

# Prophecy Unveiled - Persecution

Sunday, April 24, 2022

As we near the end of our series on Prophecy, I want to examine two more areas - Jesus Second Coming and The Great Tribulation.

Today I want to turn our attention to Jesus Second Coming... Following the resurrection, Luke tells us that Jesus appeared to the disciples *"over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God."*

## Acts 1:1-11

1 In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach 2 until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. 3 After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. 4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

6 Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

Of course, we have already looked at Matthew 24 and Matthew 25 which speak of the events surrounding the last days and Jesus' return. Throughout God's Word we are given many prophetic indicators that lead up to the return of Christ.

## Signs of Society

In [Matthew 24:37](#) Jesus says that His coming *“will be just like in the days of Noah.”*

Genesis 6 describes the days of Noah when mankind’s *“minds were focused upon evil.”* In the days of Noah, immorality and violence were everywhere. The Apostle Paul spells it out in detail ([2 Timothy 3:1-4](#)), *“Realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God...”*

## Signs of Technology

[Daniel 12:4](#) said there would be an explosion of knowledge and an increase in the rapidity of transportation at the end of this age. The Bible describes scenarios that depend on mass communication, satellite television, the Internet, computer technology and medical advances that have become a reality only in our day and time.

## Signs in World Politics

Yet another category of signs pertains to World Politics. The Bible prophesies a very specific end time configuration of nations.

Israel is pictured as a nation once more that is surrounded by hostile Arab neighbors intent on its destruction. This, of course, has been the situation in the Middle East since the Israeli Declaration of Independence in May of 1948 ([Ezekiel 35:1-36:7](#); [37:21-22](#)).

Daniel prophesied that the Roman Empire would be revived. This began with the formation of the European Union ([Daniel 2:36-41](#)).

The Bible prophesies a great power located in the *“remote parts of the north.”* This nation will menace Israel in the end times and will ultimately lead an invasion of Israel together with specified allies, all of which are modern day Muslim states ([Ezekiel 38:1-39:16](#)). Russia and its Muslim allies fit this description precisely.

## Spiritual Signs

More evidence that Jesus will soon return is that at the end of this age Spiritual signs will abound.

Three times in Matthew 24 Jesus warns that the end of this age will see many false prophets claiming to be Christ with a resulting rise in cult followings, misleading many people away from the true teachings of the Bible.

Satanism in the form of witchcraft, New Age, and the occult were prophesied to become mainstream, and so they have. Paul writes in [1 Timothy 4:1](#) that *“the Spirit explicitly says that in the latter times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.”*

And, many churches will become apostate, denying Jesus and ignoring His moral law. Paul writes about those who profess to being Christian in [2 Timothy 4:3-4](#), *“The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine... and will turn aside to myths.”*

But, the signs are not all bad news. We are told that there will be some very positive spiritual signs in these end times. For instance, Jesus said that the Good News of salvation will spread throughout the world. He said, *“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come”* ([Matthew 24:14](#)).

There also will be a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit and a greater interest in Bible prophecy and understanding of it ([Matthew 24:14](#); Joel 2; Daniel 12).

## Signs of Nature

As a result of all this turning away from God, God will increase the signs of Nature. Natural disasters of every type increasing greatly in frequency and intensity like “birth pains” are God’s way of calling people to repent and return to a loving relationship with Him ([Matthew 24:8](#)). Jesus stated in [Luke 21:11](#) that *“there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.”*

## Signs Concerning Israel

The prophetic signs that relate to Israel, though, are the most important of all because the Jews are God's prophetic time clock. What this means is that the Scriptures often tie a prophesied future event with something that will happen directly to the Jews.

An example can be found in Matthew 24 where Jesus prophesied that the re-establishment of the nation of Israel would be an end time sign using the fig tree as a symbol of Israel. The fig tree re-blossomed on May 14, 1948 when the nation of Israel was re-established, pointing to the soon return of the Lord

In [Luke 21:24](#) He prophesied that the Jews would be dispersed from Jerusalem and be led captive among the nations. He then said to watch for their return to Jerusalem because, when they return, it will mark the season of His return.

