

Thoughts on Bible Prophecy and Coming Events

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The prophecies written in the books of Daniel and Revelation describe a sequence of events spanning a period of approximately 3,500 years. Several prophecies began unfolding during the fifth century B.C. and we have been able to observe their chronological fulfillment over the past 2,600 years.

It is the consistent and precise fulfillment of apocalyptic prophecy during the past 2,600 years that enables us to determine what the Bible says about tomorrow. Because the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation conform to a well defined architecture, we can determine our location within the chronological order of events they predict. In other words, we can verify what has happened in the past and we can determine what is coming next.

The world stands on the doorstep of a great transition. I am not talking about the unrest currently seen in the Middle East. History reveals that nations routinely change governments. No regime lasts forever. The rise and fall of governors and governments is as old as mankind.

Looking toward the future, Bible prophecy largely ignores the current unrest that we see around the world. The books of Daniel and Revelation are concerned with something far larger than the Middle East. The Bible predicts that God Himself will soon step into the affairs of men and bring life –as we currently know it – to an end.

The Bible is the *only* source of truth on this subject because God's coming actions have nothing to do with the social and political unrest that currently plagues Earth. The Bible is the *only* book that contains a comprehensive road-map of soon coming events and the Bible is the *only* authority that speaks for God about this matter. For these reasons, Christians should prayerfully reconsider the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation. Generally speaking, most of the people on Earth are about to be overwhelmed with the arrival of the "Great Day of the Lord."

What Happens Next?

The following is a brief summary of coming events that will affect the entire planet. The book of Revelation predicts three *global* earthquakes. These earthquakes will increase in severity as they occur. They will sever bridges, break down hydroelectric dams, tear train tracks apart, collapse metropolitan freeway overpasses, and kill many people.

Obviously, thousands of buildings will collapse. The world's economy will implode. Communication, travel, and manufacturing infrastructures will come to a screeching halt. Prior to 1994, scientists claimed that a global earthquake was physically impossible. This theory has been shattered. An earthquake shook the whole world in December 2004 and approximately 230,000 people died in southern Asia as a result of the tsunami that followed.

In addition to global earthquakes, Revelation also predicts the world will be set on fire by a

meteoric shower of burning hail. This cataclysmic event will burn up a third of Earth. Millions of acres of trees and more importantly, food crops will be destroyed. Until the 1980s, scientists scoffed at the notion that Earth had been impacted by a civilization-threatening asteroid. This theory has been shattered. Today, scientists have identified more than 120 impact craters on Earth. A few of the craters are more than 150 miles in diameter!

Powerful telescopes recorded the impact of Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9, with Jupiter (July 1994). One impact created a crater large enough to hold three planets the size of Earth. No one is ridiculing the possibility that a massive asteroid could hit Earth *again* and destroy the whole world. In fact, the book of Revelation predicts two asteroid impacts are coming. One asteroid will impact an ocean and the resulting tsunami will wash away thousands of coastal cities with the same ease that high tide removes footprints in the sand.

Then, a second asteroid impact will obliterate much of a continent. Many, perhaps millions of people who survive the initial impact will eventually perish from drinking contaminated water. (Ground waves from a massive asteroid impact will shear geological structures allowing deadly bacteria to enter underground aquifers.)

The Bible does not say which ocean or which continent will be impacted, but we can be sure that when these events take place, they will not be random events. God is deliberate and purposeful in all that He does and His apocalyptic judgments are executed with surgical precision.

The book of Revelation also predicts that extensive darkness will cover Earth for many months. This darkness could be caused by a sequence of volcanic eruptions that occur shortly after the asteroid impacts. Consider this: Where there is no sunlight, there can be no crops. The result of extended darkness is famine. A worldwide famine is coming.

The most frightening part of Bible prophecy is not coming disaster. What concerns students of Bible prophecy most is the religious and political response that will be forthcoming. The Bible predicts that the world's religious and political leaders will unite and hastily create a worldwide organization to appease the wrath of an angry God. The Bible predicts this crisis organization will suddenly rise up and it will be given authority over all nations without firing a single bullet! This is no fairy tale. This is not a reality check.

These events are predicted in God's Word and we need to know now what we will soon face. God has informed us of His actions so that we will not lose faith in Him. **"I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe."** (John 14:29)

God has something to say to every living person on Earth – all seven billion of us. One day, He will suddenly terminate the affairs of man and during a short period of 1,260 days, He will sort through the people of Earth. He will separate the honest in heart from those who hate the light of truth.

