

THE GREAT TRIBULATION AND THE RAPTURE : PART 1

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Published On: September 15, 1997

Last Updated: June 18, 2025

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As I explain in a number of other articles which you'll find listed at the end of this same series, back in 2011-2012, my personal understanding of Bible prophecy began to undergo a major change. By July of 2016, my new theological perspective had solidified, and I published a seven-part series entitled "Jesus Christ's Return: Have We Been Deceived?", in which I expressed and explained my new understanding concerning some of the words of the ancient Prophets, as well as the words of Jesus and the Apostles.

You see, when I authored the original version of this series back in September of 1997, I was of a very different mindset than I am twenty-eight years later today. As I point out in the aforementioned series, as well as in more recent articles such as "Fight Against Futurism!", in 1997 I very strongly embraced a particular doctrinal belief system -- that is to say, a theological perspective -- which is commonly referred to as Futurism.

For those of you who may have never heard of this word, and

who thus may not fully understand what Futurism is, in the simplest of terms, it is a doctrine and belief system which takes ancient, already-fulfilled prophecies, and places them in our current time, or in the future, as if they have not been fulfilled yet. It is in fact because so many modern Christians now approach Bible prophecy from this false base, and this very misguided understanding, that they have become so terribly confused. You see, if you start off on a false premise and a false assumption, then everything you believe after that is false as well. It is just one lie built upon another, and one deception built upon another. That is just the way it works.

My dear friends, if you doubt that this is so, simply visit some of the many popular social networks and see what some of those Christians are saying and teaching, and you will be convinced. There is now so much doctrinal confusion out there, that it is mind-boggling. But the real tragedy is that while many of said Christians may be very sincere and well-meaning with regard to their beliefs, nevertheless, they don't even realize that they've become deceived, and that through their actions of sharing their false beliefs, they are unknowingly spreading the deception even further.

So exactly how do we avoid falling into this subtle snare? One of the best things that we can do is to not become so dogmatic, and so unbending in our personal understanding of the Scriptures, to the point that we reject anything which contradicts our current views. If we are truly being honest with ourselves, we need to acknowledge that none of us has a monopoly on the truth. Thus, we need to maintain a certain level of humility, and admit that we are all still learning and growing in matters concerning our Christian faith and doctrine.

I can certainly say this for myself. In fact, not only am I constantly learning new things as I continue to delve into the depths of God's Word, but I am also willing to change my views when the Scriptures reveal to me that I've been wrong about something. If you doubt that this is so, then consider the fact that right now I am in the process of updating this current series. Over the years I have authored a number of articles where I discuss this very topic, which you'll find listed at the end of this same series. These include the following ones, which I encourage you to read as your time permits:

Are You Flexible?

Facebook False Prophets and Misguided Teachers

Humility in Our Understanding of God's Word

My Evolving Theology

Please Stop Misinterpreting the Scriptures

Understanding the Bible in Context

The simple fact of the matter is that we must all trust in the Lord's guidance, and not in our human wisdom in order to understand these prophetic mysteries. We must put on the mind of Christ, and not try to understand these Scriptural truths with our carnal minds only. We must be led by the Holy Spirit of the Lord in our understanding. We must all diligently compare Scripture with Scripture, and rightly divide the Word of truth, as we are advised to do in the following group of verses:

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

Proverbs 3:5-6, KJV

"For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."

1 Corinthians 2:16, KJV

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

Romans 8:14, KJV

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

2 Timothy 2:15, KJV

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

Acts 17:11, KJV

As long as we all remain spiritually flexible, and do not become overly adamant concerning our personal beliefs and pet theories, the Lord will be able to continue to enlighten us, and to expand our understanding of the mysteries of His Word. Now as far as the interpretation of Bible prophecy is concerned, any degree of extreme rigidity on our part, could

not only stunt our spiritual growth, but even make us guilty of the same things of which the Lord accused the Scribes and the Pharisees of old. As I point out in articles such as the series "The International Jew and the Protocols Of Zion", it is indeed sad that they had made such a god out of their own rabbinic traditions, that when Jesus came along with God's truth, many of them fully rejected both Him and it, as is clearly born out by the following group of Bible verses:

"And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition."

Mark 7:9, KJV

"Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye."

Mark 7:13, KJV

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

Colossians 2:8, KJV

To continue, our sincere desire and hunger for the truth, through a correct understanding of God's Word should be our primary concern and motivation as we study Bible prophecy, and any other part of the Bible for that matter. We should not continue to embrace erroneous ideas and interpretations which have been clearly shown to not be in agreement with the truth which is found in God's Word. We must not idolize or make gods out of our personal beliefs. Neither should we continue to vehemently defend our false ideas once we have been shown to be in error. To do so is merely a matter of personal pride. Thus, we need to utterly forsake them.

Of course, at the same time, there is a delicate balance to be found in my words. In other words, once we've performed a judicious study of God's Word, and once we're convinced that God has revealed the truth to us, then by all means, it is only proper that we should firmly stand by what we believe He has shown us, keeping in mind, and tempering our beliefs with the thought that we are only human and still prone to possible doctrinal error. Thus, as the Apostle Paul taught in his discourse regarding meat eaters and vegetarians that is found in the fourteenth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, we need to be persuaded in our own minds regarding what we believe to be true, but not neglect to maintain a

healthy and humble attitude as well. Consider these verses:

"A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight."

Proverbs 11:1, KJV

"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

Romans 14:5, KJV

In the final analysis, each one of us must live and believe according to our own measure of personal faith. After all, it is by that alone that we will each be judged in the final day. We will not be weighed in the Divine Balances according to what other people believe, or according to what church or organization we happened to affiliate ourselves with in this current life. Rather, we will be judged as individuals when we ultimately appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, in order to receive our just reward, or else our punishment, as the following group of Bible verses clearly reveals:

"But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."

Matthew 12:36, KJV

"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

Romans 14:12, KJV

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

2 Corinthians 5:10, KJV

"Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead."

1 Peter 4:5, KJV

"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"

1 Peter 4:17, KJV

Having now explained all of the above to you, let us return to our primary discussion regarding Futurism, and the Great

Tribulation and the Rapture. One of the core beliefs behind Futurism is the belief that the return of Jesus Christ will occur at some point in the near future. However, even saying "near future" is a subjective phrase, the reason being that there are a lot of different points of view within Futurism. As a result, when someone states that the Lord will return soon, it is actually wise to inquire of such an individual exactly what they mean, because for some of them, "soon" is a matter of days, while for others, it could actually mean weeks, months or even years from now. In other words, there is simply no consensus. Everyone has their own particular belief regarding the word "soon", and this can quickly and very easily lead to confusion.

As I mention in the series "The Woman in the Wilderness and the 144,000", this very flexibility is in itself one of the key deceptions of Futurism; because due to its flexibility, a person who promotes Futurism has a layer of protection, so that it can be challenging to prove them wrong. Just ask a Futurist what they mean by "soon", and you will see exactly what I mean. If you continue to press them regarding what they mean by "soon", while they may heehaw around for a bit, eventually, they will be forced to resort to what has become the usual standby by saying something such as "No one knows the day or the hour". Thus, "soon" becomes an ambiguous word within Futurism. Do you understand?

Personally, I don't buy into that nonsense. As I point out in other articles, I believe that God is very specific when it comes to Bible prophecy. In other words, I am convinced that each prophecy has one specific fulfillment. It is not like a reusable battery, or a reusable rocket shot into the sky by Elon Musk. Once a prophecy has been fulfilled, well, it has been fulfilled, and it simply can't be recycled into something else according to our personal belief system. Yet sadly, I see so much of this happening today. Some of those misguided teachers now promote the erroneous belief that a prophecy can have multiple fulfillments, or what they call partial fulfillments, and then a final full fulfillment. I don't think so. That would be very confusing.

But concerning the Futurists, the worst of the lot are no doubt the date setters. Sadly, despite the fact that every single one of their predictions and interpretations has failed miserably during the past two hundred years, such foolish individuals just never seem to learn their lesson. And thus, you can still find some of them promoting their

misguided doctrines on some of the social networks where they continue to set specific dates for the Rapture, or for the Lord's Return, or for some other prophetic event.

This practice is quite prevalent on Facebook, which appears to be one of the favorite stomping grounds for these types of misguided individuals. I cringe every time I come across one of their deceptive posts. Now, I would say something to them, but I have already learned through experience that it will be to no avail. Such people either want to argue with me, or else they will just delete my comment and block me.

At any rate, it is upon this core belief in the near future return of Jesus Christ that a number of other beliefs are based. Most notable among these are those which concern the exact timing of such events as the theorized construction of a third Jewish temple in Jerusalem, the signing of the Holy Covenant, the rise of the Beast and the False Prophet, the appearance of the Two Sackcloth Witnesses in Jerusalem, the Great Tribulation, the 144,000, the Mark of the Beast, the destruction of Babylon the Great, the Battle of Armageddon, and the Rapture. The Futurist-leaning interpretation of all of these events form a part of this widely-accepted belief system.

As I said a moment ago, twenty-eight years ago when I wrote the original version of this series, I was a rather solid Futurist, and there was no way that anyone could convince me to believe otherwise. I had the very same expectations as so many other Christians. I embraced the same beliefs as many of my Christian friends still do today. I earnestly clung to the firm belief that many of the events I just mentioned to you were future events, and not past, fulfilled events. Most importantly, I enthusiastically awaited the return of Jesus Christ during my lifetime with eagerness and anticipation. Furthermore, I preached Futurism quite fervently to others for forty-two years of my adult Christian life. So, yes, I was quite sold-out to the doctrine.

So what happened? Well, after embracing Futurism for about forty-two years of my life, the Lord began to shake up my Futurist beliefs, and He challenged me with certain verses which we find in the New Testament that clearly contradict what I had so fervently believed for so many years of my life. You can read about the specific whys and wherefores in the aforementioned series called "Jesus Christ's Return: Have We Been Deceived?". But the end result of my renewed

study of the Scriptures is that I really had no choice but to make a complete U-turn in my understanding and personal belief system. I had to totally re-evaluate everything I had believed regarding Bible prophecy up until that point in my life. If I had not done so, I would still be sharing the deceptions of Futurism to this day. Instead, I chose to be flexible, and you can thank the Lord for that!

One of the byproducts of that major theological shift in my personal thinking is that I had to begin the very lengthy process of going back and re-reading all of my Bill's Bible Basics articles and series which had been written up until that point, and editing each one of them accordingly, so that they conform to my current beliefs. Thus, after I had written "Jesus Christ's Return: Have We Been Deceived?" in 2016, in which I fully explained how and why I had made such a dramatic shift in my thinking, I began to update all of my other articles and series where I discuss Bible prophecy to some degree.

My friends, that is precisely what I have been slowly doing ever since that year, and I am still far from done, because this is a one-man ministry, I am getting old, my health is now in very slow decline, and I just have so many different things that I need to attend to with the BBB ministry. In other words, in addition to updating all of my old articles, I am constantly writing new articles, creating new graphics, composing new poems and songs, compiling new topical KJV Bible Verse Lists, and keeping busy posting on the social networks. Trust me; it is a lot for an old guy like me, my friends. As such, your prayers are very much appreciated.

But, thank the Lord! Finally, after having authored this series almost twenty-eight years ago, I am getting around to giving it an update. And boy, let me tell you, it is needed, because my understanding regarding the precise timing of all of the major prophetic events -- Great Tribulation, Rapture of the Saints, Christ's glorious Return, etc. -- has changed dramatically. So then, shall we begin?

