

## What's Next in God's Prophetic Plan?

### ***Introduction***

Now that God has fulfilled the prophecy of Ezekiel 38 and 39, the nation of Israel will be central to exciting developments that will continue to fulfill prophecy. And, yes, these events are leading us to the final days of mankind on planet earth. I know that's a very bold statement, but who would have believed the fulfillment of Ezekiel 38 and 39? Make no mistake, the final few years for Jesus' disciples are now plainly in view.

In God's plan to fulfill prophecy, he is going to gather the Jewish people to the land of Israel and pour out his spirit on them. Ezekiel chapters 40 and beyond tell us of the new lands Israel will inherit, the assignment of the land to the original 12 tribes of Israel and of construction of the new temple in Jerusalem on the temple mount.

In fact, chapters 40-43 of Ezekiel, give detailed instructions on how to rebuild what is the third Jewish temple on the temple mount in Jerusalem. Of course, this temple is extremely important to the final days of human history, as we'll discuss in a moment.

God has given us incredible amounts of prophecy to tell us what he's going to accomplish next.

I've mentioned a few of them:

- God pouring out his Spirit on the Jewish people (Ezekiel 39:29)
- The construction of the third temple in Jerusalem on the temple mount (Ezekiel 40-44)
- God's Glory seen entering the temple to take up residence (Ezekiel 43)
- The restart of sacrifices in the temple and the temple rituals (Ezekiel 46)
- Gathering of Jews to Israel and new lands for the 12 Jewish tribes (Ezekiel 48)

### ***Israel Now Loved by The World***

Now that Israel is exalted in the world's eyes because of God's protection from the invading enemies, all nations will come to her aid. Of course, that normally means a peace treaty! We are looking for the seven-year, "covenant" the nations will sign with Israel. The world will rush to Israel's aid economically, militarily, diplomatically, spiritually and every other way.

This seven-year agreement is prophesized by Daniel:

*"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 at 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

Notice the reference to sacrifices and grain offerings in the temple. These are not just ordinary ritual sacrifices, but the actual practice of temple priests performing sacrifices in God's temple on the temple mount in Jerusalem. This has not been seen in 2,000 years.

While scripture gives no specific time for the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy, we can clearly read the necessity for God's temple to be in existence for its accomplishment. Of course, there has been no temple in Jerusalem for 2,000 years, since the previous temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. Now that the construction of the third temple in Jerusalem is imminent, we have a major piece of the prophetic puzzle in place.

Therefore, we should be looking for this seven-year covenant in the near future. The fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy of a seven-year covenant, along with plans for construction of God's temple in Jerusalem are **gigantic** markers for us as we watch for the return of Jesus.

### ***But, What About the Rapture?***

Now, the big question you might be wondering: when is the rapture?

Please hear me: *there are clear scriptural prerequisites to the rapture.* Anyone who teaches otherwise is just not reading the bible clearly!

Many pastors, teachers and others have developed a term called the "Doctrine of Imminence" prior to the fulfillment of Ezekiel 38/39. The basic premise of this "doctrine" is that the rapture could happen at any second. My hope is that those folks will re-evaluate their teaching based on the fulfillment of Ezekiel. This is biblically inaccurate and not found in scripture. I pray it is now put to rest.

Let me show you why. In Matthew 24:15-16, Jesus says this: pay attention to Daniel's prophecy of the anti-christ (the abomination of desolation) entering the Temple at the 3 ½ year mark of the seven-year covenant.

*<sup>15</sup> "Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place—let the reader understand— <sup>16</sup> then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. Matthew 24:15-16*

Jesus in referring to Daniel 9:27, which we covered above. Jesus is not only confirming the importance of the seven-year covenant, he is adding a strong warning with it. Why is he adding a warning for those in "Judea" (Israel) to flee to the mountains when the abomination of desolation enters the "holy place", the temple?

Because at the mid-point of the seven-year agreement, when the anti-christ enters the re-built temple of God, Jesus will return for his disciples and gather them to himself for all eternity. This is the famed rapture of the church! And, for those remaining on earth after the rapture, they will now endure the great tribulation as described in the book of Revelation. Jesus himself said it will be a time of tribulation like no other. I don't have enough negative adjectives to describe the pure agony that awaits those not raptured to heaven with Jesus.

