

Discipleship Training Course

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- Speech marks around entire quotes and at the beginning of new paragraphs have been omitted
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- All quotes begin with a capital letter and end with a full stop
- Some weights, measures and times have been replaced with easier to understand terms given in the footnotes using square brackets
- All verse numbers, footnote numbers and symbols have been removed
- Poetry has been indented and only new sentences start with a capital letter

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Chapter 23. Jesus' Second Coming

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1. Old Testament prophecies

Nebuchadnezzar's had a dream of a statue and a rock. The statue represents successive powerful kingdoms of the earth. The rock represents the Kingdom of God.

*What you saw, O king, was a huge statue standing before you, striking in appearance. And terrifying. The head of the statue was pure gold, the chest and arms were silver, the belly and hips were bronze, the legs were iron, and the feet were an iron-ceramic mixture. **While you were looking at this statue, a stone cut out of a mountain by an invisible hand hit the statue, smashing its iron-ceramic feet. Then the whole thing fell to pieces – iron, tile, bronze, silver, and gold, smashed to bits. It was like scraps of old newspapers in a vacant lot in a hot dry summer, blown every which way by the wind, scattered to oblivion. But the stone that hit the statue became a huge mountain, dominating the horizon. This was your dream.***

And now we'll interpret it for the king. You, O king, are the most powerful king on earth. The God of heaven has given you the works: rule, power, strength, and glory. He has put you in charge of men and women, wild animals and birds, all over the world – you're the head ruler, you are the head of gold. But your rule will be taken over by another kingdom, inferior to yours, and that one by a third, a bronze kingdom, but still ruling the whole land, and after that by a fourth kingdom, ironlike in strength. Just as iron smashes things to bits, breaking and pulverizing, it will bust up the previous kingdoms.

But then the feet and toes that ended up as a mixture of ceramic and iron will deteriorate into a mongrel kingdom with some remains of iron in it. Just as the toes of the feet were part ceramic and part iron, it will end up a mixed bag of the breakable and unbreakable. That kingdom won't bond, won't hold together any more than iron and clay hold together.

But throughout the history of these kingdoms, the God of heaven will be building a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will this kingdom ever fall under the domination of another. In the end it will crush the other kingdoms and finish them off and come through it all standing strong and eternal. It will be like the stone cut from the mountain by the invisible hand that crushed the iron, the bronze, the ceramic, the silver, and the gold.

The great God has let the king know what will happen in the years to come. This is an accurate telling of the dream, and the interpretation is also accurate.

Daniel 2:31-45 (MSG)

Daniel received a vision of four beasts. These also represent kingdoms of the world. The fourth beast is alluded to in Revelation 12:3. It is also the first passage which mentions a tribulation for three and a half time periods (a time, times and half a time).

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions in his mind on his bed. Then he wrote the dream and told the summary of it. Daniel spoke and said, "I saw

in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the sky broke forth on the great sea. Four great animals came up from the sea, different from one another. The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings. I saw until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made to stand on two feet as a man; and a man's mind was given to it. And behold, another animal, a second one, like a bear; and it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth. And they said this to it, 'Arise, devour much flesh.' After this I saw, and behold, another one, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird. The animal also had four heads; and dominion was given to it. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth animal, awesome and powerful, and extremely strong. And it had great iron teeth. It devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped what was left with its feet. And it was diverse from all the animals that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking arrogant things. **I saw until thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat.** His clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool. His throne was fiery flames, and its wheels burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him. Thousands of thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. **The court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.** I saw at that time because of the voice of the arrogant words which the horn spoke. I was watching until the animal was killed and its body destroyed and was given to be burned with fire. As for the rest of the animals, their dominion was taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. I saw in the night visions, and behold, **there came with the clouds of the sky One like a Son of Man, and He came even to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. There was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.** As for me, Daniel, my spirit was grieved in the midst of my body, and the visions of my mind troubled me. I came near to one of those who stood by, and asked him the true meaning concerning all this. So he told me, and revealed to me the interpretation of these things. These great animals, which are four, are four kings, who shall arise out of the earth. But the holy ones of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever. Then I desired to know the true meaning concerning the fourth animal, which was different from all of them, exceedingly terrible, whose teeth were of iron, and its claws of bronze; which devoured, broke in pieces, and stamped what was left with its feet. And concerning the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up, and before which three fell, even that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spoke arrogant things, whose look was larger than the others. I saw, and the same horn made war with the holy ones, and prevailed against them, until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given to the holy ones of the Most High, and the time came that the holy ones possessed the kingdom. This he said, 'The fourth animal shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all the kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom shall ten kings arise, and another shall arise after them; and he shall be diverse from the former, and he shall put down three kings. He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall oppress the holy ones of the Most High; and he shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given over to him until a time and times and half a time. And the court shall sit in judgment, and they shall take away his dominion, consumed and completely destroyed forever. **The kingdom and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the holy ones of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.**' Here is the end of the matter. As