Due to the very mysterious and oft times cryptic nature of Bible prophecy, as well as our limited human understanding, there are a number of events within eschatology -- that is to say, within the study of Bible prophecy and the end of all things -- which have been assigned quite a variety of interpretations by those people who strive to understand God's Holy Word. One of these issues involves the precise

time frame for, as well as the length of, a period of great suffering which in the Gospels, Jesus refers to as "great tribulation". He also says that it will be a time of such great affliction as the world has never known before. This period has likewise been referred to by some people as "Jacob's Trouble".

This latter name is derived from the fact that this terrible time of great persecution involves the Jews and the nation of Israel. The terms "great tribulation", "tribulations" and "Jacob's trouble" find their origin in Bible verses such as the following. In some cases, these verses are referring to personal trials and tribulations which were endured by First Century Christians, while in other cases they are referring to a specific, intense period of suffering and persecution which came upon the Jews as a whole. It is the latter which I discuss in great detail in the series "Vespasian, Titus and the Fall of Jerusalem":

"Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even THE TIME OF JACOB'S TROUBLE; but he shall be saved out of it."

Jeremiah 30:7, KJV

"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be A TIME OF TROUBLE, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book."

Daniel 12:1, KJV

"For then shall be GREAT TRIBULATION, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elects sake those days shall be shortened . . . Immediately after the TRIBULATION of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

Matthew 24:21-22, 29-30, KJV

"For in those days shall be AFFLICTION, such as was not from

the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be . . . But in those days, AFTER THAT TRIBULATION, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory."

Mark 13:19, 24-26, KJV

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have TRIBULATION: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

John 16:33, KJV

"Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through MUCH TRIBULATION enter into the kingdom of God."

Acts 14:22, KJV

"But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, INDIGNATION AND WRATH, TRIBULATION AND ANGUISH, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;"

Romans 2:5-9, KJV

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall TRIBULATION, OR DISTRESS, OR PERSECUTION, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

Romans 8:35-37, KJV

"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; PATIENT IN TRIBULATION; continuing instant in prayer;"

Romans 12:10-12, KJV

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us IN ALL OUR TRIBULATION, that we may be able to

comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation. For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;"

2 Corinthians 1:3-10, KJV

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, BUT WE GLORY IN TRIBULATIONS also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

Romans 5:1-5, KJV

"I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you. Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful IN ALL OUR TRIBULATION."

2 Corinthians 7:3-4, KJV

"For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that WE SHOULD SUFFER TRIBULATION; EVEN AS IT CAME TO PASS, and ye know. For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain."

1 Thessalonians 3:4-5, KJV

"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;

So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith IN ALL YOUR PERSECUTIONS AND TRIBULATIONS THAT YE ENDURE: Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, FOR WHICH YE ALSO SUFFER: Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to THEM THAT TROUBLE YOU; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day."

2 Thessalonians 1:3-10, KJV

"I John, who also am your brother, and COMPANION IN TRIBULATION, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."

Revelation 1:9, KJV

"And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and TRIBULATION, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and YE SHALL HAVE TRIBULATION TEN DAYS: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

Revelation 2:8-10, KJV

"Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her INTO GREAT TRIBULATION, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works."

Revelation 2:20-23, KJV

"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of GREAT TRIBULATION, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them."

Revelation 7:13-14, KJV

Please go to part two for the continuation of this series.

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THE GREAT TRIBULATION AND THE RAPTURE : PART 2

Copyright 1994 - 2025 Bill's Bible Basics

Published On : September 15, 1997

Last Updated : June 18, 2025

Disagreements Concerning Time Frame And Length Of The Great Tribulation And Other Events, Rapture Harpazo And Caught Up, Pre-Trib Mid-Trip And Post-Trib Rapture Theories, My Former Post-Trib Position, Error Of Filtering Bible Prophecy Through The Lens Of Futurism, Futility Of Doctrinal Debates, Rapture Debates And Deception Upon Deception, Why Arguing About The Great Tribulation And The Rapture Is A Moot Point, Contrary To Futurist Thinking Many Prophetic Events Already Happened, Misguided Online False Prophets And Their Cults, History And Bible Prophecy Often Align And Confirm Each Other, Mistake Of Avoiding Extra-Biblical Sources, Misguided "I Only Need The Bible" Attitude, Years Of Serious Bible Study, Convinced By God's Word Itself, Don't Twist Pervert Or Mold God's Word To Conform To Your Beliefs, Error Of Taking Verses Out Of Their Proper Context, 1 Thessalonians 4 And Rapture Of The Saints, Peter And The Other Apostles Believed In Jesus' Soon Return, Kingdom Of Heaven Is At Hand, The Time Is At Hand, The Last Days, The Last Time, I Will Come To You, Caught Up Together, Gather Together, Possible Meaning Of The Carcase And Eagles

Continuing our discussion from part one, not only does this disagreement of views amongst Christians involve the exact time frame and length of the Great Tribulation, but it also involves the precise timing of the Resurrection of the Dead, as well as the Rapture of the Saints. Please note that the word "rapture" is not actually found in the Holy Scriptures. The actual phrase which is used in the New Testament of the KJV Bible is "caught up", as can be seen by the following verses which are found in the Apostle Paul's first Epistle to the Thessalonian church:

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, KJV

In the previous verses, the phrase "be caught up" is derived from the Koine Greek word "harpazo". Pronounced har-pad'-zo, Thayer's Greek English Lexicon states that this word means to seize, to carry off by force, to seize on, to claim for one's self eagerly, or to snatch out or away. This then is what is meant by the Rapture. In other words, the carrying away of the Saints -- both dead and living Saints -- to the Heavenly Realm at the time of the Lord's return. It is the precise timing of this event which has been a great source of debate within Christian circles for literally centuries.

Concerning the Rapture, today there are three main schools of thought. These are the Pre-Tribulation Rapture theorists, the Mid-Tribulation Rapture theorists, and last of all, the Post-Tribulation Rapture theorists. The first group claims that the Body of Christ is raptured prior to the start of the Great Tribulation. The second group is convinced that the Rapture occurs somewhere in the middle of the Great Tribulation. The last group holds the view that the Saints actually live through the Great Tribulation, and then the Rapture occurs. So which one of these views is the correct one?

Well, my friends, if you would have asked me this question a dozen years ago or longer, I would have told you without any hesitation that I identified as a Post-Tribber, meaning that

I believed in the Post-Tribulation Rapture of the Saints. I was quite sure of it and I had been very sure of it for over forty years of my life. I knew all of the verses, and I was quite able to convincingly defend my position. But that was then, and this is now, after the Lord finally set me on the right path in my understanding.

My friends, please remember what I wrote earlier. Once you get on the track of Futurism, it will majorly mess you up in a doctrinal sense, because from that point forward, you will automatically read, interpret and understand every single prophetic verse from that misguided perspective. You will in fact filter everything through that warped lens. Because you begin your quest for the truth based on the false assumption that everything -- or at least many things -- occurs in the future, you will end up way out in left field, just like so many Christians who I see rambling their nonsense on some of the social networks today. How tragic!

I am serious. I have seen certain netizens claim that we are already in the midst of the Great Tribulation. Others claim that the Rapture of the Saints will occur very soon -- any day now according to some of them -- after which the period known as the Great Tribulation will engulf the world. There have been times when I have tried to set some of these folks straight, but after a while, I finally realized that it is a futile endeavor. Why so? Well, because as I point out in my article "Should Christians Engage in Doctrinal Debates?", it is pointless to try to convince a person who doesn't want to be convinced. Until their mind and heart are really open to Scriptural truth, you can talk to them until you are blue in the face and it won't make a bit of difference. So you are just wasting your time.

So as I said, while all of these online Christians continue in their heated debates regarding exactly when the Rapture will occur in relation to the Great Tribulation itself -- some Christians argue that the Rapture is not even real to begin with -- none of them even realize that the timing of the Rapture is NOT even the actual starting point of their error. What they SHOULD be asking themselves is what is the real starting point of the Great Tribulation itself. Sadly, they won't or can't even do that, because in their deceived minds, they have already assumed that it is a future event. Thus, as I already explained in part one, such people are unknowingly building one deception upon another, because they missed the very first deception.

Now, concerning the precise timing of the Great Tribulation, what if I told you that regardless of your personal position, none of it really matters? Regardless of whether you embrace a Pre-Trib, Mid-Trib or Post-Trib position, what if it is all just a totally moot point? Why would I even dare to say this? Some of you reading this might automatically be thinking "Oh, that is because you obviously believe in the Pre-Tribulation Rapture now. As such, there is no need for you to worry about the Great Tribulation because you won't be here anyway."

Not so fast, my dear friends. That is NOT it at all. If that is your thinking, I suggest that you fasten your seat belt, because the Scriptural answer I'll now be providing may come as a big shock to you. Now, for those of my friends who have already read some of my other BBB articles, you may possibly already understand where I am coming from. But if not, I will just tell you. As I explain in the articles which are listed at the end of this series, I am fully convinced that many of the prophetic events which Futurists erroneously say haven't happened yet, have in fact ALREADY happened. In fact, I am convinced that they occurred almost two millennia ago during the First Century. Are you shocked? Well, you can't say that I didn't warn you.

Please understand that this is NOT a conclusion at which I arrived lightly or frivolously. I am NOT like certain online Christians who will look at current events, and then hastily look at a few Bible verses, and then say "Well, this event seems similar to these particular verses. These verses MUST therefore be talking about this event." And then these same misguided people go online and tell everyone that we're now witnessing fulfilled Bible prophecy through such-and-such current event. The next thing you know, they are shouting that Jesus is coming back at any minute, the Rapture of the Saints will very soon occur, and the Great Tribulation is about to begin.

My friends, as I said earlier, I see this very same scenario playing out over and over again online. Then, when nothing happens, and there is no return of Jesus Christ, no Rapture of the Saints, and no Great Tribulation, these Christians will either suddenly go silent, or else they will find some way to convince their followers that they didn't really say so-and-so. Often, they will simply say "Oh, you just didn't really understand what I said." Sadly, on and on this same game of deception will continue, because the gullible sheep

will forgive their misguided leader or wannabe prophet, and pretend that he never made such error. They are like little online cults with their false prophets. How tragic!

As I have said before, we cannot just pick out a few verses of Bible prophecy and lightly assign them to some modern-day event. If we do that, we end up with the doctrinal confusion that is now so prevalent on the social networks. As I had to learn myself, in order to really understand Bible prophecy, we ALSO need to study ancient history; because in many cases, Bible prophecy and secular history fit together like a hand in a glove. Secular history will in fact confirm what the Bible has already stated. Furthermore, until I began doing this myself years ago, there were so many prophecies in the Bible which I simply did not understand. Of course, I still haven't unraveled it all, but I certainly understand a lot more today than I did before.

Sadly, there are those Christians who will no doubt say in response, "Well, I have the Holy Spirit. I don't really need anything else. I don't need to study ancient history. I do not need Hebrew or Greek lexicons. I don't need to conduct online research. If God wants me to know something, I'm sure His Spirit will reveal it to me directly without relying on all of that other stuff." My friends, many years ago before the Lord blessed me with a little more wisdom and spiritual discernment, I had the very same attitude. I felt that the Bible was all that I needed. How wrong I was! So, friends, if you really want to gain a better understanding of Bible prophecy, please study secular history as well. You have a computer, or at least a cell phone, so please get to it!

