

## APPROACHING FINAL DAYS

The instructions we have received on how we are to relate to this world as believers will remain in effect until Christ returns. It is easy to see how these things apply to the current state of the world, but cataclysmic changes will be increasing in intensity as the final days approach. As we watch these things unfold it is reassuring to know that God has spoken of these things thousands of years ago. There were additional things revealed to both Daniel and the apostle John that they were not allowed to write down. **Daniel 12:4 “But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time....”** Clearly, there are some things that will not be understood until either history or a later anointing reveals them (See also Dan.8:26, Rev.10:4).

In order to get the clearest and most consistent picture possible, we must adhere to two major disciplines. 1. **Patterns** and related scriptures where we see the same things taught or illustrated in different ways. 2. **Context** in which verses, words, or statements are found. In addition to these, we must also at times consider the definitions of words in the original languages, and have a willingness to live with unanswered questions.

### Repeating patterns

*God's judgments* seem to wait until justice is long overdue. God was patient with the human race for thousands of years before he finally commissioned Noah to build the ark and rescue a tiny fragment of humanity from a lethal flood. Sodom and Gomorrah increased in decadence until God rescued Lot and his family and destroyed those cities. The children of Israel multiplied as a race of slaves for over four hundred years before God finally judged Egypt and freed His people. Even in the promised land the Israelites went through cycles of apostasy, repentance, and deliverance – wherein the nations oppressing them were judged.

In many cases we see God's people being protected even as his judgments are taking place among those around them – again, consider Noah and his family in the midst of the same flood that destroyed humanity, and the Israelites witnessing wrath poured out upon the Egyptians around them.

As persecutions against God's people increase during the final days, we also see God's judgments rising to interdict the intents of the oppressors. These will increasingly protect God's people from hostile individuals and governments, although many believers will still continue to suffer. In the parable of the tares in Matthew 13:30,36-43 we see wickedness selectively purged from the earth as the end draws near. This selectivity is also declared in Revelation 3:10 **“Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, that hour which is to come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”** In this context it was specifically addressed to the overcomers at Philadelphia, and probably doesn't apply to less zealous Christians. Consider also Psalms 91.

Tribulations resulting from God's judgments have appeared sporadically throughout history, but as the end approaches they will continue to intensify.

We tend to look at the God of the Old Testament as being different from the God of the New Testament. We see all the horrific judgments of God in the Old Testament where He wiped out cities and nations, and even subdued global empires. We perceive the Old Testament God as a God of wrath, in contrast to a God of love in the New Testament.

But God has not changed. As the centuries and millenniums have passed since Christ, God has stood back in incredible patience. The world is filling up with unspeakable levels of evil, and when you read what is in store for it – through the words of Daniel, Jesus, and the book of Revelation – you will find that the God of the Old is in fact alive and well, So devastating will be these judgments that at least half the world's population will be eliminated.

After Egypt was devastated by plagues, the Exodus was initiated by three major events: (a) The Passover drove Pharaoh to unconditionally release Israel (temporarily at least). (b) The Israelis requested and received gifts of gold, gems, and other items of value as they plundered a prostrate Egypt on their way out of town. (c) With the crossing of the the Red Sea into Arabia and the subsequent drowning of Pharaoh and his army, they were safely out of reach of their former captors.

These three events, were the prototypes that would become the three major feasts of Israel – Passover, Pentecost, and the Day of Atonement (which was followed the next day by the feast of booths that commemorated their time in the wilderness).

#### *The tabernacle/temple*

Three general categories of people emerged during this Exodus: (a) Those who did not have the faith to immediately enter the land of Canaan. These all died during the next forty years of travel, except for those who were under warrior age (twenty years old) at the time of this rebellion. (b) There was this younger generation who matured under the supernatural guidance and culture of the Exodus experience. These became the heirs of the promised land. (c) Then there was the anointed leadership. Initially this was Moses, whom God protected and groomed for leadership from birth, and his brother Aaron. This soon grew to include seventy anointed elders, the tribe of Levi, and a priesthood selected from among them.

The tabernacle had three progressively advanced sections that reflected this three-part population: (a) the courtyard, (b) the holy place, and (c) the most holy place.

In the New Testament there are multiple tie-ins between the temple and three levels of believer. We see Jesus in the parable of the sower speaking of thirty, sixty, and hundredfold levels of productivity. The apostle Paul speaks of three type of building material that might be applied to the foundation of the spiritual temple: (a) flammables such as wood, hay, and stubble, (b) gold and silver, (c) precious stones. It is significant that whereas metals attach to various objects and stones, precious stones are only attached by by metals – hence the most holy place is only accessed through the holy place.