He will separate the sheep from the goats. God will present the terms and conditions of salvation to every member of the human race during the Great Tribulation, and He will see to it

that every person is invited to be a part of a New World order that He will establish. Even the most vile person on Earth (if he repents and turns from sin and rebellion) can be part of God's coming kingdom.

Before He sets up His kingdom, God will destroy the kingdoms of men and this includes everyone opposed to His government and authority. Keep in mind, God is impartial. He loves everyone equally, but the human race has gone too far. God's patience is exhausted. Corporately speaking, the actions and attitudes of Earth's inhabitants have become too violent, decadent, and degenerate. We have filled up our cup of iniquity and as it was in Noah's day, the time has come for God to purify Earth.

How Soon?

The Bible speaks of Earth's final events as "The End of Days" or "The Appointed Time of the End." Several Bible authors write about this period of time because the end of sin will be marked by a complete spiritual and physical reconfiguration of Earth. In a small way, signs of this coming transformation are visible already.

For example, weather patterns have gone crazy. Flooding, drought, tornadoes, and hurricanes are producing more havoc. Seismic activity is also increasing. According to the USGS, more earthquakes measuring 6.0 and above on the Richter scale have occurred in the past decade than any of the previous three decades.

Volcanic activity is also on the increase. Our planet now has more than 400 active volcanos. Are these physical changes a sign of what is to come? Yes, if you understand that sin has doomed this planet. Consider the financial impact from nature's violence on the financial institutions of the world.

Many insurance companies are in deep trouble as a result of natural disasters. Insurance is not available in some areas because insurance companies cannot afford the losses. Moreover, the economy of the twenty richest nations on Earth is nothing more than a house of cards. A global earthquake, a global fire, or an asteroid impact could easily cause the cards to fall.

What about the spiritual condition of man? Have you noticed more hatred? Have you noticed less patience? Have you noticed more predators? As the global population continues to increase (a net gain of 9 million new people per month), another world war seems inevitable. The Middle East is boiling.

North Korea and Iran are powder kegs. An increasing number of nations now have nuclear capability, so what will Earth look like after World War III? It is time to wake up America! Planetary resources are too few for so many people and this will bring a global revolt. The world's political leaders see the problems, but there is no solution. They are too complex. People are uncertain about prices, they fear the unknown, and their anger builds. More and more, people are giving study to ways of protecting themselves from others.

Although the Bible does not precisely state when the Great Tribulation will begin, it does offer enough data to determine a "window of time" during which the end of the age happens. For example, if a person totals all the prophetic time periods in Daniel and Revelation, the genealogical records of Genesis and Exodus, and the years from the Exodus to the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., the Bible only refers to approximately 7,000 years (plus or minus a few years).

We know that the 1,000 years mentioned in Revelation 20 occurs *after* The Great Tribulation. Therefore, this suggests that on or about the 6,000th year of sin, life as we now know it could come to an end. According to these general calculations, the Great Tribulation could begin any time. Maybe the end of the age will occur before 2017 – but the passage of time will have to reveal the actual date. This much is certain, the world is in trouble and it is only a matter of time until a nuclear exchange occurs.

God Has a Plan

God is sovereign. God has a plan for Earth. He has a purpose for each individual. To understand God's purpose and plan takes some effort and personal desire. The Bible reveals everything we need to know, and we need to know all that we can know.

The end time story in Revelation is not based on a continual decline into global, moral bankruptcy. Instead, the end time story focuses on two points. The first point is timing, the second is degeneration. In other words, given enough time, degeneration overcomes mankind.

If history reveals anything, it tells us that civilizations come and go because of degeneracy. The length of time a civilization enjoys prosperity is directly proportional to God's favor. Notice this response of the prophet Daniel to King Nebuchadnezzar: "**He [the God of Heaven] changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning.**" (Daniel 2:21, insertion mine) Each time we have a political election in the United States, I reflect on this text.

How does God set up kings (or leaders) and depose of them when they were elected to office by popular vote? I have found a rather simple answer: God is able to bring about circumstances that propel people in various directions. One clear example of this is found in the story about the Tower of Babel. God altered the common language of man by creating many languages, and this simple event brought about the dispersion of nations. (See Genesis 11:1-9.)