To continue, the fact of the matter is that it took me years of serious Bible study to reach a point in my understanding -- goaded by what I now believe to have been the prompting of the Holy Spirit -- where I now realize that some of the prophecies which the Futurists insist have not happened yet, in fact ALREADY occurred a long time ago. My dear friends, stop and ask yourselves this question: What could possibly cause a man who was a solid Futurist for four decades of his life -- meaning me -- to make such a drastic change in his personal beliefs? It would have to be something extremely convincing, don't you think? Simply put, the answer is God's Word itself, and allowing it to interpret itself, instead of trying to force it to say what I had chosen to believe for so many years. Instead of accepting it for what it actually said, I was trying to mold it and interpret it my OWN way,

instead of God's way.

Sadly, this is precisely what the Futurists continue to do. They twist and pervert God's Word so that it conforms to their beliefs. This is why they don't understand that it is a moot point to be arguing about the time frame of the Great Tribulation, or the time frame of the Rapture, or the time frame of Christ's Return. They have been so blinded by their Futurist theology, that they take certain Bible verses out of their proper context, in order to try to validate their personal beliefs. As I already said, they will take verses which have absolutely nothing to do with us today, and they will interpret those verses as if they are speaking to them personally. However, this is most definitely not the case whatsoever. I fully understand this process, because I used to do the very same thing for many years due to my being under the delusion of Futurist theology. Not anymore.

For example, there are certain things in the Gospels and in the Epistles which were directed to First Century audiences, and NOT to Christians living today. A good case in point are the verses where Jesus and some of the Apostles talk about great tribulation and affliction coming upon Believers. But exactly which Believers and at what time? If you think that they meant those of us who are living today, if you believe that those particular verses are talking to you personally, that is where you have already gotten off-track, my friend. You are taking those Scriptures out of their proper context, and you have been seduced by Futurism, whether you realize it or not.

One very good example where this error is widely committed is in the well-known verses which we find in 1 Thessalonians 4, which I briefly discussed earlier. While some Christians remain convinced that the Rapture is a totally fabricated, false doctrine, others remain absolutely convinced that they represent the near-future Rapture of the Saints. But do they really? Allow me to share those verses with you again, and then we will discuss them:

"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet

the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.
Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18, KJV

Please carefully notice Paul's attitude and perspective as he writes those words. He is NOT talking about a far future event that would occur two thousand years later in our own present time as the Futurists erroneously believe. Just look at how many times Paul uses the word "we". He is including himself. He is talking directly to his readers of the First Century. That is who the "we" is, and most certainly not us modern Believers. He is NOT talking to you, and he is NOT talking to me. To believe otherwise is to purposely deceive ourselves. Yet that is exactly what the Futurists are doing. They insert themselves into those verses when they should not do that.

Please also notice how Paul is writing with a great deal of passion, anticipation and expectation. Would he really do it if this amazing event was not going to occur during his own lifetime? I think not. It is also very striking that Paul very specifically writes "by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord". In other words, Paul fully understood that some of his readers would still be alive on the day that Jesus returned to the Earth for His faithful bride. Again, Paul says "we", which means that he is convinced that he is also included in that group. Why does Paul know this to be true? Because it was the word of the Lord. It was the same words that Jesus had shared with His followers in the Gospels -- particularly in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21 -- where He talks about His Return, and the gathering together of the Saints.

Are we to believe that the Apostle Paul was simply deceived about all of these things? Did he somehow get it wrong? Was he merely confused, and were his wires just crossed? I don't believe so. Why not? Because he clearly informs his readers that he was directly taught by Christ Himself, as we see by the following two verses. Furthermore, at some point, it is possible, and perhaps even probable, that the other Apostles who had actually lived with Jesus during those three years, confirmed to Paul what he already knew to be true concerning Christ's' Return:

"But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of

Jesus Christ."

Galatians 1:11-12, KJV

The New Testament Scriptures make it rather clear that Paul was obviously not alone regarding this issue. The Apostle Peter likewise believed that the day of Christ's Return was very close at hand. This fact is also made plainly evident by verses such as the following one, where Peter declares that "the end of all things is at hand", just as Paul had done:

"But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."

1 Peter 4:7, KJV

Why did Peter, Paul and all of the other Apostles believe so strongly in this? Quite simply, because aside from the fact that Jesus had plainly told them so, this is the very same public message that John the Baptist and Jesus preached to the masses as well, as we see by the group of Bible verses below. Furthermore, we see the very same powerful message being stated in the Book of Revelation, and in other of the Epistles as well. To reiterate, they were all convinced of Christ's Return, the Great Tribulation and the Rapture of the Saints during THEIR LIFETIMES. Consider the following Scriptural evidence and believe:

"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: FOR THE TIME IS AT HAND."

Revelation 1:3, KJV

"And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: FOR THE TIME IS AT HAND."

Revelation 22:10, KJV

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND."

Matthew 3:1-2, KJV

"From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND."

Matthew 4:17, KJV

"And as ye go, preach, saying, THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND."

Matthew 10:7, KJV

"Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, THE TIME IS FULFILLED, and THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS AT HAND: repent ye, and believe the gospel."

Mark 1:14-15, KJV

"And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NIGH AT HAND. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled."

Luke 21:29-32, KJV

"But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass IN THE LAST DAYS, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:"

Acts 2:16-18, KJV

In Acts 2:16-18 above, the Apostle Peter -- who, by the way, had just been filled with God's Holy Spirit -- is clearly saying two things: Joel's prophecy was being fulfilled at that time during the First Century, and that period was also the Last Days. The phrase last days does NOT mean from 30 AD to the 21st Century, as some modern, Futurist-leaning Bible teachers erroneously teach. That is a false doctrine of men.

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath IN THESE LAST DAYS spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;"

Hebrews 1:1-2, KJV

In Hebrews 1:1-2 above, the phrase "last days" refers to the very end of the Prophet Daniel's well-known seventy weeks -- or 490 years -- prophecy. In my opinion, it has absolutely nothing to do with our modern times, as the misguided and deceived Futurists falsely claim.

"For yet a little while, and he that shall come [meaning Jesus] WILL COME, and WILL NOT TARRY."

Hebrews 10:37, KJV

In Hebrews 10:37 above, the phrase "a little while" does NOT mean 2,000 years in the future as the Futurists erroneously like to claim. To believe such a thing is nothing short of being ridiculous, in my view. Would you personally ever use the phrase "a little while" to refer to something that is not going to happen for two thousand years?

"Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together FOR THE LAST DAYS . . . Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for THE COMING OF THE LORD DRAWETH NIGH."

James 5:2-3, 7-8, KJV

In James 5:2-3, 7-8 above, the Apostle James is likewise confirming that it was in fact the Last Days -- two thousand years ago -- and that he too was convinced that Jesus would be returning soon during his own lifetime. Clearly, James is NOT going to say "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" if it would not occur for another two thousand years.

"Little children, IT IS THE LAST TIME: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby WE KNOW THAT IT IS THE LAST TIME."

1 John 2:18, KJV

As you can plainly see, in 1 John 2:18 above, not once, but twice, the Apostle John plainly tells his readers that it is the Last Time. That is to say, the very end of the Prophet Daniel's seventy weeks prophecy. My friends, from reading all of the previous verses, in my opinion, we can only arrive at one logical and indisputable conclusion. That is that Peter, James and John -- who were Jesus' inner circle -- as well as the Apostle Paul, were all fully convinced that Jesus Christ would return during their own lifetimes, exactly as He had promised them He would do in the following set of verses. How so many modern, Futurist-leaning Christians can continue to resist the plain truth of these verses just really boggles my mind:

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I WILL COME AGAIN, AND RECEIVE YOU unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also . . . I will not leave you comfortless: I WILL COME TO YOU."

John 14:2-3, 18, KJV

In my view, it simply does not make any sense whatsoever to say and write such things regarding the imminence of Jesus Christ's Return, and the coming Kingdom of God, if these two events were not going to happen for almost two thousand years until our current time, as the Futurists believe. After all, if this were the case, it should be obvious to you that such events would have little effect on Christian Believers of the First Century. So why even tell them such things? What good purpose would doing so possibly serve? In fact, it might even discourage them and give them a false hope if the Lord truly was not going to return for another two thousand years. Can you see my point?

Please notice that in the previous verses I shared with you from the Apostle Paul's first Epistle to the Thessalonians, he uses the phrases "the coming of the Lord" and "shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air". This clearly indicates that he is talking about the Rapture of the Saints at the time of Jesus' Return. The phrase "caught up together" is derived from the Koine Greek words "harpazo hama". Expanding upon the definition I shared with you earlier, that word "harpazo" means to seize, carry off by force, to seize on, claim for one's self eagerly, or to snatch out or away.

The word "hama" simply means together. So to reiterate, the Apostle Paul is clearly describing the Rapture of the Saints at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. As many of my readers will already know, the Lord describes this very same event in the following verses which are also found in three of the Gospels:

"For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together . . . And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he

shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

Matthew 24:27-28, 30-31, KJV

"And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven."

Mark 13:26-27, KJV

"And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."

Luke 21:27, KJV

So once again we see a gathering together of the Saints in the clouds of heaven at the time of the Lord's Return. As such, to deny the existence of the Rapture, as some modern Christians seem to do, is to commit a serious error. Yet if some of them are only denying the occurrence of the Rapture at our current time in history, and not the doctrine of the Rapture as a whole, then I would have to agree with them.

Concerning the Lord's mention of the carcase and the eagles, I have an interesting interpretation of what His words may possibly mean, which I would like to share with you now. In a word, I have considered the possibility that the Lord may be referring to Himself as the Carcase which was hung on the tree, and to First Century Believers -- that is to say, the Saints of God -- as the eagles who were to be gathered unto Him. This makes perfect sense to me, because Believers have in fact symbolically fed upon Jesus' flesh, precisely as He told His listeners they had to do. In fact, as I explain in other articles, it was because of this apparently offensive and profound teaching, that many of His disciples abandoned Him during the course of His earthly ministry. They simply did not possess the spiritual discernment to understand what the Lord meant, as the Apostle Paul would later write.

These truths concerning the significance of the Carcase and the eagles seem to be confirmed by the following group of Bible verses. Notice that the verse from the Book of Isaiah is not only a promise, but it also appears to be a prophecy regarding exactly what happened at Jesus' Return. It is a promise to those Saints of God who patiently waited for the Second Coming of the Lord, and who made it through -- or who

endured -- such a horrible time as the Great Tribulation no doubt was:

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."
1 Corinthians 2:14, KJV

"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."
Isaiah 40:31, KJV

"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you . . . From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him."
John 6:53, 66, KJV

"And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre."
Acts 13:29, KJV

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."
1 Peter 2:24, KJV

Please go to part three for the continuation of this series.

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THE GREAT TRIBULATION AND THE RAPTURE : PART 3

Copyright 1994 - 2025 Bill's Bible Basics

Published On : September 15, 1997

Last Updated : June 18, 2025

Apostles Firmly Believed In Coming Tribulation Christ's Soon Return And Rapture Of The Saints, I Come Quickly, Importance Of Understanding The Bible In Context, God Does Not Lie, The Apostle John's "Even So, Come, Lord Jesus", "Shortly" Means "Soon" In The Scriptures, Things Which Must Shortly Come To Pass, Things Which Must Shortly Be Done, Everything Between The Two Bookends, Shut Up The Words And Seal The Book Versus Seal Not The Sayings Of The Prophecy Of This Book, Prophetic Links Between Daniel Gospels Epistles And Book Of Revelation, Messages Visions And Prophecies Were For First Century Israel, Distorting The Scriptures Only Results In Doctrinal Confusion, God Is Very Consistent And Organized In His Thoughts And Ways, Diligently And Patiently Study The Bible And Secular History, Responsibility Of Being A Bible Teacher, The "This Generation" Debate, David Ben Gurion And May 15, 1948, All These Things, "Thy People": Bible Prophecy Centers On Israel And The Jews

Continuing our discussion from part two, as we've now clearly seen from the Scriptural evidence, the First Century Apostles were absolutely convinced that the period known as the Great Tribulation, the Lord's Second Coming, and the Rapture of the Saints were all going to occur during their lifetimes. Why did they believe these things so strongly? Because Jesus had told them so Himself. While we have examined a small number of the Bible verses where Jesus mentions His return and the gathering together of the Saints, at this point we are going to sharpen our focus, and concentrate on some more Scriptures which highlight the fact that these were NOT some far future promises as modern Futurists both wrongly believe and teach.

