

2005 In Review

The Year In Prophecy

By Ron Graff

Prophecy Central

Solid Ground Brethren In Christ Church

This material is copyrighted, but may be reproduced, only if it is given in its entirety. Documentation, Scriptural references and illustrations may be found in the various sections of Prophecy Central, "A World of Information About Bible Prophecy."

www.Bible-prophecy.com

Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.

Introduction

The year 2005 has helped us see the obvious possibilities of fulfilled prophecy all around us. During the last couple of weeks of the year, we couldn't help noticing the common theme of the tabloid magazines: "The end of the world is near!" Even the History channel on cable TV called their last week of programming, "Armageddon Week," featuring documentaries on tsunamis, Hurricane Katrina, and other natural disasters, plus special features about "Antichrist" and "Nostradamus."

Our review this year begins with Jesus' own outline of future events. It is given as a guide to Bible prophecy, to help us determine what current events might be fulfillments of divine predictions. The second part of the review recounts some of the major developments of the year.

Part One: Outline of the Future

Jesus' major message on the future is found in Matthew chapters 24 and 25 and Luke chapter 21. According to His teaching, there are four phases of history still ahead of us:

1 - The Beginning of Birth Pains – Matthew 24:4-8; Luke 21:8-11

Whole books have been written about each of these periods of time. To express it very simply, The Beginning of Birth Pains is the time from the rebirth of Israel until the start of The Tribulation. Most popular prophecy scholars believe that the Rapture of the Church – the time when Christ returns for the Church – will take place just before the Tribulation. This can be shown in many ways, but especially by the fact that, in the Book of Revelation, where "church" is mentioned repeatedly in the first three chapters, it is not found at all in chapters 4 through 20, which encompasses the entire period of judgment. This time is representative of our current age. Among other things, it includes "Wars and Rumors of Wars," "Earthquakes," "Famines," "False Christs," "Pestilences," and "Terrors from the Heavens." In all of these cases there is an increase in the frequency,

magnitude, and/or significance of the events that will continue to escalate during the Tribulation.

2 - The Tribulation – Matthew 24:9-14; Luke 21:12-19

The Tribulation is the first part of a seven-year period of time marked by a peace treaty for Israel, brokered by Antichrist, the evil world leader who will emerge in the last days.

He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing [of the temple] he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him. Daniel 9:27

This peace treaty may well be the result of a great war against Israel, described in the Book of Ezekiel, chapters 38 and 39. And that war, apparently led by Russia and her allies, including much of the Muslim world, will take place during a period of false peace.

After many days you [Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal] will be called to arms. In future years you will invade a land that has recovered from war, whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate. They had been brought out from the nations, and now all of them live in safety. Ezekiel 38:8

The Apostle Paul also alludes to this time. When people say, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly (1 Thessalonians 5:3). Israel has not been at peace with most of its neighbors since the day it became a nation in 1948. The current escalation of hostilities with the Palestinians in the land is cause for great efforts to bring about peace there. When it does finally come, it could set the stage for this great war. It is also called the War of Gog and Magog, and is very different from the Battle of Armageddon at the end of the Tribulation. It is most likely the same as the war of the Second Seal, at the beginning of the Tribulation (Revelation 6:3-4). This would all fit, because Antichrist will be on the scene by then, having been introduced by the First Seal (Revelation 6:1-2) as a rider on a white horse.

The word "tribulation" is the Greek word *thlipsis*, found in Matthew 24: 9. It is translated "to be persecuted" in the New International Version. The church will be gone, but the many new believers in Christ will be persecuted and driven underground because of their unpopular belief. There will be a One-World Religion, including false Christians, who never gave their lives to Christ, but these new Christians will not associate with the universal religion or its false beliefs.

3 - The Great Tribulation – Matthew 24:15-28; Luke 21:20-27

The Great Tribulation is the second half of these seven years, which Jesus said starts with "the Abomination of Desolation," He characterized it as "great distress [*thlipsis*/"

tribulation], unequaled from the beginning of the world until now-and never to be equaled again.” This is the time when Antichrist will declare himself to be god, will set up an apparently living image of himself in the Temple, and institute the “Mark of the Beast” world economic dictatorship. Revelation 13 gives details of his activities during this time. At that point there will be a virtual One-World Government. This period is brought to an end by the glorious return of Christ – His second coming. He will destroy Antichrist’s forces at the Battle of Armageddon, which is described in Revelation 19:11-21.