for me, Daniel, my thoughts troubled me greatly, and my face turned pale. I kept the matter to myself."

Daniel 7 (NHEB)

Daniel's received an angelic visitation of seventy "sevens". The Messiah will be crucified after the sixty ninth seven. Some Christian scholars believe that there has been a pause between the enactment of the prophecy and the beginning of the seventieth week which is split into two halves of three and a half days (representing years). This also links with the prophecy in Daniel 2 and the feet of the statue which initially indicated the Roman Empire. Some Christian scholars believe that the Roman Empire will be re-established in the last days through the European Union, pointing to the Tower of Babel being rebuilt in Strasbourg but this probably only represents part of the world government system (known as Babylon) that will be judged in the end times (see Section 5 below).

While I was still speaking and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God in behalf of the holy mountain of my God, while I was still speaking in prayer and extremely exhausted, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me about the time of the evening sacrifice. He instructed me and he talked with me and said, "O Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and wisdom and understanding. At the beginning of your supplications, the command [to give you an answer] was issued, and I have come to tell you, for you are highly regarded and greatly beloved. Therefore consider the message and begin to understand the [meaning of the] vision.

Seventy weeks [of years, or 490 years] have been decreed for your people and for your holy city (Jerusalem), to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make atonement (reconciliation) for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness (right-standing with God), to seal up vision and prophecy and prophet, and to anoint the Most Holy Place. So you are to know and understand that from the issuance of the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until [the coming of] the Messiah (the Anointed One), the Prince, there will be seven weeks [of years] and sixty-two weeks [of years]; it will be built again, with [a city] plaza and moat, even in times of trouble. Then after the sixty-two weeks [of years] the Anointed One will be cut off [and denied His Messianic kingdom] and have nothing [and no one to defend Him], and the people of the [other] prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. And he will enter into a binding and irrevocable covenant with the many for one week (seven years), but in the middle of the week he will stop the sacrifice and grain offering [for the remaining three and one-half years]; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until the complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who causes the horror."

Daniel 9:20-27 (AMP)

There are two additional verses in Daniel mentioning the abomination that causes desolation. This was partly fulfilled by Antiochus Epiphanes before the birth of Christ but Jesus also mentioned a future fulfilment of these Scriptures at the end of the age.

His army will take over the Temple fortress, pollute the sanctuary, put a stop to the daily sacrifices, and set up the sacrilegious object that causes desecration. He will flatter and win over those who have violated the covenant. But the people who know their God will be strong and will resist him.

Daniel 11:31-32 (NLT)

And he said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. Many shall be purified, cleansed and refined; but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand. From the time

that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred ninety days. Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred thirty-five days.

Daniel 12:9-12 (NHEB)

Zephaniah prophesied about the great day of the LORD's judgment being near. He encouraged the people to seek righteousness and humility:

The great day of the LORD is near. It is near, and hurries greatly, the voice of the day of the LORD. The mighty man cries there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness, a day of the trumpet and alarm, against the fortified cities, and against the high battlements. I will bring distress on men, that they will walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD, and their blood will be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung. Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD's wrath, but the whole land will be devoured by the fire of his jealousy; for He will make an end, yes, a terrible end, of all those who dwell in the land.

