

Resurrection, Rapture, Millennium, and Tribulation

By Stephen M. Golden

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There are many positions held regarding the resurrection, the rapture, the millennium, and the tribulation with much emotion and opinion involved. It is therefore appropriate to allow for the possibility of error or further insight as one studies the scriptures on the subjects. Nevertheless, we must come to conclusions along the way in order to establish God's word and His intent in our minds. It is with this attitude that I approach the subjects of the Resurrection, the Rapture, the Millennium, and the Tribulation.

The reader should note this is ***not*** a study of the book of Revelation, nor is it a complete study of Eschatology (study of the end times). However, any Eschatological review must address what the scriptures say regarding these four topics.

The Resurrection

First, let's consider the resurrection; how many there will be, and when they will occur.

One Resurrection or Two?

There are generally two lines of thinking about the resurrection. There will either be one resurrection of all the dead at the same time when the Lord returns, or there will be a resurrection of the righteous dead apart

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from the unrighteous. So that is the question before us: Will there be a general resurrection for all the dead at the same time, or will there be a separate resurrection for the righteous dead before the resurrection of the unrighteous?

Jesus said in John 5:28-29

“...those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.”

This passage allows for at least two viewpoints:

1. That the evil and good will be raised together, or
2. That they will both be raised; the good to one resurrection and the evil to another.

Either viewpoint is consistent with Jesus' statement.

The same is true of Acts 24:15.

“...and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.”

The Dead in Christ

Something to keep in mind: Only the dead need to be raised. Jesus Himself tells us this in John 11:25-26. Any believers alive at His return will not be part of this resurrection, since they will have never died.

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This ties in with Paul's words to the Corinthians in 1Corinthians 15:51, "We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed..."

So, not all Christians will be "resurrected," but we **will** all be changed.

1Thessalonians 4:15-17 addresses the dead in Christ, as well as those who are alive...

"...the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be **caught up** together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air..."

The dead who are not in Christ are not discussed, increasing confidence in the view that the resurrection of the dead in Christ and the resurrection of the dead outside of Christ are two separate events. The passage only addresses the resurrection and rapture of Christians. It is specific: "The dead in Christ." (Also see Revelation 3:10.)

The Rapture

"But the 1 Thessalonians passage doesn't say the word 'rapture.'" Will there be a rapture? The Greek word used in the passage translated as "caught up" is "*harpazo*" which means "to seize, carry off by force, to

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claim for oneself, to rescue from danger, to transfer from one place to another marvelously and swiftly.”¹

In other words, a rapture.

Jesus Himself tells us in Matthew 24:31 His angels will gather His elect, indicating a resurrection and rapture. Paul speaks about the coming of the Lord and our being gathered to Him in 2Thessalonians 2:1-2.

Jesus also clearly indicates a rapture of those who are His in Matthew 24:40-41 and Luke 17:34-35 by saying “one will be taken, and the other left.” This is a rapture of the righteous living. The unrighteous are left behind. Where will they be left except on earth? For what are they left? They are left for a separate event of reckoning.

Since we have already seen that the righteous living will not precede the dead in Christ (1Thessalonians 4:14-17), this *strongly* indicates a resurrection of the righteous dead separate from the unrighteous — the first resurrection.

Jesus Himself validates the conclusion of separate resurrections when He refers to the resurrection of the

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righteous in Luke 14:14. If all are raised at the same resurrection, why would Jesus qualify it with the phrase “of the righteous?”

Jesus also refers to the “resurrection *from* the dead” for those who are worthy in Luke 20:35-36 instead of a “resurrection **of** the dead”. Jesus is saying only the righteous, God’s children, will be taking a part in this resurrection, which clearly indicates two resurrections.

In Luke 14:14, Jesus again indicates a separate resurrection of the Godly from the ungodly by using the phrase, “of the righteous.”

As mentioned previously, the Apostle Paul tells us in Philippians 3:11 there is to be a resurrection **from** the dead. Paul desires to attain to this resurrection. One doesn’t have to attain to, or seek to be included in, the resurrection **of** the dead if **all** are raised unto judgment.

Resurrection FROM the Dead:²

If Christ is coming to raise the righteous 1000 years before the unrighteous, it would be natural and imperative that the former should be called a resurrection from the dead, or out of the dead, — the rest of the dead are left.

² From **The Pemillennial Position of the Primitive Church**, J. R. Clark, *The Word and Work*, 1958

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W. E. Blackstone relates that the resurrection *nekron* or *ton nekron* (of the dead) is applied to both classes because all will be raised. But the resurrection *ek nekron* (out of the dead) is not once applied to the ungodly. The latter phrase is used 49 times, always with the idea of out of the dead. Philippians 3:11 is used in a remarkably significant manner. The NIV renders it 'resurrection from the dead,' which is closer to the meaning than the KJV which renders it 'resurrection of the dead.'" The Greek preposition *ek* is used in duplicate form. The phrase is *teen exanastasin teen ek nekron*, and the literal translation is "the out resurrection from among the dead." This particular construction gives special emphasis that this is the resurrection "out from among the dead."

Already come?

In 2Timothy 2:17-18, Paul describes Hymenaeus and Philetus as destroying the faith of some by teaching that the resurrection has already taken place. He reaffirms the existence of this false belief in 2Thessalonians 2:1-2 and reassures the Christians there.

1 Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, 2 not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come.

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This false teaching would not have been possible if there were no prior understanding that the righteous, dead and living, would be taken out of the world, leaving the rest behind. The truth of the rapture therefore is implied by Paul in this passage.

