18]).

This seems to describe a stage of the Great Apostasy that will occur during The Greatest Persecution. Jesus said, **you will be handed over to be persecuted** and **at that time many will turn away from the faith**. This persecution refers to The Greatest Persecution that will occur after Antichrist's Claim to be God, as described later in Christ's sermon (cf. vs. 15-21).

D) The pain of the Great Apostasy

In the world today Christians have a very great and painful problem. A multitude of unregenerated people profess to be Christians. As a result, these false Christians cause a great deal of trouble in Christianity and in local churches, especially when they are in positions of leadership. And as illustrated above, false Christians can be very difficult to detect. Therefore, an immense amount of pastoral and church ministry is expended on false Christians.

But after the Antichrist's Resurrection, this will begin to radically change. Multitudes of false Christians will clearly expose themselves by worshipping the Antichrist. The current harmful deception of false Christians in Christianity will be essentially ended at the very beginning of the Endtimes. That is the good news about the Great Apostasy in the Endtimes.

But we must recognize and prepare for the shocking pain this event will cause for God's people. When the first and foremost False Christ is revealed and **will deceive many**, causing the Great Apostasy, it will perhaps be the first painful **birth pain** of the Endtimes (Matt 24:5, 8). This is a good explanation for why Jesus called the emergence of False Christ(s) the first **birth pain**.

Why will the Great Apostasy be so shocking and painful? Because some of our moms, dads, husbands, wives, sons, daughters, friends, and Pastors will be among those who, **will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate** us (Matt 24:10).

The Great Apostasy will be shocking and painful because so many professing Christians will abandon Christianity. Real Christians will be revealed as a relatively very small minority in the world when the Endtimes begin. They will be tempted to feel like Elijah who told God:

> **"The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the <u>only</u> one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."** (1 Kgs 19:10 NIV)

The Great Apostasy will be shocking and painful because the revelation of some of the false Christians will be a great surprise. MacArthur is right to say, "Whereas apostasy should sadden and outrage believers, it should neither shock nor surprise them, because the Spirit explicitly says that it will occur." [19] But the surprise will be unavoidable. Family members, friends, famous "Christians," and some of our own Pastors, whom we were convinced were even better Christians than we are, will begin to worship the Antichrist after his Resurrection and expose their true hearts. Surely, even the Apostle Paul was shocked when his longtime partner in ministry, **Demas**, **deserted** the Apostle **because he loved this world** (2 Tim 4:10 NIV).

In summary, both the magnitude and the utter surprise of the Great Apostasy will make it one of the very first shocking and painful events of **the beginning of birth pains** (Matt 24:8). This is another aspect of the Endtimes that Christians need to be doctrinally, spiritually, and emotionally prepared for so they can respond to the Great Apostasy in a God-glorifying way. But as warned in the previous book, widespread false teaching on the doctrine of the Endtimes in the Church today has left Christians very unprepared (cf. *Christ's Endtimes Teaching*, ch. 16).

By far the greatest pain of the Great Apostasy will come because of our great love and attachment to the false Christians who **turn away from the faith**. Can you hear the hurt in Paul's voice when he wrote, **Timothy, please come as soon as you can** because **Demas has deserted me** (2 Tim 4:9-10 NLT)? Because of apostasy, the Apostle lost a dear friend.

Likewise, David experienced a similar betrayal and wrote:

> **If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were rising against me, I could hide. But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship at the house of**

> **God, as we walked about among the worshipers.** (Ps 55:12-14 NIV)

Evidently, David had a **friend** who was in spiritual **fellowship** with him in **the house of God**. Like Paul, and because of apostasy, David also lost a **companion**, a **close friend**. And David admitted that this was very difficult to **endure**.

Jesus of course experienced the same. Even when Judas came to the Garden of Gethsemane to betray Him, **and kissed him**, **Jesus replied, "Do what you came for, friend"** (Matt 26:49-50 NIV). Jesus was not being sarcastic when He called Judas His **friend**. Even Judas knew that, and that is why Judas committed suicide out of guilt later (cf. Matt 27:3-5). Judas knew Jesus had been His **friend**.

When Christians in the Last Generation Church experience the broken relationships occurring because of the Great Apostasy, it will help to remember that godly men like David, Paul, and Jesus experienced the same thing.

Not only will false Christian friends and family members **turn away from** us, but they will eventually turn on us, **and will betray and hate** us (Matt 24:10). Primarily because of the Great Apostasy, Jesus warned that during the Endtimes:

> **"Even those closest to you—your parents, brothers, relatives, and friends—will betray you. They will even kill some of you"** (Luke 21:16 NLT).

Elsewhere He said:

> **"Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by everyone because of me"** (Matt 10:21-23 NIV).

Jesus was virtually quoting the Prophet Micah who similarly warned:

> **Do not trust a neighbor; put no confidence in a friend. Even with the woman who lies in your embrace guard the words of your lips. For a son dishonors his father, a daughter rises up against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man's enemies are the members of his own household.** (Mic 7:5-6 NIV)

The **betray**al predicted here will include **those closest to you** (Luke 21:16) somehow participating in you being **arrested, persecuted, and killed** (Matt 24:10), especially during The Greatest Persecution. Those who should protect us and help us, will expose and **hate** us. Wiersbe described the Great Apostasy when he wrote: "Those who once were true to each other will betray each other. This suggests that marriages, homes, and nations will be torn asunder because of a lack of loyalty." [20] But again, all of this will be God's will. Regarding even His First Coming, Jesus said:

> **"I came not to bring peace, but a sword. 'I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. Your enemies will be right in your own household!'"** (Matt 10:34-36 NLT)

The Antichrist will seek a similar division in another attempt to imitate the real Christ. However, the division caused by the real Christ occurs because He and His followers believe the truth. The division caused by the Antichrist will occur because his followers will believe lies.

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[1] Here **the faith** (Matt 24:10) clearly refers to the Christian faith. As Carson notes, "Professing believers are either included in this description or are the focus of interest" (560; cf. Gundry who calls them "professing disciples," 479). Nolland (965) and France (906) are virtually heretical to claim they will be real born again Christians losing their salvation. MacArthur is more biblical, who comments on Matt 24:10:

> As persecution intensifies in the end times and believers begin to be arrested, hated, and martyred for Christ's sake, many supposed Christians will defect. Although they will have had an outward identification with Christ, they will prove by their desertion that they never belonged to Him. When the persecution becomes too

severe, they will forsake Christ and join fellow unbelievers in assailing God's people… God's people will be betrayed by those who once were a part of their fellowship but who become offended at Christ when the cost rises too high. Both to save their own skins as well as to vent the hatred for the things of God they have always had in their hearts, they will turn informer and persecutor. (*Matthew*, 24:10)

[2] Ibid., 138.

[3] MacArthur, 1 Tim 4:1, underlining added.

[4] "About Three-in-Ten U.S. Adults Are Now Religiously Unaffiliated". *Measuring Religion in Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel*. Pew Research Center. December 14, 2021.

[5] See discussion on accurately identifying real Christians in Kurt Jurgensmeier, *Biblical Apologetics*, ch. 5.16, sec. A.2; online at www.trainingtimothys.com.

[6] "Discrimination in the European Union", *Special Eurobarometer*, 493, European Union: European Commission, 2019.

[7]https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Israel#:~:text=In%202022%2C%2045%25%20of%20Israel,'%2C%20including%20religious%20zionist

[8] In 2020 the Pew Research Center "estimated the number of Christians worldwide to be around 2.38 billion." (https://www.pewresearch.org/topic/religion/religious-demographics/pew-templeton-global-religious-futures-project/). In 2023, it was reported: "There will be over 2.6 billion Christians worldwide by the middle of 2023." (https://www.gordonconwell.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2023/01/Status-of-Global-Christianity-2023.pdf)

[9] For a biblical evaluation of Charismatic and Pentecostal doctrine and practice see the books in the section entitled: "Biblical Critique of Charismatic Doctrines & Practices" under the "Scholar's Section" at www.trainingtimothys.com. For a much briefer summary of this material, see the *Theological Journal*, articles #16 and #17.

[10] Zurlo, Johnson, and Crossing, "World Christianity and Mission 2020: Ongoing Shift to the Global South", *International Bulletin of Mission Research*. **44** (1): 16 (July 2019).

[11] Miller, Sargeant, and Flory, *Spirit and Power: The Growth and Global Impact of Pentecostalism* (August 2013).

[12] For more on the biblical doctrine of false Christians and assurance of salvation see *Christian Essentials* study #1, *FORGIVENESS*, chs. 1.6-1.8 at www.trainingtimothys.com.

[13] Accordingly, the early Church Father Irenaeus (120-200) writes under the heading "Doctrines and Practices of Simon Magus and Menander":

> Simon the Samaritan was that magician of whom Luke [spoke of in Acts]… This Simon, then-who feigned faith … set himself eagerly to contend against the apostles, in order that he himself might seem to be a wonderful being, and applied himself with still greater zeal to the study of the whole magic art, that he might the better bewilder and overpower multitudes of men. Such was his procedure in the reign of Claudius Caesar, by whom also he is said to have been honoured with a statue, on account of his magical power.
>
> This man, then, was glorified by many as if he were a god; and he taught that it was himself who appeared among the Jews as the Son, but descended in Samaria as the Father while he came to other nations in the character of the Holy Spirit. He represented himself, in a word, as being the loftiest of all powers, that is, the Being who is the Father over all, and he allowed himself to be called by whatsoever title men were pleased to address him. (*Against Heresies*, online at www.ccel.org, I.23)

[14] D. E. Aune, "Simon Magus," *ISBE*, 4:516.

[15] Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 263–339) writes of Simon the Sorcerer:

> [H]e was struck dumb by the miracles that Philip performed by divine power, and slipped in. He actually received baptism, in his hypocritical pretence of belief in Christ. It is an astonishing fact that this is still the practice of those who to the present day belong to his disgusting sect. Following in their progenitor's footsteps they slip into the Church like a pestilential and scabby disease, and do the utmost damage to all whom they succeed in smearing with the horrible, deadly poison concealed on them. By now, however, most of these have been expelled -just as Simon himself, when his real character had been exposed by Peter, paid the appropriate penalty. (*Ecclesiastical History*, trans. G. A. Williamson, ed. Andrew Louth, (Penguin Books, 1989), I.2, 37)

[16] *MNTC*, 1 & 2 Timothy, at 2 Tim 4:10.

[17] Fee and Stott have little comment on Demas. Guthrie seems wrong when he writes that Demas "had perhaps found the apostle's demands too rigorous. There is, however, nothing to suggest that Demas was an apostate, although there was a later tradition to this effect" (183).

Barnes had an interesting take on the statement that "**Demas, because he loved this world** [*aion*: "age"]**, has deserted me**": "It means that he desired to live. He was not willing to stay with Paul, and subject himself to the probabilities of martyrdom; and, in order to secure his life, he departed to a place of safety." Dr. Barnes did not feel the Apostle's words implied any "worldliness" in Demas at all. This seems unlikely.

MacArthur is willing to say Demas, "may not have been a true believer at all" (*MNTC*). Likewise, Knight writes:

> Paul seems to be contrasting Demas' love with that which marks true Christians (4:8)… Demas' love for this world implies that he is one whose love for something else has taken the place of love for God (cf. 3:2, 4; cf. 1 Jn. 2:15) (464).

[18] This quote of Matt 24:8-11 is a combination of the NIV and NLT.

[19] *MNTC*, *1 & 2 Timothy*, loc. 3062.

[20] Wiersbe, at Matt 24:10.

Chapter 17

The Effects of Antichrist's Resurrection on Real Christians

Contents

A) Antichrist's Resurrection will immediately begin worldwide and severe discrimination of real Christians

B) Biblically informed Christians will understand the meaning of Antichrist's Resurrection *Dan 12:10*

C) Biblically misinformed Christians will be shocked and confused

Primary Points

- Eventually, God's people will be hunted, imprisoned, and executed in the Greatest Persecution. But at least 3.5 years before that, after Antichrist's Resurrection, powerful anti-Christian propaganda and severe discrimination will begin.
- After Antichrist's Resurrection, the only "religion" that will not be tolerated is biblical Christianity.
- Antichrist's Resurrection and the implementation of his Religious Covenant will immediately result in a campaign of public slander and discrimination with an unprecedented scope and intensity.
- The Resurrected Antichrist will treat real Christians like the outdated and harsh Pharisees that Christ condemned.
- The persecution of the Jews by the Nazis reflects a historical model that will probably be followed by the Resurrected Antichrist to lead the world to fulfill Christ's prediction that the whole world will hate his followers (cf. Matt 24:9).
- There will be two kinds of Christians on the Earth when the Antichrist is Resurrected. Biblically informed Christians will be like the **men** of **Issachar … who understood the times and knew what Israel should do** (1 Chron 12:32). Misinformed Christians will be confused, shocked, and afraid.
- As with all of Christ's commands, there will be consequences for Christians who disobey His command to **"Watch!"** intelligently and diligently for biblical signs of His Return.

- When Antichrist's Resurrection is literally fulfilled, many unbiblical beliefs about the Endtimes will be painfully but effectively proven wrong.

In the previous chapters we discussed the effects of Antichrist's Resurrection on the non-Christians of the world. This chapter will discuss how this event will affect real Christians in the world.

A) Antichrist's Resurrection will immediately begin worldwide and severe discrimination of real Christians

How will pagans and false Christians treat real Christians after Antichrist's Resurrection?

At this point, the Antichrist will be implementing his **covenant with many** (Dan 9:27) and promoting his own Religion (cf. ch. 14, sec. A). The Resurrected Antichrist will consider real Christians and Christianity to be a great obstacle to the growth of Antichrist's Religion.

Therefore, he will do all he can to lead his amazed, deceived, worshipping, and submissive followers to begin to fulfill another prophecy about God's people in the Endtimes. Jesus said to His followers, <u>after</u> **the beginning of birth pains**: **"Then you will be arrested, persecuted, and killed"** in The Greatest Persecution and **"you will be hated all over the world because you are my followers"** (Matt 24:8-10 NLT).

We have noted all along in this book that there will be a process for things to develop in the Endtimes that will require some time. Let us be reminded of what events will ultimately lead to for real Christians. Jesus said:

> **The time is coming when those who kill you will think they are doing a holy service for God. This is because they have never known the Father or me. Yes, I'm telling you these things now, so that when they happen, you will remember my warning.** (John 16:2-4 NLT)

But stages of persecution will occur <u>before</u> Christians are **arrested** and **killed** by people believing the Antichrist is **God** and they are performing **a holy service** to him. The Antichrist's Claim

to be God will result in The Greatest Persecution (cf. Matt 24:15, 21). After that time, real Christians will be imprisoned and executed for not worshipping the Antichrist (cf. Rev 13:9-10).

But such severe persecution will not develop immediately. It will take time, and a process for the world to come to a conviction that Christians must be hunted, imprisoned, beaten, and killed. That process will begin with Antichrist's Resurrection and the spread of Antichrist's Religion.

An increased **hate** for Christians **all over the world because** we **are** Christ's real **followers** will begin immediately with Antichrist's Resurrection. It was suggested elsewhere that virtually every religion in the world will be acceptable at that point (cf. ch. 13, sec. C.3). But not biblical and authentic Christianity. It will be the only "religion" that will <u>not</u> be tolerated.

The entire pagan world and a multitude of false Christians will be worshiping the man that real Christians will claim is the Antichrist. <u>That</u> will not be popular. Authentic Christianity will quickly become the only rejected religion immediately after Antichrist's Resurrection.

This intolerance of real Christianity will result in its public slander. Of course, we experience this very thing today, especially in the American media. But the public attack on the character of biblical Christianity will exponentially increase in scope and intensity at the very beginning of the Endtimes with Antichrist's Resurrection.

With the implementation of his worldwide Religious Covenant and Religion, the Resurrected Antichrist will begin a powerful propaganda campaign against real Christians by publicly slandering them. Again, the Antichrist will be claiming to be the real Jesus Christ who is implementing a new **covenant** (Dan 9:27) to replace NT Christianity. Therefore, the Resurrected Antichrist may treat real Christians like the outdated and harsh Pharisees that Christ condemned.

In fact, he may imitate some things from Christ in His blistering statements about the Pharisees in Matthew 23. For example, Jesus rightfully and publicly criticized the Pharisees for over-burdening people with their legalistic laws (cf. Matt 23:4). The Resurrected

Antichrist may unjustly criticize real Christians of the same thing, contrasting it with his own "easier" Religion.

Jesus criticized the Pharisees for hindering people from getting to Heaven (v. 13). Even now Christianity is widely criticized for claiming, **There is one God and** only **one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity—the** [crucified] **man Christ Jesus** (1 Tim 2:5 NLT). The Resurrected Antichrist will probably initially claim there are many ways to have a relationship with God, and therefore, all pagan religions have some value. Accordingly, he will accuse narrow-minded Christians of being **blind guides** just as Jesus did the Pharisees (cf. Matt 23:15-17).

Jesus called the Pharisees **hypocrites** seven times in his sermon against them. Surely the Antichrist will accuse Christians of the same.

Jesus said to the Pharisees **"you ignore the more important aspects of the law—justice** and **mercy"** (Matt 23:23 NLT). **Mercy** in Antichrist's Religion will mean tolerance for abortion, homosexuality, and all sorts of sins that real Christians rightfully condemn. The "intolerance" of biblical Christianity will become a foremost reason Christians **will be hated all over the world** (Matt 24:9).

The Antichrist's public slander will result in increased discrimination of real Christians. It may not yet be officially condoned by all world governments, but the people of the **world** will **hate** Christians **because** we are **followers** of the real Christ. One thinks of the sinful discrimination that blacks experienced in America. People actually believed they were an inferior race of humans. The world will believe the same thing about Christians. Accordingly, it will be good business to exclude Christians and they may be banned from many services.

Obviously, anti-Christian propaganda and discrimination has already greatly increased in recent years all over the world. It would seem Christ's prediction that the whole world would **hate** His **followers** has already begun to be fulfilled. But when the Antichrist's Resurrection occurs and he begins to implement his worldwide Religion, this process will greatly increase with an unprecedented scope and intensity.

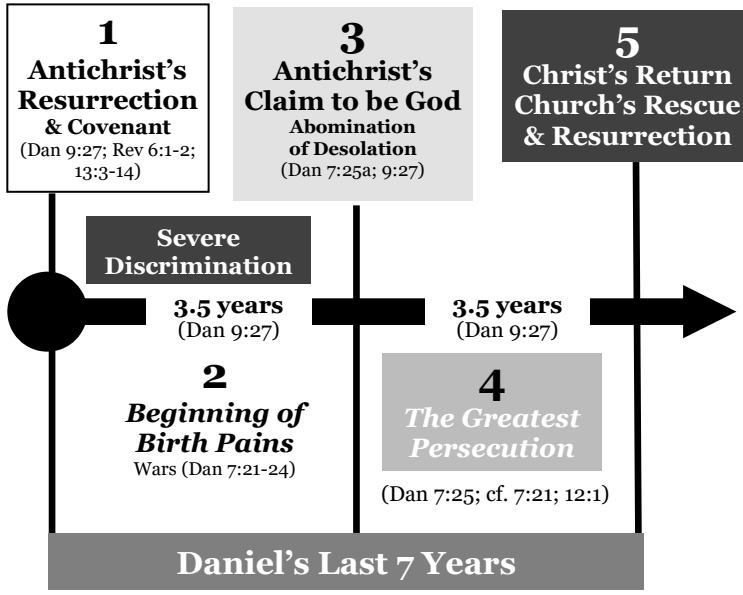
Eventually, after Antichrist's Claim to be God and The Greatest Persecution begins, only real Christians will refuse **the mark of the beast** and be legally outlawed worldwide from being able to **buy or sell** anything (Rev 13:17). Even after that, such severe economic discrimination will ultimately lead to the hunting, imprisonment, and execution of all real Christians on Earth.

Therefore, it would seem there will be a period of about 3.5 years when Christian persecution immediately begins to intensify with Antichrist's Resurrection. This will lead up to Antichrist's Claim to be God, after which The Greatest Persecution will begin. This progression of Antichrist's career against the Church can be summarized in the table and illustrated in the graphic on the following page.

Table: The 3.5 Year Progression of Antichrist's Career against the Church

After Antichrist's Resurrection & during The Beginning of Birth Pains
The Antichrist will implement his Religious Covenant that will immediately confront biblical Christianity.
The Antichrist will publicly slander biblical Christians.
The world will have a growing dislike for real Christians.
Unofficially, there will be a significant increase of discrimination and persecution against real Christians by the public.
After Antichrist's Claim to be God & during The Greatest Persecution
The Antichrist will outlaw biblical Christianity.
The Antichrist will demand that everyone on Earth receive **the mark of the beast** and only real Christians will refuse and be unable to **buy or sell**.
The Antichrist will demand the arrest, imprisonment, and execution of biblical Christians.

Graphic: The 3.5 Year Progression of Antichrist's Career against the Church



Therefore, note in the graphic above the time of "Severe Discrimination." It will begin at least 3.5 years before the Greatest Persecution begins. During that time, the Antichrist will follow a proven process to lead the whole world to **hate followers** of Jesus (Matt 24:9).

What occurred in Nazi Germany in the 1930's and 40's offers us a historical model that will probably be followed by the Resurrected Antichrist. Again, the process took several years. First, there was public anti-Jewish propaganda and slander. 20 years before the start of WWII, Adolf Hitler issued his first written comment on the "Jewish Question" in which he defined Jews as a race and not members of a religion. He stated that Jews are a "race-tuberculosis of the peoples," and the goal was to remove them altogether. [1] Of course, as Hitler's popularity grew, so did his propaganda of the Jews.

This led to increasing levels of hatred for the Jews in Nazi Germany. Already they were being severely discriminated against, being rejected from jobs and schools. Then they were forced to publicly identify themselves by wearing a yellow armband with the star of David. Later, they were forced to live in Jewish ghettos, apart from the rest of society. Eventually they were exterminated in concentration camps. [2] The following timeline reflects this progression:

1933: Adolph Hitler appointed Chancellor of Germany; boycott of Jewish shops and businesses; laws barred Jews from holding civil service, university, and government positions; public burning of books written by Jews.

1935: Jews barred from serving in the German armed forces; anti-Jewish racial laws enacted; Jews no longer considered German citizens; Jews could not marry Aryans.

1936: Jewish doctors barred from practicing medicine in German institutions.

1938: Mandatory registration of all property held by Jews inside the Reich; Office of Jewish Deportation established to increase the pace of forced emigration; 17,000 Polish Jews living in Germany expelled; *Kristallnacht* (Night of Broken

Glass) which were anti-Jewish riots in Germany, Austria, and the Sudetenland; 200 synagogues were destroyed; 7,500 Jewish shops looted; 30,000 male Jews sent to concentration camps; Decree forced all Jews to transfer retail businesses to Aryan hands; All Jewish pupils expelled from German schools.

1939: Nazis began segregating Polish Jews in ghettos, usually in the most run-down area of a city. Ghettos were shut in by walls, fences, or barbed wire. No one could leave or enter without a special permit.

1941: German Jews required to wear yellow star of David with the word *"Jude";* nearly all Jews in occupied Poland were forced into ghettos and struggled to survive despite extreme hardship.

1942: Mass deportation of Jews to killing centers.

As noted, eventually the world's **hate** for **followers** of the real **Christ** will lead to **the time … when those who kill** real Christians **will think they are doing a holy service for God** (Matt 24:10; John 6:2). But there will be a painful process leading up to that which will immediately begin in a shocking way with Antichrist's Resurrection at the very beginning of the Endtimes.

B) Biblically informed Christians will understand the meaning of Antichrist's Resurrection *Dan 12:10*

There will be two kinds of real Christians on the Earth when the Antichrist is Resurrected: biblically informed Christians and biblically misinformed Christians.

Biblically informed Christians will be like the **men** of **Issachar … who understood the times and knew what Israel should do** (1 Chron 12:32). As it says in Daniel, at **the end time … those who have insight will understand** (12:9-10 NASB). This will be because they diligently and humbly studied and correctly understood biblical prophecy.

These Christians will have already recognized the possible fulfillment of the emergence of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition and the Rising Antichrist, as discussed in previous chapters (cf. *BBP* chs. 4-9). Therefore, they will be watching with a special carefulness for Antichrist's death and Resurrection.

Because biblically informed Christians will understand the biblical doctrine of the Endtimes, they will be much more prepared to glorify God with love, joy, and peace instead of confusion, panic, and paralysis. Contrary to biblically misinformed Christians, biblically informed Christians will **be ready for action, serving, and fleeing … like servants waiting for their master to return from the wedding feast** (Luke 12:35-36 [3]).

C) Biblically misinformed Christians will be shocked and confused

Unfortunately, many Christians today do not even know the Antichrist's Resurrection is predicted in Scripture. And even many more have never heard an accurate teaching on it. Remember the Thessalonians? Because they did not understand the biblical sequence and substance of Endtime events they had **become easily unsettled** and **alarmed by** a false **teaching** about the Endtimes (2 Thess 2:2). This "Thessalonian Panic" was discussed in the previous book (*CET*, ch. 16, sec. B).

How **unsettled** and **alarmed** will Christians be who have <u>not</u> been correctly taught about the Endtimes, when a famous leader of a minor country is miraculously resurrected from the dead? How about the millions who were taught the Real Christ is supposed to come and "rapture" them before the Antichrist comes to persecute them?

Their world will be shattered. Their fear will be paralyzing. And the Devil will certainly find ways to take advantage of their confusion. Confusion is where the Devil works. In the previous book, you read:

> As with all of Christ's commands, there will be consequences for Christians who disobey His command to **"Watch!"** intelligently and diligently for biblical signs of His Return… [W]hen the Antichrist's Resurrection occurs,

mistaught Christians will be freaking out, and be very confused and afraid.

Because of that, the Antichrist will have a great advantage over those believers who were not prepared to face him. Which again, is what all of the painless, popular, but false teachings on the Endtimes lead to. The Antichrist's unique weapon over such Christians will be: Surprise. Shock. When we are shocked by painful events, we are emotionally **shaken** and **alarmed** like the Thessalonians, and therefore, mentally and spiritually weakened. Shock makes it all the more difficult to exercise faith at a time when it is most necessary.

When the Endtimes begin, God will expect His people to glorify Him. But because popular teaching has left many unprepared for these things, many will be overwhelmed with fear. But Jesus said, even when these devastating Beginning of Birth Pains occur, **"don't panic. Yes, these things must take place, but the end won't follow immediately"** (Matt 24:6 NLT). But much of the Church will disobey Christ and **panic** at the beginning of the Endtimes because popular and false teaching on this doctrine will leave them unprepared. (*CET*, ch. 16, sec. C)

In *Christ's Endtimes Teaching*, several Endtime views were explained and biblically evaluated based on Christ's Endtimes sermon, Paul's Thessalonian epistles, Revelation chapters 6-7, and Daniel (cf. *CET* chs. 11-16). It is hoped that study can especially help many teachers of God's word to **be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth** (2 Tim 2:15 NLT).

Hopefully, God will raise up more Teachers before the Antichrist's Resurrection to help His people better understand the prophetic Scriptures. But unfortunately, it seems probable that the Church will remain rather deceived and misinformed about biblical prophecy until the Antichrist's Resurrection occurs.

The Church could have, and should have, understood the doctrine of the Endtimes better. The NT Scriptures on this topic are a lot more clear than the OT Scriptures and God expected us to carefully study them and sufficiently understand and teach

them. But most Christians will probably not be sufficiently interested to do so until after the Antichrist's Resurrection. When Antichrist's Resurrection is literally fulfilled, many unbiblical beliefs about the Endtimes will be immediately, painfully, and effectively proven wrong.

Those believing the biblical details of Christ's Return do not matter (apathetic Pan-tribulationism) will hopefully believe otherwise. Those emphasizing or ignoring the literal meaning of biblical prophecy (e.g. Amillennialism) will hopefully change their perspective. The many who believe we are to be "raptured" off the Earth before any Endtime events occur (Pre-tribulationism) will be shocked into abandoning what their Pastors claimed was true.

For example, Pre-tribulationist John Walvoord reflected a foundational teaching of that view when he wrote regarding the book of Revelation: "Nowhere in scenes of earth that describe the end time (chaps. 6–19) is the church pictured as involved in the earthly struggle." [4] But when Antichrist's Resurrection occurs, surely all Pre-tribulationists will recognize they are already living in the middle of the book of Revelation, chapter 13, where this event is described!

Hopefully, these misinformed Christians will fervently and humbly study prophetic Scripture with a new and more accurate perspective. Christ's Endtimes Teaching will no longer be ignored as something only for the Jews. Revelation chapters 6, 12 and 13 will be understood as applying to the Church, instead of just some kind of invented "post-rapture" Christians on Earth during Christ's Wrath.

And they should readily understand from Revelation 13 that Antichrist's Resurrection was predicted, and The Greatest Persecution will follow (vs. 3-10), and they should prepare for it. [5]

In fact, it seems there is a prediction that biblically misinformed Christians will indeed fervently and humbly study prophetic Scripture with a new and more accurate perspective after Antichrist's Resurrection. An Angel told Daniel:

> **"But you, Daniel, keep this prophecy a secret; seal up the book until the time of the end, when many will rush**

> **here and there, and knowledge will increase"** (12:4 NLT).

