

The Fulfillment of Bible Prophecy (Focusing on the End Times - Tribulation Period)

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Is Bible prophecy being fulfilled today? With the hype of certain televangelists and new books being written on the subject of Bible prophecy many Christians believe we are living in the time when Bible prophecy is once again being fulfilled. Many well-meaning but misinformed Christians will say something like this: "We must be living in the End Times when ancient Bible prophecies are once again being fulfilled in the world." This is the conclusion of many speculators today but is it the conclusion of God's Word? Is Bible prophecy being literally fulfilled in our present generation and when will Bible prophecy once again be fulfilled?

This summary on the fulfillment of various prophetic events was written in connection with another study called "Prophetic Gaps." The content of this study on prophetic fulfillment is important so the student of Bible prophecy will keep prophetic fulfillment in the framework of the seven-year Tribulation Period, as it relates to Israel and the 70th week of Daniel. This is the time when Bible prophecy will once again begin to be fulfilled on earth.

To conclude that Bible prophecy is being fulfilled today is a common misconception. Also, to conclude that Bible prophecies will occur during a gap of time between the Rapture and the start of the seven-year Tribulation Period, and before the signing of the Jewish covenant (Dan. 9:27), seems to be taking interpretive license over what the Bible actually states regarding prophetic fulfillment. The Bible prophesies of the Rapture and then predicts the commencement of the Tribulation Period. Therefore, to squeeze the fulfillment of prophetic events into a gap of time that occurs between the Rapture and Tribulation Period, would be assuming that various prophecies will be literally fulfilled *outside* the parameters of God's specified time periods recorded in the Bible, and not align with the movement of God's prophetic time clock.

The Gap-Setting Stage

The stage is definitely being set for End Time prophecy to be fulfilled. There are various stage-setting events occurring in our present day, and more specifically and in a greater way, events that will transpire during an interim

period of time between the Rapture and official start of the Tribulation Period, which will finally prepare the world for the seven-year Tribulation Period, the time when prophecy will once again be fulfilled in relation to the earth. During this gap, which is an undetermined period of time, all the preparations and planning will be made and all the props will be put in place for prophetic events to be fulfilled during the seven-year Tribulation Period, the actual time of prophetic fulfillment.

For instance, after the Rapture has occurred, the heads of the European nations will obviously be meeting together and having their negotiations about a united confederacy, paving the way for the prophetic fulfillment of the Revived Roman Empire to occur during the Tribulation Period, as outlined in God's Word (Dan. 2:41; 42-44; 7:7; 7:20-24). The Antichrist will already be a key player on the world scene, even though he is a smaller figure in the Middle East, setting the stage for him to appear on the world scene as the "little horn" (Dan. 7:8) during the actual Tribulation Period (1 John 2:18), who will seize the opportunity to overthrow three of the European superpowers with his intelligence, demonic abilities, and military genius (Dan. 7:20, 24).

Later during the middle of the Tribulation Period, the Antichrist will convince and capture the allegiance of the seven other federated states in Europe and the Middle East (Rev. 17:12-13, 17), uniting the old Roman Empire, and becoming the new world Caesar (Rev. 13:4-8), after a time of conflict in the Middle East that contests his power (Dan. 11:40-45). However, when the Tribulation Period begins, the Antichrist is depicted as a genius and demonically guided "little horn" (Dan. 7:8), who through satanically inspired guidance and supernatural abilities or powers (2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 12:3) will impose a firm and binding covenant with Israel ("many" - Dan. 9:27), Daniel's people, who are living during the future time of the Tribulation Period. This covenant will be accepted by other nations as a way to create order, stability, and the long-awaited peace within the Middle East. Therefore, Israel will be forced by the Antichrist to accept this covenant.

Certain events will definitely begin to take shape in the world prior to the start of the Tribulation Period. A converging together of European and Middle East allies, along with the news that a peace treaty will be signed with Israel in the near future, will result in the Islamic nations and Russia to become uneasy and filled with anger, since Europe and the Middle East is beginning to side with Israel. This will ignite hatred in their hearts and will

cause them to make preparations for battle, so they are ready to attack Israel when the actual Tribulation Period begins (Ezekiel 38-39), with the signing of the seven-year covenant or peace treaty.

It's very apparent that a gap of time occurs between the Rapture and the official beginning of the Tribulation Period with the signing of the seven-year covenant in the Middle East (Dan. 9:27). This covenant signing will be the start of the seven-year Tribulation Period. This will be the time when prophecy will once again be fulfilled on earth. Therefore, it's important to view the actual fulfillment of prophetic events, such as the rise of the "ten toes" out of the historic Roman Empire (Dan. 2:41) or "the ten horns out of the kingdom" (historic Roman Empire - Dan. 7:24), which results in the reunification of the ancient Roman Empire under the Antichrist (Rev. 17:12-13, 17) as occurring during the Tribulation Period. Also, the actual revelation of the personal Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:8), the new world Caesar ("the prince that shall come" - Dan. 9:26), along with the Islamic invasion of Israel (Ezekiel 38-39), will also occur during the seven-year period of Daniel's 70th week.

This is because the Bible predicts that all these events and many more will transpire or unfold in the world during the seven years. Much will be in place during the gap of time between the Rapture and Tribulation Period (a strong alliance of nations – the ten-nation confederacy, the rise and popularity of the future Antichrist, plans to create a contract with the Jewish nation for seven years). All these events will likely set the stage for the Tribulation Period to begin with the signing of the Jewish covenant (Dan. 9:27). Immediately afterward, Daniel sees the little horn rising to power and prominence in the world during the Tribulation Period. But it's during the actual Tribulation Period when Daniel's events are seen to be prophetically fulfilled, which is the time of Daniel's 70th week of seven years (Dan. 9:27).

