



THE FINAL ROAR

THE QUESTIONS...

THE ANSWERS...

THE END OF THE AGE...

ROD PARSLEY

THE FINAL ROAR

The Questions
The Answers
The End of the Age

ROD PARSLEY



Columbus, Ohio

The Final Roar: The Questions, The Answers, The End of the Age

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INTRODUCTION

Christians are fascinated by the imagery and information in Revelation, but the subject matter in the book has led to a wide variety of conclusions about its meaning. For instance, in Revelation 5:5, one of the elders around the throne of God identifies someone among heaven's hosts as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. Just a few verses later, this same person is described as a Lamb. This can, of course, be none other than our Savior, the Lord of Glory, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. But why is He described in terms that everyone would agree are opposites? How can He be a lion and a lamb at the same time?

Those who read the Bible will undoubtedly have more questions than answers when encountering Revelation for the first time—or the fiftieth time. But that's not a bad thing.

Questions lead to answers. The ancient Greeks recognized this, which is why they emphasized the value of questions in their schools of philosophy. Aristotle, one of the most famous Greek scholars of the classical period, listed seven questions that are fundamental to learning, regardless of the subject. They are who, what, where, when, with, how and why.

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My purpose is to answer all seven of these questions regarding the end of the age, using the book of Revelation as a guide. Here they are, in order:

1. The Roar of the Imposter: Who Is the Antichrist?
2. The Roar of Intimidation: What Is the Mark of the Beast?
3. The Roar of the Return: When Is Jesus Coming Back?
4. The Roar of the Region: Where Will These Things Take Place?
5. The Roar of Reason: Why Will These Things Happen?
6. The Roar of the Age: How Long Is the Tribulation?
7. The Roar of the Appearing: With Whom or With What Is He Coming?

But before I answer any of these questions, I don't want to leave you hanging in suspense about the Lion and the Lamb. Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God, sent into the world, born of a woman, fully human, to be the final sacrifice for sin. As such, He is the ultimate Lamb.

But that's not all He is. He is also fully God and is coming back not as a bleeding sacrifice, but as a conquering king. Without a doubt He is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, and He will rule and reign forever.

The imagery of a lion is particularly appropriate when applied to our soon-coming King. When a lion

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roars, every other beast within hearing takes notice. And the only thing that can quell the roar of a lion is the roar of another lion. A lion may be regarded as the king of beasts, but Jesus Christ is the King of kings. He is Lord over everything, and no voice can overcome or silence His roar.

There are many voices in the world, and all of them have significance. But the voice that a believer's heart is attuned to hear above any other is the roar of the King of all creation—Jesus Christ.

Chapter One

The Roar of the Imposter: Who Is the Antichrist?

God-given dominion is a part of our human DNA, but it has become terribly twisted into an inhumane effort by the few to dominate the many. Today, this ungodly impulse for domination is combined with global problems to which there seem to be no solutions. Genocide and ethnic cleansing are more predominant today than ever. Stubborn foes fight over disputed borders with no end in sight. Enemies—who will not accept peace when it's offered—bitterly denounce wrongs they've suffered in an effort to generate even more terror and unrest.

As global tensions increase, the universal cry for a leader who can restore order will rise above the clamor of chaos. When it seems there is no answer, a leader will emerge with manicured hands, a perverse mind, and a demonic spirit. He'll be endowed with bright and burnished credentials, but only darkness will flow from his

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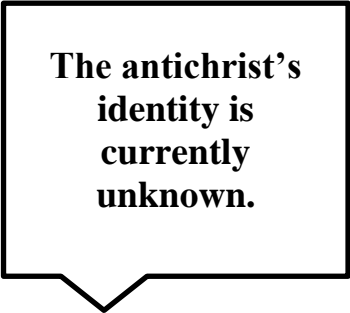
blackened core. His words will be pleasing, but his agenda will be horrifying.

Larry Norman, that pioneer of Jesus music, described the antichrist this way: “in the midst of the war, he offered us peace / he came like a lover from out of the east / with the face of an angel and the heart of a beast / his intentions were 666.”

Speculation About the Antichrist’s Identity

His rapid rise and irresistible appeal will so overshadow other politicians that they will be immediately catapulted into the depths of irrelevance.

His identity is currently unknown—although it’s likely he’s alive at this moment. He will be a model citizen of the international community—a cosmopolitan fig-



**The antichrist’s
identity is
currently
unknown.**

ure—a true man of the world. He’ll be the unequaled darling of the media; respected for his accomplishments; he’ll exhibit the finest of human characteristics. He’ll be highly educated, refined, wealthy, and well-connected. Men will consider it the highest privilege and greatest honor just to stand in his presence.

Don’t bother to speculate about his identity—it is destined to remain a mystery until the time appointed

for his revealing. Preachers the world over have made predictions about who would hold this dubious distinction, but have been sorely disappointed when their preferred candidates have all died.

Here's a Bible resume—Revelation 6:1-2 (NIV):

"I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, 'Come!' I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest."

Please don't mistake the imagery of this white horse rider with another conqueror who rides a white horse later in the book of Revelation. That "rider" is not the "antichrist," but "the" Christ.

The antichrist rides a white horse because he is the ultimate imposter. He does everything he can to imitate God, but the contrasts are telling and compelling.

1. Christ came from above (John 6:38); antichrist will ascend from the pit (Revelation 11:7)
2. Christ came in His Father's name (John 5:43); antichrist will come in his own name (John 5:43)
3. Christ humbled Himself (Philippians 2:8); antichrist will exalt himself (2 Thessalonians 2:4)

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4. Christ was despised (Isaiah 53:3); antichrist will be admired (Revelation 13:3-4)
5. Christ will be exalted (Philippians 2:9); antichrist will be cast down (Revelation 19:20)
6. Christ came to do His Father's will (John 6:38); antichrist will come to do his own will (Daniel 11:36)
7. Christ came to save (Luke 19:10); antichrist will come to destroy (Daniel 8:24)
8. Christ is the truth (John 14:6); antichrist is the lie (2 Thessalonians 2:11)
9. Christ is the Son of God (Luke 1:35); antichrist is the son of perdition (2 Thessalonians 2:3)
10. Christ is the mystery of godliness in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16); antichrist will be the mystery of iniquity, Satan made manifest in the flesh (2 Thessalonians 2:7)

A Counterfeit of Christ

Riding on his counterfeit white horse, the antichrist carries a bow; whereas, the true Christ is never seen with a bow, but with a sword. I like this—the antichrist has a bow, but he has no arrows. This reveals that he will accomplish most of his work through diplomacy and the veiled threat of force. He won't resort to violent force until he consolidates his power.

At first, he'll be a master of manipulation and get what he wants free of charge through skillful negotiation. He will be hailed as a man of peace, but his appearance will signal destruction, not rest and peace. The horsemen who follow him in close succession are not peace and prosperity, but war, famine, and death with hell riding along for good measure.