Notice that the Christians referenced in Revelation 12:11-12 are with the Lord since “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb”, yet a woe concerning Satan to those who remain on the earth follows. This indicates someone is still on the earth. Something is to happen to those left on the earth. Satan’s time is short, not ended.

Will the end come immediately after the resurrection?

Paul gives us a little more information on the subject by indicating a sequence of events.

1Corinthians 15:22-26 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But **each in his own turn**: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

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All who are in Christ will be made alive. That certainly is a resurrection for those who are dead in Christ. However, these “turns” do not immediately follow each other. Note how the statement about making “those who belong to Him” alive is as separate from “the end will come” as the “first fruits” are from “those who belong to him.” We have the “first fruits,” then “those who belong to him,” then the end.

These are distinct events in sequence, and not necessarily occurring close together. The point of Paul’s statement is the order, not the proximity in time (“each in his own turn”). We know more than 2000 years have passed between Christ’s Resurrection and now. Yet His return has not occurred. While it does not require a similar time span, it does not logically follow that the end will come immediately after Christ takes out those who belong to Him.

Even the last trumpet is not the last event. The Last Trumpet mentioned in the book of Revelation is not the same “last trumpet” understood in the Jewish tradition representing the final event. John’s prophecy, written around 95AD, was unknown to the Jews of Jesus’ day. From the Jewish perspective, the references to trumpets refer to the feast of trumpets, in which the last trumpet was a long swelling final blast representing triumph, and was the close of the feast of trumpets.

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This feast of trumpets was representative of Jewish history, and the last trumpet signified the joyous triumphal conclusion at the end of the ages.³

Therefore, the end does not come immediately after the resurrection of the righteous dead. It comes at some point after Jesus destroys all dominion, and reigns until it is complete. The final event in this creation is the destruction of death itself. (1Corinthians 15:24-26)

The First Resurrection

What is the first resurrection? Although some say the first resurrection occurs at baptism, this is difficult to reconcile.

While Paul tells us we “have been raised,” in Colossians 3:1,4 and Ephesians 2:6, he also indicates in Romans 6:4-5 that we have *not* been resurrected. Our resurrection is still in the future. Therefore, these verses cannot be used to justify saying, “The first resurrection is when we are ‘raised to walk in newness of life’.” Instead, Paul tells us our resurrection is in the future.

³ From the DVD “*25 Unusual Signs of Christ’s Second Coming*,” Perry Stone, Jr., Evangelist

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In Romans 6:8, Paul says “**we will also live with him,**” which projects our life with Christ into the future. Christ **will give** life to our mortal bodies (Romans 8:11). For at this moment, we still have our mortal bodies. It can hardly be said we have been resurrected while we are still in our mortal bodies. Paul makes the statement that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again.

Romans 6:9 For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him.

The same is true of our resurrection, since a comparison is clearly being made. This conclusion is reinforced in Revelation 20:6 which says that over those who are part of the first resurrection, the second death has no power.

As we’ve seen before, Paul tells us in Philippians 3:11 there is to be a resurrection from the dead and that he desires to attain to this resurrection. That means it was yet to occur from his perspective.

Revelation 20:4-5 clearly tells us that the idea of the ‘first resurrection occurring at baptism’ is wrong. “They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection.”

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John specifically says **this** is the first resurrection, which correlates very well with 1Thessalonians 4:14-18.

If the first resurrection occurs at baptism, the first death must precede it. If that is the case, there is no theological consideration for physical death, because the second death has no power over us. (Revelation 20:6) If one asserts that the second death is physical death, and that it indeed has no power over us, then you have a conflict with scripture.

John tells us in Revelation 20:14-15 and 21:8 **the second death is the lake of fire**. Therefore, if the first death is at our conversion, and the second death is the lake of fire—eternal death, where is physical death? It would have to mean no one who has been baptized will physically die because the first death would have preceded their first resurrection, and the second death is the lake of fire which has no power over them. Clearly then, the first resurrection does *not* occur at baptism.

Also, if the first resurrection did occur at baptism, the resurrection referenced by 1Thessalonians 4:15-17 must be the second resurrection. The resurrection of the unrighteous dead must be yet a third resurrection.

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Jesus in the Sky

For the first resurrection and rapture, Jesus does not come down to the earth. The passages Matthew 24:27; 24:30-31 and Luke 17:24 simply indicate it will be visible.

He is seen in the sky; it's like a flash across the world. He gathers His own to Himself, and as 1Thessalonians 4:17 says, we will meet Him *in the air*. This will be no “secret coming,” as some detractors of the rapture have described it. This will be like a flash of lightning, and just as quick. The world will indeed see Him, but those who disbelieve will explain it away as they did when God spoke audibly to His Son [John 12:29], and when he rose from the dead. Man has an incredible ability to rationalize and explain away the evidence for the existence of the Almighty God. Just consider the pervasiveness of the belief in Evolution — that all things created themselves — in the midst of overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

Some words on prophecy

Before we go further, it's appropriate to relate some important truths about prophecy.

1. God doesn't give all the details of a prophecy to any particular person. Throughout history, especially

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concerning the end times, only partial details were entrusted to various prophets: Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and others. But in His Word, he has revealed to us more detail through his prophets and writers collectively. As we examine God's Word, we begin to see a more complete picture.