The actual fulfillment of these prophecies will take place during Daniel's prophesied 70th week as Jesus suggested in His prophecy, which He gave on the Mount of Olives (Matt. 24:15 with Dan. 9:27). We will note later in this study that there are several prophetic events that may occur remarkably close together, occurring almost simultaneously. For instance, according to Daniels' prophecies, as the Tribulation Period begins, the Antichrist is seen having great political clout, with three kings and countries immediately giving their allegiance to the Antichrist (the little horn). These prophetic predictions will likely occur in close proximity with the signing of

the covenant. It's these events, particularly the signing of the covenant, that will become sign markers that the world has entered an unprecedented period of time, known as the Tribulation Period (Matt. 24:21, 29), when the actual fulfillment of specific End Time prophecies will be taking place on planet earth.

The Great Parenthesis

Today we live in a time period ("the dispensation of the grace of God" - Eph. 3:2), which can be viewed as a "prophetic skip" or a "great parenthesis" as Harry Ironside said. This is comparable to an interlude when prophecies are put on hold and not being fulfilled, as they relate to Israel and the End Times of the Tribulation Period. This period of *prophetic interruption* or prophetic parenthesis falls between the 69th and 70th week of Daniel – the final seven years related to Israel's prophetic destiny (Dan. 9:24-27).

Daniel 9:26-27

"And **after** threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof *shall be* with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he (the End Time Antichrist) shall confirm the covenant with many for **one week** (a period of the seven years): and in the **midst of the week** (the middle of the Tribulation Period) he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, (stop the Jewish sacrifices) and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make *it* desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."

The key word "after" (Dan. 9:26) in Daniel's prophecy reveals a stoppage in the prophetic clock and a gap of time that would exist, after the first 483 years has expired, and before the final period of seven years begins to conclude the 490 years of Daniel's prophecy. James also mentions the stop or gap of time in relation to Israel's prophetic destiny during the Tribulation Period in Acts 15:13-16, when he states how the Church Age would be followed by Israel's blessings: "And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men *and* brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name (Church Age). And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, **After** this (after the Church Age runs its course), I

will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up” (a figurative expression for David’s posterity being restored spiritually and physically to the land).

All of this means that the ONLY prophecies being *directly* and *literally* fulfilled today are the prophecies about the Church and the last days. Jesus prophesied that He would build His Church (Matt. 16:18) and Peter confirmed this prophecy (Acts 15:13-16). Also, the prophecy of the “last days” (2 Tim. 3:1; 2 Pet. 3:3) as it relates to the spiritual decline in the world during the Church Age is coming to pass today. Both Paul and Peter predicted that the “last days” would plague the Church and even during Paul’s own day he viewed the fulfillment of this taking place before his very eyes (“the mystery of iniquity doth already work” - 2 Thess. 2:7). These are the only two prophecies that are coming to pass. All the prophecies related to the End Times, or final drama which Jesus gave in Matthew 24, and which is further outlined in the Book of Revelation has no prophetic fulfillment in our current day. It’s impossible for these prophecies to have fulfillment in our present day since we are not living during the specific time period when these prophecies will be literally fulfilled.

The point is this; the fulfillment of all ancient Bible prophecies will be suspended during the gap of time presented in Daniel 9:26-27. No prophecy will be fulfilled until the Rapture of the Church occurs (1 Thess. 4:13-17) and the Tribulation Period begins, which revolves around Israel’s final week of seven years, as predicted in Daniel 9:27, which is further portrayed as “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:7). The fulfillment of ancient Bible prophecies in the books of Daniel, Isaiah, Revelation and other prophetic writings will NOT occur until the specified time period, related to Israel’s last days begin (Joel 2:30-32; Acts 2:17-22), which refers to the Tribulation Period and Millennial Kingdom.

The Seven Years (Tribulation Period)

Following the Rapture, the next event on God’s prophetic calendar is the seven-year Tribulation Period (Dan. 9:27). Therefore, the fulfillment of prophetic events must align with this time period. They cannot occur in a gap of time that precedes the Tribulation Period, which the Bible does not portray as part of the End Times. The Tribulation Period is an eschatological, seven-year period of judgment, which Jesus designated as

a time of intense tribulation on earth (Matt. 24:21; 29). This period of time occurs after the Rapture (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:1-10; Rev. 3:10) and begins with the signing of the seven-year covenant (Dan. 9:27). It is represented by various time designations throughout the Scripture.

1. The latter years

This time designation refers specifically and exclusively to the Tribulation Period. The prophecies of Daniel, Ezekiel, and Revelation definitely envision prophecy being fulfilled during the seven-year Tribulation Period of Daniel's "one week" of seven years (Dan. 9:27). Strict time designations are applied to this specific prophetic time period which when added together equal seven years (Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 11:2; 12:14; 13:5).

In the prophetic passage of Scripture that reveals the Russian/Islamic invasion of Israel, the specific period of a seven-year Tribulation is seen in such phrases as "latter years" and "latter days" (Ezek. 38:8, 16), which are the same expressions used in the Old Testament in reference to Israel's final time of distress, in connection with the Tribulation Period and her final restoration to the Millennial Kingdom (Isa. 2:2; Jer. 23:20; 30:24; Hosea 3:5; Micah 4:1; Acts 2:17-21). Therefore, the Russian/Islamic invasion will undoubtedly occur during the "latter years" or the time frame of the Tribulation Period. The events of the "latter times" and "latter days" cannot occur before the Rapture or in a gap of time between the Rapture and start of the Tribulation Period. From Biblical observation, they can only occur during the Tribulation Period – Daniel's final week of seven years.

The official reunification of the Roman Empire in the course of Daniel's prophetic writings is also locked into the overall time frame and context of the 70th week (Dan. 9:27) – a final period of seven years in relationship to Israel's prophetic destiny (Dan. 9:24). The kings who give their empires to the Antichrist are said to be kings "that shall arise" (Dan. 7:24) in the future, during the same time period that Daniel identifies elsewhere as the "one week," and as Ezekiel calls "latter days," and "time of the end" (Dan. 12:4) which corresponds to Jesus' teaching on the Tribulation Period in Matthew 24 and Revelation 12 with Israel fleeing into the wilderness.