**The antichrist
will be a master
of manipulation.**

Using Revelation 13 as our guide, let me summarize several of the antichrist's major activities. First, he ascends to power precipitously—he will appear to burst onto the world stage out of nowhere. His rise to power is not natural, but supernatural. Verse two says the antichrist receives his authority from the dragon, Satan himself.

"And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea . . . The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority."

Rebellion Will Be Unthinkable

Next, in spite of the turmoil that accompanies his ascension, the antichrist persuades entire nations to swear their allegiance to him and him alone. As his influence

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spreads like a black plague, rebellion will become unthinkable.

He will control the political, economic, and religious systems of much of earth's population. Due to the influence of our interconnected global economy, where conditions in one nation are affected by conditions in others across the globe, those regions not under his direct control will come under extreme pressure. They'll be met with unprecedented economic sanctions and military might, making life outside his dominion difficult to endure.

The antichrist's coalition of countries will require supernatural help which only he can promise. It'll be a fragile and easily fractured group with diverse interests, but the antichrist, assisted by the false prophet, will hold it all together through the supernatural power of demon spirits and lying signs and wonders.

" . . . This kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay."

~ Daniel 2:41-43

The antichrist will also rule over a global religious kingdom—we see it in Revelation 17. The harlot, which represents a worldwide religious system, rides the beast

(the antichrist), but will eventually be destroyed by the beast it seeks to control. This means that the antichrist will throw off the vestiges of any religious dogma and insist on being worshipped as God himself! He will not share his glory with any other man or religious system.

Most importantly, the antichrist will attempt to control the economies of the world through a number assigned to every human being. (See Revelation 13:16-18.) But world domination, worship, and economic control won't be enough to satisfy the antichrist. The most important item on his diabolical agenda is the annihilation of the apple of God's eye—the nation of Israel and that shimmering diamond on a velvet couch—its capital, the holy city of Jerusalem.

A Broken Covenant

The terrible imagery of Revelation 12 gives us a foreshadowing of the persecution that will come upon Israel during the last three and a half years of the seven-year tribulation period. Don't forget, the Church and the Holy Spirit are raptured to heaven—these seven years involve God's determined dealings with Israel. This chapter chronicles Satan's blinding hatred for Israel and his mad attempts to use the antichrist to destroy her.

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According to Daniel 9:27, the antichrist makes a covenant with Israel, but breaks it at the midpoint of the tribulation.

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

What treachery! The antichrist makes a covenant with Israel, promising to protect her, and then turns his back on his solemn promise and instead seeks her destruction. The abomination that causes desolation is the antichrist’s idolatrous act of erecting a statue to himself in the Jewish temple of Jerusalem. What happens afterward will make Hitler’s holocaust look like a Sunday school picnic. Jesus spoke about it in Matthew 24:15-16:

“So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel – let the reader understand – then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. . . .”

Jesus warned them that when this abominable idol was set up, they should run for the hills because persecution and tribulation are coming, the likes of which the world has never seen. It will be a time when the world is dying, the moon is bleeding, and the seas are seething to

spill their dead in the lap of God. Israel will willingly embrace the antichrist's promise to protect her borders because of the unrelenting violence that has become her daily routine. But this covenant will not last, and the antichrist will become Israel's deadliest enemy.

By the end of the seven-year tribulation period, war has ravaged the globe. Famine stalks the world. Plagues, unprecedented in scope and severity, have poisoned the earth. Men's most dangerous foes are those of his own household. The concepts of peace, safety, and security are now just words with no meaning. Satan's perversion of humanity—the culmination of his foul work—is fully manifested in the antichrist, the epitome of every evil and abomination wrapped in human flesh.

**Famine stalks
the world.**

If this were the end of the story, it would be a shameful thing to so much as utter it in public. If it was the culmination of God's plan for creation to come to such unalterable catastrophe, it would be a perversion to glorify it with human speech. But my friends, remember this: if there is a counterfeit, there is a genuine article. If there is an imposter, the real surely exists. If there is an antichrist, there is a real Christ, and I submit to you that He—the real Christ—is truly the end of the story.

Chapter Two

The Roar of Intimidation: What Is the Mark of the Beast?

No conspiracy theory or tale of intrigue is as compelling and frightening as the narrative introduced in Revelation 13 regarding the mark of the beast.

Revelation 13:1 says:

“I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, with ten crowns on his horns, and blasphemous names on his heads.”

Verses 16-18 continue:

He causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, so that no one may buy or sell, except he who has the mark or the name of the beast or the number of his name. Here is a call for wisdom: let him who has understanding calculate the number

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of the beast. It is the number of a man. His number is six hundred and sixty-six.

Man's final days will be all Daniel saw them to be. Daniel 8:23 says:

"In the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their limit, a king will arise, having a fierce countenance, skilled in intrigue."

World Domination

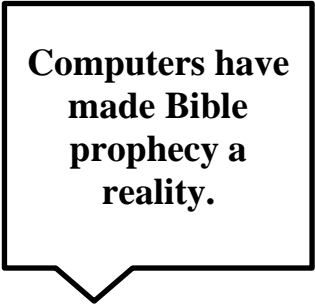
The antichrist will attempt to achieve world domination by gaining control of the global economy and international currency. He will impose a substitute—a different medium—unknown and unused by past generations.

This political leader will seek absolute control of global commerce. No longer will regions or nations of the world be distinguished by distinctive monetary systems. The dollar, the yen, and the pound will go the way of the Italian lira, the French franc, and the German mark as a global currency captures man's imagination like the euro has already done throughout much of Europe.

The collapse of existing economic systems will continue, and that breakdown will pave the way for a breakthrough technology introduced by the beast himself.

Human identity will be by number only. The common prefix to precede each number will be 666—the number of the antichrist’s name. He will not be satisfied with partial measures. His ultimate agenda will be that every citizen of earth will have to seek his permission for everything they do. His system will attempt to gain and maintain control of every other system—infrastructure, manufacturing, economics, transportation, energy, agriculture, education, government, religion, the military, entertainment, construction, banking and credit, healthcare, information, communication, travel—everything.

Through the mega growth of information technology—computers have made Bible prophecy a reality. The convenience and freedom of shopping on the Internet is well-known and well documented. But every time you make a purchase, someone knows what it is and when it happened, how much you spent and where you had it delivered. In addition, your desire for ease, convenience, and promised benefits prompt you to sign up for the frequent shopper program at your favorite grocery store.



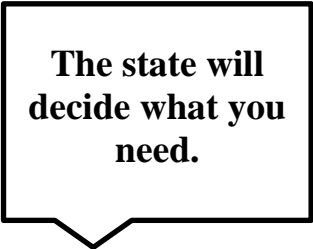
**Computers have
made Bible
prophecy a
reality.**

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But when you pay for your purchases with a credit card or debit card, the store keeps a record of what you bought, in what quantities and when. The evidence of this is that the store then sends you coupons for the exact items you buy most often. Many websites have tracking programs attached to them that monitor how many times you visit the site, and when, and for how long.