Perhaps the most dramatic tie-in between the temple and different levels of believer is found in Revelation chapters eleven and twelve. In Revelation eleven John is given a rod and told to measure the temple and those who worship there. But he is told to leave out the courtyard outside the temple structure (the two-roomed building), because it is given to the gentiles to be trampled underfoot for three and one half years. (In this context the courtyard would have been assumed to be part of the temple, had it not been specifically excluded in these instructions to John.)

In chapter twelve we see a manchild leadership being birthed from the church, whom God protects supernaturally (as He did Moses). This birth is painful for the church, and there will be “birth pang” stresses as God calls forth a new level of leadership that is unrestrained by man-made institutions. This leadership will go beyond the walls of churches – and through the spiritual realm – will proceed on to rule the nations (with a rod of iron).

Immediately after this we see war in the heavenlies as the angels (on behalf of the saints) take on the dragon. In this battle the saints reclaim the seat of authority over the earth in the spirit realm (which had been abdicated to the dragon by Adam in the Garden of Eden). There is no longer any place for Satan in the spiritual realm and he returns to the earthbound status that he had before the fall.

This action is longed for and prophesied in **Romans 8:19-21** “**For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.**”

The government Satan establishes on earth upon being cast out of heaven has no spiritual authority, and is to be defied – in fact, those who do serve the government he creates will be damned. The earth however, is now under the authority of saints and does their bidding as it did when Adam was in

control. This time however, there remains a horrific mess to be cleaned up from the previous thousands of years.

### *The Exodus again*

Next we see the woman escaping to the wilderness where she will be protected and fed for three and one half years. The final feast of Israel was the feast of booths – commemorating the Exodus where Israel found protection and provision. I am only speculating here, but I would expect an environment of peace, provision, and harmony, when Satan can no longer tempt from the spirit realm. But in this scenario the woman is still on the earth, and Satan knows where she is.

The furious dragon sends armies after the woman, but the earth – now under the authority of the saints – swallows this army (as the Red Sea engulfed Pharaoh's army). Finally we see the deposed dragon going off to make war with the remainder of the church to whom he has been granted access to “trample under foot” for this same three and one half years – as prophesied in Revelation eleven.

### **Context of verses, words, and events**

In Daniel chapter 9, Daniel had been in prayer for Jerusalem, and the angel Gabriel was sent to reassure him and to provide insights into the future.

**9:24 “Seventy weeks are decreed upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy. 25 Know therefore and discern, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the anointed one, the prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks<sup>[7+60+2 i.e. 69]</sup>: it shall be built again, with street and moat, even in troublous times.”**

Here is a case where God provides a clear time frame for a future event (the beginning of the seventieth week). I understand that scholars have calculated that it was 483 (7 times (7+62) = 483) years from the time king Cyrus issued the decree to restore Jerusalem until Jesus was baptized in the Jordan by John the baptist.

**9:26 “And after the threescore and two weeks shall the anointed one be cut off, and shall have nothing; 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 even unto the end shall be war; desolations are determined.”**

We know that Jesus was not cut off on the day He was baptized, but 3-1/2 years later. The word in verse 26 translated as “nothing” is also correctly translated as “no one” – as in: “I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will scatter.” The second part of verse 26 speaks of a different entity than the Messiah – military forces in this case. They will destroy Jerusalem and the temple, which we know was historically fulfilled in 70 AD.

**9:27 “And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and upon the wing of abominations shall come one that maketh desolate; and even unto the full end, and that determined, shall wrath be poured out upon the desolate. ”**

Some confusion is possible concerning the identity of the “he” beginning verse 27, but it is clearly someone different than the “one who makes desolate” in the second half of this same verse.

There are two additional clues concerning this person: He is one who made a covenant, and also one who stopped the sacrifice. After the crucifixion of Jesus, any blood sacrifice has been a stench in the nostrils of God because it is a refusal to acknowledge the blood of Jesus as being adequate. Jesus Himself removed all meaning from further blood sacrifice and by this, made the act itself an abomination. **Isaiah 66:2 and 3** speak of this where it says 2“...but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word. 3 He that killeth an ox is as he that slayeth a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as he that breaketh a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as he that offereth swine's blood; he that burneth frankincense, as he that blesseth an idol. . ”

Remember also, that at this point God tore the veil in the temple from top to bottom. **“by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is His flesh” (Heb.10:20)** Clearly, Jesus stopped the sacrifice and grain offering in verse 27, and replaced them with the commemorative sacrament of

bread and wine in communion. In all fairness I do have to mention a reference to Daniel 11:31 where a ruler does away with the “regular sacrifice.” I would submit that this “regular sacrifice” may be a reference to communion or to some other liturgical practice. It may be the forbidding of prayer to anyone but the this ruler himself as king Darius was conned into doing – I really don’t claim to know.

