

2016 in Review
The Year in Prophecy

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Introduction

Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. ² He answered and said to them, “When it is evening you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red’; ³ and in the morning, ‘It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times. – Matthew 16:1-3

Jesus expected the spiritual leaders of His generation to know the prophecies and recognize that He was the Messiah. They should have realized that He was fulfilling those predictions. Most of those Pharisees and Sadducees never did recognize the truth about Him. It is the same way today. It’s time for Christians to recognize the signs of the times and do what they can to lead others to Christ while there is still an opportunity!

This report is a summary of the ten top developments during 2016 that are of interest to prophecy students. Most of this information has come from news stories and quotations from the daily updates on the [Prophecy Central](#) web site. There are more than one hundred different sections on the site that deal with the various topics that we cover.

Each of these sections is devoted to a particular aspect of prophecy. Links are provided to these pages. They typically start with a brief summary of the importance of that subject, followed by a list of pertinent Scripture references that are linked to online Bible sites for easy reading and access to other study tools and commentaries. Important current events are collected on each page during the year with the headline and a brief summary. Visitors can connect to the original article and read our summary of the story. These summaries remain for posterity even if the original news articles are no longer on line.

You may also search for information in our blogs, Commentary on Revelation, and the books we have written.

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1 - Wars

/Terrorism/ Persecution / Cyberwar/ Syria/ Middle-East War /Cold War

As usual, war is an overwhelming aspect of this year's prophecy news.

In his Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24 & 25) Jesus identified four phases of the future: "The Beginning of Birth Pains," "The Tribulation," "The Great Tribulation," and "After the Tribulation."

The first prediction Jesus made about the "Beginning of birth pains" in the End Times was that there would be great conflicts. (Matthew 24:6).

"You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come." -- Matthew 24:6.

Wars have always been an unfortunate part of human history, but in the End-Times, Jesus said they would get worse.

During the past century we have had two world wars, the use of nuclear weapons, the cold war, terrorism, and cyberwarfare.

There will be other wars in the future, including a regional war against Israel (Psalm 83), the war of the Second Seal ([Revelation 6:3-4](#)), the Beast's campaign to rule the world ([Revelation 13:5-8](#)), the Battle of Armageddon ([Revelation 19:11-21](#)), and Satan's Last Stand ([Revelation 20:7-10](#)) after the Thousand Year Reign of Christ.

We will devote two sections to this subject—taking first the awful progress of terrorism around the world, and then the shocking build-up of alliances between Russia and other nations that could very well be leading to Ezekiel's prophecy of the Gog and Magog war of the End Times.

Terrorism has been a cause of some of the "wars" predicted by Jesus as signs of the times. It has been a factor in the history of the Middle East for hundreds of years, and is now a world-wide problem, especially since the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington D.C. in 2001. Terrorism produces a general sense of dread even when there is no actual attack taking place. This could be one of the most significant fulfillments of Jesus' prediction of "rumors of war" (Matthew 24:6).

The unrest in the Middle-East focuses on the civil struggle between the government of Israel and the Palestinian people who want to establish a separate Palestinian state. Most of the Arab and/or Islamic nations in the area are also involved. This could result in the regional war that was foretold in Psalm 83. The United States, the U.N., the European Union, and even Russia are all trying to bring about peace in the region.

At the end of the year (2016), and near the end of Barak Obama's presidency, the United States made a tragic mistake—abstaining from a United Nations resolution that condemned Israeli settlement building. In the past, the U.S. has always vetoed such resolutions. The "peace process," a futile attempt for many decades, has been virtually unreachable lately because the Palestinians will not conduct direct talks with Israel, possibly leading to a two-state position. They don't actually believe in separate states for the Jewish and Palestinian

peoples. They don't believe Israel has any right to be there in spite of the witness of history and the decision by world leaders after World War II that the persecuted Jews should return to their homeland in fulfillment of Ezekiel chapters 36 and 37.

Now it appears that most of the world is against Israel and against God's revealed purpose for them.

And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it. – Zechariah 12:3

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[Appendix C – Psalm 83](#)

2 – Gog and Magog

Russia/ Iran/ Turkey

This is the war of Ezekiel 38 and 39. We relate it to the war of the Second Seal in Revelation 6:3-4, a major conflict near the beginning of the Tribulation Period. Some respected scholars apply it to The Battle of Armageddon later in the Book of Revelation.

The following discussion of the War of Gog and Magog is an excerpt from our book: [Connecting the Dots: a Handbook of Bible Prophecy](#)

The Aggressors of the War of Gog and Magog - Ezekiel 38:1-4

According to Ezekiel, an alliance of enemies will attack Israel in the End Times. The leader will be Gog of the land of Magog, who is the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. He is assisted by Persia, Cush, Put, Gomer, Beth Togarmah, and other nations. Most of these names are listed in the genealogies of Genesis 10. Gog is not listed in Genesis 10, but he is evidently the head of the land of Magog, who is mentioned as a son of Japheth, one of Noah's sons. It is known that Japheth traveled north from Mt. Ararat after the flood.