This prophecy referred to the entire **book** of **Daniel**. [6] Evidently at the time this **prophecy** was given, it was not God's will for His people to fully understand it. But when **the time of the end** is upon us, that will change. God will want Christians to understand how Daniel's **prophecy** applies to them. Accordingly, Wiersbe comments:

> The book [of Daniel] was to be treasured and protected and shared with the Jewish people. However, the book was "sealed" in this sense: The full meaning of what Daniel wrote would not be understood until "the time of the end" (see Matt. 24:15). Even Daniel didn't fully understand all that he saw, heard, and wrote (Dan. 12:8)! [7]

Accordingly, God knows such knowledge and interest in these prophecies probably requires some current events to occur first. When God's people see these prophecies being fulfilled before their very eyes, then the prediction in Daniel 12:4 will be fulfilled.

When will **many … rush here and there** to **increase** their **knowledge** of the **prophecy** and **book** of **Daniel**? The **time of the end**. [8] More specifically, when the **prophecy** in **the book** of **Daniel** is being fulfilled.

Hopefully, this will include the **prophecy** in **Daniel** concerning the Rising Antichrist and the 10-nation Endtime Coalition (cf. Dan chs. 7-8; *BBP* chs. 4-9). But surely this predicted **rush** to **increase** Christians' **knowledge** of the **prophecy** in **the book** of **Daniel** will begin after the shocking and paradigm shifting event of Antichrist's Resurrection (cf. *BBP* chs. 10-16).

What will the **many** be doing at **the time of the end** with the **prophecy** in **the book** of **Daniel**? **Rush here and there** to **increase** their **knowledge**. Contrary to what many have taught, this is not talking about some increase in scientific or technological knowledge during the "information age" (cf. *BBP* ch. 1, sec. C.3).

These **many** will **rush here and there** to **increase** their **knowledge** about **the words** in **the book** of **Daniel** [9] because his **prophecy** particularly about the Rising Antichrist will be coming true in front of their own eyes. If these predictions are not fulfilled

during Antichrist's Rise, then certainly they will be after Antichrist's Resurrection. Accordingly, Wiersbe explains the topic that will be studied by these Endtime Christians:

> "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" is not a reference to automobiles and jet planes or the advancement of education. It has reference to the study of God's Word in the last days, especially the study of prophecy.
>
> Amos 8:11-12 warns us that the day will come when there will be a famine of God's Word, and people will run here and there seeking for truth but won't find it. But God's promise to Daniel is that, in the last days, His people can increase in their knowledge of prophetic Scripture as they apply themselves to the Word of God. [10]

The need to **rush here and there** for their **knowledge** of prophetic Scripture to **increase**, suggests that a great deal of effort will be required. [11] Because this is speaking of **the time of the end**, it may <u>not</u> be referring to increased travel. Surely God knew the Internet would be available at **the time of the end** and helps for study would be provided there.

The good news is that at **the time of the end** Christians will more faithfully obey God's commands about studying and understanding prophetic Scripture. In the first chapter of the first book of this *Endtimes Essentials* series, the following two Scriptures were addressed (cf. *CET* ch. 1, sec. C).

First, God commanded especially His Teachers:

> **Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive his approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth** (2 Tim 2:15).

In **the time of the end** God's people will do this as **many will rush here and there, and knowledge will increase.**

Likewise, Paul warned:

> **The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but … will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.** (2 Tim 4:3-4 NASB).

But in **the time of the end** God's people will stop being afraid, academic, and apathetic about understanding prophetic Scripture (cf. *CET* ch. 1, sec. B). Instead, they will **endure** this **doctrine** of the Endtimes and **rush here and there** so their **knowledge will increase**.

Will the Endtime Christians' search for **knowledge** about prophetic Scripture be successful? The prophecy promises it will be. The literal Hebrew reads: **knowledge <u>will</u> be increased**, not simply sought after. Thus the NLT quoted above is accurate: **many will rush here and there, and knowledge <u>will</u> increase** (Dan 12:4). [12]

There is another prediction in Daniel that assures us that Christians' **knowledge** of prophetic Scripture **<u>will</u> increase** in the Endtimes. Elsewhere we read: **Those who have insight among the people <u>will give understanding</u> to the many** (Dan 11:33 NASB). [13] Likewise, the ESV has: **And the wise among the people shall <u>make</u> many understand**. An even fuller translation is the NCV which reads, **Those who are wise will help the others understand what is happening** in the Endtimes.

Daniel makes it clear that there is a connection between **when many will rush here and there, and knowledge will increase** about the **prophecy** in **the book** of **Daniel** at **the time of the end** (12:4); and **those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many** (11:33).

In fact, these same Endtime Teachers **who have insight** and **who** will **lead the many to righteousness** are mentioned again in Daniel 12:3, just before the prediction in verse 4. In other words, it is because God will provide the Endtime Teachers **who have insight** that the efforts of the **many** to **increase** their **knowledge** about the Endtimes will be successful.

Who will these Endtime Teachers be? **Those who have insight** translates the Hebrew word *ūmaśkîlê*. The *TWOT* notes its verb form means:

> An intelligent knowledge of the reason… the process of thinking through a complex arrangement of thoughts … to gain insight into the words of the Law… Still another usage of

> the verb is to have insight or comprehension [which is] seen as God's gift to Israel through his … teachers…
>
> Another usage stresses the idea of causing to consider, give insight, and teaching. David indicates that the Lord made him understand the details of the pattern of temple furniture (1 Chr 28:19)… The noun also has the sense of insight or understanding. [14]

Unfortunately, the common translation as **the wise** (NIV, NLT, ESV, NET, etc.) suggests these men will be skilled and encouraging counselors in practical wisdom. On the contrary, they will be a special group of Endtime Teachers who will be skilled in accurately explaining the prophetic Scriptures, like the **prophecy** in **the book** of **Daniel** (12:4). Obviously, when **those who have insight among the people … give understanding to the many** (11:33) about the doctrine of the Endtimes, it will also be encouraging, and these Endtime Teachers will also be **those who lead the many to righteousness** (12:3). [15]

Again, Daniel reveals a connection between the character of God's people in the Endtimes and the ministry of the Endtime Teachers. Speaking of the Antichrist, we read in Daniel 11:32:

> **By smooth words he** [the Antichrist] **will turn to godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant, but the people who know their God will display strength and take action** (NASB)

Why will these **people who know their God … display strength and take action** in response to Antichrist's activities? Because in the next verse we read: **Those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many** (v. 33).

In the previous book, *Christ's Endtimes Teaching*, the reader was warned that accurately understanding the doctrine of the Endtimes, is necessary to possess the necessary confidence and clarity to glorify God in the Endtimes. This is why Jesus was so intent on teaching the substance and sequence of Endtime events in His Endtimes sermon. It was precisely because the Thessalonians did <u>not</u> understand these very things, that they experienced their

"panic" when they believed the Endtimes had already begun (cf. *CET* ch. 16).

God intends for His people to glorify Him in the Endtimes. Therefore, He is going to cause things like the Antichrist's Resurrection to wake up Christians and compel them to **rush here and there** to **increase** their **knowledge** of the **prophecy** in **the book** of **Daniel** and other Scriptures at **the time of the end** (Dan 12:4). He is going to further enable this by raising up Endtime Teachers **who have insight** and **will understand** the prophetic Scriptures accurately and **will help the others understand what is happening**.

During the Endtimes, God will be sending unbelievers **a powerful delusion** and **false prophets** to **deceive many people** (2 Thess 2:11; Matt 24:11 NIV). In contrast, He will be sending His people Endtime Teachers who **will understand** the Endtimes so they can **help the others understand what is happening**.

During the OT Age, God's Word was communicated through Prophets. The NT revelation was given through Apostles. But the Endtimes will be the Age of the Teachers who are finally and accurately explaining the written revelations of the Prophets and Apostles in prophetic Scripture. [16]

What will be their reward for all the effort they devoted to studying, understanding, and teaching the prophetic Scriptures to God's people, and being persecuted for it? For all eternity **Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever** (Dan 12:3 NASB).

Do you want to be one of these Endtime Teachers if the Endtimes occur in your lifetime? Do you want to be among **those who have insight among the people** regarding the **prophecy** of **Daniel** and the doctrine of the Endtimes? Do you want to **help the others understand what is happening** in the Endtimes? Do you want to be among **those who have insight** at **the time of the end** and **will shine as bright as the sky** and **lead many to righteousness** and whose glory **will shine like the stars forever and ever** because of this monumental ministry?

Then ask God for the necessary passion, focus, and humility to study the most emotionally challenging and intellectually complex texts and doctrine in Scripture. And pray that you will obtain a sufficient understanding before the Antichrist's Resurrection when **many will rush here and there, and knowledge will increase**.

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[1] https://itstartedwithwords.org/resources/antisemitism/timeline-of-antisemitism/

[2] Information on the process of Jewish discrimination and persecution in Nazi Germany was derived from: https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/ghettos-in-the-holocaust and

https://www.museumoftolerance.com/education/teacher-resources/holocaust-resources/timeline-of-the-holocaust.html

[3] For an explanation of the suggested translation of Luke 12:35-36 see *CET*, ch. 10, sec. C.

[4] Walvoord, *Rev*, loc. 1874.

[5] There are promises in Daniel that in the Endtimes **many will rush here and there, and knowledge will increase** (12:4 NLT) and that God will raise up **those who have insight among the people** who **will give understanding to the many** (Dan 11:33 NASB). These seem to be predictions of Endtime Teachers who will be helping God's people understand the prophetic Scriptures. Could these things happen at the beginning of the Endtimes? Perhaps. But the context of these verses in Daniel is clearly The Greatest Persecution (cf. 11:32-35; 12:1-10). Therefore, it would seem the ministry of these Teachers will be well after the Antichrist's Resurrection and not until after his Claim to be God.

[6] The claim that the **prophecy** referred to in Dan 12 refers to the entire book is supported by K&D who write:

> The revelation of these chapters is not only in point of time the last which Daniel received, but also forms the essential conclusion of all earlier revelations, then the expression used of the sealing of this last revelation refers plainly to the sealing of the whole book. (Dan12:4)

[7] Wiersbe, Dan 12:4.

[8] Even the Amillennialist Young writes on the fact that Dan 12:4 is referring to the Endtimes:

> Evidently, Daniel had written down his revelations, as he received them… The time of the end is the consummation, when the Lord shall return from heaven. The "words" which Daniel was to shut up contained revelations which extend to the "end." The "end" therefore, is not the terminus of the reign of Antiochus. (257)

[9] Accordingly, Young writes: "Jerome (ca. A.D. 400) followed by many excellent interpreters, refers the action to the study of the book [of Daniel] itself" (258).

[10] Wiersbe, Dan 12:4.

[11] Walvoord notes regarding the Endtime **rush here and there** to **increase … knowledge** (Dan 12:4):

> John Calvin translated it, "Many shall investigate, and knowledge shall increase." Leupold interprets the verse to mean, "Many shall diligently study it [Daniel], and knowledge will increase." In the Hebrew the word "knowledge" is *hadda'at*, literally, "the knowledge," that is, understanding of this long prophecy. Some consider the sentence as referring to the eyes of a reader running "to and fro" in reading the Word of God (cf. 2 Chr 16:9). Whether or not physical wandering and travel is involved, the implication is that attempts to understand the truth will require considerable effort. (*Dan,* 291-2)

[12] It is claimed here that Dan 12:4 is predicting the Endtime search for understanding biblical prophecy will be successful. In addition, it seems Dan 11:33 supports this when it predicts: **Those who have insight among the people <u>will</u> give understanding to the many** (11:33 NASB).

However, this is debated, even in translations. The NIV has: **Many will go here and there to increase knowledge**. This is at best neutral, but surely does <u>not</u> promise success (cf. NCV, CEV). The GNT has **many people will waste their efforts trying to understand what is happening**. But the more literal NASB is clear: **many will go back and forth, and knowledge <u>will</u> increase** (cf. NLT above; ESV, NET).

Admittedly, Hebrew scholars agree with Walvoord that Dan 12:4, "is difficult to translate" (*Dan*, 291). Young adds: "The phrase is extremely difficult to interpret" (257). Accordingly, even Bible translations differ.

However, most versions have it as the NLT: **many will rush here and there, and knowledge <u>will</u> increase** (cf. NASB, ESV, CSB, NET, KJV, NKJV, cf. Walvoord, K&D, Calvin, Leupold; as usual, Wallace (*BST*) and Hill (EBC) are rather useless on the meaning of Daniel 12:4.). The difficulty of translating the Hebrew may be demonstrated by the NRSV which has: **Many shall be running back and forth, and <u>evil</u> shall increase**.

Young acknowledges that *K&D* (through Klieforth) favor the view that the **many**'s search will be successful. But he responds:

> However, I find myself unable to accept any of these views, because they do not seem faithfully to reflect the force of the Heb. verb. This verb means "to go," "to rove about." Thus Satan speaks to the Lord and says that he has come from "going to and fro in the earth" (Job 1:7b). The present occurrence seems to reflect upon Amos 8:12, "And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of

the Lord, and shall not find it." The verb appears to describe a vain travelling about in order to discover knowledge. (258)

There are problems with Young's more pessimistic view. First, he implies that the verb (*shuwt*) refers to an aimless or unproductive wandering about. But the Hebrew does not imply that. Second, the verse from Amos 8 seems to be in a different context than Daniel 12. The former will most likely be fulfilled during "the Day of Lord" when God is punishing Israel (cf. Amos 8:9-10). Dan 12 involves all of God's people, including the Church, and includes all Endtime events in Daniel's prophecy. Third, Young does not consider the promise that **Those who have insight among the people <u>will</u> give understanding to the many** (11:33 NASB).

[13] Unfortunately, several translations are again obscure at Dan 11:33 regarding the effect of the Endtime teachers. For example, the NIV has, **Those who are wise will instruct many** (cf. NET, NLT), which is at best neutral regarding the effect of the **wise**. Again, the NASB seems better which has: **Those who have insight among the people <u>will</u> give understanding to the many**.

[14] *TWOT*, 877.

[15] Goldingay is correct to explain regarding those with **insight**:

> They use this to "enlighten the multitude." The verb (בין) is a common word in Daniel, generally denoting insight into the meaning of dreams, visions, or prophecies. It suggests that the ministry of the discerning is not teaching in general or exhortation to faithfulness but the interpretation of the prophetic scriptures—and no doubt of these Danielic visions—for the persecuted community. (303)

Likewise, Tanner explains:

> The verb בִּין (*bîn*) basically means "to discern." See BDB (107a 3c) for the Hipʿil meaning, "give understanding, teach."., These would have been the ones wise in the knowledge of the Scriptures who could exhort the masses of common people. (683)

Unfortunately, Tanner's comments are marred because he believes this prophecy was essentially fulfilled in the 2nd century B.C.

Collins is simply not helpful.

In general, far too many commentators seem to misunderstand who **those who have insight** will be. Some fail to distinguish them at all. Walvoord claims, "they are illustrations of faithful saints in all ages" (290). However, Dan 11:33 makes it clear that **Those who have insight among the people** are distinguished from **the many** they will be teaching. Do all believers have equal **insight** and **knowledge** of Scripture? Of course not. This is why **Christ himself gave the teachers** [to the Church] **to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up** (Eph 4:11-12 NIV). And He will do the same in the Endtimes.

Walvoord also suggests the Endtime Teachers will be evangelists, and "those who have influenced others to [saving] faith" (290). Some derive this from the prediction that they will **lead the many to righteousness** (Dan 12:3). The NET perhaps suggests this when it has **they will teach the masses** (11:33), implying a lot of unbelievers. But the connection between Dan 11:32 and verse 33 clearly suggests otherwise. **Those with insight** (v. 33) will be teaching **the people who know their God** (v. 32), not pagans. These Endtimes Teachers **will give understanding to the many** (11:33) about **the words** and **prophecy** in **the book** of **Daniel** (12:3), instead of conducting evangelistic crusades for unbelievers.

Among commentators there is a general lack of belief or clarity that these Endtime Teachers will be helping God's people understand the doctrine of the Endtimes and the prophetic Scriptures. Some seem reluctant to call them Teachers of doctrine at all (cf. Hill, *EBC*). This is based on the fact that the Hebrew word *sākal* used to refer to them can mean, "a wise dealing and use of good practical sense" (*TWOT*, 877). Thus the common translation, **the wise** (NIV, NLT). But the context of the work of **those with insight** makes it clear that their primary ministry will be to **give understanding** of the doctrine of the Endtimes and prophetic Scripture (cf. Dan 12:4).

Calvin is confusing on this point. At Dan 11:33 he strongly denies **those with insight** are "teachers." But when commenting on Dan 12:3 he says the same Hebrew word there "means those who are endued with understanding … *the teachers*."

Young is slightly more clear when he refers to them as "the learned" and "those who instruct others in the way of truth" (256). *K&D* describe them as: "The intelligent who, by instructing their contemporaries by means of word and deed, have awakened them to steadfastness and fidelity to their confession in the times of tribulation and have strengthened their faith."

In addition, many suggest the prophecies regarding the Endtime Teachers were fulfilled in the 2nd century B.C. during the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes and as recorded in Maccabees (cf. Tanner above; Hill, *EBC*). But this is only half the truth and the least important truth. Such scholars ignore the near/final and partial/complete nature of many biblical prophecies (cf. *CET* ch. 12, sec. B; *K&D* at Dan 11:35).

Finally, it is admitted that Daniel seems to place the ministry of the Endtimes Teachers especially during The Greatest Persecution. This is the most likely period of time when **Some of those who have insight will fall, in order to refine, purge and make them pure until the end time** (Dan 11:35 NASB). But the **increase** in **knowledge** enabled by **those who have insight** will include all of the **prophecy** in **the book** of **Daniel** (Dan 12:4), including those about the 10-nation Coalition and

the Rising Antichrist in Daniel chapters 2, and 7-9. Therefore, it seems their ministry will be raised up before Antichrist's Claim to be God and The Greatest Persecution, so that **the people who know their God will** be prepared to **display strength and take action** even during The Beginning of Birth Pains after Antichrist's shocking Resurrection.

[16] Understandably many will disagree that the miraculous gifts of Apostles and Prophets have ceased in the Church. But if the reader wishes to disagree with integrity, then they are asked to biblically refute the 5 books this author has written on Apostles, miracles, and the gifts of prophecy, miracle working, and tongues. All of these books were written with the same level of scholarship demonstrated in the *Endtimes Essentials* series. All of them are also available free of charge at www.trainingtimothys.com in the "Scholar's Section" under "Biblical Critique of Charismatic Doctrines & Practices."

The author means no unnecessary offense to the many dear Christians who would disagree. But it is this author's opinion that the unbiblical doctrines and practices of the Charismatic and Pentecostal movements have severely damaged and divided the Church and will be especially dangerous in the Endtimes. Therefore, the in-depth biblical study provided in these books should be carefully considered by anyone who wants to be a Bible Teacher who can **present yourself to God as one approved** because you **correctly explain the word of truth** (2 Tim 2:15 NIV & NLT) about Charismatic and Pentecostal doctrines and practices.

Part VI

Other Events in the Beginning of Birth Pains

Chapter 18

The Unprecedented Catastrophes in The Beginning of Birth Pains

Contents

A) An introduction to the Seals of Preparation

B) Wars during The Beginning of Birth Pains *The 2nd Seal*

C) Famines during The Beginning of Birth Pains *The 3rd Seal*

D) Other catastrophes during The Beginning of Birth Pains *The 4th Seal*

E) The ongoing but limited effect of The Beginning of Birth Pains

Primary Points

- Christ's Revelation confirms the substance and sequence of the catastrophic events in The Beginning of Birth Pains Jesus spoke of in His Endtimes Teaching.
- It seems the **rider**s on the "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" may be portraying the Antichrist in all of his deceptive and destructive activities during The Beginning of Birth Pains.
- The Beginning of Birth Pains will occur in a typical pattern of war leading to famine which leads to plagues.
- Correctly understanding Revelation 17-18, and the identity and destruction of **Babylon the Great** is vitally important. It will be argued in the book, *Endtime Babylon* that this prophecy is predicting the destruction of America with nuclear weapons.
- Scripture predicts Endtime wars, from The Beginning of Birth Pains to the world-wide rebellion at the end of Christ's 1,000-year Reign.
- Endtime **plagues** may kill more people than anything else during The Beginning of Birth Pains.
- **Death** by **wild beasts of the Earth** will not be as odd as it may seem.

- The effect of the opening of a particular Seal of Preparation continues and even intensifies throughout The Beginning of Birth Pains.
- The Beginning of Birth Pains will kill virtually every single person living in a particular **one fourth of the Earth**. This could amount to 2 billion people.
- In addition to Endtime Babylon, that **one fourth of the Earth** will probably especially include Africa which is already vulnerable to famine and disease.
- The Remaining World is the world that exists after The Beginning of Birth Pains is completed. It is the 75% of the geographical Earth that will not have its population wiped out in the wars, famines, and plagues of the first four Seals.

A) An introduction to the Seals of Preparation

As noted in chapter 1 of this book, *The Beginning of Birth Pains* (*BBP*), the Last Generation Church will be present on the Earth during these events. This was clearly demonstrated from Scripture in the previous book, *Christ's Endtimes Teaching* (*CET*). The table below summarizes a suggested order for six primary events in the beginning of the Endtimes:

Table: The First Primary Events of the Endtimes

#	Event	Description & refs.	Where discussed
"Pregnancy" Events of the Endtimes			
1	**10-nation Endtime Coalition** established	Will unite with Antichrist to destroy Endtime Babylon (cf. Dan 7:7, 15-25; Rev 17:3, 12-17; Dan 2:41-44)	*BBP* chs. 4-6
2	**Antichrist's Rise**	He first emerges as the famous	*BBP* chs. 8-9

		ruler of a small country in the vicinity of Russia (cf. Dan 7:8, 24; 8:9-11; Ezek 38:1-4; 39:1-6; Rev 16:14; 19:11-21).	
The Beginning of Birth Pains			
3	**Antichrist's Resurrection** (First Seal)	The first certain sign the Endtimes have begun (cf. Rev 6:1-2; 13:3-8; 17:8; 2 Thess 2:9-11)	*BBP* chs. 10-13, 16-17
4	**Antichrist's Religious Covenant**	A **covenant with many** to form a world-wide religion for the worship of the Antichrist (Dan 9:27)	*BBP* chs. 14-15
5	**Destruction of Endtime Babylon**	The Antichrist & 10-nation Coalition will unite to annihilate the economic super-power on Earth at the beginning of the Endtimes by consuming it with fire in one hour such that no one will ever live there again (cf. Rev 17-18; Jer 50-51; Matt 24:6-7; Rev 6:3-4; Dan 8:24)	*Endtimes Essentials* book #3: *Endtime Babylon*

6	**2nd, 3rd, & 4th Seals of Preparation**	The wars, famines, and plagues unleashed during this time will combine to kill the people living on one fourth of the Earth (cf. Rev 6:3-8; Matt 24:6-8)	*BBP* ch. 18

We have discussed events #1-#4 in chapters 4-17 of *BBP*. Event #5 (The Destruction of Endtime Babylon) will be covered in the next book of the *Endtimes Essentials* series, *Endtime Babylon*. Therefore, the topic of this chapter will be events in #6, the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Seals of Preparation described in Revelation 6:3-8.

[Read Revelation 6:1-8]

An introduction to the **scroll** of Christ's Wrath and an explanation of the purpose of the Seals of Preparation have been provided elsewhere (cf. *CET* ch. 14, sec. E). It is important to remember that the first five Seals are not Christ's Endtime Wrath. Revelation 6 makes it clear that it is only with the opening of the 6th Seal that we read, **the wrath of the Lamb … has come** (vs. 16-17). This was explained further in chapter 3 (sec. B). [1]

Rather than being Christ's Wrath, The Beginning of Birth Pains, portrayed by the first four Seals, [2] seem to be empowered by demonic forces ultimately allowed by God. The purpose of the first five Seals is to prepare the world for Christ's Wrath which will be unleashed with the opening of the 6th Seal. Therefore, throughout the *Endtimes Essentials* they are referred to as the Seals of Preparation.

More specifically, the Seals probably portray the activities of one demon possessed person, the Antichrist. He is the one portrayed as emerging on the Earth in the 1st Seal. It is he who will be ultimately responsible for the **martyred** (Rev 6:9 NLT) in the 5th Seal portraying the results of The Greatest Persecution. It

would seem the actions of the Antichrist will also be ultimately responsible for the catastrophic war and resulting famine described in the 2nd and 3rd Seals.

Therefore, it seems the **rider**s on the "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" may be portraying the Antichrist in all of his deceptive and destructive activities during The Beginning of Birth Pains.

Why is the imagery of the four **horse**s abandoned after the 4th Seal?

One reason may be that the imagery reflects the progression and sequence of Endtime events from what Jesus called **the beginning of birth pains** (Matt 24:8) to **the greatest persecution** (v. 21). Accordingly, the first four Seals portray the results of the events in The Beginning of Birth Pains, and the 5th Seal the results of The Greatest Persecution. It was argued elsewhere that this sequence and labeling of Endtime events is important (cf. *CET* ch. 3, sec. E). Therefore, it may be reflected in the change of imagery in the Seals of Preparation.

Revelation 6 also confirms that the events of The Beginning of Birth Pains will not be happening all at once. On the contrary, the emergence of the Antichrist portrayed by the **rider** on **a white horse** (Rev 6:2) will come before and be followed by the **wars** (Matt 24:6) symbolized by the **rider** on **a fiery red horse** with **a large sword** who will be **given power to take peace from the earth and to make people kill each other** (Rev 6:3-4). Likewise, the **famines**, **earthquakes**, and **plagues** will follow and be a result of the **wars** (Matt 24:7; Luke 21:11; cf. Rev 6:5-8).

Let us also notice again that the general sequence of Endtime events being portrayed in this passage of Christ's Revelation, lines up exactly with the sequence of Endtime events in Christ's Endtimes Teaching (cf. Matt 24:1-31; *BBP* ch. 2, sec. A). With the opening of each Seal of Preparation, progressive events of The Beginning of Birth Pains will occur. These Seals can be summarized in the following table:

Table: The Four Seals of The Beginning of Birth Pains

Seals of Preparation	Endtime Event	Christ's Description
1st Seal Rider on White horse (Rev 6:1-2)	Antichrist's Resurrection & Religious Covenant	"Many will come in my name claiming, 'I am the Christ' and deceive many" (Matt 24:5)
2nd Seal Rider on Red horse (Rev 6:3-4)	Catastrophic, even nuclear war	"Nation will rise against nation." (Matt 24:7)
3rd Seal Rider on Black horse (Rev 6:5-6)	Severe economic hardship	"There will be famines" (Matt 24:7)
4th Seal Rider on Pale horse (Rev 6:7-8)	The population of 25% of the Earth dies from famine, disease, and wild beasts.	"There will be great earthquakes and… plagues in many lands." (Luke 21:11)

In general it can be said that the great majority of this book, *The Beginning of Birth Pains*, has been focused on Endtime events suggested to be portrayed in the 1st Seal.

In previous chapters (10-12), it was argued that the 1st Seal portrays the emergence of the Antichrist, the first and foremost of the False Christs that Jesus warned of. It was also argued that the 1st Seal reflects the Antichrist at the very beginning of the Endtimes and will include Antichrist's Resurrection and Religious Covenant (cf. chs. 13-17). Therefore, it has also been claimed that the opening of the 1st Seal portrays the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun. More details regarding the opening of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Seals will be discussed below.

B) Wars during The Beginning of Birth Pains *The 2nd Seal*

B.1) War in the 2nd Seal *Rev 6:1-2*

As argued previously, the opening of the **first seal** depicting a **rider** that **rode out** on a **white horse … conquering** (Rev 6:1-2) probably refers to the Resurrected Antichrist emerging onto the world scene and establishing peace (cf. ch. 11, secs. B.2, C.3-4). With the opening of the 2nd Seal the peace accomplished during the 1st Seal is ended. A suggested translation of Revelation 6:3-4 reads:

> **Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make people violently slaughter each other. To him was given a large sword.**

The suggested translation generally follows the NIV. It seems this Seal is describing catastrophic, even nuclear war. First, this **horse** is described as being **fiery red** (*pyrros*). Versions that simply translate the Greek here as **red** (NASB, NLT) are less than accurate. John does not use the regular Greek word for "red" (*eruthros*). Rather, he uses a root word for "fire" (*pyr*), and therefore both *BDAG* and the NIV render this as **fiery red.**

This **fiery red** may have something to do with the kind of warfare being described here. Therefore, it could be referring to the powerful rockets used to launch and propel nuclear missiles. Or it could refer to the great fires that the nuclear warheads will cause upon impact. More evidence for this will be discussed in the book, *Endtime Babylon*.