Now consider the word “covenant”. In Daniel 11 we find the world system’s final leader constantly at odds with a covenant, and also “the people of the covenant.” I do not find any references relating this ruler and the covenant in a favorable relationship. Therefore it would be difficult to construe from verse 27 that the Antichrist is making a firm covenant -- let alone being cut off in the middle of it. The second half of this verse refers to a different person arriving after the middle of this week “who makes desolate.” Taken together, 27 is a repeat of verse 26 in both structure and content, but with a different details highlighted.

So then, since the time of Christ we are left with 3-1/2 years to complete the list mentioned in verse 24. A very thorough search of the book of Revelation will find no seven year period mentioned. In fact, if you are able to locate the only seven year period mentioned in the entire New Testament, you will find that it has nothing to do with future events.

The book of Revelation does contain five cases where approximately 3-1/2 year periods are mentioned, and a careful analysis reveals that these are overlays of the same period used to highlight different aspects of this final chapter of history. The first of these five mentions does not occur until the eleventh chapter of Revelation. (Some theologians have glued together a couple of these 3-1/2 year periods to come up with their 7-year tribulations. Consistent practice would give us 17-1/2 years.)

### **Approaching the final 3-1/2**

In Matthew 24, Jesus began to comment on future catastrophes. In Mt. 24:3 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, 3“**Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?**” 6“**And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled: for these things must needs come to pass; but the end is not yet.** 7 **For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and earthquakes in divers places.** 8 **But all these things are the beginning of birth pangs..”**

These catastrophic beginnings will build slowly at first, and may not be recognized as end times by many. But the fact that Jesus defines them here as the “beginning of birth pangs” clearly connects them to events that soon unfold in greater intensity in the book of Revelation.

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## NOW AND THEN

### *The four horsemen*

Conditions may initially appear to be of natural origins, as wars and rumors of wars increase – along with earthquakes and other natural disasters. These will take an increasingly spiritual flavor as the Lamb begins to open the seven seals of Revelation 6.

The first of these seals releases a global government. In Daniel chapter 2 king Nebuchadnezzar is given a picture of future world governments in the form of a huge statue. The head is of gold (which was revealed as representing his own government); the chest and arms were of silver, the belly and thighs were of bronze, the legs were of iron, and the feet were of iron and clay. Historians have identified the silver, bronze, and iron as the empires of Medea-Persia, Alexander, and Rome, respectively. Amateur theologians have attempted to assign the iron and clay mixture to various despots, but it remains historically obvious that nothing resembling a global military empire has arisen since Rome.

**Daniel 2:41 In that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay.**

Either this prophecy will be fulfilled by the opening of the first seal in Revelation 6, or there will be another global kingdom that will arise that was neither revealed to Nebuchadnezzar nor elsewhere in the Bible.

**Daniel 2:44 In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms.**

Note the plurals in “days” and “those kings.” God’s kingdom has been growing for millenniums, continues to grow today, and will rule the earth by the close of this age.

Clearly, this final kingdom of the statue seen by Nebuchadnezzar is incohesive and unstable, and the crushing of this kingdom and the obliteration of significant secular governments begins with the opening of the second seal. Order descends into chaos as the world’s government collapses into rebellions, and local warlords scrambling for turf. Bloodshed, looting, and rampant lawlessness soon reign. The world will never again believe in a global solution originating from mankind.

There are many models in modern history that tell us what happens when a despotic government collapses. Countries in Africa, for instance, have seen widespread violence and genocide, and are followed by widespread famine – which is the third seal.

A populous weakened by bloodshed, famine and subjected to the filth and unsanitary conditions of a collapsed infrastructure becomes easy prey to diseases that are unchecked due to the unavailability of medical facilities. Add to this the rise of predators gorging themselves on weak and helpless humans, and we see the the fourth seal manifested. The global affect upon humanity is herein listed as decimating a full fourth of the world’s population.

A period of a little less than 3-1/2 years is first mentioned in chapter 11, and this period does not begin until well after the opening of the seventh seal. By this time, half of mankind has been eliminated by the seals and other judgments.



## THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT

### **Our Status In The World**

#### *Callings*

God is the one who calls us, and the terms of his calling is “as is.” Becoming a Christian doesn’t automatically mean a change in occupation or living arrangements (unless of course you’re involved in crime or other immoral activity). Paul admonishes the Christians at Corinth to not seek a change of living status as a part of becoming Christians (1Cor.7:18-24).

The apostle Paul was called while a tent maker in Tarsus. He was initially called as a teacher at Antioch, and then as an Apostle. In Corinth Paul supported himself as a tent maker, while engaged in his apostolic ministry (Acts 18:3). We also see Paul gainfully employed in Thessalonica (2Thess.3:8-12), and at Ephesus (Acts 20:33-34).

In Ephesians 4:8 We see that God is the one who gives gifts. We do not decide what we are to become once called. Now this gifting process is likely to be confirmed by a desire to minister in specific ways, but if it is legitimate, this too would be at the initiative of God – as it clearly was in the cases of Moses, Paul, and others.