In Daniel, all prophetic roads and phrases lead to the Tribulation Period, which is followed by the glorious reign of the King in the Millennial Kingdom. To conclude otherwise would be misleading and attempting to

find prophetic fulfillment outside the boundaries of Daniel's familiar "seven" – the seven years (Dan. 9:27). Therefore, the official events of the Tribulation Period, such as the revelation of the Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:8) and the reunification of the ancient Roman Empire under the Antichrist (Rev. 17:12-13, 17) cannot occur before the Rapture or in a gap of time between the Rapture and start of the Tribulation Period. According to Biblical terminology and observation, these prophetic events can only occur during the Tribulation Period.

2. The time of the end

Already mentioned above, this time designation also refers specifically and exclusively to the Tribulation Period. All the time designations in Daniel point to the seven-years, known as the Tribulation Period. The expressions "the time of the end" (Dan. 12:4, 9) and "at the time of the end" (Dan. 11:40), according to Daniel, describe a prophetic time period, with a series of events, which bring the earth closer to its climactic end or finish. Such events as the rise and rigorous contest against the Beast (Dan. 11:40), the racial persecution and hatred of the Jews (Dan. 12:1), and the resurgence of prophetic knowledge (Dan. 12:4, 9) are events linked to the time of the end and indicate that the earth is moving to its intended destiny and goal, which is the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom (the messianic kingdom).

It's during the "time of the end" (Dan. 11:40), beginning with the middle of the Tribulation Period, when other nations will contest the Antichrist's bid for world power. But Daniel also describes this specific time period, the midway point of the Tribulation Period, as a time when Israel will begin to suffer persecution (Dan. 12:1) by the hands of the Antichrist (Matt. 24:15-21; Rev. 12:6). It's during the "time of the end" (the middle of the Tribulation Period) when Antichrist conquers all his military adversaries, but he will also break his treaty with the Jews, erect his blasphemous image (Dan. 9:27), persecute them (Dan. 12:1), and establish a strategic military base in Jerusalem (Dan. 11:45). The "time of the end" encompasses the second half of the Tribulation Period and those specific events that lead up to the end of the age (the pre-messianic age).

All of these time designations ("latter years" and "time of the end"), with their associated events, transpire during the Tribulation Period and fall within the greater time frame and purpose of Daniel's final week of seven

years (Dan. 9:27). Once again, these events CANNOT occur before the Rapture or in a gap of time that exists between the Rapture and Tribulation Period. The Scriptures speak of their specific fulfillment during the Tribulation Period.

3. The Tribulation and End Times

Of course, this time designation points to that period of time that Jesus introduced in the Olivet Discourse. It is the Tribulation Period which is also represented in the seal, trumpet and bowl, judgments outlined in the Book of Revelation (Rev. 6-19). It once again points to Daniel's "one week" or seven-year time frame and is the same as "the tribulation of those days" (Matt. 24:29) which leads up to "the end of the age" – the broader pre-messianic age (Matt. 24:3, 14), and it will be a time filled with intense tribulation that is consecutively unleashed on planet earth. Many of the events that Daniel spoke about in his writings, such as the persecution of the Jews (Dan. 12:1) and the abomination of desolation (Dan. 9:27), is also reflected in Jesus' teaching of the End Times (Matt. 24:15-21). This indicates that both Daniel and Jesus were speaking of the same period of time – the seven-year Tribulation Period.

Since the disciples and Jesus spoke of the seven-year Tribulation Period, as portraying events that lead to a specific end (Matt. 24:3, 6, 14; Matt. 13:39, 40, 49), the events associated with this time period are often termed as End Time events. In other words, the specific period of time (seven years) leading up to the end of this period of intense judgment is often termed, the End Times. The End Times envision a seven-year time frame, where specific events transpire that serve as specific signs (Matt. 24:32-33), prior to the "end of the age" (Matt. 24:3, 13), when Christ returns to earth in His Second Coming.

These "end time" events occur during an era of prophetic judgment, the Tribulation Period (Matt. 24:21, 29), and these specific judgments will be unleashed upon planet earth following the Rapture of the Church and prior to the Second Coming. Once again, they are often coined as End Time events, since they are judgments that occur at the close or ending of the present dispensation, the Church Age (Matt. 28:19), during a narrow period of time consisting of seven years, just prior to Christ's Second Coming.

Christ divided the seven years of the Tribulation Period into two separate phases. He compares the first three-and-one-half years to “the beginning of sorrows” (birth pangs - Matt. 24:8). This is the period of time of the seal judgments (Rev. 6). The second three-and-one-half years is comparable to “great tribulation” (heavy birth pangs - Matt. 24:21) which is when the most severe judgments will fall upon planet earth (trumpet and bowl judgments). It is also the time when Israel will be persecuted (Matt. 24:16-21).

This closing era of time on earth, prior to the Millennial Kingdom or Messianic Age, will involve unprecedented judgments and earthly terror (Matt. 24:21-22), which will take place until the official close of the “end of the age” (Matt. 24:14b; Matt. 13:39-40), with the return of Christ to planet earth (Matt. 24:29-31). These End Times (a designated time period of intense judgment) will have to be shortened to only seven years, according to God’s own sovereign plan and prophetic timetable, or else the entire earth would be destroyed or leveled by God’s judgments and no one would physically survive (“And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved” - Matt. 24:22).

As previously stated, these events cannot occur before the Rapture or in a gap of time that exists between the Rapture and Tribulation Period. The Bible states they can only occur during the End Times which occurs during the Tribulation Period, a specific time that corresponds to Daniel’s 70th week or final week of seven years (Dan. 9:24, 27).