Corporations pay a lot of money to find out as much about you as they can. They say they do it to provide you options based on your preferences. But what if a ruthless dictator gained control of that information? It is no great stretch of the imagination to think that he could and would use it for quite different reasons. You would be controlled and constrained. Instead of having more options, you would have only one—obey or suffer the consequences of disobedience.

According to prophecy—"no man might buy or sell"—no transaction will be completed without his prefix. The state will decide if you need an automobile—



**The state will
decide what you
need.**

what kind and when. The state will determine what kind of housing you have and where. Access to your medication will be governed, not by a doctor or a pharmacist, but by some minion who is looking at whether your prescription falls within

arbitrary quotas they must fulfill. If it does, you can have it. If it doesn't, you can't, and no amount of appeals you can make will change it. Think of it—a global economy planned from start to finish by one man.

People Will Be Branded Like Cattle

Hear this preacher—if you will not be marked for Christ, you will be marked for antichrist. You will be branded like a rancher brands his cattle. And his mark will shout every second that you belong to hell!

But look on the bright side—there will surely be new-found freedoms—freedoms from carrying cash or check-book—you'll be mechanized and analyzed. There'll be no privacy. It won't be your name on a check. It will be his number on your body. Should you reject on religious grounds, the solution will be simple. Extermination! Re-read the history of Hitler and his concentration camps for dissidents. Nothing will be accessible to the objector. Your only option . . . Starvation!!!

Historically, in tough times people make the mistake of putting their trust in political masterminds who manipulate the unthinking and undiscerning masses into the perpetuation of their own perversion. They promise to provide everything free of charge and fix everything wrong without cost or sacrifice to you except, that is, for your allegiance.

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The Almighty Government

This kind of political “leap of faith” began in America during the great depression when President Franklin D. Roosevelt promised that the almighty and benevolent federal government would-should-and could provide everything the people needed.

Roosevelt’s first attempts ended in total failure. He eventually learned that most Americans didn’t want something for nothing—as startling as that seems to this generation, they actually wanted to work. This led FDR to utter the memorable quote that I mentioned in my book, *Silent No More*: “The federal government must and shall quit this business of relief. To dole out relief is to administer a narcotic, a subtle destroyer of the human spirit.”

The New Deal programs of the 1930s, including Social Security, began to “condition” an entire generation to expect their government to take care of them in their retirement, during their working life, and even before they went to school.

This new form of “statism” is the spirit of this present age, which emphasizes entitlement and victimhood rather than personal responsibility and resourcefulness. A generation has been raised with the expectation that

someone else owes them everything, and they do not anticipate having to work to earn anything.

They're therefore "pre-conditioned" to accept the claims of a leader who promises them the rainbow—whether he can deliver anything but the rain is a different matter.

Anyone who can take away your sense of responsibility can also take away your freedoms. Here's a story related by a refugee from a developing nation on how to catch wild pigs:

First find out where the wild pigs are feeding. Then put some corn out in an open field. Soon the pigs will come to eat the free corn. Keep putting out free corn every day. After the pigs get used to your free corn, put up a fence along one side of the field. Soon the pigs will get accustomed to the fence. Keep giving them free corn. Then put up another section of fence. Keep giving them free corn. After a while, put up a third section of fence and then a fourth—with a gate in it. Keep giving them free corn. Now, the pigs are no longer working to find their own food. When they get accustomed to the fence with the open gate, slam the gate shut and trap them inside. They've lost their ability to find their own food and have become

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totally dependent on your free corn. They can no longer survive without you.

He Who Controls the Food . . .

He who controls the food controls the population. When my sister was a little girl, her favorite singer was Tennessee Ernie Ford. I can still hear her singing the lyrics to "Sixteen Tons," which have become the byline to what many are now living, "Saint Peter don't you call me 'cause I can't go—I owe my soul to the company store!"

Today, ungodly regimes around the world control entire populations by simply withholding food. Reports of tons of emergency food supplies being diverted from starving masses have been documented by relief agencies. Their efforts to relieve suffering are compromised by political leaders who use the threat of starvation as a means of maintaining power.

Famine is the cruelest of all the horrors that have attended man's sinful career on earth. Lamentations 4:9 says:

"Those killed by the sword are better off than those who die of hunger, for they pine away, stricken for want of the fruits of the field."

During the seven-year tribulation period, famine will prevail. Revelation 6:5-6 shouts:

When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there was a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. Then I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a day's wages, and three quarts of barley for a day's wages, and do not harm the oil and the wine."

Conditions will be so distressed that ordinary working people will have no thought of luxuries or entertainment—survival will be their only goal. On the other hand, the oil and wine—foods of the rich—will be in abundant supply for the few who can afford them.

Into this desperate condition will come a magnificent and magnanimous world leader. With gifts of eloquence and charisma manifested in unequaled persuasive effect, he'll pledge to provide food, shelter, and safety through his unparalleled leadership skills—through his masterful managerial moxie—his Rhodes Scholar intellect and Hollywood leading man good looks. Through his wisdom, charm, and benevolent generosity, he'll promise to meet every

**The antichrist will
promise to meet
every need of
suffering humanity.**

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need of suffering humanity, right down to a chicken in every pot!

To prove his grandiose claims, he'll enlist the services of a powerful and persuasive false prophet who will accomplish the miraculous in his name, including lying signs and wonders. The false prophet will even erect a statue in honor of the antichrist, and cause it to come to life—and then he'll demand that the beast be given wholehearted, unreserved, unquestioned, and unwavering devotion and allegiance by everyone who benefits from his unprecedented kindness.

The Mark of the Beast

This overpowering world leader—never equaled in human history—and his silvery, slippery-tongued sidekick will persuade multiplied millions to swear allegiance to him alone. He'll promise that his followers will never again know lack or experience the gnawing ache of hunger, and he'll prescribe one sure way for the huddled masses to prove their undying devotion. Here it is from Revelation 13:16-17:

He causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, so that no one may buy or sell, except he who has the mark or the name of the beast or the number of his name.

All the food you need will be available—all you have to do is take the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name. That's it. Just one little mark. Just take it. Go ahead. It's easy. Just take the mark of the beast—your hunger will end, your pain, fear, and suffering will be over. Just do it. Take the mark of the beast, it will be your ticket to peace, provision, and protection. Just take the mark of the beast!

There's no risk—the technology has been available for years. It won't hurt any more than a pinprick. It's convenient, and it won't take long to install. All it involves is a tiny microchip implanted in your right hand or forehead. There'll be no more fumbling with or risking the loss of inconvenient plastic cards or cash. Just pass your hand or head in front of the scanner. It's secure; you'll never lose it, even though your wife says you'd lose your head if it wasn't attached. It'll provide safety for your family. If something happens to any one of them, they can be located in minutes by means of that little implanted microchip.