2. Some prophecies speak of events separated by thousands of years in the same sentence. For example, Jesus read from Isaiah 61:1-2 in the Synagogue at Nazareth as recorded in Luke 4:19. He stopped at the comma in verse two and sat down. Then He said "...This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." The portion of the scripture after the comma, the part Jesus did not read, is yet to be fulfilled today. Clearly, the day of vengeance of our God has not yet come. This is but one example of how two events of prophecy in a single passage can be separated by more than a thousand years.

In another instance, Zechariah 9:9 is fulfilled by Matthew 21:4-5 when Jesus rides into Jerusalem on the colt of a donkey. Whereas Zechariah 9:10 remains unfulfilled to this day.

10 I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations.

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His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.

3. Some statements of prophecy have relevance to more than one event. For example, The Jews consider Hosea 11:1 “Out of Egypt I called my son” to have been fulfilled in Moses leading Israel out of Egypt. However, Matthew ties this to the events surrounding the birth of Christ in Matthew 2:15.

4. Whenever we consider prophecy, we must keep in mind that passages of greater information shed light on passages of lesser information. But passages of lesser information can not and must not overshadow or limit passages of greater information. That is to say less specific passages should not limit or restrict the meaning of more specific passages. The goal is to make all the passages harmonize.

John goes into the greatest prophetic detail of the end times in his discussion of the resurrection in the Book of Revelation. Therefore, it tends to shed light on all other prophecies.

Jesus comes with His saints

According to 1Thessalonians 3:13, Jesus is going to come with “all His saints,” “all His holy ones,” or “all

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those who belong to Him,” depending on the translation.

Are we not His saints, His holy ones? Do we not belong to Him? Some might say the above verse is not talking about coming to earth. What else from Paul’s perspective could "coming" mean than coming to earth? Now see Zechariah 14:4-11 and note that the Lord comes with His saints/holy ones (v.5 “Then the LORD my God will come, and all his holy ones with him.”).

Jude (Jude 1:14-15) refers to Enoch who prophesied that Jesus comes with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment on all who are ungodly.

Is not the Church called "His saints?" Are there other saints to whom this verse could possibly refer? Perhaps these are the Christians who have already died. Even so, their resurrection had to have preceded this event, if it is going to take place at all, for Him to come with them to execute judgment.

The saints will judge the world.

According to 1Corinthians 6:2-3, the saints will judge the world. Revelation 2:26-28 says we will rule the nations with an iron hand. 2Thessalonians 2:12 says

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we will reign with Christ, and Revelation 20:6 says it will be for a thousand years.

If there is only one resurrection of the dead, and everything happens at that time, [when do all these things take place?](#)

Satan not yet bound

Revelation 20:2 tells us there will be a time when Satan will be bound for a thousand years. Some say Satan is currently bound and that we're reigning with Christ now. Does Christ reign in this world today? Hardly. Is Satan bound? Certainly not. No one can legitimately say Jesus reigns on earth today. Satan is currently Lord of this world. See Luke 4:5-6; John 12:31; and 1Peter 5:8.

It is interesting to note that in Luke 4:5-6, Jesus did not take issue with Satan when he said he had been given authority over the kingdoms of the world. And in John 14:30 and John 16:11, Jesus confirms that Satan is still here and still prince of this world.

Paul calls Satan the ruler of the kingdom of the air in Ephesians 2:1-23 and John tells us the whole world is under the power of the evil one in 1John 5:19. If the devil prowled around like a roaring lion in Peter's day

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(1Peter 5:8) then he does so today. Satan is as active as he ever was. The binding of Satan for a thousand years is an event in the future.

The Man of Lawlessness

Paul tells us that the man of lawlessness will be revealed and will exalt himself over all that is worshipped. This is not a “conceptual man,” but a specific entity who sets himself up in the temple⁴ to be worshipped as God — if God’s Word means what it says.

2Thessalonians 2:3-4 "Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and **the man of lawlessness is revealed**, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will **exalt himself** over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that **he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.**"

Removal of the Holy Spirit

According to 2Thessalonians 2:1-10, the Holy Spirit — *or some agent of God who now holds lawlessness back* — must be taken out of the way before the lawless one is revealed. How do we conclude the one who holds back lawlessness is the Holy Spirit? First of all, we know Jesus sent the Helper (the Holy Spirit) to earth after He ascended (John 16:7). But is “the Helper”

⁴ Note: First there has to be a temple.

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conclusively the Holy Spirit? Jesus, in John 14:26, says He is.

Jesus said the Holy Spirit would not come unless He went away (John 16:7-8), indicating a real presence on this earth that would be in conflict in some way if Jesus remained here. So, the Holy Spirit is now here on earth.

If the one who holds back lawlessness is **not** the Holy Spirit, then it would have to be another righteous entity about whom we have no information at all. Paul would be referencing this unknown entity for which there is no other reference or knowledge. This seems highly unlikely.

Do Christians not have the Holy Spirit today? The New Testament has many passages that indicate the Holy Spirit is here for us. He lives within Christians who are His temple. Jesus promised Him to us. Since this is true, when will He be taken out of the way? This is yet to happen, and it must happen **before** the man of lawlessness is revealed. Therefore, the man of lawlessness will not be revealed until all Christians are removed from the earth, because Jesus would not take away the comforter promised to Christians while Christians remain on the earth. **The man of lawlessness will not be revealed until after the**

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rapture. There will be no Christians—those to whom the Holy Spirit was promised, the Bride of Christ—on the earth after the rapture.

The Millennium

Revelation 20:1-8 tells us Satan will be bound for a thousand years and we will reign with Christ for a thousand years, after which, Satan will be released for a while.