3. The Terrible Day of the Lord

Joel envisions a time period called “the terrible day of the LORD” (Joel 2:31) which also corresponds to the Tribulation Period and falls in the same category and time reference as the End Times (Matt. 24:3-26). The basic pattern and prediction of judgment that Jesus spoke about in the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24:21-22) is also predicted to happen during the Day of the Lord (1 Thess. 5:2-3; Isa. 3:6, 9-11, 13; Joel 2:11; Zeph. 1:14-18) which makes these two time periods identical. In short, the Day of the Lord also corresponds to Daniel’s “week” of seven years (Dan. 9:27), since this specific time period reflects the same events spoken by Daniel the prophet, such as the rise and career of the Antichrist (Dan. 9:27; 2 Thess. 3:1-12).

In summary, prophetic events are seen to occur within the framework of this designated time period, which is represented by various names

(Tribulation Period, time of the end, latter days, latter years, end times, and Day of the Lord). This once again means that one CANNOT make the fulfillment of these Bible prophecies as occurring before the Rapture (in our present day) or in a gap of time that exists between the Rapture and Tribulation Period, without ignoring the clear teaching regarding prophetic fulfillment, which links all End Time or “end of the age” prophecies being fulfilled exclusively during the Tribulation Period (the seven years).

For a more details regarding this subject see the authors study entitled “Prophetic Time Designations.”

The Timing of Prophetic Events

Since the specific texts, total numbers (Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 11:2; 12:14; 13:5; Rev. 17:12), times (Dan. 12:4, 9; 1 Thess. 5:1-2), and terms (latter years, latter times, time of the end, end of the age, Day of the Lord) relate specifically and only to the seven-year Tribulation Period, one should NOT dogmatically assert that the events, such as the reunification of the Roman Empire (Dan. 2, 7), Gog’s northern invasion (Ezek. 38-39), or the rebuilding of the Jewish temple (Rev. 11:1-2) will take place in the gap of time that exists between the Rapture (post-Rapture) and beginning of the Tribulation Period (pre-Tribulational). Although the stage will be set for Antichrist’s rise to power during the interim time period, he will not be actually *revealed* as the “man of sin” (2 Thess. 2:3) and identified as such (2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 13:18) until the specific seven years unfold, which is the time when knowledge of End Time events, in relationship to their prophetic fulfillment, will be specifically known.

Daniel 12:4

“But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.”

Although many have interpreted this as jet travel and other forms of advanced knowledge (computer technology), the context is clearly talking about the advancement of knowledge (Bible knowledge) regarding End Time events that are specifically and literally being fulfilled on earth during the Tribulation Period. In other words, those saved people living during the actual era and time, when prophetic events will be literally fulfilled, will understand many specific details about prophecy and their progress of fulfillment in relation to earth’s current events (Rev. 6-18). They will be able

to identify the events that are occurring in the world in relationship to Bible prophecy and pinpoint the specific players of the End Times (Tribulation Period), such as the personal Antichrist (Rev. 13:18).

The seven-year Tribulation Period will result in a revival of prophetic studies like the world has never previously witnessed. It will be a time of unprecedented Bible study in relationship to God's truth and specifically the area of Bible prophecy, since the world will be living in that seven-year period of time that precedes the end, when Jesus returns in His Second Coming. It is no wonder why the Church today has advanced in its study of Bible prophecy within the last century. It seems the closer people get to the end, the more interest and revival there is in prophetic studies. This will be especially true during the Tribulation Period, which precedes the end by seven years.

Paul's teaching about the events associated with the Day of the Lord (2 Thess. 2:3) was given to remind the saints that they COULD NOT be living during the period of time known as the Day of the Lord (Tribulation Period), since it's during this exact time, when the apostasy will be witnessed, the restraining presence of the Holy Spirit will no longer be felt, and when the Antichrist will be revealed ("then shall that Wicked [one] be revealed" – 2 Thess. 2:8). In other words, Paul teaches that these events would not transpire outside the Tribulation Period, in order to explain that the Church could not be living during the Tribulation. Paul clearly defines when these specific events would transpire in the world and does not budge on the timing of them. To look for the fulfillment of these events, and other Tribulation events, outside the boundaries of their time fulfillment is to err and create confusion regarding God's End Time prophetic program.

The events mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12, such as the religious apostasy, restraining influence of the Spirit, and revelation of Antichrist will be eventually revealed during the Tribulation Period. However, as the Tribulation Period begins the Antichrist's immediate rise to stardom as a "little horn" (Dan. 7:8) will be very apparent, along with the signing of the covenant (Dan. 9:27) and likely the Russia/Islamic invasion (Ezek. 38), which takes place in retaliation to the signing of this covenant. These prophetic events may actually be viewed as *sign markers* that trigger the beginning of the Tribulation Period. These particular events indicate the earth has moved into that specific period of time that Jesus foretold, known as the End Times, a time when horrifying events will unfold or transpire in

two periods of time consisting of three- and-one-half years (Matt. 24:1-31; Daniel 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 11:3; 12:6).

In concluding this section, it's safe to assume that the events of the Tribulation will begin to unfold rapidly or "quickly" (Rev. 1:3; 22:10) and make headline news, as the Tribulation Period officially begins. As previously mentioned, some events could conceivably occur in close proximity to one another when the Tribulation Period begins because of the preparation time (gap) between the Rapture and commencement of the Tribulation. As the Tribulation Period begins, we see the rise of the popular "little horn" (Dan. 7:8), the official signing of the covenant (Dan. 9:27), and the Russian/Islamic invasion (Ezek. 38), as the world moves into the predicted time period known as the End Times, when ancient prophecies found in the books of Ezekiel, Daniel, Isaiah and Revelation are being fulfilled. Until Daniel's 70th week begins, there can be no exact or literal fulfillment of Bible prophecy (Dan. 9:27). The Bible reveals that God's prophetic program for Israel and the events associated with the End Times is on hold until the final week begins - "the week" of seven years (Dan. 9:27).