Back to Daniel for one more point: Notice Daniel's statement to Nebuchadnezzar about the quality of men God places in leadership. "**The decision [to punish you for unbridled vanity, oh king] is announced by messengers, the holy ones [angels] declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men.**" (Daniel 4:17, insertions mine)

Here is a profound point: When a nation turns its back on principles of righteousness and its

individuals turn away from right doing, God deals with that nation and its individuals accordingly. The prophet Daniel clearly understood why he was in Babylon as a captive. Notice his confession: **"All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you. 'Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you.' "** (See Daniel 9:11 and Ezekiel 14:12-22.)

These principles are timeless because God is eternal. Our planet has turned away from God. Moreover, the resources of the world are limited. This is a recipe for conflict. The cancer of sin has become pandemic. Selfish ambitions and greed have ruined our economy. Affections for one another are cold and ethnicity is all too important. All of these things serve to alienate us from one another. So, what must God do with His wayward planet? He must act. He will act.

Keep in mind that we cannot protect ourselves from the coming tribulation. Any efforts to save self is a lot like arranging deck chairs on the Titanic. What difference does it ultimately make where the chairs are placed on a ship headed for the bottom of the ocean?

Like Humpty Dumpty (representing the civilizations of the world), all the king's horses and all the king's men (the efforts of man) cannot put it back together again. In the language of football, we have reached fourth and goal, and 5 seconds remain on the clock. Will the world implode or will God step in? The prophecies of Daniel and Revelation reveal that God is about to take matters into His own hands.

What Does God Want?

The Bible indicates that God will accomplish four important matters during the Great Tribulation. First, He will awaken every person on Earth to the fact that Jesus, the Judge of all mankind, is about to appear and require an account of each person's behavior.

Second, God is about to expose the properties of sin to the human race because few people recognize or understand sin's powerful control. Third, God is going to expose the contents of every human heart by placing a comprehensive test of faith before each of us. Finally, God will silence the blasphemous claims of the world's religious systems.

He will demonstrate that human beings cannot obtain salvation through membership in *any* religious system. God is about to inform the world that salvation only comes through total commitment and submission to Jesus Christ.

Most of the prophetic interpretations we hear on radio and television are misleading. Do not misunderstand. People can believe anything they choose to believe about the future, but belief or denial has no effect on coming events. Almost everyone in Noah's day refused to believe a flood was coming. What effect did their denial have on the promised event? Millions of people anticipate things that will never happen and when the predicted events of Revelation begin, everything that can be shaken, will be shaken.

On that day, many people will abandon their faith in God because they placed their faith in their religious leaders instead of studying God's Word for themselves. Even worse, many religious leaders have not spiritually prepared their flocks (their parishioners) for the trying circumstances they are about to face. What is more bitter than the experience of misplaced trust? I mention these things because most religious leaders, either do not know about the coming events or they deny the seriousness of the fulfillment of prophecy.

Few people are spiritually prepared for the trying experiences ahead. What many people have been *led* to believe about God is not true. In the coming hour of tribulation, many unprepared people will become bitter. In their anger, frustration and fear, many people will turn against their religious leaders and hate God. Of course, such hatred will be misdirected. After all, Bibles are readily available and where should the responsibility for preparation lie.

God's Silence

The character of God is poorly understood – even in the United States. Many people diminish God's authority, glory, and power because He has not recently revealed Himself in the affairs of man. When the prophet, Isaiah, saw God's throne, he fell on his face saying, " **'Woe to me! I cried. I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.'** " (Isaiah 6:5) On the other hand, Isaiah was amazed at God's reluctance to show Himself as the Almighty. Isaiah wrote, "**Truly you are a God who hides himself, O God and Savior of Israel.**" (Isaiah 45:15)

God's *apparent* silence comes as a consequence of sin. Just as offenses physically separate friends or family members, the offensiveness of sin separates us from God's physical presence. As generations come and go, knowledge of God dims. The reality of God becomes faint, and the longer we go without renewed evidence of God's authority and glory, the more silent He appears to be. In the vacuum of this silence, sin becomes more attractive and less offensive. Sinners become bold and defiant in transgression.

Sin metastasizes. Violence, sorrow, and suffering spring up like dandelions after a spring rain. Every night, the evening news confirms our accelerating slide into depravity. Degenerate, hideous sins are justified and glamorized on TV for purposes of entertainment.

Sin has a strange effect on human beings –it causes sinners to minimize the effects or the guilt of their wrong actions. Think about this for a full five seconds: Sin causes human beings to deny the significance of *personal* wrong doing! (How many people in prison falsely maintain innocence?)