This is known as The Millennium. By the way, for those who say “millennium” is not found in the Bible, neither is “omniscient” or “omnipresent.” Millennium simply means “thousand years” — mille = thousand, annum = year.

[Again, I ask](#), if there is only one resurrection of the dead, and everything happens at that time, when do all the events mentioned in Revelation 20:3-9 take place? From where do the “rest of the dead” (v.5) come when the thousand years are finished? Scripture tells us there will be a reign on this earth (Revelation 5:10 and 20:4). Paul also indicates this in 2Timothy 2:12.

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The Great Tribulation

Prophecy Yet To Be Fulfilled

In Daniel 9:24-27, the Anointed One is cut off at the sixty-ninth “week” [or “sevens”], that is, seven sevens plus sixty-two sevens. This is the crucifixion of our Lord. Discussion about the seventieth week follows in the prophecy. However, the prophecy does not demand that the seventieth week follow immediately, and the concept of the Anointed One being “cut off” implies that it does not. (Daniel 9:27)

Daniel 9:24 indicates the final week will bring an end to sin, and will bring in *everlasting righteousness*. Obviously that has not happened yet.

This Generation Shall Not Pass Away

There is much discussion about Jesus’ saying “this generation shall not pass away before these things come to pass” (Mark 13:24-30 and Luke 21:32).

Some say this means the generation of those who were hearing Jesus’ voice, others say this means this age in general.

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However, these explanations do not match reality. The times of the Gentiles are still active, we have not seen startling signs in the sun, moon and stars, there has not been perplexity over the tossing of the sea, and the heavenly bodies have not been shaken. (Luke 21:24-26)

Jesus then says, "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other." (Matthew 24:30-31 and Mark 13:27) Surely, this has not happened.

Still others say "this generation" means the Hebrew race.

An option to those explanations is that *the generation seeing those things come to pass will not pass away until all those things take place*. Some in recent times have suggested that the time for this was 1988; using 40 years as a "generation," since Israel took back nation status in 1948 and several other events took place then. The Lord did not return. These people have been severely chastised for their erroneous predictions.

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While I do not intend to predict the day of the Lord's return, this viewpoint is worth a second look, but with a modification. While using 40 years as a generation might be valid for computing "how many generations" in other Biblical references, in this case, the scripture says the generation "will not pass away." This indicates anywhere from 70 to perhaps up to 120 years, or however long any human born at that time [1948] might live. The Lord's return under such an interpretation of prophecy could be as late at 2068.

Reign of the beast

Some say the beast is the man of lawlessness. He will set himself up as God (2Thessalonians 2:3-4; Daniel 11:36; Revelation 13:7-8). The "mark of the beast," the taking of which will be on the right hand or forehead, and without which no one will be able to buy or sell, must come before the beast and false prophet are cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 14:11). Then comes the Millennial reign, after which Satan is released to make war on God's People.

Out of the Great Tribulation

Who are those clothed in white robes? (Revelation 7:13-14) According to one of the elders by the throne of God, these are the ones who have come out of The

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Great Tribulation, "...They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb..." and John didn't know who they were. This implies they were not Christians who had lived up to that point, so no tribulation that had occurred up to 90 AD (the estimated date the book of Revelation was written) could have been "The Great Tribulation." It also indicates some in The Great Tribulation will be made pure by the blood of the Lamb.

Daniel 11:35 tells us there will be believers ("the Wise") who will stumble so that they may be purified. Some believe this indicates Christians will go through the Great Tribulation. However, the prophecy was given to Israelites, and is just as likely speaking of Jews rather than Christians, or even possibly Gentiles who have come to faith after the Church is taken out.

Christians spared

In the New Testament, Luke 21:36, 1Thessalonians 1:10, and Revelation 3:10 give us an indication at least *some* if not all Christians will be spared from The Great Tribulation. While the passage in Luke may be referring to the Jewish people, the other passages certainly refer to Christians. Revelation 20:4 also indicates believers will suffer at this time because, to praise some believers for not receiving the mark, they

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would have to have been given the opportunity to receive it. On the other hand, if this is to apply to all Christians, it must occur before the man of lawlessness, or the beast, is [cast into the lake of fire](#), as we discussed before.

Was it 70 AD?

Some say The Great Tribulation occurred in 70 AD when Rome sacked Jerusalem. But, Jesus said in Matthew 24:2 the temple and its surrounding structures will be utterly destroyed. "...not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." Was the 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem what Jesus meant? There are stones from the temple and temple area ("all these things") still standing on each other even today.

The disciples asked when these things would take place, and Jesus responded in Matthew 24:7 that "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places." But that "...All these are the beginning of birth pains." (v.8) Jesus tells us in Luke 21:9-11 that these things do not happen immediately.

From the time Jesus said this until 70 AD, the many wars, famines, and earthquakes had not had time to

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take place. Jesus followed this by saying these were just the beginning of birth pangs. He then said in Matthew 24:14 that the gospel will be preached to the whole world before the end will come.

Jesus says in Matthew 24:29-30 “Immediately after the distress of those days ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’ At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.”

Last I checked, the sun and the moon still shine, and stars were still there. Even if Jesus meant only for a short period, as in an eclipse, there is no historical record of these events associated with the 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem. The Son of Man did not appear in the sky, and the nations of the earth did not mourn over the 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem. Most nations weren't even aware of the destruction of Jerusalem. Additionally, if 70 AD was the time of tribulation Jesus meant, He would have already come, and we would have been born too late.