Hesoid, a Greek writer of the 7th century BC, and contemporary of Ezekiel, identified Magog with the Scythians and southern Russia. Flavius Josephus, a 1st century Jewish historian said that Magogians were called "Scythians" by the Greeks. Philo, a 1st century Greek identified Magog with southern Russia.⁸⁹

Commentators from the turn of this century and before have generally identified Gog and Magog with Russia even though, at the time, they could not explain why Russia would turn against God's people. They conjectured that perhaps the time would come when there would be animosity between Russia and Israel.

Rosh ("head", "chief") sounds like Russia. Meshech sounds like Moscow or Mushkovi, the old name for Russia. Tubal sounds like Tobolsk.

- The Target: Israel - Ezekiel 38:2-12

This is the only time in history that this could be said of Israel, that they were brought back from many nations. It is true that they were brought back from Babylon and Persia in the Old Testament, but it is only since the Zionist movement, which began in the late 1800's, that Jewish people have returned from nations all over the world. They had been scattered abroad even in New Testament times. On the Day of Pentecost, for example, the various languages spoken by the Apostles, when the Holy Spirit came upon them, represented the many lands where they had settled. But they had not returned to stay. This really never happened until the amazing events that led to the rebirth of Israel in 1948. What thoughts would come into Russia's mind to make them want to attack Israel? A consideration of Russia's instability and the plans of some of their leaders for expansion throughout the Mediterranean area is given below. Israel has always been a key land bridge between Russia's allies and is presently an enemy of some of those allies. Any number of

scenarios in the always-volatile Middle East politics could lead to a Russian attack in the future.

- Russia's Allies - Ezekiel 38:5-6

Persia is now known as Iran, and there is an amazingly close relationship now between Russia and Iran. Cush is Ethiopia, Put is Libya, Gomer and Beth Togarmah may well be Turkey and/or other Islamic nations like those once part of the Soviet Union.

It is interesting that Mizraim, the forefather of Egypt is apparently missing from this lineup. This, of course, fits the current world scene, with Egypt being the first Arab nation to make peace with Israel.

- Israel's Allies - Ezekiel 38:13

Israel's allies appear to be few and feeble. Some of Saudi Arabia was populated by Sheba and Dedan. The merchants of Tarshish could be England and English colonies. In that case, The United States could even be included since we were once an English colony. These allies ask why Russia and its allies are coming, but do not appear to deter them.

- The Outcome - Ezekiel 38:22

The quick end of this future war will be with God's judgment. It could be God's personal power, raining literal fire and brimstone, as in the days of Sodom, or it could be God using nation against nation, as he often did in the Old Testament, to precipitate a nuclear exchange.

And with pestilence and with blood I shall enter into judgment with him; and I shall rain on him, and on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, a torrential rain, with hailstones, fire, and brimstone. - Ezekiel 38:22

The next chapter of Ezekiel continues to give details of this great conflict. Again, it is a scene of utter destruction.

"And I shall strike your bow from your left hand, and dash down your arrows from your right hand. 4 "You shall fall on the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops, and the peoples who are with you; I shall give you as food to every kind of predatory bird and beast of the field. 5 "You will fall on the open field; for it is I who have spoken," declares the Lord GOD. 6 "And I shall send fire upon Magog and those who inhabit the coastlands in safety; and they will know that I am the LORD." - Ezekiel 39:3-6

(End of excerpt)

Russia is a country that is rich in Christian history. It is one of the primary countries where the Orthodox Christian Church flourished until the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and creation of the Soviet Union (USSR) which was an atheistic Communist Dictatorship. For several decades after World War II the Soviet Union was a formidable world power with great nuclear

stockpiles. A "Cold War" existed between the USSR and the United States, representing two philosophies of government: Communism versus Democracy. Nuclear war was avoided by the concept of "Mutual Assured Destruction" (MAD), which meant that neither super-power would dare attack the other since both would surely be annihilated in the exchange. The USSR was disbanded in 1991 with the so-called "Fall of the Iron Curtain."

There has been progress toward a stable democracy in Russia since 1991 with free elections and greater freedom of religion. However, the politics of Vladimir Putin have undermined confidence in their democracy. It is possible that the country will revert to old dictatorial practices.

Prophecy scholars have wondered for more than a century if Russia would be the End Times leader of the war of Gog and Magog, prophesied in Ezekiel 38 and 39. We relate this to the war of the Second Seal in Revelation 6:3-4, a major conflict near the beginning of the Tribulation Period. Some respected scholars apply it to The Battle of Armageddon later in the Book of Revelation.

Since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, **Iran** has been the champion of the Shi'ite branch of Islam. Now their leadership harbors a deep hatred for the United States, whom they call "The Great Satan," and Israel, "The Little Satan."

Even though they have immense supplies of oil, they have claimed to need nuclear power as well. It is now admitted by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the United Nation's nuclear watchdog, that their goal is the development of nuclear weapons.

Iran figures prominently in Bible prophecy because they are the direct descendants of the Persians, who are mentioned in Ezekiel 38 as key allies of Magog, a powerful nation in the North that many prophecy scholars have tentatively identified as Russia.

Turkey was the center of the great Islamic caliphate known as the Ottoman Empire, which reigned over a sizeable portion of the world until it was dissolved at the end of World War I. At the present time it is controlled by a secular government and is considered the geographical, political, and religious connection between Europe and the struggling Islamic nations of the Middle East.