It is commonly thought that humans would never be foolish enough to unleash nuclear weapons in the world. But notice the prophecy says the demonic **rider** on the **fiery red horse** will be **given** supernatural **power to <u>take peace</u> from the earth and to <u>make</u> people violently slaughter each other.**

Power and **make** (NIV) are not in the Greek text. The text literally says the **rider** "**<u>was granted</u>** [*edothē*] **to take peace from the earth and that they would slaughter one another**." [3] Therefore, a God-given **authority** (NLT) and **power** (NIV) being

given to the Antichrist is being reflected here. And that **power** will be used to **make people violently slaughter each other**. [4]

Next we see the nature of this warfare. **People** will **violently slaughter** [*sphaxousin*] **each other**. Regarding the Greek word used here, it was noted earlier in *BBP*:

> The Greek word for **violently slaughtered** is not the normal Greek word for "kill" (e.g. *apokteinō*, used 74 times in the NT). Rather, the word used here means: "slaughter … killing a person by violence." (ch. 13, sec. A)

Therefore, **violently slaughter** is a good translation. *Webster's* defines "slaughter" as: "to kill in a bloody or violent manner; to kill in large numbers." This again could certainly reflect the use of nuclear weapons. And so does the next reference to a **large sword.**

The weapon used is not described as the literal weapon of a sword, but is metaphorically described as a **mega sword** (*megalē machaira* [5]). This would suggest a weapon with more killing power than normal. [6] In fact, the result of the war unleashed in the 2nd Seal will largely contribute to the **one-fourth of the earth** that will be **kill**ed (Rev 6:8) during The Beginning of Birth Pains and reflected in the 4th Seal. All of this again seems to suggest the use of nuclear weapons. Accordingly, MacArthur comments on the 2nd Seal:

> Men will slay one another on an unprecedented scale. Violent slaughter will become commonplace. While Scripture does not give the details, the advances in modern weaponry suggest a terrible, unimaginable holocaust. [7]

Likewise, Thomas writes of the 2nd Seal:

> The horse's color, *pyrros* ("fiery red"), intimates the nature of afflictions under the second seal. It is a span of slaughter and bloodshed… This is warfare in its most feared form… All in all, it is better to assign *sphaxousin* a broad connotation of the violent taking of life through warfare (Lenski). This will be a visitation resulting in great carnage. [8] [9]

B.2) The annihilation of Endtime Babylon *Rev 17-17*

The wars unleashed in the 2nd Seal seem to include the destruction of Endtime Babylon described in Revelation chapters 17-18. There we are given a prophecy about the total annihilation of a people and place called **the great prostitute** (17:1) or **Babylon the Great** (17:5). Book #3 in the *Endtimes Essentials* series, *Endtime Babylon*, is devoted to a biblical exegesis of this prophetic Scripture. A key text is Revelation 17:16, and the following suggested translation will be supported in *Endtime Babylon* (ch. 1, sec. A.):

> **The ten horns that you saw, and the beast will hate the Prostitute, and these will permanently remove all people from her and strip her naked and they will devour her body and will burn her down with fire.** (Rev 17:16)

The clearest and most repeated description of **Babylon the Great** in this prophecy describes it as the economic superpower of the World (cf. Rev 17:2, 4; 18:3, 7, 9, 11-19, 23).

When the Endtimes begin, its superior wealth, and its promotion of the worship of wealth, will suppress the Antichrist from the full rulership and worship of the world (cf. 17:3, 7). It is also repeatedly described as a spiritual **Prostitute** that at one time served God, but becomes a foremost practitioner and promoter of the sinful idolatry of wealth.

In addition, at least 4 more attributes of Endtime Babylon can be derived from this passage to identify it. The book *Endtime Babylon* will argue that by far the best interpretation of **Babylon the Great** and **the great prostitute** is the United States of America.

Because Endtime Babylon will hinder the 10-nation Endtime Coalition and the Antichrist from coming to full power, the **ten horns … and the beast will hate the Prostitute, and these will permanently remove all people from her and … burn her down with fire** (17:16). Three times the prophecy states Endtime Babylon's destruction will occur **in one hour** (18:10, 17, 19). The result will be that no people will ever live there again, as **No worker of any trade will ever be found in** it **again… The voice**

of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in it **again** (Rev 18:22-23 NIV). This suggests the kind of nuclear warfare reflected above in the description of the 2nd Seal.

In addition, this is why it was argued elsewhere that some nations in the 10-nation Endtime Coalition will possess nuclear weapons (cf. *BBP* ch. 4, sec. B.2).

Indeed, many biblical arguments will be given in *Endtime Babylon* to demonstrate the destruction of **Babylon the Great** (America) occurs during the catastrophic wars portrayed in the 2nd Seal. Accordingly, American Christians will be on the Earth at the time Endtime Babylon is attacked and destroyed by the Antichrist and the 10-nation Endtime Coalition.

Therefore, correctly understanding Revelation 17-18, and the identity and destruction of **Babylon the Great** is vitally important. The topic is introduced here because the timing of its destruction in Endtime events best fits the wars of the 2nd Seal. But again, biblical arguments for the above conclusions are provided in the book, *Endtime Babylon*.

B.3) War in Christ's Endtimes Teaching *Matt 24:6-7*

Jesus' gave His own commentary on the wars occurring during The Beginning of Birth Pains. In a suggested translation of Matthew 24:6 we read:

> **"You will hear reports of devasting wars** [*polemous*] **and riots** [*polemōn*]**, but guard yourself against fear and make sure you are not alarmed. These horrific conflicts must happen, but My coming and the end of the age will not follow the wars immediately."** (Matt 24:6 [10])

Hear reports translates the Greek word *akoas* which can mean, "account, report, message." [11] This is better than the NIV **rumors** or NLT **threats** which suggest they will not be real **wars**. The **reports** will be about real, and even very devasting **wars**. But the people who merely **hear reports** of them will <u>not</u> be <u>in</u> the **wars**. They will be in places on the Earth where the **wars** are <u>not</u> happening. As Hagner writes, Christ's words refer to "reports of wars more distant." [12] The GNT translates it as **"You are going to hear … the news of battles far away**."

Devastating wars and **horrific conflicts** reflect the kind of events that would cause God's people to have **fear** and be **alarmed** (cf. Luke's **terrified** [NIV]; **panic** [NLT], 21:9). Small skirmishes will not have such an effect.

The suggested translation reflects that Christ was warning of two different types of **conflicts**, which would be large **wars** and smaller **riots**. Granted, Matthew translated Jesus as using essentially the same Greek word twice (*polemos*). Accordingly, most versions like the NIV choose to translate it as **wars** both times resulting in the rather redundant statement: **You will hear of wars and rumors of wars**. But it seems more likely Jesus intended to differentiate the events He was speaking of.

Accordingly, *polemos* has a rather wide range of meaning including these three: 1) "war;" 2) "a single engagement, *battle, fight*;" or 3) a more general "state of hostility/antagonism, *strife, conflict, quarrel."* [13] Therefore, instead of having Jesus simply warn of **wars** twice in one phrase, the suggested translation reflects the third meaning of *polemos* and adds **riots**.

It seems Jesus was not only warning of massive **conflicts** when **"Nation will go to war against nation, and kingdom against kingdom"** (v. 7 NLT). He was also warning of a more general and localized, but violent "state of hostility/antagonism, *strife, conflict, quarrels"* between individuals all over the world.

This fits Luke's version of Christ's statement. There Jesus says: **"When you hear of wars** [*polemous*] **and disturbances** [*akatastasias*]**, do not be terrified"** (Luke 21:9 NASB). The Greek word *akatastasias* is a virtual synonym for the third use of *polemos* above, meaning: 1) "unsettled state of affairs, *disturbance, tumult*;" or 2) "opposition to established authority, *disorder, unruliness*." [14]

The suggested translation of **riots** for the meaning of both *polemos* and *akatastasias* fits the meaning of these words well. *Webster's* defines "riots" as: "a violent public disorder, a tumultuous disturbance of the public peace."

Accordingly, it is suggested that in both Matthew 24:6 and Luke 21:9 Jesus was warning of both massive **wars** between **nations**

and **kingdoms**, and more localized hostilities, conflicts, and **riots** between and among groups of people. [15]

No doubt such violence in communities all over the world will especially increase with the opening of the 2nd Seal of war and the 3rd Seal of severe economic hardship. Famine and massive shortages of necessities will make people desperate. Desperation will lead to violence. As Jesus predicted during this same time: **"Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold"** (Matt 24:12 NLT).

Finally, the suggested translation has: **"Guard yourself against fear and make sure you are not alarmed**.**"** This reflects the Greek word *horate* which means: "to be alert or on guard, pay attention." [16] Jesus is implying that the **wars and riots** will be so **horrific**, that even His people will be tempted to have great **fear** and be **alarmed** that the End of the world has come. But Jesus corrected such thinking and said, **"My coming and the end of the age will not follow the wars immediately"** (cf. NLT).

B.4) Antichrist's Wars *Daniel*

Notice that Jesus predicted multiple Endtime **wars** (plural). As it says in Daniel, **War and its destruction and horrors have been determined by God to continue to the very end of the world** (Dan 9:26 [17]). Indeed, from The Beginning of Birth Pains to the world-wide rebellion at the end of Christ's 1,000-year Reign, Scripture predicts many wars **to the very end of the world**. These include in some order: [18]

1) The Rising Antichrist's military victories resulting in the downfall of three leaders in the 10-nation Endtime Coalition and portrayed in the 1st Seal (cf. Rev 6:1-2; *BBP* ch. 11, sec. B).

2) An alliance of the Antichrist and the 10-nation Endtime Coalition to destroy **Babylon the Great** (Rev 17:5; the world's economic super-power) with **fire** in **one hour** such that no one will live there again (cf. Rev chs. 17-18; *Endtimes Essentials* book #3: *Endtime Babylon*).

3) The Antichrist will attack and destroy Jerusalem at the time of his Claim to be God ("abomination of desolation"), breaking his

Religious Covenant with Israel at its midpoint (cf. Dan 9:27; Zech 14:2; Luke 21:20). This will be discussed more in *Endtimes Essentials* book #4: *The Greatest Persecution*.

4) An army of 200 million demonic creatures will kill one third of all the people living on the Earth during Christ's Endtime Wrath (cf. Rev 9:13-19).

5) At the end of Christ's Wrath, the Antichrist will gather the armies of the world to Israel for the Battle of Armageddon (cf. Rev 16:12-16; 19:11-21; Ezek 38-39).

6) At the end of Christ's 1000-year Reign on this Earth, a number of people likened to the grains of sand on the seashore, will attack Jerusalem and be destroyed by fire from Heaven (cf. Rev 20:7-9).

After that, a **new heavens and new Earth** will be created and **There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain,** [or war] **for the old order of things has passed away** for eternity (Rev 21:1, 4 NIV; cf. Isa 2:4).

But as noted earlier in the *Endtimes Essentials* series, "God's path and plan to get to the End of this wicked world will be long, painful, shocking, and bloody" (*CET*, ch. 2, sec. A). And that path includes a lot of war. Indeed, **War and its destruction and horrors have been determined by God to continue to the very end of the world** (Dan 9:26).

One will notice above that the Antichrist is at the center of most of the Endtime wars. Accordingly, the prophecies about him in Daniel describe his warlike nature. One will notice above that the Antichrist is at the center of most of the Endtime wars. Accordingly, the prophecies about him in Daniel describe his warlike nature.

He will cause astounding devastation … He will destroy those who are mighty … When they feel secure, he will destroy many (8:24-25 NIV). Another translation has it: **He will destroy to an extraordinary degree… He will destroy mighty men … he will destroy many while they are at ease** (NASB). The NLT translates: **He will cause a shocking amount of destruction… He will destroy powerful leaders… he will destroy many without warning**. Elsewhere we read **He will**

attack the mightiest fortresses and still **succeed in whatever he does** (8:24; 11:39 NIV).

All of this seems to especially fit Antichrist's surprise attack on Endtime Babylon predicted in Revelation 17-18.

It might be asked how could all these **devasting wars and riots** (Matt 24:6) occur in a world ruled by the Antichrist? Again, Revelation 13 tells us that after Antichrist's Resurrection:

> **The whole world** will be **filled with wonder and follow the beast. People** will **worship the beast and ask, "Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?" … And it** will be **given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life** (Rev 13:3-4, 7-8 NIV, with future tenses added).

In addition, it has been argued that the 1st Seal (Rev 6:1-2) depicts Antichrist's Resurrection occurring at the very beginning of the Endtimes and before the conflicts unleashed in the 2nd Seal (cf. Rev 6:3-4; *BBP* ch. 11). So again, how could the **devasting wars and riots** (Matt 24:6) occur in a world where the Antichrist has already established his **worship** and **authority** (Rev 13:4, 7)?

First, it is unlikely that after Antichrist's Resurrection anyone will attack him. **The whole world** will be **ask**ing**, "Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?"** The united answer will be "No one." Accordingly, Scripture describes the Antichrist initiating the attack on Endtime Babylon (cf. Rev 17:16), the attack on Jerusalem before his Claim to be God (cf. Dan 9:27; Zech 14:2; Luke 21:20), and the Battle of Armageddon (cf. Rev 16:13-16; Ezek 38:2-6). The wars unleashed with the 2nd Seal will not be wars against the Antichrist, but will be led by the Antichrist. [19]

Finally, while Antichrist's worldwide **worship** and **authority** will probably prevent "civil wars" between entire **nation**s, [20] it will not stop public **riots** and violence, and even rebellion against local authorities. The Bible describes all unbelievers when it says they **live in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another** (Titus 3:3 NIV).

In a world led by the Antichrist, there will not only be a growing hatred for Christians (cf. Matt 24:9), but unbelievers will have a growing hatred for one another. Neither the Antichrist's worldwide **worship** nor **authority** will be a hindrance to the control and power that people's sinful natures will continue to have over them in the Endtimes. Again, even with the Antichrist in power, Jesus predicted **"Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold"** (Matt 24:12 NLT).

C) Famines during The Beginning of Birth Pains

The 3rd Seal

Throughout history, wars have produced famine. Likewise, the catastrophic wars unleashed in the 2nd Seal will result in the famine described in the 3rd Seal. Accordingly, in both Christ's Endtimes Teaching and His Revelation, Jesus taught that after **wars**, **there will be famines … in various places** (Matt 24:6-7 NIV; cf. Rev 6:3-6). In Revelation 6 we read:

> **When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, "Two pounds of wheat for a day's wages, and six pounds of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!"** (Rev 6:5-6 NIV)

This portrays a period of severe economic hardship and the **famines** Jesus warned of. The Greek word (*limoi*) means: "hunger" or "famine." [21] *Webster's* defines "famine" as "an extreme scarcity of food." Such **famine** will eventually lead to deaths by starvation described in the next (4th) Seal. During the 3rd Seal, the desperate efforts of people to simply meet their basic physical needs will be the focus of the world.

Osborne explains regarding the use of **a pair of scales**: "In Lev. 26:26 and Ezek. 4:16 the image of eating bread on the basis of weight symbolized terrible scarcity." [22]

Likewise, when **two pounds of wheat** will cost **a day's wages**, food is obviously scarce. A **day's wages** translates a Greek

word (*dēnariou*) often rendered "denarius." "A denarius was the average day's wages for a working man." [23] **Two pounds** translates a Greek word (*choinix*) meaning: "A dry measure, often used for grain, approximately equivalent to one quart or one liter, *quart*. It was a daily ration of grain for one person." [24] Ladd explains:

> Grain was the main food in the ancient world, and barley was the food of poor people because it is less expensive than wheat. A quart of wheat was the average daily consumption of a man. This pictures a situation where scarcity prevails, when it would take all that a man could earn, a day's wages, to buy enough of the cheapest food for a small family. In ordinary times, a denarius would purchase twelve to fifteen times as much food. [25]

Thomas writes:

> The minimum daily food requirement of barley was three measures because it was cheaper than the better food, wheat… By buying the cheaper commodity a laborer could obtain three measures and have enough for himself and his family, but each person received less nutritional value. [26]

Understanding the statement: **"do not damage the olive oil and the wine!"** (Rev 6:6) is more difficult. First, the Greek word here (*elaion*) specifically means "Oil extracted from the fruit of the olive tree, *olive oil*." [27] Therefore, versions that translate this as merely **oil** are not as accurate (cf. NIV, NASB) as those that have **olive oil** (cf. NLT, NET).

There are two primary interpretations of what the statement, **"do not damage the olive oil and the wine!"** means: 1) Basic necessities will become valuable commodities, or 2) There will still be rich people living in luxury at this time. [28] The first interpretation seems best.

First, we should understand the meaning of the **olive oil and the wine** during the time that the Bible was written. At that time, they were <u>not</u> luxuries. Rather they were common products used by everyone. Accordingly, Ladd writes:

> Oil and cheap wine were among the common necessities of life for poor people. 'Grain, oil, and wine' is a common phrase

> in the Bible representing the ordinary necessities (Deut. 7:13; 11:14; 28:51; 2 Chron. 32:28; Neh. 5:11; Hos. 2:8, 22; Joel 2:19; Hag. 1:11). These were the staple foods in Bible lands. They were all essential to the normal life of these countries and were not real luxuries. [29]

However, they were valuable commodities. The NT indicates that **olive oil** was used in **lamps** (Matt 25:3-10 NLT; cf. Exod 27:20). Both were used for healing purposes.

Speaking of how the "Good Samaritan" ministered to an injured man, Luke writes: **The Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them** (10:34 NLT; cf. Isa 1:6; Jms 5:14). Wine was used to purify water, which may be why Paul advised Timothy: **Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses** (1 Tim 5:23 NIV). One reference notes:

> Olive oil was used extensively in biblical times for cooking. It was an essential part of everyone's diet, as is shown in the Bible by the repetition of the oil (Hebrew, *yitzhar*), wine, and grain trio (e.g., Deut 7:13; 11:14; 12:17; 18:4, etc.). Olive oil was mixed with flour for cakes, was used for frying meat, and eaten with bread and stews. [30]

While valuable, there is no indication in Bible times that **olive oil and the wine** were luxuries primarily or only enjoyed by wealthy people. If this had been the intended meaning in Revelation 6:6, then it seems items such as gold and silver would have been mentioned.

Therefore, their mention here points to their value as commodities of trade during a time of severe economic scarcity. The mention of **a pair of scales** points to this. As Mounce notes: "The balance indicates a time of scarcity when the basic commodities of life are measured out at greatly inflated prices." [31] "Commodities" is the key term here. With all of that said, there will still probably be very rich people living in the world at this time.

Regardless, the pain during the 3rd Seal will be severe. We read a similar prophecy in Ezekiel when God punished His people when the Babylonian army surrounded Jerusalem:

> **Then he told me, "Son of man, I will make food very scarce in Jerusalem. It will be weighed out with great care and eaten fearfully. The water will be rationed out drop by drop, and the people will drink it with dismay. Lacking food and water, people will look at one another in terror, and they will waste away under their punishment.** (Ezek 4:16-17 NLT).

The Christians living during this time in the Last Generation Church will experience the unprecedented **famines** (Matt 24:7) unleashed during the 3rd Seal (cf. Rev 6:5-6). Therefore, it is interesting to note the promise given specifically to the Christians who will **come out of the great persecution** [*thlipseōs*] (Rev 7:14) who will have experienced the **famines** and struggle for basic needs during **the beginning of birth pains** (Matt 24:7-8):

> **"He who sits on the throne will give them shelter. They will never again be hungry or thirsty; they will never be scorched by the heat of the sun. For the Lamb on the throne will be their Shepherd. He will lead them to springs of life-giving water. And God will wipe every tear from their eyes."** (Rev 7:15-17 NLT)

D) Other deadly catastrophes during The Beginning of Birth Pains *The 4th Seal*

Regarding the **fourth seal** we read:

> **When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.** (Rev 6:7-8 NIV)

This is not describing a mere summary of the other Seals. [32] In the 4th Seal several additional painful Birth Pains are mentioned. In addition, one senses an even greater increase in the intensity of the Endtime Birth Pains with the opening of the **fourth seal**. For example, the severe economic scarcity in the 3rd Seal has become

starvation in the 4th Seal. Likewise, the war and famine of previous Seals has resulted in perhaps the deadliest threat: **plague**. [33]

The divine punishments of the **sword, famine, and plague,** and even **wild beasts** are commonly mentioned together in the OT (cf. 1 Chron 21:12; Jer 14:12; 21:7; 24:10; 44:13; Ezek. 5:12; 6:11-12; 14:21; 33:27). The latter two references in Ezekiel again concerned God's punishment of the nation of Israel when Babylon attacked Jerusalem. We read there:

> **For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "How much worse will it be when I send against Jerusalem my four dreadful judgments —sword and famine and wild beasts and plague —to kill its men and their animals!"** (Ezek 14:21 NIV)

> **This is what the Sovereign LORD says: "As surely as I live, those who are left in the ruins will fall by the sword, those out in the country I will give to the wild animals to be devoured, and those in strongholds and caves will die of a plague."** (Ezek 33:27 NIV)

Let us discuss each of these **four dreadful judgments** of God during The Beginning of Birth Pains and unleashed with the opening of the 4th Seal.

Being **kill**ed **by sword** is mentioned again. However, this is probably not referring to or limited to merely the **nation … against nation** kind of **wars** (Matt 24:6-7) unleashed in the 2nd Seal as described above. In the 4th Seal being **kill**ed **by sword** may also include increased violence and murders caused by the scarcity of food during that time. [34]

As noted, with the opening of the 4th Seal, the severe economic hardship in the 3rd Seal will eventually result in starvation and **Death**.

In addition, **plague** [35] will be added to the world-wide catastrophes. The Greek word here (*loimoi*) means "epidemic disease." [36] Jesus had warned of this in Luke's version of Christ's Endtimes Teaching when He said, **"There will be famines and plagues** [*loimoi*] **in many lands"** (21:11 NLT).

Thus, again, we see a common progression that has been demonstrated throughout human history. War leads to famine and

malnutrition and great stress leads to disease, which often kills the most people. This is even reflected in Scripture (cf. Jer 14:12; Ezek 5:17; 14:21; Luke 21:11). MacArthur notes:

> Throughout human history, disease has killed people on a far more massive scale than war. More Union and Confederate soldiers died from disease during the Civil War than were killed in battle. An estimated 30 million people died during the great influenza epidemic of 1918–19–more than three times as many as the estimated 8.5 million soldiers who died in battle during World War I. In addition, several million more died at about that same time in an outbreak of typhus in Russia, Poland, and Romania. In a world ravaged by war and famine, it is inevitable that such disease will be widespread. [37]

Finally, Revelation 6:8 reveals the odd prediction of people being killed by **the wild beasts of the earth**. This source of killing during The Beginning of Birth Pains is not mentioned in Christ's Endtimes Teaching, but only here in His Revelation. **Wild beasts** probably simply refers to wild animals. This divine punishment was also described in the OT where we read:

> **Then the LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died.** (Num 21:6 NIV)
>
> **"I will send wasting famine against them, consuming pestilence and deadly plague; I will send against them the fangs of wild beasts, the venom of vipers that glide in the dust."** (Deut 32:24 NIV)
>
> **Therefore a lion from the forest will attack them, a wolf from the desert will ravage them, a leopard will lie in wait near their towns to tear to pieces any who venture out, for their rebellion is great and their backslidings many.** (Jer 5:6 NIV)

God has certainly used **wild beasts** (Rev 6:8) for His purposes. These OT examples suggest such things occur as a result of God's Wrath to punish people. But as noted above, **the wrath of the Lamb** (Rev 6:16) does not begin in the Endtimes until the 6th Seal.

Therefore, the first four Seals are best understood to be catastrophes empowered by demonic forces that God allows in order to prepare the world for Antichrist's rule, and eventually, Christ's Wrath.

MacArthur adds regarding the Endtime unleashing of **wild beasts**:

> At first glance, the inclusion of wild beasts with war, famine, and disease seems puzzling, since most creatures dangerous to man are either extinct or isolated in unpopulated regions. But one explanation may be that the most deadly creature of all, the rat, thrives in all populated areas. Rats have been responsible for uncounted millions of deaths throughout history, both by eating food supplies, and especially by spreading disease. The most infamous and devastating occurrence of rat-borne disease was the Black Death, a fourteenth-century outbreak of bubonic plague that wiped out one-fourth to one-third of Europe's population. In a world ravaged by war, famine, and disease, the rat population may run wild. [38]

Because of its oddity, some have speculated that **wild beasts** are referring to "microscopic beasts" and diseases. But **plagues** are already mentioned in the text. It's possible that the prediction includes deadly insects. The Greek word translated **wild beasts** is *thēriōn* which means: "any living creature, excluding humans." [39] Indeed, mosquitos are by far the most dangerous "animal" in the world, responsible for about 1 million deaths each year through infecting people with malaria and other diseases. [40]

But it would seem the primary reference here is to wild animals killing people. Even today, poisonous snakes kill 50,000 people every year, and stray rabid dogs another 25,000. [41] A report goes on to state:

> The crocodile is responsible for 1,000 deaths, the hippopotamus for 500 deaths, the elephant and the lion 100 each. Wolves and sharks, often villainized on TV and in movies, only cause ten deaths each year. [42]

It would seem that during The Beginning of Birth Pains, the divine curse on Creation (cf. Rom 8:19-22) will come to full fruition

as the **wild beasts** of Nature become especially hostile and a significantly greater threat than today. [43]

The divine curse on Creation may also come to a climax in the form earthquakes. While these are not mentioned in the first five Seals in Revelation 6, in Christ's Endtimes Teaching He warned: **"There will be great earthquakes"** (Luke 21:11 NLT; cf. Matt 24:7).

The Endtime **earthquakes** could be caused by supernatural forces being exerted by God. However, there is evidence that the use of nuclear weapons could cause this as well. Many of the nuclear weapons tests that have been conducted with even small warheads have been documented to cause local earthquakes afterwards. Multi-megaton warheads would surely do the same. [44]

E) The ongoing but limited effect of The Beginning of Birth Pains

Revelation 6:8 also describes the continuing and cumulative effect of the wars, famines, plagues, deadly wild animals, and earthquakes unleashed on the world during The Beginning of Birth Pains. We read that **Death** and **Hades … were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine, and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth** (Rev 6:8 NIV).

Notice that some of the catastrophes of The Beginning of Birth Pains are repeated here, including war (2nd Seal) and **famine** (3rd Seal). This suggests that the effect of the opening of a particular Seal of Preparation continues and even intensifies throughout The Beginning of Birth Pains. It has been argued that the deception unleashed in the 1st Seal also progresses throughout this time (cf. ch. 13, sec. C).

Therefore, the effects of The Beginning of Birth Pains and the opening of the first four Seals of Preparation will be massive. However, the geographical location may be limited to one **fourth of the earth.** [45] The NIV expresses the more literal Greek well: **Death, and Hades … were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth** (Rev 6:8 NIV). There is some debate about what **a fourth of the earth** means here. The Greek word for **earth**

(*gēs*) can mean either 1) the place where humanity lives, *earth*; or 2) the inhabitants of earth, *people*. [46] Therefore, is this one **fourth of the Earth** to be understood geographically or numerically?

Most commentators claim it refers to one fourth of the world's population. [47] Therefore, it is commonly concluded that with a current population of the world at around 8 billion people, the text is predicting the death of 2 billion people during The Beginning of Birth Pains. In this scenario, the wars, famines, and plagues of the first four Seals will be occurring rather evenly all over the world and killing people in a rather random way. Unfortunately, these same commentators do not offer any arguments for this view and seem to assume it is correct.

There are reasons to believe otherwise. Again, the text states: **Death, and Hades … were given power over a fourth of the earth** [*gēs*] **to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth** [*gēs*] (Rev 6:8 NIV). Notice that in the very same verse *gēs* refers to the planet, not people, when it refers to **wild beasts of the earth**. If **earth** (*gēs*) means the planet in the second part of the verse, this is an argument that it means the planet in the first part of the verse. Therefore, **a fourth of the earth** (*gēs*) would refer to one fourth of the geographical area of the planet, rather than the population.

Likewise, a short time later in the Revelation, the very next statement like this is in 8:7. There we read of the first Trumpet Punishment when, **A third of the earth** [*gēs*] **was burned up**. Here, **earth** clearly refers to a geographical area, not people. This is the case with all of the multiple references to a portion of the **earth** (*gēs*) in Revelation (cf. 8:8, 9, 10, 11, 12).

Finally, when Revelation is referring to a portion of humanity, it makes this clear by twice using the phrase to **kill one-third of all the people** [*anthrōpon*] **on earth** (*gēs*) (Rev 9:15 NLT; cf. v. 18). Therefore, if John had meant a third of humanity (or the population) in Revelation 6:8, it seems he would have specified it as he does in Revelation 9.

These characteristics of the Revelation suggest that in 6:8 **a fourth of the earth** refers to a geographical area of the Earth. This interpretation of Revelation 6:8 may also equate to approximately

2 billion people. But its emphasis on a specific geographic area of the Earth seems to suggest the deaths will not be evenly distributed in the world.

In other words, the wars, famines, plagues, and earthquakes may be concentrated in specific continents on Earth. Therefore, a great many people (maybe everyone) living in that one **fourth of the earth**'s geography will be **kill**ed. This seems to be what is being referred to when we read: **Death, and Hades ... were given power over a fourth of the earth** [*gēs*] **to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth** [*gēs*] (Rev 6:8 NIV).

For example, it seems those killed by war will be primarily in this one **fourth of the earth**. Therefore, the other 75% of the **earth** will not physically experience these Endtime wars. This would reflect Christ's statement that in the Endtimes many people will merely **hear reports** of these **wars**, or **news of battles far away** (Matt 24:6), as discussed above.

The fact that these **wars** may be confined to one **fourth of the earth** is another indication that the great majority of these deaths will occur in the apparent destruction of Endtime Babylon (America) with nuclear weapons.

Likewise, it seems Africa will be a part of the one **fourth of the earth** where virtually all of its people will die during The Beginning of Birth Pains. This is because it will be especially hit hard by famine. One resource notes:

> According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, "Africa imported about 85% of its food (in 2016-2018) from outside the continent." This amounted to $35 billion and is expected to reach $110 billion by 2025. [48]

In a world suffering from the severe economic scarcity of the 3rd Seal, famine will probably affect Africa more than any other place on Earth because of its greater dependence for food on the rest of the world.

Therefore, it is suggested that Endtime Babylon (America) and Africa may be the one **fourth of the earth** where all the people are **kill**ed by the wars, famines, plagues, earthquakes, and wild beasts during The Beginning of Birth Pains. It is interesting to note

that the combined geographical land mass of America and Africa is approximately 27% of Earth's total geographical area. [49] That would be about **a fourth of the earth.**

The **Death** and **kill**ing of those living on **a fourth of the earth** will culminate and be completed in the 4th Seal. Afterwards there will be what can be called the Remaining World. It is the 75% of the geographical Earth that will not have its population wiped out during The Beginning of Birth Pains and the events of the 2nd-4th Seals.