*Gather yourselves together, yes, gather together, you nation that has no shame, before the appointed time when the day passes as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD comes on you, before the day of the LORD's anger comes on you. **Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, who have kept his ordinances. Seek righteousness. Seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the LORD's anger.***

Zephaniah 1:14-2:3 (WEBPB)

Zechariah prophesied the destruction of two thirds of the Israelites and a final battle in which all the nations will fight against Jerusalem but the LORD will arise and fight against them:

"Awake, sword, against My shepherd, and against the man who is close to Me," says the LORD of hosts. "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; and I will turn My hand against the little ones. It shall happen that in all the land," says the LORD, "two parts in it will be cut off and die; but the third will be left in it. I will bring the third part into the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will test them like gold is tested. They will call on My Name, and I will hear them. I will say, 'It is My people;' and they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'

*Behold, a day of the LORD comes, when your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city will be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city will go out into captivity, and the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. **Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle.** His feet will stand in that day on the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in two, from east to west, making a very great valley. Half of the mountain will move toward the north, and half of it toward the south. You shall flee by the valley of my mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azel; yes, you shall flee, just like you fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. The LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with you. It will happen in that day, that there will not be light, cold, or frost. It will be a unique day which is known to the LORD; not day, and not night; but it will come to pass, that at evening time there will be light. It will happen in that day, that living waters will go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the eastern sea, and half of them toward the western sea; in summer and in winter will it be. **The LORD will be King over all the earth. In that day the LORD will be One, and His Name One.**"*

Zechariah 13:7-14:9 (NHEB)

In addition there is a prophecy by Joel relating to the outpouring of the Spirit in the last days but this is referred to under the teaching in Acts as it was quoted by Peter on the Day of Pentecost (see Section 3).

2. Jesus' teaching on His Second Coming

Jesus taught His disciples about the signs of the end of the age before His return. He emphasised the importance of discernment and the need to always be prepared and to demonstrate our faith through practical love towards others. The final parable may also indicate that the nations will be judged for how they showed love to others, not just individuals.

Jesus went out from the temple, and was going on His way. His disciples came to Him to show Him the buildings of the temple. But He answered them, "You see all of these things, don't you? Most certainly I tell you, there will not be left here one stone on another, that will not be thrown down."

As He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? What is the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?"

*Jesus answered them, "**Be careful that no one leads you astray.** For many will come in My Name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will lead many astray. You will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that you aren't troubled, for all this must happen, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there will be famines, plagues, and earthquakes in various places. But all these things are the beginning of birth pains. Then they will deliver you up to oppression, and will kill you. You will be hated by all of the nations for My Name's sake. Then many will stumble, and will deliver up one another, and will hate one another. Many false prophets will arise, and will lead many astray.*

Because iniquity will be multiplied, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end will be saved. This Good News of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world for a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

When, therefore, you see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take out the things that are in his house. Let him who is in the field not return back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are with child and to nursing mothers in those days! Pray that your flight will not be in the winter, nor on a Sabbath, for then there will be great suffering, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever will be. Unless those days had been shortened, no flesh would have been saved. But for the sake of the chosen ones, those days will be shortened.

*Then if any man tells you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or, 'There,' don't believe it. **For there will arise false christs, and false prophets, and they will show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the chosen ones.***

*Behold, I have told you beforehand. If therefore they tell you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' don't go out; or 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' don't believe it. **For as the lightning flashes from the east, and is seen even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.** For wherever the carcass is, that is where the vultures gather together. But immediately after the suffering of those days, the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken; and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky. **Then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. He will send out His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His chosen ones from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.***

Now from the fig tree learn this parable. When its branch has now become tender, and produces its leaves, you know that the summer is near. **Even so you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.** Most certainly I tell you, this generation will not pass away, until all these things are accomplished. **Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. But no one knows of that day and hour, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.**

As the days of Noah were, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ship, and they didn't know until the flood came, and took them all away, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and one will be left. **Watch therefore, for you don't know in what hour your Lord comes.** But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch of the night the thief was coming, he would have watched, and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. **Therefore also be ready, for in an hour that you don't expect, the Son of Man will come.**

Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his lord has set over his household, to give them their food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his lord finds doing so when he comes. Most certainly I tell you that he will set him over all that he has. But if that evil servant should say in his heart, 'My lord is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat his fellow servants, and eat and drink with the drunkards, the lord of that servant will come in a day when he doesn't expect it, and in an hour when he doesn't know it, and will cut him in pieces, and appoint his portion with the hypocrites. That is where the weeping and grinding of teeth will be.

Then the Kingdom of Heaven will be like ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. Those who were foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. Now while the bridegroom delayed, they all slumbered and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, 'Behold! The bridegroom is coming! Come out to meet him!' Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'What if there isn't enough for us and you? You go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' While they went away to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast, and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us.' But he answered, 'Most certainly I tell you, I don't know you.' **Watch therefore, for you don't know the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.**

For it is like a man, going into another country, who called his own servants, and entrusted his goods to them. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one; to each according to his own ability. Then he went on his journey. Immediately he who received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. In the same way, he also who got the two gained another two. But he who received the one talent went away and dug in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

Now after a long time the lord of those servants came, and reconciled accounts with them. He who received the five talents came and brought another five talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents. Behold, I have gained another five talents in addition to them.'

His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things, I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

He also who got the two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents. Behold, I have gained another two talents in addition to them.'

His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things, I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

He also who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you that you are a hard man, reaping where you didn't sow, and gathering where you didn't scatter. I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the earth. Behold, you have what is yours.'

*But his lord answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant. You knew that I reap where I didn't sow, and gather where I didn't scatter. You ought therefore to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received back my own with interest. Take away therefore the talent from him, and give it to him who has the ten talents. **For to everyone who has will be given, and he will have abundance, but from him who doesn't have, even that which he has will be taken away.** Throw out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*

***But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. Before Him all the nations will be gathered, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.** He will set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will tell those on His right hand, 'Come, blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; **for I was hungry, and you gave Me food to eat. I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink. I was a stranger, and you took Me in. I was naked, and you clothed Me. I was sick, and you visited Me. I was in prison, and you came to Me.**'*

Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You; or thirsty, and give You a drink? When did we see You as a stranger, and take You in; or naked, and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'

*The King will answer them, '**Most certainly I tell you, because you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to Me.**' Then He will say also to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels; **for I was hungry, and you didn't give Me food to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger, and you didn't take Me in; naked, and you didn't clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you didn't visit Me.**'*

Then they will also answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and didn't help You?'

*Then He will answer them, saying, '**Most certainly I tell you, because you didn't do it to one of the least of these, you didn't do it to Me.**' These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."*

Matthew 24-25 (WEBPB)

3. Teaching in Acts

Firstly, two angels bore witness to the certainty and nature of Jesus' return after His ascension:

After He said this, He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid Him from their sight.

*They were looking intently up into the sky as He was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? **This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven.**"*

Acts 1:9-11 (NIVUK)

Secondly, Peter proclaimed a prophecy in the book of Joel on the Day of Pentecost, relating the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to the last days. This is particularly true of the age in which

we now live since the Holy Spirit was outpoured again much in a wider way from 1st January 1901 (see Chapter 11).

Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd, "Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem! Make no mistake about this. These people are not drunk, as some of you are assuming. Nine o'clock in the morning is much too early for that. No, what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel:

*'In the last days,' God says,
 'I will pour out My Spirit upon all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy.
Your young men will see visions,
 and your old men will dream dreams.
In those days I will pour out My Spirit
 even on My servants – men and women alike –
 and they will prophesy.
And I will cause wonders in the heavens above
 and signs on the earth below –
 blood and fire and clouds of smoke.
The sun will become dark,
 and the moon will turn blood red
 before that great and glorious day of the LORD arrives.
But everyone who calls on the Name of the LORD
 will be saved.'*"

Acts 2:14-21 (NLT)

We may combine this Scripture with others such as Haggai 2:9, John 2:19, Luke 13:32, Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 and 2 Peter 3:8 to understand that the current outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the restoration of the five-fold ministry to the church indicates that we are living at the end of the age.

4. Teaching in the epistles

Paul taught that all Israel would eventually be saved. However, this process may involve many losing their lives in the last days as prophesied above by Zechariah. The restoration of Israel as a nation in 1948 is part of this process and a fulfilment of many other Biblical prophecies.

*I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and in this way **all Israel will be saved**. As it is written:*

*"The deliverer will come from Zion;
 He will turn godlessness away from Jacob.
And this is My covenant with them
 when I take away their sins."*

As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies for your sake; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and His call are irrevocable. Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that He may have mercy on them all.

Romans 11:25-32 (NIVUK)

Paul taught the Thessalonians about the Second Coming of Christ in his first letter to them:

*But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. **For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.** Therefore encourage one another with these words.*

*Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that **the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.** While people are saying, "There is peace and security", then sudden destruction will come upon them as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with Him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.*

1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11 (ESVUK)

Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians was partly motivated by the need to correct a misunderstanding by some of them that the Second Coming had already taken place. Paul explained that this would not take place before the man of lawlessness was revealed. This person can be associated with Daniel and Jesus' teaching on the abomination that causes desolation and John's teaching on the Antichrist. In addition to a specific individual (the antichrist), these passages indicate that there are many antichrists and a secret power of lawlessness already at work.