Those who pursue ministry because of its potential career value are hirelings and not anointed ministers. Paul warns about this (Phil.1:15-17). Peter puts it more strongly in 2Pet.2:2-3

#### *Priorities*

The very first priority is in our own thoughts and lives. A good place to start is by finding our places in the beatitudes recorded in the gospels, and resolving to let our lives shine into the world around us. Peter gets a little more specific in 1Pet.3:8-17, and adds still more in chapter 4. In 2Pet.1, Peter

describes how God has provided everything we need to live godly lives, and then provides an “as for your part” clause in verse 5. This is followed by a list of target behaviors that extends through verse 7. We are also warned about judging others instead of being careful to control our own behavior in Matthew chapter 7. In Romans 14:1-13 Paul enlightens us further on this concept. Individual diligence in drawing close to God and living exemplary lives is foundational to ministering to others within the church and in the world at large.

Another priority is to remain in fellowship in a changing world. The church that will adapt to fickle levels of political and public favor will need to become a more flexible organism than a corporate organization. Some denominational congregations have recognized the need for more intimate small groups within their congregations and facilitate their development. These fellowships add a much-needed body ministry dimension to traditional incorporated churches. They will also add flexibility, should public or governmental disfavor become a factor.

Groups of friends gathering together in Jesus name without the control or facilities of a corporate church would be free from government interference in dealing with political or social issues. Such restrictions are currently imposed at the federal level upon non-profit incorporated churches. As these unofficial groups continue to pray, study, and wait upon God, together in individual homes or rented facilities, they would not need corporate resources. This disappearance from corporate visibility would provide flexibility to survive and minister in an increasingly hostile world.

### *Optimizing life for now and perilous times*

As a young man, while considering becoming a missionary, I went down to Guatemala for a few months to explore the scene first hand. I was quite poor, and after about four months, I got a job teaching English for a couple more months before having to sell my car for bus fare home.

Being young, adventurous, respectful, and generally broke, I was able to elicit rich candor from a wide mix of cultures. I dated Swedish school teachers, a local girl chaperoned by her mother and sister (I loved all three) – they know what men are like – and I hung out with university students who were indoctrinated in communism. I was also warmly received by some seminary students of about my age who wanted to provide me with a woman to sleep with. If this wasn't enough opportunity for trouble, I would sometimes sleep on the couch of a nun when it was too late in the evening to catch a bus to the town I lived in (but I never got into the habit).

I saw many locals viewing missionaries as people who had an endless supply of income without having to earn it. Although there were often sincere conversions, many pretended interest so they could get closer to the status and income. I met beautiful local Christians and pastors, and also some who were not all that engaged. When I asked one of the latter category why he was a pastor, he responded that because it was a good living.

Although the sum of all this convinced me to not become a missionary in the conventional sense, I did see myself returning as a businessman. I pictured leading an exemplary life among them and sharing Jesus as opportunities arose – or could be created. I also reasoned that I would be able to create local funding and perhaps job opportunities to support evangelistic efforts.

I share all this because there are some basic common denominators between this life that I considered, and that of believers optimized for the difficult times: (1) We are called to make disciples, and to serve God with all we have. We need a willingness to optimize our talents and resources for ministry to each other and to the world at large. Even if we are not called to walk in this manner in a foreign country, as believers we are called to walk this way wherever we happen to be at the moment. (2) Minimize the cost of your lifestyle, so you can have more resources to serve others. This would also make emergencies more manageable – whether our own or those of others. (3) Meet regularly with a local culture of believers who are in harmony with your vision. (4) Be active in gainful employment so we can support ourselves and give to those in need. (5) Actively engage the culture and world around us so we can provide light and direction to those who would crave it.

The above modifications in lifestyle would go a long ways towards optimizing our responses to a world that could change drastically overnight. Besides having minimum needs met, we would be surrounded by like-minded believers to walk with us in seeking God and to better discern the times and appropriate actions.

If you're worried about how you're going to eat, then ask God how he would have you prepare to provide for others. If you're concerned about shelter, water, or energy, ask God how he would have you provide these things for others. If you're concerned about how you are going to avoid hostile governments, individuals, or mobs, then prepare for others. Also consider developing avenues of employment or anything else that might concern you – for others.

God has called us to make disciples, shine as lights, and minister to the needs of others. If we would have more revelation from God, then we must diligently engage in the things he has already called us to do. In John 8:31-32, Jesus said **“If ye live in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”** So it isn't a matter of just hearing God's words, but only by *living* in them will we receive additional revelation. Consider also Matthew 6:33, where in reference to these things Jesus said **“.....But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”**

The *real* question is not about God's provision, but whether or not we will qualify by living in Gods words and seeking him above all else. God has made these conditions clear – debate them if you must.