As I explain in other articles, such as the seven-part series entitled "Jesus Christ's Return: Have We Been Deceived?", in the Book of Revelation, the Angel of the Lord gave a message to the Apostle John, which he was to deliver to the Church of Philadelphia -- which was one of the First Century churches which was located in Asia Minor, today known as Turkey -- in which he told them that they would witness Christ's Return. The specific message was in fact that He -- meaning Jesus -- was coming quickly, as we see by the following verse:

"Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."
Revelation 3:11, KJV

Earlier in this series, I discussed with you the importance

of understanding Bible verses in their proper context. In other words, you really need to take the time to understand the who, what, where, when and why of everything that you're reading. You need to know the intended audience. Now in this particular case, it is obvious that the intended party was in fact the Church of Philadelphia, which was an actual church in Asia Minor. The previous verse is most certainly NOT for twenty-first century Christians, and to believe that it is, is a complete deception.

Let's be honest here, my dear friends. Does it really make any sense whatsoever that Jesus would tell the Seven Churches in Asia Minor that He was coming quickly, if He really wasn't intending to return for another two thousand years? Wouldn't it in fact be a bald-faced lie? But we know that God is most certainly NOT a liar, and Jesus is not a liar either. So who does that leave? Well, aside from the Devil himself -- who as we know is the father of lies -- it only leaves the misguided Futurists who twist the meaning of certain verses in order to support their wayward doctrines. Granted, some of them may not be intentionally lying, but they are certainly deceived, just as I was for so many years. Consider the following verses:

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"
Numbers 23:19, KJV

"God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged."
Romans 3:4, KJV

"In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;"
Titus 1:2, KJV

Now, consider the following. If the aforementioned verse that is found in Revelation chapter three -- where we are told that Jesus is coming quickly -- is referring to Jesus returning to the Earth during the First Century, then in order to be consistent, we are forced to conclude that the following verses that are also found in Revelation chapter twenty-two, must likewise be referring to Jesus returning during the First Century, and not during our present time:

"Behold, I COME QUICKLY: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book . . . And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I COME QUICKLY; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be . . . He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I COME QUICKLY. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Revelation 22:7, 10-12, 20, KJV

My friends, please notice how John concludes those verses. He says "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Now, would John really write that if he thought that Jesus wasn't going to return for another two millennia? It would be rather preposterous, wouldn't it? But just by writing that, the Apostle John is clearly demonstrating that he believes the visions and the messages he has just been given. So once again we witness an attitude of anticipation and expectation. John knew and was fully convinced that Jesus would be returning very soon during his own lifetime.

By the way, my friends, in case you missed it, that is FOUR TIMES that we see the phrase "I come quickly" being used in the Book of Revelation. The four instances all point to the First Century return of Jesus Christ, and everything else that we have been discussing in this series, including the period known as the Great Tribulation, and the Rapture of the Saints. But we are not done just yet with this amazing Book of Revelation. As it turns out, "I come quickly" isn't the only specific time indicator which we find in this book.

As I have mentioned before, there are two other verses which we find in the Book of Revelation which point to the imminent fulfillment -- meaning during the First Century -- of all of the events we have been discussing in this series. But first, allow me to ask you a simple question. If I were to say to you "I really hope to finish this series shortly", how would you understand it? Do you think I mean next year or perhaps even the next decade? Obviously not. You would assume that I mean very soon, maybe even within hours or days, right? Well, two thousand years ago, the word "shortly" meant the very same thing in the Scriptures. For example, consider this set of verses that are found in the New Testament:

"But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly thither."

Acts 25:5, KJV

"But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power."

1 Corinthians 4:19, KJV

"But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state . . . But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly."

Philippians 2:19, 24, KJV

"These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly:"

1 Timothy 3:14, KJV

"Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me:"

2 Timothy 4:9, KJV

"Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you."

Hebrews 13:23, KJV

"Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me."

2 Peter 1:14, KJV

"But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name."

3 John 1:14, KJV

Earlier I spoke to you about the importance of consistency and context in properly understanding God's Word. Now, it would be rather confusing if in all of the previous verses, the word "shortly" meant something different, correct? Yet it is rather obvious that the word "shortly" means the very same thing. In other words, in a very short amount of time. Bearing this point in mind, consider now the following two verses which we also find in the Book of Revelation, taking note of how the word "shortly" is used in them:

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants THINGS WHICH MUST SHORTLY COME TO

PASS; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:"

Revelation 1:1, KJV

"And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the THINGS WHICH MUST SHORTLY BE DONE."

Revelation 22:6, KJV

Now tell me something. In order for the word "shortly" to be understood in a consistent manner, doesn't it seem obvious that in the previous two verses, the word ALSO means in a very short time, and that it is in fact in perfect agreement with "I come quickly"? What I find particularly interesting about these two verses is where they are located within the Book of Revelation. In other words, one in the first chapter of the Book, and one in the final chapter of the Book. In my opinion, this means that they are to serve as bookends, and that everything that is written between them -- represented by the word "things" in both of the verses -- must shortly come to pass. Not today during the twenty-first century, but two thousand years ago during the First Century AD. Do you agree?

But that is not all, my friends. As you will recall, in part two of this series, I shared with you a set of Bible verses which include the important phrase "the time is at hand". We can interpret that phrase to mean now, or at least very soon from the perspective of the First Century. This is obviously yet one more indication of the imminent fulfillment during the First Century of the things which are being discussed. But let me draw your attention again to one of those verses. As you will now plainly see, it too is found in the final chapter of the amazing Book of Revelation:

"And he saith unto me, SEAL NOT THE SAYINGS OF THE PROPHECY OF THIS BOOK: for the time is at hand."

Revelation 22:10, KJV

Do you see that, my friends? The Angelic Messenger is clearly telling John to NOT seal the Book! Why not? Because the time is at hand. Why not? Because I come quickly. Why not? Because the events which are described in this Book are things which must short come to pass, and which must shortly be done. In direct contrast, when the Prophet Daniel received his equally amazing prophecies, do you know what he was told? Consider the following verse for the answer:

"But thou, O Daniel, SHUT UP THE WORDS, AND SEAL THE BOOK, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."

Daniel 12:4, KJV

Isn't that just mind-boggling? Daniel was specifically told to seal his Book. Why? Because the events he described in it were not going to be fulfilled quite yet. When would they be fulfilled? The verse clearly tells us "the time of the end". So this extremely vital information was purposely sealed up for hundreds of years, and its meaning was not understood. Then the Apostle John is told to NOT seal his Book, because that very time had now arrived, and everything would come to pass shortly. Not two thousand years in the future as those Futurists erroneously claim, but right then and there during the First Century! I hope you are as convinced as I am.

For anyone who may be a little confused, as I explain in a number of my other articles, the Book of Daniel, Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, some of the information that is found in the Epistles, and the Book of Revelation all describe some of the very same prophetic events, and those events center on the nation of Israel and the Jews. In fact, Daniel and Revelation use some of the very same symbolic imagery. In other words, kings, horns, toes and different wild beasts. Isn't that amazing?

In my view, the way that these Books -- which, by the way, were written centuries apart -- flow smoothly together is clear proof that all of those warning messages, prophecies and visions were specifically designed for the disciples of the Lord who lived during the latter half of the First Century. It is clear to me that the purpose of all of that information was to prepare them for the things which they would personally experience during their lifetimes. What things? Again, the Great Tribulation, the Return of Jesus Christ, and the Rapture of the Saints.

To reiterate this key point, I personally find no evidence whatsoever to suggest that said information is addressed to Christians who are living two thousand years later today in our present time. As I noted earlier in this series, in my view, the only way to arrive at such erroneous conclusions is by purposely and intentionally distorting the meaning of certain Scriptures, and taking them out of context. But by following this foolish practice, it will only result in

serious doctrinal confusion, as is quite clearly evidenced on certain social networks where wild theories and personal interpretations run rampant and are a dime a dozen.

However, I am personally convinced that God is not the author of confusion. He is in fact consistent and very organized in all His thoughts and ways. As I also mentioned in part one, I embrace the view that each of His prophecies has one specific fulfillment at one particular time in His overall story and plan for humanity. Furthermore, I remain convinced that it is His desire that we understand the mysteries of His Word. And we will, if we take the time to diligently study it, along with seriously studying secular history as well. Again, they go hand-in-hand.

My friends, honestly speaking, it may take many years for us to grasp it all -- or at least some of it -- as has been my case personally. In fact, I am not ashamed to say that I am still digging away with my pick and shovel, and continuously asking the Lord to give me greater understanding, so that I may be able to share the truth, and only the truth. I really don't want to leave this life if there is something I have taught which still requires some degree of correction. This is how seriously I take my task as teacher for the Lord. I realize that I will be held accountable for everything I say and teach. Thus, it is imperative that I get as much of it right as is humanly possible. So I strive I remain open to the Lord's leading. This is a topic which I discuss in the article called "The Office of Prophets and Teachers".

In this series, we have talked a lot about understanding the Bible in context, particularly when it comes to the issue of Bible prophecy. I have already shared a number of Scriptural time indicators which consistently prove that all of these events occurred during the last half of the First Century AD. These include the following words and phrases:

1. the time is at hand
2. is at hand
3. the last days
4. the last time
5. I will come to you
6. I come quickly
7. must shortly come to pass
8. must shortly be done

There is yet one more strong time indicator which I will now

share with you. This particular indicator can be found in the Gospels, and in fact in Jesus' own words to His followers. It is the phrase "this generation". Sadly, just as they've done with other key words and phrases which are found in the New Testament, the Futurists have seriously distorted and taken out of context this phrase as well. In fact, they have been doing it for literally decades, sad to say, as I discuss in the following articles, and possibly more:

1. Jesus Christ's Return: Have We Been Deceived?
2. Modern Deceptions: Return to Israel, the Fig Tree and This Generation
3. The Day I Am Waiting For

If you have read any of the aforementioned prophecy-related articles and series, then you may know that the way in which they distort the meaning of this phrase is by saying that it is referring to our current generation, or more accurately, to the generation which witnessed the political birth of the modern state of Israel on May 15, 1948 when David ben Gurion -- who was the President of the Jewish Agency for Palestine -- declared it a nation. In fact, we could easily and rightly say that this famous date stands as the foundation stone for the entire modern doctrine of Futurism, because everything else that is related to Futurism is based upon it.

However, as I point out in "The Day I Am Waiting For", what the Futurists apparently do not realize yet -- or at least they are not admitting it openly -- is that by clinging to this particular date to supposedly justify and validate their beliefs, they have in fact set themselves up for a very great disappointment. While I amply discuss this same issue in the aforementioned three articles, I feel that it is important to review some of the major points here, because it ties in to the three key events we have been discussing. That is to say, the Great Tribulation, the Second Coming of Christ, and the Rapture. The main Bible verses which the Futurists utilize to supposedly validate their "this generation" belief are the following:

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."

