

An open, heavy wooden door with metal studs, set in a stone wall, leading to a bright outdoor area. The door is made of dark wood and has several horizontal bars with metal studs. The wall is made of rough-hewn stone. The floor is paved with dark, rectangular stones. The scene is brightly lit from the right, creating a strong contrast between the dark interior and the bright exterior.

*Why The
Ancients
Knew
Your
Future.*

Unfulfilled Biblical
Prophecies.

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- ### 1 INTRODUCTION

We live in an exciting age. E. W. Bullinger was a clergyman during the late 1800s. He noticed that major Biblical events tend to occur around 1,000 year boundaries. Abraham lived around 2,000 BC. The Kingdom of Israel was founded 1,050 BC. Jesus was born around 4 BC and died around 30 AD. Dating Abraham is a little debatable, but the pattern is interesting. Especially, since recently, Israel fulfilled a prophecy by becoming a country in 1948. Also, many of the pieces needed to fulfill other Biblical prophecies are falling into place. For example, the Bible predicts a world war will be centered in the Near East. Only a couple of years ago, that was hard to believe because there was nothing worth fighting about over there. The Middle East was just a big pile of sand, until they found oil. Now those prophecies don't seem all that unbelievable.

The prophecies that haven't been fulfilled are not predictions. They are prophecies. The difference between a prediction and a prophecy is like a card game. If you're trying to guess the other guys cards then you are predicting. If the other guy has a friend behind you, telling him your cards, then he is prophesying. For the Old Testament prophets, God is the friend. Since God knows all the cards, the prophets always get it right. The Biblical Prophecies will be fulfilled, they will happen.

Deuteronomy 18:20-22

New International Version (NIV)

20 But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, is to be put to death.”

21 You may say to yourselves, “How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?”

22 If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken.

Biblical prophecies were made to be understood. I think it's a common misunderstanding that

prophecies were intended to prove that God existed. That's not what prophecies were intended to do. ~~Prophecies were given to prove that a prophet represented God. Picture someone standing on a street corner and yelling that God spoke to him out of a burning bush, and that God said he was supposed to lead the country. That's what Moses did. We wouldn't make him president. We would lock him up. However, what if he predicted something that no one expected and then it happened. You might be a little more likely to listen to him. If a prophecy is going to prove that a man represented God, then it had to have three things:~~

1. It had to be clear, so there was no doubt about what was being predicted.
2. It had to happen within a short timeframe.
3. It had to be highly unlikely to actually happen.

Here is an example of a prophecy that was given when Samaria was under a siege. The people had already eaten all their food and were starting to eat their children. Whatever food they had was extremely expensive.

2 Kings 7:1-2

Contemporary English Version (CEV)

⁷ Elisha answered, "I have a message for you. The LORD promises that tomorrow here in Samaria, you will be able to buy a large sack of flour or two large sacks of barley for almost nothing."

² The chief officer there with the king replied, "I don't believe it! Even if the LORD sent a rainstorm, couldn't produce that much grain by tomorrow."

"You will see it happen, but you won't eat any of the food," Elisha warned him.

First, notice that the prophecy was very clear. Nobody had any doubts about what it meant. Next, notice that prophecy was very hard to believe. Finally, notice that it was going to occur the next day. had everything necessary to prove that the prophet spoke for God.

Now after a prophet proved that he represented God, he could predict things further into the future. However, the other two rules still applied. The prophecy had to be clear, and it had to be an unlikely event. Remember the virgin birth? That was about as unlikely as you can get.

Have you ever really thought about Matt 2:4-6? The wise men come looking for the prophesied Messiah. This really upsets King Herod, and so he asks his Biblical scholars where the Messiah was predicted to be born.

Notice that they had an instant answer from the Old Testament. Where did they get the answer? From a prophet.

Matthew 2:4-5

Contemporary English Version (CEV)

⁴ Herod brought together the chief priests and the teachers of the Law of Moses and asked them, "Where will the Messiah be born?" ⁵They told him, "He will be born in Bethlehem, just as the *proph* wrote,

To answer Herod's questions, his experts referred to a prophecy from the prophet Micah. The prophecy was written about 700 years before Jesus.

Micah 5:2

Contemporary English Version (CEV)

²Bethlehem Ephrath,
you are one of the smallest towns in the nation of Judah.
But the LORD will choose
one of your people
to rule the nation—
someone whose family
goes back to ancient times.

