

Review: Understanding The End Of The Age

- We saw how we can view prophecy as *literal* or *allegorical* (symbolic).
- We looked at different approaches to prophecy: *preterism* (prophecy has been fulfilled); *historicism* (prophecy shows you the whole outline of history); and *futurism* (much prophecy has yet to come to pass).
- There are different viewpoints on the *Millennium*: some say there is no literal reign of Christ upon the Earth (*amillennialism*); some say we will bring it about through the Gospel (*postmillennialism*); and others believe that Christ will come to personally inaugurate it (*premillennialism*).
- There are also varying views on the Rapture of the Church – the doctrine that the final generation of saints will avoid physical death at Jesus’ coming. These viewpoints vary depending on where a person places the Rapture with reference to the last seven years (the *70th Week of Daniel*).
- Finally, we looked at some important end-times terms and characters, such as *the Day of the Lord*, *the Antichrist*, *the False Prophet*, and *the Restrainer*.

1. Purposes of the 70th Week of Daniel in God's Plan

Where is God taking history, and what is in store for the human race?

Daniel 9:26b-27: 26(b) “And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined. 27 Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.”

1.1. Review of the 70th Week and its duration

By way of review, it was prophesied that there would be 70 sets of 7 years each, for a total of 490 years. All those years have passed except for the final week, the final set of seven years which is still future. This is not a novel teaching:

...when the sixty-two weeks are fulfilled, and Christ has come, and the Gospel is preached in every place, the times being then accomplished, there will remain only one week, the last, in which Elijah will appear, and Enoch, and in the midst of it the abomination of desolation will be manifested, that is, Antichrist...

- Hippolytus of Rome, c. 200 AD

Those seven years culminate in the literal return of Jesus Christ. God will use that seven-year period to accomplish a number of important purposes:

1.2. God's purpose with Israel.

God will refine unbelieving Israel and draw them to Himself.

1.3. God's purpose with the nations.

God will use this time to judge the nations.

1.4. God's purpose with the Church.

God will use this time to purify the Church in her devotion to Christ.

1.5. In general, God will vindicate Himself in history and put down all rebellion.

Neither mankind nor Satan will ever rule the Earth again.

2. The Rise of Antichrist

2.1. Who is the Antichrist?

The Antichrist is the name that we generally give to the world-ruler who leads mankind's final rebellion against God's authority.

- He aggressively persecutes all who follow Christ and all who are of Israel.
- He is energized by the power of Satan and has authority to rule and to blaspheme for 42 months (1,260 days or three and a half years).
- “Antichrist” is from the Greek word *antichristos*, which means someone who is opposed to Christ or who is in Christ's stead.
- For the time being, the manifestation of Antichrist in power is being restrained by something or someone (a “restrainer”).

2.2. World-empires that persecute God's People.

Several empires have persecuted God's people down through time. These are portrayed symbolically in *Daniel* and in *Revelation*.

2.2.1. Nebuchadnezzar's statue. In Daniel 2, the prophet saw a vision of a statue in the form of a man. There was a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, loins and thighs of brass, legs of iron and the feet and toes of iron mixed with clay.

- The head was Babylon, and the other parts were kingdoms that would follow. In the days of the last kingdom, a stone “not made with human hands” would destroy the statue and become a mountain to fill the earth.
- People argue about the fourth and lowest part of the statue.

2.2.2. *The Beast with seven heads and 10 horns.* In Daniel 7 the prophet had a vision of four beasts which represent four kings who would rule on the earth. The fourth was the most frightening, and it had 10 horns.

- Daniel a horn grow up out of this fourth beast and then pluck up three of the existing horns by the roots. This new horn would subdue three kings and the saints would be given into his hand for three and a half years.
- In Revelation 12 this same beast, called a dragon, persecutes the woman who has given birth to Christ for 1,260 days.
- In Revelation 13 you see this beast persecuting for 42 months.
- Revelation 17 explains that these 10 horns are kings who receive power with the Antichrist and wage war against Jesus Christ.

2.2.3. *Who are the heads of the beast?* In Revelation 17, the heads are explained to be historical kings or empires which actively persecuted Israel.

- When John wrote Revelation, he was told that five had fallen and one was then existing. People suggest these were Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia and Greece. The one then existing would likely be Rome.
- The identity of the one who would come for a short space of time has been debated.
- The Antichrist is the 8th in this series, but he is also portrayed as the entire beast because he represents all, and is the culmination of all.

2.3 The False Prophet

The other evil beast-character in the end-times drama is the False Prophet. His activities are described in Revelation 13. John says that he looks like a lamb but speaks like a dragon. He causes people to worship the first beast.

2.4. The Great Apostasy

Paul taught in 2 Thessalonians 2 that the Day of Christ could not come unless the apostasy occurred and the “man of sin” (that is, the Antichrist) was revealed. An apostasy is a rebellion or a falling away from the faith.

