

END TIME BIBLE PROPHECY FOR BEGINNERS

*A collection of essays on Premillennial
Eschatology*

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Introduction: Why Study Eschatology?

David J. Nixon

"The End Times"...you may hear this phrase and have a variety of reactions - the ones I would encourage you to have are "joy" and "hope". I base this on the description of this event given to us by Paul in God's Word, The Bible. Paul says that the news regarding the End Times is the "blessed hope" with which we are to encourage and build up one another:

"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you." (Titus 2:11-15)

Whatever else comes to your mind when you see the phrase "The End Times", the Lord intends us as Believers to respond in a positive attitude and for this to be something taught in the churches to encourage each other and indeed exhort us on to live the Christian life. I go one further, and suggest to you that a knowledge of the End Times also exhorts us for evangelism while we still can. If we know Jesus is coming back soon then we are left with a massive task of seeing that all our friends, loved ones and even those people we have never met around the world hear the Good News of Jesus Christ. Indeed, also useful is the fact that as the thousands of years old prophecies of scripture come to life and play themselves out on the world stage we have an incredible opportunity to draw peoples' attention to the predictive prophecy and divine self-proving element of a Book that so many dismiss too quickly. Furthermore, it is this call to evangelism and defending of Biblical truth that Peter attributes the Lord's tarrying so far in history because He still awaits more to be saved (2 Peter 3:3-10) - this is his answer to those who mock him for teaching Christ's imminent return and should be our model today also!

Jesus Himself told us signs that would draw our attention to His imminent return as an encouragement: "But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." He expected us to be out looking for His return with joy because this is the culmination of the Good News: Christ's return and our uniting to Him for all eternity.

Even all of Creation is longing for the Lord's return, as Paul writes and he connects it also to our inward hope for the Lord's return and our bodily resurrection: For we know that all the rest of creation has been groaning with the pains of childbirth up to the present time. However, not only the creation, but we who have the first fruits of the Spirit also groan inwardly as we eagerly await our adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For we were saved with this hope in mind. Now a hope that can be observed is not really hope, for who hopes for what can be seen?" (Romans 8:22-24). When the Lord returns He will eventually create a New Heaven and a New Earth, free from the curse of sin that has plagued so much of its existence.

These are just some of the things to think about as you look at the End Times articles collected in this booklet. Far too often this context for the End Times is lost and it becomes a battleground of speculations; for these reasons the church today has largely turned its back on the black sheep of eschatology. It saddens me that a scholar on this topic came to my church and was greeted with disappointment when he told them he was going to talk on these things - where is their blessed hope? Do not sell yourself short, do not reject the hope the Lord has for you in this dark and wicked age, accept the blessing that He has promised to those who study these things (Revelation 1:3)

The Lord is returning, that is for sure, the details of it are contained in scripture. Let this be our scriptural model of interpreting Bible prophecy: we will determine the scriptural foundations and let those scriptures interpret events happening around us - not the other around! The scriptures foretold the rebirth of Israel and the recommencement of God's redemptive plan for that nation in the Final Days (the culmination of the End Times which have lasted from Christ's Ascension to now). That rebirth waited almost 2000 years but has happened now and so much more is taking place which seems to be lining up to fulfil Biblical prophecy, you can learn more now - may the Lord bless you as He has indeed promised!

Timeline of the Tribulation

David J. Nixon

The following is an attempt to set down the major events surrounding the 70th Week of Daniel, which many people commonly refer to as the “Tribulation Period”. The Lord Jesus only spoke of a 3.5 year Great Tribulation so our conception of a 7 year Tribulation Period comes from a synthesis of the terms of Jesus and content of Daniel in his 70 Weeks prophecy. For the purposes of this timeline we will be a little less precise and use the popular parlance instead, since we are going for a simple overview here rather than a deeper study.

This is only intended as a very simple and humble attempt to guide you through the big picture of Bible eschatology taking you through the Pre-Millennial interpretation of the many scriptures on these matters when interpreted in a straightforward and responsible literal fashion as far as is possible in the passages. There is a degree of uncertainty regarding the precise timing of some of these events but this is an attempt to put together something that would reflect the broad understanding and interpretation of the relevant scriptures, and where there are equally valid derivations possible they normally are recognised.

Before the Tribulation:

- *Gog Magog War* (Ezekiel 38 & 39) – this attack by an alliance of Russia, Turkey, Iran, and other Arab nations will be drawn into battle against an unsuspecting Israel in the latter days only to be thwarted by divine intervention on her behalf. The likely outcome of this short-lived war will be the restoration of a spiritual consciousness to Israel in light of her miraculous deliverance. Notice that the conspicuous absence of Syria in this alliance implies that the prophecy regarding the destruction of Damascus is fulfilled before this war (Isaiah 17:1)
- *Rapture of the Church* (2 Thessalonians 2:6-8a) – taking the Holy Spirit as the “Restrainer” then it follows that if the Antichrist is to rise into power then the church must be removed before he is able to be revealed. Arguably he is not revealed until the Abomination of Desolation so this could happen any time up until the mid-point of the Tribulation.
- *Rise into power of the Antichrist* (Daniel 7:23-24) – before Antichrist can make any agreement with Israel he must be in a position of power so it logically follows that his political ascent in the revived-Roman kingdom must begin at some point before the 70th week can begin. He will arise out from among 10 kings who will give their authority to the Antichrist to rule, despite his being somehow different to them in power initially.

Commencement of the Tribulation:

- *Peace with Israel* (Daniel (9:27a) – Antichrist will make an agreement with Israel for 7 years, likely negotiating some peace settlement in the region, as he is depicted as being a conqueror through peace initially (Revelation 6:2). It will appear as a time of peace and security in Israel, although the same cannot be said for the rest of the world (1 Thessalonians 5:3)

First Half of the Tribulation:

- *Scroll and Trumpet Judgements* (Revelation 6,8 & 9) – God desires that mankind might repent from their sins and in wishing to break our stubborn will sends plagues of judgement on the world symbolised by a series of 7 Seals and 7 Trumpets. The cumulative effect of these judgements is horrifying because a major proportion of the world’s population will be wiped out by them and the global economy will face greater strain than it ever has done before with large proportions of vital industries destroyed. Jesus seems to indicate that these signs are only the beginning of the troubles of the Tribulation period (Matthew 24:4-8). Worse is still to come as Jesus warns that unless the still to come judgements were

cut short that no flesh would survive (Matthew 24:22).

- *144,000 Jewish Evangelists and 2 Witnesses* (Revelation 7 & 11) – 2 Witnesses will be raised up to prophesy for a period of 42 months which is the equivalent of half of the Tribulation's length. It is unclear about when their time of testimony will run but it is made clear that it is the Antichrist who will make war against them and kill them in Jerusalem before they are bodily resurrected and raptured 3.5 days later (Revelation 11:7-9). As a result their deaths will occur sometime around the mid-point of the Tribulation and their ministry must therefore run throughout the first half of the Tribulation Period. They will be aided on mass by 144,000 Jews who will be sealed by God to spread the Gospel, although whether they will be concentrated globally or only in Israel is unclear. If there is no church present due to the rapture then this would strongly imply a global ministry.

Mid-Point of the Tribulation:

- *War in Heaven* (Revelation 12:7-12) – Satan and his demons engage in war against the Archangel Michael and the angels in Heaven, but they are defeated causing them to be permanently barred access from the throne to accuse the saints. Instead they are thrown down to Earth and Satan - aware that time is short before the Lord returns to complete his redemptive work – must attempt to stop God's redemptive programme by preventing Israel fulfilling the prophecy of recognising Jesus and declaring "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord" (Matthew 23:39).
- *Empowering of the Antichrist* (Revelation 13:1-5) – Antichrist apparently is healed or even potentially stages a false resurrection causing the world to marvel at this miracle which is really a direct act of Satan who now directly empowers the Antichrist and gives him authority to rule for the final half of the Tribulation. At this same time the False Prophet will command the worship of Antichrist by the peoples of the world and initiate the Mark of the Beast and Image worship system to facilitate this and destroy those who refuse to worship (Revelation 13:11-18).
- *The Abomination of Desolation* (Daniel 9:27; 12:11; Matthew 24:15-20; 2 Thessalonians 2:4) – a Satanically empowered Antichrist will take away the sacrifices in the Temple, declare himself to be god and turn on Israel breaking his 7 year agreement with them (Daniel 9:27). The Image of the Beast will likely be set up on the wing of the Temple and worship commanded of it as it is given power to speak through some demonic manifestation of a voice (Revelation 13:15). Sometime around this time the Antichrist will kill the 2 witnesses, but they will 3.5 days later be resurrected and carried into Heaven, an event that will be broadcast to the world and Jerusalem will be rocked with an earthquake subsequently (Revelation 11:7-13)
- *War against Israel and the Believers commences* (Daniel 7:25; Revelation 12:13-17; Revelation 13:7) – Satan seeking to destroy Israel will be thwarted by God providing an escape for her into the desert (as Jesus warned she must flee to the mountains: Matthew 24:16), although Zechariah 14:2 suggests that only half of Jerusalem's inhabitants will escape. They will likely head into the Jordanian desert to the mountain fortress of Petra which appears to be exempt from the Antichrist's influence (Daniel 11:41). Frustrated by this intervention and inability to stop those escaping into the desert Satan will instead turn against the remnant of the Church in the world, who will not be able to take the Mark of the Beast nor worship the Image. Many Christians will be beheaded for their refusal to back down from their faith and testimony in Christ (Revelation 20:4).

Last Half of the Tribulation:

- *The Bowls of Wrath Judgements* (Revelation 15 & 16) – Looking at the progression of the warnings given by the 3 angels in Revelation 14:6-11 this seems like the probable order as the Bowl of Wrath judgements begin as God still continues to desire mankind to repent but they run into league with Satan

and the Antichrist taking the Mark of the Beast.

