

Timing's Top Ten

by Kevin Beck

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The end is near. The Antichrist has been spotted. Christ may come any day now. We are living in the last days. Judgment is rapidly approaching. We must evangelize the whole world quickly in order to hasten the Second Coming. Armageddon is right around the corner.



These and other mantras spring from Christian pulpits every week. Evangelists spout the “good news” of imminent doom and gloom. Best-selling novels warn unwary unbelievers that unless they repent today, they increase their risk of being left behind. Self-styled tele-prophets sit behind news desks interpreting current events in light of scripture. They boldly predict that the European Union or the Arab world or China or some other despotic and demonic power will soon arise, amass armies and set the planet ablaze. (If you want to know more about it, send \$19.95 for their latest book.)

All of the popular eschatological schools—Dispensationalism, Amillennialism, Postmillennialism, and even some branches of fulfilled prophecy—hold that either all or some of the chief eschatological happening will transpire in our future.

Is the end near? Is Christ about to return? Might God close the curtain on history today? Does the Bible predict the grand finale to occur sometime in the near future?

An examination of ten major biblical eschatological events reveals that Jesus and the early Christians expected these things to take place within the lifetime of the generation then living. Any eschatological schema that pulls these events out of their biblical timeframe and places them into an extended future distorts the original meaning and misses the true goal and scope of biblical eschatology.

What follows is an examination of the timing of ten of the Bible’s most significant eschatological topics. You will notice that each one is contemporaneous with the biblical writers themselves. Christ and the apostles anticipated the completion, fulfillment, occurrence, or conclusion of all of these events by the fall of Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans in 70 AD.

With apologies to David Letterman, here is Timing’s Top Ten list.¹

Number 10: The Great Apostasy

Throughout the millennia, Christian predictors of the end have pointed to the Great Apostasy (*aka* The Falling Away) as a sure sign that the closing stage of history was about to commence.

The Falling Away is supposed consist of increasing rates of immorality and debauchery. False teachers from within the church will lead the flock astray. Young people who have been raised in good Christian homes will be caught up in decadence.

Undeniably, the New Testament makes such predictions. Paul wrote, “Let no one deceive *you* by any means; for that day will not come unless the falling away comes first” (2 Thess. 2:3).

Paul elaborates most clearly on the Apostasy in his letters to Timothy. “Now the Spirit expressly says that in the latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons...” (1 Tim. 4:1). “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves...but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all” (2 Tim. 3:1-9).

Folks from most eschatological bents look at today’s western society as fulfilling the prophecies of the Falling Away. Crime is on the rise. Churches are shrinking. Traditional doctrines and morality are vanishing. Good is being called evil and evil good—right from the pulpit. Are we currently seeing the Great Apostasy? Are folks falling away as we speak? Rather than looking at the headlines of newspapers, we would be well served to investigate the Biblical text more carefully. Significantly, Paul wrote to Timothy about the Great Apostasy because it was occurring in his day. Some were already leaving the faith. “As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that *you* may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables...” (1 Tim 1:3-11).

Paul predicted that some church leader in Ephesus would fall away and take the flock with them. “From among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after themselves” (Acts 20:30). Timothy’s Ephesian opponents fit the profile of those involved in the Great Apostasy. Some had rejected the faith and “suffered shipwreck” (1 Tim 1:19). These adversaries’ sins “are clearly seen” (1 Tim 5:24, compare 2 Tim 3:9). Paul warned Timothy to withdraw himself from “anyone [who] teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus” (1 Tim 6:3).

Paul’s final word in the first epistle sounds an ominous admonition applicable to Timothy in his ministry. “O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoid profane and vain babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge, by professing it *some have strayed concerning the faith*” (1 Tim. 6:20).

By the time Paul penned his second letter to Timothy, the condition had deteriorated. Paul encouraged Timothy to face his antagonists with courage, “Charging *them* not to strive about words...Be diligent to present yourself approved to God...shun profane and vain babblings, for *they will increase* to more ungodliness.” The message of the false prophets Hymanaeus and Philetus was spreading like cancer. They had “strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection was already past, and *they overthrow the faith of some*” (2 Tim 2:14-18). The time was then coming when folks “will not endure sound doctrine...they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

The point: People *in Timothy’s day* (not ours) were the ones departing from the faith and thereby constituting the Great Apostasy.