4 - After the Tribulation – Matthew 24:29-31; Luke 21:28

When Christ returns, it will be as King of Kings, and Lord of Lords (Revelation 19:16). He will set up a righteous kingdom for one thousand years (Revelation 20:1-8), and after that, He will preside over the final judgments (Revelation 20:9-15), then usher in “a new heaven and a new earth.” (Revelation 21:1 and the rest of chapters 21 and 22).

Part Two: Prophecy-Related Developments of 2005

Wars and Rumors of War

As it has been for many years, there are many wars (more than 30 this year) raging in the world. Most of them are civil wars, and some are exceedingly brutal, with the objective of genocide, but the global news media largely ignores them. The more obvious wars are the world-wide War On Terrorism - including The Iraq War, The Israeli/Palestinian Conflict, the new and growing Cold War over Weapons of Mass Destruction, and, of greatest interest, the looming conflict with Iran over development of nuclear weapons.

The War on Terrorism

Terrorism is still very much with us, and is a global threat. It only takes an occasional sneak attack somewhere in the world to make people everywhere nervous about their own future. Terrorism is a perfect example for the Biblical expression “Rumors of War.” Osama bin Laden has still not been found, and his chief operative in Iraq, Musab al-Zarqawi, has also eluded capture.

Nearly simultaneous bombings in London’s subways in June resulted in over 50 deaths and more than 700 injuries. The attacks were conducted by British Muslims with origins in Pakistan. It was the first time that suicide bombers carried out attacks in Western Europe.

In November, unrest among poor Muslims in Paris suburbs led to many consecutive nights of rioting and looting.

The trial of Saddam Hussein is not going well, due to the inexperienced new justice system in Iraq.

Palestinians claimed “victory” when Israel accomplished their unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza strip, and now that area is a hotbed of terrorist activism, with Hamas and al Qaida gaining the upper hand over the Palestinian Authority and Mahmoud Abbas, the weak successor to Yasser Arafat.

The Iraq War

Depending on who is reporting the news, there is great progress toward democracy and stability in Iraq, or there is a gradual decline in the will to stand against the insurgents there. President Bush speaks forcefully about the need to finish the task, but there are growing numbers of anti-war protestors here in America, spurred on by liberal politicians who wish to discredit the Bush administration. Failure to accomplish a transition to a free and democratic Iraq would give terrorism a tremendous advantage.

The Israeli/Palestinian Conflict

It has been a tumultuous year in Israel. The whole world wants to see peace in The Holy Land, since the situation there is closely related to the War on Terrorism and the ambitions of militant Islamists everywhere. A long succession of attempted peace treaties have all failed, including “The Road Map,” brokered by The U.S., Russia, the U.N. and the E.U. Consequently, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has led his fragile government to a unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank. They have built a great security fence between the territories, and have left the Palestinians to their own control.

This has led to a take-over of the Palestinian territories by militant extremists, and has divided the people of Israel itself. Many Israelis accept the withdrawal as a necessary evil since there seems to be no other way to keep suicide bombers from entering their cities.

Others object to the withdrawal because it displaces Jewish settlers, and because it gives opportunity for the militants in the Palestinian areas to flourish. This has resulted in great civil unrest, and the dissolution of their government, the Knesset. The government is being rebuilt at this time, but Ariel Sharon has suffered a major stroke, and may not even survive. All of this has left the country in a weakened state.

Meanwhile, the United States is pressing more than ever to bring about the emergence of Palestine as a separate state. And the European Union may be in a position to replace the United States as the chief broker of peace in the Middle East because of America’s past support of Israel and the growing rift between the U.S. and the Islamic world over the War in Iraq.

Sir Jonathan Sacks, the U.K.’s Chief Rabbi says that there is a growing tsunami of anti-Semitism sweeping the globe, because people everywhere, weary of the threat of terrorism, blame the nation of Israel for their problems.

At the end of the year, movie giant Steven Spielberg, who is Jewish, released the film, “Munich,” which supposedly was his secret masterpiece. According to some reviews of the movie, even Spielberg seems to doubt the validity of the Jewish state.

The solution to this world-class enigma is still the acceptance of a brokered peace treaty between Israel and the Palestinians. Such a treaty will have to grant more Israeli territory, and some concessions about Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. When such a proposal is adopted it will lead only to a temporary peace there. As noted in part one of this report, The Bible teaches that when people say, *“Peace and safety,”* *destruction will come on them suddenly.* (1 Thessalonians 5:3)

Once that happens, prophecy watchers will turn their attention to the possibility of the great war of Ezekiel 38 and 39 described in the discussion of Russia that follows.

The New Cold War

Russia has reinvigorated the New Cold War with the successful test of their "hypersonic flying vehicle" a ballistic missile that is able to maneuver between space and the earth's atmosphere, changing course as it goes. This missile would be able to penetrate any missile defense system that the U.S. plans to build.

China, still a Communist nation, is experiencing incredible economic growth. They are also exerting their military muscle, accelerating the modernization of their military because they expect to have a conflict with the United States over Taiwan in the not-so-distant future. Janes' Military Intelligence says that the U.S. is vulnerable to an Electromagnetic Pulse Attack (EMP) delivered by China or other nations, in which a nuclear device would be exploded at high altitude, knocking out electrical power systems and all kinds of electronic devices. Such an attack would bring communications and transportation to a halt.

Iran preparing for nuclear war against Israel: Possibly Ezekiel's war of Gog and Magog

The most striking prophecy fulfilled in our generation is the rebirth of the nation of Israel in 1948. This had been predicted in great detail in Ezekiel, chapters 36 and 37. Israel is symbolized by the fig tree in Jesus' great message on the Mt. of Olives.

Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. Matthew 24:32-35

Ezekiel 38 and 39 continues the story of the future. It is extremely credible because of the detailed fulfillment of the previous two chapters in our generation. It predicts that a great northern power, Gog, will lead a war against Israel. For decades prophecy students have identified Russia as the most likely leader of this attack. The names of Gog's allies in those chapters may be identified by the migration of Noah's family members after the Flood (Genesis 10). Those allies include nations that are close to Russia today, and key Islamic nations, including Iran (Persia). The nature of the war is described in terms that would best fit a nuclear exchange.

Recent events in Iran bring this war into serious consideration. For a couple of years, Iran has been building a light-water nuclear reactor at Busheir, with great assistance from Russia. Israel, The United States, The United Nations, and the European Union have all strongly objected because of the likelihood that Iran intends to develop nuclear weapons. Iran supposedly halted their work for many months this year, but has now made it clear that they will continue to pursue their program. The recent election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as Iran's President has made matters worse. His extremist views and

inflammatory rhetoric have put the world on guard. He supports the common Iranian desire to “Wipe Israel off the map.” Both the U.S. and Israel have made strong statements that Iran must not be allowed to reach the point where it can produce nuclear weapons, and that point may only be a few months away now. Janes Intelligence Digest predicts that there is a growing likelihood of a preemptive strike against Iran in 2006 by the U.S., Israel, or both.

In response, Iran says any attack against them would prove disastrous to Israel because their country is close to Iran, and it is small. Some analysts have said that the detonation of just two nuclear weapons would destroy Israel.

When this future war takes place, God will intervene, making it short and disastrous for Israel’s enemies (Ezekiel 38:17-23). This war is probably the same as the one described by the opening of the second seal in Revelation 6. It could be the event that leads to a negotiated seven-year peace treaty between Antichrist and Israel. The Tribulation period will take place during these seven years.

The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.'

-- Daniel 9:26-27 (NIV)

Disasters – Weather, Earthquakes, Threat of Asteroids

Because of extreme natural disasters, even non-believers have been asking the question, “Is God angry with us?” The great magnitude 9.15 earthquake and tsunami that struck Indonesia in the last week of 2004, was responsible for unprecedented destruction. Generating waves as high as 90 feet, whole villages were washed away. The death toll rose steadily in the early weeks of 2005, well past the 200,000 mark. The effects of the event were felt all over the Earth, and people in 11 nations were killed.

A record-breaking hurricane season pounded the United States, and Hurricane Katrina caused unthinkable damage to the entire city of New Orleans, much of which was suddenly flooded by broken levees. It was our nation’s greatest natural disaster.

Later in the year there was another major earthquake, this time near the Pakistan/Kashmir border. The earthquake, measuring 7.6 magnitude killed more than 87,000 people and left about 4 million people homeless at the start of the bitter winter season. Actually, overall earthquake activity was down a little in 2005. Some believe seismic activity is on the rise, while others show that it is fairly static. In any case, these very large quakes demonstrate the validity of the Scriptural prophecy about a very great earthquake. According to Revelation 6:14; 16:18-20, this intense earthquake will occur as part of the Battle of Armageddon at the end of the Tribulation period. During this upheaval every mountain will be shaken down and every island will sink.

There is growing concern about the possibility that an asteroid could impact the Earth with disastrous results. In recent years there have been incredible discoveries about our solar system. We have many previously-unknown planet-like objects and thousands of Near Earth Asteroids (NEAs). It is likely that some of these asteroids will eventually collide with the Earth. Toward the end of the year, NASA scientists, who have been monitoring one of these objects, which they have named Apophis, said that there was a 1 in 37 chance that this 400-meter asteroid will impact the earth in 2029. Such an event would cause a global catastrophe. They are asking governments to make plans now to change the orbit of the asteroid.

These disasters serve to remind us that all of these events will be much worse during the Tribulation period. Earthquakes, storms, and collisions by asteroids are all predicted for these last days.

Other Developments

Preparing for the Mark of the Beast

In Daniel 12:4 we read that in the last days knowledge will increase, and people will run back and forth. This is undoubtedly a reference to the information explosion and the use of the Internet in our generation. The technology that makes this knowledge possible may also be used to link buyers and sellers everywhere, all over the world in electronic commerce. This will make it possible for the prediction about Antichrist's dictatorial control of world commerce. According to Revelation 13:16-18, in the middle of the Tribulation period, he will require everyone to receive his mark in their right hand or forehead. Anyone who refuses will not be permitted to buy or sell. Today's supercomputers, Internet, satellites, wireless technologies, smart cards, and radio-frequency identification tags (RFID) make it possible to track every individual, and exert control over who is permitted to buy and sell. RFIDs may be printed on paper, embedded in credit cards, or even implanted in people. VeriChip is a RFID capsule that is injected into humans. Last March the VeriChip company received the prestigious "Well-Tech Award" for helping medical patients by conveying vital personal information and recent medical history.

Security compromises

Because of the need for added security in this age of terrorism, people are much more willing to use these identification devices. They will give up some level of personal privacy for the additional security and convenience they receive in the process. People are also more willing to allow laws, like our Patriot Act, that could be used to spy on them in order to insure that there is greater information about terrorists in our midst.

Continued Expansion of the European Union and its influence

The European Union continues to be the prime contender for Daniel's ancient prophecies about a final world government before the establishment of Messiah's reign on Earth (Daniel 2:36-45; 9:24-27).

According to Daniel's prophecies, The Antichrist will come from a final form of the old Roman Empire, one that is partly iron, like the old empire, and partly clay. As The European Union rises to challenge the U.S. for world dominance, it fits this picture perfectly.

Plagues/Avian Bird Flu

Plagues, mentioned by Jesus as one of the signs of this age, become a major cause of death during the Tribulation.

When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

- Revelation 6:7-8 (NIV)

Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt said the likelihood of a flu pandemic in the future is "very high." The Avian Bird Flu, which has killed millions of birds in Asia, is not yet transmitted from human to human, but there is serious concern that the virus could mutate and become capable of spreading among humans. The World Health Organization (WHO) says that if this strain crosses over and becomes transferable from human to human. It could claim the lives of 2 to 7 million people.

American Apostasy and Revival

This has been a year of attacks by the ACLU against the use of the word "God" in the Pledge of Allegiance and on our coins. Apostasy, or the "falling away" of the Church (1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:1-9) is still a problem, but there are also encouraging signs for believers.

World missions are growing rapidly, with thousands of people coming to know Christ every day, especially in emerging countries where Christianity has not been strong in the past. In addition, there is good reason to believe that there is a kind of revival brewing here in the United States. The recent success of *Narnia: The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*, with its strong Christian content, is a good sign that there is still plenty of interest in spiritual things. Toward the end of the year we experienced "Holiday Wars," with stores dropping the word "Christmas," even for their trees. Christians reacted strongly against this further secularization of Christmas, and most stores changed their advertising to win back offended customers.

The confirmation of Chief Justice John Roberts and the upcoming confirmation hearings for Judge Samuel Alito for the other opening on the Supreme Court are encouragements to Bible-believing Christians who would like to see a stop to so-called “legislation from the bench,” as in the case of Roe versus Wade, where the courts basically established new law by their decision instead of interpreting existing law.

Sometimes people ask why God would send revival in the last days. The Bible shows that He always gave believers a chance to repent, and he often allowed the worst of pagans that opportunity to repent as well, such as the story of Nineveh in Jonah’s time.

Jesus taught that even during the Tribulation period the Gospel will be given to all nations before the end comes (Matthew 24:11-14). There will be both extremes at the end, but as the darkness becomes more intense, the light will seem all the brighter.

CONCLUSION

In all, it was another eventful year, bringing us one step closer to that glorious day when Jesus Christ will return for His own (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Let us continue to live holy and godly lives as we look forward to His coming! (1 Peter 3:11-12).