The country has a stable economy and one of the largest standing armies in the world. It has applied for membership in the European Union. It has a defense pact with Israel, but relations between the two countries have been severely strained since the Israelis intercepted a flotilla heading from Turkey to Gaza in 2010. The ships were supposedly only carrying humanitarian aid, but they were in fact bringing illegal weapons.

Turkey figures prominently in Bible prophecy as the land of the seven churches mentioned in the book of Revelation, and as a key ally of Magog, a powerful nation in the North that many prophecy scholars have tentatively identified as Russia. Together with other nations, these allies will engage Israel in a future war against Israel. See [The War of Gog and Magog](#).

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[Iran](#)

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3 – Presidential Campaign

This year our nation, and much of the world, witnessed a shocking and brutal presidential election. In the end, a strong majority of evangelical Christians voted for Donald Trump feeling that this choice was the “lesser of two evils.” It was clear that most evangelicals preferred the [platform](#) of the Republican Party, especially in regard to moral issues, and the assurance that he would fill Supreme Court vacancies with good, conservative candidates. They realized that no one is perfect except Jesus (1 John 3:5; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15), and He wasn’t running!

In our blog, [“Why Vote?”](#) we suggested three things a Christian should do:

1 – UNDERSTAND SPIRITUAL WARFARE

The Bible explains that, since the beginning of the human drama, world governments have been infiltrated by Satan. During the temptation of Our Lord, the Devil actually offered him the kingdoms of the world!

Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.”

Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.’” – Matthew 4:8-10

On the other hand, the Bible also teaches that, in spite of corrupted governments and sinful rulers, God is still in control.

For exaltation comes neither from the east Nor from the west nor from the south. But God is the Judge: He puts down one, And exalts another. – Psalm 75:6-7

God is sovereign. He allows rulers to be installed in order to accomplish His purposes. His plan may be to bless those who trust Him, or even to correct those who go astray. Sometimes he lets people have their own way to teach them a lesson. This happened in Israel’s history when they wanted a king. It also occurred during Moses’ time.

They soon forgot His works; They did not wait for His counsel, But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, And tested God in the desert. And He gave them their request, But sent leanness into their soul. – Psalm 106:13-16

2 – PRAY

If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. – 2 Chronicles 7:14

This disappointing election could be just the wake-up call we need as a nation to return to the Lord, and hopefully experience another great revival for the sake of untold millions of young people in our country who do not know the Bible and have not yet accepted Jesus personally as their Savior and Lord.

3 – VOTE

Hal Lindsey [points out](#) that failing to vote is similar to the mistake made by the one character in Jesus' parable of the talents who just buried his money in the ground instead of investing it.

Christians need to be involved in the elective process, not to champion one political party over another, but to call the nation back to its moral roots.

The future of the United States is not defined in Bible prophecy. A weak or ungodly government here would just make it easier for the future evil world dictator, the Beast, to exert his influence.

A revival here would be a great impetus to an End Times spiritual harvest and might provide the environment for a Christian underground during the Tribulation.

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4—Revival

Good News

The question arises, "If these are the end times, would God send a revival when He has already predicted apostasy and spiritual decline?"

The answer is "Yes!" He gave opportunity to Noah's family, Lot's family, and the believers in Jericho and Nineveh to repent and be spared. Why wouldn't He give an opportunity, especially to the young people of our generation who have never really understood the Gospel?

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. - 2 Peter 3:9

Revival must come through God's Holy Spirit. But His people must really want it.

If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. - 2 Chronicles 7:14

Heard any good news lately? Prophecy comprises about one-third of the Bible, and believe it or not, most of it is good news! The prophecies of the first coming of Messiah were certainly good news. And the massive amount of Bible teaching about the Millennial age and beyond, is unquestionably positive! But admittedly, much of "end-time prophecy" is depressing. We should remember that Jesus called this phase of the future "labor pains." Just as the birth of a baby is preceded by difficult and painful labor, the birth of the Millennium, and after that, the glorious New Heaven and Earth, is preceded by the Tribulation.

We need to balance our study of prophecy with a reminder that God is still on His throne. He is the loving, all-powerful creator and the designer of our incredible salvation.

The Gospel is the "Good News." The Bible is His love letter to us. The incredible Creation is His handicraft. The Family is His idea. Israel is still His chosen people. And the Church is the greatest expression of His power and purpose during this age.

Additionally, the Bible tells us repeatedly not to be afraid! So let's look forward to a wonderful New Year in the Lord!

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5 – Mark of the Beast /Technology /Antichrist

Even people who know very little about what the Bible actually teaches are generally aware of the prophecy of the “Mark of the beast” or “666” that will someday be imposed on all who want to buy or sell anything.

The Bible does teach that an evil person, “The Beast,” or “Antichrist” will one day appear on the scene, and will rapidly gain power and control over most of the world, presumably through his economic prowess.

He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666. – Revelation 13:15-17.

He will be energized by Satan, and like his master, he will want to actually be worshipped by his subjects.

The actual "Mark" will be Antichrist's NAME or NUMBER, not ours. It will be "worn" on the right hand or on the forehead as a symbol of worship. However, national or international ID numbers will also be significant because at the time the Mark is instituted, Antichrist will control all buying and selling, which will obviously require personal identification for all people

The world in which we live has been fully prepared for an economic messiah who could take financial control of a desperate situation. Furthermore, the philosophies and organizations are in place for both a one-world government and a one-world religious system.