There are other prophecies concerning Israel that mark the end times when Jesus will return. One is found in Isaiah 35 where we are told that the decimated and barren land of Israel will flourish once again. In fulfillment of this prophecy, early in the 20th Century the Jewish settlers began to reclaim the land. Today, Israel has become the breadbasket of the Middle East.

Zechariah 12 tells us that Israel will become a military powerhouse in the end times, and today, the tiny nation of Israel is considered by military experts to have the fourth most powerful military force in the world.

Another key prophetic sign related to Israel in the end times is the one whose fulfillment we are witnessing today — the focusing of world politics upon the nation of Israel ([Zechariah 12:2-3](#)). All the nations of the world, including the United States, are coming against Israel over the issue of who controls the city of Jerusalem.

### **Zechariah 12:3**

**3 On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves.**

People are often surprised to learn that references to the Second Coming outnumber references to the first coming by a factor of eight to one. Scholars have identified 1,845 different biblical references to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

**In the Old Testament**, no less than seventeen books mention Christ's return. The New Testament authors speak of it in 23 of the 27 books. Seven out of ten chapters in the New Testament refer to His return. In other words, one out of every thirty verses in the New Testament teaches us that Jesus Christ is coming back to this earth.

- Dr. David Jeremiah

One of the most surprising references to Christ's return comes from the time of Genesis. Did you know that **Enoch** predicted the Second Coming of Christ? Although the book of Genesis did not record his prophecy, we can find it in the New Testament book of Jude.

#### **Jude 14-15**

**14 Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about them: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones 15 to judge everyone, and to convict all of them of all the ungodly acts they have committed in their ungodliness, and of all the defiant words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."**

The Prophet Daniel described the second coming of Jesus in the following way

#### **Daniel 7:13-14**

**13 "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. 14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.**

The second coming of Christ can be broken up into two main parts - The Rapture of the Church, which we call "The Blessed Hope" and the Physical Return of Jesus to the Earth.

In the Assemblies of God, we believe that the first of these two events precedes The Great Tribulation and can be seen in the following prophetic passages

#### **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17**

**16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ**

will rise first. 17 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. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

Romans 8:23

23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.

Titus 2:13

13 while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,

1 Corinthians 15:51-52

51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

The second coming of Christ also includes the visible return of Christ to the earth with his saints to reign for 1000 years (The Millennial Reign of Christ)

Zechariah 14:4-5

4 On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. 5 You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.

Matthew 24:27-31

27 For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 28 Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.

29 “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.’

30 “Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. 31 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.

Revelation 1:7

7 “Look, he is coming with the clouds,” and “every eye will see him, even those who pierced him”;

and all peoples on earth “will mourn because of him.” So shall it be! Amen.

Revelation 19:11-14

11 I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. 12 His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. 13 He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. 14 The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.

Revelation 20:1-6

20 And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. 2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. 3 He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

4 I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5 (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The

second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

The word of God also tells us that during this 100 year reign of peace we will also see the salvation of national Israel and the establishment of universal peace that will affect the very creation itself.

Isaiah 2:4

4 He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

Isaiah 11:6-9

6 The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. 7 The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. 8 The infant will play near the cobra's den, and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest. 9 They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Remember that one of our ground rules for studying prophecy is...

Prophecy helps us be prepared.

Jesus declares four times in the book of Revelation (Revelation 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20) "*I am coming soon*"

If we believe these prophecies are true and that they are soon to be fulfilled, how should we respond?

## 1. Keep Watching

1 Thessalonians 5:1-4

5 Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, 2 for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. 4 But you,



brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief.

2 Peter 3:3-13

3 Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 4 They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” 5 But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. 6 By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. 7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

## 2. Keep Waiting

Luke 12:36

36 like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him.

Titus 2:13

13 while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,

### 3. Keep Witnessing

Right before Jesus ascended into heaven and right before the angels told the disciples about Jesus' return; Jesus told the disciples that they would receive power to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth. Jesus wants us to tell people that He came the first time and that He will come again.

### 4. Keep Working

Luke 12:42-43

42 The Lord answered, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? 43 It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns.