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Keeping Time On God's Prophetic Clock

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The Prophecies of Revelation

by Noah W. Hutchings

The theme of Revelation is presented in chapter one, verse seven: “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.”

The Book of Revelation, therefore, is about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The human recorder, the Author, and the reason for the book is revealed in the first three verses: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand” (Rev. 1:1-3). Jesus Christ is the Author of this book. An angel was the messenger, and the apostle John is the recorder.

The theme of the Apocalypse is found in chapter 11:18-19: “And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth. And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.”

Jesus warned of the coming world destruction in the last days: “Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory” (Luke 21:26-27).

For the first time in the history of the world the nations have the nuclear power to destroy this entire earth. Forty nations now have atomic weapons. The clear message of Revelation is that unless God intervenes and Jesus returns, there will be no hope for this world. Therefore, Jesus is not coming back to destroy

the world, but to destroy those who would destroy the world. Those in a time of great fear, which is now gripping the minds of men, will be blessed to know that God is not going to let evil men destroy the world. And, the Second Coming of Jesus is that only hope: **“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our saviour Jesus Christ”** (Titus 2:13).

In the four gospels we find 12 disciples, 70 witnesses, 1,600 furlongs, 153 fish, 6 waterpots, 5 porches, etc. The early church fathers taught that the biblical patterns of numerics—consistently carried through the kingdom promise books from Genesis to Revelation by forty writers over a period of 1,600 years—proved that only a higher intelligence could have directed them. After Israel crucified the Messiah, numbering stopped; however, the kingdom offer was left open on a conditional or tentative basis—**if Israel will repent and call out to God to send Jesus back, he will come back** (Acts 3:13-21). In this conditional kingdom promise period under the preaching of Peter, James, and John, there was only approximate numbering—“about an hundred and twenty” (Acts 1:15); “about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41), etc. In the epistles to the churches, all numbering disappears because only God knows who is really saved by faith in Jesus Christ. However, when we get to Revelation everything is again numbered: seven churches, four beasts, seven vials, seven seals, seven trumpets, 144,000 witnesses, 24 elders, and even the exact dimensions of the New Jerusalem are given, etc. This is supporting evidence that the church will not be in that period of desolation that is described in the Bible as the coming Great Tribulation, the time of judgment prophesied in the Revelation.

The prophet Daniel wrote that at the time God would deliver His people (Israel) and fulfill His covenant promises there would be a “time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation” (Dan. 12:1).

The judgments against Israel in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple was only against this one nation. The judgments

of the Great Tribulation will affect every nation. This is what most of this book of prophecy is about.

The Rapture of the Church

In the Old Testament, resurrection of the lost and the saved is placed at, or after, the Great Tribulation, the 70th prophetic week of Daniel: "... some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12:2).

In the epistles to the churches in the New Testament, the saved who have died prior to the return of Jesus Christ will be raised with a new body in order: "But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (1 Cor. 15:23). Old Testament saints, including the saved of Israel under the Law, will be raised at the end of the Tribulation and the beginning of the Millennium (Job 19:25-27; Ezek. 37:12-13; Rev. 20:4-5).

The promise to the members of Christ's church (every person born again by faith in Him during the dispensation of grace) is a heavenly kingdom (John 14:2-3; Eph. 3:1-12). The promise to Israel is an earthly kingdom (Ezek. 40-48; Amos 9:11-15). The question arises as to the order of resurrection of all Christians, dead or alive, when the Lord Jesus Christ returns.

