

THE THINGS WHICH MUST
SHORTLY COME TO PASS

Hugo Bouter

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Concerning Biblical expectations of future events



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Timing of the Second Coming:
'of that day and hour no one knows.'

Mark 13:32-33

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1. What will happen with Israel and the church?

The fulfilment of Biblical prophecy with respect to the end times has already begun, and the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 is evidence: '(...) Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near.' (Matt. 24:32-34; cf. 21:18-21, Ezek. 37:1-8).

First, there is a national restoration, followed by a spiritual restoration through the breath of the Spirit into what had previously been dry bones; also pictured in Romans 11 as the broken branches grafted back into the olive tree. Israel will once again be the vineyard of the LORD and produce fruit for Him.

The church, on the other hand, has a heavenly future: she will be snatched out of the earth. The Lord Jesus Himself will descend from heaven and all the true believers that belong to the church, and also the Old Testament saints (all those who are Christ's, 1 Cor. 15:23) will be taken up to meet the Lord in the air. The dead will be raised and the living will be changed in the twinkling of an eye.

God's Word says: 'For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet 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 thus we shall always be with the Lord' (1 Thess. 4:13-18; cf. 1 Cor. 15:51-52; Heb. 11:40).

The church is brought into the Father's house with its many mansions. This is a special blessing for the believers of this dispensation who may now know God through Christ as their *Father*. They have a privileged place in the nearness of the Father and the Son. The many mansions of the Father's house are, so to say, the intimate living quarters in God's heavenly house (cf. the priest's chambers of the temple in the Old Testament).

The Lord Jesus Himself spoke about this while He was still on earth: 'Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go 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, there you may be also'. 'Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me' (John 14:1-3; 17:24).

2. Christ's appearing or revealing in glory

After the judgments of Revelation 4 to 19 are carried out, the Lord will appear in power and glory with all the heavenly saints to establish a visible kingdom here on earth. We will be revealed with Him in glory. This is what *most* of the passages that speak about the return of Christ are about (see Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 4:14b; 2 Thess. 1:10; Rev. 19:14; cf. Zech. 14:5).

There is another important event prior to this. The believers will first appear before the judgment seat of Christ in order to be presented and receive rewards for their service and sharing in the time of His rejection. There are crowns and thrones for His followers, who will reign with Him (Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 4:8). To be presented at this judgment seat is a *blessing*, because everything from our lives will be made *transparent* there. Believers will not come into judgment (John 5:24).

3. The Hour of Trial

Thus the church, which awaits the return of the Lord Jesus, will be saved from the hour of trial that will come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. 'I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown' (Rev. 3:10-11). Being saved from *the hour* of trial means that the church will *not* pass through the judgments of the last seven years of the end times. Christ delivers us from the wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:10). Those who live on the earth, lit. 'the inhabitants of the earth', refers to all who have exclusively *earthly ambition* and do not possess a heavenly calling. They fall prey to the temptations of the end times through the deception of the beast and the false prophet.

'The hour of trial' encompasses the entire period of Daniel's last week (i.e. 7 years), the 'Great Tribulation' is the *second* half of this period: therefore 3 ½ years, or 42 months, or 1260 days (we find these time periods in Rev. 11 and 12). The term Great Tribulation appears in the New Testament in Matthew 24:21, Mark 13:19 and Revelation 7:14. The Old Testament speaks of the time of Jacob's Trouble (cf. Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1).

There will also be martyrs in the *first* half of the last 7 years, as we can read in Revelation 6:9-11, but these first trials are nothing compared with what will happen in the Great Tribulation. Whoever refuses to worship the beast will be killed (Rev. 13:15-17). For the sake of the elect from Israel, who have accepted the Messiah, those days will be

shortened (Matt. 24:22). They have to flee to the mountains and the wilderness of Judea to find refuge from the persecution of the beast and his prophet (Matt. 24:16ff.; Rev. 11:7; 12:13ff.).

4. The Seventy Weeks of Daniel

The last week of Daniel¹ (the last of 70 weeks of years, broken down in sections of 7 and 62 weeks plus one last week, cf. Dan. 9:24-27) is therefore divided into two halves: at the beginning of the 70th week a seven year treaty is signed between reunited Europe (the revived Roman empire) and Israel (maybe under the regime of the antichrist). This covenant is elsewhere called a covenant with death and Sheol (Isa. 28:15). After three and a half years, the newly instituted order of worship in Jerusalem comes to an end.

An idol will be placed in the rebuilt temple, a statue of the Roman ruler that will be able to speak. This is the 'abomination of desolation' (Matt. 24:15), i.e. the idol that will cause total desolation – accomplished through a destroyer that that God will send from the North, Assyria, also called the king of the North, who is the rod of His anger (Isa. 10:5; Dan. 11:40-45; 12:11). Moreover, the antichrist (the second beast from Revelation 13, later called the false prophet) will have himself worshiped as god in the temple (2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 13:4, 11ff.).

People often incorrectly think that the future ruler of Europe and the antichrist will be one and the same person, but in Revelation 13

1 The period of the church is a New Testament mystery and is not taken into account in Old Testament prophecy.

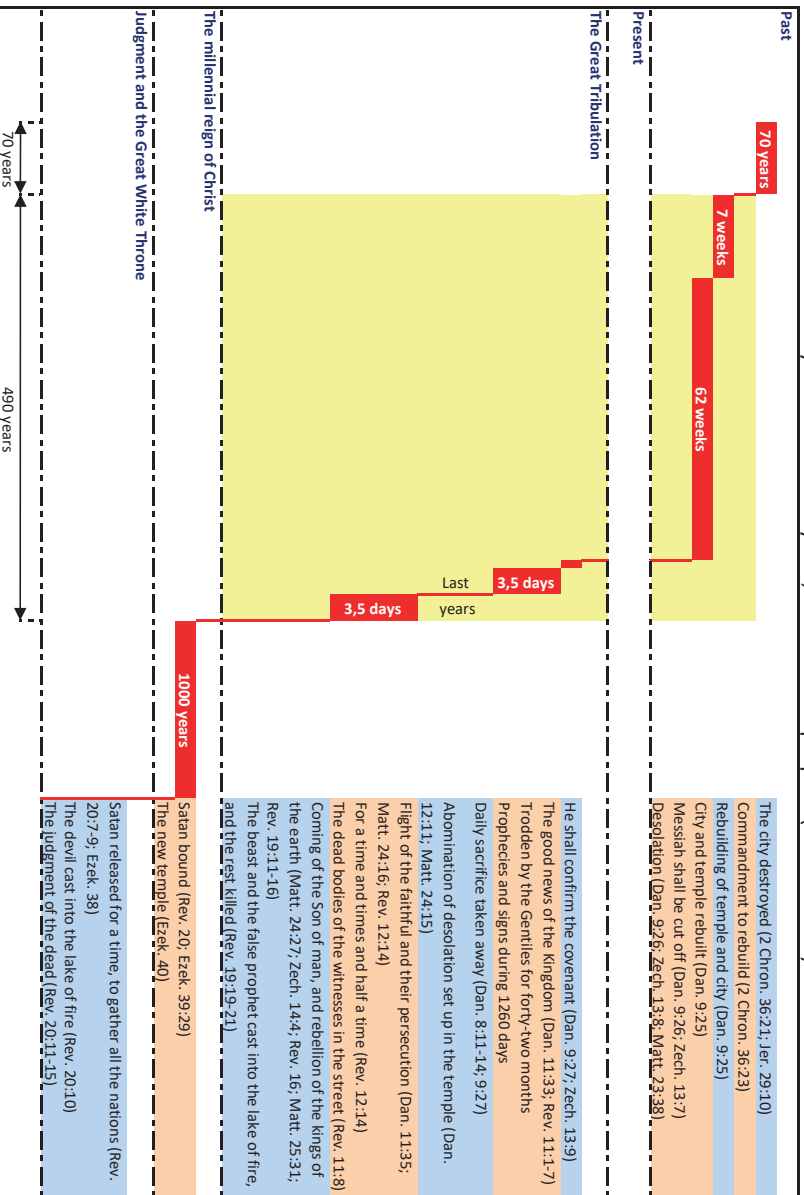
it is clearly about two different figures, two ‘beasts’, which speaks to the fact that they have no conscious relationship with God. The first person is often simply called ‘the beast’, the second is the false prophet that misleads the people to worship the first beast. This second one is the antichrist (1 and 2 John), the king of Israel (Dan. 11:36-39), the man of sin, the lawless one, the son of perdition (2 Thess. 2). He is the false christ, who comes in his *own* name (John 5:43).