The incredible technological progress that we have observed in our generation has a definite association with the fulfillment of ancient prophecies. Daniel recorded many detailed predictions about the future that even he could not fully understand. In fact, toward the end of his Old Testament book, he was told,

"Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. But you, Daniel, roll up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge" --Daniel 12:4.

Before our time, no one could have imagined the unbelievable increase of knowledge that has been brought about by the computer revolution. And the Internet has provided a way for many to "go here and there" to gain that information.

The Apostle John wrote that there were already many antichrists. To him this word signifies deceivers who deny that Jesus is from God (1 John 2:18; 1 John 4:3 and 2 John 7). But in writing the Revelation, he does not use the word "antichrist" at all. Instead, he uses the expression "the beast" regularly from Revelation chapter 13 through 20.

There are many other biblical names for "the beast." In Daniel 7:8 he is called another (eleventh) horn that speaks boastfully. In Daniel 9:26 he is referred to as "the ruler who will come." In Daniel 11:21 he is described as "a contemptible person." In 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 the Apostle Paul labeled him "the man of lawlessness," and "the lawless one." And in Revelation 6:1-2 he is seen as the rider on the white horse.

Everything considered, the person most prophecy writers call "Antichrist" is "the beast." In Revelation 13:11 there is "another beast," who is obviously a religious leader who makes an image of the first beast and requires everyone to worship it. This person is part of an "unholy trinity" in Revelation 13 - The Dragon (the Devil), the first beast (evil world dictator), and this other beast. Most prophecy scholars refer to this other beast as the "the False Prophet." From the Apostle John's perspective he would also be an antichrist.

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6 – Apostasy

Apostasy or "falling away" is the subject of several end-times warnings in the Bible. Just at the time that people should be most interested in God's Word, there will be an increase of evil in society, caused in part by a failure of God's people to stand for biblical principles. However, as the darkness increases, the light of truth will shine brighter as it emanates from Godly believers. Therefore, it is likely that at the same time that the church in general becomes more worldly, there will be a great end-times revival as well.

There is a vital connection between the prophesied apostasy ("falling away") of the end times and the practice of abortion and other right-to-life issues.

The Bible describes a terrible increase in crime and immorality. This is an accurate picture of our times: with all its riots, prison overcrowding, drug and alcohol addiction, carjackings, drive-by shootings, follow-home robberies, and home invasions.

There is currently a huge spike in violence and crime that has been caused by racial unrest following the deaths of some people who were arrested by police. This situation is exploited by agitators, and made worse by officials with ultra-liberal agendas. Police are reluctant to make arrests and keep the peace because of the danger of personal attacks by hostile crowds on the street and a lack of support from their superiors.

As with the other signs, this problem of lawlessness is bad before The Tribulation but it will accelerate off the scale during those seven dreadful years because the Holy Spirit will no longer be acting as The Restrainer, and Antichrist will be revealed.

There is a vital connection between the prophesied apostasy ("falling away") of the end times and the rise of pornography, infidelity, divorce, homosexuality and other kinds of sexual confusion. These are symptoms of a society that has departed from the teaching of God's Word.

It is our desire to show [love and compassion](#) while being honest about what the Bible says regarding this topic.

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7 – Israel

The nation and the land of Israel are the subject of many Old Testament prophecies. Many of them relate to God's plans for the nation, warnings of judgment because of their disobedience, and restoration after they were conquered by the Assyrians and the Babylonians.

There are also comforting prophecies about Israel's distant future, and especially their role in the future righteous kingdom that will be established by the Messiah.

In our lifetime we have witnessed one of the most amazing fulfillments - the promise of Ezekiel chapters 36 and 37 that the chosen people will be brought back from all over the Earth and re-born as a nation. This, of course, was fulfilled in 1948 when, against all odds, Israel declared independence, and with God's help, has been able to fight off enemies on all sides for over 65 years.

The current wave of violence between Israel and the Palestinians could die out and become one of many such cycles in the area, or it could lead to more serious war, such as the one predicted in Psalm 83. The outcome of this war could be a most welcome peace agreement.

Such a peace agreement might be just another phase in the age-old struggle between the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael, or it could be the false peace mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 5:3. 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. (NIV)

When Israel finally is at peace, it will be the first time since they became a nation in 1948 that they have enjoyed such security. This could cause them to lower their guard, which would set the scene for The War of Gog and Magog predicted in Ezekiel 38 and 39. This war will most likely correspond to the 2nd Seal of Revelation 6.

The dramatic end of this great war of the 2nd Seal could produce the treaty predicted in Daniel 9:27, which many prophecy scholars identify as the beginning of the seven-year Tribulation period.

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8 – Islam

Islam is the second largest, and some claim, the fastest growing, religion in the world. It is not well understood in the United States, but the attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center by militant Muslims have made people curious about its teachings. Many Muslims live in relative peace, but there is a strong, sizeable faction of radical militants that dominate the news and use terrorist tactics to advance its agenda of world domination. Osama bin Laden and his organization, Al Qaeda, was responsible for the killing of more than three thousand innocent Americans.