Therefore, the Remaining World that the Antichrist will rule over may not include the place and people of America or Africa. Likewise, the Christians living in this **one fourth of the earth** may die during The Beginning of Birth Pains and will not experience The Greatest Persecution.

It has been noted that many people believe and teach that these Seals and The Beginning of Birth Pains have already been occurring throughout Church history or even now. But the magnitude of the 4th Seal disproves this. Accordingly, it was written elsewhere:

> MacArthur is correct to note against the "historical" view of The Beginning of Birth Pains in Revelation 6:
>
> > The first four seals clearly describe awe-inspiring, frightening judgments without parallel in human history. There is nothing that has happened since John had this vision that could be the fulfillment of these judgments.
>
> Therefore, focusing on how mere shadows of The Beginning of Birth Pains have occurred in human history does little to help the Church prepare for the great darkness that is coming. (*Christ's Endtimes Teaching,* ch. 3, sec. B).

Regardless of whether the **one fourth** of people being killed refers to population or geography, there has not been a period of history when anything close to this has happened. And it certainly is not happening today. These unprecedented horrors will occur sometime in the future. Perhaps even your future. Which is why an important question is addressed in the last chapter of this book: Are you ready for the Endtimes?

[1] Seals 1-5 do <u>not</u> portray Christ's Endtime Wrath as demonstrated elsewhere (cf. *BBP* ch. 3, sec. B; *CET*, ch. 14). Nevertheless, the Pre-tribulationist MacArthur comments regarding these Seals: "All those calamities will mark the outpouring of God's wrath on the fallen, rebellious world" (*MNTC*, Rev, 176).

[2] MacArthur agrees that, "The first four seals cover the period Jesus described as "the beginning of birth pangs" (Matt. 24:8)" (*MNTC*, Rev, 177), which is why he should not interpret them as Christ's Endtime Wrath because The Greatest Persecution that follows (the results of which are portrayed in the 5th Seal) certainly do not reflect Christ's Endtime Wrath.

[3] *LGEINT.*

[4] The suggested translation of Rev 6:4 that the Antichrist will be **given power to take peace from the earth and to <u>make</u> people violently slaughter each other** is reflected in the NET which reads: **it was granted permission to take peace from the earth, <u>so that</u> people would butcher one another**. Again, more evidence for a supernatural **power** causing such destructive war will be discussed in *Endtime Babylon*.

[5] It is odd that the Greek word *megalē* (**large**) is coupled with *machaira* here which means: "a relatively short sword or other sharp instrument, *sword, dagger …* knife" (*BDAG*). One would have expected John to use *rhomphaia* here which means, "a large and broad sword" (*BDAG*). Still, the addition of *megalē* makes it clear that John intended **large sword**.

[6] Oddly, the popular *Left Behind Collection* suggests the **fiery red horse** of war will merely be a rebellion of Egypt, England, and a militia in America, against the Antichrist.

[7] MacArthur, *MNTC*, Rev, 180. Likewise, Thomas writes of the 2nd Seal:

> The horse's color, *pyrros* ("fiery red"), intimates the nature of afflictions under the second seal. It is a span of slaughter and bloodshed… This is warfare in its most feared form… All in all, it is better to assign *sphaxousin* a broad connotation of the violent taking of life through warfare (Lenski). This will be a visitation resulting in great carnage. (699, 702)

[8] Thomas, 699, 702.

[9] As noted, MacArthur and Thomas correctly interpret the meaning of the 2nd Seal as massive war. Walvoord has little comment but likewise acknowledges:

> When the second seal is broken, military warfare breaks out and peace is taken from the world. The constant tension among nations and the ambitions of rulers have their climax in this period before Christ comes. Though "wars and rumors of wars" (Matt. 24:6) are characteristic of the age, it is evident that warfare occupies a large

> place in the consummation of the age with a resultant great loss of life. (125)

However, it is surprising how many scholars ignore the obvious meaning in the 2nd Seal of massive war as also predicted by Jesus when He warned **"Nation will rise against nation** (Matt 24:7 NIV). For example, Osborne (278) and Morris (103) interpret it as merely "civil war" implying wars within nations.

Beale characteristically misses the most important meaning of the text and claims meanings that probably are not even there when he writes regarding Rev 6:3:

> [This] must not be limited to literal warfare but includes the dimension of spiritual struggles … persecution of Christians is also in mind. (379; cf. Hendricksen, 100).

On the contrary, the prediction of literal and unprecedented war is the intention of the text, but Beale has no commentary on this because he barely sees it there. Also, persecution is not reflected until the 5th Seal portraying The Greatest Persecution.

Mounce also misses the point that the 2nd Seal is portraying massive war, but does agree that it may also include "rebellion and civil disorder" (143) as is reflected in Christ's description as explained in this section.

[10] Commentaries on Matt 24:6-8 are generally disappointing. Most seem focused on trying to prove that Jesus was not intending to give us signs or events **of the end of the age** (v. 3). For discussion on this "scholarly skepticism" regarding obeying Christ's command to **Watch!** (Mark 13:37) for signs of His Return, see *BBP* ch. 1, sec. C.2 and *Additional Studies on the Endtimes* (*ASE*), ch. 9.

Unfortunately, MacArthur confuses the Seal Preparations describing The Beginning of Birth Pains (cf. Rev 6:1-8) with the Trumpet Punishments of Christ's Wrath (*Matt*, loc. 42847ff.)

[11] *BDAG*, #4b.

[12] Hagner, 691.

[13] *BDAG*, #1a, #1b, #2.

[14] *BDAG* #1, #2.

[15] It is true that *BDAG* gives one possible meaning of *akatastasias* as "opposition to established authority." Accordingly, many translations render it in Luke 21:9 as **revolutions** (NIV 1984, GNT), **insurrections** (NLT, NRSV), and **rebellions** (NET, CSB). Marshall translates it as "civil wars" (*Luke*, 764). But these meanings seem stronger than necessary. All other uses of *akatastasias* in the NT refer merely to **disorder** within churches (2 Cor 12:20; 14:33; Jms 3:16) or public **riots** (2 Cor 6:5). Therefore, "revolutions" and "civil wars" is not a good translation of *akatastasias* in Luke 21:9. **Disturbances** (NASB), **commotions** (KJV, NKJV), **tumults** (ESV), and **riots** (NCV, CEV) is better.

[16] *BDAG* #2.

[17] For an explanation of the suggested translation of Dan 9:26 see *BBP* ch. 3, endnote #4.

[18] The *Left Behind* series portrays some sort of attempted invasion of Israel by Russia even before The Beginning of Birth Pains. In the authors' explanation elsewhere, they quote verses obviously describing the Battle of Armageddon (Lahaye & Jenkins, 83-89). Therefore, there is no biblical support for such an attack.

[19] Some have claimed that Daniel 11:40-45 predicts wars against the Antichrist. But there are good arguments for seeing these prophecies fulfilled by Antiochus in the 2nd century B.C. For more on this issue see *Additional Studies on the Endtimes*, ch. 16: "The Relationship of Daniel 11 with the Endtimes."

[20] It is argued in this chapter that "civil wars" apart from wars led by the Antichrist will not be a feature of the Endtimes because of Antichrist's worldwide worship and authority. This is supported by the fact noted above that *akatastasias* in Luke 21:9 is not used this way in the NT (cf. Endnote #16 above). However, Mounce (143) and Morris (103) claim the 2nd Seal depicts only civil war. Part of their error is based on their misinterpretation of the 1st Seal as primarily depicting the unleashing of worldwide war. For biblical arguments that the 1st Seal portrays victory in past wars and the establishment of peace, see *BBP* ch. 11.

[21] *BDAG* #1 & 2.

[22] Osborne, 280.

[23] Thomas, 706.

[24] *BDAG*.

[25] Ladd, *Revelation*. Mounce writes, "The price appears to be ten to twelve times what it should have been, cf. Cicero, *Verr.* 3.81" (144). Cicero gives the average prices for these things in 1st century Rome.

[26] Thomas, 706.

[27] *BDAG*.

[28] Thomas takes this view that **"do not damage the olive oil and the wine!"** (Rev 6:6) means there will still be rich people living in luxury at this time. He writes: "It indicates rather the inequity that will prevail. The poor will have it extremely hard while the wealthy will experience no interruption to their luxurious lifestyle" (708). He explains:

> One explanation sees olive oil as part of the staple food supply as were wheat, barley, and wine, whether in a time of shortage or prosperity (cf. Deut. 7:13; 11:14; 28:51; 2 Chron. 32:28; Neh. 5:11; Hos. 2:8, 22; Joel 2:19; Hag. 1:11), and the prohibition not to hurt the olive oil means a limitation to the scarcity. In other words,

the third seal will entail poverty, but the famine will be only partial, not severe (cf. Ps. 104:14-15). This line of thinking points out that the stipulated price of the wheat and barley also places a limitation on the rider. He could have charged two denarii rather than one, making the famine even more severe (Alford; Swete).

Yet oil and wine were more in the category of luxuries than wheat and barley (Moffatt). For this reason, the other analysis of the prohibition sees olive oil as particularly associated with the rich and concludes that the wealthy are unhurt by the famine. The lesson is a disparity between the poor and the rich. Comfort is denied the common worker, but the rich pass through the trial unscathed (Moffatt; Scott; Lenski).

Some argue against this by noting the universal nature of the seal visitations (Beckwith) and by reasoning that the Lamb would not issue an order favoring the rich and aggravating the bad circumstances of the poor (Mounce). Yet the force of objections is mitigated by remembering that the rich will get their judgment under the sixth seal (Beasley-Murray).

The problem with taking this as a reference to limited famine is that it underrates the severity of the seals. This famine will be serious enough to make it unique in history up to that time. The world has already seen many limited famines, but never one like this. The limitation proposal cannot explain the exorbitant price of grain (Beckwith). People could not live on olive oil and wine, so they must be seen as extras (Scott). The seal judgments will not limit human suffering. They will enhance it. So it is wrong to take a major feature such as this prohibition against hurting the oil and the wine and interpret it as a limitation on human hardship. It indicates rather the inequity that will prevail. The poor will have it extremely hard while the wealthy will experience no interruption to their luxurious lifestyle. (707-708).

This view is possible. But for reasons shared in this section this view seems to be inaccurate.

[29] Ladd, 101.

[30] https://israelolivebond.com/olive-oil/olive-oil-history/

[31] Mounce, 144.

[32] Some deny that the 4th Seal reveals any new catastrophes and is intended only as a summary of the first three Seals. But the 4th Seal is a separate judgment from the first three. Accordingly, Thomas writes regarding Rev 6:8:

> [It] has at times been taken as a separate sentence, a succinct summary statement of all four seals (Mounce). Yet it is awkward to cross the boundaries erected by the separate seals to justify such an inclusive antecedent for the pronoun. Besides this, it is difficult to see how the rider on the white horse could have killed through the

use of wild beasts, if he killed at all (Mounce)… For example: Famine has already

come on the scene under the third seal, but will worsen under the fourth so that sizable numbers of people will die from it. (714-15)

[33] Thomas writes: "A conspicuous increase in severity comes with the opening of the fourth seal" (710).

[34] Accordingly, Ladd writes: "Death by the sword differs from the plague of the second horseman, war, in that it can include all kinds of violent deaths by the sword, such as murder, as well as war" (101).

However, Mounce seems correct to note: "No significance should be attached to the fact that John here chooses a different word for the sword than he used in 6:4" (145). Indeed, *BAGD* reflects little difference between the *megalē machaira* (**large sword**, v.4), and a *rhomphaia* ("A large and broad sword used by non-Greek-speaking peoples, especially the Thracians," **sword**, v. 8).

[35] The Greek word *thanatos* is used twice in Rev 6:8. We read: **Death** [*thanatos*]**, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague** [*thanatō*] (NIV).

Death is the correct translation in 6:8a as *thanatos* generally means: "the termination of physical life, *death*" (*BDAG*). But versions are correct to translate it as **plague** (NIV), **pestilence** (NASB), or even better as **disease** (NLT) in its second use in this verse.

First, the catastrophes described in the 4th Seal are probably meant to reflect Christ's Endtimes Teaching. In Luke's version He said, **"There will be famines and plagues** [*loimoi*] **in many lands"** (21:11 NLT). The Greek here clearly means, "plagues, diseases" (*BDAG*).

Secondly, in the LXX (2nd century B.C. Greek translation of the OT used in the NT Church), *thanatos* is used to refer to plagues and disease "over thirty times" (Beale, 382). Therefore, the second use of this term in Rev 6:8 probably refers to **disease** instead of simply generically death again. Accordingly, Thomas writes:

> *Thanatō* ("pestilence") will also contribute its share of misery to this period (Lee). Jesus chose a different word, λοιμοί (*loimoi*, "pestilences"), to speak of the problem in His Olivet discourse (cf. Luke 21:11), but both words describe sweeping plagues that will assail the world's population. (711)

MacArthur adds:

> Pestilence translates *thanatos*, the same word translated "Death" earlier in verse 8. Here it may primarily refer to disease as the cause of death (cf. 2:23; 18:8) but is broad enough to encompass natural disasters such as the earthquakes predicted by Jesus (Matt. 24:7), floods, and volcanic eruptions. It could also refer to the effects of biological and chemical weapons. (*Rev,* 184)

[36] Mounce, 145. Cf. *BDAG*. Unfortunately, modern Evangelical commentaries on Luke are fairly useless in offering any more insight into the **famines**

and plagues (Luke 21:11) Christ predicted. They are mainly focused on the origin of the different wording or order of words between the Gospels, which is a rather speculative and worthless topic.

[37] MacArthur, *Rev,* 184.

[38] MacArthur, *Rev*, 184.

[39] *BDAG*.

[40] https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-animals-that-kill-most-humans.html

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Most commentators have very little to say about the **wild beasts** referred to in Revelation 6:8. Beale makes a lengthy argument that they refer to the "beasts" of Antichrist and the False Prophet (Rev 13). But his argument is primarily based on his false belief that The Greatest Persecution has already begun with the 1st Seal, and at least the 3rd and 4th Seals portray this persecution of Christians. In other words, Beale misunderstands or ignores the biblical sequence of Endtime events. Jesus described wars, famines, and plagues and said, **"these are the beginning of birth pains"** (Matt 24:8). In the very next verse He said, **"Then you will be handed over to be persecuted"** (v. 9 NIV). This perfectly matches the sequence in Rev 6:1-11.

[44] For references to nuclear weapons causing earthquakes see online at http://www.ratical.com/radiation/inetSeries/testsNquakes.html; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tectonic_weapon; https://news.climate.columbia.edu/2018/09/24/north-koreas-2017-bomb-test-triggered-earthquake-fault-new-analysis-finds/

[45] The NLT's description of the geographical effect of the wars is, **And there was war and slaughter everywhere** (Rev 6:4). Oddly the translators seemed to forget that Rev 6:8 limits the geographical scope of the wars to **one fourth of the earth**.

[46] *BDAG* #1 & #2. Although *BDAG* seems to make a mistake in not even listing or categorizing the use of *gēs* in Rev 6:8.

[47] Actually, no commentators could be found that even suggest that **one fourth of the earth** (Rev 6:8 NIV) refers to geography rather than population. Osborne, Morris, Beale, Walvoord, MacArthur, and Mounce interpret Rev 6:8 in a population sense (Thomas does not specify). The latter is typical and writes: "This expression does not indicate a geographical area but [the first four Seals] … bring about the death of

one-fourth of humankind" (Mounce, 145). But as with all the rest of commentators, Mounce offers no arguments for his interpretation.

[48] https://www.theafricareport.com/123719/whats-behind-africas-skyrocketing-imports-yet-increased-production-growth/

[49] The entire land mass of Earth is 57.5 million square miles. The U. S. is 3.8 and Africa is 11.7 million square miles, equaling 15.5. 57.5 divided by 15.5 equals 27%.

Chapter 19
Descriptive Outline of Endtimes Events

[Note: It may be helpful to review the entire Glossary in *Christ's Endtimes Teaching* (Appendix B) before reading this chapter. Throughout this chapter there are references to books in the *Endtimes Essentials* series using the following abbreviations: Book #1, *Christ's Endtimes Teaching* (*CET*); Book #2: *The Beginning of Birth Pains* (*BBP*); Book #3: *Endtime Babylon* (*EB*); Book #4: *The Greatest Persecution* (*GP*). This chapter will also refer to supplemental online materials entitled *Additional Studies of the Endtimes* (*ASE*)]. All of these are available online at www.trainingtimothys.com.]

Contents

A) The 7 Primary Endtime Events in order of their occurrence

B) A list of 25 Endtimes events in a suggested order

C) Detailed outline of Endtimes events [Online version only]

A) The 7 Primary Endtime Events in order of their occurrence

In chapter 2 of *Christ's Endtimes Teaching* (*CET*) the following events were listed in the following order. Subsequent chapters demonstrated this biblical outline of these Endtimes events:

1) The Beginning of Birth Pains

Jesus said that a False Christ(s), devastating **wars**, **famines**, **earthquakes**, and **plagues** will be **the beginning of birth pains** (Matt 24:4-8 NIV; Luke 21:9-10; cf. Rev 6:1-8). The purpose of these is to prepare the world for Antichrist's dictatorship and Christ's Wrath.

2) Antichrist's Claim to be God

After **the beginning of birth pains**, Jesus said His people will **"see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that**

causes desolation'" (Matt 24:15 NIV). Paul described this event when he wrote: **The man of lawlessness … will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple** [in Jerusalem]**, proclaiming himself to be God** (2 Thess 2:3-4 NIV). And the world will believe him so that **All the people who belong to this world** [will] **worship the beast** [Antichrist] (Rev 13:7-8 NLT).

3) The Greatest Persecution

Jesus said after Antichrist's Claim to be God, **"then there will be the greatest persecution of God's elect people. It will be greater than any persecution since the world began, and it will never be equaled again"** (Matt 24:21 [1]). This will be the Antichrist's Wrath against God's **elect** and **saints** (including the Church), because they refuse to worship him (cf. Matt 24:9, 21-22; cf. Rev 6:9-11; 13:7-10; 14:12; Dan 7:21, 25).

4) Christ's Return

Jesus said, **"Immediately after the completion of the greatest persecution, then 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'**

Then the sign that the Son of Man is coming will appear in the sky. And then all the peoples of the Earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of Heaven, with power and great glory. (Matt 24:29-30 [2]).

5) The Church's Rescue

Jesus said after **all the peoples of the Earth … see the Son of Man coming** then **He will send His Angels with a loud trumpet blast, and they will lift up and gather together God's elect people in the sky** (Matt 24:31 [3]). This is the Church's Rescue described elsewhere (cf. 1 Thess 4:15-17; 2 Thess 2:1-4; Rev 7:9-14). It occurs **Immediately after the completion of the greatest persecution** of **God's elect people** (Matt 24:21, 29), but before the time of Christ's Wrath.

6) Christ's Wrath

Jesus revealed that immediately after the Cosmic Signs marking Christ's Return and the Church's Rescue, then everyone remaining on the **earth** will cry out **"hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?"** (Rev 6:15-17 NIV). This period of Christ's Wrath will include the Trumpet and Bowl Punishments and is completed with the Battle of Armageddon (cf. Matt 24:37-39; Rev 6:15-17; chs. 8-9; 15-16; 1 Thess 5:1-10; Isa 13:9-13).

7) Christ's 1000-year Reign

This event is often referred to as the Millennium (cf. Rev 20:1-10). During this period, God will complete the physical fulfillment of His OT prophecies concerning Israel. But the Christians who experience The Greatest Persecution, including refusing Antichrist's mark, will also be rewarded with the unique privilege of experiencing the First Resurrection and reigning with Christ on the Earth during this time (Rev 20:4; cf. 13:11-18; 14:11-12).

These are the 7 Primary Events of the Endtimes. After their completion, time as we know it will end and Eternity will begin. Four major events will then occur:

1) The creation of a New Heavens and New Earth (cf. Rev 20:1-5).

2) The Second Resurrection of all unsaved dead and the remaining saints who were not in The Greatest Persecution and were not resurrected in the First Resurrection (cf. Rev 20:4-6).

3) The Great White Throne Evaluation (cf. Rev 20:11-15; Matt 25:31-46).

4) The Wedding Feast of the Lamb (cf. Rev 19:9; Isa 25:6-8; Matt 26:29; Luke 13:28-29; 14:15; 22:17).

B) A list of 25 Endtimes events in a suggested order

This is a condensed list of Endtime events. Further biblical support and details on each of them will be shared in the next section. It is hoped that seeing this broad outline of virtually all of the major Endtime events predicted for the Church and Gentile nations, will give you a rather breath-taking perspective on how complex and awesome God's plan for the end of this world is.

#1: The 10-nation Endtime Coalition will emerge, possessing nuclear weapons, and hating Endtime Babylon.

#2: The Rising Antichrist will emerge as the leader of a relatively minor country in the vicinity of Russia.

#3: The Rising Antichrist will become famous and admired all over the world.

#4: The Rising Antichrist will be successful in everything he does, including the removal of 3 leaders in the 10-nation Endtime Coalition.

#5: The Rising Antichrist will be leading the world to global peace.

#6: The Rising Antichrist will be undeniably killed and then resurrected from the dead. Antichrist's Resurrection will result in his world-wide worship. This seems to be the clearest sign The Beginning of Birth Pains and the Endtimes have begun.

#7: The Antichrist will make a Religious Covenant with his world-wide worshippers. This will begin Daniel's Last 7 Years.

#8: The Great Apostasy will begin with all false Christians rather immediately worshipping the Resurrected Antichrist, and Jews accepting him as their Messiah.

#9: A Jewish temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem.

#10: The False Prophet will perform miraculous signs and order supernaturally speaking statues of the Resurrected Antichrist to be erected all over the world for his worship.

#11: The Antichrist and the 10-nation Endtime Coalition will form an alliance and destroy Endtime Babylon with nuclear weapons.

#12: Wars, famines, plagues, and earthquakes will kill the population living on one fourth of the Earth.

#13: The Antichrist will attack Jerusalem 1,260 days (3.5 Jewish years) after the implementation of his Religious Covenant and perform his Claim to be God ("abomination of desolation") in the rebuilt Jewish temple. This will begin The Greatest Persecution.

#14: The Greatest Persecution will begin in Jerusalem and spread to all of "God's elect people" world-wide, including the Church and Israel. The Greatest Persecution, and Antichrist's authority to conduct it, will last exactly 1,260 days (3.5 Jewish years).

#15: The False Prophet will force all inhabitants of the Earth to receive the mark of the Antichrist ("666") in order to buy or sell.

#16: Miracle working False Christ's and false prophets will attempt to deceive Christians to believe that Jesus Christ has returned to Earth.

#17: God's Two Prophets will be calling down punishments on the Earth for 42 months (3.5 Jewish years) and unable to be killed.

#18: Cosmic Signs will alert God's people and the Remaining World of Christ's Return after the 1,260 days (3.5 Jewish years) of The Greatest Persecution.

#19: The Church's Rescue will occur after the completion of The Greatest Persecution and at Christ's visible Return. This will be the First Resurrection of Christians and limited to those living or dying in The Greatest Persecution.

#20: Christ's Wrath will be executed against the remaining unbelievers on the Earth in the Trumpet and Bowl Punishments.

#21: Antichrist will gather armies to attack Israel in The Battle of Armageddon.

#22: Christ will make His second appearance on Earth with the saints of the First Resurrection and annihilate His enemies in The Battle of Armageddon and consummate His Wrath on Earth.

#23: Satan will be bound in the Abyss during the 1,000-year reign of Christ on Earth.

#24: Christ will reign on Earth for 1,000 years with those resurrected in the First Resurrection.

#25: At the end of Christ's 1,000 year reign on Earth, Satan will be released to lead a final rebellion that will be defeated, and Satan will be assigned to eternal Hell.

You read in chapter 1 of *CET* that the Endtimes was a significant and complicated topic in Scripture. The above list of 25 separate events described in Scripture demonstrates this.

While the above list may seem overwhelming, it is actually absent of many more events. A majority of these will be occurring in the nation of Israel during the "Day of the Lord" and after Christ's Return. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overall view of Endtime events involving the Church and Gentile nations.

Perhaps the most surprising event introduced in this chapter is the nuclear destruction of the economic superpower of the world at the initial stages of The Beginning of Birth Pains. Biblical support for this is provided in book #3, *Endtime Babylon* (*EB*).

Let us begin our broad overview of the major events in the Endtimes.

C) Detailed outline of Endtimes events

1: The Beginning of Birth Pains

Antichrist's Rising

#1) The 10-nation Endtime Coalition will emerge, possessing nuclear weapons, and hating Endtime Babylon. (cf. *BBP* chs. 4-6)

a) The prominence and power of this Endtime Coalition are suggested by its repeated mention in Scripture. Daniel describes this evil Endtime kingdom as 10 toes of a statue of a man (cf. Dan 2:33, 41-43) and 10 horns of a beast (cf. Dan 7:7, 20, 24). This kingdom of 10 horns is repeatedly mentioned in Revelation (cf. 12:3; 13:1-2; 17:3, 7, 12-14, 16-17).

b) Daniel 7:8, 24 indicate the Coalition exists before the Rising Antichrist emerges. This would suggest that the emergence of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition is the very first Endtime event.

c) Daniel chapters 2 and 7 give us 6 biblical attributes of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition that enable us to recognize its emergence in the world.

c) This Coalition is specifically named in Scripture as being present at the Battle of Armageddon (cf. Rev 17:14). Therefore, the ancient geographical places specifically named to be at this Battle (cf. Ezek 38:1-6) may give us another biblical clue as to what modern nations will be in the Coalition.

d) The soon to be (by July 2024) 10 member Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) led by Russia and China, fit the 6 biblical attributes of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition and are all located in geographical areas specifically predicted in Scripture to be present at the Battle of Armageddon. Therefore, the SCO is a reasonable candidate to become the 10-nation Endtime Coalition.

#2) The Rising Antichrist will emerge as the leader of a relatively minor country in the vicinity of Russia. (*BBP* ch. 8, secs. B-C)

a) The Rising Antichrist will initially emerge as a **little horn** amongst, but separate from, the **ten horns** of the Endtime Coalition (Dan 7:8, 24; 8:9-11).

b) The Rising Antichrist will initially emerge from **Magog.** The Antichrist is described as **Gog of the land of Magog** (cf. Ezek 38:1-6). **Magog** is a reference to the ancient Scythian Empire (cf. Col 3:11) which existed throughout modern Russia and countries in its vicinity.

c) Therefore, it seems the Antichrist will initially emerge as the leader of a relatively minor country in the vicinity of Russia.

#3) The Rising Antichrist will become famous and admired all over the world (*BBP* ch. 8, sec. D)

a) The Rising Antichrist will also be famous and admired throughout the world because when he is killed and Resurrected the whole pagan world will recognize him and worship him (cf. Rev 13:3-4, 8).

b) In an extraordinary way, Volodymyr Zelenskyy matches all of the biblical criteria in Endtime events #2 and #3 for the Rising Antichrist and is therefore a reasonable candidate to be confirmed as the Antichrist.

#4) The Rising Antichrist will be successful in everything he does, including the removal of 3 leaders in the 10-nation Endtime Coalition (*BBP* ch. 9, secs. A-B)

a) He will be supernaturally successful, which may include victory in war (Dan 7:24; 8:12, 23)

b) He will "uproot" 3 leaders of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition (cf. Dan 7:8, 24)

#5) The Rising Antichrist will be leading the world to global peace (Rev 6:1-4; *BBP* ch. 9, sec. C)

a) If Volodymyr Zelenskyy accomplishes Endtime events #4 and #5 then it will be further confirmation that he is the Antichrist.

#6) The Rising Antichrist will be undeniably killed and then resurrected from the dead. Antichrist's Resurrection will result in his world-wide worship. This seems to be the clearest sign The Beginning of Birth Pains and the Endtimes have begun (cf. *BBP* chs. 10-16)

a) The Resurrected Antichrist will be the first and foremost False Christ that the real Christ warned of (cf. Matt 24:4-5, 23-26; Rev 6:1-2; *BBP* ch. 10).

b) The emergence of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition and the Rising Antichrist may be able to be recognized with some confidence. But the biblical descriptions of these events are too obscure to be absolutely certain. Which is why the Antichrist's Resurrection would seem to be the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun and who the Antichrist is (cf. *BBP* chs. 11-12).

c) The world will witness the Antichrist being undeniably executed and then miraculously raised from the dead. The entire pagan world will **worship** and **follow** him (cf. Rev 13:3-4, 8) because **God sends them** this **powerful delusion** (2 Thess 2:11). (cf. *BBP* ch. 13)

d) Antichrist's Resurrection will cause immediate divisions in Christendom as false believers begin the Great Apostasy. (cf. *BBP* ch. 16)

e) Antichrist's Resurrection will cause immediate and severe discrimination against real Christians. (*BBP* ch. 17)

#7) The Antichrist will make a Religious Covenant with his world-wide worshippers. This will begin Daniel's Last 7 Years. (cf. *BBP* chs. 14-15)

a) The Antichrist's Religious Covenant will be a result of the worldwide worship caused by Antichrist's Resurrection and will formally implement Antichrist's Religion.

b) Antichrist's Religious Covenant will begin Daniel's Last 7 Years (cf. Dan 9:27).

c) Exactly 1,260 days after this Religious Covenant is made (**in the middle of the 'seven'**), the Antichrist's Claim to be God (**abomination of desolation**) will occur (cf. Dan 9:27).

d) Then the Greatest Persecution will begin and last exactly 1,260 days, the remaining half of Antichrist's 7-year Religious Covenant (cf. Dan 7:25; 9:27; 12:6-7; Rev 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5).

e) It is Christ's Return and the Church's Rescue that ends The Greatest Persecution (cf. Matt 24:29-31; 2 Thess 2:8).

f) Therefore, the Last Generation Church will know that exactly 2,520 days (7 Jewish years of exactly 360 days each) after the implementation of the Antichrist's Religious Covenant, Christ's Return and the Church's Rescue will occur. (cf. *BBP* ch. 15)

g) Christ never said that no one will <u>ever</u> know the timing of His Return. He said no one could know at the time He lived on the Earth (cf. Matt 24:36). He also said His people will know when He is coming, and it will not surprise them. Likewise, Noah knew the exact day the Flood would begin (cf. Matt 24:32, 50-51; Luke 12:35-46; 1 Thess 5:1-4; Gen 7:4, 10; Matt 24:37-39).