How convenient! How wonderful! How indispensable! Why would anyone not agree to benefit from this incredible technology?

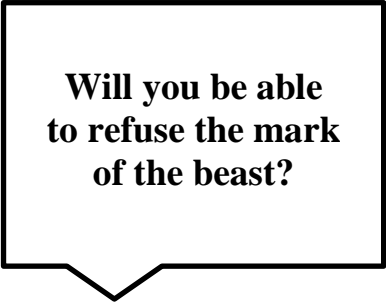
The choices are clear. You can take the mark of the beast and feed your family, continue to live in your home, keep your job, pay your bills, and earn the respect

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of your friends and co-workers. After all, the mark of the beast is the apex of your attempt to “fit in” and become a part of the global family. You know the mantra, “One world, one government, one religion, one leader.” Tolerance and inclusion on a global scale. What could be more perfect (we are the world)!

On the other hand, if you refuse the mark, you’ll be an outcast. You’ll be regarded as a malcontent and a troublemaker. And of course, you’ll be ridiculed with the worst label of all, “intolerant and exclusionary.” You’ll lose your job, your home, and your ability to feed your family. You won’t be able to buy so much as a crust of bread without that mark.

How will you explain to your starving children that you can’t give them the very necessities of life? We’re not



**Will you be able
to refuse the mark
of the beast?**

talking about being unable to give him the latest LeBron’s, or her the latest couture fashion, or them the latest cell phone or video game. How will you be able to face your children as they cry themselves

to sleep alone in some remote area, exposed to the elements with nothing to shelter them? How will you be

able to look them in the eye and tell them that you refused the mark of the beast? They'll know just as you'll know that eventually, if you don't give in and take that mark, you and your entire family will be hunted down like animals and killed. What are you waiting for? Just take the mark!

Who Do You Worship?

Can you imagine how easy it will be for most people to sweep aside their misgivings about becoming a worshipper of the beast? Everyone who takes the mark will have everything they need and live free from the tragedy, terror, and trouble that will torment those who refuse to bear the mark of the beast and the number of his name—666!

You say, "I'd never take that mark." Really? What's your price? What caused you to sell out, and turn your back on God already? Was it a relationship with someone who promised you love? Was it the lure of position or promotion? Haven't you already stopped praying? What about your Bible reading or church attendance? What has already caused your heart to grow cold toward God? Peer pressure? Are you kidding?

Self-preservation is a powerful motivator. Hunger will move people to commit unspeakable acts, and

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everyone who takes the mark of the beast will be consigned to eternity separated from God in a place called hell. Hell is a place where men gnaw their tongues for pain, and the fire is never quenched!

You see, during the reign of the beast and his number 666, no personal agency of self-will or determination, no religious movement, no league of nations, no philosophical posturing, no academic or intellectual institution. no organization on this planet will muster the combined strength to resist him. Hear Daniel prophesy, "He shall devour the whole earth and tread it down and break it in pieces."

You will go where he tells you to go, do what he directs you to do, even speak what he bids you speak. You will parrot back with a blank, empty stare that black is white and white is black, good is evil and evil is good because he said so! Children will curse and betray their parents, parents will betray their children.

I speak from a pulpit in the USA where 90% of the population say they believe in God and 40% say they are born again. Yet few live lives markedly different from the broader culture. Mark my words, every lukewarm believer, every church member just going through the motions of religion, and every person who names the name of Christ yet exhibits none of the spiritual power

that would identify them as being truly born of God—you will be his target!

There is a way to avoid all this trouble. It is by accepting Jesus Christ, the living Savior, into your heart and life. The antichrist may rage, and attempt to control and dominate men by coercion, but for those who trust in Jesus, you won't have to deal with all that—you will be gone from here before he ever makes his appearance.

Chapter Three

The Roar of the Return: When Is Jesus Coming Back?

Let me quote one of the most controversial figures in history. Some dismiss Him as a crank—crazy. Some revere Him as a radical—a revolutionary. Some say He was just a good man, willing to live and die for a noble cause. Some say He never existed at all and was nothing more than the product of the fevered imagination.

These are His words, spoken to eyewitnesses more than two thousand years ago, whose statement was recorded in an ancient manuscript that has withstood the test of time. He said:

Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God. Believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places. If it were not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, you may be also.

~ John 14:1-3

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His name is Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and He said He was coming back.

The question that burns in the hearts of men is, “When?” And I know the answer!

My critics cry out, and the skeptics scoff that no one knows when the end will come. After all, they point out—and, I might add, rightly so—that some who anticipate His coming have said they knew when since Jesus took His leave of earth on that post-resurrection morning from the Mount of Olives outside Jerusalem.

Don't Be A Date Setter

As early as the year 500 A.D., theologians were predicting Jesus' return based on the dimensions of the ark. Pope Sylvester II said that Jesus would return 1,000 years after His birth, on January 1, 1000 A.D. When that failed to materialize, some said He'd return 1,000 years after his death, in 1033 A.D.

The Jehovah's Witnesses are notorious for setting dates for Jesus' return. They did it first in 1914. Then, when that didn't materialize, they set another date for 1925. Of course, that didn't happen either, but they then said it would occur in 1975.

A former NASA engineer wrote the book, *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988*. It sold 4 ½ million copies and none of it was true. Dr. Sumrall said, with a chuckle,

“A lot of preachers were disappointed when all their antichrists—Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin and all the rest—died.”

Nearly every American president has been suspected of being the antichrist, including every recent one. It’s all foolishness.

One pundit mused that the antichrist is Barney the Dinosaur. Here’s the reasoning: Barney is a cute purple dinosaur. Replace the Latin V for the letter u in those words and you get cvte pvrple dinosavr. Now take out all but the Roman letters that stand for numbers: c v l d i v.

**Barney is not
the antichrist.**

Add up the values of all those numbers (100+5+5+50+500+1+5) and you come up with the number—you guessed it—666! (Parents and teachers, please note: this is a joke. Barney is not the antichrist.)

The End of the World

And who could forget Y2K? At midnight, December 31, 1999, every computer controlling global functioning would go berserk, because they couldn’t distinguish the year 2000 from the year 1900.

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So, the Chicken Littles of the day said the power grid was going to go black and financial systems would fail, creating chaos that would plummet us back into the dark ages. But the ball dropped in Times Square just as always, and no disasters befell the world as we entered a new millennium.

I recently saw a greeting card that said, "I don't mean to brag or anything, but this is like the fourth or fifth end of the world I've lived through."

Jesus said there would be signs that would accompany His return. Matthew 24:6-7 lists some of them:

"There will be wars and rumors of wars. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines, epidemics, and earthquakes in various places."

The Rapture of the Church

One unmistakable event that will happen before the return of the Lord is the rapture of the Church, as 1 Thesalonians 4:16-18 declares:

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in

the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

There's a hillside in Kentucky where my parents and my sister have been laid to rest. On the day of Jesus' appearing, I'll be shouting, "Hurry up, Mother! Come on, Dad! Debbie, get out of there! The dead in Christ shall rise first, and we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air—and I don't want to have to wait too long to make my final flight!"

**The dead in Christ
shall rise first.**

It won't matter if you are five miles under the crusty surface of the earth in a coal mine. It won't matter if you are flying above the earth in a 747 aircraft at 35,000 feet.

If you're blood washed, you're coming out of here like metal to a magnet to meet the lord in the air. Like lightning flashing out of a dark-throated storm cloud and faster than the fleetest hoof ever struck a pavement or a wheel turned upon an axle, if you're born again, you're coming out of here!

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The Tribulation

Then, after the rapture, there will be seven years of tribulation. Matthew 24:21 describes it this way:

“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.”

During that seven year period of time that is God’s determined dealing with the nation of Israel, two wit-

**The two witnesses
will be unstoppable.**

nesses will arise, declaring the Word of the Lord right under the antichrist’s nose in Jerusalem. They are unstoppable and unkillable until the time of their minis-

try is concluded. Then they will be overcome by the antichrist, and lie dead in the street for 3 ½ days.

The world will rejoice that they have finally been silenced. But after 3 ½ days, breath will come back into their bodies. Their eyes will open—their hearts will beat—blood will once again course through their veins—they will stand upright on their feet, and will be caught up to heaven with the whole world watching.

Are You Ready for Jesus' Imminent Return?

And then, the second coming will happen exactly as the Bible predicts that it will. Revelation 19:11-13 tells it this way:

I saw heaven opened. And there was a white horse. He who sat on it is called faithful and true, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on His head are many crowns. He has a name written, that no one knows but He Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood. His name is called the word of God.

Jesus will slide His long, lean Galilean leg over a steaming white stallion. The crack of His whip will billow out like the crash of a thousand cannons. The black hair on the head of damnation will turn white with horror.

King Jesus will return to Earth, and all His saints with Him. And there is nothing the devil, the antichrist, or the false prophet will be able to do about it!

Jesus is coming again. And I know when! I want to share it with you. It's no prediction but absolute truth!

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Here it is, from Luke 12:40:

“So don’t you be thoughtless and careless. Just when you don’t expect him, the Son of Man will show up.”

The Living Bible says:

“So be ready all the time. For I, the messiah, will come when least expected.”

The New Living Translation says it like this:

“You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected.”

God’s Word Translation declares:

“Be ready, because the Son of Man will return when you least expect Him.”

There it is, from no less an authority than God our Creator’s own words! Jesus Christ is coming back when you least expect him.

My focus is not on the day, or the hour, the year or even the season. What’s paramount is that you are expecting Him. The question is not “when?” The real question that needs to be answered is, “what are you expecting?”

What you expect informs what you do and how you live. What are you expecting—not just for today, but for tomorrow and eternity?

THE ROAR OF THE RETURN: WHEN IS JESUS COMING BACK?

Tomorrow you expect to live, but 2 Corinthians 6:2 makes it plain that:

"Today is the day of salvation."

Chapter Four

The Roar of the Region: Where Will These Things Take Place?

It will be no secret that the antichrist seeks world domination. However, his main sphere of influence will be a ten-nation confederacy. Revelation 17:12-13 says:

The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom yet, but they will receive authority as kings for one hour with the beast. These are of one mind and will give their power and authority to the beast.

Most of the events of eschatological significance will take place in and around the Middle East region. There is no doubt that the effects of the upheavals that occur will affect other regions and nations to a greater or lesser degree, but one of the myths that persists from the book of Revelation is that the antichrist will have absolute control of every nation of the world. That is simply not true, and has no basis in the Bible.

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One of the reasons for this confusion is that the Bible uses inclusive terms such as “all the world” or “the whole world” in describing the antichrist’s authority or influence. This is a figure of speech known as synecdoche, where the whole of something is used to refer to only part of a thing.

Here is an example. Luke 2:1 says:

“In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the entire inhabited earth should be taxed.”

Even though the entire inhabited earth is mentioned in this scripture, it is obvious that the only people who were affected were those living under the dominion of Caesar Augustus. This does not literally mean that every person in the earth was taxed by the Roman authority. Many people in other parts of the world did not know or care about Roman taxation policy. So it will be in the days of the antichrist—with a few exceptions due to modern technology.

The World Seems Smaller

In many ways, the world is a much smaller place than it was in ages past. People and nations used to be separated by mountain ranges, deserts, oceans or other seemingly impassable obstacles. For the most part, these natural features of the earth prevented them from traveling

from one place to another, or having any communication or knowledge of other places or people.

Today, as a result of improvements in transportation, communication and technology, people can not only talk to others a world away, they can travel to the distant reaches of the globe. And they can do it with greater ease and convenience than our ancestors could imagine.

The world is connected in ways that were impossible in previous generations. Nations and regions are economically interdependent. A natural disaster in Saudi Arabia affects the price of gasoline in America. A drought in Russia increases the cost of food in Europe. Conditions in Asia affect the availability of consumer goods in Africa. So it is reasonable to conclude that even though the antichrist will not control every nation on the earth, what happens in his ten-nation confederacy will have an undeniable effect on what happens elsewhere in the world.



**We are
connected.**

Wars and Rumors of Wars

Here is another point to consider. According to Revelation 6, during the seven-year tribulation period, the antichrist is accompanied by War, Famine, and Death, with Hell clinging to Death's back. Due to international

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alliances, war in one part of the world will no doubt involve other nations.

Famine will have widespread effects. Death in the form of disease respects no national boundaries. In addition, the antichrist's efficient propaganda machinery will propagate innuendo, rumors, half-truths and outright lies in a manner that will make Hitler's regime look like a model of moderation. It will indeed be a perilous time on planet Earth—even in those countries that do not fall under the direct domination of the antichrist.

However, there will be other nations who will align themselves with the antichrist, as we see in Revelation 16:12-14:

The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great Euphrates River, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east. Then I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, who go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

However, the seat of his authority is a group of ten nations who appear to be either centered in or near the Middle East—a region which, of course, includes present

day Israel. And there is the real answer for all this upheaval. Not only does the antichrist thirst for world domination, but he is satanically inspired to destroy God's people, the nation of Israel. So it is no surprise that much of his activity is in or near Israel. Many of the climactic events of Revelation occur within the borders of modern Israel, and especially in or around the city of Jerusalem.

The City of Peace

The coalition of the antichrist's armies gather in a place called Armageddon, according to Revelation 16:16. The antichrist sets up an idolatrous image in the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, according to Daniel 9:27.

When Jesus returns, He will stand on the Mount of Olives just outside Jerusalem, according to Zechariah 14:4. After the millennium, the final conflict, known as the battle of Gog and Magog, will occur at the gates of Jerusalem, as recorded in Revelation 20:8-9.