Number 9: The Antichrist

Ask Jack Van Impe or Hal Lindsey, and you might hear that the Antichrist in league with the United Nations or some other international body is just waiting his opportunity to unleash nuclear holocaust upon the world.

However, the epistles of first and second John plainly recognize Antichrist activity operating in the first century, not the twenty-first.

“Little children, it *is* the last hour, and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, *even now many antichrists have come*, by which we know that it *is* the last hour” (1 John 1:18). John spotted the Antichrist working in his day. It was proof positive to him that the last hour had begun (more on this below).

Additionally, John and his original readers unquestionably knew the exact identity of the Antichrist. “**They went out from us, but were not of us**” (1 John 1:19). Antichrist had belonged to the early faith community.

John cautioned his original audience, “Many false prophets *have gone* out into the world...and this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and *is now already in the world*...and the world hears them” (1 John 4:1-5).

Later, John alerted the elect lady, “**many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist**” (2 John 7).

John was not foretelling of events twenty-one centuries into the future. He wrote to his contemporaries about then-current happenings.

Number 8: The Great Tribulation

Jesus predicted, “**Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you...For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be**” (Matt. 24:9, 21).

Chapter 30 of John Walvoord’s handbook, *Major Bible Prophecies: 37 Crucial Prophecies that Affect You Today*, discusses the Great Tribulation from the dispensationalist perspective. “The future time of great tribulation and distress in the world is often confused with the stress that has characterized the human race from its beginning.”² Walvoord and the dispensationalist camp places the Great Tribulation foretold by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse in humanity’s future. Tim LaHaye built the entire *Left Behind* series on the premise of a future Great Tribulation.

Instead of looking forward to the Great Tribulation, we ought to keep it within its Biblical timeframe. The New Testament speaks of tribulation or tribulations twenty-eight times, all of which refer to what was soon to occur or what was already occurring in the first century.

Jesus promised the twelve, “**In the world you will have tribulation**” (John 16:33), and the book of Acts chronicles the tribulation suffered by the early church and its leaders. In Acts 4-12,

Peter and John are tried twice, beaten, and imprisoned. Stephen is executed. Saul made havoc of the church breathing threats and murder against it. Herod killed James and seized Peter.

After being pelted with stones in Lystra, Paul encouraged the Galatian Christians, “*We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God*” (Acts 14:22). Paul is then jailed in Philippi. Riots break out in Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth, and Ephesus. Finally, he is arrested in Jerusalem, tried multiple times, and sent to Rome.

Paul wrote openly about the great tribulation he suffered. “*We glory in tribulations*” (Rom.5:3). “Who shall separate *us* from the love of Christ? Shall *tribulation*...?” (Rom. 8:35). The Father of mercies “*comforts us in all our tribulation*” (2 Cor. 1:4). Paul was a minister of God “*in tribulations,*” and he was joyful “*in all our tribulation*” (2 Cor. 6:4 and 7:4). He sympathized with the Thessalonians “*in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure*” (2 Thess. 1:4).

The letter to the Hebrews recalls “*the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations*” (Hebrews 10:32-33). By this time, the Great Tribulation had been ongoing for some time already.

The entire book of 1 Peter reassures first-century Christians who were being “*grieved by various trials*” (1 Peter 1:6). Peter instructed them to endure grief and take beatings patiently “*for to this you were called*” (2:19-21); that is, Jesus predicted their tribulation in the Olivet discourse. They suffered “*for righteousness sake [and] for doing good*” (3:13-17). Their persecution was not unexpected. “*Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you...if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God in this matter*” (4:12-16). However, their tribulation would not last long, and God would perfect them “*after you have suffered a while*” (5:10, cf. Matt. 24:22).

In Revelation, John identifies himself as “*your brother and companion in tribulation*” (1:9). Jesus knew of the church in Smyrna’s “*tribulation*” and foresaw that “*the devil is about to throw some of you into prison that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days*” (2:9-10).

There can be little doubt that the Great Tribulation was occurring during the lifetime of the New Testament writers and the first-century Christians.

Number 7: The Rapture

Dispensationalists who expect a future tribulation also anticipate the physical levitating of faithful believers off the planet. The only timing issue for dispensationalists is whether the rapture will occur before the tribulation, in the middle of it, or at its conclusion.

Biblically, though, the timing of the rapture was a first-century phenomenon.³ In 1 Thessalonians 4:17-18, Paul addresses the issue of the Rapture. He wrote, “*We who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.*” Moreover, he reassured his original audience that “*we who are alive and remain shall be*

caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus *we* shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thess. 4:15-18).

Paul expected that he and at least some of the Thessalonians would be alive to experience being caught up. He composed his letter to the Thessalonians to console their qualms. They would participate in the rapture. If the Rapture is yet future, then a few Thessalonians and maybe even Paul himself remains until this day.

Number 6: World Evangelization

Jesus prophesied, “**And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come**” (Matt. 24:14). Modern evangelization movements seek to fulfill this requirement so they may usher in the end.

However, worldwide evangelization culminated in the first-century.⁴ Prior to his Ascension, Jesus commissioned the apostles to “**go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature**” (Mark 16:15). He charged them “**You shall be witnesses of Me in Jerusalem, and in Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth**” (Acts 1:8). This is exactly what we find happening in the book of Acts. The Apostles preach in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and the whole empire all the way to Rome itself.

Christ hand-selected Paul to preach the gospel into all the world. On the Damascus road, Jesus instructed Paul to go to the “**Gentiles to whom I now send you.**” Paul then personally encapsulated the Acts 1:8 blueprint. He declared the gospel “**in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles**” (Acts 26:17-20).

Paul sensed the eschatological significance of his worldwide evangelism. “**For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel**” (1 Cor. 9:16). Paul’s preaching mission was the lynchpin to the arrival of the end. The failure of his mission was unthinkable.

As the first-century progressed, Paul recognized the success of his mission work. He told the first-century Roman church that the gospel had been preached into the entire world. “**Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my *gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ...now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations according to the commandment of the everlasting God***” (Rom. 16:25-26).

Paul claimed the accomplishment of world evangelism to the Colossians. “**The truth of the gospel which has come to you, as *it has in all the world...the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven***” (Col. 1:6, 23).

Additionally, Paul commended the Thessalonians for their world-renown faithfulness. “**For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also *in every place***” (1 Thess. 1:8).

World evangelism became a reality in the first-century through the ministry of Paul and his missionary churches.

Number 5: The Last Days

Both the Dispensational and Amillennial theses contend that we are in the Last Days today. Dispensationalists see them as the closing time period of the “church age” which will happen any day now. For the Amillennialist, the Last Days began at Pentecost in Acts 2, and will continue until the Second Coming at some indeterminate point in the future.

Dispensationalism and Amillennialism are right in assigning the Last Days to the time period of the “church age” and reaching their climax at the Second Coming. However, they have both mistakenly misplaced and misidentified the church age and the Second Coming in regard to their timing. The Last Days constituted the final days of the Old Testament time period concluding at the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter and the twelve were accused of being drunk. Peter abjured and clarified any misunderstandings of what was happening. He preached to the Jerusalem throng by quoting Scripture concerning Last Days events. *“This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out My spirit on all flesh’”* (Acts 2:16-17). Peter understood the phenomenon of speaking in tongues at Pentecost as verification of the appearance of the Last Days.

Peter not only preached about the Last Days, he wrote about them. He contended that Christ *“indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you”* (1 Peter 1:20). The Last Days were well underway when Peter wrote.

In 2 Peter 3, the apostle advised his original audience how to handle their adversaries. Significantly, the very existence of the mockers attested to the presence of the Last Days during the mid first century. *“Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days”* (2 Peter 3:3).