*Now in regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to meet Him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, not to be quickly unsettled or alarmed either by a [so-called prophetic revelation of a] spirit or a message or a letter [alleged to be] from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has [already] come. Let no one in any way deceive or entrap you, **for that day will not come unless the apostasy comes first [that is, the great rebellion, the abandonment of the faith by professed Christians], and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction [the Antichrist, the one who is destined to be destroyed], who opposes and exalts himself [so proudly and so insolently] above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he [actually enters and] takes his seat in the temple of God, publicly proclaiming that he himself is God.** Do you not remember that when I was still with you, I was telling you these things? And you know what restrains him now [from being revealed]; it is so that he will be revealed at his own [appointed] time. **For the mystery of lawlessness [rebellion against divine authority and the coming reign of lawlessness] is already at work;** [but it is restrained] only until he who now restrains it is taken out of the way. Then the lawless one [the Antichrist] will be revealed and the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of His mouth and bring him to an end by the appearance of His coming. The coming of the [Antichrist, the lawless] one is through the activity of Satan, [attended] with great power [all kinds of counterfeit miracles] and [deceptive] signs and false wonders [all of them lies], and by unlimited seduction to evil and with all the deception of wickedness for those who are perishing, because they did not welcome the love of the truth [of the gospel] so as to be saved [they were spiritually blind,*

and rejected the truth that would have saved them]. Because of this God will send upon them a misleading influence, [an activity of error and deception] so they will believe the lie, in order that all may be judged and condemned who did not believe the truth [about their sin, and the need for salvation through Christ], but instead took pleasure in unrighteousness.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 (AMP)

Paul shared a prophecy with Timothy about the increase in deception in the later times:

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.

1 Timothy 4:1-5 (NIVUK)

Paul also explained to Timothy how people would change in the last days as wickedness increases:

You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that!

They are the kind who work their way into people's homes and win the confidence of vulnerable women who are burdened with the guilt of sin and controlled by various desires. (Such women are forever following new teachings, but they are never able to understand the truth.) These teachers oppose the truth just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses. They have depraved minds and a counterfeit faith. But they won't get away with this for long. Someday everyone will recognize what fools they are, just as with Jannes and Jambres.

2 Timothy 3:1-9 (NLT)

Peter taught about the time of Jesus' Second Coming in his second letter:

My dear friends, this is now the second time I've written to you, both letters reminders to hold your minds in a state of undistracted attention. Keep in mind what the holy prophets said, and the command of our Master and Saviour that was passed on by your apostles.

First off, you need to know that in the last days, mockers are going to have a heyday. Reducing everything to the level of their puny feelings, they'll mock, "So what's happened to the promise of his Coming? Our ancestors are dead and buried, and everything's going on just as it has from the first day of creation. Nothing's changed."

*They conveniently forget that long ago all the galaxies and this very planet were brought into existence out of watery chaos by God's word. Then God's word brought the chaos back in a flood that destroyed the world. **The current galaxies and earth are fuel for the final fire. God is poised, ready to speak His word again, ready to give the signal for the judgment and destruction of the desecrating sceptics.***

Don't overlook the obvious here, friends. With God, one day is as good as a thousand years, a thousand years as a day. God isn't late with His promise as some measure lateness. He is restraining Himself on account of you, holding back the End because He doesn't want anyone lost. He's giving everyone space and time to change.

But when the Day of God's Judgment does come, it will be unannounced, like a thief. The sky will collapse with a thunderous bang, everything disintegrating in a huge conflagration, earth and all its works exposed to the scrutiny of Judgment.

*Since everything here today might well be gone tomorrow, do you see how essential it is to live a holy life? Daily expect the Day of God, eager for its arrival. **The galaxies will burn up and the elements melt down that day – but we'll hardly notice. We'll be looking the other way, ready for the promised new heavens and the promised new earth, all landscaped with righteousness.***

*So, my dear friends, since this is what you have to look forward to, **do your very best to be found living at your best, in purity and peace. Interpret our Master's patient restraint for what it is: salvation.*** Our good brother Paul, who was given much wisdom in these matters, refers to this in all his letters, and has written you essentially the same thing. Some things Paul writes are difficult to understand. Irresponsible people who don't know what they are talking about twist them every which way. They do it to the rest of the Scriptures, too, destroying themselves as they do it.