It seems as though no city has been fought over more than Jerusalem. It has been destroyed and rebuilt over and over again. Even now, it is the center of attention for three of the world's major religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Its name means the City of Peace, but peace has been an elusive quality throughout its history. Why?

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The best answer I can give is that Jerusalem is the place upon the earth where God chose to place His name. It is the site of the historic and future temple, where God was and will be worshipped. It will be the administrative center and capital of the earth during the millennium. And in the future, when that heavenly city comes to earth, its name will be the new Jerusalem.

Satan, the enemy of God and all that bears God's image, is in a state of great rage at this point in history. He knows he cannot assault God himself, so he attempts to destroy anything that resembles God or represents Him. I believe that is why Israel, and especially the city of Jerusalem, will be the focus of so much of the antichrist's destructive activity. But Satan's efforts to destroy Jerusalem will be unsuccessful—and by the time the new Jerusalem comes to earth, Satan will have already been banished to the lake of fire for eternity.



**Satan is
raging.**

New Jerusalem

The new Jerusalem! The city made by God himself, as an everlasting dwelling place for the righteous of all ages! This is the place Abraham looked for during his earthly pilgrimage, but never found. He received the land of Canaan as his earthly inheritance for himself and

his descendants, but nothing on earth could satisfy the longing in his soul for something beyond this world. John describes it in all its glory in Revelation 21 and 22.

The architecture of the new Jerusalem is fabulous, and the building materials incomparable. But for me, it wouldn't matter if the doors weren't made of pearl, but were made of wood and swung on leather hinges. To me, it wouldn't matter if the streets were not made of gold, but if there was mud in the streets knee deep. If Jesus is there, it will be heaven for me. I can't help but think of an old spiritual sung by Tennessee Ernie Ford along with many others over the years. One verse says this:

John said the city was just foursquare

(Walk in Jerusalem just like John)

And he declared he'd meet me there

(Walk in Jerusalem just like John)

I want to be ready

I want to be ready

I want to be ready

To walk in Jerusalem just like John!

Are you ready to walk on streets that are purest gold?
Are you looking for a city whose builder and maker is God? Do you realize that this world is not your true home? Get ready, because the reality of heaven will exceed your greatest expectations!

Chapter Five

The Roar of Reason: Why Will These Things Happen?

Aristotle claimed one of the seven questions was the weightiest of all. It is the question that can become a conundrum for people of any age. It tumbles from the lips of a preschooler who wants to know the reason behind a parent's simple directive. It also comes from the heart of an octogenarian who is pondering the meaning and mystery of life. It's a question that you have asked a thousand times in circumstances large and small. You can guess what it is: why?

One of the most frequently asked questions surrounding any discussion of the end times is, "why?" It's not hard to understand the motivation for asking.

The Wrath of God

There are seven seals that are opened, all of them releasing some sort of cataclysmic event, including the four

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horsemen of the apocalypse. Then there are seven trumpet judgments that unleash some form of devastation. And following all these things are the seven last plagues that are poured out of bowls filled with the wrath of God.

“Why does all this death and destruction have to take place? What is the purpose of it all? How does this conform to the image of a good and loving God?” These are all legitimate questions, and all of them have answers that are found in the Word of God.

Before I go into detail about the answers to these questions, I need to reaffirm this truth: God is at work in the affairs of men. He is not like some disinterested

**God is at work
in the affairs of
men.**

watchmaker, who wound up the universe and then left it to run down on its own without His intervention. As I said in my book *Culturally Incorrect*, “...God shows that He is steering history

toward a predetermined end of his choosing...no individual, group, or nation can thwart His plan for mankind. History is moving toward a resolution of God’s own design” (p. 75).

Even when you can’t see Him, feel Him, or sense Him in any way, God is working. And that is never truer than

during the tribulation. Despite the most strenuous efforts of the devil, the antichrist, and the false prophet, their best laid plans all fail to come to fruition. God always has the last word.

There are at least three reasons for the events that are spelled out in the book of Revelation.

First, the things that befall the earth and many of its inhabitants during the tribulation are judgments upon Satan, the antichrist, and all those who follow him in sin and rebellion.

It is not and has never been God's intention to banish men to eternity separated from Him. The Bible makes it clear that God's desire is that all men would be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. (See 1 Timothy 2:3-4.) However, there is only one way by which men can be saved, and that is by accepting Jesus Christ as Savior. There is no other remedy for sin.

There Are Only Two Eternal Destinations

There are only two eternal destinations, and the Bible is the only book that gives accurate directions to both of them. One is heaven, in the eternal presence of an everlasting and almighty God. The other is hell, eternally separated from God in a place of everlasting torment. Where an individual spends eternity is not up to God — it is up to that person.

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Choosing Jesus as Savior means choosing heaven as an eternal destination. Refusing Jesus as Savior means choosing hell as an eternal destination. There are no other options.

Hell was not created for men—it was created for the devil and his demons, who rebelled against God and were thrown out of heaven because of their rebellion. Since they could not dethrone God, they have done their best to deface, disfigure, demean, and destroy the human beings that God made in His image. Their doom is certain, and they will eventually be assigned to the torment of hell forever.

Unfortunately, there have been and will continue to be many humans who follow them in their rebellion, and will receive the ultimate recompense of their unrepentant actions by being banished from God's presence. The judgments recorded in the book of Revelation are nothing more than the final decrees of God's righteous justice on all who dare oppose Him.

God never intended men to be caught up in Satan's rebellion. Even when they did rebel, God made a way of escape for them from the judgment upon sin. But refusal of the gift of life graciously offered through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross will finally and fully be answered by judgment.

Judgment Day Will Surely Come

Those who do not acknowledge hell are actually saying there is no justice in the universe. Just as there are rewards for righteousness, there are penalties for sin. To affirm otherwise is to refuse reality and make a mockery of human history. Good and evil, right and wrong, truth and lies, wheat and weeds still exist, and all of them will be dealt with according to God's righteous decrees in the last days. Listen to the words of Jesus from Matthew 13:24-30:

He told them another parable, saying, "the kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. But when the shoots had sprung up and produced fruit, the weeds also appeared. So the servants of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? Then where did the weeds come from?' He said to them, 'An enemy did this.' The servants said to him, 'Will you then have us go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the weeds, you pull up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers: gather up the weeds first and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.' "

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Mercy is speaking right now from center stage, but judgment stands in the wings, awaiting its cue—and it will surely come at the appointed time.

God's Determined Dealing with Israel

The second reason the events recorded in Revelation must happen is due to God's determined dealings with the nation of Israel.

Jesus made this declaration over the city of Jerusalem, and the nation of Israel, in Matthew 23:37-39:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you, how often I would have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not! Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you shall not see me again until you say, "blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."

In the prophet Samuel's time, Israel clamored for a king. God finally sent them Saul, who was accepted by the people, but rejected by God because of his stubborn refusal to obey God's direction. David later became king, and God promised to build him a dynasty that would always have a descendant upon the throne of Israel.

Centuries passed and when the true king, Jesus, arrived, Israel rejected Him and claimed allegiance to Caesar, who ruled them from Rome.

Within a generation, a subsequent Caesar destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, and scattered the nation of Israel to exile among the nations of the earth. But as Paul makes clear in the book of Romans, God has not forgotten His people. He has a plan that includes them returning to their true king, whose name is Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords. But before that can happen, great tribulation will come upon the earth, and Israel will suffer intense persecution at the hands of the antichrist.

**God has not
forgotten
His people.**

Uncanny Parallels of Exodus and Revelation

There are uncanny parallels between the events of the book of Revelation and the story of Israel's exodus from Egypt. In Exodus, Israel was persecuted by the Egyptians. In Revelation, Israel is persecuted by the antichrist. In Exodus, Israel was given supernatural protection from the plagues in the land of Goshen. In Revelation, Israel is given supernatural protection from the plagues by resorting to a hiding place in the wilderness that God provides for them.

In Exodus, the plagues that came upon the Egyptians were not just to persuade Pharaoh to let Israel go; the plagues were also proof to Israel that God was who He said He was. They were defining acts of supernatural

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power for the purpose of causing Israel to trust Him, obey His commandments, and follow His leading.

In Revelation, the plagues that come upon the anti-christ and his followers will also become proof to Israel that God is their deliverer, and that they can trust Him and follow His leading.

In Exodus, the Israelites had to accept a lamb as a sacrifice to be saved from death. In Revelation, they also have to accept a Lamb as a sacrifice to be saved from death. The Lamb's name is Jesus Christ.

In Exodus, God overthrew Israel's enemies in the Red Sea. In Revelation, God overthrows Israel's enemies by the word that comes out of the mouth of Jesus, the Christ.

In Exodus, God rescued Israel from death at the hands of the first gentile kingdom that persecuted them. In Revelation, God will rescue Israel from death at the hands of the last gentile kingdom that will persecute them.

In Exodus, Israel became a nation by accepting God as their deliverer. In Revelation, Israel survives as a nation by accepting Jesus Christ, who is God, as their deliverer.

The Millennial Reign

When Jesus returns to the earth to set up His millennial kingdom, Israel will overwhelmingly accept Him and receive Him, not only as King, but as Savior.

Truly, they will say, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!”

The third reason the events of Revelation will happen is to prepare the earth for the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. Revelation 19:19 says:

“Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to wage war against him who sat on the horse and against his army.”

This multitude assembles as a result of the sixth bowl judgment, recorded in Revelation 16:12-14; 16:

The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great Euphrates River, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east.

Then I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, who go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God

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almighty....They gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

**There will be a
great slaughter
at Armageddon**

This great coalition of forces is no match for King Jesus. The battle of Armageddon would be better characterized as the slaughter of Armageddon.

Revelation 19 goes on to say that the beast and the false prophet were captured and thrown into the lake of fire.

And here is what the Bible says about the rest of the armies, from verse 21:

"The remnant were slain with the sword which proceeded out of the mouth of him who sat on the horse. And all the birds gorged themselves with their flesh."

The coalition army came into the valley hoping for conquest. Instead, they are instantaneously turned into buzzard bait.

After this, there are just a few more housekeeping items to attend to, and the millennial reign will begin.

THE ROAR OF REASON: WHY WILL THESE THINGS HAPPEN?

It will be a time of unprecedented peace and prosperity, presided over by no less than the son of God, himself—Jesus Christ, the true and rightful king.

Come quickly, Lord Jesus!

Chapter Six

The Roar of the Age: How Long Is the Tribulation?

There is possibly no other period of time that has been as much discussed, misunderstood and misrepresented than the tribulation period. The time involved is only seven years, but there are many momentous events that occur during that time. To find out more specific information about the duration of the tribulation, we must consult the book of Daniel — specifically, Daniel 9:24-27:

Seventy weeks have been determined for your people and upon your holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make atonement for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place.

Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the command to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem until the prince Messiah shall be seven weeks, and

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sixty-two weeks. It shall be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of trouble. After the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the troops of the prince who shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall come with a flood. And until the end of the war desolations are determined.

And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week. But in the middle of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the offering to cease. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed destruction is poured out on the desolator.

Sets of Sevens

This message is apocalyptic and cryptic, so it requires more than a casual reading to understand it. The term weeks as it is used in this passage simply means sevens. As we read through the narrative, we understand that it is not referring to weeks as a seven day period, but sets of seven years.

There are three divisions to these sets of 70 seven-year periods. The first is seven sevens, or 49 years, which is the time it took to rebuild Jerusalem after the exiles returned from Babylonian captivity. The next period is 62 seven year periods, or 434 years, which refers to the length of time between the completion of the rebuilt city

of Jerusalem to the death of the Messiah. The third set is the final “week,” or seven years, which makes up the tribulation period.

The angel told Daniel that this entire seventy week period involved Daniel’s people, the Jews, and the Holy City, or Jerusalem. None of these events could or can take place without Israel being a nation or Jerusalem being its capital. In fact, the events of the 70th week, or the last seven years of this 490 year period require that there be a Jewish temple in place in Jerusalem in which Jewish worship is restored. This has not yet taken place, but it will, because prophecy demands it, and God does not lie.

**Jewish worship
in the temple
will be restored.**

No Lasting Peace

One of the most intractable dilemmas of our time has been the conflict between Arabs and Jews about the city of Jerusalem. Time after time, the efforts of world leaders to bring about a lasting peace between Israel and her enemies has been thwarted by differences regarding the city.

I believe that one of the keys to the antichrist’s rise to power is that he will be instrumental in resolving this problem. I am confident that he will broker an agreement

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that will allow a Jewish temple to be built and utilized in proximity to a Muslim mosque.

Because of this breakthrough in one of the world's thorniest and most contentious issues, he will be ac-

**The antichrist
will be given
unprecedented
power and
authority.**

claimed as a leader without peer. Smart and serious people will put him forward as the one who can solve all mankind's problems. Nations will bestow upon him unprecedented power and authority—especially ten of

them, as we see in Daniel 7:24 and elsewhere.

From his seat of power in this ten-nation confederacy, the antichrist will make a seven-year covenant with Israel to guarantee its safety. Israel will enter into this accord due to its desire to finally be at peace after many decades of continuously being on guard from relentless threats of all kinds from foes far and near.

During the first half of this seven year period, the antichrist consolidates his power and polishes and perfects his system of economic control over as many people as will follow him. He does this, at least as much as possible during this time, without resorting to force.

Murderous Intent

But all this changes at the midpoint of the last seven years of Daniel's prophecy. The antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel, causes Jewish worship in the temple to cease, and sets up an idolatrous image in the temple—very likely a statue in his own image. Inspired and abetted by Satan himself, the antichrist then turns against Israel with murderous intent.