Newspaper Exegesis

Many conclude that ancient Bible prophecies are being fulfilled in our present day. The speculative, wild, and endless claims being made today by some televangelists and in prophecy books concerning such things as blood moons, Babylon, and the Beast's identity breed confusion about the End Times. Many would-be prophecy experts know more about selling books than they do about Bible prophecy. They look to the Bible and claim that certain prophetic events recorded in the books of Revelation and Daniel are being fulfilled today. However, when prophetic speculators do this they become guilty of "newspaper exegesis" which is trying to link Bible prophecies dealing with the Tribulation Period to our own day and time. Actually, prophecies are predicted to be fulfilled after the Rapture, during the Tribulation Period, when the Church will not be here (Rev. 6-19), as Paul clearly outlines in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11. In essence, Bible prophecy was written to be fulfilled after the Rapture in the specific events associated with the Tribulation Period, Millennium, and Eternal State. The ancient prophecies cannot be fulfilled in our present era of time.

Once again, Jesus used the term “end” (End Times) in relationship to the signs of the Tribulation Period (Matt. 24:3, 6, 13, 14), which is a time when God will chasten Israel (Jer. 30:7, 11; Isa. 59:20-21) and judge planet earth (Isa. 24:20-23). It’s a specific seven-year period of time (Dan. 9:27 – “one week”) that precedes His Second Coming to earth (Matt. 24:29). The term “end” in the context of Matthew 24 is applied to the events associated with this future seven-years which leads up to the climax of the pre-messianic era.

The End Times are actually events which can only occur during the future Tribulation Period, prior to when the end comes, the end of God’s seven-year judgment program with the Second Coming. We are not living in the End Time which occur during the seven years, prior to Christ’s Second Advent to earth (Matt. 24:33). Instead, we are living during the “last days” (2 Tim. 3:1) that occur prior to the Rapture, which is a secret teaching (mystery teaching – 1 Thess. 15:51-54) presented by Paul that promises the Church will be taken back to Heaven, prior to the commencement of the Tribulation Period (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9-10).

In short, End Time events can only occur during the End Times, which specifically refers to the seven-year Tribulation Period, a time when God is judging the earth, prior to Christ’s Second Coming. From a Biblical perspective and analysis, prophetic events, related to the End Times, cannot occur before the Rapture, or in a gap between the Rapture and commencement of the Tribulation Period. God’s prophetic clock does not start until the Rapture occurs and when the Antichrist officially signs the seven-year covenant with the Jews (Dan. 9:27). Only when the seven-year Tribulation Period begins do we enter the End Times, a specific era of time identified as “those days” (Matt. 24:19, 22, 29) and “in the days of these kings” (Dan. 2:44). It’s an era of time when prophecy and prophetic signs will be fulfilled on earth.

In fact, Jesus taught that a specific Jewish generation living during the coming Tribulation Period will not “pass away” or die until all of the prophetic signs come to pass and are fulfilled (Mark 13:29-30), prior to Christ’s Second Coming to earth. This text has nothing to do with a generation of people living today but the Jewish generation living during the coming Tribulation Period, who will be able to see all the signs occurring before their very eyes and calculate the soon return of Jesus Christ in His Second Coming.

My instructor, John Miles, used to say: “Signs are for Israel – not the Church.” In other words, we are not to be looking at signs, thinking that they are somehow fulfilling prophecy today; we are to be listening for the trumpet sound (1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:16). The Rapture is the next prophetic event on God’s calendar.

In essence, prophecies repeatedly speak about their fulfillment in a period of time known as “the day of the Lord” (Isa. 13:6, 9, 13; 27:1; 1 Thess. 5:2), which is a specific seven-year period of judgment that follows the Rapture (1 Thess. 5:3). This future time designation has nothing to do with the period of history in which we are living today. Therefore, the grievous error being committed today of “newspaper exegesis” (using news headlines as the fulfillment of Bible prophecy) should not confuse the discerning Christian. Nor should one seek for the prophetic fulfillment of these events prior to the commencement of the Tribulation Period, or in a period of time that lies between the Rapture and start of the Tribulation Period. End times events can only take place during the End Times!

Israel’s Regathering and Rebirth - 1948

It must also be concluded that Israel’s regathering to the land of Palestine in unbelief, and her rebirth as a nation in 1948, is NOT a direct fulfillment of Bible prophecy, as many contend today. Neither Ezekiel’s (Ezekiel 37:21-28) or Matthew’s prophecy (Matt. 24:31) pictures an ongoing regathering of Israel in unbelief throughout decades of time (19th – 21st centuries) but a universal regathering of Jews that will result in the immediate salvation of Israel as a nation (Ezek. 37:13-14). Thus, the national regathering of Israel to Palestine for salvation at Christ’s Second Coming is the subject of prophetic revelation – not the return of unbelieving Israel in 1948. Ezekiel’s prophecy depicts Israel being saved (born again) and being planted in the land for the Millennium or 1,000-year reign of Christ (Rev. 20:1-5).

Ezekiel 37:14

“And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord.”

Ezekiel 36:24-26

“For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean

water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.”

Other Bible passages on the New Covenant give similar promises to Israel (Jer. 30:10-11, 18-21; 31:8-14, 23-28). These verses teach that Israel will be regathered to the land of Palestine for salvation and preparation for the Millennial Kingdom. They speak of Israel’s regathering for cleansing and salvation, prior to the Millennium; they do not favor the view or understanding of the regathering of Israel to Palestine in unbelief, and her rebirth as a nation in 1948, and then maintaining her unbelief throughout many centuries and decades of time. This is absolutely foreign to what Ezekiel is envisioning and teaching. Israel will be supernaturally regathered at Christ’s Second Coming and then saved to live in the land promised to the Jews.