Christians need to affirm their love for Muslims (Christ died for all men), and stand against any persecution against them based on their religion or ethnicity. We should also seek to enter into dialog with them where possible, so that they might learn more about Jesus, whom they respect as a prophet, but do not accept as savior. At the same time, we should be entirely opposed to the wanton murder of innocent people by terrorists. And we should not give the false impression, so prevalent in our culture today, that our beliefs are equal. Jesus said He is the only way to God the Father (John 14:6).

Radical Islam has continued to grow. Their aim is to control the world. Intelligence experts warn that another great attack is likely in America. Few Muslim mosques stand effectively against violence. Instead, they tend to serve as places of recruitment for jihadists. Outdated immigration policies and weak border control allow the continued flow of trained terrorists into our country. Americans and their leaders need to wake up and find ways to stop this trend before it is too late for us.

In July, 2014 the radical jihadist group, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), also known as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), claimed that they were establishing a [new Islamic caliphate](#), with the goal of reclaiming the lands once held by the Ottoman Empire. Using the most brutal tactics seen in our lifetime -- including beheadings, crucifixions, mass slaughter, and burying opponents alive -- they have invaded large portions of Syria and Iraq, and have killed or driven out almost all Christians. This new, illegitimate force is motivated by Sunni Islamic theology, and will undoubtedly be resisted by the Shite branch of Islam, led by Iran. They will also be opposed by Western powers, including the United States and the more moderate Sunni nations such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt.

The continued growth of Islam raises another prophetic possibility. The large and growing numbers of Muslims in Europe are exerting a strong negative influence over the culture there: raising fear of increasing terror attacks, and imposing Sharia law in their neighborhoods, now considered “no-go zones” for regular police. The affected area would resemble the old Roman Empire at it's greatest extent, and could be what was predicted in Daniel, chapter 2, where it depicts the final world empire, symbolized by iron [Rome] and clay [Islamic influence?]. See [Revived Roman Empire](#).

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9 – The Rapture

Jesus taught that he would return again (Acts 1). His coming is depicted dramatically in Revelation 19. He will come as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. At that point he will fight and win the Battle of Armageddon and then establish his rule over the entire earth for a thousand years (Revelation 20). And when that Millennium is past, there will be a New Heaven and a New Earth (Revelation 21-22)!

The Rapture is an earlier appearance of Christ to remove his faithful followers (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). It marks the end-point of the Church Age. Then Israel will begin the last seven years of their history before Christ's glorious return.

The Rapture is part of the "mystery" of the Church. The Church was not predicted in the Old Testament or explained in Jesus' Olivet Discourse because it was not yet time for this mystery to be unveiled. When it was revealed, the Apostle Paul taught it in 1 Thessalonians chapters 4 and 5 and 1 Corinthians 15.

Some people mistakenly think that the Rapture is not found in the Bible. Of course, the English word "rapture" is not used in the Greek text. Neither is the English words "church" or "Jesus." But the Greek word for the event is *harpazo*, which means to "catch up," or "snatch away."

See also: [Excerpts from The Prophecy Puzzle](#) and Chapter 6 of our new book, [*Connecting the Dots: A Handbook of Bible Prophecy*](#).

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[Rapture Study and Chart – Appendix B Below](#)

10– World Religions

The Bible clearly teaches that there will be some kind of universal religion that will use its influence to enable the Beast, a world military and economic dictator, to rise to power.

There are already religious movements working toward the goal of a "United Religions," modeled after the United Nations. Once born-again Christians have been taken up to meet Christ in the Rapture, what is left of Christianity will be willing to cooperate with other religions in the name of peace.

According to the prophecy in Revelation about the "Mark of the Beast," all people will be required to worship the Beast in order to receive permission to buy or sell. His world religious movement will be led by the False Prophet of Revelation 13. It's influence will be symbolized by the spiritually adulterous woman who rides the Beast in Revelation 17

Recent "big news" items in the area of world religions revolve around Pope Francis' ultra-liberal, socialist-leaning politics and his efforts to find common ground with other religions, and give the impression that we all worship the same god.

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[Appendix A – Understanding the Future](#)

Appendix A

Understanding the Future

An excerpt from our book, *The Church in Prophecy and History*, pp.183-186

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One of the worst mistakes of the Reformers was the failure of most of them to correct the erroneous interpretation of Bible prophecies that had developed during the Middle Ages about Israel, the Second Coming of Christ and the other aspects of the future that were given by the Old Testament prophets, the Lord Jesus Himself, the apostles, and the Book of Revelation.

As we mentioned above, the best guiding principle of the Reformation was expressed by the concept called *Sola Scriptura*, meaning “only Scripture,” or “by Scripture alone.” This was understood to mean that the Bible is the only inspired—and therefore the most authoritative--source of truth. There is value in exposition (explanation) of the Word, as is done in preaching, and in the writing of theological books, commentaries, and devotional literature, but all of these are subordinate to, and are to be corrected by, the written Word of God.

Jesus, the “living Word” (John 1:1, 14), declared Himself to be “the way, the truth, and the life,” (John 14:5), but even this great fact is revealed by the “written Word,” The Bible:

Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. – John 17:17

Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. –
Matthew 24:35

The Reformers meant well, but there were just so many misunderstandings about the plain teaching of the Bible that it was virtually impossible to correct everything at once. Therefore eschatology (the study of “last things”—from the Greek word *eschatos*) was not revised, and was made even more confusing during the Reformation period.