Matthew 24:32-34, KJV

"So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done."

Mark 13:29-30, KJV

"So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled."

Luke 21:31-32

Regarding the phrase "all these things", if you take the time to read the three chapters which are mentioned above, you'll quickly see that it refers to the following key events:

01. false christs and false prophets
02. widespread deception
03. betrayal and persecution of the Jews
04. wars and rumors of wars
05. earthquakes in diverse places
06. famines
07. pestilences (plagues and diseases)
08. love towards fellow man abating
09. widespread preaching of the Gospel
10. abomination of desolation
11. Jerusalem surrounded by armies
12. great tribulation and affliction
13. Jerusalem and temple destroyed

Jesus clearly stated that all of these things would occur prior to His return, which would culminate in the Rapture of the Saints, and their deliverance from all those things. Now, the Futurists will insist that all of those signs are present in our current time. Add to that the fact they are fully convinced that the Parable of the Fig Tree represents Israel being declared a nation in 1948 -- which I disagree with -- and they believe that they have a water-right case. But is this really true? Are we the generation of which the Lord spoke?

Upon closer examination, we discover that their so-called water-tight case is not as solid as it may seem to some Christians who don't possess a strong foundation in God's Word, and who even less have a strong knowledge of ancient First Century history. But first things first. Was Jesus really talking about our generation? Please remember again

what I said earlier regarding reading the Bible in context. In order to understand what Jesus truly meant by the phrase "this generation", we simply need to see how it is used in other verses which are found in the Gospels. A quick search reveals the following. Please patiently read them all, and I think you will probably get the point:

"But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children."

Matthew 11:16-19, KJV

"Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here."

Matthew 12:38-42, KJV

"Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together,

even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Matthew 23:33-39, KJV

"And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation."

Mark 8:11-12, KJV

"And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like? They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! But wisdom is justified of all her children."

Luke 7:31-35, KJV

"And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineve shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here . . . Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished

between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation."

Luke 11:29-32, 47-51, KJV

"For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation."

Luke 17:24-25, KJV

So do you see it my friends? There's not a single indication in any of the above verses that Jesus is referring to a far future generation living in the twenty-first century. None. There should be no doubt in your mind that all of the verses are referring to a generation of Jewish people who lived two thousand years ago during the First Century. Isn't it rather obvious? Isn't it plain to see that when we read the verses together as a whole that the phrase refers to Jews who were actually listening to the Lord speak at that very time, and to that generation of Jewish people as a whole? If we read those verses in context, there is no other conclusion at which we can honestly arrive.

That in itself is another very important point. As I shared with you earlier, these prophetic events center on the Jews and on the nation of Israel as a whole. They have nothing to do with modern American Christians as so many of my online Christian friends like to think. Please remember again how I informed you that the Daniel prophecies, Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21 and the Book of Revelation are all linked together, and deal with a lot of the very same events. It is about the fate of the Jews during the First Century, and here is your proof. Please take special note of the words I have placed in uppercase letters:

"Seventy weeks are determined upon THY PEOPLE and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy."

Daniel 9:24, KJV

"Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall THY PEOPLE in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days."

Daniel 10:14, KJV

"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of THY PEOPLE: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time THY PEOPLE shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book."

Daniel 12:1, KJV

So the phrase "thy people" in Daniel, and the phrase "this generation" in the Gospels, are both speaking about First Century Jews, and particularly those Jews who happened to live in Jerusalem at that time. As we continue our lesson, you will learn exactly why that is. So the big question is this: If in all of the previous verses we understand that the phrase "this generation" is referring to the generation which was alive at the time that Jesus walked the earth in the flesh, why do the Futurists suddenly change course by violating the continuity of the Scriptures, and by totally changing the meaning of "this generation", by claiming that this phrase is referring to our current generation? It is like properly identifying twenty red cars as being red, but then when car number twenty-one comes along, we claim that it is blue, even though it is also really red.

Please go to part four for the continuation of this series.

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THE GREAT TRIBULATION AND THE RAPTURE : PART 4

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Published On : September 15, 1997

Last Updated : June 18, 2025

All These Things And Holes In Futurist Theology, Jesus' Signs Match Up With First Century Jerusalem, My Work On "Vespasian Titus And The Fall Of Jerusalem" Series, The Symbolic Nature Of Bible Prophecy Makes It Difficult To Understand, Works Of Flavius Josephus And Tacitus, Enhanced Understanding Of The Scriptures, The Great Tribulation Occurred During Seven-Year

First Jewish-Roman War, Bible Prophecy Centers On Israel And The Jews, America Is Not Found In Bible Prophecy, Babylon The Great, Lunacy Of "Trump Is Antichrist" Scenario, Abomination Of Desolation And Jerusalem Surrounded By Roman Armies Was A Sign To Depart Jerusalem Before The Great Tribulation Began, Words And Phrases Describing Great Tribulation Upon The Jews, Jesus' Prophecies Regarding 70 AD Destruction Of The Temple, Great Tribulation Was First Century Localized Event Focused Mainly On Jerusalem, Daniel's Prophecies Regarding The First Jewish-Roman War, Incomparable Severity Of Suffering During The War, "All These Things" Comparison Between Modern Day And First Century, Jewish False Prophets And Widespread Deception

Continuing our discussion from part three, in that part, I shared a list of events with you which were taken from the Gospels, and which precisely defined what the Lord meant by "all these things". I also remarked that based on that list, Futurist-leaning Christians are rather convinced that they have a water-tight case which supports and validates their beliefs. However, as we have already clearly seen, the first error they make is by either intentionally, or ignorantly, misinterpreting the phrase "this generation", and applying it to our current time, when they should not be doing that.

However, that is not the only hole in their argument. You see, what many of them don't realize -- either due to their lack of serious study of the Scriptures and secular history -- or perhaps due to some other reason -- is that the list of signs -- or "all these things" -- can equally be applied to the situation which existed in First Century Israel, and even more specifically to the dire situation in Jerusalem. How do I know this? Well, because just recently, I finished a major, new 25-part series entitled "Vespasian, Titus and the Fall of Jerusalem". I actually began it in 2011, but it was not until a few months ago that I made a serious effort to finally complete it.

So, over the past few months, that is exactly what I have been doing until I completed it as of three days ago at the time of this current series update. My friends, let me tell you; I learned so much from working on that series, and my personal understanding regarding the events surrounding the 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem and the temple compound by Roman general Titus and his legions, as well as their local allies -- which included the army of King Herod Agrippa II

-- was majorly enhanced.

As I point out in the series, the Scriptures themselves are rather limited with regard to the amount of really specific information they share concerning those First Century events. Furthermore, much of the information that we do find in the Bible is often shrouded in prophetic symbolism, so that it becomes rather difficult for the average Christian layman to really understand it properly. Thus, I turned to a number of extra-biblical sources so as to fill in the gaps, including "Antiquities of the Jews" and "The Wars of the Jews" by the Jewish general and historian Flavius Josephus; "Histories" by Roman historian Publius Cornelius Tacitus; and several other ancient works as well.

It was a lot of work, which required many hours of reading -- months in fact -- on my part; but as I said, it was also totally rewarding, because I now have a much better, clearer understanding regarding those First Century events. But that is not all. By reading those various works, the Scriptures themselves were opened up so much more to me, so that I can now see how some of the things which Jesus and the Apostles had said and written, were actually fulfilled in real-world events.

This now brings us to the list of "all these things" which I shared with you earlier. As I said, those same signs which the Futurists apply to our current time, can also be equally applied to the events which transpired during the second half of the First Century, when Israel experienced the full wrath of the armies of Rome. While we have already discussed the Rapture and the Lord's Return, we have yet to fully address the Great Tribulation itself. While the verses I shared with you in part one prophesy the tribulation to come, having now read the aforementioned historical works, I know that simply sharing those verses isn't the same as actually reading about the specific events which occurred to the Jews during that extremely dark period, the bulk of which happened during the first half of that terrible seven-year war.

Now one thing I can tell you with absolute certainty, is that contrary to what is erroneously believed by the modern-day Futurists -- some of whom foolishly claim that we are already experiencing the Great Tribulation, and others who likewise insist that it will begin soon -- I am personally convinced that not only is the Great Tribulation NOT a future event in any way, shape or form, but that it really occurred during

the seven-year First Jewish-Roman War -- which lasted from 66 AD to 73 AD -- during which event 600,000 to 1,100,000 Jews lost their lives.

As I have mentioned to you several times already, we need to remember that a major portion of Bible prophecy centers on the fate and destiny of the nation of Israel and the Jewish people. They are God's prophetic timepiece. Yet, sadly, in typical, haughty American fashion, some American Christians want to insert themselves right in the middle of the Bible's prophecies, because surely, the United States of America is found somewhere in Bible prophecy, right? Absolutely WRONG! You folks who continue to believe that nonsense really need to wake up from your strong delusion.

The sad thing is, that because those deceived and misguided Christians have embraced this false interpretation of the Scriptures, they have also invented a fictitious scenario where America has now become Babylon the Great, as found in the pages of the Book of Revelation. As far as I am aware, this erroneous doctrine has been floating around since the 1970s. Sadly, in its latest iteration, it seems that those folks have really gone off the deep end. What exactly do I mean by this?

Well, in case you have not heard yet, according to some of those Christians, American President Donald J. Trump is the Beast, or the Antichrist. Never mind that for years before that, they were saying that Barack Obama was the Antichrist, and Obamacare was the Mark of the Beast. In fact, I finally wrote an article in which I exposed that nonsense. Anyway, I guess Mr. Obama somehow lost the AC anointing, and so now it is resting upon Donald Trump. Yes, I'm purposely being a bit sarcastic here. I apologize, but due to the absurdity of it all, I just can't help myself.

But their deception does not end there. As I point out in the article entitled "It Is Time to Wake Up!", based on the belief that the Orthodox Jews may soon get their new temple in East Jerusalem once Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has finished his murderous "housecleaning", those same deceived Christians believe that President Trump will move to Israel, rule America from there, sit in the new temple, and in fact declare himself "God". To those misguided Christians, it all makes sense because the Orthodox Jews do in fact love Trump.

So what happens next? According to some of those Christians

-- it depends on whether they are Pre-Trib or Post-Trib -- the Rapture will occur, the Saints of God will take a fast bullet train to Heaven, and then the Great Tribulation will begin as "Antichrist Trump" begins to persecute and behead any Christian who refuses to worship him as "God". This act in itself ties into their erroneous belief that Trump will do this, because supposedly he is secretly a Jew, and he'll be compelled by the Noahide Laws -- look it up -- to kill anyone who worships Jesus, because that is blasphemy based on the tenets of Judaism. There is only one God, and to the Jews, it is not Jesus. Thus, to worship Jesus is blasphemy.

And, of course, false god Trump's instrument of death will most certainly be the thousands of guillotines which some of those deceived Christians claim to have seen in mysterious train boxcars all across America. This story has likewise been floating around for years now. You see, in their minds, all of these events fit nicely into their rather imaginative scenario, because in the Book of Revelation, we are indeed told that the Saints of God are beheaded for their faith by the Beast.

If your jaw is dropping after having read all of the above, I can't say that I blame you. It just goes to show exactly how deceived people can become when they reject the truth of the Scriptures, or at least seriously misinterpret them. So what is the truth regarding the great tribulation of which Jesus himself spoke? As I already said, the first point that we need to establish is that it is NOT a future event. It is in fact a past, already-fulfilled event. Second, we need to establish that it occurred during the First Jewish-Roman War and that it involved the Jews themselves, and NOT American Christians living today.

Exactly how do we know this? The answer is rather simple and can be easily verified just by going back to the Scriptures. As I amply explain in articles such as "Who is Babylon the Great?", "Abomination of Desolation: Explained!" and my very long series "Vespasian, Titus and the Fall of Jerusalem", if we look at what Jesus said right before mentioning the Great Tribulation, we will find a very clear answer. We will learn exactly what act preceded the Great Tribulation. In addition, if you read "Vespasian, Titus and the Fall of Jerusalem", you will come to understand the very acts which instigated the Great Tribulation in the first place. Consider the following group of Bible verses:

"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be GREAT TRIBULATION, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elects sake those days shall be shortened."

Matthew 24:15-22, KJV

"But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains: And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house: And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment. But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter. For in those days shall be AFFLICTION, SUCH AS WAS NOT FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE CREATION which God created unto this time, neither shall be. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, NO FLESH SHOULD BE SAVED: but for the elects sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days."

Mark 13:14-20, KJV

"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that THE DESOLATION THEREOF IS NIGH. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the DAYS OF VENGEANCE, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be GREAT DISTRESS IN THE LAND, and WRATH UPON THIS PEOPLE. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

Luke 21:21-24, KJV

By this point in our series, you should fully understand the importance of reading the Bible in context. So let's engage in a short question and answer session. When did Jesus give this sermon? During the First Century. Where did Jesus give this sermon? In Israel, specifically in Jerusalem. Who did Jesus share these things with? His Jewish followers. What are the signs which indicate that it is time to flee out of Jerusalem? Jerusalem is encompassed about by Roman armies, and the "abomination of desolation" is set up in the "holy place", meaning the temple compound. So what happened next? Following is a list based on Jesus' own words:

01. great tribulation
02. affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation
03. desolation
04. days of vengeance
05. great distress in the land
06. wrath upon this people
07. they shall fall by the edge of the sword
08. [they] shall be led away captive into all nations
09. Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles
10. Jerusalem and temple compound are destroyed

Regarding point number ten above, allow me to share with you the following group of verses where Jesus specifically mentions the destruction of the Jewish temple. This tragic event occurred at the peak of the war, and in the darkest hour of the war, in 70 AD:

"And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."
Matthew 24:1-2, KJV

"And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here! And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

Mark 13:1-2, KJV

"For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

Luke 19:43-44, KJV

"And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said, As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

Luke 21:5-6, KJV

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

Matthew 23:37-24:2, KJV

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Luke 13:34-35, KJV

My friends, who are all of these things happening to? The Jews of the First Century. Is there anything whatsoever in

the previous verses regarding the twenty-first century, or America, or American Christians? Absolutely not! So what can we conclude from all of this? In case it is not already obvious to a few of you, the Great Tribulation isn't by any means a future event. Neither is it a modern, global event where Christians around the world are persecuted and killed by the Beast, or Antichrist. It was a First Century event, and a localized event which centered on the Jews of Israel, and particularly on the Jews of Jerusalem who suffered the very most. Furthermore, it was instigated by the stubborn, insolent Jewish insurrectionists themselves who knowingly brought such destruction upon themselves, their country, Jerusalem, and the temple compound. This becomes readily apparent, if you take the time to read my aforementioned series.

As I have mentioned several times now, the things which the Lord spoke about in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21 are all directly linked to the prophecies of Daniel, as well as to the Book of Revelation. Keeping in mind everything I just shared with you regarding the effects of the war, consider the following group of verses which are found in the Book of Daniel, and notice their similarity to what Jesus said in the Gospels:

"And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come SHALL DESTROY THE CITY AND THE SANCTUARY; and the end thereof shall be with a flood [meaning an army of men], and unto the end of the war desolations are determined."
Daniel 9:26, KJV

"And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet THEY SHALL FALL BY THE SWORD, AND BY FLAME, BY CAPTIVITY, AND BY SPOIL, MANY DAYS. Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. And SOME OF THEM OF UNDERSTANDING SHALL FALL, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed."
Daniel 11:33-35, KJV

"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and THERE SHALL BE A TIME OF TROUBLE, SUCH AS NEVER WAS SINCE THERE WAS A NATION EVEN TO THAT SAME TIME: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found

written in the book."

Daniel 12:1, KJV

My friends, I can tell you firsthand after reading "The Wars of the Jews" and other historical works, that what you read above is exactly what happened, and much, much worse than it even sounds in those verses. Recall how Jesus said that the degree of suffering and affliction which those Jews would endure during that awful war would be the very worst since the world began. In fact, so much so, that if the Lord did not shorten the length of the war, absolutely nobody would survive. Notice how Daniel describes the "time of trouble" in the exact same way. In fact, Jesus was probably quoting from Daniel. Well, guess what? In "The Wars of the Jews", Jewish general and historian, Flavius Josephus, writes the very same thing. Consider this excerpt that we find in Book 6 Chapter 9:

----- Begin Quote -----

NOW THE NUMBER OF THOSE THAT WERE CARRIED CAPTIVE DURING THIS WHOLE WAR WAS COLLECTED TO BE NINETY-SEVEN THOUSAND; AS WAS THE NUMBER OF THOSE WHO PERISHED DURING THE WHOLE SIEGE ELEVEN HUNDRED THOUSAND [1,100,000], the greater part of whom were indeed of the same nation, [with the citizens of Jerusalem,] but not belonging to the city itself: for they were come up from all the country to the feast of unleavened bread, and were on a sudden shut up by an army, which at the very first, occasioned so great a straitness among them, that there came a PESTILENTIAL DESTRUCTION upon them, and soon afterwards such a FAMINE, as destroyed them more suddenly.

Now this vast multitude is indeed collected out of remote places, but the entire nation was now shut up by fate, as in prison, and the Roman army encompassed the city when it was crowded with inhabitants. Accordingly THE MULTITUDE OF THOSE THAT THEREIN PERISHED, EXCEEDED ALL THE DESTRUCTIONS THAT EITHER MEN OR GOD EVER BROUGHT UPON THE WORLD; for, to speak only of what was publicly known, the Romans slew some of them, some they carried captives, and others they made a search for under ground, and when they found where they were, they broke up the ground and slew all they met with."

----- End Quote -----

That is what the Scriptures state, plain and simple. So

to believe otherwise is to be in denial of what is plainly written in God's Word. It is to take the Bible out of its proper context. It's to create a deceptive, imaginary and false narrative which has no basis in the Scriptures. Yet that is EXACTLY what the Futurists have done. If you have been resisting these things, I hope that this information has opened your eyes to the truth, and helped you to fully reject once and for all the man-made, false doctrines that have been foolishly promoted and circulated for many years now. So let's return now to that list of "all these things" I mentioned earlier. To refresh your memory, let me share it with you again:

01. false christs and false prophets
02. widespread deception
03. betrayal and persecution of the Jews
04. wars and rumors of wars
05. earthquakes in diverse places
06. famines
07. pestilences (plagues and diseases)
08. love towards fellow man abating
09. widespread preaching of the Gospel
10. abomination of desolation
11. Jerusalem surrounded by armies
12. great tribulation and affliction
13. Jerusalem and temple destroyed

As I explained earlier, while the Futurists erroneously say that all of the signs which Jesus said would manifest prior to His return can be applied to our modern day, they fail to realize that the very same signs apply to First Century Israel and Jerusalem as well. In fact, not all of the signs even apply to our current time. Where is the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place? Where are the armies surrounding the city of Jerusalem? Where is the temple? I'm fully aware of the fact that for decades now, the Orthodox Jews have wanted to rebuild their temple, and in fact have made certain preparations for it since quite a few years ago. I discuss this issue in other articles. However, as of now, there is no temple, so the Futurists cannot say that this sign applies.

In contrast, every single one of the signs which Jesus gave was fulfilled to the letter prior to His return during the First Century. For example, Jewish false prophets abounded. Not only did Jesus and the Apostles warn about them, but we find a few examples of them in the Book of Acts, as we can

easily determine by the following group of verses:

"But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done . . . And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me."

Acts 8:9-13, 18-24, KJV

"And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus: Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand."

Acts 13:6-11, KJV

"Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded."

Acts 19:13-16, KJV

Regarding widespread deception, do I really need to even address this issue? From the time that Jesus walked the earth, the Jews practiced lying and deception. Perhaps you recall how they brought forth false witnesses during Jesus' trial. Furthermore, what was the very first thing they did after Jesus rose from the dead? Those deceivers tried to cover it up by bribing the soldiers, as we can see by the following group of verses:

"Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day."

Matthew 28:11-15, KJV

So clearly then, lying and deception was most certainly not uncommon within Jewish culture of the First Century. But I have yet to reveal to you the worst example of all. Keep on reading, and you will find out exactly what it was and when it occurred. Trust me; it ended in very tragic results.

Please go to part five for the continuation of this series.

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Published On : September 15, 1997

Last Updated : June 18, 2025

False Prophet Convinced Jews To Run Into Their Temple Where Many Thousands Died, Betrayal And A Lack Of Love, Disgusting Behavior Of The Seditious, Severe Famine And Corn Burned, Three Factions Which Controlled Jerusalem, Dangerous Violent Radicals Retreated Into Jerusalem As The Roman Army Advanced From Galilee, Josephus Describes Infighting Between Seditious And Burning Of The Corn, Link Between Daniel Olivet Discourse And The Book Of Revelation, Revelation Concerns Past Events, Children Of Disobedience, Wrath Of God, More Signs: Plagues And Earthquakes, Symbolic Or Literal Earthquakes?, Mount Of Olives, Four Horsemen Of The Apocalypse, The Pressure Grows

Continuing our discussion from part four, as we have seen, lying and deception was most certainly not that uncommon in Jewish culture. But perhaps the very worst example of such deception, and the very worst of the Jewish false prophets, was revealed during the peak of the First Jewish-Roman War, just prior to the destruction of the temple compound itself. While some of my readers may not know it, many thousands of Jews were killed -- burned to death, actually, or killed by the Zealots, robbers, thugs and other seditious, or also slain by the Romans themselves -- when they all ran into the temple, because they foolishly believed that God would spare and surely protect them from the Roman soldiers who by this time had already breached Jerusalem's three perimeter walls.

But do you know what motivated the Jews to make such a fatal decision to run into the temple in the first place? Josephus informs us that it was due to the lies of a certain Jewish false prophet. In fact, Josephus explains that there were a number of these false prophets who were in cahoots with the violent insurrectionists, and who performed their bidding. Why were they deceiving the people in this manner? Josephus says that it was to keep the people from deserting over to the Romans. Consider the following excerpt that is found in Book 6 Chapter 5 of "The Wars of the Jews":

----- Begin Quote -----

"While the house [the temple] was on fire, everything was plundered that came to hand, and ten thousand of those that were caught were slain: nor was there a commiseration of any age, or any reverence of gravity but children, and old men, and profane persons, and priests, were all slain in the same manner; so that this war went round all sorts of men, and brought them to destruction, and as well those that made supplication for their lives, as those that defended themselves by fighting.

The flame was also carried a long way, and made an echo, together with the groans of those that were slain; and because this hill was high, and the works at the temple were very great, one would have thought the whole city had been on fire. Nor can one imagine anything either greater, or more terrible than this noise; for there was at once a shout of the Roman legions, who were marching all together, and a sad clamour of THE SEDITIOUS, who were now surrounded with fire and sword. The people also that were left above were beaten back upon the enemy, and under a great consternation, and made sad moans at the calamity they were under, the multitude also that was in the city joined in this outcry with those that were upon the hill.