Ezekiel 37:22-28 states:

“And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions **(not fulfilled in 1948)**: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them **(not fulfilled in 1948)**: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And David my servant (either the Messiah or David himself) shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them **(not fulfilled in 1948)**. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: **(not fulfilled in 1948)** and my servant David shall be their prince forever **(not fulfilled in 1948)**. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore **(not fulfilled in 1948)**. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore” **(not fulfilled in 1948)**.

John Walvoord comments:

“It should be apparent that there is no literal fulfillment of this prophecy at the present time, for it includes too many elements that are not true in the world today. ... At the present time Israel has not been regathered, the nation of Israel has not been restored to one kingdom. David has not been resurrected to be king over them, not everyone knows the Lord, and the people of Israel are not clearly identified as the people of God. The time of Israel’s trouble which precedes these events has not yet taken place. Taken in their natural meaning, these promises of the new covenant are so specific that it is obvious that they have not been fulfilled at the present time.”

The word “gather” (Ezek. 37:21) frequently refers to God’s final regathering of Israel (Isa. 11:11-12; 43:5; Jer. 32:37) and not to a continual regathering that takes place over the course of centuries and decades. Of course, we know that a *historic* regathering has already begun, as Israel returns to the land today in unbelief, but the *prophetic* regathering will take place in the latter days, when God supernaturally gathers the believing remnant of Jews back to the Promised Land (Ezekiel 34:24-29).

As of 2010 the largest numbers of Jews live in Israel (5,703,700), United States (5,275,000), France (483,500), Canada (375,000), the United Kingdom (292,000), Russia (205,000), Argentina (182,300), and Germany (119,000). But they also live elsewhere and it will take a supernatural work of God to bring them all back to Israel for their final examination, salvation, and blessing. Reading Ezekiel’s entire prophecy informs us that it’s depicting the time when Israel returns to the land in belief and salvation in order to inherit the promised blessings of the fathers and prophets. It’s a specific and definite time when God quickly “gathers” (Ezek. 37:21) Israel supernaturally from among the nations of the world, through angelic assistance (Matt. 13:40-41; 24:31), in order to immediately examine them, determine their salvation, and then prepare them for entrance into the earthly theocracy of Kingdom.

Matthew 24:31 records:

“And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect (Israel – Isa. 45:4; Deut. 7:6) from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

This is definitely a supernatural regathering that occurs at Christ's Second Coming which prepares His ancient people Israel for her covenant and Kingdom blessings. Nevertheless, it's also true that the Bible *assumes* (without directly prophesying about it) that Israel will return to Palestine in unbelief sometime before the Tribulation Period begins (Ezek. 38:8). Daniel 9:26 talks about the Roman judgment, which along with other previous judgments (Assyrian and Babylonian), scattered the Jews throughout the earth – the Jewish Diaspora (James 1:1). However, Daniel 9:27 immediately follows with the Antichrist's covenant, which he makes with the Jews (Dan. 9:27). This means that Israel will in some measure return to the land after the Roman judgment (Matt. 24:1-2) and be living in Palestine during the coming seven-year Tribulation Period (Ezek. 38; Matt. 24:15-21; Rev. 11:1-2; 12).

Actually, there has been a continuous settlement of Jews in the land of Israel since the Roman conquest, despite tremendous hardships and against all odds. In fact, even when it was officially forbidden by the Crusades, Jews managed to obtain special permits to live in Jerusalem because they were cloth dyers or had other vital skills. Jewish communities in Jerusalem and other outlying areas were resettled more than once. Jews have been living in Jerusalem continuously for nearly two millennia. However, when the Zionist movement began to blossom (late nineteenth century) the Jews started returning in larger numbers to their ancient homeland. In 1948 the Jewish people were officially recognized as a group of people that possessed a Jewish state called Israel, which was independent from British mandate.

Here is the point. Bible prophecy *assumes* that Jews must be back in the land in some measure, despite the Diaspora (Jews living in countries outside Palestine), since the Antichrist will make a covenant with Israel (Dan. 9:27). At best, we can conclude that the Bible indicates Israel will return to the land and seek to inhabit it, since prophetic events revolve around Israel being back in the land (Matt. 24; Rev. 12), and since there will be a large body of Jews already present in Palestine to experience the Messiah's deliverance and salvation (Zech. 12, 14; Hosea, 6:1-2; Rom. 11:26). This will occur in conjunction with the worldwide regathering of "his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt. 24:31; Mark 13:27) to examine Israel (Ezek. 20:38) and prepare the Jews for the Millennial Kingdom (Matt. 24:40-51; 25:1-30).

In addition, we must make note that Israel's return to the land and rebirth in 1948 did not have to occur in order for Jesus to return in the Rapture. God could have caused the Jews to return in the unknown period of time (a prophetic gap) that exists between the Rapture and the beginning of the Tribulation Period. He could have planned Israel's return and rebirth in another way; however, He has chosen to progressively and gradually bring a large group of His people back to Palestine in unbelief, before the Rapture, in order to set the stage for end time events to take place. The return of the Jews to the land today is not a matter of prophetic fulfillment, but a matter of *prophetic preparation*, so prophecy can be fulfilled during the end times.

A Prophetic Scenario

Prior to the start of the Tribulation Period (during the gap of time between the Rapture and Tribulation), the news about a Middle East peace treaty will be broadcast everywhere throughout the earth, through the medium of radio, TV, Internet, and newspapers. There will be plenty of headline news stories regarding the plans for a political contract to be officially made with Israel, to bring peace throughout the Middle East. Perhaps a specific day and time will be set for this historic event to occur. All eyes will be on the Middle East for the making of history.