#8) The Great Apostasy will begin with all false Christians rather immediately worshipping the Resurrected Antichrist, and Jews accepting him as their Messiah (cf. Matt 24:10; 2 Thess 2:3; cf. *BBP* ch. 13).

a) Like all unbelievers, false Christians and unregenerated Jews will not have the spiritual power to resist the **powerful delusion** (2 Thess 2:11) of Antichrist's Resurrection and will be among the **many** (Dan 9:27) who agree to Antichrist's Religious Covenant and adopt a perverted kind of Christianity and Judaism that conforms to Antichrist's Religion.

b) The beginnings of the Great Apostasy with Antichrist's Resurrection will cause severe divisions in Christendom and

massive departures from churches. This will also cause a great deal of pain for real Christians which is why it can be referred to as the first "birth pain" of the Endtimes.

#9) A Jewish temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem. (cf. *BBP* ch. 14, sec. C)

a) This remarkable development will be a result of Antichrist's Religious Covenant and initial support of all world religions.

b) This event is necessary for the fulfillment of Antichrist's Claim to be God in **the abomination of desolation** when the Antichrist **will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.** 2 Thessalonians 2:4 (2 Thess 2:4; cf. Dan 9:27; Matt 24:15)

#10) The False Prophet will perform miraculous signs and have supernaturally speaking statues of the Resurrected Antichrist to be erected all over the world for his worship. (cf. *BBP* ch. 14, sec. E)

a) The False Prophet's emergence seems to be tied rather closely to Antichrist's Resurrection (cf. Rev 13:11-12).

b) The False Prophet will perform miraculous signs in support of the Antichrist's worship (cf. Rev 13:13-14).

#11) The Antichrist and the 10-nation Endtime Coalition will form an alliance and destroy Endtime Babylon with nuclear weapons. This will result in what can be called the Remaining World. (cf. *Endtimes Essentials* book #3: *Endtime Babylon*)

a) While Revelation 17-18 is near the end of Revelation, the fact that it describes a world before the Antichrist's Reign and The Battle of Armageddon, suggests it depicts events at the beginning of Endtime events. This is one example of the

widely recognized fact that Revelation is not written in a strictly chronological order. (cf. *EB* ch. 2)

b) Endtime Babylon is primarily described as the economic superpower of the World when the Endtimes begin (cf. Rev 17:2, 4; 18:3, 7, 9, 11-19, 23). It is also repeatedly described as a spiritual Prostitute that at one time served God but becomes a foremost practitioner and promoter of the sinful idolatry of wealth.

Today this would clearly be America. If the Endtimes are to begin in our generation, the economic power (and the forsaking of her unprecedented Christian roots and influence), make America/New York City the best candidate for the location of the **great city** and nation of the spiritual Prostitute of Endtime Babylon (cf. Rev chs. 17-18; Jer chs. 50-51; cf. *EB* chs. 4-7).

c) **The ten horns** [10-nation Endtime Coalition] **that you saw and the beast** [Antichrist] **will hate the Prostitute** [America] **and these will permanently remove all people from her and strip her naked and they will devour her body and will burn her down with fire.** (Rev 17:16 [4]). This annihilation will occur in **one hour** and make Endtime Babylon uninhabitable (Rev 18:10, 17, 19, cf. vs. 8, 21-23). Nuclear weapons are the best explanation for all of these biblical descriptions (cf. *EB* chs. 8-12).

d) There is growing evidence that both Russia and China have developed EMP and cyber warfare capabilities to disable America's ability to retaliate with its nuclear weapons (cf. *EB* ch. 11).

e) The sequence of these events seems to be supported by the first two Seals of Preparation (cf. Rev 6:1-4; Matt 24:4-7). After the emergence of the first and foremost False Christ in the Antichrist's Resurrection (1st Seal), massive war will follow (2nd Seal). This seems to be referring to the destruction of Endtime Babylon which will be a part of the **one fourth** on the Earth where everyone is killed (Rev 6:8). (cf. *EB* ch. 8).

#12) Wars, famines, plagues, wild beasts, and earthquakes will kill the population living on one fourth of the Earth. (cf. *BBP* ch. 18)

a) The nuclear devastation of especially America would contribute to catastrophic poverty, famines, and plagues, and perhaps even earthquakes resulting in the death of the people living on **one fourth of the Earth** (Rev 6:8; cf. Matt 24:4-8; Rev 6:3-8).

b) There is evidence that this **one fourth of the Earth** in which all people die will be America and Africa which are 27% of the geographical area of the Earth.

c) This will result in the Remaining World that the Antichrist will rule and where Christians will face The Greatest Persecution.

2: Antichrist's Claim to be God

"Abomination that causes desolation"

(see *Endtimes Essentials* Book #4, *The Greatest Persecution*)

#13) The Antichrist will attack Jerusalem 1,260 days (3.5 Jewish years) after the implementation of his Religious Covenant and perform his Claim to be God ("abomination of desolation") in the rebuilt Jewish temple. This will begin The Greatest Persecution.

a) Exactly 1,260 days after Antichrist's Religious Covenant, he will enter the "Holy of Holies" in the rebuilt Jewish temple, desecrate it, and proclaim himself to be God on Earth. (cf. Dan 9:27; Matt 24:15; 2 Thess 2:3-4; Rev 13:5-6)

b) It appears at this point that the Antichrist is indwelled with Satan and begins Satan's 1,260 day reign (Rev 12:7-17).

The Archangel Michael will cast Satan to the Earth to indwell Antichrist (cf. Dan 12:1; 2 Thess 2:6-7)

c) This is when the Antichrist rules over the Remaining World and begins The Greatest Persecution against Israel and the Last Generation Church (cf. Matt 24:15-22; Rev 12:7-17).

d) As noted above, Antichrist's Reign and The Greatest Persecution will last exactly 1,260 days until Christ's Return and the Church's Rescue (cf. event #7 above).

3: The Greatest Persecution

Antichrist's Reign & Wrath against God's people

(see Book #4, *The Greatest Persecution*)

#14) The Greatest Persecution will begin in Jerusalem and spread to all of "God's elect people" worldwide, including the Church and Israel. The Greatest Persecution, and Antichrist's authority to conduct it, will last exactly 1,260 days (3.5 Jewish years).

a) The Greatest Persecution will begin in Jerusalem and Israel but quickly include Christians all over the world (cf. Matt 24:15-22; Rev 12:13-17).

b) The persecution of the Last Generation Church will be the largest in human history (cf. Matt 24:21-22; Rev 6:9-11; Rev 12:13-17; Rev 13:1-10; Dan 7:21, 25; 12:1, 3, 7, 10-11). Beheadings and imprisonment will be common (Rev 13:10; 20:4).

c) The majority of Christians will be killed (cf. Matt 24:22).

d) The remaining saints will be Rescued alive by Angels (cf. 1 Thess 4:15-17; Matt 24:31).

e) As noted above, The Greatest Persecution will <u>start</u> with Antichrist's Claim to be God which will be exactly 1,260 days

after the Antichrist Religious Covenant is implemented (cf. Dan 9:27). Then the Greatest Persecution will last exactly another 1,260 days from Antichrist's Claim to be God to Christ's Return. (cf. Dan 7:25; 12:6-7; Rev 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5; cf. event #7 above).

#15) The False Prophet will force all inhabitants of the Earth to receive the mark of the Antichrist ("666") in order to buy or sell. (cf. Rev 13:13-15).

a) It would seem at this time death will be the penalty for not worshipping the Antichrist's statue (cf. Rev 13:16-18).

#16) Miracle working False Christ's and False Prophets will attempt to deceive Christians to believe that Jesus Christ has returned to Earth. (cf. Matt 24:5; *BBP* ch. 10, sec. B.3)

a) The Resurrected Antichrist will be the first and foremost example of the False Christs that Jesus warned of (cf. Matt 24:3-5; Rev 6:1-2).

b) It seems the ministry of the miracle working False Christs and False Prophets will occur during The Greatest Persecution (cf. Matt 24:21-27).

c) There is a very real threat that the miracle-working False Christs will deceive Christians, although they will not lose their salvation (cf. Matt 24:24)

#17) God's Two Prophets will be calling down punishments on the Earth for 42 months (3.5 Jewish years) and unable to be killed (cf. Rev 11:1-13; *ASE* ch. 13)

4: Christ's Visible Return

(See Book #4, *The Greatest Persecution*)

#18) Cosmic Signs will alert God's people and the Remaining World of Christ's Return after the 1,260 days (3.5 years) of The Greatest Persecution (cf. *CET* ch. 3; ch. 14, sec. D)

a) Signs in the sun, moon, and stars are **the sign of** [His] **coming and of the end of the age** (Matt 24:3; cf. Matt 24:29-31; Luke 21:25-28; Rev 6:12-17; Isa 13:9-13; Joel 2:30-31).

b) This will happen **immediately after the persecution of those days** (Matt 24:29).

c) Christ's Return will be seen by the entire world (cf. Matt 24:30; Rev 6:15-17; 2 Thess 1:6-7)

d) Christ's Return will be accompanied by a trumpet call and Angels (cf. Matt 24:29-31; 1 Thess 4:15-17).

e) A "secret, silent" return of Christ is never mentioned in Scripture.

f) Christ's Return will occur exactly 2,520 days (7 Jewish years) after Antichrist's Religious Covenant (cf. event #7 above).

g) There is only one Second Coming (*parousia* "presence") of Christ, but two visible appearances of Christ. These include: 1) His initial appearance to Rescue the Church (cf. Matt 24:29-31), and a considerable but unspecified time later; 2) His appearance at the Battle of Armageddon with His Church (cf. Rev 19:11-21). (cf. *CET* ch. 9, sec. A).

5: The Church's Rescue

The "Rapture"

(See Book #4, *The Greatest Persecution*)

#19) The Church's Rescue will occur after the completion of The Greatest Persecution and at Christ's visible

Return. This will be the First Resurrection of Christians and limited to those living or dying in The Greatest Persecution. (cf. Matt 24:29-31; 1 Thess 4:15-17; 2 Thess 2:1-3; Rev 7:9, 13-14)

a) Angels will be lifting saints into the air to meet Christ (cf. Matt 24:29-31; 1 Thess 4:15-18).

b) The Church's Rescue is the First Resurrection. As saints are lifted, their bodies will be changed into the immortal body that Christ has (cf. 1 Cor 15:50-53; 1 Thess 4:15-18; Rev 20:4-6)

6: Christ's Endtime Wrath

The wrath of God against Satan's people

Antichrist's Defeat

Antichrist's Banishment Eternally in the Lake of Fire

#20) Christ's Wrath will be executed against the remaining unbelievers on the Earth in the Trumpet and Bowl Punishments. (cf. Rev chs. 8-9; 15-16; Isa 2:10-12, 17-18; 13:6-13)

#21) Antichrist will gather armies to attack Israel in The Battle of Armageddon. (cf. Rev 14:17-20; 16:12-18; 19:17-21; 20:10; Ezek chs. 38-39)

#22) Christ will make His second appearance on Earth with the saints of the First Resurrection and annihilate His enemies in The Battle of Armageddon and consummate His Wrath on Earth. (Rev 19:17-21; 20:10; Ezek chs. 38-39)

a) The rescued and resurrected saints in the First Resurrection will accompany Christ to fight in The Battle of Armageddon (cf. Rev 19:14; also 19:8; 6:11; 7:9, 13-14; 1 Thess 4:17).

b) Israel will be burying dead bodies from the defeated armies for 7 months (cf. Ezek 39:11-14).

c) Israel will be burning the weapons of the defeated armies for 7 years (Ezek 39:9-10).

7: Christ's 1,000-year Reign

The Millennium

#23) Satan will be bound in the Abyss during the 1,000-year reign of Christ on Earth (cf. Rev 20:1-3).

#24) Christ will reign on Earth for 1,000 years with those resurrected in the First Resurrection (cf. Rev 20:4-6). [5]

#25) At the end of Christ's 1,000 year reign on Earth, Satan will be released to lead a final rebellion that will be defeated, and Satan will be assigned to eternal Hell (cf. Rev 20:7-10).

And Eternity will begin…..

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[1] For an explanation of the suggested translation of Matt 24:21 see *CET* ch. 3, sec. E.

[2] For an explanation of the suggested translation of Matt 24:29-30 see *CET* ch. 3, sec E.

[3] For an explanation of the suggested translation of Matt 24:31 see *CET* ch. 4, secs. C.

[4] For an explanation of the suggested translation of Rev 17:16 see *EB* ch. 1, sec. A.

[5] Technically, the Millennium is an Endtime event because it occurs while "time" is still operating and before the creation of the eternal New Earth. For more on a literal interpretation of the Millennium, see *CET* ch. 12, sec. A.6.

Chapter 20

Estimated Duration of Endtime Events

About 12 years

Contents

A) Duration of Daniel's Last Seven Years

B) Duration of Endtime events before Daniel's Last 7 Years

C) Duration of Endtime events after Daniel's Last 7 Years

A) Duration of Daniel's Last Seven Years

In Christ's Endtimes Teaching He said: **"Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened"** (Matt 24:34 NIV). This indicates that Endtime events will occur within one **generation**. This is often considered to be 40 years. However, it is likely that these events will transpire in significantly less time than that. This seems to be one reason Jesus called Endtime events **birth pains.** It is doubtful that Jesus expected us to believe **birth pains** could last for many years. **Birth pains** begin rather immediately before the birth. Therefore, Endtime events will endure a relatively short period of time before the **birth** of Christ's 1000-year Reign on Earth.

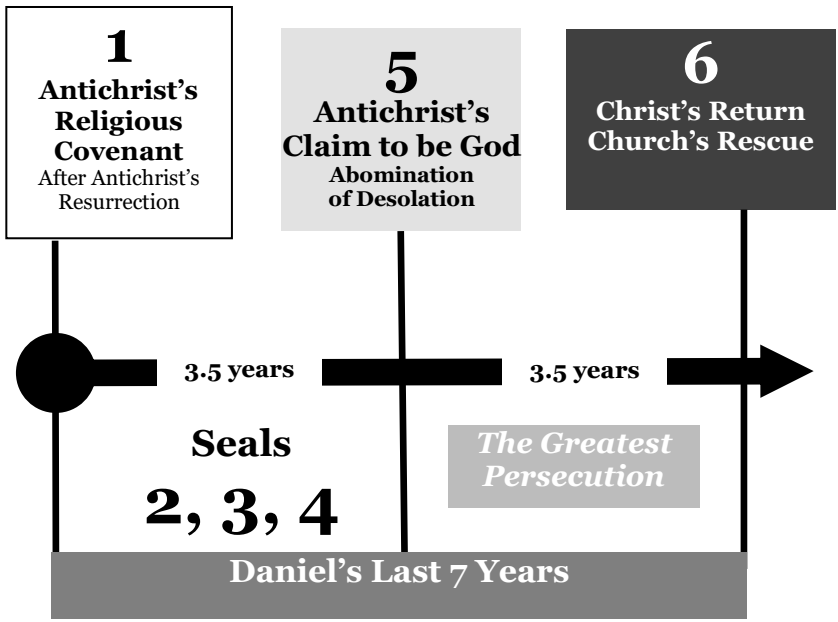
So, it can be reasonably concluded that Endtime events will last several years. Nevertheless, the duration of Endtime events can only be estimated.

It has been argued that both Antichrist's Resurrection and Antichrist's Religious Covenant are portrayed in the opening of the 1st Seal (cf. Rev 6:1-2, *BBP*, ch. 11; 14, sec. B). It is admitted this is a significant claim which determines a great deal about the sequence of Endtime events. But several biblical reasons for this scenario have been given.

Antichrist's Religious Covenant (portrayed in the 1st Seal) will be the beginning of Daniel's Last 7 Years (cf. Dan 9:27). This gives us the clearest biblical framework for understanding the duration of Endtime events before Christ's 1,000 year Reign.

As demonstrated elsewhere (ch. 15) there will be exactly 1,260 days (3.5 Jewish years) between Antichrist's Religious Covenant (the 1st Seal) and Antichrist's Claim to be God (resulting in the martyrdoms in the 5th Seal). Then Scripture tells us there will be another 1,260 days (3.5 Jewish years) between the Antichrist's Claim to be God (the 5th Seal) and Christ's Return (the 6th Seal) to end The Greatest Persecution and Rescue the Church (cf. Dan 7:25; 9:27; 12:7; Rev 11:2-3; 12:6; 12:13-14, 17; 13:5). This can be illustrated in the following graphic:

Graphic: Duration of Seals



This graphic is of course a summary of much of what has been argued in the book *The Beginning of Birth Pains*. Those biblical arguments have led to the following conclusions. We see that with the opening of the 1st Seal the Antichrist's Resurrection will occur leading to Antichrist's Religious Covenant. This will begin Daniel's Last 7 Years.

The opening of the 5th Seal will mark the Antichrist's Claim to be God and the 3.5 years of The Greatest Persecution. Both The Greatest Persecution and Daniel's Last 7 Years will be ended by

Christ's Return and the Church's Rescue. So, as demonstrated in chapter 15, Scripture reveals that this portion of the Endtimes will last exactly 7 year or 2,520 days.

B) Duration of Endtime events before Daniel's Last 7 Years

It has been argued in *The Beginning of Birth Pains* that there are Endtime events that will precede Daniel's Last 7 Years. These include:

1) The establishment of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition (cf. *BBP* ch. 4, sec. B.1).

2) Antichrist's Rise in becoming world famous and deposing 3 leaders in the 10-nation Endtime Coalition (cf. *BBP* chs. 8-9).

It has in fact been argued that the establishment of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition may be the first Endtime event to occur. If that is so, then we can ask the question: How much time will there be between the establishment of the 10-nation Coalition; and when Antichrist's Resurrection and resulting Religious Covenant will occur and Daniel's Last 7 Years begin? Again, we can only estimate this time period. Let us simply estimate a year between the establishment of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition and the implementation of Antichrist's Religious Covenant, which will begin Daniel's Last 7 Years.

C) Duration of Endtime events after Daniel's Last 7 Years

Suggested events that will follow Christ's Return and the completion of Daniel's Last 7 Years include:

1) The Trumpet & Bowl Punishments during Christ's Wrath.

2) The Battle of Armageddon which ends Christ's Wrath.

After the Battle of Armageddon Christ's 1000-year Reign will begin.

Therefore, we can ask the question: How much time will there be between Christ's Return and His first appearance for the

Church's Rescue; and when Christ's second appearance occurs at the Battle of Armageddon? An explanation of the two appearances of Christ during His Second Coming was provided in *Christ's Endtimes Teaching*, chapter 9.

The time between Christ's Return (and 1st appearance), and The Battle of Armageddon (Christ's 2nd appearance), and the intervening period of Christ's Wrath, is not specified in Scripture. The only specific time element we are told is that the 5th Trumpet Punishment will last **five months** (Rev 9:5, 10).

It is interesting to note that 7 years and 3.5 years are specified time periods given before and after the time of Christ's Wrath. As noted above, the time between Antichrist's Religious Covenant and Christ's Return (and the beginning of Christ's Wrath) will be exactly 7 Jewish years. Likewise, the time between the Antichrist's Claim to be God and Christ's Return (the Greatest Persecution), will be exactly 3.5 Jewish years.

In addition, we are told that after The Battle of Armageddon (and the end of Christ's Wrath), the Jews will be burning their enemy's weapons for **seven years** (Ezek 39:9).

Therefore, we have prophesied periods of 3.5 and 7 Jewish years before Christ's Return and the beginning of Christ's Wrath. We also have a prophesied period of 7 years following the end of Christ's Wrath (The Battle of Armageddon).

Therefore, it is possible these same time periods could be applied to the time of Christ's Wrath. For example, Antichrist will be given exactly 3.5 years to exercise his wrath on God's people. It would seem appropriate that Christ would have 3.5 years or even 7 years to exercise His Wrath against the Antichrist and His enemies. Therefore, it is suggested that the period of Christ's Wrath (starting with Christ's Return, including the Trumpet and Bowl Punishments, and ending with The Battle of Armageddon) will last 3.5 or 7 years.

There is perhaps some evidence that favors the suggestion that Christ's Wrath will last 3.5 years. First, it seems Christ's official ministry on Earth during His First Coming was about 3.5 years. Scholars are generally agreed that: "the ministry of Jesus

extend[ed] over a period of three years and the months that preceded the Passover of [John] 2:23." [1]

How do scholars conclude this? The Gospels seem to record Jesus visiting Jerusalem for 3 successive Passovers. The last one involving His death and Resurrection. Matthew 4:17 describes the beginning of Christ's ministry. If there was 6 months between this and the first Passover He visited, then this would make Christ's ministry 3.5 years.

If this is the case, then Antichrist's **forty-two months** (3.5 years) **to exercise its authority** would be one more way he will imitate the real Christ.

If Christ's ministry during His First Coming was 3.5 years, and His Wrath during His Second Coming will last 3.5 years, this would equal the prophetically important period of a total of 7 years.

There is perhaps another indication that Christ's Wrath and the Trumpet and Bowl Punishments will last 3.5 years (42 months). As noted, it is conspicuously revealed by God that the 5th Trumpet Punishment will last **five months** (Rev 9:5, 10). If we attach a similarly corresponding number of months to each of the Trumpet and Bowl Punishments we get the following data:

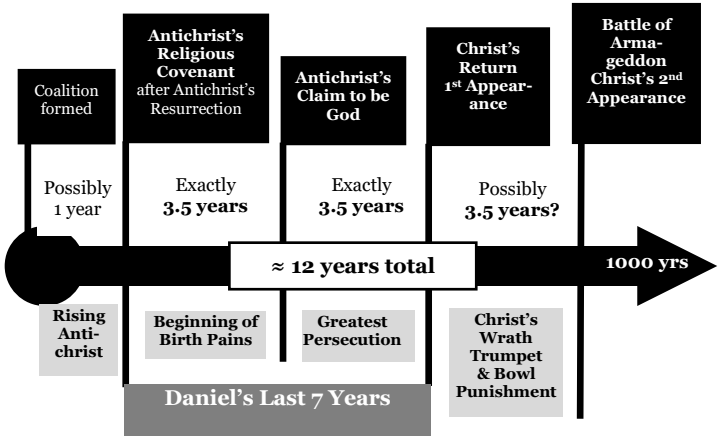
1st Trumpet lasting 1 month
2nd Trumpet 2 months
3rd Trumpet 3 months
4th Trumpet 4 months
5th Trumpet **5 months** (cf. Rev 9:5, 10)
6th Trumpet 6 months

1st Bowl 1 month
2nd Bowl 2 months
3rd Bowl 3 months
4th Bowl 4 months
5th Bowl 5 months (cf. Rev 9:5, 10)
6th Bowl 6 months
This = 42 months (3.5 years)

This is another possible indication that Christ's Wrath (and the Trumpet & Bowl Punishments) last 3.5 years.

What then would be the total estimate of the duration of Endtime events based on the above suggestions? About 12 years. This equals the estimated 1 year between the establishment of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition and Antichrist's Religious Covenant; PLUS Daniel's Last 7 Years; PLUS the possible 3.5 years of Christ's Wrath. It is again admitted that such calculations are speculative. But these conclusions can be illustrated in the following graphic:

Graphic: Suggested Time Intervals of



If Christ's earthly ministry was 3.5 years, and Christ's Wrath will last an additional 3.5 years, then both Christ and the Antichrist would have an ordained period of 7 years in these events. Such "gaps" in God's timeline for fulfilling His plans are common. For example, within Daniel's **period of seventy sets of seven** years, there has now been over a 2,000 year gap between the end of the 69 **sets of seven** years when **the Anointed One** was **killed**, and the final **set of seven** years to be fulfilled by the Antichrist (Dan 9:24-27 NLT). This may be one more way that the Antichrist fulfills even God's ultimate desire for him to imitate the real Christ. This too can be illustrated in the following graphic:

Graphic: The 7 Year "Careers" of Christ & Antichrist

[1] *ISBE*, I.688-89.

Chapter 21
Are You Ready for the Endtimes?

Contents

A) Where are we at in recognizing the beginning of the Endtimes?
B) What can we do now to prepare for the Endtimes?
C) How should we feel about possibly living in the Endtimes? *Grief, joy, and confidence, but not fear*

Primary Points

- We should be watching carefully to see if Volodymyr Zelenskyy will fulfill three more biblical prophecies about the Antichrist.
- God said: **"My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge."** You may need to proactively pursue a better understanding of the doctrine of the Endtimes. *The Endtimes Essentials* series was produced to help you do that.
- Develop and pursue the completion of a "Regret list."
- You do not want to enter the Endtimes with a damaged relationship with God because you refuse to obey Christ's teaching in Matthew 5:23-24.
- Spiritual strength will be especially necessary to live in the Endtimes in a God-glorifying way so **Train yourself to be godly** (1 Tim 4:7).
- If The Beginning of Birth Pains begin in your lifetime, obeying Proverbs 27:12 will be wise and loving, not foolish.
- How should we feel about the possibility of experiencing the Endtimes? Like Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane.
- We should never lower the standard of what a Christian is expected to do because God's Spirit lives in them and can live through them.
- Be assured that God does not want you to worry or be afraid about anything you or your loved ones may experience in the Endtimes.

- What was Jesus' response to His deep grief and the prospect of so much spiritual, emotional, and physical suffering? He asked the Father three times to allow Him to escape the pain and suffering of His crucifixion. NOT EVEN GOD LIKES SUFFERING!
- No matter what happens to you and your loved ones in the Endtimes, God planned the Cross so you would never doubt His love for you and them!
- In the end we must all say with Jesus, **"Yet I want your will to be done, not mine"** (Matt 26:39).
- We do not choose the times we live in. **The Father alone has the authority** to decide whether or not you are chosen to glorify Him in the Endtimes.
- God understands if we deeply ponder the consequences of the Endtimes and spend some time grieving what we will lose. But if He chooses for us to live and lose in the Endtimes, we must love Him enough to embrace it and determine to glorify God no matter what.
- Even when you are sad or disappointed, God's Spirit wants to make room for JOY in your heart. God always expects you to experience JOY because of all your heavenly blessings, even in the midst of sadness and suffering.
- During The Greatest Persecution, virtually every Christian husband, wife, and their children will be hunted and imprisoned or executed.
- No matter what happens to us and our loved ones, we also have a **joy awaiting** us.
- Christian, be assured that you will glorify God in the Endtimes. This is because **God is faithful; he will not let you be tested beyond what you can bear**, even in the Endtimes (1 Cor 10:13).

A) Where are we at in recognizing the beginning of the Endtimes?

Let us review some of the conclusions of this book, *The Beginning of Birth Pains*. In July 2024, the Shanghai Cooperation

Organization (SCO) is scheduled to be 10 nations that uniquely match 7 biblical attributes of the prophesied 10-nation Endtime Coalition (cf. chs. 4-6). Volodymyr Zelenskyy is the leader of a minor nation in ancient Magog who is also famous and admired all over the world. He is the first person in human history to fulfill these three biblical prophecies about the Rising Antichrist (cf. ch. 8). Based on these two extraordinary events we have **two witnesses** (Matt 18:16) that it is reasonable to suggest there is a 60% probability that the Endtimes have already begun.

Therefore, we should be watching carefully to see if Zelenskyy will fulfill three more biblical prophecies about the Antichrist: 1) Be supernaturally successful by defeating the #2 military in the world; 2) Cause the downfall of three leaders in the SCO (e.g. Putin, Lukashenko, and Khamenei); 3) Begin leading the world to peace (cf. ch. 9). If these three events occur in a relatively short period of time, then it is reasonable to suggest that there is an 80% probability the Endtimes have already begun.

It is admitted that we cannot be 100% certain of these things until the Antichrist is undeniably killed and miraculously raised from the dead (chs. 10-12). These conclusions are summarized in the following tables from chapter 9:

Table: Increasing Confidence in Identifying the Antichrist

#	Biblical Prophecy	Potential Fulfillment	Reasonable Probability that Zelenskyy is the Antichrist
Biblical prophecies already potentially fulfilled			
❶	Will be the leader (**little horn**) of a minor country (Dan 7:8; 8:9)	Zelensky became the President of Ukraine (in **Magog**] in an extraordinary way in 2019.	**60%** Based on being the first person in human history to match these biblical prophecies
❷	From the **land of Magog** (Ezek 38:2)	Zelenskyy was born in **Magog** (Kryvyy Rih, Ukraine) in 1978.	
❸	Jewish ancestry but abandoning Jewish faith (Dan 11:37)	Zelenskyy was born to parents committed to the Jewish faith, but he has abandoned it.	
❹	Will be recognized and admired worldwide so that he is worshipped after his Resurrection (Rev 13:3, 7-8, 12)	Zelenskyy is *Time* magazine's "Most Influential Person in the World" in 2022.	
Biblical prophecies to watch for			
❺	He will succeed in everything he does (Dan 8:24)	If Zelenskyy completely defeats the #2 military in the world, even retaking Crimea, in a relatively short period of time.	**80%** Especially based on the supernatural nature of #5, the specific nature of #6, & the 10-nation SCO.
❻	He will uproot 3 leaders in the 10-nation Endtime Coalition (Dan 7:8, 24)	If Zelenskyy's victories are the catalyst for the downfall of 3 members of the SCO, particularly Putin, Lukashenko, and Khamenei.	
❼	Leading the world to peace (Rev 6:2)	If Zelenskyy is successfully leading summits and organizations	

		pursuing world peace.	
❽	The Antichrist's Resurrection (Rev 6:1-2; 13:3, 14)	If Zelenskyy is undeniably killed and raises from the dead.	**100%** Then we will know with certainty he is the Antichrist & the Endtimes have begun.

