

BIBLICAL PROPHECY EXPLAINED

Approximately one-third of the Bible is prophecy, much of which concerns the return of Jesus. This article will not explain all the nuances of such prophecy; that would require a book. However, this article will answer the following questions:

- a) Why will Jesus wage war upon His return (Revelation 19)?
- b) Whom will He fight?
- c) The “beast” and “false prophet” – who are they?
- d) Where and what is Armageddon?

Jesus, our Savior and Warrior

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness ***He judges and wages war***. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, ‘KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS’” (Revelation 19:11-16, emphasis mine).

Indeed, Jesus will return as a Warrior. Heavenly signs will precede His return, and a trumpet will announce it. The sound will be deafening and His descent will be visible to everyone. “But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a ***great trumpet*** and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other” (Matthew 24:29-31, emphasis mine).

The trumpet will announce Jesus’ triumphant return and trigger the first resurrection: “Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed” (I Corinthians 15:51-52). When will the dead rise? “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s ***at His coming***” (I Corinthians 15:22-23, emphasis mine). (The dead in Christ will rise and the living saints will be changed.)

Jesus will be angry. He'll fight the nations and ecclesiastical authorities who are persecuting the descendants of ancient Israel (the twelve tribes or nations of Israel, including the Jewish nation) and His saints, at the battle of Armageddon (more on that later). "Behold, a day is coming for the LORD when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you. For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. ***Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations***, as when He fights on a day of battle. In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south. You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him! In that day there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle. For it will be a unique day which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light. And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter. And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one" (Zechariah 14:1-9, emphasis mine).

The battle at Armageddon will be monumental. Imagine the combined armed forces of the nations, with their advanced weaponry (smart bombs, stealth fighters, nuclear weapons, etc.), fighting against spirit beings. How can mortal man fight an immortal spirit being? Not only will they fight, but these nations will believe they can defeat the returning Christ. Such suicidal delusion is inspired by Satan himself: "And I saw coming out of the mouth of the ***dragon*** and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; for they are ***spirits of demons***, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame. And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon" (Revelation 16:13-16, emphasis mine).

The Bible is rich in metaphor and other figures of speech. For example, Jesus is referred to as a Lamb; the dictator who fights Christ at His return as a beast; and Satan himself as a dragon and roaring lion: "your adversary the devil walks about like a *roaring lion*, seeking whom he may devour" (I Peter 5:8). Jesus was not a literal lamb, and the dictator won't be an actual beast. Similarly, Herod was not a fox (Luke 13:32).

Metaphors describe an individual's character. For example, Herod was as wily as a fox. And Satan is as enchanting and slippery as a snake. "Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made" (Genesis 3:1). This implies that Satan is subtle, shrewd and sneaky.

According to Revelation, Jesus will wage war against a "beast" and his armies. In John's vision (the apostle John was the author of Revelation), this beast has *ten horns*, which are symbolic of ten kings. ("Kings" refer not only to actual kings, but also to presidents and prime

ministers.) These men lead ten nations that will unite to fight Jesus. “The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast. ***These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them***, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful” (Revelation 17:12-14, emphasis mine).

Comprehension of these prophetic scriptures is impossible without referring to the book of Daniel. Daniel, who lived in the sixth century BC, described events preceding Jesus’ return. In his second chapter, Daniel interprets a dream by Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Babylonian empire (in modern-day Iraq). “You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth” (Daniel 2:31-35).

King Nebuchadnezzar saw a great “statue” in his dream. A stone eventually destroyed this statue; the stone then becomes a great mountain which “fills the whole earth.” (Isaiah refers to the capital of the future kingdom of God on this earth as a mountain: “Now it will come about that in the last days the ***mountain of the house of the LORD*** will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it” [Isaiah 2:2, emphasis mine])

Daniel explains that the parts of this statue represent successive empires; the head of gold represented Nebuchadnezzar’s empire. “After you (Nebuchadnezzar) there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth. Then there will be a ***fourth kingdom*** as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces. 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. As the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle. And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery. ***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, but it will itself endure forever. Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy” (Daniel 2:39-45, emphasis mine).