He does everything he can to hunt down and destroy every last Jew on the face of the earth. Without God's miraculous protection, his plan of extermination would succeed. The Jews are scattered once again, and many flee to a sanctuary provided for them by God in the wilderness.

You would think it would be a relatively easy matter for the antichrist to follow them and finish them off, but wars, intrigues, natural disasters and divine intervention will hinder his efforts.

Various scriptures confirm that this state of affairs lasts for 42 months, or 3 ½ years. Some nations attempt to oppose the antichrist's schemes, but many others are persuaded to assist him. The culmination of all this activity is that a vast army is gathered together in the plain of Megiddo, in preparation for a final assault against—

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and complete destruction of—the remnant of Jewish refugees, wherever they may be found.

All of this changes in a moment because of a new circumstance that takes the antichrist completely by surprise. John tells it firsthand, from Revelation 19:11-16:

I saw heaven opened. And there was a white horse. He who sat on it is called faithful and true, and in righteousness he judges and wages war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written, that no one knows but he himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood. His name is called the word of God. The armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed him on white horses.

Out of his mouth proceeds a sharp sword, with which he may strike the nations. He shall rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the winepress of the fury and wrath of God the almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written: king of kings and lord of lords.

The Last Day of the Tribulation

The last day of the seven-year tribulation period ends with a climax that no Hollywood blockbuster could ever hope to exceed. Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, comes back from heaven with His saints, destroys the combined

forces of the antichrist, and casts the antichrist and the false prophet into the lake of fire. Satan is bound for a thousand years. Jesus begins His thousand year millennial reign and the redeemed of the Lord rule and reign with him.

And if that isn't enough, there are even greater things in store for us throughout eternity—but time cannot tell the wonders we will experience throughout the eternal ages in the presence of God. I plan to be there—and I hope with all my heart that you will be, too.

Chapter Seven

The Roar of the Appearing: With Whom or with What Is He Coming?

What is the rapture? Perhaps no end-time doctrine has generated as much controversy over the years as the rapture of the Church. Many churches no longer mention it in their preaching and teaching, for two main reasons.

The first is that within Christianity there are several widely divergent points of view about end-time issues, and specifically about the rapture of the Church. The second is that the word rapture is never used in the Scriptures, although the term rapture refers to a specific word that is used in the New Testament. I will deal with both of these points in order.

Historically, Christians have fallen into one of three schools of thought regarding eschatology, or end-time events.

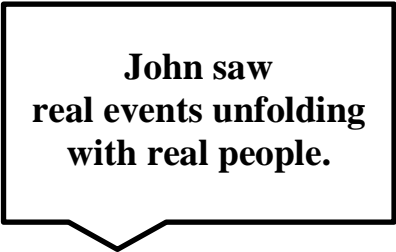
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Amillennialism

The first of these I want to mention is amillennialism, or the belief that there will not be 1,000 years of peace on earth. This point of view originated from a corrupt church during the Middle Ages, and does not include the rapture of the Church.

Amillennialists do not believe Satan will be bound for a thousand years. They believe that the church has replaced Israel in God's plan, and that the world will be destroyed when Jesus returns. They believe that the book of Revelation was written for the first century church, and has little relevance to the present age. This theory is gaining acceptance among both the clergy and laity today.

Amillennialists believe that the language of Revelation is only figurative or symbolic in nature and that it



**John saw
real events unfolding
with real people.**

does not refer to actual events that will occur on the earth. But there is no indication in John's writing that anything he saw or experienced was only to

be understood in a figurative sense. He saw real people and real events unfolding far in advance of their fulfillment. Just because he had difficulty explaining some of

what he saw and heard does not mean they were intended to be regarded as images that held no relevance to future events.

Postmillennialism

Next is a doctrine known as postmillennialism. As the name indicates, this position teaches that Christ will return after the millennium. The world will experience one thousand years of peace, and then Jesus will come. Postmillennialists believe that the whole world will become Christianized before the return of the Lord.

This view is becoming rampant today and is a heritage of religious tradition that says the world and humanity is getting better and better. Eventually, the whole world will evolve its way into resembling the kingdom of God.

Anyone with a functioning set of eyes and ears can see that the world is not headed in the right direction. But postmillennialism asserts that if men just have enough time, information, and opportunity, they will begin to love everyone and all conflict will cease.

According to this view, strife among individuals, classes, clans, or nations is only due to a lack of education, understanding, money or some other basic require-

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ment. This idea fails to take into consideration the corrosive and destructive effects of sin on the human heart and mind.

Premillennialism

The third end-time view, and the one that we maintain adheres to the plain testimony of the Word of God, is premillennialism. As its name implies, this doctrine teaches that Christ's appearing to gather His saints is imminent, and could occur at any moment.

A seven year period known as the tribulation will follow this event, and will be concluded by the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth to set up His earthly reign

**The millennium
will be blessed with
1,000 years of peace.**

of one thousand years of unprecedented peace, followed by the renovation of the earth and the eternal state. This was the first end-time doctrine histori-

cally. It is also the one we believe most accurately reflects the events of the end of the age spoken of in the Bible, including the rapture of the church.

Just because the word rapture is not found in the Bible does not mean it is not a scriptural idea. The word rapture is a way to describe the Greek word *harpazo*,

which means to seize, to catch up, to catch away, or to take by force.

The rapture of the church is arguably referred to by Jesus, Himself, in John 14:1-3:

Listen, I tell you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, for the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible will put on incorruption, and this mortal will put on immortality. When this corruptible will have put on incorruption, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then the saying that is written shall come to pass: "death is swallowed up in victory."

In the same vein, 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18 says:

For if we believe that Jesus died and arose again, so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will not precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we shall be

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forever with the lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

The Seven Raptures

The concept of a rapture is not new, nor is it one isolated incident only involving the church. There are actually seven raptures mentioned in the Bible. The rapture of the church is only one of them. Here are all seven, listed in order:

Enoch—Genesis 5:24: *“Enoch walked with God, and then he was no more because God took him.”*

Elijah—2 Kings 2:11: *“As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.”*

Jesus—Acts 1:9: *“When He had spoken these things, while they looked, He was taken up. And a cloud received him from their sight.”*

The Church—1 Thessalonians 4:17: *“...we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the lord in the air.”*

Three Raptures in the Book of Revelation: In each of these cases, John sees people on earth, and then sees the same group in heaven.

Tribulation Saints—Revelation 7:9: *“Then I looked. And there was a great multitude which no one could count,*

from all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands."

The Two Witnesses—Revelation 11:12: *"Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, 'Come up here!' And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies watched them."*

The 144,000—Revelation 14:3: *"They sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn that song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth."*

We believe in the imminent, pre-tribulational rapture of all those who are genuinely born again and looking for the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. I sincerely hope that you are expecting His appearing, and that you are ready for that great event by making Jesus Christ your Savior and Lord.

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