

Are we the last generation?

by Armin A. Wolff

In any Bible study, do not just believe Armin Wolff or whoever, but be like the Bereans in Acts 17 -- read the scriptures carefully, pray for the Holy Spirit to open your understanding of God's word and come to your conclusion on this or any subject. Points raised as questions will hopefully create an incentive for you for further study on your own.

Many people throughout history have expected the Lord Jesus to return to Earth in their lifetime. From certain passages in the New Testament it is quite evident that the early church, including some of the apostles believed this. Careful study of the end time prophecies in the Bible reveal a convergence of factors, that have not come together until the present generation.

God never does anything by surprise. He always tells what He is going to do through prophets. Since about 30% of God's word is future from the time it was written, the study of biblical prophecy should be a significant part of anyone's studies of the Bible. Writing history in advance, is a major way God authenticates his word, this collection of 66 books we call the Bible.

Amos 3:7 "For the Lord GOD does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.."

When the Lord interacted with Abraham concerning what He was about to do to Sodom and Gomorrah, He shared his plans with his servant and friend, Abraham. Many centuries earlier God also told Noah about the impending judgment of the flood.

Genesis 18:17 For the Lord GOD said, Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do,

When he was here on earth in the person of Jesus Christ, that was no exception. His disciples specifically asked him about when he was coming again, as he promised. He gives the most extensive answer in Matthew 24 & 25, but also addresses the subject in Luke 21.

• *Last Generation to see it all.*

Jesus indicates the last generation living before his coming would see all of his prophecies fulfilled.

Luke 21:32 Truly I say to you, This generation shall not pass away until all these things are fulfilled.

When is "this generation" alive on Earth? We read in Psalms that when God builds up Israel will be the time when he shows up.

*Psalm 102:16-18 When LORD shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory. He will turn to the prayer of the forsaken and not despise their prayer. This shall be written for **the** generation to come; and **the** people who shall be created shall praise LORD.*

The phrase in verse 18, "the generation to come" is literally "the generation *last*". Notice that the definite article is used to refer to a specific generation and also for a certain people.

• *What is a Generation?*

When considering this question we might first of all do well to remember that Jesus was not speaking Greek to His disciples, but Hebrew. According to what are known as the fragments of Papias, the book of Matthew was first written in Hebrew and then later translated to Greek. Papias was one of the early Church Fathers who lived from 70 to 155 AD.

• *Hebrew-Greek translation of the word "generation"*

Given that Jesus was speaking Hebrew, the word that we ought to be truly considering is the Hebrew word dor (דור), which underlies the Greek word genea (γενεά) The Greek Septuagint translates dor as genea. Dor is defined by Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon as "an age, generation of men, as if the period and circuit of the years of life." The 79 times that word dor (דור) is used in the Hebrew Bible, the word should be defined as the period of a person's life..

• *Total lifespan*

While it is true that a new generation begins with the birth of one's offspring, that still does not

negate the fact that the length of a particular generation is the total lifespan. The Hebrew or Greek word is not that different from their English equivalent.

Exodus 1:6 And Joseph died, and all his brothers, and all that generation.

That verse clearly is not about people in Abraham's day or people in Moses' day. It was the people group of a particular time that died – that is a generation.

• *One lifetime*

A human lifetime, according to scripture, is allotted 70 years and if a person is especially blessed, 80 years or maybe sometimes more. My mother made it to age 97. I had my 83rd birthday this year. Therefore I am well into that time of extra grace given to me on this planet. Thus anyone alive in 1948 could certainly be part of the last generation at the end of which Jesus will come back. The current world average lifespan is 67.5 years. In spite of all the advances in modern medicine, the average human lifespan still is about that amount of time which God had written down in his word thousands of years ago.

Psalms 90:10 The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by strength they are fourscore years, yet their pride is labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

Isaiah 23:15, At that time Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years, the span of a king's life.

• *The Fig Tree as a Sign of His Coming*

Jesus gave an important sign to look for concerning his coming: the fig tree. The sign of his coming and the end of the age is the fig tree:

Matt 24:32-33 Now learn a parable of the fig tree. When its branch is still tender and puts out leaves, you know that summer is near. So you, likewise, when you see all these things, shall know that it is near, at the doors.

Who or what does the fig tree symbolize? The answer to this question is unmistakably Israel. God clearly compares Israel with a fig tree.

Hosea 9:10 I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness. I saw your fathers as the first-fruit in the fig tree at her first time. But they went to Baal-peor

and set themselves apart to a shameful thing; and they became abominable like that which they loved.

Joel 1:6-7 For a nation has come up on My land, strong and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he has the jaw teeth of a lioness. He has laid My vine waste and splintered My fig tree. He has stripped it and cast it away; its branches grow white.

God shows Jeremiah a vision of baskets of good figs and bad figs. Note that both the good and the bad are representative of Israel (Judah). The "good" are taken out of the land, that is, out of danger, and the "bad" are left to be judged.

Jeremiah 24:1-8 After Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken into exile from Jerusalem Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, together with the officials of Judah, the craftsmen, and the metal workers, and had brought them to Babylon, the LORD showed me this vision: behold, two baskets of figs placed before the temple of the LORD. One basket had very good figs, like first-ripe figs, but the other basket had very bad figs, so bad that they could not be eaten. And the LORD said to me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" I said, "Figs, the good figs very good, and the bad figs very bad, so bad that they cannot be eaten." Then the word of the LORD came to me: "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I have sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldeans. I will set my eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up, and not tear them down; I will plant them, and not pluck them up. I will give them a heart to know that I am the LORD, and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart." But thus says the LORD: Like the bad figs that are so bad they cannot be eaten, so will I treat Zedekiah the king of Judah, his officials, the remnant of Jerusalem who remain in this land, and those who dwell in the land of Egypt.

Jesus continues the correlation of Israel with a fig tree during the final stage of His ministry. Jesus had been ministering in Israel for about three years when He gave this parable.

Isaiah 5:1-7 Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of

stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and briars and thorns shall grow up; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting; and he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, an outcry!

Just like the illustration of God seeking good fruit from His vineyard and finding none, so too Jesus, had come in person expecting to find some good fruit and found little or none.

*Luke 13:6-9 He also spoke this parable: A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard. And he came and sought fruit on it, and found none. And he said to the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these **three** years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none. Cut it down, why does it encumber the ground? And answering, he said to him, Lord, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and throw manure. And if it bears fruit, well; and if not, then after that you shall cut it down.*

That Jesus had Israel in mind is confirmed at the end of the chapter when Jesus laments over Jerusalem because of their unwillingness to receive their Messiah and declares that their house is left desolate.

Luke 13:34-35 Jerusalem! Jerusalem! the one killing the prophets, and stoning those having been sent to her; how often I desired to gather your children in the way a hen gathers her brood under the wings, and you did not desire it. Behold, your house is left to you desolate. And truly I say to you, You will not see Me until it come when you say, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.

• *Jesus cursed the fig tree*

Matthew 21:19 And seeing a fig tree in the way, He came to it and found nothing on it except leaves only. And He said to it, let no fruit grow on you forever. And immediately the fig tree withered away.

Thus, just like His parable of the fig tree, He had come looking for fruit from the Jewish leadership for over three years, but finding none. They were like the barren fig tree with no fruit and so He then pronounced judgment on the worthless tree causing it to die immediately which symbolized the nation.

• *Israel destroyed*

Israel was mostly destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD and then again in 135 AD. After the second Jewish revolt they were warned not to return to Jerusalem upon the pain of death. They were then dispersed to the four corners of the earth – without a home-land for nearly 1900 years. Furthermore, the curse appears to apply to the land itself as well.

• *Dry and barren land*

Rabbi Menachem Kohen of Brooklyn discovered that the land of Israel “suffered an unprecedented, severe and inexplicable drought that lasted from the first century until the 20th – a period of 1,800 years. Journalist Joseph Farah, prompted by the research of Rabbi Kohen, later discovered that only after the Jews returned did the rain begin to come.

For 1,800 years, it hardly ever rained in Israel. This was the barren land discovered by Mark Twain. So-called “Palestine” was a wasteland – nobody lived there. There was no indigenous Arab population to speak of. It only came after the Jews came back. Beginning in A.D. 70 and lasting until the early 1900s the land was dry as a bone.

• *Israel re-born*

Then after those many years and just as Isaiah had foretold (Isaiah 66:8), Israel was born in one day on May 14, in 1948.

Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? Shall a nation be brought forth in one moment? For as soon as Zion was in labor she brought forth her children.

For all the intervening centuries since the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and its Temple, the Jews were

scattered all over the empire and subsequently all over the planet. Scholars have been reading all the prophecies concerning the rebirth of Israel. Most of them in the past applied these numerous prophecies about the return of Israel to the Church. Even today, in spite of the physical national presence of Israel in their God given homeland, many unbelieving so called “*Christian Scholars*” still try to cut Israel as a nation out of the plan of God.

For most of the time since the Babylonian captivity, Israel has never been a sovereign nation for very long. Israel was under the thumb of Rome before Jesus Christ came to earth first time. After almost 20 centuries, in 1948, Israel indeed became a sovereign nation once more.

• *Focus today is on Israel*

The modern building up of Zion, the nation of Israel, their declaration of independence and statehood began on May 14, 1948. Until our modern times, many scholars throughout the centuries could not envision the prophecies concerning the return of the nation of Israel to their God given home-land be taken literally, but it really happened and is now history. *So then the last generation begins with the re-birth of the nation of Israel.*

• *Israel Sovereign over Jerusalem*

Long before Jesus ever walked on this earth, Jerusalem was being trampled upon by the Gentiles. Israel, although still in the land, was not sovereign over its affairs and the city of Jerusalem. Jesus said:

Luke 21:24 And they shall fall by the sword's edge. And shall be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the nations until the times of the nations is fulfilled.

Jerusalem was under the political control of other nations until finally in June of 1967, that city once again came under the sovereign control of Israel. The city is and shall remain a thorn in the sides of the nations around the world, just as God foretold in his word.

*Zechariah 12:2-3 Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling to **all the peoples all around**, and it shall also be against Judah in the siege against Jerusalem. And in that day I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for **all peoples**. All who lift it*

*shall be slashed, and **all the nations of the earth** will be gathered against it.*

Jerusalem has never been the center of attention of the whole world until our time. What other city can be named, that has the attention of the UN and governments all around the world?

A number of US presidents have promised in their election campaigns, that they would recognize Israel's sovereignty over Jerusalem. Yet after they were elected, like typical politicians, forgot about that among their other promises. It was not until Mr. Trump was elected as president, who also promised that he will move the US Embassy to Jerusalem in recognition of Israel's right to name their capital, that this part of the Scripture was fulfilled. He did indeed relocate the US Embassy. Of course President Trump was not a typical politician. In fact here was someone that was elected president, who had never been in public office of any kind. That was certainly unprecedented in US history.

Of what other city on earth can it be said that a zoning change and the building of a few apartments threatens world peace? Jews have been praying for the peace of Jerusalem for centuries and Christians are also admonished to. That prayer will only be totally fulfilled when Jesus comes and rules in Jerusalem, which will then be the physical capital city of the whole earth. The stage for that glorious coming is being set right in our time.

First coming of Messiah

Through the prophet Daniel God tells us the exact date when Messiah the King would appear in Israel as King. (Daniel 9:25-26)

*25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going out of the command to restore and to build Jerusalem, to Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks. The **street** shall be built again, and the **wall**, even in times of affliction.*

26 And after sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself. And the people of the ruler who shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. And the end of it shall be with the flood, and ruins are determined, until the end shall be war.

When someone says to you that World War II ended six decades plus about eight years ago, you

would be able to figure out from that information how many days that comes to. In Hebrew there is a similar grouping of seven years, weeks of years. The numbers given in Daniel are split up into a group of $62 \times 7 = 434$ years and a group of $7 \times 7 = 49$ years, which adds up to 483 years. $434 \text{ years} \times 360 \text{ days per year}$ according to the Babylonian calendar comes to 156,240 days. $49 \text{ years} \times 360 = 17640$ days, which together comes to 173,880 days.

• *Order to rebuild Jerusalem*

There were 4 decrees issued concerning the return of the Jews to their homeland. Three of them are chronicled in the book of Ezra and concern the rebuilding of the temple. However, they were not given the authority to be independent and were not allowed to rebuild the fortifications and their military at this time. This gave rise to physical and spiritual frustration and no real progress toward the goal of restoring the city and nation to its former status. The book of Nehemiah chronicles much of this frustrating time.

Notice a detail in v25; it mentions not the temple, but the city itself with its streets and the wall are to be rebuilt. Nehemiah succeeds in getting the permission that allows the re-building of the city, and especially the means of defense thereof.

According to Daniel, the count starts from the day the decree or command is given to rebuild Jerusalem and specifically its wall. When this command was given is recorded in the book of Nehemiah.

Nehemiah 2:1 And it happened in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, wine was before him. And I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence before.

• *Mathematical prophecy*

From archeology we know that the date the decree was given was on March 14 445 BC. (The Coming Prince by Robert Anderson) $7 * 69 * 360 = 173880$ days comes to 476 years and 21 days in our calendar.

• *Specific Day of the Decree*

That day according to the Royal Observatory in Greenwich England was 14 March, 445 BC. That was the first day of Nisan, which is the beginning of the ecclesiastical Jewish year. By

straightforward counting according to the Julian calendar which we use, that comes to 477 years and 24 days. We have to remember to subtract one year from that, because there is no year zero. That leaves us with 476 years and 24 days. Now we have to account for leap years. That adds $476 \text{ years} / 4 = 119$ days. That brings us to 173,883 days which is remarkably close to the 173,880 day figure given in Daniel.

• *Amazing Precision of Prophecy*

Close enough only counts in horseshoes. God our Creator deals in *exact* numbers. It turns out the discrepancy comes from the fact that the Julian calendar year is $1/128$ of a day longer than a true solar year. Because of that, it is necessary to omit a leap year every 128 years. If that factor is corrected for, then we get back exactly to the original 173,880 day number.

• *Palm Sunday*

So if we go forward this amount of time we come to the 10th of Nisan, which we now celebrate as Palm Sunday, the day Jesus declared himself as King, riding on a donkey into Jerusalem.

The prophet Zechariah predicted the precise circumstances of the event

Zechariah 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, your King comes to you. He is righteous and victorious, meek and riding on an ass, even on a colt, the son of an ass.

and Daniel had given us the exact day of the fulfillment of this prophecy.

• *Jerusalem and Temple destroyed*

Jesus predicted the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. When Jesus' disciples proudly called attention to the beauty of the Temple, Jesus told them:

Matthew 24:2 And Jesus said to them, Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, There shall not be left here one stone on another that shall not be thrown down.

This was literally and graphically fulfilled in 70 A.D. when the Romans came and totally wiped that city from the face of the earth. The Roman soldiers, being extremely angry, against orders, set fire to

the Temple. The interior of the Temple was clad in wood overlaid by gold. The heat of the fire melted the gold, which ran between the cracks of the stones, because the Temple stones were fitted without mortar. To get the gold out, the temple was torn apart so that literally not one stone remained on top of another. Anyone who visits the temple area today, will still find a big pile of jumbled stone blocks, that were part of the former temple.

Jews scattered

The Jews in Jerusalem were scattered into the far-flung Roman Empire. Later, in 135 A.D. because of another Jewish revolt, the remaining Jews in Israel were driven out of their land, sternly warned not to ever return there again on pain of death. To expunge the Jewish memory of the land, the Romans renamed it "Palestine".

The Last Day of This Millennium

God reveals to us the **fact** that one day with him equals 1000 earth years. That is an exact mathematical *equation*, not an approximation or educated guess. Anybody who has been or is still involved in any field of science, has learned that God does not deal in approximations or round figures. That mathematical precision is also evident in God's word, the Bible. According to these mathematical calculations, the present millennium we still are in now, will have its last day exactly 2000 years later on 6th April, 2032.

*2Peter 3:8 But do not overlook this one **fact**, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*

Psalms 90:4 For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.

Israel is healed

Therefore, the *next* normal earth day, the *7th April 2032*, is the beginning of next millennium on the first day of which Israel will see Jesus, whom they have pierced. (Zechariah 12:10-14) On that day, Israel as a nation, is spiritually reborn and at last recognizes Jesus as the Messiah.

Hosea 6:1-2 "Come, let us return to the LORD; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up. After two days he

will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him.

Beginning of next millennium

Looking into the future, exactly 2000 years plus *one day* will be 7 April 2032. That is the first day of the new millennium. On that date Jesus will be proclaimed not only the King and Messiah of Israel, but the King and ruler of the entire earth. On that date exactly as specified by the prophet Zechariah the whole nation of Israel will accept their Messiah, Jesus, just as they rejected him as a nation on that first Palm Sunday.

Zechariah 12:10-14 "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. The land shall mourn, each family by itself: the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself, and their wives by themselves; and all the families that are left, each by itself, and their wives by themselves.

On exactly that day, Jesus will set his foot on the Mount of Olives, where everyone on earth will see him. I imagine that this will occur by the modern technology of television that will transmit the event to every place on the globe.

75 years since the founding of Israel

Since May 14, 1948, Israel has existed as a nation. This year 2023, it has been 75 years since they declared their independence. They are the only democratic nation in the Middle East and are more prosperous now than their neighbors. However they are still spiritually dead toward God and do not acknowledge that Jesus is the Messiah. When they see Jesus there on the Mount of Olives from which He rose into heaven 2000 years ago, they will repent with great sorrow for what they did as a nation those many centuries ago. They will then all become spiritually alive from that day forth.

God tells us date when Jesus returns

God told us through the prophet Daniel when Messiah would be declared the first time by the exact number of days from a specific event in history. The Jewish religious leadership knew or should have known when Messiah would be declared in Israel when he came. Jesus held them responsible for knowing that. In the same way the date of the physical return of Jesus to earth is tied to a specific knowable and known date in history. Why do so many Christians and especially Christian leaders and pastors, just like the Jewish leaders back then, insist that the exact date of the return of Jesus is a secret, that has *not* been revealed us by God himself through his prophets.

77th anniversary of Israel

That proclamation day also *happens* to be exactly 2520 days (7 biblical 360 day years) *after* May 14, 2025 which also *happens* to be the 77th anniversary of the state of Israel. Israel declared its existence as a country and independence on 14 May 1948. The 14th May 2025 is mathematically exactly 7 biblical years ahead of the beginning of the biblically predicted time called the tribulation, which Jesus predicted that it would be a time of trouble for mankind, the likes of which has never happened before and will never happen again.

Wise Men from the East

Somewhere from the East of Jerusalem, some educated, prominent people came that lived in what used to be the Babylonian and Medo-Persian Empire real estate, who had studied their history books. In those histories the stories and possibly the writings of Daniel the Jewish prophet must have alerted them to read the signs in the heavens, especially that of His the star, that is of the King of the Jews.

Educated Astronomers

The educated elites and rulers of Jerusalem were rightfully disturbed to have a heavily armed group of men come there from around 500 miles away. In Scripture we read that these wise men from the East brought gifts to give to the King they came to worship. Prominent, wealthy people in those days did not travel large distances with valuable treasure without some sort of armed guard. They obviously looked for and saw a sign in the heavens that they

associated with the birth of this Jewish King. About 3 years later, to the objection and chagrin of the religious leaders in Jerusalem, Pilate ordered a sign to be placed above Jesus hanging on the cross, namely "King of the Jews".

Matthew 2:1-2 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

Double fulfilled prophecy

Prophecy can have a two-fold fulfillment. The angel Gabriel told Daniel of two things that the Messiah will accomplish. First he will deal with sin and second He will bring in everlasting righteousness.

Daniel 9:24 Seventy weeks are decreed as to your people and as to your holy city, to finish the transgression and to make an end of sins, and to make atonement for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.

The first part was accomplished at the cross, but the second part is still future to us. Jesus came the first time to Bethlehem in order to save humanity, but he will come the second time to Jerusalem as King of kings to rule over Israel and from there over the whole earth. Prophecy in the Bible isn't always chronological or contiguous in time. Here in Daniel 9, in a single verse, we have a prophecy that apparently spans centuries.

• Peter applies end-time prophecy to his time

Likewise, Peter applies the prophecy in Joel in his sermon to the day of Pentecost, even though the book of Joel is primarily about the restoration of Israel at the glorious appearing of Messiah. So this is a dual prophecy.

Acts 2:16-21 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: "And it shall be in the last days, says God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh. And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. And in those days I will pour out My Spirit upon My slaves and My slave women, and they shall prophesy. And I will give

wonders in the heaven above, and miracles on the earth below, blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before that great and glorious Day of the Lord. And it shall be that everyone who shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

As a witness to the crucifixion Peter had experienced this strange darkness, which must have been something other than a solar eclipse, because those only last for a few minutes.

Luke 23:44-45 And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in the middle.

Evidently, the prophecy of Amos was fulfilled the day Jesus was crucified. The sun disappeared at noon on that day and an eclipse of the moon caused the moon to rise blood red. That is why Peter applied the prophecy to his time.

Amos 8:9 And it shall be in that day, says the Lord Jehovah, I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the light of day.

The book of Amos concludes with an ironclad promise of God, that after Israel returns in the end, Israel is here to stay. Jesus, in his prophecies concerning his second coming, also referred to sun and moon failing to shine and other celestial phenomena. So this kind of thing will happen again.

*Matthew 24:29 And immediately **after the tribulation** of those days, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from the heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.*

• **Two predictions separated by much time**

One of the most striking of these near-far prophecies is in Isaiah. Jesus, by the Holy Spirit speaking through the prophet tell us of history in advance, separated by a large period of time.

Isaiah 61:1 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,

Isaiah 61:2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn,

• **Jesus quotes this, but not all of it**

Jesus tells his hearers that "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." but notice he doesn't quote all of it, but leaves out the part about the day of vengeance because that part is yet to come at or just before His second coming.

Luke 4:16-20 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him,

Thus it is evident from Scripture, that prophecies can have dual fulfillments.

The re-building of Jerusalem

After the destruction of Jerusalem, various attempts to rebuild the city were made throughout the ages. Even though in 690 A.D., the Dome of the Rock was built there, the city itself, together with its wall, remained a heap of ruins. Attempts at rebuilding were all somehow, amazingly thwarted until the days of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire existed from the years 1300 A.D. to 1918 A.D. A person by the name of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent reigned between 1520 A.D. and 1566 A.D, which was the longest rule of any Ottoman Empire ruler. Although a Muslim himself, unlike his modern radical Muslim counterparts, he loved the Jewish people and Jerusalem. This is highly unusual, because the Koran values a Jewish man only one third of a faithful Muslim. Muslims later cemented shut the eastern gate (Golden Gate) in the wall of Jerusalem to try to thwart the entrance of the Jewish Messiah.

• **Decree given to once again rebuild Jerusalem**

Suleiman issued a decree in 1536 A.D.*¹ to rebuild the wall and city of Jerusalem. However, nobody has been able to determine the exact date of this decree. It appears to have been lost in history. We know from inscription thereon, that the fountains were being built by and during 1536 & 1537 AD. These fountains supplied the necessary water to the workers rebuilding the wall and the city. We know the wall was definitely under construction in late 1538 as the first of the gates, the Damascus Gate was being built then. Construction of the whole project was completed in 1541/1542 A.D. The old city of Jerusalem, complete with its wall still exists today.

In Daniel 9, the 69 “Weeks” (or periods of 7 years) from the command to build the Wall unto the coming of Messiah is broken down into 62 + 7 “Weeks.” Why this particular division of the total time? Let's do a little math using the Babylonian year of 360 days. $62 \times 7 \times 360 = 156240$ days. $7 \times 7 \times 360 = 17640$ days. Total = 173880 days. If we add 156240 days to the year 1539, the year when the Damascus gate was completed, we come to the year 1967 when Israel took control of Jerusalem.

Signs in the Heavens

In connection with the prophecies of His return, the Lord said that the Sun, Moon and stars are to be for signs. Consider Solar and Lunar eclipses. These come and go with clockwork regularity. The word “coincidence” is not in God's vocabulary.

• *Four full lunar eclipses in a row*

Something that is already rare astronomically is for 4 full Lunar eclipses to occur in succession. Usually, many partial eclipses occur between the times of total Lunar eclipses. For 4 totals to occur in a row is remarkable astronomically. However, even more remarkable is for such a tetrad of eclipses to occur on Jewish feast days.

• *Once the last century, once this century*

This event only occurs once in this present century, namely in 2014-2015. Such a tetrad only occurred once in the last century. Those occasions were in 1967 and 1968 when 4 total Lunar eclipses occurred in succession on Passover April 24th 1967, and Tabernacles October 18th 1967; then

Passover April 13th 1968, and Tabernacles October 6th 1968. Is it a “coincidence” that the only tetrad of Lunar eclipses in the 20th century surrounded the return of the Old City of Jerusalem to Jewish control on 7th June 1967? There were no tetrads in the 1800's or the 1700's or the 1600's.

• *Solar eclipses in on the action*

Total Solar eclipses are similarly rare. It is even rarer for there to be two total Solar eclipses in one year. In 1967, there were two, namely on 9th May and 2nd November. Does anyone think this convergence is by “chance”? Events in the heavens and especially in Jewish history definitely appear to be linked.

• *Re-building Jerusalem's wall*

It is of exceptional rarity for total Solar eclipses to occur every year or so. That has only occurred consistently in the 1500's. The occasions were January 3rd and December 24th 1535; December 13th 1536; April 28th 1538; April 18th 1539; April 7th 1540; August 11th, 1542. These Solar events were complimented by 4 total Lunar eclipses in a row on 24th May and 17th November 1537, plus 12th March and 5th September 1541. There were no partial lunar eclipses, such as there usually are in between these four total eclipses. That was the period of time during which the old city wall of Jerusalem was being rebuilt.

• *Near future events*

The only tetrad of total Lunar eclipses in the 21st century were on Passover April 15th 2014, followed by Tabernacles October 8th 2014; then Passover April 4th 2015 with Tabernacles 28th September 2015. It is not only the moon, but also the sun that gets into the act here. The first total Solar eclipse being 1st Nisan March 20th 2015, and Rosh Hashanah September 14th 2015. So there is a culmination of significant astronomical events in September 2015 with a total Solar eclipse at Rosh Hashanah just a few days before the key day of Atonement September 23rd, and followed a few days after by a total Lunar eclipse at the Feast of Tabernacles. Something of prophetic importance is likely to happen to Israel and perhaps the whole world during this timeframe.

• *A Jewish prophet in our time?*

In January 2006 a Jewish Rabbi in Israel by the name of Yitzchak Kaduri passed away at the age of 108 years. He was greatly revered in Israel and over 200,000 people showed up in Jerusalem at his funeral. He had left behind a sealed envelope with instructions that it was not to be opened until one year after his passing. In the same year that Kaduri died, Ariel Sharon, then Prime Minister of Israel was suddenly cut down and rendered comatose from a stroke. A year later, in 2007 when Kaduri's note was opened, there in Hebrew, Kaduri had written that the Lord Jesus had appeared to him and revealed himself. Kaduri wrote in Hebrew that Yeshua (Jesus) is the Messiah and that he will come back after Sharon dies. Sharon had lain in a coma for about eight years and did die on January 11, 2014. How does this fit together with the eclipses on Jewish feast days? I suppose we will have to wait and find out!

• *Israel's 70th Anniversary*

The year 2018 marks the 70th anniversary of the existence of the modern state of Israel. Is that a coincidence? Does anything in the kingdom of God happen by chance? As He freed them after the 70 years of captivity in Babylon, will God free Israel from the present shackles of secularism and national unbelief and bring them to freedom in the glorious kingdom of the Messiah? This timing cannot be dogmatically asserted, but we know from Scripture that when Jesus comes back to the earth again, all of Israel will be saved.

Rom 11:26 And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

Israel will come to a national repentance for having rejected and slain their Messiah. They will be exceedingly sorrowful upon seeing Jesus and realizing the magnitude of their crime against Him.

Zechariah 13:6 And one shall say to him, What are these wounds in your hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.

*Zechariah 12:10 And I will pour on the house of David, and on the people of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of prayers. And they shall look on **Me** whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for*

Him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be bitter over Him, as the bitterness over the first-born.

When he hung upon the cross he asked the Father to forgive them. God will certainly forgive and heal them when they realize what they have done and they repented as a nation for that deed with great sorrow in their heart.

• *Every Jew back in Israel*

In spite of the Jews having come back steadily to Israel since 1948, the fact is, that today still a significant number of Jews are scattered in other countries. There are almost as many Jews living in the United States, as in Israel. There is still a sizable number of Jews in Europe. Yet God tells us in his Word, that there will not be a single Jew left anywhere on earth except in Israel. Even the USA will join the countries that have expelled Jews, including those who are American citizens.

The war in Gaza today

We are right now witnessing prophecy, history told in advance, with the advent of the senseless and vicious attack by Hamas on Israel. Anti-Semitism is raising its ugly head in many places of the world right now, including in the US. It is not inconceivable, but highly probable, that any Jewish people still living anywhere else other than Israel, will either officially get kicked out by many national governments, or more likely will take Aleah offered by the state of Israel, and emigrate to Israel, because of the violence and hatred that is occurring right now against Jews worldwide.

God has an Enemy

For people who don't believe the word of God, the Bible, the worldwide, rampant universal anti-Semitism does not and cannot make sense at all. In our Western culture the virus of materialism accompanied by what usually includes scientism, is generally unwilling to believe that anything beyond the material world that can be accessed by the human senses and the extensions we have developed for them.

Spirit Realm is really there

Those of us who believe the Creator God of the Bible, understand at least in part, that these principalities and powers exist worldwide and have

blinded all people that do not have the Holy Spirit show them the truth existing in the dimensions beyond the physical world.

Ephesians 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the world's rulers, of the darkness of this age, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

That world is home to a large number, to us unknown, highly organized, real and powerful intelligent spirit beings, that even though they generally don't have physical bodies, can and do affect the minds and then mostly through our bodies, this physical world of ours.

God's Adversary

God does not give us anywhere nearly as much detail about that spirit world and its cadre of intelligence spirit beings, as we would like at this time in our journey through this present life. That spirit world has a governing command structure, at the pinnacle of which is a spirit person that is labeled "Satan" or also the "Devil".

John 8:44 You are of the Devil as father, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and did not abide in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own, for he is a liar and the father of it.

When Satan asked Jesus, who is God, to worship him, he asked Jesus to doubt his deity and to demote himself as God. At that time Jesus was fully human and therefore limited to mortality, but even so was still God, God on earth, clothed in a mortal human body.

4:8-10 Again, the Devil took Him up into a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me. Then Jesus said to him, Go, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve."

Jesus did not dispute Satan's claim that he could give him all the kingdoms of the world. This world had originally been given by God to Adam, the first human. Adam a superior, immortal creation made in the image of God, had been given complete dominion over the earth.

No Jews to be left in the Nations

One of the most frightening things for all Jews still scattered around the world, is that Ezekiel, the prophet of God, tells us that at some point, there will not be a single Jew left anywhere outside of Israel! That means that even if the Hamas and Hezbollah and all the other earthly human enemies of Israel manage to kill millions of Israelis, the population of Israel will be replaced, even increase.

*Ezekiel 39:27-28 when I have brought them again from the peoples, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; then they shall know that I am Jehovah their God who exiled them among the nations. But I have gathered them to their **own** land, and **have not left any of them there.***

Satan, the murderer.

Throughout History, Satan has unsuccessfully tried to murder by genocide, the Jewish people. He well knows, as recorded in Genesis, the promise of God.

Genesis 3:14-15 The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

That offspring of that first human, thousands of years down the road of time, came and indeed crushed Satan's head and made it possible for God to give His grace to all those who are willing to believe and commit themselves totally to that divine yet fully human Jew, named Jesus.

Another try by Satan to commit genocide

I partially quoted this below, but you should read the entire section of Scripture, to get the total context of what happened there.

Exodus 1:16-17 "When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live." But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live.

If at first you don't succeed...

Satan tried again to do his genocide project against the Jews. This time it is recorded in the book of Esther. Again, read that entire book, because it is definitely worth reading.

Esther 3:6 And he scorned to lay hands only on Mordecai, for they had revealed to him the people of Mordecai. And Haman sought to destroy all the Jews throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, the people of Mordecai.

Satan failed once more

Matthew 2:16 Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men.

As we can read in the headlines today, the hatred against the Jewish people is still seething worldwide at the behest of Satan the liar and murderer.

Satan's last fail to eliminate the Jews

The last big genocide murder try against the Jews was in the last century under Adolf Hitler. As usual, the Nazis and the demonic helpers failed again, as it will happen once more in the future. There is one more try for Satan and then Jesus will come, get Satan thrown into the abyss and then rule on earth in righteousness for 1000 years.

A remnant cries out to God

After they have *all* returned, most of them will die there in Israel, but a believing remnant will remain. This remnant of Israel will cry out in desperation at the end of the Tribulation for the return of the Messiah, which he will answer at that time.

Psalms 102:17-21 he regards the prayer of the destitute and does not despise their prayer. Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that a people yet to be created may praise the LORD: that he looked down from his holy height; from heaven the LORD looked at the earth, to hear the groans of the prisoners, to set free those who were doomed to die, that they may declare in Zion the name of the LORD, and in Jerusalem his praise,

Jesus came the first time to save, but he comes the second time to reign over the whole world from

Israel. We are given a sure date, which was perfectly fulfilled for the first time he came to Israel. We are not given the day or hour of his return for His Church, but are we given the exact date or at least a very narrow range of dates when Jesus comes back to Israel?

Believers in Jesus escape

About 37 years before Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D., Jesus warned his disciples and the others who believe, to flee out of Jerusalem and Judea into the mountains. When the Roman armies under Titus Vespasian laid siege to Jerusalem, no one could enter or leave that city. Seemingly, it was too late for the Christians or anybody else to escape. History records that a message came from Rome for Titus to hurry back home with his army, to avert a possible coup. Therefore, the Roman Army broke off the siege and headed toward the Mediterranean seashore where the ships that had brought them were anchored. When they arrived, another message came from Rome, that everything was under control and no help was needed.

Luke 21:20-21 And when you see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that its destruction has come. And let those in Judea flee to the mountains. And those in its midst, let them go out. And those in the open spaces, let them not go into her.

After the Romans lifted their siege, the believing Jews in Jerusalem all escaped and fled to the mountains east of Jerusalem, along with other believers in the countryside outside of Jerusalem. The Romans soon returned and resumed their siege of the city and ensured the death or enslavement of all unbelieving inhabitants thereof. There was not a single Christian believer in Jerusalem after the Romans marched in. Jesus knows how to protect his own from judgment.

1260 Days

In the last days also, yet future to us, believing Jews are told by Jesus to flee into the mountains when they see the abomination of desolation Daniel prophesies about. (Matt 24) This is the day when the Antichrist demands to be worshiped in the rebuilt Jewish Temple. The believing Jewish remnant will be taken care of in the mountain wilderness for 1260 days, at the end of which Jesus will return to Jerusalem to finish off the antichrist

and his troops at the Battle of Armageddon. (Revelation 12) Therefore exactly 1260 days will elapse from the day of the event the Bible calls the abomination of desolation, until Jesus Christ returns to Jerusalem.

• *Mountains east of Jerusalem*

The only mountains that could conceivably shelter fleeing refugees from Jerusalem are to the east in the country now known as Jordan, but known as Edom and Moab in biblical times. Bozrah, also Bouseira or Buseirah, is an ancient city in southern modern-day Jordan. It was the capital city of Edom Kingdom.

• *Fleeing Jewish Believers*

There Jewish believers will find shelter and desperately cry for the Lord Jesus to save them from sure destruction. The Lord will hear this cry after the powerful military machine of Israel is utterly defeated by the armies of earth. Yeshua, and He alone, will fight for and with His people, just as we read in the days of old. He tells us about this:

Isaiah 63:1-3 Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson? Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save." Why are your garments red, like those of one treading the winepress? "I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing.

The ancient city of Bozrah is mentioned by Isaiah because for one thing, its name means ‘grape-gathering,’ and compares this with the treading grapes and pouring out of blood. •

• *Religious hypocrites*

The Jewish religious leaders were always looking for a sign. Jesus called them hypocrites, because they were able to look at the sky to predict the weather, but were unwilling to apply the prophecies in Daniel, Psalms, Zechariah and other prophets of God to the time they were living in.

Matthew 16:1-3 The Pharisees and the Sadducees came to Him, tempting Him. And they asked Him that He would show them a sign from Heaven. He

answered and said to them, When it is evening, you say, Fair weather; for the sky is red. And in the morning, Foul weather today; for the sky is red and gloomy. Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky, but you cannot see the signs of the times!