But you, friends, are well-warned. Be on guard lest you lose your footing and get swept off your feet by these lawless and loose-talking teachers. Grow in grace and understanding of our Master and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Glory to the Master, now and forever! Yes!

2 Peter 3 (MSG)

As mentioned above, John taught about the coming of the Antichrist and that many antichrists had already come:

Little children, these are the end times, and as you heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen. By this we know that it is the final hour. They went out from us, but they didn't belong to us; for if they had belonged to us, they would have continued with us. But they left, that they might be revealed that none of them belong to us. You have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. I have not written to you because you don't know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. ***Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the Antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son doesn't have the Father. He who confesses the Son has the Father also.***

*Therefore, as for you, let that remain in you which you heard from the beginning. If that which you heard from the beginning remains in you, you also will remain in the Son, and in the Father. This is the promise which He promised us, the eternal life. These things I have written to you concerning those who would lead you astray. **As for you, the anointing which you received from Him remains in you, and you don't need for anyone to teach you. But as His anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie, and even as it taught you, you will remain in Him. Now, little children, remain in Him, that when He appears, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before Him at his coming.***

1 John 2:18-28 (WEBPB)

5. Prophecies in Revelation

There are many prophecies in the book of revelation, many of them building upon the passages already introduced. It is unwise to take the prophecies in Revelation in Biblical order to predict the order of events on the earth in the last days (apart from those which include a clear temporal sequencing). These prophecies are summarised below:

1. Some Christian scholars believe that the **letter to the Church in Laodicea** (Revelation 3:14-22) relates to the final age of the church immediately preceding the Second Coming

of Christ. Of particular note is the **lukewarmness and blindness of believers at this time and their need to become hot and to be able to see.**

2. The **seven seals** (Revelation 6 and 8:1-5), the **seven trumpets** (Revelation 8:6-9:21 and 11:15-19) the **seven plagues** (Revelation 15) and the **seven bowls of God's wrath** (Revelation 16) indicate successively more intense judgments to come at the end of the age.
3. The **two witnesses** (Revelation 11:1-14) will arise before the Second Coming of Christ. It is unclear whether or not these are individuals. They will bear witness during the time that the Gentiles will trample the holy city for 42 months (possibly the same as half of Daniel's seventieth week). Again, this timescale may be figurative rather than exact.
4. The **two beasts** in Revelation 13 will appear in the end times. The beast coming out of the sea appears to represent a false Christ; the beast coming out of the earth appears to represent a false Holy Spirit. The second beast will force everyone to receive a **mark** in order that they can buy or sell which is associated with the number 666 (6 representing the number of man as he was created on the sixth day and 666 thus representing a counterfeit Trinity).

It is interesting to note that the universal barcode system uses a code very similar to three sixes to position bar code readers (Relfe, 1982). However, this should be taken as an indication of what is to come rather than a comment on the morality of buying and selling items containing a barcode. There was recently much concern in the USA about their Health System Reform Bill as a draft contained a proposal for everyone to receive an implanted computer chip in order to identify them. However, this was not included in the final version of the bill but it appeared to still be on the previous US Government's agenda (Washington Star News, 2015). The technology to implement such a system was invented by a Professor in the UK in 1989 (Warwick, n.d.).

Some people believe that the rapture (see Matthew 24:40-41 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) will take place before the mark of the beast is implemented so that believing Christians will not have to make this choice. The devil demonstrates his lack of creativity here as the mark of the beast is a counterfeit of God's true mark (see Exodus 13:9 and Ezekiel 9:4).

5. The **fall of Babylon** is prophesied in Revelation 18, indicating a final judgment on the world system (without God).
6. The **first resurrection** is described in Revelation 20:1-6. It will involve (at least some) believers reigning with Christ on the earth for one thousand years.
7. The **final battle** (possibly the same as **Armageddon**) will take place after the millennial rule with Christ (Revelation 20:7-10). Armageddon is mentioned in Revelation 16:16 and draws on Zechariah 12:11 and the prophecy in Zechariah 14.
8. The **second resurrection** (Revelation 20:11-15) will then take place in which the dead will be judged.

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