And besides, many of those that were worn away by the famine, and their mouths almost closed, when they saw the fire of the holy house, they exerted their utmost strength, and brake out into groans and outcries again; Perea did also return the echo, as well as the mountains round about the [city], and augmented the force of the entire noise.

Yet was the misery itself more terrible than this disorder; for one would have thought that the hill itself, on which the temple stood, was seething hot, as full of fire on every part of it, that the blood was larger in quantity than the fire, and those that were slain more in number than those that slew them: for the ground did nowhere appear visible, for the dead bodies that lay on it, but the soldiers went over heaps of those bodies, as they ran upon such as fled from them.

And now it was that the multitude of THE ROBBERS were thrust out [of the inner court of the temple] by the Romans, and had much ado to get into the outward court, and from thence into the city, while the remainder of the populace fled into the cloister of that outer court. As for the priests, some

of them plucked up from the holy house the spikes that were upon it, with their bases, which were made of lead, and shot them at the Romans instead of darts. But then, as they gained nothing by so doing, and as the fire burst out upon them, they retired to the wall, that was eight cubits broad, and there they tarried; yet did two of these of eminence among them, who might have saved themselves by going over to the Romans, or have borne up with courage, and taken their fortune with the others, throw themselves into the fire, and were burnt, together with the holy house, their names were Meirus the son of Belgas, and Joseph the son of Daleus.

And now the Romans, judging that it was in vain to spare what was round about the holy house, burnt all those places, as also the remains of the cloisters and the gates, two excepted; the one on the east side, and the other on the south; both which, however, they burnt afterward. They also burnt down the treasury chambers, in which was an immense quantity of money, and an immense number of garments, and other precious goods there repositied; and, to speak all in a few words, there it was that the entire riches of the Jews were heaped up together, while the rich people had there built themselves chambers [to contain such furniture.] The soldiers also came to the rest of the cloisters that were in the outer [court of the] temple, whither the women, and children, and a great mixed multitude of the people fled, in number about six thousand. But before Caesar had determined anything about these people, or given the commanders any orders relating to them, the soldiers were in such a rage, that they set that cloister on fire ; by which means it came to pass, that some of these were destroyed by throwing themselves down head-long, and some were burnt in the cloisters themselves. Nor did any one of them escape with his life.

A FALSE PROPHET WAS THE OCCASION OF THESE PEOPLE'S DESTRUCTION, who had made a public proclamation in the city that very day, That "God commanded them to get up upon the temple, and that there they should receive miraculous signs of their deliverance." Now, there was then a great number of false prophets suborned by THE TYRANTS [the seditionists] to impose on the people, who denounced this to them, that they should wait for deliverance from God; and THIS WAS IN ORDER TO KEEP THEM FROM DESERTING, and that they might be buoyed up above fear and care by such hopes. Now a man that is in adversity does easily comply with such promises; for, when such a seducer makes him believe that he shall be delivered

from those miseries which oppress him, then it is that the patient is full of hopes of such his deliverance.

Thus were the miserable people persuaded by these deceivers, and such as belied God himself; while they did not attend, nor give credit to the signs that were so evident, and did so plainly foretell their future desolation, but like men infatuated, without either eyes to see, or minds to consider, did not regard the denunciations that God made to them."

----- End Quote -----

My friends, the previous excerpt from "The Wars of the Jews" is just a small preview of what you will find if you read my series called "Vespasian, Titus and the Fall of Jerusalem". Again, if you really desire to better understand the events related to 70 AD, the destruction of the temple compound, and the seven-year First Jewish-Roman War as a whole, I encourage you to read this 25-part series. You'll be glad that you did.

Regarding the previous list of things which Jesus said would serve as signs of His soon return, two other characteristics of that dark period were betrayal and a lack of love towards one's fellow man. Let me remind you of exactly what the Lord had said in three of the Gospels where He discusses all of these signs which would precede His imminent return:

"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another . . . And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."
Matthew 24:9-10, 12, KJV

"Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death."
Mark 13:12, KJV

"And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death."
Luke 21:16, KJV

My friends, trust me when I say that the in-depth account by Flavius Josephus regarding what occurred within the walls of Jerusalem during the Roman siege is filled with this kind of

sickening behavior. The three factions of men who took over Jerusalem during its final months and years were extremely violent, cruel, self-serving, greedy, very ungodly, and they demonstrated absolutely no regard for the sanctity of life. Regardless of whether they were children, women, men or the elderly, the seditionists killed them all mercilessly if it resulted in their own financial gain, or being able to steal food from someone else in order to survive a little longer.

In his list of the precursor signs, Jesus likewise mentioned famines and pestilences. That is to say, plagues. Now if you read my aforementioned series, you will see that famine is a common theme throughout Josephus' work. Once the Romans put up their five-mile siege wall around Jerusalem, time was on their side, as the food supply within Jerusalem slowly began to dwindle. As that happened, people became more desperate, and the animosity and violence of those wicked thugs who had taken control of the city grew worse with each passing day. As I said, they would do anything in order to secure more food for themselves, and it was really sickening.

To make the dire situation even worse, due to the constant infighting that erupted between the controlling factions, we are informed that fires were set both in and around the temple area, and throughout the city as well. This resulted in a large amount of the stored corn being destroyed, which only hastened the demise of so many thousands of people due to the extreme famine which then gripped the city.

In Book 5 Chapter 12 of his "Histories", the Roman historian Publius Cornelius Tacitus explains how the rival forces in Jerusalem were divided into three factions. Each faction had their own general, as well as their own army, and each one of them controlled different parts of the city. One faction consisted of Zealots who were led by John of Giscala. He had fled like a coward with a large body of his thugs from the Galilean city of Gischala upon realizing that it was futile to try to continue fighting against Titus and the Romans.

And so, John's band of violent thugs now controlled a third of Jerusalem. The most violent amongst the Zealots were the Sicarii -- or dagger men -- who would kill anyone for the sake of profit. That even included killing their own fellow Jews. Barabbas was probably a member of the Sicarii. Another faction which controlled one part of Jerusalem was led by a violent deceiver named Simon bar Giora. A third faction was led by Eleazar.

Just so you understand, as the Romans swooped down from the north conquering cities and villages as they advanced, all of the surviving radicals were forced into Jerusalem with its surrounding hills, cliffs and high walls. This created a very toxic, violent and explosive environment within the city. Caught in the middle of this seething pot of hatred and anger were many Jerusalemites who wanted to make peace with the Romans. But the insane insurrectionists would not let them. They in fact killed anyone who they perceived as being a potential traitor or deserter.

So as Tacitus describes it in the excerpt below, the city of Jerusalem had indeed become filled with every possible kind of violent, wicked, murderous, ungodly and seditious men who were constantly in competition with each other. He refers to these evil, despicable men as "a vast rabble collected from the overthrow of the other cities", meaning from the cities of Galilee -- such as Gischala -- which the Roman army had already conquered. Please notice how Tacitus specifically mentions how a large quantity of corn was burned up due to the constant fighting between these various factions:

----- Begin Quote -----

"Their numbers were increased by a vast rabble collected from the overthrow of the other cities. All the most obstinate rebels had escaped into the place, and perpetual seditions were the consequence. There were three generals, and as many armies. Simon held the outer and larger circuit of walls. John, also called Bargioras, occupied the middle city. Eleazar had fortified the temple. John and Simon were strong in numbers and equipment, Eleazar in position. There were continual skirmishes, surprises, and incendiary fires, and a vast quantity of corn was burnt. Before long John sent some emissaries, who, under pretence of sacrificing, slaughtered Eleazar and his partisans, and gained possession of the temple. The city was thus divided between two factions, till, as the Romans approached, war with the foreigner brought about a reconciliation."

----- End Quote -----

As you can see, the three radical factions which had gained control of Jerusalem were not in unity by any means. In fact, they constantly clashed with each other, until John finally slaughtered Eleazar and his men, thus taking control of the

temple compound. This then just left two factions defending the city of Jerusalem. While John and Simon at times formed an alliance against the Romans, it was an on-again-off-again situation, and when it came down to it, it was the survival of the fittest.

Jewish historian Flavius Josephus also mentions the grave consequences of the famine which gripped the city once the Romans had erected their siege wall and prevented the Jews from going out to find food. However, similar to Tacitus, he also points out that the famine was made worse, and the deaths of so many Jerusalemites hastened, by the fact that the foolish seditious Jews were bringing about their own destruction by burning -- intentionally or not -- the vast amounts of corn which were stored within the city. He even states that had the fighting factions not done this, the people of Jerusalem could have endured the siege for a lot longer. Consider the following excerpt which is taken from Book 5 Chapter 1 of "The Wars of the Jews":

----- Begin Quote -----

"Accordingly, it so came to pass, that all the places that were about the temple were burnt down, and were become an intermediate desert space; ready for fighting on both sides of it [meaning between the factions]; and that almost all that corn was burnt, which would have been sufficient for a siege of many years. So they were taken by the means of the famine, which it was impossible they should have been, unless they had thus prepared the way for it by this procedure."

----- End Quote -----

Dear reader, as I have repeatedly told you throughout this lengthy series, the Daniel prophecies, Jesus' key sermons in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21 and the astounding events we see being described in the Book of Revelation are all quite intertwined. They in fact all speak of some of the very same events, except in different ways. It is very important that you grasp this point, and that you see this connection; for if you don't, then you will never properly understand all of these prophecies. You will go on for many years, wondering what it all means, half-confused, just as I previously did.

The same war that Daniel talks about is the same war that Jesus talks about. And the same war that Jesus talks about

is the very same war we see being described in the Book of Revelation. It is also the very same First Century temple that is mentioned in these three different Biblical sources. It is likewise the very same persecuted Saints who we see being discussed. It is the same exact city being discussed. If you do not grasp this particular point, I encourage you to consider reading my series called "Who is Babylon the Great?". Lastly, in Daniel and Revelation, we see the very same time frames being spoken about as well. All of these books and chapters are describing the Great Tribulation which had been foretold to come; not in our current time, but almost two thousand years ago.

To reiterate this key point, as I explain in other articles, contrary to what so many of my Christian brethren have been deceived into believing -- and as I likewise once believed until the Lord opened my spiritual eyes -- most, if not all, of the amazing Book of Revelation isn't a prophecy regarding our near future in the twenty-first century. In reality, it concerns dreadful events which transpired during the latter half of the First Century when God's Wrath fell upon Israel and the people of Jerusalem due to their rejection of His Son.

As we have seen through previous verses, both Jesus and the Apostles spoke of this terrible wrath which would fall upon those stubborn CHILDREN OF DISOBEDIENCE who rejected God's wonderful Gift of Salvation through His Son. Jesus said that this terrible wrath would also be a precursor to His return. Here are some additional verses regarding God's Wrath and the unbelieving children of disobedience:

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it . . . He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God."

John 8:44, 47, KJV

"For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry . . . "

1 Samuel 15:23, KJV

"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air,

the spirit that now worketh in the CHILDREN OF
DISOBEDIENCE:"

Ephesians 2:2, KJV

"Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of
these things cometh the WRATH OF GOD upon the CHILDREN OF
DISOBEDIENCE."

Ephesians 5:6, KJV

"For which things' sake the WRATH OF GOD cometh on the
CHILDREN OF DISOBEDIENCE:"

Colossians 3:6, KJV

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he
that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the WRATH
OF GOD abideth on him."

John 3:36, KJV

"For the WRATH OF GOD is revealed from heaven against all
ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth
in unrighteousness;"

Romans 1:18, KJV

"The same shall drink of the wine of the WRATH OF GOD,
which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his
indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and
brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the
presence of the Lamb . . . And the angel thrust in his
sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth,
and cast it into the great winepress of the WRATH OF GOD."