Notice, that the Biblical scholars weren't confused about the meaning of the prophecy. They knew what was prophesied. The prophecy wasn't cryptic. It didn't contain any hidden messages. There wasn't any allegory. The Bible clearly intended that they understood the message – and they did.

Also notice that Messiah was predicted to come from a tiny, little village. If you were guessing, you would guess a big city. After all, is it more likely that the Messiah would come from a city with 500,000 people or a city with 500 people? So the prediction was unlikely to be fulfilled, and the meaning was clear to the Biblical scholars.

Compare this to the prophecies of Nostradamus. Here's one:

Earthshaking fire from the center of the Earth Will cause tremors around the New City. Two great rocks will war for a long time, Then Arethusa will redden a new river.

Well, that certainly is clear isn't it? That's clearly predicting... Humm, what is it predicting?

This prophecy by Nostradamus is said to predict the atom bomb!

*Near the gates and within two cities There will be scourges the like of which was never seen,
Famine within plague, people put out by steel,
Crying to the great immortal God for relief.*

Really? There was a plague in the cities bombed by the first atom bombs? The Japanese were crying out to the true God? Gee, I didn't know that. Somehow, I doubt that prophecy predicted the first atom bombs. I wonder what would have happened, if you had gone to the experts on Nostradamus at the beginning of the war II, and asked what the prophecies of Nostradamus had to say about the war? I suspect that none of the experts on Nostradamus would have mentioned an atom bomb. Compare that to Herod's experts. They immediately told Herod the meaning of the Biblical prophecy.

I can hear your questions now. If the Bible's prophecies are so clear, then how come there is so much confusion about the Book of Revelation? Well, sit down. Are you ready? The Christians in the first century clearly understood the Book of Revelation. Now, maybe they didn't understand every little detail, but they clearly understood the main message. If that's true, how come the book was clear to them, but so fuzzy to us? Remember, prophecies were made to be understood by the people. So the book was written to the people of the 1st century using language, objects and symbols the people at that time understood. If we spoke Greek, raised sheep and goats, used oil lamps made out of pottery,

then we would also clearly understand the book. However we don't, and unfortunately, sometimes it's impossible to fully translate those things into our language. Let me give a few examples showing the difficulty in translating the Bible.

Early Christian missionaries went to a Pacific island and translated the Bible into the language of the people. None of the natives showed any interest in Christianity. The missionaries couldn't figure out why the natives weren't responding. Eventually, the missionaries discovered the problem. The women on the island had sex with anyone they wanted. When children were born, the mother and her brother raised them. When the missionaries translated the Bible, where the Bible referred to God as a father, that's the way the missionaries translated it. To the islanders, the father created the child, but then had no involvement in the child's life. So the natives thought the Bible was saying, that God created the world and then had no more involvement in it. When the missionaries realized the problem, they translated the word father as uncle. So "Our father, who art in heaven" became "Our uncle, who art in heaven". Although the correct word was "father", the word that conveyed the idea of God's love for us was "uncle".

The Eskimo language has about 15 different words for snow. We only have one – snow. So if you were to translate a book written in the Eskimo language into English and you come across one of the words for snow, you would translate it as snow. However, you would have lost meaning. The only way you could come close to translating the word, and keeping its original meaning, would be to write a sentence or two instead of trying to use just one word. That is frowned upon in making English translations of the Bible. Normally, we call that a paraphrase, not a translation.

Now let's say you sent your translation of the Eskimo book to a friend and he decided to translate the book back into the Eskimo language. He comes across the word for snow. Which of the 15 possible words for snow was the original word? The English word doesn't tell you enough to choose the correct word. Since each Eskimo word is referring to a slightly different kind of snow, your chances of guessing the correct meaning is about 7 percent. In other words, 93 percent of the time, you end up adding meaning that isn't there. If you want to translate the book back into English, you have no choice but to risk mistranslating the word.

So can we understand the unfulfilled prophecies? Well, we are in luck. We have the Bible in its original languages, so we don't have to rely on translations, but we still need to understand the culture of the 1st century. So with a little help from archeology, and looking carefully at the culture of the 1st century – and every once in a while looking under the English, the meaning of the Book of Revelation becomes clear – and that meaning, probably, isn't what you've heard.