Jude’s readers faced intense hostility from ungodly men who denied the Lord and spotted the love feasts. Jude assured his audience that their vindication would come soon, and their rivals would be convicted. He reiterated Peter’s observation that *“there would be mockers in the last time”* (Jude 18). Jude recognized the Last Days as being the period of time in which he lived, and he nowhere suggests that it would extend across the centuries.

As mentioned above Paul alerted Timothy to beware of his opponents in Ephesus. In fact, the opposition he faced served as verification of the arrival of the last days. *“But know this, that in the last days, perilous times will come”* (2 Tim. 3:1, see also 1 Tim. 4:1).

The book of Hebrews counseled first-century Jewish Christians not to return to the old temple/sacrificial system. It was true that, *“God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets has in these last days spoken to us by His Son”* (Heb. 1:1-2).

Moreover, the Hebrew writer understood the last days as coming to a rapid close. “Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old *is ready to vanish away*” (8:13).

By the time John wrote his first epistle, the last days were nearly concluded. “Little children, *it is the last hour*” (1John 1:18). The time was almost up.

Number 4: The End of All Things

The completion of world evangelism and the closing of the Last Days ushered the way for the end of all things. Jesus promised that the “*gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come*” (Matt. 24:15).

Wait a minute. How can the end have come in the second half of the first century? The planet is still here. The sun is not dark. The moon has not transformed into blood.

Popular eschatology looks forward to cataclysmic events which will rock the space-time universe and either end or transform all things physical as we know them. For most, the end of all things marks the end of time. However, the Bible never predicts the end of time—only the time of the end.⁵

What’s the difference? There is a world of difference. It is the difference between the end of the physical world and the beginning of a new covenantal world.

On the Mount of Olives, the disciples of Christ asked him, “*What will be the sign of your coming, and the end of the age?*” (Matt 24:3). Jesus responded with a lengthy discourse, but he guaranteed the disciples that they would witness the end of the age. “*Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things are fulfilled*” (24:34).

Not only would the disciples witness the end of the age, God would use them in bringing it about. In the Great Commission, Jesus sent the apostles into the world preaching, and he promised them, “*Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age*” (Matt. 16:20). The end of the age would commence with the apostles’ completion of their preaching mission.

Paul admonished the Corinthian church to pay attention to the original Exodus generation and their failure to enter the Promised Land. He expected the Corinthians to enter into *the* Promised Land very soon. “*Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come*” (1 Cor. 10:11).

The book of Hebrews argues that Jesus is a better High Priest who offers a better sacrifice than anything provided for in the Old Covenant. Christ’s sacrifice marked the beginning of the end.⁶ “*But now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself*” (Heb. 9:26).

Writing in the first century, Peter expected an imminent end. “*But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers*” (1 Peter 4:7). It is nonsensical to stretch Peter’s sense of propinquity into his distant future.

Even the apocalyptic description in **2 Peter 3** is filled with looming expectation.⁷ The “**Lord is not slack concerning His promise.**” The dissolution of all things impelled Peter’s original audience to consider their actions. “**What manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness.**” In fact, they were to be “*looking for and hastening the coming day of God.*” A delay of 2,000 years would mark their utter failure to both witness and accelerate coming of the end.

Number 3: The Second Coming

All eschatological schools acknowledge the Second Coming or *Parousia*⁸ of Christ. What is not commonly realized is that Christ himself promised to come within the lifetime of his contemporaries.⁹ Amillennialism looks forward to Christ’s coming at some unknown time in the future. Dispensationalists expect Christ to return any day now. On the September 16, 2001 broadcast of *International Intelligence Briefing*, Hal Lindsay predicted, “Tuesday, September 11, 2001 the end began...Jesus Christ is near His return...I really believe that the coming of the Lord is very, very near.”¹⁰

Jesus himself envisaged the Parousia to occur while at least a few of his original listeners still lived. “**For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his work. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom**” (Matt. 16:27-28).

In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus foretold of “**the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.**” He affirmed the timetable of his arrival. “**Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things are fulfilled**” (Matt. 24:31-34). If Jesus was right, then either the Second Coming happened in the first century or there are some two thousand year old people alive today.