Jesus clearly expected the religious leaders of his day to understand Daniel's prophecy, among many others, and watch it being fulfilled before their eyes, to the day.

Luke 19:41-42 As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace--but now it is hidden from your eyes.

On that very day, Palm Sunday, he wept over Jerusalem, because its leaders had hardened their heart toward their Messiah and therefore failed to recognize what the prophets Daniel and Zechariah had written concerning this occasion. Just as God had prophetically determined the *specific* day when Jesus rode as king into Jerusalem, does he do so again when Jesus comes to earth as King of kings for the second time? It appears that He does.

The date and day he comes for His Church, the bride

Like the religious leaders of His day, is the main body of the religious Christian establishment also unwilling to discern the times we are living in? Before he comes to Israel the second time, He will come to rescue His Church, before the most terrible time ever, comes upon this planet.

• *God Himself shows up*

Zechariah prophesies about the same war that Ezekiel does. At the height of that war Zechariah tells us this will happen:

Zechariah 9:14 Then the LORD will appear over them, and his arrow will go forth like lightning; the Lord GOD will sound the trumpet and will march forth in the whirlwinds of the south

• *God Blows the Trumpet*

Sounds to me like that event will be a sudden unexpected thing, for God himself, not some angel, blows the trumpet.

In the Bible we can read about lots of trumpets sounding, especially in the book of Revelation, but

there are not too many occasions of where God himself personally blows the trumpet.

At the sound *that* trumpet the dead in Christ will rise and we who are still here will be transformed, experiencing the redemption of our bodies. The redemption of our spirit was accomplished on the cross.

• *Jesus comes in clouds*

When he does, he will not touch the ground, but be in the clouds of the air, from where he will call all believers who have the Holy Spirit within to himself. He tells his disciples that it is possible *escape* the terrible time he describes.

*Luke 21:36 Watch therefore, praying in every season that you may be counted worthy to **escape** all these things which shall occur, and to stand before the Son of Man.*

Jesus tells his followers from what they may escape and where they will escape to. The “what” is from all the terrible things he was telling them about and “to” is to stand before the Son of Man. Therefore, if you as a Christian get accused of being an escapist by believing this, joyfully agree.

• *No one knows the day or hour*

There can be no date setting for the time when Jesus comes for his Church, as so many have attempted. In regard to the timing of this, Jesus tells us specifically that we know neither the day nor the hour, but only the season.

Mat 25:13 Therefore watch, for you do not know either the day or the hour in which the Son of Man comes.

• *Business as usual*

Luke 17:26-30 And as it was in the days of Noah, so it also shall be in the days of the Son of Man. They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark; and the flood came and destroyed them all. So also as it was in the days of Lot: they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but the day Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from the heaven and destroyed them all. Even so it shall be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.

The majority of earths inhabitants will be going about their business as usual, when suddenly the judgment of God strikes. There was no escape for those who were outside the ark nor for those who were in Sodom when that place was incinerated.

A vision/dream

In 1993 I had a very vivid revelation concerning this time interval of 40 days. I have not mentioned this to many people, but I did write it down and gave a copy of that to a friend of mine at the time, who uploaded it to the Web. That brother in the LORD is now no longer with us on the planet.

An independent witness

Earlier this year I received an email from a physician who still practices in Maine. Through the pastor of our local church and the website thereof which I still maintain, he got my email information and told me he had a similar revelation from the Lord in 2006. He was also specifically told at that time about the 40 day interval between the resurrection of believers and their trip with Jesus into the heavenly dimensions. There were other commonalities in these revelations, such as the display of despair by those who remained in their mortal bodies. There were others who had similar dreams like I had in the 1980s and early years of the new millennium.

Greater works?

Jesus said that believers him will do greater works than he did while here on earth as a mortal man.

John 14:12 Truly, truly, I say to you, He who believes on Me, the works that I do he shall do also, and greater works than these he shall do, because I go to My Father.

Many Questions Remain

There are many more questions that can still be asked, such as what did Jesus mean when he said "greater works"? Will those greater works be done by the immortal, transcendent believers giving the rest of humanity a 40 day glimpse of the powers of the age to come? Will that initiate a huge worldwide revival and turning to Jesus, before the predicted judgments come upon this earth? The early Christians of the first century were willing to brave torture and death from the earthly powers inspired by Satan. Was that because they had met

and experienced the majesty of the risen Lord Jesus? Will the Christians in name only, who missed the transfiguration, now be loyal enough to Jesus to suffer death at the hands of the man of sin, the antichrist?

World-wide revival?

What effect will the transformation of the mortal believers and their 40 days later sudden removal have on the unbelieving masses of humanity on earth? After all believers in Jesus Christ have left the Earth for the safety of heaven, God will judge the earth and its inhabitants. Some of the details of these judgments are chronicled in the book of Revelation chapters 6-19.

Luke 17:34 I tell you, in that night there shall be two in one bed, the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two shall be grinding together, one will be taken, and the other left. Two shall be in the field, one will be taken, and the other left.

This event will take place all over the earth in an instant. In some places it will be night, in some places it will be morning and in other places it will be the middle of the workday. All who belong to the true Church of Jesus Christ, just like Jesus on that resurrection morning, all believers filled with the Holy Spirit, having been instantly transformed 40 days prior from mortality to immortality, placed into a transcendent body not subject to time and space will live in an immortal body just like the body that clothed Jesus after his resurrection. The trumpet call of God will sound, but only the transformed ones will be able to obey God's call to meet the Lord Jesus in the clouds.

Jesus is the prototype

I believe the process of transformation of believers will follow the pattern set by the transformation of Jesus' battered and brutalized body. Just as Jesus was still physically here on earth for a short time before he ascended into heaven, so it is likely that transformed, glorified believers will also be here on earth for 40 days. Just as the glorified Jesus still ministered to those he loved, so his transformed followers may also be given a last-minute opportunity to warn those loved ones who failed to *really* believe unto salvation.

Christian Jargon Word

This Christian jargon word "rapture" is nowhere in the Bible. It comes from the Latin translation into Greek, where the word ἁρπάζω "harpazo" is translated as "raptus" from which we get the word "raptor" which is a type of bird, such as an eagle or falcon, which without warning swoops down and snatches its prey and carries it upward into the sky. In Scripture we can read about this in 1Thessalonians 4:17 where the English phrase "caught up" is found. That Greek word occurs 13 times in the New Testament, in the context of a sudden, without warning, forceful removal from one location to another.