- *Destruction of the Harlot of Babylon* (Revelation 17) – As the aforementioned events take place the angel reports that the Antichrist turns on a religious organisation with global reach and dominion over many peoples. It seems that the prophecy refers to Rome, the city on 7 hills and perhaps even to its religious centre the Vatican or some other global religious grouping that will in the future be based there. 1 Peter 5:13 refers to “Babylon” in code for Rome due to the political climate at the time. The Antichrist and those of his kingdom are said to be jealous of the power and reach of this religious organisation and will use her and betray her, causing her complete destruction
- *Destruction of Economic Babylon* (Revelation 18) – The economic system of the Antichrist is identified with Babylon, which could very well refer to Rome, Jerusalem or another city which the Antichrist adopts as the centre for his kingdom. Particular judgement is reserved against its decadence and she will be destroyed by divine judgement in a single day (Revelation 18:8). This particular judgement will cause global sadness and people suffer the collapse and loss of their economic riches and materialistic lifestyles.
- *Battle of Armageddon* (Daniel 11:40-45; Revelation 16:12-16; 19:19-21) – With the 6th Bowl Judgement drying up the River Euphrates the eastern powers are able to cross over to meet the Antichrist’s forces gathered in Israel’s Valley of Jezreel on the Plain of Esraelon. It is here that they will engage in battle around Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:1-4) until Jesus returns in the Second Coming to the Mount of Olives. The protected place in the desert for Israel is believed to be in the Jordanian desert in the land of Edom which is specifically excluded from the Antichrist’s grasp in this final battle (Daniel 11:41).
- *The Second Coming and Destruction of Antichrist and False Prophet* (Revelation 19:19-21)- Jesus will destroy the armies of the Antichrist with His words, while casting both Antichrist and False Prophet into the Lake of Fire. He will establish the Millennial Kingdom reigning from Jerusalem and judge the nations of the world who have survived the Tribulation, a process that will take several weeks (Daniel 12:12). Those who have died during the Tribulation will be resurrected to reign with Christ, alongside the raptured Church who will have returned with Christ as His army (Revelation 20:4; Revelation 19:14)

Millennial Kingdom:

- *Imprisonment and Subsequent Loosing of Satan* (Revelation 20:1-3; 7-10) – Satan is bound in the bottomless pit for 1000 years to allow the nations of the world that will be restored during the Kingdom age to live free from deception. However, they will still have to grapple with the sinful condition that they will continue to inherit from their parents (survivors of the Tribulation Period who did not take the Mark of the Beast) because they will not have been resurrected into their incorruptible eternal bodies at this point. Their ability to sin means that at the end of the Millennium when Satan is again loosed for a short time that many will rebel against Christ and be judged along with Satan by being cast into the Lake of Fire for eternity. Then all the dead will be resurrected and judged at the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11-15) and all whose names are not recorded in the Lamb’s Book of Life are cast into the Lake of Fire also. Hereafter, a New Heaven and New Earth will be created for all of eternity (Revelation 21:1).

The Nation of Israel in the Last Days

David J. Nixon

In 1948 an event of unparalleled Biblical proportions happened on the world stage as the nation of Israel was reborn in the land by declaring independence for the Jewish state. For centuries the Church had metaphoricalised away any significance of Israel in Bible prophecy seeing as the state had ceased to exist, but once again in an unmistakeable fulfilment of prophecy Israel was back as a world and Bible prophecy player. The Apostle Paul warned the early Church not to be arrogant in dismissing Israel's continued importance in God's redemptive programme because she would ultimately be restored into fellowship with God (Romans 11:17-27). This process is not yet complete because Israel still does not recognise Jesus Christ as the Messiah but such a day is coming when she shall declare "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord" (Matthew 23:39).

Reading the Old and New Testament prophecies together you cannot help but reach the conclusion that Israel is involved. Israel forms the centre piece of the 70 Weeks prophecy which is the whole basis for there being a 7 year Tribulation period and indeed it cannot commence until an agreement is made between the Antichrist and Israel which he can then break (Daniel 9:27); Zechariah 12;14 describe the importance of the city of Jerusalem in the last days; Revelation 12 clearly shows that Israel will be the first target for attack by the Antichrist and other chapters describe how two witnesses and 144,000 Jews will be called into evangelistic ministry in the last days to call the nation back to God. The prophet Ezekiel while in Babylonian exile received the vision of the valley of the dry bones become flesh again, describing the future rebirth of national Israel within the land (Ezekiel 37), and the prophet Isaiah prophesied that this event would surprisingly happen in the space of a day (Isaiah 66:8). This almost certainly was the 1948 rebirth of Israel! These are but a few examples of the picture we see unfolding across the pages of scripture concerning Israel's importance but even the Lord Jesus addresses the issue.

The Apostle Peter answers the mocking questions of those asking 'Where is the Lord after all this time?' with the response that He is not at all slow to action but rather is being patient with the world not willing any to perish (2 Peter 3:4-9). Many people today remark that the signs listed by Jesus at the start of Matthew 24, as He answers the disciples questions regarding when He will restore Israel and bring in the kingdom, are so generic that it is impossible to ever know when the Lord is going to return. However, they neglect the image of the fig tree which Jesus goes on to tell the disciples about which will be the Rosetta stone of end time Bible prophecy to warn that the time is imminent for His return: "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Matthew 24:32-35). In the prophetic scriptures Israel is described as a fig tree or as an olive tree, and Jesus symbolically rebuked the unfruitful fig tree which was not ready for when He came to it just a few chapters earlier. This image would then mean that when we see the nation of Israel become fruitful again that this is the sign that the time of the end is near and the Lord's return is in season. Thus we are left with the unmistakeable impression that we must indeed be nearing the Lord's return since Israel was reborn in the land over 60 years ago today.

With 7 years still left outstanding on the timer of Daniel's 70 Weeks Prophecy we know that in the days to come the Antichrist will form an agreement with Israel, which he will then proceed to break 3.5 years later turning on the nation (Daniel 9:27). His war against Israel frustrated by God's miraculous deliverance of her will come to a head as he gathers his armies in the valley of Jezreel north of Jerusalem at the end of the 70th Week and there he will do battle against the Lord Jesus who returns to bring in the kingdom now that Israel has returned to Him declaring Him Messiah!

Before this time it seems that Israel will come under attack from the Gog Magog alliance of nations as described in Ezekiel 38 & 39. She will also face the threat of destruction from the nations immediately around her as described in Psalm 83 where they make plans to wipe Israel off the map. The list of nations in this Psalm are those directly around Israel on all sides and so I would argue that it is likely it has already been fulfilled by the Arab conflagrations against Israel in 1967 and 1973 when they attempted to destroy Israel, particularly in the latter's case when it was an almost fully success surprise attack on the eve of the national Yom Kippur holiday. In all the wars that the newly reborn nation has faced God has delivered her successfully and blessed her greatly with the spoils of victory. Yet still His heart yearns for His nation to return to Him!

Understanding the Bible's prophecies about the last days begins with Israel, the nation which had so much revealed to her and which still forms an important part of God's redemptive programme for the world as His return draws ever nearer!

For a more in depth analysis of the signs concerning Israel in the End Times please consult my article: *"Signs of the Times Concerning Israel and the Church"*

The Gog Magog War in the Final Days - Ezekiel 38 & 39

David J. Nixon

I remember a few years ago describing our passage of scripture today as one of the most important apologetic resources for defending the divine inspiration of the Bible that this generation has had to date - why? Well the answer is that its fulfilment could potentially be one of the most unmistakeable direct fulfilments of 2500 year old prophecy that we have seen, ranking up alongside the rebirth of Israel in 1948 in a single day and recapture of Jerusalem in 1967. The Bible was clear that Israel was going to be reborn in the land - it happened. The Bible is also clear that this latter days nation of Israel will come under attack from an alliance of nations, which are named, and will require the supernatural intervention of God to save her - it will happen, and indeed today we are seeing the posturing towards its fulfilment

As always we need to set out our Biblical basis (our metaphorical tent peg holes) and only then see if any pegs fit into what the scriptures say. There can be no doubt that in the past predictive prophecy has been fulfilled exactly and so we should not doubt that it would be any different today for He is the same God yesterday, today and forever.

Setting the scene:

The scriptures indicate that the focal point of this attack will be the land of Israel: "After many days you will be mustered. In the latter days you will go against the land that is restored from war, the land whose people were gathered from many peoples upon the mountains of Israel, which had been a continual waste. Its people were brought out from the peoples and now dwell securely, all of them" (38:7-8). It was said by Mark Twain when he visited the Holy Land in the 19th century that the land was completely desolate, and it was only after the Jewish aliyah and rebirth of Israel that the desert began to bloom again - although it would be wrong to attribute Isaiah 35:1 to this since that chapter is seemingly about the Millennial Kingdom.

The scriptures seem to indicate that God considers these events as happening in the latter days, the time after Israel has returned to the land. Throughout the previous 2000 years the Lord has seemingly paused His redemptive plan for the nation of Israel as a whole to instead focus on the rest of the world through the evangelism of the Church. However, the uncompleted 70 weeks of Daniel (Daniel 9) indicate that the Lord will still finish His purposes for Israel and only usher in the physical reign of the Kingdom; indeed the Apostle Paul makes clear that the Lord is far from finished with Israel and will use the Church to provoke her to jealousy (Romans 11). In previous articles we have looked at how the rebirth of Israel was one of the definitive signs given by Jesus of the final days commencing and us being put on definite standby for the Lord's imminent return (Matthew 24). However, the rebirth of national Israel is still missing one crucial element: its spirituality!