Table: Levels of Readiness & Action for Endtime Events

"DEFCON"	"Weather"	Current Signs of the Endtimes	Christian Response
5 Minimal threat of nuclear war	Partly Cloudy	None. The SCO becomes more than 10 members or Zelenskyy's success and popularity end, or he is killed without a resurrection.	None
4 Watching for nuclear war	Tornado Watch	SCO remains 10 members and Zelenskyy is rising.	This provides 2 "witnesses" that the beginning of the Endtimes is near. Therefore, continue to carefully monitor Zelenskyy & the SCO.
3 Preparing for nuclear war	Tornado Warning	Zelenskyy continues to "succeed in everything he does" including replacing 3 leaders in the SCO & producing world peace.	This would provide a third "witness" that the beginning of the Endtimes is near. Therefore, prepare for

			Endtime events to occur
2 Ready for nuclear war	You see a tornado coming toward your house	Zelenskyy is Resurrected from the dead	This would provide absolute certainty the Endtimes have begun. Therefore, implement plans for subsequent Endtime events to occur
1 Experiencing nuclear war	The tornado has destroyed your house	We are in the Last Generation Church	Survive The Beginning of Birth Pains & glorify God in The Greatest Persecution

B) What can we do now to prepare for the Endtimes?

It is understandable that some will want to wait until Antichrist's Resurrection before they do anything to prepare for the Endtimes. But you are encouraged to consider the following steps at the suggested stages of probability and readiness. These stages are based on the tables above. There is wisdom in completing the suggested tasks at their suggested time because they will become even more important to accomplish if later stages occur when you will also have additional suggested tasks to complete.

B.1) "Tornado Watch" Stage

This is the stage of suggested probability and readiness that we are currently in based on the biblical prophecies that seem to have already been fulfilled in the SCO and Zelenskyy. Therefore, it would seem wise to pursue the following tasks.

1) Study the Bible on the Endtimes

God said: **"My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge"** (Hosea 4:6 NIV). He said this in the context of the priests not teaching the people correctly. Unfortunately, this is the situation in the Church today. The confusion, ignorance, and controversy over what the Bible teaches on the Endtimes is evidence of this. Therefore, you may need to proactively pursue a better understanding of these things. The *Endtimes Essentials* series was produced to help you do that.

Therefore, you are encouraged to study the first three books of the *Endtimes Essentials* series. These include #1: *Christ's Endtimes Teaching*; #2: *The Beginning of Birth Pains*; #3: *Endtime Babylon*. These are available in print or free Kindle versions at Amazon.com. Also PDF, HTML, audio, and video versions are also available free of charge at www.trainingtimothys.com.

Book #3, *Endtime Babylon* will provide some very important things for you to consider if you live in America.

2) Monitor current events

Throughout Christ's sermon on the Endtimes He said: **"Be on guard! Be alert!" … "keep watch" … "What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'"** (Mark 13:33, 34, 37 NIV). **Watch!** for what? Current events in our world that would signal the beginning of the Endtimes, and that Christ's Return is near.

It would seem prudent to monitor news about the SCO, the war in Ukraine, and Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Particularly, watch to see if Zelenskyy 1) Defeats Russia in an extraordinary way; 2) Causes the downfall of Putin in Russia, Lukashenko in Belarus, and Khamenei in Iran; 3) Begins to lead the world to peace.

The BBC is an especially good source for news in Eurasia. Google News has a feature that will collect news stories on the above topics.

3) Pursue your "Regret List"

Jesus told His disciples: **"As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one**

can work" (John 9:4 NIV). Indeed, if the Endtimes begin sometime soon, even in our lifetime, then we may run out of time to do some things that we would regret.

Therefore, develop a "Regret List." What are things that you would regret not doing if you were to die? Doing something like this is probably a good idea even if the Endtimes do not begin in your lifetime.

For example, do you have any broken relationships that God would want you to pursue healing in? Jesus said:

> **"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift."** (Matt 5:23-24 NIV)

Do you understand what Christ was saying? If you are aware that another Christian has been offended by you, and you have not done everything you can to rectify that, then God does not want you to worship Him! Carson explains regarding "the person who comes to perform his religious duty but who has offended his brother":

> It is more important to be cleared of offense before all men than to show up for Sunday morning worship. Forget the worship service and be reconciled to your brother; and only then worship God. [1]

MacArthur adds:

> The phrase "your brother has something against you" could also refer to anger or hatred on the brother's part. That is, even if we hold nothing against him, if he is angry with or hates us, we should do everything in our power to be reconciled to him.
>
> Obviously, we cannot change another person's heart or attitude, but our desire and effort should be to close the breach as much as is possible from our side and to hold no anger ourselves even if the other person does. Regardless of who is responsible for the break in relationship—and often there is guilt on both sides—we should determine to make a reconciliation before we come before God to worship.

> True worship is not enhanced by better music, better prayers, better architecture, or even better preaching. True worship is enhanced by better relationships between those who come to worship. Worship may be improved by our staying away from church until we have made things right with those with whom we know our relationship is strained or broken. [2]

If you have done something to offend one of God's children than it has offended their and your Father too. Therefore, God wants you to do all you can to be reconciled with that person. So much so that God wants you to do whatever you can to mend that relationship before you worship Him. This reflects what the Bible says elsewhere:

> **If someone says, "I love God," but hates a fellow believer, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? And he has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their fellow believers.** (1 John 4:20-21 NLT)

If you have not already done so, do your best to reconcile relationships, particularly with other Christians. Or as the Apostle put it: **If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone** (Rom 12:18 NIV). You do not want to enter the Endtimes with a damaged relationship with God because you refuse to obey Christ's teaching in Matthew 5:23-24.

There are other things to consider for your "Regret List." Is there a promise you made that you need to keep? David wrote that a **righteous** person is someone **who keeps an oath** [**promise** NLT] **even when it hurts** (Ps 15:2-4 NIV). Have you made a promise to your spouse, son or daughter, or a friend that you can fulfill at this time? There is probably no good reason not to do it now.

Is there someone you want to share the Gospel with? Is there a ministry task you want to do? Is there a financial gift that you can invest in the Kingdom of God. Again, Jesus warned, **Night** may be **coming, when no one can … do the works** of God.

What would you regret not doing if you no longer had the opportunity? Develop and pursue your "Regret List" with courage and love, knowing that God wants you to do these things too.

4) Improve your relationship with God and your spiritual health

The Bible says, **Train yourself to be godly** (1 Tim 4:7). Obviously, this should be a priority at any time in our lives. But spiritual health and strength will be especially necessary to live in the Endtimes in a God-glorifying way if they begin sometime soon. How can you **Train yourself to be godly**?

First, start specifically praying for this and asking God to help you grow in faith, love, and hope. Another suggestion is to complete the *Renew Ministry* series of discipleship materials. These are also available free of charge at www.trainingtimothys.com. The *Renew Ministry* material is especially designed to help you permanently remove sinful strongholds in your life and experience the love, joy, and peace of God's Spirit living through you more consistently.

Begin by completing the material in the *FRUIT* study in one of its various formats. It is a very biblical, but also challenging evaluation of our spiritual health and maturity. There are vital truths here to understand if you are going to glorify God in your Christian life, including the Endtimes.

B.2) The "Tornado Warning" Stage

Proverbs says: **A prudent person foresees danger and takes precautions. The simpleton goes blindly on and suffers the consequences** (Prov 27:12 NLT). It is suggested we will be at a more serious stage of probability and readiness if Volodymyr Zelenskyy fulfills the three biblical prophecies noted above. At this point, it is suggested there is an 80% probability that the Endtimes have already begun with the establishment of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition in the SCO. By analogy, this would be the Tornado Warning stage and DEFCON Level 3 which is "preparing for the probability of nuclear war."

Therefore, it would seem to be time to do what you can to prepare for the wars, famines, plagues, and earthquakes of The Beginning of Birth Pains and the subsequent Greatest Persecution. There are several things to consider here.

First, the steps suggested above in the "Tornado Watch" stage will be important. Especially improving your relationship with God and your spiritual health. Trusting and glorifying God is always the most important thing for a Christian. And the power of the Holy Spirit controlling you will be the only way you can do this.

Second, you are encouraged to do more study. If you have not yet read *Endtimes Essentials* book #3, *Endtime Babylon*, or completed its audio or video versions, you are urged to do so, especially if you live in America. But the fulfillment of the prophecies in Revelation 17-18 will affect you wherever you live in the world. It is vital that you understand them.

Third, what could you do to wisely prepare for The Beginning of Birth Pains? Jesus said there will be **wars … famines and earthquakes** and **plagues … in various places** (Matt 24:6-7; Luke 21:11). It is understandable if you have thought the "end of the world survivalists" types are a little odd and you never wanted to be one of them. But if The Beginning of Birth Pains begin in your lifetime, God will want you to do your best to survive them and help others do the same. Obeying Proverbs 27:12 quoted above will be wise and loving, not foolish.

Giving advice on such things is not within the expertise of this author. Fortunately, you probably know a Christian who has studied these things and can suggest resources.

It is true that **A prudent person foresees danger and takes precautions. The simpleton goes blindly on and suffers the consequences** (Prov 27:12 NLT). But this biblical wisdom needs to be balanced with other Scripture. In all of your planning and preparation for **"the beginning of birth pains"** (Matt 24:8), remember something else Jesus said:

> **"So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his**

kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matt 6:31-33 NIV)

C) How should we feel about possibly living in the Endtimes? *Grief, joy, and confidence, but no fear*

Throughout the *Endtimes Essentials* series I try to be honest about the pain that the Last Generation Church will experience in the Endtimes. Therefore, in this section, I want to take a step back from all the doctrine and biblical facts about the Endtimes and address our hearts. My *Endtimes Essentials* series focuses on what we are supposed to understand about this doctrine. But I also want to offer an answer to this question: How should we <u>feel</u> about possibly living in the Endtimes?

People will respond differently to the prospect of living in the Endtimes. Of course, it is important they have a biblical understanding of the fact that the Last Generation Church will experience The Beginning of Birth Pains and The Greatest Persecution. Again, this biblical sequence of Endtime events was demonstrated in the previous book, *Christ's Endtimes Teaching* and some description of the painful challenges of The Greatest Persecution were provided (cf. ch. 16).

Even so, we should view the Endtimes as an unprecedented and extraordinary opportunity to glorify God, deepen real Christian fellowship, have an eternal and focused perspective on life, and perhaps experience miracles of God protecting and providing for us. I believe all of these things will occur in the Endtimes for the Last Generation Church. They will be a great encouragement to those having the privilege of living in that time.

But allow me to share some of my own personal struggles about living in the Endtimes. I have been studying these things for over 30 years. As I have learned more, the prospect of experiencing the Endtimes has become increasingly real to me. This book has expressed my reasons for believing that the Endtimes may begin relatively soon. As I have faced that potential reality, with an understanding of the biblical Pre-Wrath Rescue position, I have had to wrestle with it!

I have had to spend some time with the Lord grieving all of the ministry and people I might lose. It's not so much about what might happen to me, but what would the Endtimes be like for the people I love? I do not want them to suffer the wars, famines, and plagues of The Beginning of Birth Pains, or the pain of The Greatest Persecution. No wonder the painless but unbiblical views of the Endtimes are so popular!

I do not wish to be overly dramatic, but Christ's experience in the Garden of Gethsemane has spoken to me. When Jesus entered the Garden of **Gethsemane** we read He **became anguished** [*lypeisthai*] **and distressed** [*adēmonein*] and said, **"My soul is crushed with grief** [*perilypos*] **to the point of death"** (Matt 26:36-38 NLT). In Luke He is described as **being in agony** [*agōnia*] (22:44 NASB).

There are things here that can encourage us as we face the possibility of entering the Endtimes. But first, we must note something in Christ's experience that we should not and cannot imitate: Jesus was afraid. Both the English and Greek words used above to describe His emotions include the ideas of anxiety and fear. [3]

How do we reconcile this with the fact that the most repeated command in Scripture is **Do not be afraid** (Luke 1:13)? [4] Likewise, Jesus commanded His followers **do not worry about your life**, even if basic necessities like **food** and **drink** and **clothes** are threatened (Matt 6:25 NIV). The Apostle Paul commanded Christians **Do not be anxious about anything** (Phil 4:6 NIV). The Bible clearly teaches that fear and **worry** are normally a sign of idolatry and sin against God. So how could Jesus be afraid in the Garden of **Gethsemane** and not sin?

Because Jesus was afraid of about the only thing you can be afraid of and not sin. Elsewhere He explained:

> **"Don't be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell."** (Matt 10:28 NLT)

Anyone who is going to be punished by God for their sin should be afraid.

Accordingly, Jesus was afraid of God's wrath that He would experience to pay the penalty for our sin. God's **punishment that brought us peace** with God **was on him** (Isa 53:5 NIV). What made Jesus afraid was the **cup of suffering** that He was asking His **Father** to have **taken away** from Him if **possible** (Matt 26:39 NLT). Throughout Scripture, such a **cup** referred to **God's cup of wrath** (Rev 14:10 NLT). [5] Therefore, Jesus had a biblical reason to be afraid.

But no Christian does. We will never be punished by God for our sins or experience His wrath. Therefore, we have no biblical reason to be afraid. Did you notice above that Jesus even commanded us, **"Don't be afraid of those who want to kill your body"**? If we are not to be **afraid** of even someone killing us, then it will be sin against God to worry about anything else!

Christians assume the command **Do not be anxious about <u>anything</u>** (Phil 4:6; cf. Matt 6:25) is so impossible to obey, that God must not really mean what He said. But is the difficulty of obeying a biblical command our criteria for understanding it?

Of course not. For example, Jesus clearly commanded: **"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you"** (Luke 6:27-28 NIV). Do you really think obeying the command to never be afraid is harder to obey than always loving those who hate you? How about the Bible's command: **<u>Imitate God</u>, therefore, in everything you do** (Eph 5:1 NLT)?

We should never lower the standard of what a Christian is expected to do because God's Spirit lives in them and can live through them. Be assured that God does <u>not</u> want you to worry or be afraid about anything you or your loved ones may experience in the Endtimes.

But we can certainly be sad about it. And this is the feeling that we can identify with Christ in the Garden of **Gethsemane**. If we are sad about what we might face in the Endtimes, Jesus is our example. The Greek words used to describe Christ's internal state reflect deep grief and emotional pain. *Lypeisthai* (**anguished**) means "be sad, *grieve*." [6] *Perilypos* (**crushed with grief**) means "very sad." [7] Accordingly, when Jesus said, **"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death"** (Matt 26:38)

He was describing the intensity of His sadness. [8] As Carson puts it, "It suggests a sorrow so deep it almost kills." [9]

The depth of His sorrow is also illustrated when we read, **his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground** (Luke 22:44 NIV). It is probably <u>not</u> true that Jesus actually **sweat … blood**. Rather Luke writes that His **sweat**ing **was <u>like</u> drops of blood falling to the ground**. In other words, His anguish was producing so much **sweat** that big **drops** of it were **falling to the ground**. [10]

All of this fulfilled the prophecy that Jesus would be, **a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief** (Isa 53:3 NLT). Friends, if we encounter the unique suffering of the Endtimes, we too will be chosen by God to be people **of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief**. And we must be reminded that God chose Christ to experience the same on this Earth. Even God the Father Almighty has experienced deep sorrow. In my *Renew Ministry* materials, I remind us:

> Sadness can be godly. The Bible says that when God saw humanity's wickedness, **The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain** (Gen 6:6 NIV). One translation says, **It broke his heart** (NLT). God Almighty, the Creator and Ruler of the Universe, experiences deep sadness and emotional pain.
>
> So there is nothing necessarily sinful about SADNESS. In fact, the Bible commands, **Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep** (Rom 12:15). There is **A time to cry and a time to laugh. A time to grieve and a time to dance** (Eccl 3:4). SADNESS is godly when the circumstance calls for it. This was certainly true of the deep sadness Jesus experienced during the night of His crucifixion. [11]

Why was Jesus so sad? Because of what He was going to lose. On the cross He lost His holiness and purity. **God made him who had no sin to be sin** (2 Cor 5:21 NIV; cf. Gal 3:13). Perhaps even worse, He lost His fellowship with His Father. It seems He was experiencing the most pain, when **Jesus cried out in a loud**

voice, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (Matt 27:46 [12]).

Unlike Christ on the cross, we will never lose our holiness before God, nor will we ever lose our relationship with the Father. Because Christ was **abandoned** by the Father, **nothing can ever separate us from God's love** (Rom 8:38 NLT), not now, or in the Endtimes. But we may lose a great deal.

Last Generation Christians will lose their jobs, houses, possessions, respect, freedom, friends, parents, spouses, children, grandchildren, and even their own life. And it is appropriate, and even wise, to grieve the possibility of such great loss. Jesus was certainly sad about what He was going to lose, even if it was only going to be temporary.

And we should not overlook Jesus' sadness about how much He was going to physically suffer. He knew the biblical prophecies about the Suffering Servant He would fulfill. Isaiah said of Christ's experience on the day He was whipped and crucified:

> **His face was so disfigured he seemed hardly human, and from his appearance, one would scarcely know he was a man. … he was pierced … crushed … He was beaten … He was whipped… He was oppressed and treated harshly** (Isa 52:14; 53:5-7 NLT)

That was a lot of pain! Certainly, anticipating that also made Him **deeply grieved**.

What was Jesus' response to His deep grief and the prospect of so much spiritual, emotional, and physical suffering? He asked the Father three times to allow Him to escape the pain and suffering of His crucifixion. Do not miss this.

Being in agony He was praying very fervently … "My Father! … let this cup of suffering be taken away from me" (Luke 22:44 NASB; Matt 26:39 NLT). He prayed that three times, **saying the same things again** (Matt 26:44 NLT). The Bible says: **While Jesus was here on earth, he offered prayers and pleadings, with a loud cry and tears, to the one who could rescue him from death** (Heb 5:7 NLT).

JESUS DID NOT WANT TO SUFFER. Why did Jesus not want to suffer? BECAUSE NOT EVEN GOD LIKES SUFFERING!

God hates suffering so much that one day He is going to recreate a world where **There will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain** (Rev 21:4 NLT). A painless world is what God ultimately desires. But for now, suffering accomplishes purposes that are even more important to Him than a painless Universe.

Both the Son and His Father suffered deeply when Christ was rejected, betrayed, beaten, and crucified. Why? Why would even God allow Himself to suffer like that? Because **God** wanted to **demonstrate his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us**, suffering on the cross (Rom 5:8 NIV). **God** the Father wanted to reveal and prove His love to us in such a convincing way, that He planned our salvation to require the excruciatingly painful death of His Son. Convincing us of His love for us was more important than saving His Son from suffering.

No matter what happens to you and your loved ones in the Endtimes, God planned the Cross so you would never doubt His love for you and them!

But do not miss the point that even God does not like suffering. Some Christians have an idea that it is somehow noble to like suffering. But this is neither godly nor biblical. We should dislike suffering as much as Jesus did in the Garden. HE DID NOT WANT TO SUFFER. And I do not want to suffer in the Endtimes, nor see my loved ones experience the same.

Some might suggest such a reluctance for the Lord's Return is unbiblical. Didn't Paul say we are to **eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed** (1 Cor 1:7 NIV) and be among those **who have longed for his appearing** (2 Tim 4:7 NIV)? Didn't John plead at the end of Revelation, **"Come, Lord Jesus!"** (Rev 22:20 NLT)?

Yes, but both men already thought they were experiencing the persecutions of the Endtimes (cf. Rom 13:11-12; 1 Cor 7:29-31; 10:11; 2 Thess 1:4-7; 1 Pet 4:7; Jam 5:8; 1 John 2:18). Paul wrote the statement above in 2 Timothy from prison awaiting execution. John wrote the Revelation from exile on the island of **Patmos** (Rev 1:9). If I were in their situations, I would heartily proclaim the same things. But I'm not. We still have freedom to do the Lord's work in

this world. And I do not apologize for not wanting to see the people I love, suffer.

But in the end we must all say with Jesus, **"Yet I want your will to be done, not mine"** (Matt 26:39 NLT). If we experience the Endtimes we will also experience an unimaginable amount of loss, pain, and sorrow. This is especially so as we ponder how our loved ones will suffer.

Yes, we must all wrestle with what our Father may be asking us to suffer and lose if we enter the Endtimes. And we must all finally say what Jesus said, **"My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine"** (Matt 26:39 NLT). But do not miss, that the prospect of suffering, caused Jesus to struggle greatly, and this will be a great struggle for us as well.

We do not choose the times we live in. Speaking of all humanity, Scripture says God, **marked out their appointed times in history** (Acts 17:26 NIV). God the Father also chooses if the Endtimes will begin in your **appointed time in history**.

When the disciples asked the risen Lord, **"Are you at this time going to restore the kingdom?"** He replied, **"The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times"** (Acts 1:6 NIV, v. 7 NLT). And **the Father alone has the authority** to decide whether or not you will be chosen to glorify Him in the Endtimes.

I'm reminded of one of my favorite exchanges between Frodo and Gandalf in *The Fellowship of the Rings*. Frodo is feeling burdened because of the difficult times he is living in and the heavy burden it has placed upon his life. He tells Gandalf: "I wish it need not have happened in my time." Gandalf responds:

> So do I. And so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.

The point is that God understands if we deeply ponder the consequences of the Endtimes and spend some time grieving what we will lose. But if He chooses us to live and lose in the Endtimes, we must love Him enough to embrace this and determine to glorify God no matter what.

Accordingly, in the Garden Jesus experienced more than the **deepest grief** and **being in agony** (Isa 53:3; Luke 22:44). **An angel from heaven appeared and strengthened him** (Luke 22:43 NLT). His Father comforted His Son in His pain. And if you will seek your Father's comfort in prayer and His Word, He will strengthen and comfort you as well. Not only now, but also throughout the Endtimes. Be assured Christian, we will be able to say with the Apostle:

> **All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort… For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ.** (2 Cor 1:3, 5 NLT)

And being reminded of Christ in the Garden of **Gethsemane** will be a **source** of God's **comfort**.

Let us also be reminded that at no time in the Garden did Jesus cease to be controlled by the **love, joy,** and **peace** of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22). The *Renew Ministry* materials explain:

> Even **Jesus wept** (John 11:35) when His friend Lazarus died. But did He lose all hope and joy? No. So even if a Christian friend dies, you need not **grieve like the rest of mankind who have no hope** (1 Thess 4:13 NIV), because your hope gives you JOY…
>
> The Bible's teaching about Christian JOY reveals something remarkable. The JOY of God's Spirit has the amazing ability to exist with SADNESS and grief. The Christian can always feel JOY, but it will not always be a pure JOY. It may be mixed with SADNESS. Therefore, the Apostle Paul wrote, **Our hearts ache, but we always have joy** (2 Cor 6:10 NLT). God expects **our hearts** to **ache** about sad things. But even when you are sad or disappointed, God's Spirit wants to make room for JOY in your heart.
>
> God always expects you to experience JOY because of all your heavenly blessings, even in the midst of sadness and suffering. This is why Paul wrote from prison, **Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—feel happy!** (Phil 4:4 [13]).

Accordingly, Hebrews tells us, **Because of the joy awaiting him** Jesus **endured the cross** (12:2 NLT). Jesus knew His great suffering would only be temporary, and the time would come when He would live in the Kingdom of God on a perfect and painless New Earth. Because He never stopped believing that, He never lost His hope or joy, even as He felt the **deepest grief** and was **being in agony** (Isa 53:3; Luke 22:44).

If you keep praising God for all the things that nothing in the Endtimes can ever take from you, you will never lose your joy either. In fact, **the joy of the Lord** will be **your strength!** (Neh 8:10).

On the night before He was crucified, Jesus felt a mixture of deep grief and abiding joy. What are some other ways this relates to the question asked above: How should we feel about possibly living in the Endtimes?

First, we should feel a deep sadness about the possibility of entering the Endtimes. It has been said from the very beginning of the *Endtimes Essentials* series that the very hardest thing about the biblical doctrine of the Endtimes is its emotional challenge (cf. *CET*, ch. 1).

There is a reason the holy and courageous Prophet Daniel was **deeply troubled … fainted and was sick for many days** when he saw the **astounding devastation** the Antichrist will cause during The Beginning of Birth Pains and how he will **oppress** the **saints** in The Greatest Persecution (Dan 7:25, 28; 8:24, 27). If God has chosen us to be in the Last Generation Church, then He has also chosen for us to suffer in some extraordinary ways, much like the First Generation Church.

Jesus said, **"there will be the <u>greatest</u> persecution of God's elect people. It will be greater than any persecution since the world began, and it will never be equaled again"** (Matt 24:21). By **the greatest persecution** Christ did not mean Endtime Christians will be tortured in greater ways than any persecuted Christians in history. If you know what some Christians have suffered, you know that is hardly possible. It will be **the greatest persecution** because every single Christian living on the planet will

be persecuted. Therefore, it will be **the greatest persecution** because of its worldwide scope.

Still, the Endtimes will bring an unprecedented and painful amount of chaos and crisis to the Last Generation Christians. And that will occur in just the catastrophic wars, famines, plagues, and earthquakes in The Beginning of Birth Pains.

Then in The Greatest Persecution, Jesus warned us: **"You will be hated all over the world because you are my followers"** (Matt 24:9 NLT). It would seem virtually every Christian husband, wife, and their children will be hunted and imprisoned or executed. That's why Jesus said if He did not stop The Greatest Persecution with His Return, **"no one would survive"** (Matt 24:22).

There is a reason Jesus said, **"Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!"** (Matt 24:19 NASB). **Woe** is a rare word in modern English. *Webster's* defines it as "a condition of deep suffering from misfortune, affliction, or grief." The Greek word (*ouai*) was used many times in the ancient Greek translation of the OT (LXX) to translate several Hebrew words (*hôy*, *hôwâh*) that meant "to howl," like the "nighttime cry of a jackal" or "like the scream of an infant." It referred to deep grief, sorrowful wailing, and intense pain. [14]

Jesus specifically warned us that the Last Generation Church will experience such **Woe** in the Endtimes. Which is why the good possibility that the Endtimes will occur in our lifetime, or even rather soon, puts us all in the Garden of Gethsemane like Jesus.

However, it was also pointed out above that Jesus felt joy in that Garden before His crucifixion. **Because of the joy awaiting him** Jesus **endured the cross** (Heb 12:2 NLT). Likewise, no matter what happens to us and our loved ones, we also have a **joy awaiting** us. For example, you might temporarily lose your Christian husband, wife, children, grandchildren, or friend in the Endtimes. There will be a multitude of ways for them to die. But be assured you will see them again relatively very soon.

This is true of even our babies and young children who may not yet have professed a faith in Christ. A person's eternal salvation ultimately depends on the sovereign and gracious election of God (cf. Eph 1:4-6, 11; Acts 13:48; Rom 9:10-24; 11:5).

History and experience have demonstrated that God usually places His predestined souls in Christian families. Of course, there are painful exceptions, but the vast majority of children who grow up in a Christian family, become Christians. This is because God prefers that His predestined people are raised in Christian families.

Remember as well that God does not need a profession of faith from an infant or child to save them. They simply need to be chosen by Him and paid for by Christ's blood, which all predestined souls are. Your chosen child is among **the ones whose names** [were] **written in the Lamb's Book of Life even before the world was created, the Lamb who was slaughtered** for them (Rev 13:8 [15]).

All of this is why David confidently proclaimed when his infant son died: **"I will go to him one day"** (2 Sam 12:23 NLT). David knew God had chosen his family to be favored by Him. If you are a Christian family, you can be confident of the same thing.

And whenever your loved ones die, including the Endtimes, you can say like David, "I will go to them one day." And again, that **day** will not be far off. For example, The Greatest Persecution will only last 3 and a half years (cf. Dan 7:25; 9:27; 12:6-7; Rev 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5). Then Christ will Return and the First Resurrection will occur at the Church's Rescue.

Accordingly, the Apostle Paul said even the worst of our **troubles** are **momentary** and **temporary** (2 Cor 4:17-18 NIV), especially in the Endtimes.

This is not the place to explain all the biblical reasons to experience joy even in our suffering in the Endtimes. I hope to discuss that in another book. [16] But you can be sure God has given you many great reasons to experience unconditional joy. We can share one that will certainly apply to the Endtimes. Jesus said in His very first recorded sermon:

> **"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."** (Matt 5:11-12 NIV)

God is promising that His eternal reward will make your suffering for Him worthwhile. But again, such a promise deserves more explanation than what will be given here. Still, even though we may lose so many people and things in the Endtimes, we can continue to experience joy because of what we cannot lose, including our eternal life and eternal rewards.