The Apostle Paul confirms this entry of the anti-Christ into the Temple at the 3 ½ year mark also:

*2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, [the rapture] we ask you, brothers and sisters, <sup>2</sup> not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us—whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter—asserting that the day of the Lord has already come. <sup>3</sup> **Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. <sup>4</sup> He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.***

Daniel 9:27, Matthew 24:15 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 all refer to the same event: the breaking of the seven-year covenant by the anti-christ at the 3 ½ year point by entering the holy of holies in the temple of God, In Jerusalem. That day is the day when only the followers of Jesus (“brothers and sisters”) will be raptured. Paul confirms, “that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed”.

Jesus says this about the rapture: Matt 24:37-41

*<sup>37</sup> As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; <sup>39</sup> and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>40</sup> Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. <sup>41</sup> Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.*

Notice the scene: eating and drinking, marrying, men working in the field, women grinding...all refer to normal life. Verses 40 and 41 clearly describe the rapture scene, “one will be taken and the other left”. Therefore, we can expect the first 3 ½ years of the seven-year covenant period to be peaceful and normal. And we can expect the rapture when the anti-christ enters the Temple to proclaim himself to be God.

### ***What about the seven-year tribulation?***

Some quite mistakenly say the length of the great tribulation is seven years long. But, nowhere in the bible is there evidence for a seven-year tribulation. I believe many have taken Daniel's seven-year covenant and assumed that the tribulation was to start at the beginning of that period. Historically, many Christian leaders have taken this view, so it is very widely taught. But, as we can see above, with overwhelming scriptural evidence, the great tribulation begins at the mid-point of the seven-year covenant.

The book of Revelation also makes four references to periods of time during the great tribulation period that indicate the tribulation will last three and one-half years. All of the following verses refer to events that are occurring during the great tribulation:

1. *But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months. Revelation 11:2*
2. *And I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth. <sup>4</sup>They are “the two olive trees” and the two lampstands, and “they stand before the Lord of the earth.” Revelation 11:3-4*
3. *She gave birth to a son, a male child, who “will rule all the nations with an iron scepter.” And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. <sup>6</sup>The woman fled into the wilderness to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days. Revelation 12:5-6*
4. *The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the wilderness, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent’s reach. Revelation 12:14*

All four of these verses refer to time periods of three and one-half years. There are no other references to time periods such as these in the book of Revelation. So, the indication, is this: the Great Tribulation begins at the 3 ½ year point of Daniel’s seven-year covenant. And according to Revelation, the Great Tribulation will last for 3 ½ years.

### **Let’s Review:**

Ok, lets’ recap the prerequisites to the rapture as described in Scripture:

1. God’s holy temple, on the temple mount in Jerusalem, must be reconstructed and fully functioning with the priestly rituals, offerings and sacrifices
2. The seven-year covenant with “the many” – referring to the nations that will support Israel must be finalized
3. Only then will we eventually see the “abomination that causes desolation” which is the entry of the anti-Christ into the Holy of Holies of the temple (where the Glory of God resides).

### **The Day and the Hour**

*<sup>32</sup> “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. <sup>33</sup> Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. <sup>34</sup> Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. <sup>35</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. <sup>36</sup> “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Matthew 24:32-36*

This is a critical teaching from Jesus. He tells us to be on the lookout for “all these things”, because when we see them, we will know he is “near, right at the door”. We know from Jesus’ own teaching the specific events leading up to the actual rapture of the church. Is there any

question the rapture is at the mid-point of the seven-year agreement? Scripture is very clear in this regard, so we cannot ignore it, or explain it away.

Yet many, many people have taken Matthew 24:36 and interpreted it in such a way as to effectively “negate” all the hard evidence scripture presents regarding these end time events. Jesus said all his words will come to pass in verse 35. The new temple, the seven-year agreement, the abomination of desolation at the midpoint of the covenant, are all factual events we are to be looking for, based on Jesus’ prophesies. Have we misinterpreted Matthew 24:36?