There is currently no rebuilt Temple of Solomon upon the Temple Mount, and nor is there any realistic swell of support for it either. There are groups such as the Temple Mount Faithful and Temple Institute who are busy preparing and campaigning for the recommencement of Temple life, but they have yet been unsuccessful. However, scripture clearly records the words of both Jesus and Paul that the Temple will be the centre piece of the Antichrist's work in the Abomination of Desolation wherein he will declare himself to be God (Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:4). How is it then that this prophecy can be fulfilled in a mostly secular Israel today? I believe based on my understanding of this passage of scripture that Gog Magog could be the turning point for the spiritual rebirth of Israel - but please note the critical words of Paul in Athens: "I perceive that in every way you are very religious" (Acts 17:22) because that is the same charge Paul would level against the future Israel for it will still not accept the Lord Jesus as Messiah (something that will only happen immediately before the Second Coming when they declare: "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord"). Ezekiel prophesies that once God

delivers them from the hands of the invaders: "And my holy name I will make known in the midst of my people Israel, and I will not let my holy name be profaned anymore" (39:7); "The house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God, from that day forward" (39:22); "Then they shall know that I am the Lord their God, because I sent them into exile among the nations, and then assembled them into their own land. I will leave none of them remaining among the nations anymore. And I will not hide my face anymore from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord God" (39:28-29). I would contend these passages are a strong basis to conclude that there will be a spiritual rebirth in Israel ahead of the recommencement of the 70 weeks prophecy through until the Second Coming of the Lord.

Israel immediately before the attack will be apparently enjoying a time of believed security. She is described by the Lord, who is narrating the thoughts in Gog's mind: "I will go up against the land of unwalled villages. I will fall upon the quiet people who dwell securely, all of them dwelling without walls, having no bars or gates [...] Thus says the Lord God: 'On that day when my people Israel are dwelling securely, will you not know it?'" (Ezekiel 38:11,14). If we abide by our strict method of Biblical interpretation then it is very hard to see this war as being likely to happen in the imminently near future because Israel is anything but living in a state of security: what with Hamas engaged in a rocket war from the Gaza Strip; posturing with Syria over the Golan Heights coupled with that nation's attempts to construct nuclear weapons; and the growing threat of a nuclear armed Iran with the capability to hit anywhere within Israel with a wide array of unconventional weapons. Indeed, when we take this passage further and particularly look at the portion "land of unwalled villages" then I cannot but wonder why the Lord chose to highlight this point. In my mind it can do nothing but indicate that this prophecy is not yet ready for fulfilment because Israel's settlements require to be heavily fortified, her borders are some of the most secure in the world, and she is continuing to build a massive wall around the West Bank to keep out terrorists.

The prophetic players:

When first reading this prophecy you would be forgiven for getting immediately lost because you do not recognise any of the names of the nations listed in chapter 38. The names are derived from the sons of Noah and where their children settled in the post-diluvian world. This is not an exact science, that must be stated from the outset! Determining the modern day counterparts to the nations listed is not simple and I cannot claim to be an expert on it. Instead I can only rely on brief research into what the ancient historian Josephus records regarding the identity of these nations, and would refer someone wishing to go deeper to check out some of the scholarship on the matter. While there is room for some disagreement the broad picture seems to interpret the nations as following:

- **Magog** - the Scythian people who settled north of the black sea, and further identified as in the area now encompassed by Russia by Arabs who call the Great Wall of China as the "Great Wall of Al Magog" because it was built to keep out the northern people they called the Magonians.
- **Persia** - almost certainly Iran (seeing as Iran was called Persia until recent times and the Iranian people are fiercely protective of their Persian nationality, rather than Arab).
- **Put** - likely Libya.
- **Cush** - Horn of Africa (likely present day Somalia).
- **Gomer** - likely part of western Turkey.
- **Bethogarmah, Meshec, Tubal** - likely the area around the Caucasus region in northern Turkey and southern Russia today.
- **Sheba & Dedan** - likely present day Saudi Arabia or Ethiopia.

Even if you disagree or find fault with what has already been admitted as a humble attempt to identify the Biblical nations, then the broad picture is clear: a coalition of Islamic nations surrounding Israel led

by a northern power (our point of reference being north of Jerusalem which would allow for either Russia or Turkey - the 2 main proposed candidates today) - under the command of a leader identified as "Gog" of the land of Magog and ruler of Tubal and Meshec - will descend upon that tiny nation. I will go no further in attempting to identify Gog because I believe such speculation is too far removed from the Biblical text for there to be any certainty over it this side of its fulfilment. There are a number of candidates but if the Lord tarries another generation still such discussion would have been totally fruitless so I will save your time and my writing space by not touching on it - that remains part of the watching of prophecy unfold based upon the Biblical model which we are articulating here.

Strikingly missing from this list of nations is Syria. In the past 3 wars against Israel in 1948, 1967 and 1973 Syria has been an integral part of the Islamic effort to destroy the tiny nation. She remains a fervent enemy of Israel today and there is very little doubt that given the opportunity she would join in any attack against her. Indeed, her very strong military links with Iran - one of the other leaders of the attack - would implicate her as having a strong interest in participating in the Gog Magog attack. The Bible's silence on her involvement is conspicuous under these circumstances! Many attribute this absence to the fulfilment of the Isaiah 17 prophecy that Damascus will be completely destroyed as a city, and cite many historians who would contend that it is the longest continually inhabited city in world history. This is a very strong argument and given the Bible's record of complete fulfilment of its prophecies it is reasonable to consider this prophecy as still open to complete fulfilment exactly as written. There are many scenarios that immediately come to mind in which we could see the destruction of Damascus before any attack by Gog Magog - indeed if Israel is to be living in security it would appear that Syria must at least be tamed, and Iran's nuclear programme be tamed also if Israel is ever to feel secure again when it believes both nations to be their greatest modern existential threat! However, we will err on the side of caution and not indulge in such speculations in this article presently - again the prophecy will take shape and be fulfilled exactly so we are called to watch that happen within a Biblical mental framework, which again appears to warn us that the time is not yet ready (although in the Middle East things are known to change quickly!)

The 3 End Time Battles Compared:

I want to now turn to consider the outcomes of the Gog Magog War - and arguably the most significant one has already been covered in describing the implications for Israel's spiritual life as she will again remember the Lord God, their deliverer. The scripture passage also indicates that it will serve as a sign of God's might to the other nations of the world, who have stood aside while Israel is attacked merely discussing the invasion (38:13). The destruction on the attacking nations is extreme, but rather than risk repeating myself I want to discuss the outcomes of Ezekiel 38 & 39 in comparison with the Battle of Armageddon Revelation 19 and the Millennial Battle of Gog Magog in Revelation 20 because there is some argument as to whether these 3 battles (or some combination of them) are one event. I will attempt to set this done in tabular format to better facilitate your own comparison of the scriptural passages.

Ezekiel 38 & 39:

-The Participants: A Russia/Turkish led coalition of select Islamic nations

-The Time: A time of peace in Israel in the latter days, most likely prior to the initiation of the 70th Week of Daniel

-The Place: Attack on the nation of Israel which is thwarted on her mountainous Northern Border by Divine intervention on her behalf

-The Outcome: Destruction of the attacking forces upon the mountains of Israel by torrential rain, fire and sulphur; judgement (either divine or nuclear response from Israel) on the coastlands of the northern nation that attacks them. Israel has to embark on a massive cleaning exercise after the attack and is able to burn the weapons of war as fuel for 7 years.

Revelation 19:

-The Participants: The global armies of the Antichrist (see Revelation 16 also for details on the demonic influence in the gathering of this army as part of the 6th bowl judgement)

-The Time: Shortly before Christ's Second Coming at the conclusion of the 70th Week of Daniel

-The Place: The Valley of Jezreel (Har Mageddon - Mount Megiddo) north of Jerusalem

-The Outcome: The Second Coming of Christ who slays the armies with the words of His mouth and casts the Antichrist and False Prophet straight into the Lake of Fire; destruction of the Mystery Babylon (I will save comments on the possible identity of the city for another time); massive geological catastrophe (see Revelation 16 on the 7th bowl judgement and Isaiah 24). Binding of Satan for 1000 years, inauguration of the Millennial Kingdom with Christ reigning bodily from Jerusalem after judging the remaining living nations of the world.

Revelation 20:

-The Participants: The rebel sinful Millennial children who join Satan

-The Time: Shortly after Satan is unleashed from his 1000 year imprisonment in the Bottomless Pit at the conclusion of the Millennial Kingdom

-The Place: The camp of the Saints, likely Mount Zion wherein Christ is bodily reigning

-The Outcome: Fire comes down from Heaven to burn up all the rebels, with the casting of their leader Satan into the Lake of Fire for eternity and the final Great White Throne Judgement of the dead. Then there is the creation of the New Heavens and New Earth.

It must be admitted that there are certain similarities between the 3 battles, but they do not go deep enough to suggest that any of them are the same battle being described in both the Old and New Testaments. There are many passages where such a comparison can be made, and very convincingly too - indeed such comparison is required to make total sense of the whole prophetic picture i.e. Daniel's 70th week and John's Revelation visions along with teaching of Paul all harmonize together. However, in this situation no such harmonisation appears to be immediately possible if we are going to remain faithful to interpreting the Word as we find it.

Concluding Thoughts:

It is a challenging text to write on because so much of it is tempting to speculate on and attempt to draw application with today's events - that is not a wrong thing to do in and of itself, indeed that is the purpose for many End Times ministries to inform people of how events are meeting the Biblical narrative. However, first we must have that clear Biblical framework in our heads which grounds all our applications. It can be so easy for us in our zeal to see the Lord's return to read too much into events and begin to write and teach unbiblically by pure accident. I remember whenever the Lebanon-war in summer 2006 caused a great stir in the prophetic community and I have to admit writing an article which excitedly was looking towards the imminent destruction of Damascus if she entered directly into the conflict against Israel, as she was threatening to do. We were wrong. We had people giving interviews on CNN but in the end we were wrong. So much of the resentment against the study of eschatology is too much eagerness and not enough patience and discernment and remaining Biblical. Speculation is ok, but it must be tightly controlled within what the Word actually teaches us.

Paul was someone who was eager for the Lord to return to. In closing let's consider his words which I have taken a lot from in recent years: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith" (Philippians 1:21-25). I would go one step further than

Paul and say that our continuing here on this Earth is important for seeing many more people come to know Christ, because Peter reminds us that we are awaiting the Lord's timing for these events all to happen and flood to their conclusion because He is still waiting for those last people to repent and come to believing faith in Christ Jesus as their Lord and Saviour (2 Peter 3). Let us be busy, not in idle speculations at length, but in Kingdom business which is far more likely to see the Kingdom come sooner. Yes I absolutely advocate the apologetic and evangelistic place for eschatology, but those events being fulfilled and being the proof we desire is not dependent on us but God, so let us let Him work according to His good pre-ordained timing while we work busily for His glory!

The Rapture Question?

David J. Nixon

I know of no other more hotly debated topic in all of eschatology than that of The Rapture Question? The debate is very much down to the complexities of determining the chronological timing of the Rapture in relation to the events of Daniel's 70th Week aka the Tribulation period in modern parlance. No one is any less of a true Christian believer because of what they believe about the timing of the Rapture - let us just get that straight from the outset! I am conscious that many different people will be reading this and so I want to make this article as neutral as possible to simply narrate and explain the different positions on the Rapture.

"The Rapture" itself is not a term found in the Bible! What the word refers to is the literal meaning of the Greek word "harpazo" which translates as "caught up" in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord". This is the moment that the Apostle Paul has earlier described to the Church in Corinth as: "Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:51-52). Quite simply this is the moment that Jesus will return for His bride, the Church, and in an instant transform us for all eternity into our eternal righteous bodies - the completion of the good work that Christ has already begun in us.

The debate comes around when this event occurs in relation to the 7 years left unfulfilled in Daniel's 70 Weeks Prophecy. There are three large popular positions on this question today: the Pre-Tribulation, Pre-Wrath and Post-Tribulation Raptures - no disrespect intended towards those of the Mid-Tribulation Rapture position, but I have not come across much writing or advocacy of it in the last 5 years. If we humbly attempt to go through each then I will invite you to go and decide what you think given some of the scriptural passages I have given in support of each opinion that I have come across in what is a vast topic of scholarship. The Rapture is not a salvation issue, so it is not crucial that you come to a firm position and it is perfectly legitimate to skip over this sometimes contentious issue! If anything, be satisfied with the confident knowledge that the Lord is coming again and let Him catch you up in the air as He has perfectly timed - however in the meantime be busy about the kingdom and gospel work we have been commissioned with for we do not want to be like the wicked servant of Matthew 25 and are meant to be salt and light in this world while we still are here!

Pre-Tribulation Rapture:

This position believes there is a two stage coming of the Lord, firstly a surprise Rapture with the Lord coming to the air at an unknown hour prior to the commencement of the Tribulation and then subsequently the Second Coming with the Lord Jesus' coming to the Mount of Olives after the battle of Armageddon. There appears to be two types of scripture regarding the Lord's return: the unknown hour (Matthew 24:42,44; 25:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2) and the known calculable time from the time that Satan turns on Israel through the Antichrist at the time of the Abomination of Desolation (Daniel 7:25, Revelation 12:14; 13:5). Reconciling these two results in this two stage conception of the Lord's return, and it is argued that this is the "mystery" not revealed in the Old Testament of which Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 15. The reason for the Rapture being conceived as Pre-Tribulation is the Apostle Paul speaking in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7 describing how the "Restrainer" will need to be taken out of the way and only then will the Antichrist be revealed. It therefore follows if the Holy Spirit is accepted as the identity of the "Restrainer", that the sudden absence of the Holy Spirit indwelt church as salt and light in

the world will provide the opportunity for Satan to raise up the Antichrist into a position of power to make the agreement with Israel which kicks off the 70th Week (Daniel 9:27a). This view is very much ingrained in the view that the 70th Week is the time of Jacob's trouble prophesied about in Jeremiah 30, and so concerns God's redemptive programme for Israel, thus the removal of the Church during that time. They find the Rapture described in Revelation 4:1 when the voice like a trumpet calls John in through the door of Heaven (mirroring the 1 Thessalonians 4:16 description), which then in Revelation 19 is opened unleashing the armies of Heaven who accompany Christ back to Earth - seeing the saintly army as being the returning Raptured Church.

Pre-Wrath Rapture:

This position also agrees with there being a two stage coming of the Lord, at both an unknown hour and the calculable hour based on the definite duration of the Antichrist's reign and the 70th Week. However, in addition it also sees there being two different types of wrath being present in the 70th week, both in the latter half which is properly called the Great Tribulation when such will be the destruction that no life would survive unless God cut it short (Matthew 24:21-22). There is a distinction drawn between the wrath of Satan against the Church, described after his failed attempt to destroy Israel in the Abomination of Desolation when he is cast down to the Earth around the mid-point of the Tribulation (Revelation 12:17); and the wrath of God which can only properly be said to happen during the Trumpet and certainly the Bowls of Wrath Judgements. It is made clear "and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come...for God has not destined us to wrath but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9). It follows that the Church is not destined to undergo the Wrath of God and so it is after the Wrath of Satan but before the Wrath of God - in that indeterminate time - that the unknown timed Rapture will occur taking the Church out of the world. As a result there is absolutely no need for the Church to be removed prior to the commencement of the Tribulation because it is not solely the time in God's programme for dealing with Israel and the unrepentant world. Indeed this accounts for the depictions of mass persecution against the Church during the Seal Judgements in the first half of the Tribulation which prompt the Saints in heaven to question how long it will be allowed to continue, to which the reply comes: "rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been" (Revelation 6:11). At the conclusion of the Great Tribulation the picture is the same as in the Pre-Tribulation view as the Saints return to see the Antichrist vanquished at the battle of Armageddon.

Post-Tribulation Rapture:

This position is critical of the conception of a two stage coming seeing that there is no direct scriptural reference to two such events. Taking all the scriptures together they find a harmony between them which accounts for one single stage return at the end of the 70th Week with all the various stellar and geological catastrophes happening at that time. In particular they cite Jesus' words: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out His angels to gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:29-31), as a demonstration that the only gathering of the Church is after the Tribulation has ended as described by these same phenomena in: "It will come about in that day that there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle. For it will be a unique day which is known to the Lord, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light" (Zechariah 14:6-7). It disagrees that the Tribulation is peculiarly part of God's plan for Israel and instead believes the Church will be present. This leaves the Church on Earth throughout the Tribulation period and so the lukewarm Laodicean Church Age of that day will be purified through the fires of the Tribulation (Revelation 3:18). Further, since Jesus refers to

it being like the days of Noah in the Last Days (Matthew 24:37), just as Noah and his family had to go through the Flood but were preserved by God's provision of the Ark, likewise the Church cannot be said to undergo God's wrath for she will be protected. Some would argue that the person of the Restrainer in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7 is really describing the Archangel Michael who is described as again standing up as defender of Israel in Daniel 12:1 at the end of the Tribulation, so it is he who is taken away to allow the Antichrist to rise into power by making the agreement with Israel in Daniel 9:27 until the Lord's return.

A lot more could be said on each of these positions but this is just a basic primer for each!

My own position can be found and argued for in the following article: *"The Great Escape? An Exposition and Critique of Rapture Doctrine"*.

Understanding Daniel's 70th Week

David J. Nixon

As you study eschatology, and particularly in my articles, you will come across many references to “Daniel’s 70th Week” and be left with the impression that this is somehow an important event in the End Times. Well you would be right in thinking that! The 70th Week of Daniel is arguably one of the most significant prophecies given in the entire Bible, as well as being one of the most important still unfulfilled prophecies at our current time.

To set the scene, the Prophet Daniel is a prominent captive in the nation of Babylon and has been praying to God for the promised deliverance from the hands of Israel’s captors after 70 years of Exile, as prophesied by Jeremiah. He is visited by the angel Gabriel (Daniel 9:21), who is the herald of this important message as well as the good news of the conception of Jesus Christ to Mary some 500 years later. Gabriel informs Daniel of God’s timetable for Israel until He “puts an end to sin, and to atone for righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place” (9:24). This plan will unfold over a period of “70 weeks” according to Gabriel.

Initially, it is crucial that we come to an understanding of what this term – “70 weeks” – refers to. In Hebrew the word “week” simply means “set of seven” and that is why some of our English Bible translations render it as “70 sevens” in this passage. From this it follows that God has decreed 490 units of time until He ushers in the kingdom on Earth and completes His plan for national Israel. Now it is possible that we could debate whether the unit of time is a day, week, month or year. It would seem sensible in a prophetic context to take it as a year and indeed when we examine the content of the passage a year seems like the best interpretation. However, we are greatly aided here by the fact that this is a prophecy which has been fulfilled in history and so we have confirmation that it is indeed to take place over a period of 490 years.

The progression of the prophecy is as follows: there will be 7 and 62 weeks from the going forth of the command to rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah, Jesus Christ, comes into the world (9:25). The Messiah will be cut off during the 69th week and then the Temple will be destroyed by “the people of the prince who is to come” (9:26). Now before examining in detail the historical fulfilment of the prophecy up until this point we need to note in passing that a few decades passed between the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ and the Temple’s destruction. This is a crucial point that we need to return to in detail once we have seen the historical evidence for fulfilment of the prophecy up until the 69th week’s conclusion.

I have argued in the past that this prophecy is an incredible apologetic resource given the fact that it predicts the timing of the Crucifixion almost exactly, something which would be impossible 483 years in advance – unless of course God who is outside of time and knower of all things told us in advance, as Daniel claimed. If you consult the table below I have set out some points in Israel’s history and paralleled it with the corresponding prophetic developments which substantiate their divine origin:

(Historical Event => Prophetic Correlation)

- **538BC** Cyrus defeats Babylon and issues an edict allowing the return of the Jews. => **Cyrus's victory was exactly prophesied by Isaiah 200 years before; *Daniel receives 70 weeks prophecy***
- **536BC** 50,000 Jews return to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple after Cyrus returns the articles stolen by Nebuchadnezzar (but the work stops after 1 year). Daniel dies. => **Completion of 70 years of captivity, as prophesied by Jeremiah. Return prophesied by Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel**
- **515BC** Temple reconstruction completed
- **464BC** King Artaxerxes takes the Persian throne
- **458BC** Artaxerxes allows Ezra the priest to return with more people to Jerusalem to revive the spiritual

- condition of the city - **444BC** Artaxerxes grants Nehemiah's petition to allow the rebuilding of Jerusalem and issues the decree. => **Commencement of 70 weeks prophecy**
- **443BC** Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem and has the walls rebuilt
 - **396BC** Jerusalem's walls, moat and plaza rebuilt. => **Completion of 7th week of Daniel's Prophecy**
 - **333BC** Alexander the Great, leader of Grecian Empire, invaded Israel but allowed the Jews to continue Temple worship
 - **323BC** Alexander dies and his Empire is divided between his 4 generals. **This 4 way division was prophesied by Daniel over 100 years previously**
 - **320BC** Alexander's General Ptolemy I seized control of Jerusalem, having already controlled Egypt
 - **198BC** Antiochus III of Syria (General Seleucus founded kingdom of Syria/Seleucid on ruins of Alexander's Empire) defeats Egypt to take control of Israel
 - **167BC** Antiochus IV Epiphanies attacks Jerusalem and the defiles the Temple. => **Abomination in the Temple prophesied by Daniel almost over 350 years before**
 - **164BC** Jews retake Jerusalem and cleanse the Temple under Judas Maccabees
 - **63BC** Jerusalem conquered by Rome under General Pompey. => **Prophesied by Daniel**
 - **~4BC** Jesus Christ born in Bethlehem. => **Prophesied by Isaiah**
 - **30/33AD** Jesus Christ Crucified in Jerusalem => **Prophesied by Isaiah and Daniel. Completion of the 69th week of Daniel's Prophecy**
 - **70AD** Destruction of Temple by General Titus. => **Prophesied by Daniel 500 years before and Jesus 40 years before**

By studying this table you will come to see the incredible accuracy of Biblical prophecy, and these are but a few of the prophetic developments that I have noted briefly so the totality of the subject is overwhelming evidence for the Bible as God's inspired truth. However, there is still the matter of why Daniel 9:26 describes the crucifixion and says that it will be followed by the destruction of the Temple and then after that the final 70th week of the prophecy will happen. The entire prophecy should have been completed in either 37 or 40AD at the latest (depending on your date for the crucifixion, which is a matter of debate today), yet the Temple was not destroyed until 70AD and the events of the 70th Week have not transpired. With all the evidence for the accuracy of Bible prophecy what has gone wrong with the 70 weeks prophecy just as it enters into its final lap? Even Jesus made reference to the 70th week when He commanded Israel to flee to the mountains when she saw the Abomination of Desolation in the future which had been described by Daniel in Daniel 9:27 (Matthew 24:15), so He certainly saw it as still awaiting future fulfilment!

The answer is quite simply that there appears to be a very important pause in God's timetable for Israel's redemption – notice that I say pause because the Apostle Paul is very clear that this is only temporary and normal service will resume in the future (Romans 11:25-27). Now God is working through the body of Christ, the Church, to bring the gospel message to the whole world so that the Gentiles might too receive redemption through Jesus Christ (John 10:16). When that time is complete then Christ shall return for the Church (2 Peter 3:1-10) and pick up with Israel where He left off with the initiation of the 70th Week. (For more detail and scriptural exposition on this particular point please consult my article: *"Signs of the Times Concerning Israel and the Church"*)

The rebirth of Israel as a nation was prophesied (Isaiah 66:8; Ezekiel 37; Matthew 24:32-35) and forms the basis for the countdown towards the recommencement of 70 Week programme for the redemptive history of Israel. Jesus said that by the end of the 70th Week that Israel would return to Him and declare: "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord" (Matthew 23:39). So we now turn to consider how this happens.

The 70th Week begins with the character of the "Prince" of the people who destroyed the Temple in

70AD (9:26) who is referred back to in the Hebrew pronoun commencing Daniel 9:27: “And he shall confirm a covenant with the many for one week”. This person is therefore somehow connected with the Roman Empire and based on an understanding of the synthesis of the visions in Daniel 2 & 7 I believe that the identification of the Prince as being one in the same with the “little horn” who arises into power in a resurrected Roman kingdom in Europe is entirely well founded scripturally. As a result we can conclude we are dealing with the person of the Antichrist described in Revelation 13.

Daniel tells us that Antichrist will break his peace agreement with Israel after 3.5 years and John in Revelation 13 describes how the Antichrist will be empowered for a similar period of 3.5 years and so again we can safely conclude we are dealing with the same character and events here during the latter half of the 70th Week. The breaking of the covenant will involve an attack on the Temple in Jerusalem and the Antichrist declaring himself to be god (2 Thessalonians 2:4). The 70th Week will then conclude with the rescue of Israel and the remnant of Believers in the world from the clutches of the Antichrist, who will be judged and thrown into the Lake of Fire. Christ will then usher in the Millennial Kingdom and reign physically from Mount Zion as prophesied throughout the Old Testament as the kingdom comes to Israel. (For more detail and scriptural exposition on these points please consult my article on “The Unholy Trinity Operating in the Last Days”).

So hopefully now you will understand why we talk about the 70th Week of Daniel and why it is 7 years long and still a future event we are awaiting to happen.

Appendix:

Please note that if you want to do the calculations yourself to verify the 70 weeks prophecy then you must take into consideration the progression from 1BC to 1AD and also the fact that the 70 weeks prophecy was given in the Hebrew Calendar of 360 days per lunar year. As a result the calculation would look something like this:

The Jewish year is 360 days long (not our 365.242 days – remembering the .242 is why we have a leap year every 4 years!) so when calculating the dates of the 70 weeks prophecy’s fulfilment some mathematical calculation is needed to convert the dates! Since there would be 69 weeks (7 weeks + 62 weeks) between Artaxerxes decree and the Messiah being cut off there were 173,880 days (483 years multiplied by 360 days in Jewish calendar). Divide 173,880 by 365 to convert to the number of years in the Gregorian calendar giving ~476.07 years; when taken from 444BC goes to 33AD.

We know from history that Artaxerxes made his decree in early March so our calculation would place the end of the 69th week at the end of March/beginning of April in 33AD. This is also the time of Passover in the Jewish calendar, which you will recall is when Jesus was crucified. Therefore to virtually the exact day Daniel’s prophecy predicted the crucifixion if you accept the later 33AD date – otherwise the 30AD date is still safely within the 69th Week to count as fulfilment!

The Antichrist

David J. Nixon

This article is taken from a longer piece "The Unholy Trinity Operating in the Last Days" by David J. Nixon

In Revelation 13 we are introduced to the second person in the unholy trinity: the Antichrist. The character of "The Antichrist" is not strictly named correctly many argue. We call him such because John warns against deceivers who have gone out denying Christ's deity and calls all such people "the deceiver and the antichrist" (2 John 7); indeed he has earlier indicated that those who cannot confess that Jesus is God incarnate are like this because of the "spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already" (1 John 4:3). This apparently indicates that there is a particular spirit of the antichrist and that it evidences itself in setting itself up against the claims of Jesus to be the Son of God to deceive people. Thus whenever we have the End Time character variously called "the little horn" (Daniel 7:8), "The prince of the people who must come" (Daniel 9:26), "the Man of Lawlessness" (2 Thessalonians 2:3), or "the Beast out of the Sea" (Revelation 13) and we look at what the Bible says about what his actions will be ("opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God." 2 Thessalonians 2:4) then we understandably see him as the ultimate personification of the plural spiritual antichrists of history. He is depicted as a beast with 7 heads, 10 horns with 10 crowns and blasphemous names written on them; I am not entirely certain that a great deal can be derived from the image with any degree of certainty or accuracy so instead I propose to look at the more clear things we do get directly out of the scriptures.

The origin of the Beast out of the Sea and his power is made clear: "To it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority" (Revelation 13:2); "The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing because they refused to love the truth and so be saved" (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10). Just as Satan as "Prince of this World" (John 14:30) legitimately offered all the kingdoms of the earth to Jesus in the wilderness temptations, so too he will offer the kingdoms to the Antichrist in the ultimate demonstration of the bankruptcy of gaining the world at the expense of his soul (Matthew 16:26). To facilitate this rise into power the Restrainer described by the Apostle Paul (2 Thessalonians 2:6-7) must have been removed out of the way, and many of us take that to mean that the Rapture will have already have occurred by this time removing the Church and indwelling Holy Spirit from the world. At some point (I would argue 3.5 years before this empowering, for reasons you will see momentarily) Antichrist will form a 7 year covenant with Israel which marks the commencement of the 70th Week. It is perhaps this time of peace and security that the Apostle Paul refers to as: "While people are saying 'peace and security', then sudden destruction will come upon them" (1 Thessalonians 5:3).

The scriptures are clear that the Antichrist is given a 42 month duration of authority (Revelation 13:5) which would place the timing of Satan's empowerment of him at the midpoint of the 70th Week at which time there are 42 months (another way of saying "a time, times and half a time"/3.5 years/1260 days) until the Second Coming when the Antichrist is judged and thrown into the Lake of Fire by Christ (Revelation 19:20). It then logically follows that the Abomination of Desolation must occur quickly after this empowering of the Antichrist for it is the definitive half way point of the 70th Week with his turning against Israel in breach of the covenant to attack the Temple and so necessarily needs to fit with the timings set out in prophecy: "And he shall make a covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator" (Daniel 9:27). Once his efforts against Israel are thwarted then he will turn and be allowed to "make war on the saints and to

conquer them” (Revelation 13:7)

Daniel prophesied a great deal concerning the Antichrist and also about the archetype character of Antiochus Epiphanies IV who would commit what the Jews called the “Abomination of Desolation” in the Maccabean point of Jewish national history in 2nd century BC. Jesus Himself indicated that the Antichrist would commit the actual “Abomination of Desolation” and refers back to what Daniel prophesied (Matthew 24:15); however, we see from Antiochus a pattern that the still future Antichrist is likely to follow. For example, they both will be defiling the Temple although their specifics may be different. In this respect we can presume that the unfulfilled portions of prophecy that refer to Antiochus will be completely fulfilled in the person of the Antichrist. We find these potential dual fulfilment and descriptive portions of scripture in Daniel 8&11: “his power shall be great –but not by his own power; and he shall cause fearful destruction and shall succeed in what he does and destroy mighty men and the people who are the saints. By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand, and in his own mind he shall become great. Without warning he shall destroy many. And he shall even rise up against the Prince of princes, and he shall be broken – but by no human hand” (Daniel 8:23-25); “and the king will do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. He shall prosper till the indignation: for what is decreed shall be done. He shall pay no attention to the gods of his fathers, or to the one beloved by women. He shall not pay attention to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all. He shall honour the god of fortresses instead of these...” (Daniel 11:36-38a). These passages describe much of what we can expect of the Antichrist’s character which will be arrogant, godless and glorifying militarism.

In an earlier prophecy Daniel predicts some of the political milieu surrounding the Antichrist’s rise into power. We know that the “little horn” of Daniel 7 refers to our Antichrist because of the clear identification here which you will immediately recognise given earlier passages we have already looked at today: “He shall speak words against the Most High and shall wear out the Saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law, and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times and half a time” (Daniel 7:25) fits with “it was allowed to exercise authority for 42 months” (Revelation 13:5b) as just one example. In scripture a “horn” normally symbolises power of some kind, so against this background we are seeing in this vision how the Antichrist becomes a powerful player in world politics in the Final Days. We know it is a person and not a nation because the horn is said to have human features: “the horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things, and that seemed greater than its companions.” (Daniel 7:20) and this ties with our conception of Antichrist as a person who John later describes again similarly as having a boastful and blasphemous mouth: “And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words...It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven” (Revelation 13:5-6).

Daniel’s vision here is inexorably tied to the earlier interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the tall statue in Daniel 2. What both visions show is the history of Gentile nations that have had control over the nation of Israel post-exile. The first vision is of King Nebuchadnezzar’s perspective of human kingdoms as being a thing of honour to bow down to and respect (a statue); while the second vision is from God’s perspective showing the kingdoms as wild beasts - with the necessary connotations of needing to be controlled. I am not going to undertake a detailed comparison nor exposition on the meaning of the two visions here as I have often done in the past, but likely do will later in this series when considering the identity of this final kingdom of the Antichrist.

Both visions strongly seem to me to be showing the same kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome and I argue that the difference in number between each vision is not important (as there are 5 parts to the statue, but only 4 beasts). The reason for this being that the fifth part of the statue is an

extension of the 4th due to still having some of the iron material present which was the component of the 4th kingdom; further the 4th beast has 10 horns on its forehead which Daniel is particularly interested in learning the meaning of and I contend these relate to the 10 toes on the statue's feet, so again are an extension of the 4th kingdom. We see that the Antichrist will arise out of 10 kings as we read that the 10 horns on the 4th beast's head are kings of the revived-Roman kingdom (Daniel 7:24a). The Antichrist will be "different from the former ones" thus his depiction as a "little horn" and he will somehow "put down 3 kings" (Daniel 7:24b). When we go on to read John in Revelation 17 we get a bit more corroborative information that the 10 horns again are kings who will give their power and authority to the Antichrist: "and the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast. These are of one mind and hand over their power and authority to the Beast. They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for He is Lord of Lords and King of Kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful" (Revelation 17:12-14). So it seems that some European regathering from the ruins of the Roman Empire is the political base for the Antichrist being given authority to rule for the last part of the 70th Week.

The end of the Antichrist's reign comes at the end of the 70th Week as Christ returns. Daniel prophesied that the Antichrist's kingdom would be destroyed by God's kingdom coming to Earth to destroy the manmade systems we have put in place (Daniel 2:34, 45). Daniel prophesied the end of the Antichrist's attempts at global domination in Daniel 11:40-45 and specifically says that the Antichrist will at the end camp his armies "between the sea and the glorious holy mountain" (Daniel 11:45b) (obviously referring to Mount Zion in Jerusalem). John picks up the story by describing how as one of the final Bowl of Wrath judgements the great River Euphrates that has always marked the division between the East and West will dry up allowing the great eastern armies to march across to meet the Antichrist in battle in the land of Israel at the place "that in Hebrew is called Armageddon" (Revelation 16:12-16). Armageddon refers to Har (Mt.) Megiddo in the Valley of Jezreel – sometimes known as the plain of Esraelon. It is in this large fertile plain between Jerusalem and the port of Haifa – the perfect staging ground to defend the best passage into Eastern Europe – that the final battle lines will be drawn. I think it is of this day that Isaiah wrote: "On that day the Lord will punish the host of heaven, in heaven, and the kings of the earth, on the earth. They will be gathered together as prisoners in a pit; they will be shut up in a prison, and after many days will be punished" (Isaiah 24:21-22). As Jesus returns in the air He will be met by "the beast and the kings of the earth gathered to make war against Him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. And the beast was captured...thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur. And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse" (Revelation 19:20-21).

This marks the end of the detestable character of the Antichrist and all the evil that he advanced in Satan's cause here on earth at the cost of so much bloodshed!

The False Prophet

David J. Nixon

This article is taken from a longer piece "The Unholy Trinity Operating in the Last Days" by David J. Nixon

In Revelation 13 we are introduced to the third character in the unholy trinity of the False Prophet, who while initially called the “Beast out of Earth” (Revelation 13:11) is later referred to as “the false prophet” (Revelation 20:20). It seems that the Antichrist is the political and military leader of the unholy trinity while the False Prophet is the religious backer of the enterprise. He is depicted as a lamb with 2 horns and with the mouth of a dragon. Breaking down the images, we see a character with power as symbolised by the 2 horns and counterfeit heretical Christianity as expressed by the appearance of a lamb (the ordinary image of Christ) but with the mouth of a dragon (Satan).

The scriptures themselves are plain at explaining what the role of the False Prophet is: “exercises all authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast whose mortal wound was healed” (Revelation 13:12) If we stop here momentarily then it bears considering that one thing I deliberately held off discussing previously was the passage where John describes the Antichrist beast image as having “one of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marvelled as they followed the beast” (Revelation 13:3). Many take this passage to indicate that the Antichrist will stage some faux-resurrection after an attempt on his life (see the apparent description of an attack in verse 14b) to again mimic God’s design but with a twist – some go so far as to say that the post-resurrected Antichrist is really fully possessed by Satan and that is where his power comes from. Whatever the precise meaning, the effect is clear in that there grows around him a religious cult which the False Prophet then organises worship around. To substantiate the claims to deity that the Antichrist will make in the Temple in the Abomination of Desolation (2 Thessalonians 2:4) the passage goes to say: “it performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people,” (a demonstration which mimics that of Elijah on Mount Carmel facing the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18 and indeed a call to take Jesus’ warning to test all things seriously: “for false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect” (Matthew 24:24)).

The False Prophet causes the people to create an idol to worship the Antichrist and using some sorcery is able to cause this statue to speak and together they demand that all those who will not worship the Antichrist are to be killed (Revelation 13:15). Like Antiochus before him, Antichrist will likely set this idol up in the Temple, which is probably what is referred to as setting up an abomination on the wing of the Temple in Daniel 9:27. We read later that this method of killing likely will involve decapitation: “Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands” (Revelation 20:4).

This leads us nicely into considering how the False Prophet initiates the Mark of the Beast system – likely one of the most recognisable elements in the popular knowledge of eschatology. It is set up as a way to prevent anyone who refuses to worship the Antichrist from taking part in the global economy and as a result make their lives very difficult to just survive (Revelation 13:17). Again if I can proffer a suggestion, just as Jesus says that we are to seek our daily bread from God and that He is the bread of life; Satan will similarly seek people to rely on worship of Antichrist and himself for them to be able to get their literal daily bread. The Mark itself is somehow connected with the name of the Antichrist, which is itself connected with his number 666 (Revelation 13:17b-18). I do not know the connection and I very strongly doubt any one today does, so I will not waste time here in idle speculation

concerning it in any depth.

The Mark itself is to be taken on the right hand or forehead. Now there is some debate in eschatology over whether there will be a real mark or not because other passages talk about God placing a mark on His people during the 70th Week also, which they say does not have to be physical. I have set out in this article already to show that Satan has a way of perverting God's design and so I would argue that he perverts God's design by making it a physical Mark. Previously I have stumbled on these passages which are also illuminating to consider in our study: "And [Passover] shall be to you as a sign on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the law of Lord may be in your mouth." (Exodus 13:9), "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might... You shall bind [the words of this command] as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes." (Deuteronomy 6:5, 8). They show that there is a God given command for remembrance and worship of Him to be somehow symbolised as being worn on our foreheads and hands, and interestingly in the second passage it is the first commandment of absolute allegiance to God which we are meant to be remembering that is the focus. Is it not then interesting how Satan seeks to twist things in the Mark of the Beast making it himself and the Antichrist as the focus of the world's worship and making it an actual Mark on the skin? Therefore, I think his placing the Mark in these places on the body is by no means accidental in light of these passages!

The eternal consequences of taking the Mark of the Beast and being a part of the False Prophet's religious system are clearly set out: "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshippers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name" (Revelation 14:9-11). Also more immediately they shall receive the full brunt of the suffering poured out in the Bowl of Wrath judgements (Revelation 16:2, 10-11)

The end of the False Prophet comes at the battle of Armageddon when Christ returns in the Second Coming: "And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur" (Revelation 19:20).

Between them, the unholy trinity will have caused vast multitudes of people to follow them into eternal damnation in the Lake of Fire. At the end of such bloodshed and evil throughout human history, there then comes this hopeful and encouraging thought of what is ahead in God's redemptive plan once the 70th week and Millennial Kingdom are over: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and first earth had passed away... Behold the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them and they will be his people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning or crying nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:1,3-4).