Daniel foresaw the emergence of four successive empires: Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. In succession these empires ruled the civilized world from the sixth century BC to the fifth century AD. However, Daniel, under the inspiration of God, said that the “God of heaven” will establish a kingdom in the days of the fourth kingdom. Obviously God did not establish His kingdom during the reign of the Roman Empire. Therefore, in the end-time an empire consisting of ten nations (the “beast” power) will emerge, and it’s this empire that Jesus will destroy at His return.

Beasts, horns, and other symbolism

“And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and *seven heads*, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names. And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority. I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast; they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, ‘Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?’” (Revelation 13:1-4, emphasis mine). We’ve already established that the ten horns symbolize ten distinct nations that will unite to fight Christ at His return. In this scripture God further described the Beast as having seven heads. The heads represent different manifestations or types of this fourth kingdom throughout history. The last such manifestation or type was Hitler’s Germany.

Daniel’s prophecy and John’s visions (recorded in the book of Revelation) include descriptions of beasts. Although they lived over five hundred years apart, both Daniel and John saw visions of the same “beast,” or rather, the same end-time kingdom and events.

“In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel saw a dream and visions in his mind as he lay on his bed; then he wrote the dream down and related the following summary of it. Daniel said, ‘I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. And *four great beasts* were coming up from the sea, different from one another. The first was like a lion and had the wings of an eagle. I kept looking until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man; a human mind also was given to it. And behold, another beast, a second one, resembling a bear. And it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth; and thus they said to it, ‘Arise, devour much meat!’ After this I kept looking, and behold, another one, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird; the beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it. After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a *fourth beast*, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had *ten horns*. While I was contemplating the horns, behold, *another horn*, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great boasts” (Daniel 7:1-8, emphasis mine).

Daniel's second chapter refers to a statue comprised of four parts representing four successive world-ruling empires. His seventh chapter refers to four beasts, and like the fourth kingdom in his second chapter, the fourth beast is fearsome and strong. Moreover, the fourth beast has ten horns. This image of a beast with ten horns reappears in Revelation 17:12-14: "The **ten horns** which you saw are **ten kings** who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast. These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful."

Taken together, Daniel's prophecies and John's visions describe an end-time empire consisting of ten nations that will unite to fight Christ at His return. Moreover, these nations form the fourth "beast" specified in the books of Daniel and Revelation.

The "Beast" and Satan

Before Adam and Eve, Satan (then known as Lucifer) tried but failed to overthrow God. "For you (Satan) have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High' (Isaiah 14:12-16). According to Revelation 12, Satan will again try to overthrow God, and he will again fail.

Moreover, Satan attempted to kill Jesus at birth (Revelation 12:4), in His childhood (Herod's attempt to destroy the male children under 2 years old), and on the stake, commonly referred to as the "cross." Satan tempted Jesus continuously (Matthew 4:1-11, Hebrews 4:15), thus trying to deny Him the opportunity to become our Savior. When all else fails, Satan will inspire the nations to fight Jesus at His return: "And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the **dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority**" (Revelation 13:2, emphasis mine).

The Bible describes Satan as a dragon: "Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child. And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne. Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days. And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. And the **great dragon** was thrown down, **the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world**; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, 'Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night. 'And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life

even when faced with death. ‘For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time. And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child. But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood. But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth. So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, ***who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus***” (Revelation 12:3-17, emphasis mine).

These scriptures describe Satan as a dragon with seven heads, ten horns, and seven diadems. We’ve already seen that the ten horns correspond to ten nations that combine to fight Christ at His return. The seven heads represent seven manifestations, or resurrections, of the fourth empire since the fall of Rome in 476 AD. The last such manifestation was Hitler’s short-lived German empire during World War II. And clearly these empires and nations receive their inspiration from Satan and his demons.