Let us also be reminded again that God does not want us to worry or be afraid of anything in the Endtimes. Even **of those who want to kill your body**, and certainly not about our **food**, **drink**, and basic physical needs (Matt 10:28; 6:25). Speaking specifically of The Beginning of Birth Pains, Jesus said:

> **"You will hear reports of devasting wars and riots, but guard yourself against fear and make sure you are not alarmed. These horrific conflicts must happen, but My coming and the end of the age will not follow the wars immediately."** (Matt 24:6)

As explained previously in this book (ch. 18, sec. B) this is a good translation of the Greek used here. Notice Jesus' command even in the context of the Endtimes. **Guard yourself against fear and make sure you are not alarmed**. Even when you see or even experience **devasting wars** and **horrific conflicts**. Jesus said these things **must happen**.

All the suffering of the Endtimes is going to **happen** no matter what anyone does or wants. The only question is this? Will you glorify God? The Bible says, **Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God** (1 Cor 10:31 NIV), including suffering in the Endtimes.

Christian, be assured that you will glorify God in the Endtimes. This is because **God is faithful; he will not let you be tested** [*peirasmos* [17]] **beyond what you can bear** (1 Cor 10:13). That is a promise you must take into the Endtimes with you. No matter how biblical prophecy describes the horrors of the Endtimes, this promise will remain true for God's people.

It was explained previously (ch. 3, sec. C) that God will be completely sovereign over all Endtime events. That includes your experience of them. God and His Angels will be watching over you and your loved ones the whole time. God will sovereignly guard,

filter, and control what you suffer in the Endtimes. He has chosen that <u>for</u> you. We read in Revelation regarding The Greatest Persecution:

> **Anyone who is <u>destined</u> for prison will be taken to prison. Anyone <u>destined</u> to die by the sword will die by the sword. This means that God's** [Last Generation] **saints must endure persecution patiently and remain faithful** [in the Endtimes]**.** (Rev 13:10 NLT [18])

There are some things predestined by God about your life. One is whether or not you will be living when the Endtimes begin. And if He has chosen you for that, then there is another thing God will decide for you. That is what you will be tested with in the Endtimes. This is because **God is faithful**, and **he will not let you be tested beyond what you can bear** (1 Cor 10:13).

Why is that? Why is God so committed to making sure you are <u>never</u> **tested beyond what you can bear**?

Because God wants you to glorify Him. If you were constantly tested with things that were too hard for your faith or that you could not overcome, then you would automatically fail those tests and <u>not</u> glorify God. But God's greatest purpose for your life on Earth is to glorify Him. Therefore, your Father never sets up His sons and daughters to fail their tests. God controls the tests. He customizes them to ensure **you** will not be **tested beyond what you can bear**.

And that leads us to something else God wants you to feel about the Endtimes: CONFIDENCE. Confidence that because of God's sovereignty and God's Spirit, you <u>will</u> fulfill your God-given purpose if you experience the Endtimes. You will glorify God. You will love, trust, obey, and experience God in ways you never imagined. And another thing. You are really going to tick off and disappoint the Devil. Amen?

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[1] Carson, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Baker, 1978), 42.

[2] MacArthur, *MNTC*, *Matt*, loc. 7339.

[3] *Adēmonein* (**distressed** NLT, NASB; **troubled** NIV) in Matt 26:36 (Mark 14:33) means: "be in anxiety, distressed, troubled" (*BDAG*). Accordingly, "distressed" in English can mean: "to cause to worry or be troubled" and "troubled" means to be "concerned, worried" (*Webster's*). Likewise, *agōnia* in Luke 22:44 means: "apprehensiveness of mind, especially when faced with impending ills, *distress, anguish* (anxiety varying in degree of intensity). Therefore, the Gospels clearly describe Jesus as experiencing fear on the night before His crucifixion. Bock writes that *agōnia* "probably describes the momentary anxiety or fear" (1761).

[4] NT scholar N. T. Wright confirms: "The most frequent command in the Bible is 'Don't be afraid'" (*Following Jesus* [Eerdmans, 2014], 65). Although I do not recommend much of Wright's doctrine.

[5] For numerous biblical references to a **cup** referring to God's wrath, see Carson, *Matt*, 609.

[6] *BDAG*.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Nolland remarks:

> Deeply grieved to the point of death is not far from Jonah 4:9 LXX where the language seems to mean (cf. v. 8), 'I have been grieved so much that I want to die.' But that does not fit the Gospel context very well, where Jesus' distress leads rather to the request to be spared the death that faces him. A better guide comes from Judg. 16:16 which says Samson's 'soul was grieved to death,' where 'death' is not literal but a marker of intensity. (*Matt*, 1098)

[9] Carson, Matt, 609.

[10] Some have provided medical evidence that it is possible for humans to "sweat blood" (cf. Raymond Brown, *The Death of the Messiah, from Gethsemane to the Grave*, Anchor, 1994, p. 185). However, even if this is a medical possibility this is <u>not</u> what Luke described. Regarding the comment that Jesus' **sweat was like drops of blood**, Bock writes:

> It is important to note that this is metaphorical, not a description that says Jesus [actually] sweat blood. The remark depicts Jesus' emotional state as so intense that he perspired profusely as a result. The sweat beads multiplied on his body like flowing clumps of blood and dropped to the earth. (1761-2)

[11] *FRUIT* study, ch. 12; available online at www.trainingtimothys.com.

[12] The suggested translation of Matt 27:46 is a combination of the NIV and NLT.

[13] The suggested translation of Phil 4:4 follows the NLT but replaces **rejoice** with **feel happy**. This is the meaning of both the Greek and the English. The Greek word is *chairete* which means: "to be in a state of happiness and well-being, *rejoice, be glad*" (*BDAG*). Unfortunately, many

translations have **rejoice**, but many English speakers interpret this as something like "to praise." But even *Webster's* defines "rejoice" as "to feel joy or great delight." For more on how modern English translations hide the repeated references to feeling happy in the Bible, see *FRUIT*, ch. 12; available online at www.trainingtimothys.com.

[14] *NIDNTT*, vol. III, 1051.

[15] The suggested translation of Rev 13:8 is: **the ones whose names were not written in the Lamb's Book of Life even before the world was created, the Lamb who was slaughtered.**

This translation generally follows the word order of the NASB (ESV) and the language of the NLT. There is some debate as to whether the reference to **before the world was created** refers to Christ's death (NLT, NIV), or the recording of names in **the Book of Life** (NASB, ESV, NET). Scholars admit that the Greek word order could have either meaning.

Osborn claims "The word order favors" the death of Christ as being what is referred to. To support his view he quotes 1 Pet 1:20 that states regarding Christ, **God chose him as your ransom long before the world began** (NLT) (*Rev*, 503).

However, Scripture itself makes things rather clear. Later, Rev 17:8 refers to unbelievers as **The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from** [**before** NLT] **the creation of the world**. This makes it clear that the recording of names in the Book of Life is what has occurred before time. Contrary to Osborne (and Mounce), comparing and reconciling Scripture with Scripture is a much more decisive factor in both translating and interpreting a biblical text than the Greek word order.

In addition, 1 Pet 1:20 has little to do with Rev 13:8. Peter wrote **God chose him** [Christ] **as your ransom long before the world began** (NLT). But what Osborne wants Rev 13:8 to say is what the NIV and NLT say: **the Lamb … was slaughtered before the world was made** (NLT). We recognize that in one sense, God's activities are timeless. But it is doubtful God expects us to believe the NLT translation of Rev 13:8, and it is not what Peter wrote. Therefore, the NASB (and ESV) seem correct to say:

> **All who dwell on the earth will worship him** [Antichrist]**, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.** (Rev 13:8 NASB)

As usual, Thomas is right when he explains:

> The connection of the phrase π αταβολς σμου (*apo katabolēs kosmou*) with what precedes it is in question. Is it connected directly with γέγραπται (*gegraptai*), "the book of life written from the foundation of the world," or with σφαγμνου (*esphagmenou*), "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"?

The chief support for connecting it with *esphagmenou* ["slain"] is the verse's word order. The phrase follows immediately after the participle. This compares with a twelve-word separation between the phrase and *gegraptai* (Mounce).

On the other side, the chief argument for connecting the phrase with *gegraptai* [what was written] is a parallel in [Rev] 17:8 where that is the only connection possible. The same finite verb and the same phrase

in that verse must have a direct connection because the verse has no word about the Lamb or His being slain (Swete, Lenski).

Of course, in 13:8 John may be supplementing the thought of 17:8 with something different (Alford, Caird, Johnson), but 17:8 offers a rejoinder to the principal objection to the *gegraptai* connection. It has a seven-word separation between the phrase and *gegraptai*, thus showing that a contextual separation is no serious obstacle to its connection with *gegraptai*.

Consistency of usage by the same author is the stronger consideration, so the sense "the book of life written from the foundation of the world" is the best solution. This sense fits into the immediate context better too. It advances the argument that continues through 13:10 by implying that the elect are predestined to refrain from beast-worship and therefore suffer persecution. This reassures them in the midst of their powerlessness against the beast, they are still in the keeping providence of God, having been there since the foundation of the world (Ladd). (1128-29)

[16] For a biblical study on this topic see the hopefully upcoming book, *Suffering: Why Do Bad Things Happen to God's People?* that will be available online at www.trainingtimothys.com.

[17] The Greek here can be translated as **tested** or tempted (cf. *BDAG*).

[18] The translation of Rev 13:8 is the NLT except that **saints** replaces **God's holy people** as in the 1984 NIV.

Appendices

Appendix A

Endtimes Essentials
Book #2

The Beginning of Birth Pains

The First Endtime Events

Part I
Introduction to the Beginning of the Endtimes

The painful beginning of the end

1: Understanding the Beginning of the Endtimes

A) The importance of The Beginning of Birth Pains *The Church will be there!*

B) God expects us to correctly interpret prophetic Scripture

B.1) Objections to God's expectation to correctly interpret prophetic Scripture

B.2) The command of 2 Timothy 2:15

C) God expects us to recognize the fulfillment of prophetic Scripture

C.1) The expectation that we can obey Christ's commands to recognize signs of His Return in current events

C.2) Unbiblical criticism about obeying Christ's command to "Watch!"

C.3) Common mistakes made in obeying Christ's command to "Watch!"

D) God's predictions and promises regarding the correct interpretation and application of prophetic Scripture

D.1) The prediction that the meaning of Daniel would remain hidden until the Endtimes were near *Dan 12:4a*

D.2) The prediction of increased study & understanding of prophetic Scripture *Dan 12:4b*
D.3) The promise of teachers with insight on the Endtimes *Dan 11:33; 2 Tim 2:7*
E) Determining when the Endtimes begin *3 testimonies*

2: The Beginning Events of the Endtimes
A) The primary biblical texts & events of The Beginning of Birth Pains
Table: "These are the beginning of birth pains"
B) What will be the first events of the Endtimes?
B.1) The events occurring before and within The Beginning of Birth Pains
B.2) The first 6 primary Endtime events
Table: The 6 First Primary Events of the Endtimes

3: The Nature of The Beginning of the Endtimes
A) The primary nature of The Beginning of Birth Pains *Increasing Pain!*
Graphic: The Increasing Birth Pains of the Endtimes
B) Are The Beginning of Birth Pains Christ's Wrath? *No!*
C) God's sovereignty over The Beginning of Birth Pains
D) God's purposes & plan for The Beginning of Birth Pains

Part II
The 10-nation Endtime Coalition
The first Endtime event

4: The Activities & Attributes of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition
A) Introduction to the 10-nation Endtime Coalition
B) The Coalition's activities
B.1) Where does the existence of the Coalition fit into the sequence of Endtime events?

B.2) The Coalition will align with the Antichrist to burn down Endtime Babylon in one hour *(Rev 17-18)*
B.3) The Coalition will be the foundation of Antichrist's Beast Empire
B.4) The Coalition will be among the core nations in the Battle of Armageddon
B.5) The Coalition's duration
C) The Coalition's attributes
C.1) The Coalition will be Daniel's fifth unbelieving empire
Table: Pagan world empires predicted in Daniel
C.2) The Coalition will be 10 nations existing in the Endtimes & the foundation of Antichrist's world-wide Beast Empire
C.3) The Coalition will be divided, diverse, and of varying military strength
C.4 The Coalition's relationship to the Roman Empire [Online version only]
D) Conclusions regarding the biblical attributes of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition

5: The 10-nation Endtime Coalition & the Battle of Armageddon *Ezek 38:1-6*
A) Using participants in the Battle of Armageddon to identify the 10-nation Endtime Coalition
B) Identifying the potential countries predicted to be at the Battle of Armageddon
B.1) Identifying Magog: *Russia*
Graphic: The Land of Magog (Scythia)
B.2) Identifying Rosh, Meschech & Tubal: *Russia & Turkey*
B.3) Identifying Gomer and Togarmah: *Russia & Armenia*
B.4) Identifying Persia, Cush, and Put: *Iran, Egypt, & Libya*
Graphic: Location of "Cush" in Egypt & Sudan
B.5) Identifying "*kings from the East*" (Rev 16): *China & India*

C) Biblical candidates for membership in the 10-nation Endtime Coalition based on their predicted presence at the Battle of Armageddon.

6: A Potential Modern Candidate for the 10-nation Endtime Coalition: *The SCO*

A) Introduction to identifying the 10-nation Endtime Coalition

B) What is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (*SCO*)?

C) How does the SCO match the 7 biblical attributes of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition?

Table: A comparison of the nations predicted to be at the Battle of Armageddon, candidates for the 10-nation Endtime Coalition, & the current SCO

Table: The SCO's fulfillment of prophecies about the 10-nation Endtime Coalition

D) The limited "window" to confirm the SCO is the 10-nation Endtime Coalition

Part III
The Rising Antichrist

His initial emergence in the world

7: An Introduction to the Antichrist

A) The Antichrist's prominence in Scripture & neglect in modern theology

B) The Antichrist's purpose: *Opposing & imitating Christ by worldwide dominion*

C) The Antichrist's strategy: *Supernatural deception, catastrophic destruction, and human desperation (Rev 6:1-8)*

D) The Antichrist's 7 primary activities

Table: Antichrist's 7 Primary Activities

8: Recognizing the Rising Antichrist *The leader of a minor country in Magog but famous & admired worldwide*

A) Unbiblical & unreliable ways to identify the Antichrist
  A.1) The unbiblical guesses of Nero, Hitler, Putin, and popes
  A.2) Popular but insufficient ways to identify the Antichrist (Dan 8:23; 2 Thess 2:3-4)
  A.3) The obscurity of the number of Antichrist's name *666*
B) The Antichrist will emerge as the leader of a small country (Dan 7:8)
C) The Antichrist will come from the land of Magog (Ezek 38:2)
D) The Antichrist will be a Jew (Dan 11:37)
E) The Antichrist will be a world-famous person (Rev 13:3-4)
F) A remarkable modern example of a man matching the biblical attributes of the Rising Antichrist *Volodomyr Zelenskyy*

9: Confirming the Rising Antichrist *The remarkable convergence of evidence in our world that the beginning of the Endtimes may be near*
A) The Rising Antichrist "will succeed in everything he does" (Dan 8:24)
B) The Rising Antichrist will "uproot" 3 leaders of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition (Dan 7:8)
C) The Rising Antichrist will successfully lead the world to a period of peace
D) The remarkable convergence of evidence in our world that the beginning of the Endtimes may be near
  D.1) The emergence of the SCO and Zelenskyy should prompt us to obey Christ's command to "Watch!"
  D.2) If Zelenskyy continues to fulfill other biblical prophecies then we should obey Christ's command to "Be dressed in readiness"
    Table: Increasing Confidence in Identifying the Antichrist
  D.3) Helpful analogies of readiness
    Table: U. S. Military DEFCON Levels
    Table: Levels of Readiness & Action for Endtime Events

Part IV
The Revealed Antichrist

The first certain sign the Endtimes have begun

10: The First Birth Pain *Antichrist as the First and Foremost False Christ*

A) The importance and difficulty of knowing when the Endtimes have begun [Online version only]

B) The Antichrist as the first & foremost False Christ (Matt 24:5)

B.1) The first birth pain, seal, and sign of Christ's Return are all described as the emergence of False Christs

B.2) The False Christs will be claiming to be Jesus Christ Himself returned to Earth

B.3) The timing of the False Christs' emergence & ministry *After the first & foremost False Christ, the Antichrist*

11: The First Seal *Antichrist's Imitation of the Real Christ* Rev 6:1-2

A) Introduction to the First Seal *The emergence of the Antichrist as the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun*

B) The First Seal & Antichrist's Rising [Online version only]

B.1) The success symbolized by his crown

B.2) The military victory symbolized by his horse and bow

C) The First Seal & Antichrist's Revealing & Resurrection

C.1) The opening of the First Seal portrays Antichrist's Revealing & Resurrection

C.2) The Antichrist will imitate the Real Christ in His Resurrection

C.3) The Antichrist will conquer the world through the deception of his Resurrection

C.4) Some early Endtime events seem to require Antichrist's Resurrection first

12: Antichrist's Revealing *The first certain sign the Endtimes have begun* [Online version only]

A) Paul's topic in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 *Antichrist's Revealing*

B) Paul's purpose in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 *Teaching the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun*
C) The nature of Antichrist's Revealing *Miraculous signs including Resurrection*
D) The sequence of events surrounding Antichrist's Revealing
D.1) Distinction between the Antichrist's Revealing & his Claim to be God
D.2) The Rebellion as Antichrist's Religious Covenant
Table: Suggested Endtime Events in Relation to Antichrist's Revealing
Graphic: Suggested Endtime Events in Relation to Antichrist's Revealing

Part V
The Resurrected Antichrist

13: The Effects of Antichrist's Resurrection on Unbelievers *Amazement, deception, worship, discipleship, & submission* Rev 13
A) Introduction to Antichrist's Resurrection *A real death & miraculous resurrection*
B) How will the Rising Antichrist be killed? *Perhaps public beheading*
C) The effects of the Antichrist's Resurrection on the unbelieving world *Universal amazement, deception, worship, discipleship, & submission*
C.1) The universal effect on unbelievers
C.2) The amazement & deception of unbelievers
C.3) The worship & discipleship of unbelievers
C.4) The submission of unbelievers

14: Antichrist's Religious Covenant & False Prophet
A) The nature of Antichrist's Covenant *a religious covenant*
B) The timing of Antichrist's Religious Covenant
C) The Antichrist's False Prophet [Online version only]
C.1) Biblical texts describing the False Prophet

C.2) The False Prophet's purpose & activities in The Beginning of Birth Pains *Promoting Antichrist's worship with statues*

D) The significance of Antichrist's Religious Covenant for Israel *Finish their rebellion & build their temple* [Online version only]

15: The Surprising! Significance of Antichrist's Religious Covenant for the Last Generation Church *It begins God's 7-year countdown to Christ's Return*

A) The 8 times Scripture says The Greatest Persecution will last exactly 1,260 days

B) God's desire for the Last Generation Church to know the exact day Christ will Return

Graphic: The 7-year Countdown to Christ's Return

C) Refuting the objections

16: The Effects of Antichrist's Resurrection on False Christians *The shock & pain of the Great Apostasy*

A) The prediction of the Great Apostasy *Matt 24:10* [Online version only]

B) The nature of the Great Apostasy *Matt 7:21-23*

B.1) The magnitude of the Great Apostasty

B.2) The deception of false faith

C) The deception of false faith

D) The progression of the Great Apostasy

E) The pain of the Great Apostasy

17: The Effects of Antichrist's Resurrection on Real Christians

A) Antichrist's Resurrection will immediately begin worldwide and severe discrimination of real Christians

Table: The 3.5 Year Progression of Antichrist's Career against the Church

Graphic: The 3.5 Year Progression of Antichrist's Career against the Church

B) Biblically informed Christians will understand the meaning of Antichrist's Resurrection *Dan 12:10*

C) Biblically misinformed Christians will be shocked and confused

Part VI

Other Events During The Beginning of Birth Pains

18: The Unprecedented Catastrophes in The Beginning of Birth Pains

A) An introduction to the Seals of Preparation [Online version only]

Table: The First Primary Events of the Endtimes

Table: The Four Seals of The Beginning of Birth Pains

B) Wars during The Beginning of Birth Pains *The 2nd Seal*

B.1) War in the 2nd Seal *Rev 6:3-4*

B.2) The annihilation of Endtime Babylon *Rev 17-18*

B.3) War in Christ's Endtimes Teaching *Matt 24:6-7*

B.4) Antichrist's Wars *Daniel*

C) Severe economic hardship during The Beginning of Birth Pains *The 3rd Seal*

D) Other deadly catastrophes during The Beginning of Birth Pains *The 4th Seal*

E) The ongoing but limited effect of The Beginning of Birth Pains

19: Descriptive Outline of Endtimes Events

A) The 7 Primary Endtime Events in order of their occurrence

B) A list of 25 Endtimes events in a suggested order

C) Detailed outline of Endtimes events [Online version only]

20: Estimated Duration of Endtime events *about 12 years* [Online version only]

A) Duration of Daniel's Last Seven Years

Graphic: Duration of Seals
B) Duration of Endtime events before Daniel's Last 7 Years
C) Duration of Endtime events after Daniel's Last 7 Years
Graphic: Suggested Time Intervals of Endtime Events
Graphic: The 7 Year "Careers" of Christ & Antichrist

21: Are You Ready for the Endtimes?
A) Where are we at in recognizing the beginning of the Endtimes?
Table: Increasing Confidence in Identifying the Antichrist
Table: Levels of Readiness & Action for Endtime Events
B) What can we do now to prepare for the Endtimes?
B.1) "Tornado Watch" Stage
B.2) The "Tornado Warning" Stage
C) How should we feel about possibly living in the Endtimes?
Grief, joy, and confidence, but not fear

Appendices

A: Detailed Table of Contents for *The Beginning of Birth Pains*
B: Summary Sheet for 10-nation Endtime Coalition [Added Online version only]
C: Summary Sheet for The Rising Antichrist [Added Online version only]
D: Graphic: A Biblical Sequence of Endtime Events [Online version only]
E: Will People Get Saved During the Endtimes? [Online version only]

Appendix B
The 10-nation Endtime Coalition

Summary of *Endtimes Essentials* book #2: *The Beginning of Birth Pains* (*BBP*) chs. 4-6

The big idea: The prophesied 10-nation Endtime Coalition may be emerging in our world.

A) What is the Coalition?

The ten leaders/nations who unite with the Antichrist to form the base of world-wide power for Antichrist's Beast Empire. (Rev 17:12-13) **The ten horns you saw are <u>ten kings</u>** [the 10-nation Endtime coalition] **... They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast.** (cf. Dan 2:41-44; 7:7, 23-25)

B) The Coalition's prominence and descriptions in Scripture

Mentioned at least 14 times in Daniel and Revelation as **ten kings**, **ten horns**, and ten **toes** (Dan 2:34, 41-43; 7:7-8, 20, 24; Rev 12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7; cf. *BBP* ch. 4, sec. A).

C) The Coalition's establishment may be the first Endtime event to occur

It seems the Coalition will be established before the Antichrist becomes prominent. (Dan 7:24-25) **Its ten horns are ten kings who will rule that empire** [NLT]**. <u>After</u> them another king will arise** [the Antichrist]**, different from the earlier ones** [NIV] **... He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One** [NASB; cf. 7:8].

D) The Coalition's 7 biblical attributes

1) Will be exactly 10 nations (Dan 2:44; 7:24; Rev 17:12; cf. ch. 4, sec. A).

2) Will emerge in the world <u>before</u> the Antichrist emerges (Dan 7:8, 24; cf. *BBP* ch. 4, sec. B.1). Therefore, it may be the first Endtime event to occur.

3) Will possess nuclear weapons that will be used by the Antichrist to **burn down** in **one hour** the world's foremost economic power, **Babylon the Great**, such that no people ever live there again (*BBP* ch. 4, sec. B.2).

(Rev 17:16) **The ten horns** [Coalition] **that you saw and the beast** [Antichrist] **will hate the** [spiritual] **Prostitute** [**Babylon the Great** 17:5] **and these will permanently remove all people from her** [*ērēmōmenēn*] **and strip her naked and they will devour her body and will burn her down with fire** [*katakausousin*]**... in one hour** such that no one ever lives there again (cf. 18:10, 17, 19, 21-23)

4) Will be both militarily very strong, and very weak (cf. Dan 2:42; cf. *BBP* ch. 4, sec. C).

5) Will be very diverse in race, culture, and language (Dan 2:43; cf. *BBP* ch. 4, sec. C).

6) Will be divided and have internal conflicts (Dan 2:41, 43; cf. *BBP* ch. 4, sec. C).

(Dan 2:41-43) **The feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the** [military] **strength of iron** [like Roman Empire] **in it... so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united.**

7) Will wage war against the Lamb [Christ] at the Battle of Armageddon (Rev 17:14; cf. Rev 16:14, 16; 19:19; Ezekiel 38:1-6; cf. *BBP* ch. 4, sec. B.4 and ch. 5).

Is there a reasonable candidate for the 10-nation Endtime Coalition emerging in the world today?

A) What is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)?

The SCO is the largest economic, political, and military alliance in the world, uniting 40% of the world's population. It was started in 2001 by Russia and China and is scheduled to consist

of ten nations in 2024, which will also include Iran, India, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Belarus. (cf. *BBP* ch. 6, sec. B)

B) How does the SCO compare with the 7 biblical attributes of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition?

(cf. *BBP* ch. 6, sec. C)

1) Will be exactly 10 nations in 2024 (Dan 2:44; 7:24; Rev 17:12; cf. ch. 4, sec. A).

2) Will emerge in the world before the Antichrist emerges (Dan 7:8, 24; cf. ch. 4, sec. B.1).
It is doubtful the Antichrist will be revealed before 2024.

3) Will possess nuclear weapons (Rev 17:16; 18:10, 17, 19, 21-23; cf. ch. 4, sec. B.2).
Four current members possess nuclear weapons, with Iran working on it. Russia and China possess the 1st and 3rd largest nuclear weapons arsenals in the world.

4) Will be both militarily very strong, and very weak (cf. Dan 2:42; cf. ch. 4, sec. C).
Russia, China, India are ranked the #2, #3, & #4 most powerful militaries in the world. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan are ranked #62, #90, & #111.

5) Will be very diverse in race, culture, and language (Dan 2:43; cf. ch. 4, sec. C).
The SCO is spread out over 60% of the land mass of Eurasia. Each member has its own language with a great diversity in cultures and religions.

6) Will be divided and have internal conflicts (Dan 2:41, 43; cf. *BBP* ch. 4, sec. C).
Currently a war going on between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. India and Pakistan despise one another. There have even been recent border clashes between China and India.

7) Will wage war against the Lamb [Christ] at the Battle of Armageddon (Rev 17:14; cf. Rev 16:14, 16; 19:19; Ezek 38:1-6; cf. *BBP* ch. 4, sec. B.4 and ch. 5).

(Ezek 38:1-6) **Set your face against Gog** [Antichrist]**, of the land of Magog** [Russia & satellite nations]**, the chief prince of Meshek and Tubal … and say… "I will … bring you out with your whole army … Persia, Cush and Put will be with them … also Gomer with all its troops, and Beth Togarmah from the far north with all its troops—the many nations with you.**

Ancient people groups predicted to be at the Battle of Armageddon (cf. Ezek 38; Rev 16)	**Modern nations predicted to be at the Battle of Armageddon** SCO's 10 members shaded	**Nations that are scheduled to be full members of the SCO in 2024 & predicted to be at Armageddon**
• Magog • Rosh • Meshech • Tubal • Persia • Cush • Put • Gomer • Beth-togarmah • Kings east of the Euphrates	• Russia • Russian "satellite" countries (Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan) • Iran • Afghanistan • Turkey • Armenia • Egypt • Sudan • Libya • China • India • Pakistan	1. Russia 2. China 3. India 4. Pakistan 5. Iran 6. Kazakhstan 7. Kyrgyzstan 8. Tajikistan 9. Uzbekistan 10. Belarus

Appendix C
The Rising Antichrist

Summary of *Endtimes Essentials* book #2: *The Beginning of Birth Pains* (*BBP*) chs. 7-9

The big idea: The Antichrist may be emerging in our world.

A) The Four Stages of Antichrist's Career (*BBP* ch. 7, sec. D)

1) Rising Antichrist's initial emergence on the Earth as a **little horn** and Jewish leader of a minor country in **Magog**. (Dan 7:8; 8:9; Ezek 38:2)

2) Resurrection Antichrist's burst onto the world scene resulting in his worldwide worship. Probably the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun (Rev 6:1-2; 13:1-14)

3) Wrath Antichrist's persecution against God's people (Matt 24:15-22; Rev 6:9-11; 13:5-7)

4) Punishment Christ's judgment on the Antichrist after Christ's Return (2 Thess 2:8; Rev 20:10)

B) The 7 biblical attributes of the Rising Antichrist

1) He will initially emerge as the leader of a relatively minor country (cf. *BBP* ch. 8, sec. B)

As I was thinking about the ten horns, there was another one, a little horn [the Rising Antichrist]**. It was rising up** [*cliq*: "ascending"] **among the ten horns…** [It] **started small but grew in power … until … it took away the daily sacrifice from the LORD** (Dan 7:8; 8:9,11).

2) The Antichrist will be from **the land of Magog** (Ezek 38:2) which is the modern country of Russia and nations in its vicinity. (cf. Rev 16:16, cf. v. 14; 19:11-21; cf. *BBP* ch. 8, sec. C)

He will be leading the armies against Christ at the Battle of Armageddon. Therefore, the Antichrist will be **Gog, of the land of Magog** (Ezek 38:2). This is well known as the ancient **Scythian** empire (Col 3:11) which is the modern country of Russia and its satellite nations.