At Solomon’s porch, Peter advised *the Jerusalem crowd*, “Repent, therefore and be converted, that *your* sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord and that He may send Jesus Christ to *you*, who was preached to *you* before whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things.” Peter did not leave the Temple multitude wondering as to when that might occur. “**Yes. And all the prophets from Samuel and those who followed, as many as have spoken have also foretold of these days**” (Acts 3:19-24)

Similarly, Paul and the Corinthians believed that both the end and Jesus would come within their lifetimes. “**Christ was confirmed in you so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation¹¹ of our Lord Jesus Christ who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ**” (1 Cor. 1:6-8). It is with this expectation that the early Christians could cry, “O Lord, come!” (16:22).

As the Thessalonian believers suffered persecution, Paul assured them of their vindication. God would “**give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels...when He comes in that Day to be glorified in His saints and to admired among all those who believe because our testimony among you who believed**” (2 Thess. 1:7-10). Paul’s preaching would result in the Thessalonians’ venerating Christ at his

Parousia. Furthermore, Paul fully anticipated the Thessalonians to be living at the Second Coming. “*We who are alive and remain at until the coming of the Lord...then we who are alive and remain...Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Thess. 5:23).

The apostle to the Gentiles along with the Philippian church shared a hope. “*We also eagerly wait for the savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.*” It was not a hope that would disappoint. “*The Lord is at hand*” (Phil. 3:20-4:5).

The book of Hebrews encourages the original readers in their persecution. They would “*receive the promise: for yet a little while, and He who is coming will not tarry*” (Heb. 10:36-37).

Likewise, James admonishes his readers to “*be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord...for the coming of the Lord is at hand...the Judge is at the door*” (James 5:7-9). James expected his brother’s imminent arrival.

John’s vision on Patmos concludes with Messiah three-fold promise: “*Behold, I am coming quickly...And behold, I am coming quickly...Surely I am coming quickly.*” Certainly Jesus knew the difference between quickly and 2000 years (so far). John echoes Christ’s pledge: “*Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus!*” (Rev. 22:7, 12, 20).

Even a cursory glance at these few pertinent passages illustrates the New Testament’s saturation of a sense of imminence surrounding the Parousia of Christ.

Number 2: The Kingdom of God

Dispensationalists predict a time when Christ will reign from Jerusalem. Many Amillennialists hope to die and be carried by angels into the kingdom. Rather than expecting a fleshly kingdom established in the city of Jerusalem sometime in the future or to go to some faraway place, Jesus and the New Testament predicted the arrival of the Kingdom of God in the first century.

Both John the Baptist and Jesus preached the imminent arrival of the kingdom. “*Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*” (Matt. 3:2, 4:17, Mark 1:14-15). Neither one expected an extended delay in the kingdom’s emergence.

Furthermore, Jesus instructed his disciples to preach the same thing. “*These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them saying...‘as you go, preach saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand’*” (Matt. 10:7).

In fact, Jesus prophesied of the kingdom’s arrival within a generation of his contemporaries. “*Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom*” (Matt. 16:28).

Importantly, Jesus quelled the enthusiasm of the overly-anxious multitudes who during his three-year ministry “**thought the kingdom would appear *immediately***” (Luke 19:11). The kingdom would not come in 33 AD, but it would arrive within forty years.

As the first century progressed, the apostolic preaching missions proclaimed the impending emergence of the kingdom. Philip preached the kingdom in Samaria. Paul spoke of it in Galatia, Ephesus, and Rome. (Acts 8:12, 14:22, 19:8, 28:31).

The writer of the book of Hebrews saw his readers and himself as being in the process of obtaining the kingdom. “***We are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken***” (Heb. 12:28).

Similarly, the apostle Peter buoyed the spirits of his readers “**to make *your calling and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ***” (2Peter 1:10-11). Peter foresaw the time when his then-living addressees would enter God’s kingdom.

Finally, Paul in his last book expected the kingdom to come quickly. “**I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom**” (2 Tim. 4:1). The passage is literally translated: “God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who is *about to* judge the living and dead according to his appearing and kingdom.”¹²

Inspired men from John the Baptist to the apostle Paul—including Jesus—predicted the kingdom’s consummation within their generation.