In Luke 21:20, Jesus said armies (plural) would surround Jerusalem. In 70 AD there was essentially only one army involved — the army of Rome. However, there *are* armies surrounding Jerusalem

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today. The part of this passage that speaks of the Jews being taken captive and dispersed to other nations seems to have happened (verses 23-24). Nevertheless, signs were not seen in the sun, moon, and stars, the nations were not perplexed at the raging of the sea, and the heavenly bodies have not been shaken indicating this part of Jesus' statement is yet to take place. It is likely Jesus was speaking of two different times.

The hour of trial that will come upon the whole earth.

Jesus said in Luke 21:35 and Revelation 3:7-10, the tribulation would come upon all who are on the earth.

The events of 70 AD did not come upon all who live upon the face of the whole earth. The 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem did not even cause trial for a large part of the world known to the Biblical writers of the day.

Also, the Apostle, John, wrote the book of Revelation around 95 AD — about twenty-five years after the 70 AD “destruction of Jerusalem.” So if the events recorded in the book of Revelation are in the future, The Great Tribulation of which *he* wrote could not have been 70 AD. It was yet to come.

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Some try to discount the teaching of The Great Tribulation by quoting such verses as John 16:33, Romans 2:9, Romans 5:3, Romans 8:35, Romans 12:12, 1Thessalonians 1:6, and Revelation 1:9 which speak of tribulation and trials in the Christian life.

Using these passages, they point out that all Christians suffer tribulation. Yes, there is tribulation. John even mentions his own at the beginning of the book of Revelation. However, John records the words of God's servant, one of the four elders by God's throne, who goes *out of his way* in Revelation 7:14 to distinguish *those* tribulations from the one he is describing. He calls it "the great tribulation" — using both the definite article "the" and the qualifying adjective "great."

If The Great Tribulation is simply the tribulation we all must undergo, John's revelation reveals nothing. The Elder would then be saying "these are those who suffered what most Christians suffer..." and the point being made is either lost, or irrelevant. The question remains: Who are these ones in robes?

In Revelation 6:9, John is shown those who had been slain and whose brethren would join them in a short time.⁵

⁵ Concept from *Escape from the Great Tribulation*, Stanford Chambers.

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Then, after that short time passes (Revelation 20:4) John sees the entire number together.⁶

All of these who had not worshipped the beast *and* those mentioned in 1Thessalonians 4:15-17, who are those given authority to judge, as mentioned in the first clause of Revelation 20:4, combined, comprise the first resurrection. This carries with it one of two implications. Either the first resurrection takes place after the tribulation, or the souls who were murdered for their testimony of Jesus during the Great Tribulation join those already resurrected and raptured. This “Testimony” is *not necessarily* that of the Church.

Jesus speaks specifically of being ready in Luke 21:36, and indicates that through prayer we can escape this tribulation. This contradicts the belief that the general tribulations are this one.

Furthermore, the use of the Greek word *harpazo* (catching up) would not have been chosen if Christians were not to be saved from at least part, if not all, of the "great time of testing." (See definition of [harpazo](#) previous.)

Jesus will save those who persevere “...from the great time of testing that will come upon the whole world to

⁶ Concept from *Escape from the Great Tribulation*, Stanford Chambers.

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test those who belong to this world.” (Revelation 3:10) —At least those of “the church in Philadelphia”—whomever that reference includes.

This time of testing and tribulation is also known as Jacob’s trouble. Jeremiah 30:7,11ff Israel does not escape “Jacob’s trouble.” A new Israel is brought forth. See also Isaiah 66.

A “Second Chance?”

One view regarding the tribulation is that all of it takes place after the Church is taken out, and does not involve the bride of Christ, the Church.

Many who disagree with this position call it a “second chance,” and try to refute it by saying, “there is no second chance.” However, it’s always easier to fight a straw man than to address an issue squarely. No pre-trib-pre-millennialist I have ever read or heard maintains there will be any “second chance.” There is no “second chance” to become a part of Christ’s Church.

“When the Church is taken out, there are no more entries. This is His Bride. There will be guests at the marriage supper, but there will be the bride, i.e. The Church. The fact that many Israelites will come

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through the tribulation and be with Jehovah at the end does not disturb me, nor does it disturb the plan and Word of God. Even if you believe (as does Brother. [Dr. E.E.] Lyon) that some Gentiles will be saved from destruction AFTER the church is caught up, these would not become part of the Bride of Christ.”

-W.R.Golden, Evangelist

This is not a “second chance.”

“Who would want to contemplate suffering through World Church & Government and 'the mark' just for a second chance? ...Revelation 7:9 reveals those saved after the Church era [could include] ... Gentiles.”

-W.R.Golden, Evangelist

The Church is not therefore an afterthought in this scenario, as some contend; it is the Bride of Christ. This fits well with the vision of the New Heavens, New Earth, and New Jerusalem described by the Apostle John in the last two chapters of Revelation. John reveals a distinction between new Jerusalem's residents (the bride of Christ) and those who enter into it temporarily (the Nations).

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To maintain that the only ones God can save from now on are those who are part of Christ's Church, even after the Church is taken out, and even in the light of promises to Israel, is both egotistical and arrogant.

Paul tells us in Romans 11:11-32, God can, and will, graft Israel in again. If God could graft us into the tree in the first place, and graft Israel back into the tree in the second place, who are we to put our limitations on His saving grace by prescribing what God can and cannot do? (Romans 11:23-36) God can save all who put their faith in Him. (Romans 11:32) Think of the faith it would require to put your trust in the Almighty God during the ridicule, torment, and torture of The Great Tribulation.