1. The messages to the churches end with Revelation 3. In the first verse of chapter four, John is commanded by a voice like a trumpet to rise up to heaven. The church is not mentioned again until Revelation 22:16, indicating it is not on earth during the Great Tribulation. The Christians who have died before this event are raised in a glorified body; those Christians alive will receive a sudden change into a glorified body, and all will rise to meet Jesus Christ in the air (1 Thess. 4:13-18).
2. Many call the translation of the entire body of Christ (all Christians) the "Rapture." The word *rapere* in the Latin text means to be caught up with joy. The trumpet that John heard calling him to heaven is the trumpet of 1 Cor. 15:52, not the last trumpet of Revelation which signals judgment, not joy.
3. After the description of the Rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul stated concerning the unsaved in the coming "day of the Lord," that "they shall not escape." If the unsaved are not going to escape, then someone is going to escape—Christians who are on earth at that time!
4. The biblical account of the translation of the church indicates only Christians are involved. It is a sudden and silent event. In the literal return of Jesus Christ to this earth, the scriptures indicate that "every eye shall see him," including Israel. He will also come as the lightning—visibly (Matt. 24:27)—with the angels of heaven to destroy the armies of Antichrist and those who obey not the gospel (2 Thess. 1:8). The "Rapture" of the Church at the beginning of the Tribula-

tion, and the Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation are obviously two separate events.

5. The apostle Peter verified the gospel of grace that God gave Paul and the mystery of the church, including the Rapture (2 Pet. 3:15-16). Peter declared that just as God delivered Noah from the flood, and Lot from the judgment of Sodom, He is able to deliver Christians from the judgment of Tribulation (2 Pet. 2:4-9).

There are many other reasons why Christians will not go through the Tribulation, but these should be sufficient to encourage Christians to be ready for the Lord's coming in the air instead of watching for the Antichrist and the Mark of the Beast.

Opening the Seven-Sealed Book

The prophet Daniel foretold that the age would end with a "time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation" (Dan. 12:1). Then, Daniel was instructed, "shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the time of the end" (Dan. 12:4). The unsealing of the seven-sealed books reveals the catastrophic judgments that will come upon the world during this time of trouble, the Great Tribulation.

Breaking of Seal #1: A king with a crown comes riding upon a white horse with no arrows for his bow. Kings traditionally rode white horses. No armaments indicate this king will promise peace on earth. This person is the Antichrist who will confirm a Middle East peace treaty with Israel (Dan. 9:27). Such a peace plan precedes sudden world destruction (1 Thess. 1:1-3); the Antichrist "by peace shall destroy many" (Dan. 8:25).

Breaking of Seal #2: After a brief period of world peace, worldwide war begins. The rider of the red horse signals international bloodshed. Daniel wrote of the reign of the Antichrist: "... unto the end of the war desolations are determined" (Daniel 9:26).

Breaking of Seal #3: As the third seal is broken, a rider appears on a black horse. A pronouncement follows warning of famine and pandemic diseases. Jesus said there would be famines and pestilences (diseases) in divers (many) places (Matt. 24:7).

Breaking of Seal #4: The breaking of this seal releases a rider on a pale horse bringing death to those who have rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ and are destined for hell. Even nature, including the animal kingdoms, rebel against the iniquity that fills the earth (Rom. 8:19-23; 2 Thess. 2:7-9).

Breaking of Seal #5: As the blood of the first martyr, Abel, cried out to God (Gen. 4:10), the souls of those who refused to take the Mark of the Beast and were killed for their faith in God during the Tribulation, cry out to God for vengeance (Rev. 13:7-8; 20:4).

Breaking of Seal #6: The opening of the sixth seal results in a solar judgment to come near the end of the Great Tribula-

tion. The sun is to become seven times hotter and brighter. The moon reflects the light of the sun, so the moon becomes as hot as the sun. Then after a period of time as the light from the sun dims, the moon becomes as blood, and then darkness (Isa. 30:26; Joel 2:10, 30-31; Matt. 24:29; Rev. 16:8-9). When a nova of a medium-sized star like our sun occurs, it becomes bright and hot for a period of seven to fourteen days; the atoms are stripped of their shells, and it implodes to a fraction of its original size where gravity is so intense even light cannot escape. When this happens during the Tribulation, everyone will realize that there is a God and that His judgment is at hand.

Breaking of Seal #7: With the breaking of the seventh seal, seven angelic trumpeters appear. As each trumpet sounds, the resulting actions will implement the judgments announced in the opening of the previous six seals.