This covenant signing will be the final preparation for End Time events to begin. The converging events that mark the official start of the Tribulation Period will be the political awareness and popularity of a "little horn" (Dan. 7:8) that has arisen on the world scene. This charismatic figure and promised peace maker (Dan. 8:25; 1 Thess. 5:3; Rev. 6:2; Dan. 9:27) will be a genius (Dan. 7:20) and possess great knowledge about politics and how to solve problems in the world. His genius, deception, blasphemies (Dan. 7:25), abilities, and peace tactics are energized and fostered through demonic and devilish means ("and the dragon gave him his power" - Rev. 13:2).

Since Satan is backing and perhaps indwelling this "little horn" (2 Thess. 2:9), the Antichrist will be able to do amazing things throughout the earth, even as a smaller leader rising to power in the vicinity of the old Roman Empire (Dan. 7:23-24). Many other nations in Europe and the Middle will support the Antichrist's ideas and ingenious plan to create peace by forcing Israel into a covenant (Dan. 9:27). Since the nations that surround Israel

will back and support Antichrist's covenant plan for Israel, the Jews will be pressured or forced to accept the covenant; therefore, it is identified as a strong covenant that is confirmed among Daniel's people (Dan. 9:27).

This peace covenant that is placed upon Israel and accepted by other nations in the Middle East will be quickly followed and challenged by an invasion of Islamic militants (Ezek. 38) who have been waiting in the wings for this covenant to be signed. Various Islamic Fundamentalist countries will react violently to the prospect of signing a seven-year covenant with Israel. They will say to their Arab cousins, "He can't do that. He has just violated the law in the Quran. He is going to give away what can't be given away and he is going to do so to the cursed Jews!"

Out of hatred for the Jews, the material wealth of Israel, and a desire to obtain a strategic military position on earth, the Islamic hordes will take aim at Israel and the Antichrist but end up suffering defeat at the hands of God. Their demise will occur in the mountains of Israel, providing the Jews with the use of weaponry as fuel fire throughout the seven-year Tribulation Period (Ezek. 39:9). They will also bury the dead for seven months during the first three- and one-half years of the peace treaty (Ezek. 39:12-13) prior to the breaking of the covenant.

An invasion and supernatural destruction of Islamic soldiers at the beginning of the Tribulation Period also provides the backdrop for a time of promised peace (Rev. 6:1-2), the rise of a one world church without any threat from radical Islam (Rev. 17:1-5), the freedom to reconstruct the Tribulation temple (Rev. 11:1-2), the future formation and consolidation of the ten-nation confederacy under the Antichrist (Dan. 2:41-44; 7:24; Rev. 17:12-13, 17), which eventually paves the way for the world dictatorship and worship of the Antichrist (Rev. 13:3-18), since the threat of Islamic invaders are out of the picture.

After the Islamic terrorism is out of the way and the Middle East crises is seemingly fixed, a time of world peace and celebration and euphoria will be experienced throughout the earth (1 Thess. 5:1-3), as a result of the rider on the white horse galloping on to the world scene and promoting peace (Rev. 6:1-2). The actual rebuilding of the Jewish temple will also begin to take place, since political permission was given to the Jews to sacrifice once again, according to their ancient Jewish customs and religion (Dan. 9:27). The temple will be completed by the middle of the Tribulation Period

(Rev. 11:1-2); however, according to the fulfillment of Bible prophecy, which occurs during the Tribulation Period, the actual building project cannot begin prior to the signing of the covenant. Both the signing of the Covenant and permission to erect the temple are seen as part of the End Time scenario (Tribulation Period). Using modern equipment, the Jews will in a short time erect their beloved temple structure under the protection of the new Middle East hero and return to their ancient Jewish worship. The signing of the covenant will ensure their freedom of worship for three-and-one-half years (Dan. 9:27).

With a covenant of peace in place and the threat of Islamic militants gone, things will look like they are improving in the world and that peace has finally come to the Middle East, as the Tribulation gets underway. The world will seem like it's entering a time of peace and utopia. People will think that the dawning of the "Age of Aquarius" has finally arrived for "they shall say, Peace and safety" (1 Thess. 5:3). However, it will be short lived (Matt. 24:6-7; Rev. 6:3-4). Without warning and with a sudden vengeance, God will begin to unfold the judgments of the Tribulation Period, beginning with the seal judgments (1 Thess. 5:3 - "Then sudden destruction cometh"). Everyone will know that all is not well and that the "wrath of the Lamb" is being experienced throughout planet earth (Rev. 6:16-17).

In summary, the seven years get under way with the rise of the "little horn" (Dan. 7:8), the ratification of the covenant (Dan. 9:27), the retaliation of the Islamic hordes with their supernatural defeat by God (Ezek. 38-39), the rider on the white horse (Antichrist) declaring peace (Rev. 6:1-2), and the reemergence of the Babylonian harlot church (Rev. 17:1-6). These events will seemingly transpire together, or in close proximity to one another, at the commencement of the Tribulation Period. They will be looked upon as world-shaking and world-changing events that officially mark the beginning time period of the seven years ("one week" – Dan. 9:27) that will be systematically fulfilled, as outlined in the Book of Revelation with the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments, which are catastrophic judgments that will be poured out upon mankind (Rev. 6-19).

Paul concludes that it's during this time, the specific seven-year Tribulation Period, when the Holy Spirit's restraining influence is removed, the harlot church begins to bloom, and the hideous man of sin is revealed (2 Thess. 2:3). In addition, those living during this specific time period, who are studying Bible prophecy, will know that the personal Antichrist has been

revealed (Dan. 12:4; Rev. 13:18), the Spirit's restraining presence to suppress evil in the world has been lost (2 Thess. 2:7), and that a harlot, apostate church (2 Thess. 2:3; Rev. 17:1-5) has risen to replace the true Church, which has been raptured into Heaven (John 14:1-3).