Jesus said in John 10:16 there are sheep from more than one pen. We (Christians) are included in the other sheep, but Jesus has not limited His other sheep to "Christians." He has left it open to include all whom He might choose to include. Remember the thief on the cross (Luke 23:43) was not a Christian, but Jesus saved him.

In Acts 18:9-10, the Lord tells Paul to not be afraid because He has many people in the city of Corinth. This suggests a relationship between God and specific individuals that was outside the Christian framework.

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While not necessarily a “saving” relationship, it is an example of God working directly with men as He chooses.

Under the current age, for you to invoke the saving grace, you must come through Jesus (John 14:6) and belong to the body of Christ (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25). In the tribulation, faith in Christ as God’s Son may still carry a saving grace. Either way, no man comes to the Father but through Jesus.⁷ Who are we to limit God’s grace? (Matthew 20:1-16; 1Timothy 2:2)

Other Prophecies and Scriptures

Concerning Israel

Times of the Gentiles

The Jewish clock has been paused until God harvests the Gentiles and the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. As mentioned above, this period is when Jesus brings in the sheep from His other flock. (See Luke 21:24, Ezekiel 30:3, Romans 11:23, Romans 11:25, and Revelation 11:2.)

⁷ Note: Even this does not prevent God from working an independent act of salvation in special cases. While “no man comes to the Father but through Jesus,” the Father can still do as He will, and can reach out to man as it suits Him. This wouldn’t be man coming to God, but God reaching to man.

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Israel restored and no longer persecuted

Prophecy says Israel will be restored and no longer persecuted. God says the wicked will not oppress them any more (2Samuel 7:10-11) and that Israel will be restored to their land. (Jeremiah 30:3) All of Israel will be made alive again. (Ezekiel 37:11-12)

These prophecies have never been fulfilled. These conditions have never happened. Are they meaningless prophecies, or will the events yet occur? Some say they refer to the restoration in Ezra, but that restoration only involved the house of Judah. The scripture clearly states “the whole house of Israel” (all 12 tribes) will be restored. (Ezekiel 39:25 and Ezekiel 37:21-22) See also Ezekiel chapter 38 and Amos 9:11-15.

Are these just the wishful desires of a downtrodden people, or are they promises of God?

Israel has never returned (Jeremiah 29:10), only fractions of Israel at different times. The gathering we see today is the closest the world has seen to Israel’s return to Jerusalem.

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Jeremiah 30:8-9 says the LORD will raise up “David”, and we understand this to mean Jesus Christ. The prophecy concerns a time after Christ’s resurrection, so the restoration cannot refer to any Old Testament event. On the other hand, if “David” does not refer to Christ, when did the LORD raise up David?

Finally, Romans 11:26 clearly indicates God still has a plan for Israel.

Perhaps we’re a bit too egotistical when we believe the Church is God’s entire plan. Do we believe God has told us everything? How much do you think God has not told us? Everything God has told us is true, and it will occur just as He said, but He has not told us everything. Let us not be presumptuous in our conclusions.

As we pointed out before, Jesus said there are sheep from more than one pen. (John 10:16) Since we (the Christians) are included in the “other sheep,” it easily allows for the Israelites to still be considered part of the flock.

Seventy Sevens

Daniel 9:24-27

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24 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.

25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

26 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, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

(KJV)

In case that seems a bit obscure, here it is from the NIV:

24 "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.

25 "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the

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Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. 26 After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. 27 He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him."

J. R. Clark on the Seventy Sevens:⁸

Daniel thought this 70 years was just about over and began prying to God.

70 weeks decreed ...to finish transgression, to make an end of sin. (Daniel 9:24) The Hebrew word here for weeks means "sevens" (like our word "dozen"). This is not units of weeks, i.e. 490 years is meant. Gabriel comes to him and clarifies this. God has decreed that seven times seventy years will elapse before the promised blessing (six blessings are promised in v.24). Daniel is then told that from the restoring of Jerusalem is the time of the counting.

⁸ Summarized from **The Pre-millennial Position of the Primitive Church**, J. R. Clark, The Word and Work, 1958, pp.46-49

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Then Gabriel breaks up the 70 weeks into 7 weeks, 62 weeks, and 1 week. Nehemiah chapter 2, the rebuilding of Jerusalem is initiated and the 70 weeks begins. 69 weeks were to take “unto the anointed one, the prince” —Christ 483 years counting from 445. Prophetic years being reckoned as 360 days, this takes us to Jesus' Triumphal Entry in Luke 19.

- Do the weeks run consecutively? What is their end?
- No. The Jewish clock runs continuously through the 62 weeks and then stops [remember, 7 weeks came before the 62 weeks]. Daniel 9:26
- After 69 weeks, the anointed one is cut off and shall have nothing.
- “This is a ‘time out’ for a new era. The Church age, the calling in of the Gentiles
- At the beginning of the 70th week (v.27) the spotlight again goes to the Jews.

Two things happen after [the end of] the 69th week.

1. The anointed one is cut off (Isaiah 53:8)
2. Daniel 9:26 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, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. KJV (70 AD Destruction of Jerusalem by Rome) A period of 40 years. The 7th week is only 7 years. There must be a gap between the 69th and 70th weeks. “Also,

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when the 70th week is concluded, all such desolations are to bring in everlasting righteousness.” (Daniel 9:24)

The “prince that shall come” is a Roman prince – that is, not Christ. Why couldn’t Christ have been the one who came and made a covenant (1st 3½ years being his Ministry...)?