The Bible also describes Satan as attempting to destroy Jesus and overthrow God, and when he fails to do so, then Satan will “make war with the rest of her (the Church) children, ***who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.***”

The Great Tribulation and Martyrdom

This war against the saints will occur in a period of time described in Jesus’ Olivet prophecy: “As He (Jesus) was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, ‘Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the ***end of the age?....Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name***” (Matthew 24:3, 9, emphasis mine). Jesus describes events immediately preceding His return and the “end of the age.” His disciples will be persecuted in the days, months, and years preceding His return. These are the saints who “keep the commandment of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 12:17). Martyrdom will occur during a period called the ***Great Tribulation***: “For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short” (Matthew 24:21-22).

According to Jesus, this period will be unparalleled in severity and destruction. Jeremiah uses similar language to refer to the same period of time: “‘For behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah,’ says the LORD. ‘And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.’ Now these are the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and Judah. ‘For thus says the LORD: We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask now, and see, whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man with his hands on

his loins like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale? Alas! ***For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.*** For it shall come to pass in that day,' says the LORD of hosts, 'that I will break his yoke from your neck, and will burst your bonds; foreigners shall no more enslave them. But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them" (Jeremiah 30:3-8, emphasis mine).

It's apparent that the great tribulation will fall both on the descendants of ancient Israel (the twelve tribes of Israel, including the Jewish people) and the saints. Since the saints will be persecuted by satanically-inspired authorities (officials of the ten-nation beast power, ecclesiastical officials), then it's safe to assume that the satanically-inspired ten-nation empire known as the "beast" will also persecute the descendants of ancient Israel.

Daniel introduces a "***little horn***" among the ten horns of the beast: "this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great boasts" (Daniel 7:8). This horn who speaks great boasts is further described as "another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two ***horns*** like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon" (Revelation 13:11, emphasis mine). The book of Revelation describes an alliance between the "beast" (the ten-nation empire) and a satanically-inspired ecclesiastical person and organization that provides the beast with legitimacy and power. "And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns. The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality, and on her forehead a name was written, a mystery, 'BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.' And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus" (Revelation 17:3-6).

Harlot and little horn; these symbols refer to the same person: *a satanically-inspired false prophet and his church allied with the end-time empire known as the "beast."* Paul identifies this false prophet as the man of sin: "Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the ***man of sin is revealed***, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (II Thessalonians 2:3-4, emphasis mine). This man of sin represents the abomination of desolation mentioned in Jesus' Olivet prophecy (Matthew 24) and in Daniel 11.

Kings of the North, South, and East

"And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the ***kings of the whole world***, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty" (Revelation 16:13-16, emphasis mine).

The events culminating in the return of Jesus are worldwide in scope. However, the Bible pays special attention to events occurring in the Middle East, specifically in the modern-day Jewish state of Israel. Daniel records the actions of a *king of the north* and *king of the south*

in the end time: “At the end time the king of the South will collide with him, and the king of the North will storm against him with chariots, with horsemen and with many ships; and he will enter countries, overflow them and pass through. He will also enter the Beautiful Land (Israel, specifically Jerusalem), and many countries will fall; but these will be rescued out of his hand: Edom, Moab and the foremost of the sons of Ammon. Then he will stretch out his hand against other countries, and the land of Egypt will not escape. But he will gain control over the hidden treasures of gold and silver and over all the precious things of Egypt; and Libyans and Ethiopians will follow at his heels. But rumors from the East and from the North will disturb him, and he will go forth with great wrath to destroy and annihilate many. He will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain; yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him” (Daniel 11:40-45).