The background to these terrible events is that Satan is cast out of heaven in the middle of the last week (Rev. 12:9), and as the ‘accuser of the brethren’ will no longer have access to the heavenly regions (cf. Job 1 and 2). He is presented here as:

- a. the great dragon, despotic ruler and persecutor of the believing remnant of Israel;
- b. the old serpent, the cunning deceiver ever since Genesis 3;
- c. the devil (Gr. *Diabolos*), the one who slanders;
- d. Satan (Gr. *Satanas*), the one who opposes God, the adversary.

He knows that his time is short and he inspires the beast out of the sea, the Roman leader, and the beast out of the earth, the antichrist, who pretends to be a lamb but speaks as a dragon. These are the three players, the ‘trinity’ of evil so to say.

Seventy weeks of seven years, of Daniel the prophet (Dan. 9:24-27)



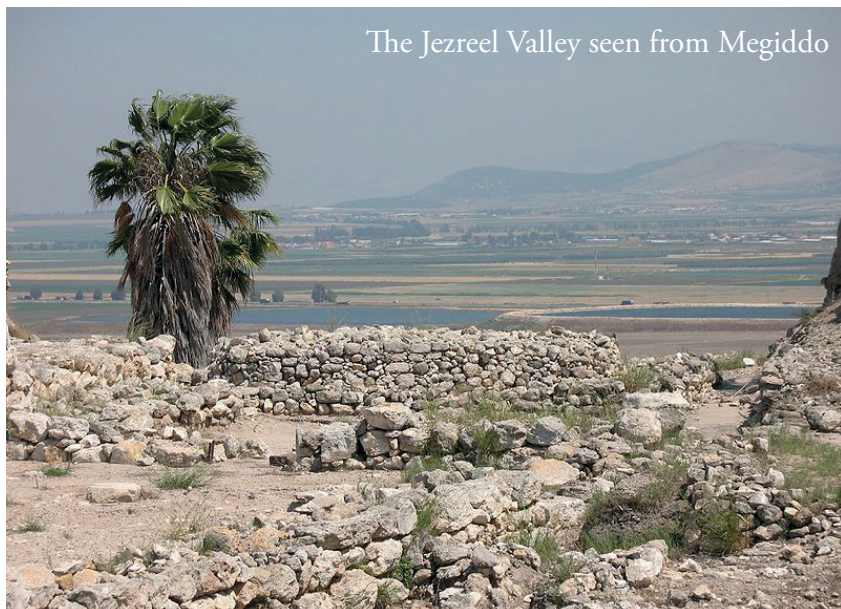
5. Three waves of seven Judgments

Then the judgments of the end times break out in full force to punish these united forces of evil and there will be wars and desolations determined until the end. John describes from an opened heaven – that is, from the point of view of the heavenly saints – the judgments during the *entire* period of seven years. He calls these ‘the things that must take place *after* this’, i.e. after the period of church history and the rapture of the church (Rev. 4:1; cf. 1:19).

The book of Revelation is about throne and temple visions (cf. Rev. 4:2, 8:3 and 11:19). The standard of judgment is always God’s *glory* and *holiness*! There are seven seal judgments and also seven trumpet judgments. The seal judgments in Revelation 6 mainly describe the events in the *first* half of Daniel’s last week, the *beginning* of sorrows [lit. labor pains] (Matt. 24:8). The trumpet and bowl judgments specifically describe the events in the *second* half of the week, the time of the Great Tribulation.

The seventh trumpet judgment extends to the return of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom (Rev. 11:15-18). That means the seven bowl judgments of God’s wrath, the last seven plagues of chapter 15 and 16, must be completed before this. This also applies to other matters that are described in more detail in chapters 12 to

18, such as the judgment of Babylon the great. Revelation 14:14-20 also provides a preview of the return of the Son of Man, and the judgment He carries out on apostate Israel who follows the antichrist. From Revelation 19:6 to 21:8 we find a chronological order of events again, from Christ's appearing to the coming of the new heaven and the new earth.



6. Armageddon, the last world war

When the sixth angel pours out his bowl of the wrath of God (Rev. 16:12-16), we are already almost at the end of the Great Tribulation. The pouring of the bowls takes place just before the coming of Christ. During the sixth bowl judgment there will be a massive gathering of troops in Armageddon (see the illustrations). Near the town of Megiddo in the Jezreel Valley is a well-known battlefield, where many kings fell during the Old Testament. It will also be the great battlefield of the end times.