1. Christ made no 7 year commitment
2. Structure of the passage (vv.26 & 27) indicates “he” is a prince in the future.
3. Destruction of Jerusalem 40 years after the 69th week does not fit into the 70th week (the last 7 years).
4. The remaining 3½ years are pointless. They head nowhere. No sins are forgiven at their end, no blessing occurs, and etc.

The “Many” are the Jews for the prophecy is about Daniel’s people (v.24) The “coming Prince” will turn out to be an enemy of the Jews. He will break the covenant in the middle of the week. Wrath is poured out unto the full end —3½ years. (Daniel 7; Revelation 12, 13 — a time, times, and half a time, 1260 days, 42 months.)

God will destroy the nations

God says He will completely destroy all the nations in which Israel is scattered (Jeremiah 30:11). Also, Jeremiah 30:11 and Isaiah 34:2-4 and tell us Israel will be (is being?) punished, but will be saved from the

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nations in which they are scattered. When has God punished the nations, as indicated by these verses?

If this simply refers to the final coming of Christ, all of this must happen in one day. When does God give them over to slaughter? Is it instantaneous?

Revelation 6:14 talks about the sky being rolled back like a scroll. I believe the stars being dissolved and the sky being rolled up like a scroll are events that will be finalized by the final return of Christ to earth. Between now and then, there has to be time for the destruction of the great city. (Revelation 18:19) There has to be time for fleeing (Revelation 6:15) ...and running and screaming.

David's line will endure forever

God told David through the Psalms that His line and throne will endure forever. (Psalm 89:34-37)

Concerning the Return of Christ

The abomination that causes desolation

The “abomination that causes desolation,” is declared by Jesus as something that will occur as the definitive sign of the end times. (Matthew 24:15-22, Mark 13:14,

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19-20, Daniel 9:27, Daniel 11:31, Daniel 12:11) Could it be Islam, or an accommodation to Islam on a “wing of the temple”?

Jesus’ feet resting on the Mount of Olives

When Jesus “catches up” His church, He will not come to earth at that time. Instead, we will meet him in the clouds, as we have seen previously (1Thessalonians 4:13-18). When He does come to earth, His feet will rest on the Mount of Olives. The Mount of Olives will divide and living water will flow from it (Zechariah 14:2-11). For those who believe all of the end time events occur on a single last day, will this happen on “the last day?” If not, when will it happen or when did it ever occur? Was the prophet wrong?

This will happen at the end of The Great Tribulation, at the beginning of the Thousand-year reign of peace. (Revelation 20:2-7)

The Age to Come

Jesus spoke of the age to come (Matthew 12:32; Mark 10:30; Luke 18:30), and others described “ages,” but what did they mean by ages and the age to come?

What ages have taken place in the world so far?

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There have been six ages in the world up to now:⁹

1. Edenic age -ended with expulsion from the garden
2. Antediluvian age -ended with the flood
3. Postdiluvian age -ended with the call & promise of Abraham
4. Abrahamic age -ended with giving of the Law
5. Mosaic age -ended with either Christ's birth, or the resurrection, depending on your perspective.
6. Christian age -the current age. Matthew 13:49: This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous
7. Millennial age -The age to come ends with death being abolished

The age to come will be ushered in by the Messiah. (Revelation 11:15; Daniel 7:13-14) It must take place after this age, because Christ's birth/life/death/resurrection ushered in this age, but the present age is evil (Galatians 1:4). John has stated the length of the age to come — a thousand years. In the same way Jesus, while on earth, did not know the day or the hour, Paul and Peter were not given this information. Jesus was to go to heaven until the times of restoration of all things. (Matthew 12:32; Matthew 10:30; Luke 18:30; Ephesians 1:21)

According to Acts 3:21, Jesus will not return until it is time to restore all things.

⁹ Taken from *Escape from the Great Tribulation*, Stanford Chambers.

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This is a place where the post-millennial and a-millennial views fail. Both of these viewpoints make the present age the final age. If this age is the final age, when is the restoration, spoken of in Acts 3:21, to take place, and when is the age to come?

Many of the teachers of post- and a-millennialism will freely state that these are the “last days,” and that the “last days” began at the birth of Christ. This is a position with which I generally agree. Even if the last days include two ages, they’re still “the last days.” However, they refuse to acknowledge the inconsistency that results in considering Christ’s statements about the age to come if there is no age to come. The very fact that Jesus uses the word “age” to describe the time period after this time period indicates that, as in previous “ages,” it is a specific time with a definite duration. If Jesus had been referring to eternity future, He wouldn't have called it an age. The age to come is the thousand year reign of peace.

In consideration of Acts 2:16-21, while it is true “this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel,” Peter did not say this fulfilled (as in “completed”) Joel’s prophecy. Instead, it is clear from the context that this was only the beginning of the foretold events, not their conclusion. For example, the Spirit was poured out upon them, and they began to prophesy. Were any of

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them dreaming or seeing visions at that moment? Were the dreams and visions fulfilled at the time of Peter's statements? No, the dreams and visions spoken of by the prophet must have come later. Did prophecy cease on the day of Pentecost? Certainly not. Were there wonders in heaven with blood, fire, and billows of smoke, as indicated by the prophecy? Did the sun become dark and the moon turn to blood? Luke did not record any such events having occurred; neither did any of the other New Testament writers. Since they have not occurred, the prophecy has not yet reached fulfillment.