The Mark of the Beast

David J. Nixon

In modern day common perceptions of eschatology, there is hardly any more popular image than the "Mark of the Beast"! Christian film makers and authors have used this Biblical device to tell great and horrifying stories in recent decades, but what does the Bible really have to say about it? This short article hopes to put together the scriptures on the matter.

We read in Revelation 13 that around the mid-point of the Tribulation an event called the Abomination of Desolation will occur whereby the Antichrist will stop the Temple sacrifices (Daniel 9:27, Daniel 12:12) and declare himself to be god (2 Thessalonians 2:4). The Antichrist's 'side-kick', the False Prophet, will then create an entire religious worship cult around him for we read that some apparent miraculous healing will restore the fatally wounded Antichrist: "I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast...all who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain...[The False Prophet] exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed" (Revelation 13:3, 8, 12).

An important part of the worship system of the Antichrist will be the Mark of the Beast programme which the scriptures say the False Prophet will "cause all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free man and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or their forehead, and he provides that no one will be able to buy or sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name" (Revelation 13:16-17). This will mean that anyone who will not worship the Antichrist will be cut off from the global economy and find it very difficult to make a living. I have commented in the past that it is ironic that just as Jesus says He is the bread of life, and that we are to pray for God the Father to provide us with our daily bread; that the Antichrist will demand people worship him to literally get bread and whatever else they need to live. Those who refuse to conform are condemned to death by the False Prophet and the voice he is able to demonically manifest in the Image of the Beast, set up in the Temple (Revelation 13:15). It is very strongly implied in later visions of John in Heaven that the preferred method of killing will be decapitation (Revelation 20:4), thus the widespread use of guillotines in Christian fiction.

The choice of physical positioning of the Mark of the Beast is, I believe, significant. According to some Old Testament scriptures the Feast of Passover is to act as a reminder of God's covenant relationship with man as a metaphorical symbol on the hand and forehead (Exodus 13:9), and the Israelites were commanded to bind the words of the first commandment to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and mind like a sign on the hand and forehead (Deuteronomy 6:5-8). It seems that the Antichrist will again ironically have the symbol of allegiance and worship placed in these Biblically significant areas to show the literal sign of peoples' allegiance to him and Satan.

One of the most commonly known elements of the Mark of the Beast is the significance of the number 666 in it, which is said to be directly related to the person and name of the Antichrist (Revelation 13:17b-18). It is said that someone with wisdom will be able to calculate and understand the significance of this number, which suggests that it may require someone with a knowledge of Hebrew gematria to work out the value of the Antichrist's name in numerical characters. However, others note that this is simply a threefold repetition of 6 - the number of man in scripture -, with such threefold repetitions being common e.g. "holy, holy, holy" as another. There has been some controversy in recent years suggesting that there have been discovered some manuscripts of Revelation which render the number as 616, however, this is a non-story if we remember that there are thousands of manuscripts

which allow us to ensure that we have the accurate text of the New Testament today as it was given originally. The discovery of one incorrect manuscript in face of the overwhelming body of other documentary evidence is surely irrelevant!

The consequences for those who take the Mark of the Beast are terrible as it prompts an angel to be sent across the Earth declaring the warning: "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of his anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name" (Revelation 14:9-11). There is absolutely no indication of any opportunity for repentance from taking the Mark of the Beast. It therefore follows that this act is the irreversible rejection of God in favour of Satan, and as a result is a very significant turning point in a person's life during the Tribulation. Despite facing death at the Antichrist's hands, it is far better for a man to give up his life and save his soul in eternity than to live a few short and horrifying years to the conclusion of the Tribulation only to be cast into the Lake of Fire. Let there be no mistake: you must not ever, no matter what, take the Mark of the Beast nor worship the Image of the Beast in the Temple!

The Two Witnesses of Revelation

David J. Nixon

While the world begins to fall apart during the first half of Daniel's 70th Week and potentially there is no Church present (if you subscribe to believe in the Pre-Tribulation timing of the Rapture) the Lord provides two witnesses to be the great evangelists of the last days. They will be important characters who will ultimately be confronted by the Antichrist as Satan's man turns against God's men. We can only tell so much from the scripture passages that we have been given on them and so will briefly consider them here.

In Revelation 11:3-14 we are introduced to these two characters. They are described as "two olive trees and the two lampstands" and when we consider each of these images we can learn a few things. The olive tree is used in other prophetic passages by Jesus (Matthew 24:32-35) and Paul (Romans 11:17-27) to describe the nation of Israel and these passages in particular are describing the future rebirth of the nation in the land prior to the commencement of the 70th Week when Antichrist will form a 7 year covenant with national Israel. It therefore is reasonable to presume that the two witnesses will be Jewish - as to their actual identity will be turn shortly. The image of the lampstands harkens back to the description of the seven churches in Revelation 1:20 as being seven lampstands. There is then clearly a connection between the ministry of the Church and the ministry of the witnesses. Just what that connection is is unclear from the passage. There is a warning to the Church of Ephesus in Revelation 2:6 that she must repent or else her lampstand will be removed. Just what the lampstand represents in the Church's ministry is unclear, but will be somehow present in the ministry of the witnesses. Certainly they will be preaching the gospel through prophesying (Revelation 11:3) and their testimony (Revelation 11:7).

Their ministry will afford them divine protection against those who would rise up against them - especially in Israel where the religious Jews may attempt to stone them for preaching Jesus Christ as the Messiah. It is said that fire will come from their mouths and kill their foes (Revelation 11:5). I do not see why this should not be taken literally, because it is not just mere defeating arguments by powerful words being described but the actual death of the enemies. They will have the power to cause plagues and drought in the world and even turn water into blood (Revelation 11:6) and these descriptions of their powers will be important when we look at the potential candidates for the two witnesses now.

There are three main candidates although two are widely accepted as the best interpretation of the passage. When we were introduced to the witnesses they were "the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth" (Revelation 11:4). Some take this to mean that the witnesses are already in Heaven before their commissioning on Earth because they are standing before the Lord. There is a potential for this being not the best interpretation because Jesus is described as walking among the seven lampstands of the churches in Revelation 2:1, which we wouldn't take to mean that they are already in Heaven. Arguably though this is describing Jesus' relationship with the churches while on Earth and there is no claim that they are standing before Him in Heaven, so there is no difficulty to reconcile. This does form the basis though that these two witnesses are not just two people providentially elected to fulfil this End Time role; instead that they are two characters from Israel's history who return to point the people to Jesus as Messiah.

The plagues and turning water into blood are associated with Moses in Egypt; while the causing of drought is associated with Elijah during the time of the conflict with King Ahab, Queen Jezebel and the prophets of Baal. Elijah never died, instead he was taken up into Heaven in a sort of Old Testament rapture experience (2 Kings 2). Elijah was also prophesied to come again in the future and make way for the Messiah, which was fulfilled by John the Baptist as Jesus admits that he has already come

(Matthew 17:12). Does this mean that Elijah cannot still come again in the Tribulation? Arguably no, for John the Baptist came in the "spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17) and also was miraculously (but not immaculately) conceived in his mother Elizabeth's womb to father Zechariah. We do not believe in reincarnation as Christians and so the Elijah bodily caught up into Heaven in the Old Testament still has the potential to return to the Earth in that body, at least as far as I can see from the scriptures.

Moses died on top of Mount Nebo overlooking the Jordan River into the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 34:7) and there is even the very strange description of a dispute between the Archangel Michael and Satan over Moses' bones (Jude 1:9). He was the greatest prophet in the whole history of the nation of Israel because he spoke directly with God. As a result many believe that he will be the second witness. However, there is also the often forgotten Antediluvian prophet Enoch who I believe is another possibility. We are told very little about Enoch in scripture other than that he was a faithful man of God who walked with Him and one day was found no more because he was taken by Him into Heaven (Genesis 5:24). He stands with Elijah as the only two people to be taken into Heaven without having bodily died on Earth, unlike Moses, and as the witnesses are destined to die on Earth and be resurrected (Revelation 11:8-11) this would all fit nicely together. However, we will only find out whenever the time comes, so should not get too obsessed with this topic when we just do not know!

Whatever their identity the time given over to the witnesses is said to be 1260 days (Revelation 11:3) which by now readers of my articles will know is the equivalent of 3.5 years in the Hebrew calendar and is often described in the prophets as a "time, times and half a time". This period is exactly half of the 70th Week of Daniel and we are told that their time will end when they are confronted by the Antichrist in the city of Jerusalem (Revelation 11:7-8). I would suggest that their time of witnessing will likely run throughout most of the first half of the 70th Week because we read in Revelation 13 that the Antichrist's satanic empowerment will commence at the half way point and he will then attack the temple in the Abomination of Desolation by declaring himself to be god (Daniel 9:27, 2 Thessalonians 2:4). It seems given the description of the Antichrist's war against Israel and then the Believing Saints which begins at this time (Revelation 13:7) that he will turn against the Witnesses at this moment rather than allow them to preach and cause problems around the world any longer. The scriptures indicate that there will be great rejoicing by the peoples' of the world for 3.5 days while they lie dead in the streets but that they will simply get up after this time and be bodily resurrected as they are caught up into Heaven (Revelation 11:12). The description here is very interesting because it mirrors John's experience in Revelation 3 when he too is called up into Heaven by a loud voice that sounds like a trumpet - an event that many interpret as being the same as 1 Thessalonians 4:16 when there is a clear description of the Rapture. In the aftermath of this event there is a great earthquake which damages much of Jerusalem and causes alarm and fear of God in the people.