3) The Rising Antichrist **will have no regard for the** Jewish **God** [*ĕlōhîm*] **of his fathers** and will therefore be a Jew (Dan 11:37), which will be required to be accepted by Israel when he

is **claiming, "I am the Messiah," and will deceive many** (Matt 24:5 NIV).

4) He will become very famous and admired in the whole world (cf. *BBP* ch. 8, sec. D)

Even though he will be the leader of one of these minor countries in **Magog** (Ezek 38:2), he will be recognized by the whole world because when he is killed and resurrected, every unbeliever in the world will know who he is and will worship him.

I saw that one of the heads of the beast [Antichrist] **seemed wounded beyond recovery—but the fatal wound was healed! The whole world marveled at this miracle and gave allegiance to the beast… all the people who belong to this world worshiped the beast … who was fatally wounded and then came back to life.** (Rev 13: 3, 8, 14 NLT)

5) He will be supernaturally successful, which may include victory in war (*BBP* ch. 9, sec. A)

The horn [Antichrist] **succeeded in everything it did... A fierce king, a master of intrigue, <u>will rise to power</u>. He will become very strong, <u>but not by his own power</u>. He will cause a shocking amount of destruction and <u>succeed in everything he does</u>.** (Dan 8:12, 23)

Another king will <u>arise</u> (Dan 7:24). **Arise** (*qûm*) can mean "victory in war or struggle."

6) He will "uproot" 3 leaders of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition (cf. *BBP* ch. 9, sec. B)

A little horn … was rising up among the ten horns and <u>three of them</u> were uprooted by it. (Dan 7:8, 24)

7) He will successfully lead the world to a period of peace (Rev 6:1-4; cf. *BBP* ch. 9, sec. C)

A **conquest** by peaceful means is reflected in **the first seal** by the Antichrist being a **rider** on a **white horse** who **held a bow**, but without arrows. This suggests perhaps the arrows have been expended and peace achieved. The world will love a peacemaker as unbelievers in the Endtimes will be **saying, "Peace and safety"** (1 Thess 5:3). But the **rider** in **the second seal** clearly depicting war, will be **given power to <u>take peace</u> from the earth** (Rev 6:4). This suggests that during the events of the First Seal peace will be established.

Is there a reasonable candidate for the Rising Antichrist emerging in the world today?

A) How does Volodymyr Zelenskyy compare with the 7 biblical attributes of the Rising Antichrist?
(cf. *BBP* ch. 8, sec. E; ch. 9 secs. A-C)

1) The Antichrist will **start small** (Dan 8:9) as the leader of a relatively minor country.

The world hardly knew where Ukraine was located, or who Zelenskyy was, before the war.

2) The Antichrist will be from **the land of Magog** (Ezek 38:2) which is the modern country of Russia and nations in its vicinity.

Zelenskyy was born in Ukraine which is located in the geographical location of **Magog**.

3) The Rising Antichrist will be a Jew (Dan 11:37; Matt 24:5), but abandon the Jewish faith.

Zelenskyy was born to Jewish parents committed to the Jewish faith, but he has **no regard for the God of his fathers**.

4) He will become very famous and admired in the whole world.

Zelenskyy is arguably the most famous and admired person in the world today, especially in Europe. *Time* magazine's "Person of the Year" for world influence in 2022. Recently dominated the G-7 Summit. Has been invited to speak before every major parliament in the free world and at numerous world-wide events.

Zelenskyy is the first person in human history to potentially fulfill all 4 of the above biblical prophecies about the Rising Antichrist.

5) He will be supernaturally successful, which may include victory in war

Zelenskyy has led the #22 ranked military in the world to defend his country against the #2 ranked military in the world. He has persuaded over 40 nations to give over $180 billion to his cause. He has claimed from the beginning of the war that Ukraine will take back all occupied territory, including Crimea. If he is successful in doing all of this, it would seem to be an example of supernatural success.

6) He will **uproot** 3 leaders of the 10-nation Endtime Coalition

The leaders of Russia, Belarus, and Iran are all in the SCO, among the most enduring and powerful dictators in the world, and uniquely opposed to Ukraine. If Zelenskyy wins the war it seems he will demand Putin, Lukashenko, and Khamenei are replaced, and current events in these countries give evidence that the people themselves will want this as well. If these 3

leaders fall it would seem to be a very specific fulfillment of biblical prophecy.

7) He will successfully lead the world to a period of peace (Rev 6:1-4)

Zelenskyy already called for a world peace summit back in 2022. If he wins the war, he will be a good candidate to promote world peace, especially if he is a cause of the downfall of the dictators of Russia, Iran, and Belarus.

B) Conclusions about Zelenskyy & the Rising Antichrist (*BBP* ch. 9, sec. D)

1) Because Zelenskyy is already the first person in human history to be a world-famous and admired Jewish leader of a small country in Magog (prophecies #1-4 above), it is reasonable to suggest there is a 60% probability he will be further confirmed to be the Antichrist.

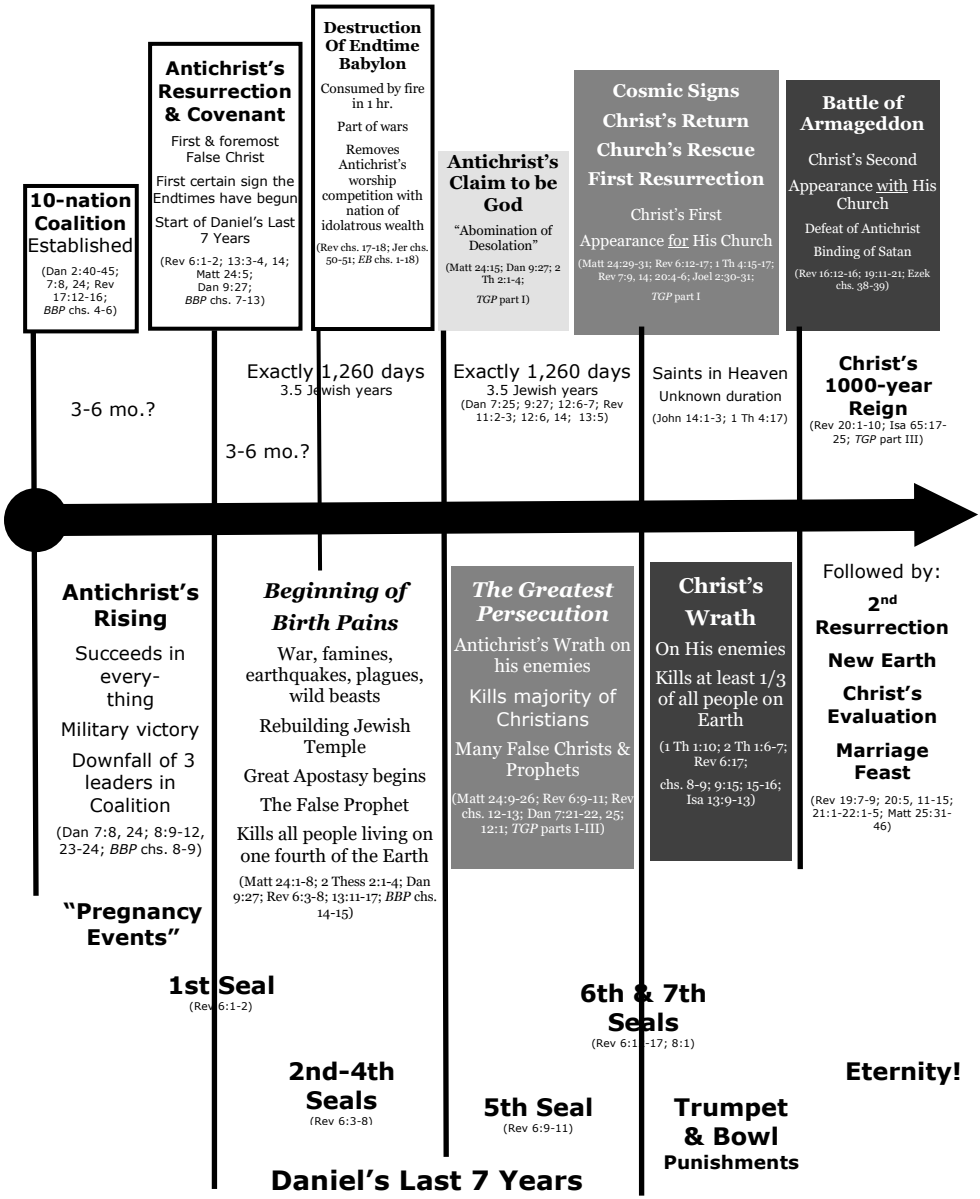
2) If Zelenskyy is successful in removing the Russian army from all Ukrainian territory, and causing the downfall of the leaders of Russian, Belarus, and Iran, and the SCO remains 10 nations, then it is reasonable to suggest there is an 80% probability he will be further confirmed to be the Antichrist.

3) If Zelensky does not win the war, or fades away in popularity, then the probability of him being confirmed as the Antichrist would reduce to about 20%.

4) If Zelenskyy is killed and miraculously resurrected from the dead, it will be the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun, and he is the Antichrist.

Appendix D

A Biblical Sequence of Endtime



Foundational Texts for the Substance & Sequence of Endtime Events
Matt 24:1-31; 2 Th 2:1-4; Rev chs. 6-7; 12-13; 17-19; Dan chs. 2, 7;
CET chs. 3-9

Materials referenced
CET: *Christ's Endtimes Teaching*
BBP: *The Beginning of Birth Pains*
EB: *Endtime Babylon*
TGP: *The Greatest Persecution*

The Beginning of Birth Pains

Appendix E

Will People Get Saved During the Endtimes?

A) Scripture argues against anyone getting saved after Antichrist's Resurrection at the very beginning of the Endtimes (Rev 13:8; 14:9, 11)

Reprobation is a theological word that refers to people who are so hardened they cannot be saved. Even God gives up on them. Such people may be described by Paul who writes:

> **Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, <u>he abandoned them</u> to their foolish thinking** [**God gave them over to a depraved mind**, NIV] **and let them do things that should never be done.** (Rom 1:28 NLT)

The topic of reprobation is too large to enter here, although it is clearly taught in Scripture (cf. Matt 12:30-32; John 12:37-41; Rom 9:18; 2 Tim 3:8; Tit 1:15-16; Heb 6:4-9; 10:26-27 [1]). What will be argued here is this. Antichrist's Resurrection and his resulting worship will cause every unbeliever at the time to be a reprobate and pass a "point of no return" in terms of their salvation.

It must be admitted that this claim can only be confirmed when the Endtimes begin, and we see for ourselves how pagans respond to the Gospel. But the claim of this chapter is in sharp contrast to many Christians who claim that a multitude of people will be saved in the Endtimes. For example, the Pre-tribulationist Tim Lahaye claims: "During the first part of the Tribulation the greatest soul harvest in all history will take place." [2]

However, the predictions in Revelation 13-14 indicate no one will be saved after Antichrist's Resurrection which will occur at the very beginning of the Endtimes. The timing of Antichrist's Resurrection was discussed in *The Beginning of Birth Pains* (chs. 10-17). There it was argued that this event is portrayed in the

opening of the First Seal (Rev 6:1-2) with the picture of a **rider** on **a white horse** imitating and claiming to be Christ and **conquer**ing the world with the deception of his resurrection (cf. Matt 24:5). Therefore, Antichrist's Resurrection is the first certain sign the Endtimes have begun.

What will be the result of Antichrist's Resurrection at the very beginning of the Endtimes? John writes of the Antichrist:

> **I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast** [Antichrist]**; they worshiped the dragon** [Satan] **because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast** [Antichrist]**...**
>
> **And all the people who belong to this world worshiped the beast** [Antichrist]**. They are the ones whose names were <u>not</u> written in the Book of** [eternal] **Life that belongs to the Lamb who was slaughtered before the world was made.** (Rev 13:3-4, 8, NASB)

If a person is among those **whose names were <u>not</u> written in the Book of** [eternal] **Life**, they can <u>never</u> be saved. After Antichrist's Resurrection, how will we know that someone's **name** is <u>not</u> in the **Book of** eternal **Life** and can <u>never</u> be saved? They will **follow after** and **worship the beast** Antichrist. The simple meaning of these prophecies is that everyone who **worship**s the Antichrist after his Resurrection cannot be saved. Their **worship** of the Antichrist will be the **kind of sin** that **will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come** (Matt 12:32 NIV).

Accordingly, their **worship** of the Antichrist will eventually lead to them taking the Antichrist's mark. What will be the punishment of those who do this. An Angel proclaims in Revelation 14:

> **If anyone worships the beast** [Antichrist] **and its image and receives its mark on their forehead or on their hand, they, too, will drink the wine of God's fury** [during Christ's Wrath]**, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. They will** [also] **be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb** [in Hell]**. And the smoke of their torment will**

> **rise for ever and ever. There will be no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name.** (Rev 14:9-11 NIV)

The Scriptures are clear: Everyone who is <u>not</u> in the Book of Life will worship the Antichrist and everyone who worships the Antichrist will go to Hell. That worship will begin rather immediately after the Antichrist's Resurrection.

It's as if the Antichrist's Resurrection will be an unprecedented spiritual dividing point for the world. At that point, everyone **whose names were <u>not</u> written in the Book of** [eternal] **Life … will worship the beast**. The same seems to be implied in 2 Thessalonians 2. Paul writes:

> **The coming of the lawless one** [Antichrist] **will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, and all the ways that wickedness deceives <u>those who are perishing</u>.**
>
> **They perish** [eternally in Hell] **because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.** (vs. 9-12 NIV)

Those who are perishing will be those who will not **be saved** and **whose names were <u>not</u> written in the Book of** [eternal] **Life**. At the time of Antichrist's **coming**, his **displays of** miraculous **power**, including his Resurrection will **deceive those who are perishing**. Why will this be? Because at this point in God's plan for the World, it would seem the Age of Grace has ended. **God** Himself will **send … those who are perishing … a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all** of them **will be** eternally **condemned**. [3] It seems no unbelievers will be able to resist God's **powerful delusion** in the Antichrist's Resurrection and **so they will believe the lie and so** they **will be** eternally **condemned**. It seems Antichrist's Resurrection will be an

unprecedented "turning point" in God's plan of salvation for the World.

It is possible there may be people whose names are in the Book of Life but have not yet been saved at the time of Antichrist's Resurrection. Maybe they resist worshipping the Antichrist for some time and get saved. But Scripture does not give any clear evidence of this and, in fact, argues against it.

First, it seems only those who would be indwelled with God's Spirit and regenerated will be able to resist the **powerful delusion** of Antichrist's Resurrection. If you are not regenerated before this event, it is unlikely you will be able to resist worshipping the Antichrist.

Second, despite all the popular claims of some great soul harvest in the Endtimes, Scripture never describes such a thing and to the contrary, describes great resistance to the Gospel. This will be the next subject.

B) The lack of repentance predicted in the Endtimes

B.1) The 144,000 sealed Jews will not be world evangelists

As noted above, especially Pre-tribulationists promote the very attractive idea that there will be a multitude of people saved in the Endtimes. Accordingly, MacArthur claims:

> Throughout the terrifying judgments of the Tribulation, God will save people. The result of the gospel preaching by the 144,000 Jewish evangelists, the two witnesses, and an angel flying in midheaven will be the greatest harvest of souls the world has ever known (cf. 7:9). [4]

It should be admitted most would have a bias in favor of accepting this view. Who would not want to believe that "the greatest harvest of souls the world has ever known" will happen after Christ's Return and the Church's Rescue. But such a bias must be resisted if we want to ensure we will have the biblical truth on

this matter. We will discuss the "144,000" in this section and the Gospel-preaching Angel in the next.

MacArthur mentions several events through which he believes a multitude of people will be saved during the Endtimes. The first is what he calls "the gospel preaching by the 144,000 Jewish evangelists." This refers to the **144,000 from all the tribes of Israel** who will be **sealed** for protection (Rev 7:4) at the time of Christ's Return before Christ's Wrath begins (cf. 6:12-17).

Contrary to Pre-tribulationists, the **144,000** are <u>never</u> described as "witnesses" or Evangelists, neither in Revelation 7:2-8, or in the rather extensive description of their character and actions in 14:1-5. [5] As usual, Pre-tribulationism is appealing to our natural bias, rather than clear statements of Scripture.

MacArthur assumes the **144,000** will be "evangelists" because Revelation 7 describes another group at Christ's Return:

> **A great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb… wearing white robes** and **who have come out of the great persecution** [*thlipseōs*] and who **have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb** (Rev 7:9, 14).

MacArthur and other Pre-tribulationists wrongly claim these people will be some kind of "post-rapture" Christians in the Endtimes.

However, concerning those who will **come out of the Great Persecution**, (7:14) there is nothing that tells us how many of them will be saved <u>during</u> **the Great Persecution**. The vast majority of them may have been saved <u>before</u> the Endtimes even began and they entered into **the Great Persecution**.

Contrary to Pre-tribulationism, this **great multitude** is the Church that will be persecuted during The Greatest Persecution and Rescued at Christ's Return. As discussed elsewhere, the Pre-tribulational view of some kind of "post-rapture" Christians completely ignores the sequence of Endtime events that Christ gave us in His Endtimes Teaching:

> The **great persecution** (*megalēs thlipseōs*) mentioned in Revelation 7:14 is the same **greatest persecution** (*megalē*

thlipsis) that Christ spoke of in Matthew 24:21. And Christ made it clear that the **greatest persecution** will occur before the Church's Rescue (cf. Matt 24:29-31). Therefore, it is impossible for this **great persecution** in Revelation 7 to occur after the Church's Rescue as Pre-tribulationism claims. (*Christ's Endtimes Teaching,* ch. 14, sec. C)

Therefore, the **great multitude** of saved people **from every nation** described in Revelation 7 lived on Earth before Christ's Return and the Church's Rescue. Nowhere does Scripture mention the presence of Gentile Christians on the Earth after Christ's Return and the Church's Rescue. Therefore, the **great multitude** of saved people **from every nation** described in Revelation 7 will not be the fruit of evangelism efforts by the **144,000** Jews. Accordingly, there is no description in Scripture of these **144,000** doing any evangelism.

The **144,000** Jews are described as those who **were purchased from among mankind and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb** (Re 14:4 NIV). Therefore, it seems they are the beginning of God's plan to restore Israel in the Endtimes. But the fact that they are specifically described as Jews argues against the claim they are evangelists to **every nation, tribe, people, and language** in the world.

B.2) The testimony of persecuted believers has no recorded effect

The Bible predicts that a specific way that the Gospel will be **preached to all nations** is through the testimony of persecuted believers to pagan officials. For example Jesus taught regarding the Endtimes:

> **"When these things begin to happen, watch out! You will be handed over to the local councils and beaten in the synagogues. You will stand trial before governors and kings because you are my followers. But this will be your opportunity to tell them about me. For the Good News must first be preached to all nations.**
>
> **But when you are arrested and stand trial, don't worry in advance about what to say. Just say what God**

> **tells you at that time, for it is not you who will be speaking, but the Holy Spirit."** (Mark 13:9-11 NLT)

But there is no indication here of what effect such testimonies will have on pagan officials in the Endtimes. In fact, because they will be leading the persecution of Christians, it is implied the effect will be very little.

B.3) The Gospel preaching Angel has no recorded effect

MacArthur mentions "the gospel preaching by … an angel flying in midheaven" during the Endtimes as another means by which there "will be the greatest harvest of souls the world has ever known." [6] This is a reference to John's remarkable statement in Revelation:

> **Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth —to every nation, tribe, language, and people. He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come."** (Rev 14:6-7 NIV)

Again, it is very attractive to believe a multitude of people will be saved in this event. But this is unlikely. First, while it is unclear exactly when this event occurs, it seems most likely to occur sometime very early in the Endtimes. Here we need to remember some things discussed in the previous section.

As noted above, there will be another Angel that seems to follow this "Gospel preaching Angel" rather immediately. That Angel will warn: **"If anyone worships the beast** [Antichrist] **and its image and receives its mark on their forehead or on their hand, they, too, will drink the wine of God's fury"** (Rev 14:9). This would seem to take place relatively early in the Endtimes in response to the results of Antichrist's Resurrection.

Therefore, if the "Gospel preaching Angel" speaks sometime after people are worshipping the Antichrist, then we should <u>not</u> expect anyone to get saved. The Scriptures say that everyone who worships the Antichrist does <u>not</u> have their name written in the

Book of Life. It will not matter for such people if even an Angel preaches the Gospel to them.

Second, we should note the contents of **the eternal gospel** the **angel** will **proclaim** to the world. It is easy to assume this will be a message of salvation. But the prophecy specifically tells us the contents of the Angel's message: **"Fear God and give him glory**." These people will **give God glory** by being scared of Him, not being saved by Him.

This is similar to another event described in Revelation chapter 11:

> **At the same time there was a terrible earthquake that destroyed a tenth of the city** [of Jerusalem]**. Seven thousand people died in that earthquake, and everyone else was terrified** [*emphoboi*] **and gave glory to the God of heaven.** (Rev 11:13 NLT)

The Greek word translated here as **terrified** is the same Greek word used in Revelation 14 when the Angel tells people to **fear** [*phobēthēte*]. The text says nothing about the frightened people in Revelation 11 getting saved. The same is true for the results of the Angel's preaching. The Angel's **gospel** will be **"Fear God and give him glory**." Likewise, the Gospel is described elsewhere in Scripture as **the gospel that displays the glory of Christ** (2 Cor 4:4 NIV), not necessarily the grace of Christ. But even if the Angel's **gospel** contains a message of saving grace, there is no evidence that anyone gets saved from it. Claiming otherwise is at best an assumption from silence on the matter. And as demonstrated further below, the biblical evidence is against it.

B.3) Why does Christ say the Gospel will be preached until the end of the world?

In Christ's Endtimes Sermon He predicted: **"This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come"** (Matt 24:14 NIV). It should be noted that Jesus may be referring to the event described above from Revelation when an **angel flying in midair** will have **the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth —to every nation, tribe, language and people** and

will say **in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come"** (Rev 14:6-7 NIV). Clearly, this is one way Christ's prediction in Matthew 24 will be fulfilled.

However, it is possible that this prediction will also be fulfilled by Christians in the Endtimes. It is also possible that Christ's prediction implies such evangelism may be successful in saving some during the Endtimes.

But even in Jesus' day, He warned that the purpose of Gospel preaching is at times to bring greater condemnation, not salvation. For the elect, **Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners** (1 Tim 1:15 NIV). But for the non-elect, **Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world"** (John 9:39 NIV). [7]

In fact, Jesus said He spoke in **"parables … to outsiders so that … when they hear what I say, they will <u>not</u> understand. Otherwise, they will turn to me and be forgiven"** (Mark 4:11-12 NLT). Romans 1 tells us that the purpose and effect of some divine revelation is to condemn, not save (cf. Rom 1:18-2:4).

This is why Christ repeatedly warned that greater revelation of His truth and power could lead to greater condemnation (cf. Matt 10:12-15; 11:20-24; John 15:22-24). [8] Accordingly, sometimes the ministry of His disciples was to cause a **testimony against** people. Jesus told His disciples:

> **"If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town, and shake the dust off your feet** [**as a testimony against them** Mark 6:11]**. Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town."** (Matt 10:14-15 NIV)

Therefore, sometimes the **testimony** of the disciples to the Gospel was a **testimony against** unbelievers to bring them greater judgement. Jesus seemed to describe the same purpose for the **testimony** of His followers in the Endtimes. In His Endtimes Sermon He warned:

> **"You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before**

> **governors and kings as witnesses to them** [**so you will bear testimony to me**, Luke 21:13]**. And the gospel must first be preached to all nations…** [But] **Everyone will hate you because of me."** (Mark 13:9-11, 13 NIV)

There is no indication here that the **testimony** of **the gospel** being spoken by these Endtime Christians will be for the purpose of saving people. On the contrary, Jesus immediately warned **"Everyone will hate you because of me."** [9]

B.4) The conversion of a multitude to Antichrist's Religion

Again, it is suggested the Pre-tribulational claim that a vast multitude of pagans are converted to Christianity in the Endtimes is largely an argument from silence. But what does the Bible clearly say about religious conversions in the Endtimes? There is not a single description of mass Christian revivals occurring in the Endtimes. On the contrary, the clearest and repeated descriptions of religious conversions in the Endtimes reflect the massive revival that will occur for the Antichrist's Religion.

Again, in response to Antichrist's Resurrection, **all the people who belong to this world** will **worship the beast** [Antichrist] (Rev 13:8). As a result, Jesus warned that:

> **"At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."** (Matt 24:10-14 NIV)

Yes, the **"gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations**," at least by an Angel circling the Earth (cf. Rev 14:6-7). But Jesus does not even hint that it will be received well. On the contrary, He specifically predicts that, **"<u>many</u> will turn away from the** Christian **faith"** and **many**

false prophets will appear and deceive <u>many</u> people.” Instead of Christian love growing in Christian revival, He says, “**the love of <u>most</u> will grow cold**.” Instead of describing a revival, He promises, “**those who stands firm to the end will be saved**” possibly implying there may not be many who will. Contrary to Pre-tribulationists, Jesus predicted the deception of **many** in the Endtimes, not their salvation.

The predictions only get darker in the Revelation. Again, MacArthur claims: “Throughout the terrifying judgments of the Tribulation [there will be] the greatest harvest of souls the world has ever known.” If that were true, wouldn’t there be a description of this in the Revelation? And as demonstrated above, the **multitude** being rescued out of the **great persecution** at Christ’s Return is not clear evidence of this (Rev 7:9, 14). On the contrary, Revelation describes the world rejecting Christ, not repenting.

After describing the death of **a third of mankind** in the **sixth trumpet** Punishment, we read, **The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons** (Rev 9:15, 20 NIV). In the **fourth bowl** Punishment Earth’s inhabitants will **be seared by intense heat**, but they will **curse the name of God, who had control over these plagues** and they will **refuse to repent and glorify him** (Rev 16:9 NIV). When **the fifth angel pour**s **out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom** is **plunged into darkness**, the **people** will **curse the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores** and they will **refuse to repent of what they had done** (Rev 16:10-11 NIV).

There are not great revivals of Christianity described during the Endtimes.

C) Practical applications to the lack of effective evangelism in the Endtimes

Many Christians may be tempted to boldly preach the Gospel in public during the Endtimes and risk their lives doing so. God may even lead some to do this. But the popular idea that evangelism

will be greatly successful in the Endtimes lacks any biblical support. As noted above, our initial attempts at evangelism in the Endtimes will reveal the truth of the matter.

During the Church Age, God expects Christians to openly befriend and sacrificially serve unbelievers in the hope of seeing them saved. But this may radically change in the Endtimes. If the worship of the Antichrist and taking his mark eternally and irreversibly dooms someone, and the whole world is doing this, then opportunities for evangelism will greatly diminish.

Even if people are getting saved in the Endtimes, then all Christians will be living in places where they are heavily persecuted and must be very careful how they do evangelism. As noted above, during the Endtimes Jesus commanded, **"You must be on your guard"** because **everyone will hate you because of me."** (Mark 13:9, 13).

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[1] For more on the doctrine of reprobation, see Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 506-9.

[2] Tim Lahaye, *Revelation Unveiled* (Zondervan, 1999), 153. Lahaye's claim that "During the first part of the Tribulation the greatest soul harvest in all history will take place" is based on his faulty Pre-tribulational interpretation of Rev 7:9, 14. This is discussed in *CET*, ch. 14, sec. C.

[3] More can be said on the question: "Will anyone be saved in the Endtimes?" For more on this see *Advanced Studies on the Endtimes*, ch. 10 at www.trainingtimothys.com.

[4] MacArthur, *Revelation*, 180.

[5] Unfortunately, in our opinion, Mounce (158), Osborne (311-313), and Beale (416-23) all interpret the 144,000 as the Endtime Church, reflecting the "replacement theology" that misunderstands the inaugurated but not yet complete unification of Israel and Church. Here dispensational/*Pre-tribulational* commentators are correct in arguing that the 144,000 are among the saved remnant from the restored Endtime nation of Israel (cf. Seiss, *Apocalypse*, 160-69; Walvoord, *Revelation*, 140-41; Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 473-82).

[6] In addition, MacArthur claims regarding the Gospel-preaching Angel:

> Here [the **gospel**] is described as eternal because it provides the means to eternal life. It is the good news that God will forgive all the sins of those who repent and believe… As earth's darkest hour approaches, the angel will proclaim the good news that it is not too late. There is still time to repent before God's judgment resumes. (86)

Likewise, Thomas claims: "The goal of the warning is to frighten potential beast worshipers into believing and to encourage the faithful to remain faithful" (1189).

[7] Carson writes regarding Christ's statement: **"For judgment I have come into this world"** (John 9:39 NIV):

> Formally, the entire clause "For judgment (*krima*) I have come into this world" stands in contradiction with 3:17, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn (*krinō*) the world" (cf. also 12:47). The charge is superficial. Even 3:17 is immediately followed by 3:18-21, with its contrast between darkness and light and its implicit threat of judgment (cf. also 3:36). Jesus' point in 9:39 is not that the very purpose of his coming was to condemn, nor even simply to divide the human race. He came to save, not condemn (12:47). But saving some entails condemning others. In that derivative sense, Jesus has indeed come for judgment.

[8] As Carson comments on John 15:22, for some: "by coming and speaking to them Jesus incited the … rejection of God's gracious revelation."

[9] Commenting on a parallel passage in Luke 21:12-19, Marshall writes regarding the use of *marturion* (**testimony**) here that it means: "the evidence that will be available on the day of judgement for the disciples and against their enemies" (768).