Near the beginning of this commentary (Chapter 1, verse 10) we discussed various ways that people have interpreted Bible prophecy through the years.

The main question about the prophecies of the Bible is whether or not they will be fulfilled literally. This is especially true about the many places in the New Testament where we are told that Jesus is returning and that His coming could take place at any time.

The Early Church interpreted these passages literally, and lived in the anticipation of Christ's any-moment return. Knowing this had a purifying and motivating effect on believers. They wanted to be living holy lives when Jesus would return. And, if He might return at any time, there was always an urgency to share the Gospel with those who had not yet received Him as Savior and Lord:

Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God. . . – 2 Peter 3:11-12a.

The other kind of interpretation is the allegorical method. An allegory is a story that is meant to teach a moral lesson. Of course the Bible does contain allegories and many other kinds of symbolic language, but the literal approach to interpretation accepts the idea that once the figure of speech is understood; there is a literal fulfillment for any prophetic utterance. This allegorical approach does not look for a future historical event, but is satisfied with the idea that the story teaches a general moral principle. From this point of view, the promises to Israel might be mistakenly transferred to the church, and the numerous Bible promises of a glorious messianic kingdom and a literal thousand-year reign of Christ can be wrongly interpreted as a gradual transformation of the culture from a pagan civilization to a Christian kingdom.

Now we need to look at the predominant beliefs about the future over the course of history.

- **Early Church Eschatology**

The first three of the churches in this prophecy would all be part of the Early Church. They were: Ephesus (Apostolic), Smyrna (Persecution), and Pergamum (Compromise). These churches took the simple, biblical "futurist" method of interpretation, which resulted in a "premillennial" view of eschatology. These are pretty technical expressions, so let us break these terms down a little bit.

The "futurist" interpretation accepts what the Bible says about future events literally.

The "premillennial" eschatology was built on this literal futurist approach. It was the belief that Jesus will return to Earth to reign for a thousand years. The Early Christians expected that, at any time, Christ might "catch up" His church at the Rapture (John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:50-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 4:1). Then, after the Tribulation period (Jeremiah 30:1-7; Daniel 11:20-45; Ezekiel Chapters 38 and 39; Matthew 24:9-28; Revelation Chapters 6 through 19), they believed that Jesus will return to establish the

Messianic Kingdom that Isaiah and most of the Old Testament prophets promised extensively in the Old Testament. According to this Book of Revelation, the Kingdom will be a thousand-year reign of righteousness over a peaceful and prosperous world (Matthew 24:29-32; Revelation 20:1-8). After the millennium there will be a judgment of non-believers (Revelation 20:11-15). This will be followed by the creation of a New Heaven and New Earth (Revelation Chapters 21 and 22).

- **Catholic Eschatology**

The Catholic Church is defined by the fourth church of this prophecy: Thyatira (Middle Ages). The leaders of the church felt that they were establishing the Kingdom of Heaven. They employed the historicist (allegorical) method of interpretation, believing that the events in their generations were gradually fulfilling the prophecies.

Since the theologians of the Middle Ages thought that they were building the kingdom they didn't feel a need for a literal thousand-year reign of Christ in the future. Using the allegorical method of interpretation, they taught that the Old Testament prophecies of a messianic millennium referred to the kingdom they were creating themselves, that would last forever. They believed that Jesus would come back to reign once they had finished preparing for His return. And from their point of view, Israel had been replaced by the church, so they did not look for literal fulfillments of the Old Testament promises. Therefore their eschatology (teaching about "last things" or the end time) was "amillennial."

- **Reformation Eschatology**

The Reformation is represented by Sardis, the fifth church of this prophecy. As we noted above, it failed to live up to its own standard of "Scripture only," and continued to hold the amillennial view of the future which they thought would result in a godly church/state union to which Christ could eventually return as King.

John Calvin did introduce a variation to the eschatology the Reformers had inherited from the Catholic Church. He called it "Covenant Theology." This viewpoint considers all of history as the development of three overarching theological covenants--the covenants of redemption, of works, and of grace. In their system, the covenants include the return of Christ, resurrection of the dead, and the Great White Throne Judgment, but no literal 1000 year Millennium.

It was common for the Reformers to consider the Catholic Church, with its church/state alliances, the evil last world empire of the Book of Revelation, and to claim that the Pope was the Antichrist.

A completely new view of the future was invented during the Reformation period by the Jesuits, a new Catholic order that we will explore next. It was called Preterism (from the Latin *praeter*—meaning “past.”) Versions of this theory relate most, or even all, of the Book of Revelation to the events of the 1st Century, revolving around the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 and/or the persecutions of the Roman Empire. It was presented as an alternative to the growing belief that the Pope was Antichrist. Preterism was later adopted by some Protestants.

- **Later Developments in Eschatology**

When we study the next church [Philadelphia] in Revelation 3 we will see that there was a strong return to the literal interpretation of prophecy, resulting in a renewed interest in the Rapture of the church and the development of end time events. It was also a boon to evangelism and the missionary movement.

For a Catholic explanation of their view of the End Times, see: [Are We Living in the Last Days?](#)

Appendix B – Study of the Rapture

Introduction

Biblical Interpretation – Hermeneutics

Inspired – Meant to be taken literally

Symbolic language is used – Parables, allegories, similes

Even when symbolism is used, there is a literal meaning.