Judgments of the Seven Trumpets

In chapter eight, with the opening of the seventh and last seal, seven angelic trumpeters in numeric sequence sound for the judgments of justice and vengeance to begin. First, the prayers of the martyrs are presented to God (Rev. 8:4), and there is silence in heaven for about one-half hour. It is as if the entire angelic host of heaven is stunned at what is going to occur on earth. Or, perhaps God is holding back judgment until the last minute, waiting for just one more soul to be saved. As the prayers of the martyrs are cast down to earth, there are resulting lightnings, earthquakes, and voices of the masses wondering what is going to happen. Then the seven angels begin to sound the trumpets.

Sounding of the First Trumpet: Blood, fire, and hail are mixed in a holocaust that will kill millions and destroy one-third of the trees and all the green grass.

Sounding of the Second Trumpet: As the second trumpet sounds, the judgments that ravage the world's population centers occur also upon the oceans, killing one-third of all marine life and sinking one-third of the ships on the oceans and seas.

Sounding of the Third Trumpet: This judgment is as a great star burning like a lamp, poisoning one-third of the earth's fresh water rivers and lakes. This could be the aftermath of an asteroid, or it could be the result of terrorist activities. The greater possibility is nuclear fallout from atomic warfare.

Sounding of the Fourth Trumpet: With the sounding of the fourth trumpet, one-third of the light of the sun and the moon will be extinguished, and the darkness of the night will be increased approximately four hours a day.

Sounding of the Fifth Trumpet (The First Woe): As the fifth trumpet is blown, the bottomless pit, the abode where fallen angels and the damned waiting judgment are confined, is opened by a star (angel) that has fallen from heaven. The "falling star" is probably Satan, shown as being cast down to the earth in Revelation 12:9-10. The bottomless pit is opened. Demonic creatures

emerge and sting and torture everyone who does not have the seal of God in their forehead (the 144,000).

Sounding of the Sixth Trumpet (The Second Woe): Four angels that are bound in the River Euphrates, the demarcation line between the oriental and occidental worlds, are let loose. These must be Satan's angels, else they would not be bound.

Sounding of the Seventh Trumpet (The Third Woe): With the sounding of the seventh trumpet, because those on earth continue to worship the Antichrist and fail to give God the glory, seven angels appear with seven vials containing the wrath of God. When the seven vials of wrath are all poured upon the world, those left alive will see Jesus Christ coming with armies of angels to bring in His kingdom from heaven.

The Antichrist

Chapter thirteen of the Apocalypse presents the roles played by two prominent characters in the Tribulation drama. The early church leaders believed the Antichrist and the False Prophet to be evil, satanic, incarnate individuals who would desolate the entire earth just prior to the return of Jesus Christ. A few facts about the coming Antichrist:

1. As the rider on the white horse, he will be a world politician without his own army.
2. He will have sufficient international military backing to promise Israel secure borders and safety (Dan. 9:27; 1 Thess. 5:2-3).
3. He will gain popularity and power in the Revived Roman Empire (Dan. 9:26; Rev. 17:9-12).
4. He will change times and laws (Dan. 7:25). The EU is considering changing B.C. and A.D. to a Common Era calendar.
5. He will experience opposition in the first three and one-half years from the two witnesses (Rev. 11).
6. He will stand in the Temple on Mt. Moriah, stop the sacrificial worship service of the Jews, and declare himself to be the messiah and christ (Dan. 9:27; 2 Thess. 1:3-4).
7. He will demand under penalty of beheading that everyone in the world worship him as God (Rev. 13:7-8).
8. In the last half of the Tribulation, opposition develops and entire nations will be made desolate, evidently from nuclear warfare. The abomination is his claiming to be God in the temple; the desolation follows (Dan. 12:1, 11; Ezek. 29:10-12; 30:1-8; Matt. 24:15-22).
9. A world religious leader, claiming to represent Jesus Christ but leading all the unsaved world to worship the Antichrist, will do great miracles and present the false Christ for all nations to worship (Rev. 13: 11-15).
10. The religious system under the false prophet will assign a mark and/or number to everyone who worships the Antichrist as God. All who do not have this mark (perhaps

a computer chip) or number will be beheaded when caught (Rev. 13:16-18; 14:9-10; 20:4).