Daniel describes an invasion of modern-day Israel and some neighboring countries by a power called the king of the north. This is the same invasion that Jesus refers to in His Olivet prophecy: “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled. Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Luke 21:20-24). John also describes this period of time: “Then there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, ‘Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it. Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months” (Revelation 11:1-2). It’s clear that Daniel, Jesus and John referred to the same event.

Anciently, the king of the north and the king of the south were, respectively, the king of the Seleucid kingdom (based in modern-day Syria) and the king of Ptolemaic kingdom (based in Egypt). After the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC, his kingdom – stretching from Greece to India, and including northern Africa – was divided among four of his leading generals. Two of his generals – Seleucus I and Ptolemy I - founded kingdoms based in modern-day Syria and Egypt. Much of Daniel 11 is an account of the competition between these rival kingdoms. However, beginning in verse 40, Daniel fast-forwards to the future. The remainder of Daniel 11 and 12 is about future events that culminate in the return of Jesus.

Apparently the king of the north is the more powerful kingdom. Because Daniel describes a fourth preponderant kingdom in his second and seventh chapters, then the king of the north and the fourth kingdom (the last manifestation of the Roman Empire) are one and the same.

Because these events transpire in the Middle East, and because the king of the north or the fourth kingdom (the beast power) is allied with a false Christian prophet masquerading as God incarnate, then the king of the South is likely an Islamic nation or combination of nations. The Islamic king of the south will provoke the king of the north into invading the “Beautiful

Land,” that is, Israel and the neighboring nations. “But rumors from the East and from the North will disturb him, and he will go forth with great wrath to destroy and annihilate many” (Daniel 11:44). Rumors from the east probably refer to the kings of the east: “Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the *kings from the east* might be prepared” (Revelation 16:12-13, emphasis mine).

A short summary, so far

Jesus will return to earth and wage war (Revelation 19:11). A great, deafening trumpet will herald His return and trigger the resurrection of the saints (I Corinthians 15:50-52). He, His angels and the resurrected or changed saints will fight against the nations assembled at Megiddo, in Northern Israel (Zechariah 14:1-9, Luke 21, Matthew 24). This is the famous battle at Armageddon.

The nations fighting at Armageddon can be classified into three categories:

- a) King of the North, alternately known as the beast power, or fourth kingdom (the last manifestation of the Roman Empire) of Daniel 2;
- b) King of the South, probably an Islamic nation or group of nations; and
- c) Kings of the East, probably Asian nations.

Not mentioned but implicit is a fourth bloc of nations, modern-day Israel, comprising descendants of the

ancient twelve tribes of Israel (including the Jewish nation). Ezekiel describes the unification of the Jewish nation with the other tribes or nations of Israel: “The word of the LORD came again to me saying, ‘And you, son of man, take for yourself one stick and write on it, ‘For Judah and for the sons of Israel, his companions’; then take another stick and write on it, ‘For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel, his companions.’ Then join them for yourself one to another into one stick, that they may become one in your hand....The sticks on which you write will be in your hand before their eyes. Say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms’” (Ezekiel 37:15-22).

The great tribulation specified in Daniel and Jesus’ Olivet prophecy will fall mainly on the modern-day tribes (nations) of Israel – such as modern-day Ephraim (Great Britain), Manasseh (the United States) and Judah (the Jewish nation) – and on the saints of God. Because these people will inherit the kingdom of God (Revelation 5:10), which Satan has tried to take by force, he is very angry at them. Satan will inspire the nations to persecute the modern-day descendants of Abraham and the saints of God; hence Jeremiah’s description of the unparalleled time of Jacob’s trouble.

The beast power (or king of the north, the ten-nation empire) will receive his supernatural power and legitimacy from the false prophet, alternately depicted as a little horn speaking great boasts; the man of sin; and the harlot drunk with the blood of the saints, who is named “BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH”. These are descriptions of the false prophet and his church. The prophet is “false” because he masquerades as Christ or Christ’s emissary, “sitting in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (II Thessalonians 2:3-9). He is false because his mentor and inspiration is Satan. And “No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds” (II Corinthians 11:14-15).