When the sixth bowl is poured out, the waters of the Euphrates dry up, clearing the way for the kings to come up from the east toward Israel, from the rising of the sun. These must be armies from the far east, such as India, Pakistan and China, because the king of the North – i.e. Syria, supported by Iran – has long since invaded the country and has achieved great conquests as far as Egypt (Dan. 11:40-45; Zech. 13:8; 14:2).

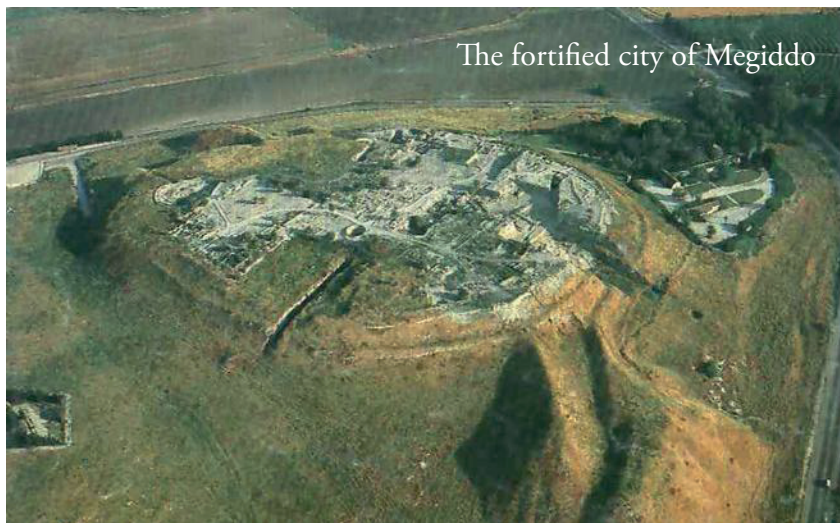
Moreover, under the influence of three unclean spirits, the kings of the entire earth, i.e. the Roman empire (cf. Luke 2:1), will go to Armageddon, where the European forces will be completely defeated by Christ (Rev. 16:15-16; 17:12-14; 19:19-21). He will execute this judgment from the opened heaven, as we see in Revelation 19. The two 'beasts', the Roman ruler and his prophet, will then be defeated

and seized and thrown alive into the lake of fire (cf. also Isa. 11:4; 2 Thess. 2:8); this is in contrast to Satan himself, who is only thrown into the lake of fire after the thousand years (Rev. 20:10).

Armageddon (Harmagedon)

'And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon (or Har-magedon)' (Rev. 16:16).

We must look for the geographical location in the Jezreel Valley and in particular at the mountain of Megiddo, the former fortified city of Megiddo. The Hebrew name Har-magedon means 'mountain of Megiddo'.



7. The Appearing on the Mount of Olives and the establishment of the Kingdom of Peace

After this, Christ appears on the Mount of Olives to defeat the King of the North as well, who has now returned from Egypt and set his headquarters not far from the holy city (Dan. 11:45). Yes, the Lord's feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, from where He also ascended into heaven (Zech. 14:4; Acts 1:9-12).

He appears in majesty with all His heavenly saints and with His mighty angels (Zech. 14:5b; 2 Thess. 1:7), when the inhabitants of Jerusalem are in great danger. When He stands on the Mount of Olives, there will be an earthquake, whereby the mountain will be split in two halves from east to west, creating through the valley in between an escape route for the threatened inhabitants of the city. Together with His people He then wins the battle against the king of the North with a devastating blow. Jerusalem receives the help of the inhabitants of Judea, who fled at the beginning of the Great Tribulation but then returned (Zech. 10:3-5; 12:1-9; 14:3-7).

In this manner the other nations gathered around will also be judged, that rose up to fight against Jerusalem. We read about this regularly

in the Old Testament (i.e. Psa. 83:2-8; Joel 3; Mal. 4:1-3). Joel names the place of these events the valley of Jehoshaphat, not far from Jerusalem. In Psalm 83 all the enemy nations are found with their prophetic names: Edom and the Ishmaelites, Moab and the Hagrites, Gebal, Ammon and Amalek, Philistia, Tyre and Assyria.

At the beginning of the Kingdom of peace, enormous Russian armies will however invade the land of Israel while it is relatively quiet and safe. The prophetic name of Russia is Gog, the world power that is situated in the *far* north from Israel's perspective (Ezek. 38:6, 15; 39:2). God will destroy these armies on the mountains of Israel though natural disasters on the one hand and on the other hand, by them killing each other. So many people will die in that judgment that it will take the inhabitants of Israel seven months to bury all the bodies (Ezek. 39:12-16).