11. The armies of Antichrist will be destroyed when they fight against the Lord Jesus Christ as He returns in all His power with the armies of heaven.
12. The Antichrist and the False Prophet will be cast alive into the lake of fire. Their judgment is predetermined, indicating they could be evil men who have lived before. Antichrist is called “son of perdition,” and so was Judas so identified by Jesus (John 17:12; 2 Thess. 2:3).

Is the Antichrist in the world today? The prophetic signs of our time indicate that he could be, but his identity will not be revealed until the Tribulation.

God’s Seven Vials of Wrath

Revelation 14 describes the Rapture, or translation, of the 144,000 Jewish witnesses before God pours out His seven vials of wrath in the last half of the Tribulation. God issues His final invitation to those on earth to be saved.

In chapter fifteen the seventh trumpet has sounded and one of the four watchers hands seven bowls containing the wrath of God, one to each of the seven trumpet angels.

Pouring Out of the First Bowl—Rev. 16:1-2: All who have taken the Mark of the Beast suffer a noisome (Gr. *kakos*—evil) and painful infection.

Pouring Out of the Second Bowl—Rev. 16:3: The remaining two-thirds of the oceans are contaminated, and the remaining two-thirds of marine life in the oceans are killed.

Pouring Out of the Third Bowl—Rev. 16:3: The remaining two-thirds of the fresh water lakes and rivers are contaminated (become as blood), leaving no water to use for drinking, bathing, or toilet purposes.

Pouring Out of the Fourth Bowl—Rev. 16:4-7: The judgment of the sun announced by the fourth trumpet is now completed, and yet there is no repentance on earth.

Pouring Out of the Fifth Bowl—Rev. 16:10-11: As the sun implodes from what seems to be a nova, the world naturally is thrown into darkness.

Pouring Out of the Sixth Bowl—Rev. 16:12-16: The warning of the sixth trumpet is now complete as the sixth bowl of wrath is poured out. The Euphrates River is dried up.

Pouring Out of the Seventh Bowl—Rev. 16:17-21: The first six bowls are poured upon specific objects or locations. The seventh bowl is poured out into the air (atmosphere). An earthquake with the emptying of the seventh bowl will be felt worldwide; even islands will disappear and one hundred-pound hailstones will fall on those still alive. The only hailstones of this size reported are the ice chunks that have fallen out of atomic clouds.

The Second Coming

“Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen” (Rev. 1:7).

The purpose of this last book of the Bible is to reveal Jesus Christ, who came as a sacrificial Lamb the first time, as **King of kings and Lord of lords** at His Second Coming. Even in Jesus’ personal absence from the earth, the world has continued by our calendar dating system to acknowledge, knowingly or unknowingly, that He is alive and the Supreme Ruler of this planet.

In the chronology of events related to the Second Coming, Jesus Christ will next go to Bozrah (just north of Petra) and lead the remnant of Israel that has been protected by God for three and one-half years back to Jerusalem (Isa. 63:1-6; Ps. 60:1, 9-12).

While it is clear from Scripture that the Tribulation will end after seven years, and the last half (called the Great Tribulation) will end after 42 months (1,260 days), there is to be an extension period of 75 days (Dan. 12:12). The first 30 days will be, evidently, taken up with the regathering of the faithful Israel from the rest of the nations, followed by the resurrection of the Tribulation martyrs and those saved prior to the Church Age. The next 45 days will evidently be taken up with judging both Jews and gentiles who are not worthy to go into the Millennium (Matt. 7:21-23; 13:47-50; Rev. 14:9-10).

For the next thousand years Jesus Christ will reign on the throne of David from Jerusalem and rule with absolute authority over the nations of the world that are left (Rev. 2:27; 12:5; 19:15).

There are several events of major importance that are to occur in the Tribulation that were impossible to present in this brief outline study. The important truth for each reader is to know that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is the Blessed Hope of this world (Titus 2:13). As we look upon the world today, if Jesus Christ did not come back, there would be no hope. And, if the reader does not know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, then he or she has no hope beyond the certainty of death.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved.

—John 3:16-17

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