The role of the Two Witnesses in conjunction with the sealed 144,000 Jewish evangelists (Revelation 7; 14:1-5) is a fascinating one during the Tribulation and I suspect that their need in the world is due to an absence of the Church due to the Rapture and so they are needed to be able to communicate the Gospel to people, so that as God's judgements descend and people do in fact repent from their hardened sinful ways that they can hear the Gospel message. Their operation in Israel will likely be one of the crucial factors in bringing her back to the Lord to declare "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord" (Matthew 23:39).

The Revived Roman Empire - Kingdom of the Antichrist?

David J. Nixon

The Bible contains a great deal of history but it does something that not even the greatest secular history book can do: the Bible predicts with absolute accuracy the future of history. This claim has been substantiated hundreds of times over the centuries as prophecies made in the Bible have come true and their fulfilment been recorded as historical fact. One of my favourite examples is found in Isaiah 45 where the prophet not only predicts the name of the Medo-Persian King Cyrus who would defeat the city of Babylon almost 200 years later, but also gives us an insight into his cunning military strategy to infiltrate his men into the city and open the gates before the invading army by having them redirect the flow of the Euphrates River which flowed through the city so it was shallow enough to send troops along the riverbed and up into the city through the gates which were left open due to a large celebration going on in the king's palace, where God Himself showed up to prophesy their imminent deaths that night (Daniel 5).

One of the greatest prophets in scripture, ironically in the Hebrew canon is one of the minor prophets - I of course am speaking of Daniel. This is one of the most thrilling and incredible prophetic books that we have been gifted with in the Bible and it contains so much predictive prophecy concerning historical events. We are currently concerned with what it has to say concerning the Kingdom of the Antichrist, and we will get to why it is often referred to as the "Revived Roman Empire".

In Daniel 2 we read the story of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream which when interpreted by Daniel showed the progression of great Gentile empires which would rule over Israel until the Lord's Kingdom came to destroy the manmade systems of this world. The statue was comprised of 5 parts each composed of a different material:

- *Babylon* represented by the gold head
- *Medo-Persia* represented by the silver arms and chest
- *Greece* represented by the bronze thighs
- *Rome* by the iron legs (interestingly the two legs can be taken to depict the split of the Empire in 395AD)
- *Revived Roman Empire* by the iron mixed with clay feet

The Lord's kingdom is then depicted as the stone cut out without hands which hits the iron mixed with clay feet of the statue causing the whole construct to collapse. We therefore have the basis that the final world empire that will be destroyed directly by the Lord's coming will be in some way connected with the former Roman Empire.

We then need to progress to a second vision that is directly perceived by Daniel this time in Daniel 7, where we have the same picture for the rest of human empires which will rule over Israel - interestingly this time since we are seeing God's perspective on these empires, rather than man's from Nebuchadnezzar's perspective, we see them depicted not as an object of respect but as wild beasts needing control. In this vision we see 4 beasts depicted which correspond with the previous ones. Now you may wonder about why there is a discrepancy between there being 5 parts of the statue, and only 4 beasts but it is because the final empire, the Revived Roman Empire, is depicted in the form of 10 horns on the fourth beast's head (which correspond with the 10 toes on the statue with the feet of iron mixed with clay). Let's just break it down again:

- *A lion with the wings of an eagle*: this is the Babylonian Empire which Jeremiah 4 prophesied would destroy Judah if it did not repent using these same images of the strength of a lion and swiftness of an

eagle. (7:4)

- *A bear raised up on one side with 3 ribs in its mouth*: this is the Medo-Persian Empire, raised up on one side because the Persians were the superior people in the Empire. The 3 ribs likely refer to the 3 conquests of the Empire in taking over the spoils of Lydia, Babylon and Egypt. (7:5)

- *A leopard with 4 wings on its back and 4 heads*: this is the Grecian Empire initially under Alexander the Great which quickly conquered the known world shown by the wings but after his death at an untimely early age of 32 his empire was divided between his 4 generals – signified by the 4 heads (7:6) and which Daniel also later prophesied about (11:4)

- *A terrifying beast with iron teeth and 10 horns*: this is the Roman Empire, and the last of all the Beasts shown to Daniel. The iron teeth correspond to the iron legs that Nebuchadnezzar saw, and the 10 horns correspond with the 10 nations depicted as the iron mixed with clay toes of the statue (7:7). From these 10 horns arose another smaller one which spoke boasting words and which was judged directly by God through destruction and being cast into the burning river of fire that was before God's throne (7:10-11)

It is this fourth and final and its ten horns that interest Daniel the most so that he enquires the meaning of it. The answer comes: "As for the fourth beast, there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms and it shall devour the whole earth and trample it down, and break it to pieces. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings. He shall speak words against the Most High and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, times and half a time" (Daniel 7:23-25). The little horn which is different to the existing ten kings can be identified as the Antichrist given the correlation of this passage with Daniel 70 week prophecy which depict the Antichrist as reigning in the 7 years prior to Christ's return (Daniel 9:27), and John's visions in Revelation in which it is revealed to him that the Antichrist will wage war firstly against Israel and when thwarted by God's miraculous deliverance will turn against the Saints (Revelation 13:7). The little horn which is depicted as being thrown into the burning river of fire in (Daniel 7:10-11) also corresponds with the description of the outcome of the battle of Armageddon when the Antichrist is cast into the Lake of Fire at Christ's Second Coming (Revelation 19:20).

So we have the depiction of a final world empire that will come to be controlled by the Antichrist who will arise out of 10 kings, but will be less powerful and different from them initially. If we take Revelation 17 into the picture at this juncture and assume that the 7 headed beast is the same as the 7 headed beast out of the sea in Revelation 13 - an image of the Antichrist in Revelation - then we learn more about his rise into power. He will initially reign with the 10 kings (17:12) but he will overcome 3 of them at some point in his rise into power and will also be handed over by them their power (17:13). Antichrist will use his newfound power to turn on Israel and the Saints still on Earth (17:14) around the midpoint of the 70th week (Daniel 9:27) when he will seat himself in the Temple of God and declare himself to be god (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

Given the clear connection between the earlier and still future revived Roman Empire we can expect to see some political and geographical grouping come together in Europe, likely spanning the territory formerly controlled by Rome, which included much of continental Europe and the southern Mediterranean bordering countries too. Since Rome divided into two separate empires some see the possibility of the Antichrist arising out of either an Eastern or a Western Empire, and this division today normally arises between those who see the possibility of an Islamic Antichrist and those who see a more future European Union secular Antichrist. Either way it does appear that it is indeed proper to refer to the final world empire of the Antichrist as the "Revived Roman Empire".

The Battle of Armageddon

David J. Nixon

The Old Testament scriptures foretell that in the Last Days the city of Jerusalem will become an important focal point of global political and militaristic intrigue: "Behold I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around; and when siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah. It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it" (Zechariah 14:2-4). The phrase "in that day" occurs throughout Zechariah as he prophesies about the campaign of Armageddon that culminates in the "Day of the Lord" when the Second Coming occurs as indicated by John's Revelation visions of the 6th Bowl Judgement when the River Euphrates dries up in preparation for the gathering of the world's armies in Israel: "which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty" (Revelation 16:14). Zechariah prophesied concerning this day that "Behold a day is coming for the Lord when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you. For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of them will not be cut off from the city. Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem" (Zechariah 14:1-4) and this correlates with the post-ascension appearance of the angel to the apostles telling them of Christ's future return to this spot on the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:11).

So it appears from these scriptures that the Antichrist will gather his armies against Jerusalem immediately prior to the Lord's Second Coming. Daniel also described this same event saying that Antichrist will respond to threats from the East by marching into Israel and setting up camp between the Mediterranean Sea and Mount Zion and it is here that he will meet his end (Daniel 11:44-45). John then tells us that the location of this gathering will be to the place called Armageddon in the Hebrew tongue, which simply translates as Mount Megiddo (Armageddon/Har Megiddo, "Har" = Mount) (Revelation 16:16). This place is in the Valley of Jezreel on the Plain of Esraelon, which falls between the key port of Haifa that is the best route to enter into continental Europe and the city of Jerusalem. So here we see the Old and New Testament prophetic pictures coming together.

The battle will be marked by incredible stellar disturbances which we cannot begin to imagine, but which are written of in the prophets concerning this day: "So it will happen in that day, that the Lord will punish the host of heaven on high, and the kings of the earth on earth. They will be gathered together like prisoners in the dungeon, and will be confined in prison; and after many days they will be punished. Then the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed, for the Lord of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and His glory will be before His elders." (Isaiah 24:21-23); "It will come about in that day that there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle. For it will be a unique day which is known to the Lord, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light" (Zechariah 14:6-7). Indeed there will also be incredible geological and ecological upheaval testified of in both Testaments too: "And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found" (Revelation 16:20), "Behold the Lord lays the earth waste, devastates it, distorts its surface and scatters its inhabitants" (Isaiah 24:1).

The outcome of the battle is sealed when Jesus Christ appears in the air in the Second Coming along with the armies of Heaven, including the raptured Saints (Revelation 19:11-16). The destruction of the armies of the Antichrist and his armies are prophesied of by both Testaments and I think that they need no further elaboration as they are clear in their interpretation: "And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received

the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh" (Revelation 19:20-21); "Now this will be the plague which the Lord will strike all the peoples who have gone to war against Jerusalem; their flesh will rot while they stand on their feet, and their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongue will rot in their mouth. It will come about in that day that a great panic from the Lord will fall on them; and they will seize one another's hand, and the hand of one will be lifted against the hand of another" (Zechariah 12-13); "Therefore a curse devours the earth and those who live in it are held guilty. Therefore, the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left" (Isaiah 24:6).

Doubtless this battle which marks the end of the Antichrist's reign will be the bloodiest event in human history as the forces of good and evil come to the ultimate clash. It even appears from the gory description of the volume of blood produced in the battle that it will not be a PG event: "And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles for a distance of two hundred miles" (Revelation 14:20). Some experts have calculated that this volume of blood would need the death of more than 200 million people - an incredible description of the potential size of the battle.

What comes after the battle is the setting up of Christ's kingdom on Earth for 1000 years in the Millennial Kingdom.