### *All Scripture is Inspired*

We all know that scripture is without error. And, the scriptures are not in conflict. In verses 32 through 35, he tells us that the people alive when these events are fulfilled will see the events coming. Then in verse 36, he says, don’t try to understand the day or hour when they will occur. Is there conflict here? Can we ignore or negate or brush off all the very clear teaching about the events leading up to the rapture, because Jesus says we don’t know the day or hour? Of course, we cannot.

My thought is this: know ALL the words of our Lord Jesus well. Be alert for the events of his coming, as he has laid out for us. That is, *know the scriptural signs of his coming, not what man predicts or says*. This includes teachings such as the “Doctrine of Imminence”. But, as many of us know, some have tried to actually predict the time and events of Jesus’ coming. Many books and blogs and shows have been presented attempting to predict when the end times will occur. Some of which have tried to do what Jesus asked them not to do: predict when, and the circumstances under which they will happen.

### *Rapture Fatigue*

In fact, there is a phenomenon among Christians called “rapture fatigue” because so many have discussed it and written about it, people are tired of hearing about it. “Are you pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation or post-tribulation in your belief?” is a common question among believers about the timing of the rapture. Ugh, I’m tired of hearing it too!

Here’s some interesting context: these words of the bible have been in existence for almost 2,000 years. Of course, throughout the centuries, humans have tried to speculate and scheme and even tried to profit from predicting the future. Jesus warns us not to do this at all. But, when the signs of his appearing do *actually start to appear* in the very last days, he himself says “... you know that it is near, right at the door.”

### *“When you see all these things”*

For those people **who are alive** when the events predicted by Jesus actually come into place, he tells them, and them only, that **they will see all these things**. They will know he is very near and that his words are coming to fruition. That means that upon the signing of the seven-year

agreement, we will absolutely know that we have three and one-half years remaining on planet earth. Jesus says we will see it! And at that point, yes, He will be right at the door!! Until those events occur, don't waste your effort speculating on times and dates, but look to the Word expectantly and patiently waiting on Jesus' perfect timing.

### **How Do We Live Now?**

God has stepped into history for a reason – to bring an end to sin and evil and gather his children to our eternal home – while sobering, we should also rejoice, we are his children and we are under his covenant of protection.

- Our day of glorification is very near! Paradise is near! Jesus is near!
  - This world was always coming to a conclusion – we are blessed that it is in our generation. Now is the time to face this in your heart!
  - Learn to live in the promise of your eternal inheritance – the love of Jesus in person, the beautiful city of New Jerusalem, the room prepared for you, life never ending, the joyful atmosphere that is heaven. All this is coming near!
  - Reset all your earthly ambitions, priorities and goals and be heavenly focused:
    - *Matt 6:19 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*
- Until Jesus returns, this is his command:
  - Love the lord your God with all you heart, mind, soul and strength
    - Authenticity in our faith will be required more than ever
    - Be a godly example of a loving, spirit filled Christian
  - Love your neighbor as yourself
    - Authenticity is what a frightened world wants to see – you have the hope of eternity in you, let the world see and know there is hope
    - Be bold in your faith – NOW is the time; go and make disciples, leave it all on the field: risk your “reputation”, your everything for Jesus: GO and make disciples
    - You are alive in these times for a reason – be thankful he has shared his revelation with you so you can be his ambassador
  - Live a Spiritually disciplined life
    - Don't let your emotions overwhelm you – find peace in prayer and let the Holy Spirit dwell in you fully
    - Be in the Word and prayer like never before
    - Beware of false teachers, get rich preachers, those selling secrets or false hope and trying to capitalize off fear and trembling

### ***Jesus' Word to Us as We Draw Near to the End***

Jesus commands us to be faithfully doing all good things until the last day: love the Lord, make disciples, go to work, love your fellow man, have children, love your family, do all the normal things! But, also but have a new, wonderful sense of urgency that the Kingdom of God is very near.

In Matthew 24, Jesus is preparing us for the rapture of his Church and the great tribulation to follow. As we see these things happening, he has a command for us to follow. Here is what he says specifically to us that are alive during these very last days:

***“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? <sup>46</sup> It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. <sup>47</sup> Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. Matt 24:45-47***