Revelation 14:10, 19, KJV

"And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous,
seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is
filled up the WRATH OF GOD . . . And one of the four beasts
gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the
WRATH OF GOD, who liveth for ever and ever."

Revelation 15:1, 7, KJV

"And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the
seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the
WRATH OF GOD upon the earth . . . And the great city was
divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations
fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to
give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of HIS
WRATH."

Revelation 16:1, 19, KJV

"And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and WRATH OF ALMIGHTY GOD."

Revelation 19:15, KJV

Returning to that list of "all these things" which the Lord said would occur prior to His glorious return to the Earth, He also spoke of pestilences -- plagues -- and earthquakes which would serve as warning signs of His imminent return. If you're familiar with some of the contents of the Book of Revelation, then you are probably already aware of the fact that some of its chapters speak of multiple earthquakes and seven primary plagues. I encourage you to dig into those chapters in order to learn more about each of them.

Concerning the earthquakes, whether or not all of the ones which are mentioned are real, physical earthquakes, at this point in time, I'm not really sure. There is the possibility that some of them may actually be symbolic of great battles which occur in the Spirit World. We need to remind ourselves that the Book of Revelation is NOT entirely literal. There is a certain portion of it which is in fact highly symbolic and allegorical. There is some fantastical imagery which I seriously doubt is meant to be taken literally.

Yet to add a degree of balance to my previous statement, let me also point out that it is true that the nation of Israel partially sits on two major tectonic plates. These are the African Plate, and the Arabian Plate. The African Plate sits on the west, while the Arabian Plate sits on the east. The boundary between these two plates is marked by a fault line which runs through the region which is called the Dead Sea Transform. Furthermore, the Jordan Rift Valley is the result of tectonic movements within this Dead Sea Transform fault system. A transform fault is where the tectonic plates on either side of the fault line slide past each other in a horizontal fashion.

Equally interesting is the fact that the Mount of Olives is located near the Dead Sea Transform fault. As a result, it is subject to the effects of the Jordan Rift Valley, which is the northernmost part of the Great Rift Valley that runs down through southeastern Africa. Some geological studies have suggested that the Mount of Olives may be experiencing some splitting or movement along this fault line. Now if I

recall correctly, many years ago, it was as a direct result of this discovery that the Holiday Inn declined to build a hotel on the summit of the Mount of Olives.

Before concluding this particular section of our discussion, I want to address one more interesting subject with you. As I noted earlier, Josephus indicated that somewhere between six hundred thousand and one million plus Jews died during the Jerusalem siege. This was either a direct result of the actual fighting, or due to other causes including the gross and painful Roman practice of crucifixion, slow starvation, disease, betrayal and even infighting amongst the very Jews themselves. Concerning these different manners of death, as I've mentioned before, I am convinced that this was a direct fulfillment of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, as we read in the following verses which we find in the Book of Revelation:

"And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer. And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword. And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine. And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth."

Revelation 6:1-8, KJV

In Book 6 of "The Wars of the Jews", Josephus explains that the dire situation that existed within the city was greatly aggravated by the fact that the siege and fall of Jerusalem occurred during the time of the Feast of Unleavened Bread

and the Passover. As you may know, it was during this time when multitudes of Jews from all around the Mediterranean Sea region made an annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem, just as we see occurring in Acts chapter two. Thus, General Titus, being the shrewd tactician that he obviously was, wouldn't allow the worshippers to leave Jerusalem again once he had begun his siege.

In this way, during the four months that the city was under siege, the pressure within Jerusalem greatly skyrocketed as the food supply began to dwindle, food prices began to rise, inter-factional squabbles began to occur, and starvation, famine and disease set in, exactly as we see described with the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse in the previous verses.

Please go to part six for the conclusion of this series.

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THE GREAT TRIBULATION AND THE RAPTURE : PART 6

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Published On : September 15, 1997

Last Updated : June 18, 2025

The Severity Of The Famine, Four Horsemen Of The Apocalypse, Desperation Of The Seditious, Measure Of Wheat And Three Measures Of Barley, Closing Thoughts, BBB Suggested Reading

Continuing our discussion from part five, as I explained a moment ago, I am convinced that everything that happened to the Jews during the dreadful seven-year First Jewish-Roman War -- meaning the war itself, famine, disease and death -- was a direct fulfillment of the Four Horsemen who are found in the sixth chapter of the Apocalypse. That is to say, the Book of Revelation. In the following excerpt which is taken from Book 5 Chapter 10 of "The Wars of the Jews", Josephus describes not only the severity of the famine itself, but

also the extremes to which the seditionists went in order to secure food for themselves. In a word, those wicked men spared no one:

----- Begin Quote -----

"The madness of THE SEDITIOUS did also increase together with their famine, and both those miseries were every day inflamed more and more; for there was no corn which anywhere appeared publicly, but THE ROBBERS came running into, and searched men's private houses; and then, if they found any, they tormented them, because they had denied they had any, and if they found none, they tormented them worse, because they supposed they had more carefully concealed it. The indication they made use of whether they had any or not, was taken from the bodies of these miserable wretches; which, if they were in good case, they supposed they were in no want at all of food; but if they were wasted away they walked off without searching any farther; nor did they think it proper to kill such as these, because they saw they would very soon die of themselves for want of food. Many there were indeed who sold what they had for one measure; it was of wheat, if they were of the richer sort, but of barley if they were poorer. When these had so done, they shut themselves up in the inmost rooms of their houses, and eat the corn they had gotten; some did it without grinding it, by reason of the extremity of the want they were in, and others baked bread of it, according as necessity and fear dictated to them; a table was nowhere laid for a distinct meal, but they snatched the bread out of the fire, half-baked, and eat it very hastily.

It was now a miserable case, and a sight that would justly bring tears into our eyes, how men stood as to their food, while the more powerful had more than enough, and the weaker were lamenting [for want of it.] But the famine was too hard for all other passions, and it is destructive to nothing so much as to modesty; for what was otherwise worthy of reverence was in this case despised; insomuch that children pulled the very morsels that their fathers were eating out of their very mouths, and what was still more to be pitied, so did the mothers do as to their infants; and when those that were most dear were perishing under their hands, they were not ashamed to take from them the very last drops that might preserve their lives: and while they eat after this manner, yet were they not concealed in so doing; but THE SEDITIOUS everywhere came upon them immediately, and

snatched away from them what they had gotten from others; for when they saw any house shut up, this was to them a signal that the people within had gotten some food; whereupon they broke open the doors, and ran in, and took pieces of what they were eating almost up out of their very throats, and this by force: the old men, who held their food fast, were beaten, and if the women hid what they had within their hands, their hair was torn for so doing; nor was there any commiseration shown either to the aged or to the infants, but they lifted up children from the ground, as they hung upon the morsels they had gotten, and shook them down upon the floor. But still were they more barbarously cruel to those that had prevented their coming in, and had actually swallowed down what they were going to seize upon, as if they had been unjustly defrauded of their right. They also invented terrible methods of torments to discover where any food was, and they were these: to stop up the passages of the privy parts of the miserable wretches, and to drive sharp stakes up their fundaments; and a man was forced to bear what it is terrible even to hear, in order to make him confess that he had but one loaf of bread, or that he might discover an handful of barley meal that was concealed; and this was done when these tormentors were not themselves hungry; for the thing had been less barbarous had necessity forced them to it, but this was done to keep their madness in exercise, and as making preparation of provisions for themselves for the following days."

----- End Quote -----

As I noted earlier, I am convinced that when God pronounces a prophecy in the Scriptures, it is always specific to one particular event. Josephus wrote "Many there were indeed who sold what they had for one measure; it was of wheat, if they were of the richer sort, but of barley if they were poorer." This perfectly matches what John wrote in Revelation. Now if you don't understand it, Josephus says that the rich people sold their possessions so as to purchase a measure of wheat, while the poor people were so poor that if they sold their things, they could only afford to buy a measure of barley. This was because a measure of wheat was worth much more than a measure of barley. John in fact says that wheat was worth three times more than barley. Barley was cheaper to buy than the wheat, so the poor bought the barley, while rich people purchased the wheat. Thus, that aspect of the Four Horsemen prophecy was indeed fulfilled.

At this point in our discussion, we have now covered all of the various signs in the "All These Things" list which Jesus said would serve as precursors announcing His soon return to the Earth. Through a variety of Scriptures, as well as two historical sources, I believe that I have provided convincing evidence to prove that the First Jewish-Roman War was in fact the period of great tribulation and affliction -- or Jacob's Trouble -- which the Lord had prophesied would fall upon the Jews, due to their foolish rejection of the Son of God. This destructive war was indeed the prophesied Wrath of God being poured out upon the children of disobedience, as the Apostle Paul had referred to the unbelieving Jews.

While Josephus himself may not have personally recognized Jesus Christ as the long-awaited Jewish Messiah, he did come to recognize that this dreadful seven-year war was the hand of God against the Jewish nation. As I mention in "Vespasian, Titus and the Fall of Jerusalem", he makes this statement on several occasions throughout "The Wars of the Jews".

If I am correct in my understanding regarding all of these things, then the obvious byproduct of all of this is that it likewise forces us to reconsider the actual time frame of the Lord's return. As I mentioned earlier, this is a topic which I discuss at considerable length in the series called "Jesus Christ's Return: Have We Been Deceived?". Of course, in this series, I have not covered every single Bible verse which is directly related to the topics of the Great Tribulation and the Rapture. Neither have I covered every single aspect of these terrible war events.

But I hope that I have provided you with enough information to motivate you to rethink your position, if you happen to believe that the Great Tribulation and the Rapture are yet future events, as the Futurists believe. If you would like to dig deeper into some of the subjects we have discussed here, then I again invite you to consider reading some of the other BBB articles and series which I have mentioned in this current series.

In conclusion, if you have been led astray by well-meaning but misguided Bible teachers who have tried to convince you of their unscriptural beliefs, I trust that this series will assist you in removing any confusion which may have filled your mind and heart. God's Word has spoken clearly. Please always remember that it does not matter what I say, or what you say. All that matters is what God's holy Word says. In

this series I have done my best to present to you with the Biblical truth as I currently understand it in a very clear, direct and easily understandable manner for your personal consideration.

With these thoughts, I will bring this article to a close. It is my hope that you've found it informative and enlightening, and I pray that it has been a blessing in your life as well. If you have an account with Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr or with any other social network, I would really appreciate if you'd take the time to click or tap on the corresponding link that is found on this page. Thanks so much, and may God bless you abundantly!

For additional information and further study, you may want to refer to the list of reading resources below which were either mentioned in this article, or which contain topics which are related to this article. All of these articles are likewise located on the Bill's Bible Basics web server. To read these articles, simply click or tap on any link you see below.

[Abomination of Desolation: Explained!](#)

[Are You Flexible?](#)

[Facebook False Prophets and Misguided Teachers](#)

[Fight Against Futurism!](#)

[Greater Works Than These Shall He Do . . . and Satan Too](#)

[He That Shall Endure Unto the End](#)

[Humility in Our Understanding of God's Word](#)

[In the Ages to Come](#)

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The Two Sackcloth Witnesses of Revelation 11
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Tradition or Truth? Old Wine or New Wine?
Understanding the Bible in Context
Vespasian, Titus and the Fall of Jerusalem
When Was Satan Cast Out of Heaven?
Who Hindered the Antichrist?
Who is Babylon the Great?
Who is Moshiach ben David?
Who is Who?: Defining Important Prophecy Terms

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