Meaning is found by comparing Scripture with Scripture

The Second Coming of Christ – Gr. *Parousia* – “appearance, presence”

The Rapture of the Church – John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:50-55; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11 (A Biblical word – *harpazo* – Meaning “catch away”); 2 Thessalonians 2:3

The Glorious Return of Christ – Matthew 24:27-31; Revelation 1:7; 19:11-16

Differences between the Rapture and the Glorious Return of Christ

| The Rapture | The 2nd Coming |
|--|---|
| Christ comes for His own 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 | Christ returns with His own Revelation 19:11-16 |
| Believers taken to Father's House John 14:1-3 | Believers gathered from the Earth Matthew 24:31 |
| Seen only by believers 1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:13-18 | Every eye will see Him Revelation 1:7; Matthew 24:30 |
| No reference to Satan | Satan bound Revelation 20:1-3 |
| Earth not judged | Earth judged Revelation 20:4-5 |
| A Mystery 1 Corinthians 15:51 ff. | Foretold in Old Testament Dan. 2:44; 12:1-3; Zech. 12:1-14; 14:3-4 |

Various Teachings about the Return of Christ

No literal return

Full Preterists – Say all of the Book of Revelation fulfilled in 70 AD, including the spiritual return of Christ.

Spiritual/Idealists – Say prophecy is motivational – calling believers to heroic living, endurance, and showing that good triumphs over evil in the end.

No Rapture of the Church, but a literal Return of Christ

Historicists – Say the Book of Revelation is a symbolic presentation of the entire church age.

Partial Preterists – Say most of Revelation was fulfilled in 70 AD, or at least by the Roman Empire, but the final chapters still look forward to a future second coming of Christ.

The Rapture of the Church and the literal Return of Christ (Futurists)

Pre-Tribulation Rapture – Say Jesus will return for the Church at (or before) the beginning of the Tribulation period.

Mid-Tribulation Rapture – Say Jesus will return for the Church at the mid-point of the Tribulation, just before the “Great Tribulation” begins.

Partial Rapture – Say Jesus will return before the Tribulation to receive those who are “waiting” for His return. Other believers may be taken during or at the end of the Tribulation.

Pre-Wrath Rapture – Say the Rapture will take place just before the Battle of Armageddon, the ultimate expression of God’s wrath.

Post-Tribulation Rapture – Say Christians have to suffer the trials of the Tribulation, but those who remain will be caught up by Jesus just before He returns to the Earth at the end of the Battle of Armageddon.

Pan-Tribulation Rapture – Say, “We don’t have a clue about the timing, but believe it will all pan out in the end.”

Evidence for a Pre-Trib Rapture of the Church

Any-moment expectation (Imminence)

In every age Christians have been expecting the return of Our Lord. Twice in the last chapter of Revelation He tells us, "I am coming quickly" (Revelation 22:7, 12, 20).

Paul referred to this ever-present possibility of Christ's return as "the blessed hope" (Titus 2:13). He also taught that His coming will be like a thief in the night (1 Thessalonians 5:1-6).

Absence of the Church during the Tribulation

Revelation, Chapters 4 through 21

There are constant references to the church and the seven churches in Revelation chapters 1-3. In Revelation 4:1 John hears a trumpet and is told to "come up here." The church is not mentioned during the whole Tribulation period. (Revelation 4:1-19:21).

The Centrality of Israel and Jewish People during the Tribulation

There are many "Saints" during the Tribulation. They are believers in Christ--Jews and Gentiles alike, but they are not referred to as the church, nor are any of the usual descriptions of the church attached to them. The apostate church of the period will be corrupt, and will give its influence to Antichrist (Revelation 18), so these Tribulation Saints will not be associated with this apostate church, the great harlot of Revelation 17.

Israel has a preeminent place during the tribulation period.

The tribulation is synonymous with Daniel's 70th Week (Daniel 9:27; Revelation 13).

The 144,000 are sealed from the 12 tribes of Israel (Revelation 7:1-8).

The Two Witnesses are probably Old Testament leaders - Moses and Elijah (or, as some think, Enoch and Elijah) (Revelation 11:1-12).

The flight of Israel --(Revelation 12)

The treaty with Israel and defilement of the Temple (Revelation 13)

Deliverance of the Saints from Wrath

Note: Believers are *not* delivered from trials or persecution (1 Peter 4:12-19; Acts 5:40-41; Philippians 3:10; 2 Timothy 3:12) but they are delivered from God's *wrath* See below:
"Christians are not delivered *from* trials, but through *them*."

Keep on the alert...praying... that you may have strength to escape all these things ... (Luke 21:36).

For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation (adversity) (2 Peter 2:6-9).

I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world (Revelation 3:10—Church of Philadelphia [Missionary]).

Antichrist not revealed until hindering force is removed

The Day of the Lord] will not come unless the apostasy [“departure”- reference to the Rapture] comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction... And you know what restrains him now... For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way (2 Thessalonians 2:1-8).

The Holy Spirit convicts the world concerning sin (John 16:7-8).