Number 1: The Book of Revelation

Advocates of all eschatological camps—including some Preterists—expect either all or some of the prophetic pronouncements to come to pass in our future. It is true that much of Revelation is difficult to understand. However, the Apocalypse is clear about its timing.

The very first verse asserts the immediacy of the fulfillment of the book’s contents. “**The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which *must shortly take place***” (Rev. 1:1). Just two verses later John reiterates the point. “**Blessed is he who reads and those who hear *the words of this prophecy*, and keep those things which are written in it; for *the time is near***” (1:3).

Revelation wraps up with the angel instructing John, “**Do not seal the words of *the prophecy of this book*, for *the time is at hand***” (22:10).

In between the timing bookends, we have other timing clues. Perhaps the most enlightening is Revelation 10:6. “**But in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, *the mystery of God would be finished*, as He declared to *His servants the prophets*.**” This passage parallels Christ in Luke 21:20-22. “**But when you [apostles] see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near...for *these* are the days of vengeance, that *all things which are written may be fulfilled*.**”

Jesus foresaw the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD and ascribed it with the significance of the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. John, too, connected the last trumpet's sounding with the consummation of all things written by the prophets. Interpreting Revelation in light of Jesus' statement permits us to see the fulfillment of all things written by 70 AD.

Understanding the whole book of Revelation as a fulfilled prophecy rather than a frustrated one allows us to put the judgment scenes, wars, pestilences, Armageddon, binding of Satan, Gog and Magog, the millennium, the resurrection and the entirety of all the events in their proper context—namely, their completion in or by the fall of Jerusalem in the first century. This permits us to see the gospel as the good news it truly is by disarming modern-day fear mongers who plunder the prophets for profit.

Conclusion

Timing matters. If our eschatological timing is off, then we will misconstrue the entire meaning of Scripture. If we look forward to what has already happened, we will neglect the rich blessings God has already bestowed upon us. For this reason, it is of utmost importance to come to terms with timing's top ten.

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ENDNOTES:

1 I am addressing primarily the *timing* of these events, not the *nature* of them. In my opinion it is of little value to discuss the nature of them without agreement on the timing. In other words, if we can come to a consensus on the timing first, we can then proceed to studying the nature of the events themselves. Additionally, any emphasis in scripture quotations has been added by me.

2 John Walvoord, *Major Bible Prophecies*, p.410.

3 Some modern Preterists taking their cue from John Stuart Russell argue that the first-century Christians physically flew off the planet in AD 70. The evidence for such an occurrence is unhistorical, and in my opinion unpersuasive.

4 For an extensive analysis of first-century worldwide evangelism see *Into All the World Then Comes the End* by Don K. Preston.

5 The Greek word translated "end" is *telos*, and it means 'goal'. Compare Romans 6:21-22, James 5:11, 1Peter 1:9.

6 See *The Cross and the Parousia: The Two Dimensions of One Age-Changing Eschaton* by Max R. King, the founder of Transmillennialism™.

7 For a full analysis of this chapter, see *II Peter3: The Late Great Kingdom* by Don K. Preston.

8 *Parousia* literally means "presence." Compare 2 Corinthians 10:10 and Philippians 1:27.

9 Those who recognize it often dismiss the New Testament's sense of imminence by advocating a delay in the Parousia. However, in *The New Testament and the People of God*, N. T. Wright addresses this objection at length and sums us up by saying that "the old scholarly warhorse of the 'delay of the parousia' has had its day at last, and can be put out to grass once and for all" (p. 462).

10 Quoted from *Quest: A Monthly Publication of Holy Ground Ministries*, October 2001.

11 The KJV translates this as "coming." The Greek word is *apokalupsis*, ie apocalypse or revelation.

12 *The Interlinear Translation of the Greek New Testament* by George Ricker Berry. See also *The Emphasized New Testament* by J. B. Rotherham. Could so many translations mishandle this verse because of a preconceived bias regarding the timing of the kingdom's arrival?