As the seven-year Tribulation period begins the "little horn" (Antichrist) will rise to greater power and gain the allegiance of three European nations (Dan. 7:20, 24) that have joined together for power and political control in Europe (Dan. 2:41). This may actually give him the political clout he needs to sign the covenant (Dan. 9:27) Later, presumably by the middle of the Tribulation Period, the other seven kings will also agree to give their allegiance to this Middle East hero – the Antichrist (Rev. 17:12-13, 17), causing the reunification of the power block of the Old Roman Empire to occur (Dan. 7:7, 24; Rev. 12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 12, 17). Daniel envisions a ten-toe stage of the Roman Empire that never existed historically (Dan. 2:41). Therefore, the feet and toes of Daniel's image were part of the representation of the fourth Roman kingdom, and they portray the Roman Empire in its final stage of existence, in contrast with the earlier iron leg state (Dan. 2:40). This means that the Antichrist will bring together ten countries that exist in the same area of the old Roman Empire (Europe and the Middle East) and become a great military power during the End Times.

When this occurs, various countries and powers surrounding the Middle East will contest the Antichrist's takeover of the European nations and seek to gain a foothold in the Middle East (Dan. 11:40-45). This dramatic military event will take place during the "time of the end" (Dan. 11:40), at the midway point of the Tribulation Period, which begins a series of events that will bring the earth closer to its climactic end or finish. Those nations that come against the Antichrist will be destroyed and overtaken by his military machine ("God of forces" – Dan. 11:38).

It's during this same time, either before or after the military conflicts, when the Antichrist will break his covenant with the Jews (Dan. 9:27), set up the abomination of desolation (Matt. 24:15; Rev. 13:15), and Israel will be persecuted severely (Dan. 12:1), causing them to flee into the wilderness (Matt. 24:15-21). In the aftermath of these battles the Beast of Revelation 13 will be worshipped as the undisputed ruler of planet earth (Rev. 13:1-9). As the second half of the Tribulation Period unfolds the Antichrist will persecute the saints (Rev. 20:4) but amazingly millions upon millions of

people will become Christians (Rev. 7:9-15). The blood of the martyrs is seed!

As the Tribulation Period winds down, Satan and demons will inspire the nations of the earth to come together to finally annihilate Israel and destroy the Messiah at His Second Coming (Rev. 16:13-14; Psalm 2:1-12). But Jesus Christ will return as the King and destroy the armies staged throughout Palestine (Rev. 19:11-16; Isa. 63:1-4) causing the blood to flow as deep as the horse bridles (Rev. 14:20).

Signs of the Times

Presently, we are living in the “last days” (2 Tim. 3:1; 1 Tim. 4:1) of earth’s history in relationship to the Rapture (“that day” - 2 Tim. 4:8), but after the signing of the covenant with the Jews (Dan. 9:27), the world will enter the “last days” in relationship to Israel’s prophetic destiny (Joel 2:30-32; Acts 2:17-22), a period of time identified as the End Times, as outlined by Jesus in Matthew 24, a seven-year period of time, which specifically occurs prior “to the end of the age” (Matt. 24:3), the pre-messianic age, and Christ’s Second Coming (Matt. 24:9).

We must remember that *prophetic events often cast their shadows upon the world before they arrive*. These shadows function as signs of the times. They are not signs that MUST occur for Christ to return in the Rapture (1 Thess. 5:1-5), since the Rapture is a signless prophetic event, which will result in God’s saints being rescued from the seven-year Tribulation Period (Rev. 3:10) and transported back to Heaven (John 14:1-2). Christ’s coming for His beloved Bride (the Church) is portrayed as an imminent event which can occur at any moment (1 Cor. 16:22; Phil. 3:20; 4:5; James 5:8-9; Rev. 22:12).

Of course, there are many trends and developments (shadows of what lies ahead during the Tribulation Period) that indicate Christ’s coming (the Rapture) and the End Times (Tribulation Period) are not far away. In department stores, we often see signs of Christmas, even before Thanksgiving has arrived. You can hear the thunder before the storm actually arrives. In one sense, one can hear the hoof beats of the four horsemen of the apocalypse on the prophetic horizon (Rev. 6:1-8). It’s later than you think!

The events occurring today in the world are preparing the earth for the seven-year Tribulation Period to begin. Some of the more prevalent events that will occur during the Tribulation Period are already casting their shadows upon the world and we see precursor signs or trends developing today that demonstrate we are close to the end times and “that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

Such signs as *religious deception* (Matt. 24:5, 11-12, 23-24; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:2-4; 1 John 2:18), *world chaos* (Matt. 24:1-7), *Christian persecution* (Matt. 24:9-19; Rev. 17:6; 20:4), *ecumenicalism and apostasy* (Rev. 17:1-7; Matt. 13:33; 2 Thess. 2:3), *globalism* (Rev. 13:1-18), *European Union* (Dan. 7:7, 24; Rev. 17:12), *Israel back in the land* (Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15-22; Rev. 12; Zech. 14:1-7; Rom. 11:26), *Middle East* (Dan. 11:40-45; Zech. 12:1-2; 14:1-2; Matt. 24; Ezek. 38); *plans to rebuild Jewish temple* (Dan. 9:27; Matt. 25:15; Rev. 11:1-2), and *Iraq and Babylon* (Rev. 16:19; 18; Zech. 5:1-11) all point to the end times.

These signs or trends or developments are setting the stage for the end times (Tribulation Period) to begin. Many of the actors and props are in place and the curtain is about to be drawn, following the Rapture, when all of these events will be literally fulfilled and brought to pass, according to God’s prophetic calendar. We are living in the Last Days, we are headed toward the End Times, and Jesus is coming again!

“Signs of the times are everywhere,
There’s a brand new feeling in the air.
Keep your eyes upon the eastern sky,
Lift up your head for your redemption draweth nigh.”

Maranatha, our Lord cometh!