According to various scriptures in Daniel and Revelation (e.g. Daniel 12 and Revelation 11), the great tribulation will last for three and one-half years. These years will include the:

- a) Martyrdom of God’s saints (foretold by Jesus in His Olivet prophecy);
- b) Persecution of Israel (the Jewish nation and other modern-day tribes – nations – of Israel, such as the United States and Great Britain);
- c) Worldwide war that will threaten the existence of man: “Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short” (Matthew 24:22);
- d) Ascendance of the beast power and false prophet; and the
- e) Ministry of God’s two witnesses: “And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. And if anyone wants to harm them, fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way. These have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire. When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them” (Revelation 11:3-7).

Shortly after the death of the two witnesses, Jesus and His armies will arrive to fight the nations at Megiddo.

Armageddon

From the Columbia Encyclopedia: “Armageddon, in the New Testament, (is the) great battlefield where, at the end of the world, the powers of evil will fight the powers of good. If the usual etymology is correct, the name alludes to the frequency of battles at Megiddo.”

Megiddo is an ancient city in Palestine, “by the Kishon River on the southern edge of the plain of Esdraelon, north of Samaria. It was inhabited from the 7th millennium BC to around 450 BC. Situated in a strategic position, controlling the route that connected Egypt with Mesopotamia, it has been the scene of many battles throughout history, from Thutmose III (c.1468 B.C.) to Gen. Edmund Allenby (later Viscount Allenby of Megiddo) in World War I” (Columbia Encyclopedia, web edition). Megiddo was a pivotal crossroads of the ancient world, where advancing armies from all directions met and fought. Thousands have died there. In the future, when Christ returns, thousands more will die there.

Armageddon refers to a place and not specifically to a battle. It’s analogous to the Battle of Gettysburg during the American Civil War. Gettysburg is a town in Pennsylvania, where the northern and southern armies fought in the summer of 1863. Technically, the battle *of* Gettysburg should be referred to as the battle *at* Gettysburg. Similarly, the battle *of* Armageddon should be referred to as the battle *at* Armageddon.

“Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty. Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed. ***Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon***” (Revelation 16:13-16, emphasis mine).

Satan and his demons will inspire the nations to gather at Megiddo to fight Christ at His return. Because Satan has inspired these nations to persecute Israel (the modern-day twelve tribes or nations of Israel, including the Jewish nation) and the saints of God, Christ will return to wage war against them. However, because the preponderant beast power is allied with the false prophet masquerading as Christ or Christ’s emissary, the nations will be convinced that they are not fighting the real Jesus but some imposter or extraterrestrial being.

God will be angry

Heavenly signs will precede Jesus’ return and the battle at Armageddon: “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. 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 24:29-31). His elect are the saints of God who obey His commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus (Revelation 12:17). God’s commandments are found in the Old Testament, primarily in the first five books of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy). These laws include the Ten Commandments (including the seventh-day Sabbath – the fourth commandment) and God’s holy days and festivals (Leviticus 23, etc.).

Jesus Himself validated the law of God: “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth

pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished” (Matthew 5:17-18). Earth and heaven haven’t passed away, neither have God’s commandments, holy days and festivals.

Jesus will return to avenge the persecution of His saints, and to prevent the annihilation of Abraham’s descendants (modern-day nations of Israel). In the meantime, right now, God is urging everyone to repent. “I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, blood, fire and columns of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD will be delivered; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be those who escape, as the LORD has said, even among the survivors whom the LORD calls” (Joel 2:30-32).

Perhaps God is calling you. You don’t want to end up on the wrong side of history, that is, on the side of the beast power and false prophet. You should want to obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. You should want to read your Bible, from beginning to end. You should pray for understanding and mercy, because you (and I) are sinners; “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

The future is scary. However, if we keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus, we will be on the right side of history. We will be on God’s side.

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