• Jewish weddings

The ancient Jewish wedding practices also can be instructive here. The bridegroom would go off to his father's house to build an addition where the young couple would consummate their marriage and subsequently live. The bride did not know the exact day when this and other preparations for the wedding were completed. She did however have a general idea of the season when the bridegroom might come for her.

• The full crew of a ship

A good biblical reason why the day when the Lord comes for His church is unknown, is because it is not predicated on a specific date, but a specific number.

Rom 11:25 For I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, lest you should be wise within yourselves; that blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the nations has come in.

In common everyday Greek usage in those days, the word translated "fullness" or in some translations "full number" was also used in a nautical sense for the full complement of the crew of a ship, which if it was not satisfied, a ship could not legally sail. If the captain of a ship wanted to sail, but was short of crew, he would often go to or send someone to the pubs and "Shanghai" one or more drunks who would wake up the next morning aboard the ship 20 miles or more out at sea. The Greek word translated as "come in" is used for the idea of a ship arriving in this destination. We use that expression also. "When my ship comes in, I'll have it made."

All Christians part of the Crew

As Christians we should be reminded that on *this* ship there are no *passengers*. We are all crewmembers. We all have a job to do. So, when the crew of the good ship Grace, the church of Jesus Christ, is complete, then the church will depart this earthly shore for its heavenly destination. Only God knows what that number is and when it will be filled.

• Pregnant women

Jesus also likened the time of His second coming for His children to a pregnant woman. We can predict the approximate time when the baby is due, but not exactly the day and hour. The exact moment of a normal birth is still a surprise even to today's modern medicine.

We know from Jesus' discourse in Matthew 24, that before he comes to Earth again, there will be a time of trouble called the Great Tribulation, such as there has never been nor ever will be again. According to prophecies in the book of Revelation and Daniel, this time will be two periods of 3½ years for a total of seven years. It is interesting that Jesus ministered on earth for 3½ years and the final time of wrath, the last half of the tribulation is also 3½ years. Is it that God, being always just, is giving Satan the opportunity to "minister" also for 3½ years?

• Rapture in Old Testament

Here we also read of a resurrection, of God's people being hidden until the judgment is passed. Note that it also mentions rooms for the people of God (John 14) as well as a shut door.

Isaiah 26:19-21 Your dead ones shall live, together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in the dust; for your dew is as the dew of lights, and the earth shall cast out the dead. Come, my people, enter into your rooms and shut your doors around you; hide for a little moment, until the fury has passed by. For behold, Jehovah comes out of His place to punish the people of the earth for their iniquity; the earth also shall reveal her blood, and shall no more cover her dead.

Jesus is the head and his Church is the body, which will rise. Also note the parallels between 1Thess 4:13-18 and these verses in Isaiah.

Conclusion

Throughout history, ever since Jesus' time, people have been predicting his return date, often setting exact dates. However, the number of prophetic factors coming together all at once have never been as numerous and specific as they are today.

- The generation that was alive at the time modern Israel came into existence is about to come to the end of their normal human life span.
- The allotted time according to Daniel's prophecy from the decree for second rebuilding of the wall and streets of Jerusalem has expired.
- The 70+ years of Israel's captivity to secularism and unbelief will come to a sudden end a short time before the return of Jesus when God by miraculous means rescues a remnant from that little nation from certain destruction. The fulfillment of Isaiah 17 and Ezekiel 38 & 39 are very near.
- Israel is being increasingly isolated without even a single friendly government any the longer. This present war with the terrorist proxies of Hamas and Hezbollah of Iran may result soon in what is predicted in Isaiah 17. That is the annihilation of the city of Damascus. All the lands of the ancient nations mentioned in Ezekiel 38 and 39 are occupied by Islamists today. The fury of the Islamic nations will fulfill Ezekiel 38 & 39. The anger of all nations against the Jews will rise to a fever pitch, causing the expulsion of all Jews from all nations. They will be hunted down to be deported to Israel. (*Jeremiah 16:16*) There will not be a single Jew left anywhere except in Israel. (*Ezekiel 39:27-28*) After the war as outlined in Ezekiel, *all* nations, including Israel itself will realize that Almighty God is fighting on behalf of Israel. This will cause Israel to turn to God and worship him as they did in former times. In order to do this they will need a Temple which will then be built.
- The ultimate organized opposition to God and his people Israel, will be from the world government headed by the antichrist, the man of sin. Noises of a single government with a religious system for the whole world are getting louder and louder every day.
- The Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated that the masses of Earth's inhabitants fearing death, can be

easily manipulated to meekly accept the rule of a dictatorial government.

- The sick economies of the world could soon be replaced by a single world government issuing digital, electronic cashless fiat money. The enormous computing and digital data storage capacity necessary to track every single financial transaction on earth is mostly in place. Some countries, such as Sweden, already have minimized or even eliminated the existence of cash as a medium of exchange.

- The world population is now over 7 billion. In Bible numbers, the number 7 signifies completion or fullness. This is especially evident in the book of Revelation, but is also sprinkled throughout the rest of the Bible. Does this mean that the world population is now full and the end of human history as we have known is about to come?

- Weapons of mass destruction, such as nuclear and chemical as well as biological, make it possible for the first time in history to fulfill Zechariah 14:12 and 14:15. Other than sickness from a gross overdose of nuclear radiation, there is and never was a disease which affects both humans and animals alike with the symptoms listed in the ancient prophecy.

- Unique, specific signs in the heavens, such as special combinations of lunar and solar eclipses on Jewish feast days, have occurred and are about to occur again in our generation.

The probability of all these events converging upon a single time of history by chance is close to zero. Therefore Jesus *could* come for his Church anytime between today and the day before a seven year peace treaty is signed with Israel.

- Christians must be ready all the time. In the midst of all this figuring and prophecy, the main thing is to heed what the apostle John tells us.

1 John 3:3 And everyone who has this hope on him purifies himself, even as that One is pure.

I suppose we shall soon see! He told His disciples to be always ready for this blessed event. *Yes Jesus, come quickly!* Are you ready?