After this the judgment of the living will take place, where Christ will sit on the throne of His glory and all the nations will be gathered before Him (Matt. 25:31-46). The nations will be separated into two groups: the sheep and the goats. The people will be separated from each other and the sheep will be permitted to enter the kingdom of peace, while the goats are sent to eternal punishment.

The criterion will be how men have treated the 'brothers' of the King. Those are in the first place the sealed ones from Israel, who, especially in the first half of the last week, have preached the gospel of the kingdom throughout the whole world (Matt. 24:14; Rev. 7:1-8). The sheep have accepted this gospel, and have proved this, amongst other things, by taking in the King's brothers. The goats however have

shown their rejection by not caring for the preachers, not clothing them and not visiting them in prison.

I don't think that all the people from the nations will personally gather in Jerusalem. The judgment will be passed there – possibly through the attendance of envoys, similar to those who will travel to Jerusalem each year during the Kingdom of peace. But the full completion of the judgment will take place in every land, by means of the angels sent forth by the Son of man to remove all the wicked from His kingdom (Matt. 13:40-42, 49-50).

The only place in the Bible that lets us know the Kingdom of peace will last one thousand years is Revelation 20:2-7, where the term 'the thousand years' appears six times. But numerous passages in the Psalms and the prophets speak about it and testify that there will be a time of unprecedented blessing for all creation, under the glorious reign of the Prince of Peace (Psa. 22:26-31; 45; 72; 93; 101; 110-111; 132-133; 145; Isa. 2:2-4; 9:7; 11:6-16; 25:6-8; 32:1-5,15-18; 33:17-20; 35:1-10; 54:1-17; 60:1-22; 66:10-14,18-24; Jer. 31:31-40; Ezek. 40-48; Dan. 7:27; Hos. 14:4-8; Joel 3:17-18; Amos 9:11-15; Mic. 4:1-5; 5:3-5; Zeph. 3:9-20; Hag. 2:7-10; Zech. 6:12-13; 14:8-21). Christ Himself will be King over the entire earth, and the law shall go forth out of Zion. The New Jerusalem is however the heavenly capital city of the Kingdom of peace.

The only place of worship on earth will be the temple in Jerusalem. The name of the city will be: The LORD is there (Ezek. 48:35). Representatives of all nations will travel there yearly to celebrate the feast of tabernacles. Satan and his demons will be bound for a thousand years. Sickness and death will be sporadic events, only as

the result of godly chastisement (Isa. 65:20). The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The curse of corruption is removed.

8. Satan Judged, the Great White Throne and the Eternal State

Finally, however, Satan will be released from his prison at the end of the Kingdom of Peace, to test mankind once again. It is a last test that will lead to the last great revolt against God and His anointed (Psa. 2:2). Alas, the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, will be deceived into going to war against the beloved city. But fire from God will come down from heaven and consume them, and the devil will be cast into the lake of fire to be tormented there with his two allies forever and ever (Rev. 20:7-10).

Isn't it terrible that we read in the next few verses about people that will also end up in eternal damnation? The eternal fire is admittedly prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41), but humans that have chosen Satan's side will share his fate forever. But first they appear before the Great White Throne to be judged righteously there, each one according to their works (Rev. 20:11-15).

This is the lot of the rest of the dead, those who did not have part in the first resurrection, the resurrection of life (John 5:29; Phil. 3:11; Rev. 20:5-6). Their names are not found in the Book of Life and their end is the second death, the lake of fire.

This is the last thing that must happen before God makes all things new (Rev. 20:11; 21:1). With this, we have arrived at the future eternal state, the new heaven and the new earth, that are described in only eight verses (Rev. 21:1-8). There will be perfect harmony. In the eternal state God will have intimate fellowship with the people on the new earth. God lives with them in His tabernacle i.e. the church. There will no longer be different nations, all people on earth will be His people together and God Himself will be with them, their God. Paul says that God will be all in all (1 Cor. 15:28).

Following these wonderful descriptions in the book of Revelation, there is a look back on the New Jerusalem in the time of the Kingdom of peace (Rev. 21:9-22:5), after which the last book of the Bible closes with the announcement of the soon return of Christ. He Himself is witness with the words: 'Behold, I am coming quickly!' Can we all reply with the faithful answer: 'Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus!' (Rev. 22:6-21)?

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