The Bible reveals that God breaks His silence from time to time. He uses four judgments to limit the growth of sin. (Ezekiel 14:21) His four judgments are sword, famine, plague, and wild beasts. In His infinite wisdom, God allows nations to rule until they fill up their cup of iniquity, and when they do, the Bible says that He removes them from power. (See Daniel 2:21; 4:16, Leviticus 18:24-27.)

What makes this process so remarkable is that God, even within the chaos of sin, completely accomplishes His plans and purposes on this Earth! We may try to explain the outcome of Earthly events by analyzing the actions of the players, but this is only a limited view.

Do not be naive and think that things happen by the prowess of man. Nothing happens in the universe without God's knowledge and permission. Even though we are not able to see God on His throne, we can know that He reigns over the kingdoms of man. God is sovereign. We may not see all that He is doing, but the evidence is right before our eyes. The Bible is clear – God is ever in control. How He maintains control over Earth is a mystery. That He does it without showing Himself is His silence.

God's silence is not too hard to penetrate, if you really want to see and hear Him. The evidences of His handiwork are all around us if we want to acknowledge Him. However, if we do not want to give Him respect, we can easily ignore Him and deny Him the recognition He is due. Thus, His silence compliments our power of choice. God can either be the greatest and most wonderful being in the universe, or if we choose, we can deny His existence. What a God! Perhaps the least understood element within God's character is His reluctance to awe His creatures with His powers and presence. His silence will be a topic of eternal discovery!

A Very Important Point

Soon, God will break His silence with mankind by raining down His judgments upon Earth. These coming events will be correctly understood as manifestations of God's wrath, but God Himself will be grossly misunderstood. To appease God and stay His awful judgments, the world's religious and political systems will enact laws "honoring God" that will be contrary to what He actually wants!

What God seeks from man is a repentant heart and a submissive attitude. He calls men and women to live a life free of the damning power of sin. Even more, He grants men and women who put their faith in Him, the power to be transformed through victory over sin.

Unfortunately, Revelation predicts that billions of people will reject God's gracious offer of grace, His gift of power over sin and resulting salvation. They will turn away because they do not believe. The hearts of many people have become hardened through rebellion and ignorance, but this is not the worst part of the story.

Revelation predicts a time is coming when wicked people will punish and torture those who obey God's laws. The persecutors will think that their actions are justified and that like Pilate, they can wash away their guilt by washing their hands. God *never* ignores an evil deed even though He may allow evil to flourish for a season. God will avenge the suffering of His children and we can be sure that justice day is coming. (See Revelation 18:6 and Obadiah 1:15.)

In the context of His coming judgments, God's character and His behavior will be misrepresented and misinterpreted. This is the heart of Revelation's story. It is a story of a loving God visiting a planet in trouble. It is a story of a just God rendering justice. It is a story of

a merciful God extending mercy. What does it say about the human race when God is left with no other alternative than deadly judgments to gain man's attention?

Revelation is a story about rebellious people and a world gone astray. Most people, when put to the coming test of faith in God, will openly and conscientiously reject the clearest evidences of God's truth. They will unite themselves in rebellion against the commandments of God (the Ten Commandments) by obeying the laws of the coming Antichrist.

God will allow Satan (the dreaded Antichrist) to physically appear during the Great Tribulation at the appointed time. This will be a deadly deception. You need to understand that God allows the devil to appear and personate Christ *before* Christ returns because the wicked **"refused to love the truth and so be saved."** (2 Thessalonians 2:10) Lucifer will claim to be God and he will lead billions of people to believe that he has come to establish a thousand years of peace, but his claims are lies.

Why will the majority of the world be duped by this coming imposter? Jesus said, **"This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed."** (John 3:19-20)

If my understanding of Bible prophecy is correct, God will soon break His silence. On that dreadful day, everyone will know that God's patience with sin and sinners has reached its limit. When the great day of the Lord begins, mortals living on a tiny speck of a planet called Earth will know that Almighty God, Owner and Creator of the Universe, has summoned mankind to appear before His everlasting throne.

We can prepare for coming events. We can prepare *now* to be a part of God's new creation. Read your Bible. It tells us who God is, what He is like, and what He wants from each of us. Preparing for Jesus' return can be compared to preparing for final exams in the senior year of college. This is serious. Ready or not, the great day of the Lord is coming. Bible prophecy is a beacon signaling that the kingdom of God is at hand. Prepare to meet God!

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