You may ask, "What is meant by the last days, then?" These are the last days of man's time; the last age in which evil reigns. As we have discussed previously, and as John has recorded, in the age to come, our Lord will reign for a thousand years of peace.

Some might say, "The age to come is when we will be in Heaven or on the New Earth in New Jerusalem." However, John clearly tells us in Revelation 20:3, 5 & 21:1-5 that the New Earth and New Jerusalem come after the thousand years have ended.

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Pending prophecy

If the Lord's return does not include the Great Tribulation or a millennial reign, when do the following events take place?

- All who do not worship the beast are killed Revelation 13:15
- Mark on hand or forehead Revelation 13:16-17; 14:9;16:2
- Temple rebuilt Daniel 8:13; 9:24-27; 2Thessalonians 2:3-4
- Dividing of Mount of Olives Zechariah 14:2, 4
- Land of Israel made flat Zechariah 14:10
- Jerusalem will be secure Zechariah 14:11
- 1000 year reign Revelation 5:10
- 7 years covenant 3½ of peace then broken Daniel 9:24-27
- "Hour of testing upon the whole world" Revelation 3:10; Luke 21:35
- The Great Tribulation Revelation 7:14
- Fiery hail Revelation 8:7
- Sea to blood Revelation 8:8; 16:3
- Waters bitter Revelation 8:11
- Sun to scorch people Revelation 16:8
- Darkness Revelation 16:10
- Earthquake like no other Revelation 16:18
- Great "city" split into 3 parts, other cities collapsed Revelation 16:19
- Islands & mountains gone Revelation 16:20

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- 100 lb. Hailstones Revelation 16:21
- Sun, moon, stars struck Revelation 8:12
- Death eludes men Revelation 9:6
- 200,000,000 horsemen Revelation 9:16
- Two witnesses 1260 days Revelation 11:3
- Dead 3½ days called to heaven, Revelation 11:11
- The Beast Revelation 13:4,8

It's simply not possible that these prophecies have taken place without our notice. If they do not take place, do we just throw out these scriptures? If you believe there will only be one final day, all these events must take place before that day, if they are to take place at all.

Strangely enough, the "Single-Last-Day" scenario has exactly the same flaw as some accuse Tim LaHay's scenario of the pre-millennial pre-tribulation rapture of having if any of the above are yet to occur. That is, "The Lord can't return if the event hasn't occurred yet."

However, an accurate representation of the pre-millennial position does not have this problem, because the Church is taken out before any of this, or at any time during.

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Summary

The many topics discussed in this article can be overwhelming. For the sake of tying it all together, here I include a summary of the events of the End Times as I see them. This list is subject to revision as new information comes to light..

My summarization of the events:

1. Jesus appears in the clouds and “catches up” His Church. He does not touch the earth at this time.
1Thessalonians 4:16-17

1. a. Israel’s clock starts ticking again.

2. Some “believers” (not necessarily Christians) suffer Tribulation. However, they do seem to be called “saints” in Revelation.

Revelation 2:10; 7:14; 13:10; 14:12; 20:4;

Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 7:25; 11:35

Nevertheless, while all Christians are saints, not all saints are Christians.

2.a. Some will not... Revelation 3:10; 3:16; 2Peter 2:9;

3. Temple rebuilt: 2Thessalonians 2:4

4. At this point the agreement with Israel is broken (Daniel’s 70th week) Daniel 9:24-27

5. Battle ensues — evil against Jerusalem Zechariah 14:2

Plagues & wrath of God here? Revelation chapters 6; 9; 11; 15; 16; 18

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6. At a future point, Return of Christ. Jesus actually touches earth and Mount of Olives divides to north and south, land is changed Zechariah 14:4,10

7. Satan bound for 1000 years. Revelation 20:2, 4

8. Jesus sets up 1000 year reign. Revelation 20:4-6, 10

9. Christians rule the nations

Revelation 2:26

10. Satan is loosed to wage war by leading “the nations” against the Saints on earth. Revelation 20:7-9;

Revelation 19:19

Plagues & wrath of God here?

11. God vs. Satan battle Revelation 20:9

12. Rest of the dead are raised. Revelation 20:5

13. Judgment of the world Revelation 20:11-15

14. New earth & New Jerusalem.

Zechariah 14:8-11; Revelation 3:12; 21:2; 21:18

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Conclusions

Based on the information presented in this article, which has been derived from the Word of God, we can draw the following conclusions:

- The resurrection of the righteous will be separate from the unrighteous.
- The living saints will be raptured immediately after the righteous dead are resurrected.
- Baptism is *not* the first resurrection.
- The Rapture is not the Lord's return to earth for judgment.
- There will be a thousand year reign on this earth.
- Satan is not now bound.
- The man of lawlessness has not been revealed.
- The Holy Spirit is still here.
- Christians will be removed before the man of lawlessness is revealed or immediately after.
- There will be a reign of the beast.
- There will be a Great Tribulation.
- 70 AD was not the Great Tribulation.
- Going through the Great Tribulation is not a "second chance."
- The times of the Gentiles are not complete.
- We are in the last days, but then, we have been since New Testament times.

As I said at the start, this was not intended to be a study of the book of Revelation, nor was it to be an

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exhaustive expose on prophecy. The intent is to discuss the subjects of the resurrection, the rapture, the millennium, and the tribulation. Entire lives have been devoted to understanding the book of Revelation and the end times, but at the very least I have demonstrated that the resurrection, the rapture, the millennium, and the tribulation are scriptural concepts. Any explanation of the end times must address these concepts. May God bless you in your pursuit of understanding these things.