2.5. The ethnicity of Antichrist

For the last 100 years or more, most people have thought he is a Roman, and have expected a revived Roman Empire to be his empire. More recently, many have come to believe that he will be a Muslim, commanding Muslim nations.

2.6. The fate of Antichrist

The fate of the Antichrist is to be destroyed by the glory of Jesus at his return.

3. Events of the 70th Week

3.1 The beginning of the 70th Week

The 70th Week is thought to begin when Antichrist makes an agreement with Israel and others. We read in Daniel 9, *...he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week.*

God rebukes Israel for doing this: *Because you have said, “We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol we are in agreement. When the overflowing scourge passes through, it will not come to us, for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood we have hidden ourselves...” Your covenant with death will be annulled, and your agreement with Sheol will not stand; when the overflowing scourge passes through, then you will be trampled down by it. (Isa. 28:15, 18)*

This is the only marker by which you could know that the 70th Week had begun.

3.2 The first half of the week

The first 3.5 years of the 7 are often considered to be years of peace and prosperity but it is not certain that this is the case.

- Antichrist wars against his neighbors. He is often identified with Daniel 11's "King of the North." This king will fight against the "King of the South."
- Note that in the last several years Israel has been making peace with what I would call the "King of the South" nations.

3.3 The Third Temple and the Abomination of Desolation

A significant feature of the last days is the rebuilding of the Temple by the Jews on the Temple Mount. Antichrist commits what we call an *abomination of desolation* – an abomination (or disgusting thing) that causes the Temple to be desolate. Daniel and Jesus spoke of a future abomination of desolation.

But in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate... (Dan. 9:27a)

"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.... For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. (Matt. 24: 15-16, 21)

...who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. (2 Thess. 2:4, ESV)

Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months. (Rev. 11:1-2)

Preparations have already been made for the construction of the Temple.

3.4 The Great Tribulation / Time of Jacob's Trouble

Halfway through the last seven years, the Antichrist commits the Abomination of Desolation. As Jesus said, this begins the Great Tribulation. Jesus said in Matthew 24:22, *And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.*

This period is seen in the Old Testament as the "Time of Jacob's Trouble."

6 Ask now, and see, whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale? 7 Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it. (Jer. 30:6-7)

1 "At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book.... 7 Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished. (Daniel 12:1, 7)

Revelation picks up this theme and timing in several places.

13 Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. 14 But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent... 17 And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. (Rev. 12:13-14, 17)

3.5 Two Witnesses

During the reign of the Antichrist, God utilizes two witnesses with a powerful prophetic ministry to release judgments.

3 And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.” 4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. 5 And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. 6 These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire. 7 When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. (Revelation 11:3-7)

3.6 The Seals, Trumpets, and Bowls

The *Book of Revelation* is the unveiling of Christ, and in that book we see how through His judgments and His actions Christ takes the Kingdoms of the world to Himself and dethrones Man and Satan.

The judgments of God seem to be contained in ***the seals, the trumpets and the bowls***. Revelation Ch. 5 shows Christ on His Throne beginning to open a scroll which contains seven seals. This imagery is meant to show Christ taking possession for God of the ownership of the world system.

SEAL 1 – white horse; conquest (Antichrist – 70 th week begins?)
SEAL 2 – red horse; war
SEAL 3 – rider on black horse; famine
SEAL 4 – rider on green horse; death and Hell
SEAL 5 – persecution and martyrdom
SEAL 6 – cosmic signs
SEAL 7 – silence, followed by the trumpet judgments
TRUMPET 1 – hail and fire
TRUMPET 2 – burning mountain
TRUMPET 3 – star on the waters
TRUMPET 4 – darkness
TRUMPET 5 – locusts from the pit
TRUMPET 6 – army of horsemen
TRUMPET 7 – worship in Heaven; preparation for the bowls
BOWL 1 – sores
BOWL 2 – judgment of the sea
BOWL 3 – judgment of rivers
BOWL 4 – heat
BOWL 5 – darkness and pain
BOWL 6 – Euphrates dried, armies of Earth gathered
BOWL 7 – massive earthquake and hail; followed by return of Christ

For the most part, we have no timeframes for events inside the 70th Week.

3.7 Possible Correspondence with Matthew 24

Some see a correspondence between Jesus' predictions in Matthew chapter 24 and the seals in Revelation 6.

Matthew 24:5	False Christs	Seal 1	White Horse; conqueror
Matthew 24:6	Wars and rumors	Seal 2	Red horse; war
Matthew 24:7	Famines	Seal 3	Black horse; famine
Matthew 24:7	Pestilence	Seal 4	Green horse; death
Matthew 24:9	Persecution	Seal 5	Martyrdom
Matthew 24:29	Cosmic signs	Seal 6	Cosmic signs

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