Events between the Rapture and the Return

Saints in the presence of the Lord (Revelation 5)

24 Elders represent the redeemed saints (Revelation 5:8-10).

The Bema-seat judgment of Christians (2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 4:2-5)

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-9)

Population of the Millennium by mortal believers

The pre-Tribulation Rapture interpretation best explains this important feature of God's future plan. According to Jesus' teaching on the Mount of Olives, there will be a judgment of the nations (Sheep and Goats - Matthew 25:31-46) just before the Millennium, just prior to the commencement of the thousand-year reign of Christ (Revelation 20:1-6). This taking of some and leaving of others is not the Rapture, but it corresponds to the Parable of The Wheat and The Tares (Matthew 13:24-30). In that parable, the tares are collected FIRST, and tied into bundles to be burned (later - The Great White Throne judgment), then the wheat is gathered into the barn. The wheat represents true believers who have survived the Tribulation period, and are thus permitted to enter the Millennial Age.

If the Rapture took place at, or near the end of the Tribulation, all believers would have glorified bodies, and there would be no righteous mortals left to enter the Millennium!

Objections to Pre-Trib Rapture of the Church

“The Rapture is not mentioned in the Olivet Discourse.”

The Church was a mystery, announced by Christ (Matthew 16:13-18), but not described until Paul's writings.

The "mystery" of the church was revealed to the Apostle Paul, and described by Him in numerous passages of Scripture. In Romans 11:25 he used the word to describe the temporary "hardening" of Israel: "I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in."

The word "mystery" (Greek *musterion*) meant a "secret," or something formerly hidden, but now revealed.

In Romans 16:25, Paul calls the Gospel, the proclamation of Jesus Christ, a mystery. In Corinthians 15:51-58, he uses "mystery" to describe the resurrection and the glorified body that believers will receive.

Paul taught that it was a mystery (formerly hidden, but now revealed) that all things will eventually be brought together under the headship of Christ (Ephesians 1:9-10).

In Ephesians 3 the Apostle explained in greater detail that the mystery of the church was part of God's purpose all along to make Gentiles heirs together with Israel.

“Christians are not delivered *from* trials, but *through* them.”

Believers are allowed to suffer trials and persecution (Book of Job; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 2 Timothy 3:12), **but are delivered from God's wrath** – such as the flood, (Genesis 7:1) Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:15-17); Nineveh (Jonah chapter 3), and the 10th plague in Exodus (death of the firstborn—Exodus 12:12-13).

“The Last Trump should be identified with the seventh trumpet in the Book of Revelation.”

This trumpet should be related to the last trumpet blown at the Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah), The Jewish New Year festival (Leviticus 23:32-32),

Differences between the two trumpets:

Rapture - 1 Thessalonians 4:16 - The trump of God / Revelation 10:7 – Trumpet blown by an angel.

Events at the Rapture – “In the twinkling of an eye” / Events at 7th trumpet take several days

Result at the Rapture – joy and transformation / Result of 7th trumpet – “the third woe” (Revelation 11:14)

“The Church of Thyatira (Revelation 2:18-29) was in danger of going into the Great Tribulation.”

This represents the period of the Dark Ages of the Catholic Church. Representatives of all church ages still exist today. The idolatrous, unfaithful church will indeed exist during the Tribulation, and will give its power to Antichrist. Contrast this with the promise to the Philadelphia church – deliverance of the saints from wrath.

“The Pre-Trib view was not developed until recently.”

Justin Martyr was pre-trib (about AD 100)

Irenaeus and Lactantius of the second and third centuries made apparently or explicitly premillennial statements (Paul Thigpin, “The Second Coming,” Charisma, Feb. 1989, p. 44)

Ephraem of Nisibis, the most important and prolific of the Syrian Church fathers (306-373) taught the pre-trib position in a sermon entitled, “On the Last Times, The Antichrist, and The End of the World.” He wrote, “For all the saints and Elect of God are gathered prior to the tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overtake the world because of our sins.” (Chuck Missler, Personal Update, June 1995, p. 12)

Appendix C – Psalm 83

¹ Do not keep silent, O God!

Do not hold Your peace,

And do not be still, O God!

² For behold, Your enemies make a tumult;

And those who hate You have lifted up their head.

³ They have taken crafty counsel against Your people,

And consulted together against Your sheltered ones.

⁴ They have said, “Come, and let us cut them off from *being* a nation,

That the name of Israel may be remembered no more.”

⁵ For they have consulted together with one consent;

They form a confederacy against You:

⁶ The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites;

Moab and the Hagrites;

⁷ Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek;

Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre;

⁸ Assyria also has joined with them;

They have helped the children of Lot. Selah

⁹ Deal with them as *with* Midian,

As *with* Sisera,

As *with* Jabin at the Brook Kishon,

¹⁰ Who perished at En Dor,

Who became *as* refuse on the earth.

¹¹ Make their nobles like Oreb and like Zeeb,

Yes, all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna,

¹² Who said, “Let us take for ourselves

The pastures of God for a possession.”

¹³ O my God, make them like the whirling dust,

Like the chaff before the wind!

¹⁴ As the fire burns the woods,

And as the flame sets the mountains on fire,

¹⁵ So pursue them with Your tempest,

And frighten them with Your storm.

¹⁶ Fill their faces with shame,

That they may seek Your name, O LORD.

¹⁷ Let them be confounded and dismayed forever;

Yes, let them be put to shame and perish,

¹⁸ That they may know that You, whose name alone *is* the LORD,

Are the Most High over all the earth.