2 THE BOOK OF REVELATION

When looking at all the unfulfilled prophecies, it's hard to pick a place to start. However in this case, maybe we should start at the end, rather than the beginning. The Book of Revelation is not only the last Book in the Bible, but we will see that the Book of Revelation ties all of the unfulfilled prophecies together.

The meaning of the Book of Revelation would have been clear to anyone before 400 AD. It was only around 400 AD or so that the meaning of the book became mysterious. Why did it become mysterious around that time? Because technology changed the culture. There was a major change to the way people made books. Books changed in the same way that books are changing today. In 50 years, digit

books will have replaced physical books and children won't know that books were ever printed. So if you make a reference to a ~~hard cover book compared to a soft cover book~~, they would have no idea what you were talking about. In 50 years, they won't understand what a book binding was or what a book shelf was for. Depending on how things work out, they may not even know what a library was.

Strange to say, but one of the reasons it's so hard to understand the Book of Revelation was a development in the development of books. So before we start to look at the book of Revelation, we need to look a little at the history of books themselves.

Abraham lived around 1,900 to 2,000 BC. During Abraham's time, people wrote on all kinds of things. They wrote on almost every material you can imagine. They even stored court records on wax tablets. Doesn't that sound like a good way to keep permanent records? They had large libraries containing books on clay tablets. We now know of libraries containing clay tablets going back over 4,000 ago. Some of their libraries had more than 30,000 tablets. Remember Moses? He wrote the Law on stone tablets. Can you imagine a 200-page book written on stone? You would need a wheelbarrow to move it or a forklift.

A new form of book replaced all of those old materials. It is this new form of book that helps us understand the Book of Revelation. The Egyptians figured out that if you smashed some reeds and then glued them together, you had a type of paper. Now you didn't have to be a bodybuilder to carry a book.

The Egyptians called this type of writing material papyrus. By gluing the reeds together, they could make fairly large books. Now when I say books, don't think of hard cover or soft cover books. A book with pages is called a codex. These books were just one long sheet of papyrus that they rolled up and tied to keep from unrolling. The rolled up book was called a scroll. This is why we have the "books" of the Bible. Originally, each book of the Bible was on a separate scroll. Normally, a scroll was made of 20 sheets of papyrus glued together to make a roll. If a book was much bigger than that, it became very hard to work with, so they divided the book into two scrolls. That is why we have the books of 1 and 2nd Kings.

In order to keep a scroll from unrolling, they would tie strings around the scroll. If the scroll was wide, they might have more than one string. If they wanted to secure the scroll, they put globs of wax over the string on the edge of the scroll. People would carry a ring with unique carving on it. They would press the ring into the soft wax. The ring would leave a unique impression. Because the impression was unique, it identified the owner of the scroll. Also when the wax hardened, if someone broke the seal they couldn't reseal the scroll without the original ring. That made it easy to tell if someone had tampered with the scroll.

. I can see you rolling your eyes. You're wondering what this has to do with the book of Revelation. Don't lie. I can see you yawning.

Ok, here it is. Books, as we know them, didn't replace scrolls until a couple hundred years after the Book of Revelation was written. So any books mentioned in the book of Revelation are scrolls not codices.

⁵ Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. ² And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, “Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?”

Notice that this book is sealed with seven seals. That means that the book can't be opened until **all** seven seals are broken. The seals are not chapters because you can't read **any** of the scroll until **all** the seals are broken. Everything that happens when each seal is broken, can't actually be in the book, because it can't be read until after the last seal is broken. This is something that everyone before 400 AD would have known, but wouldn't have been clear after people stopped using scrolls with seals. So if the book in front of the throne doesn't contain plagues and disasters - what is in the book?

Since the purpose of breaking the seals is to read the book, then if we want to know what's in the book we should look in the Book of Revelation for places where a book is actually being read.

Contemporary English Version (CEV)

¹² I also saw all the dead people standing in front of that throne. Every one of them was there, no matter who they had once been. Several books were opened, and then the **book of life was opened**. The dead were judged by what those books said they had done.

¹³ The sea gave up the dead people who were in it, and death and its kingdom also gave up their dead. Then everyone was judged by what they had done. ¹⁴ Afterwards, death and its kingdom were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death.^[b] ¹⁵ Anyone whose name wasn't written in the **book of life** was thrown into the lake of fire.

Ah, so the book in front of the lamb is the book of Life. This passage now makes a lot more sense.

Revelation 5:4-5

Contemporary English Version (CEV)

⁴ I cried hard because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or see inside it. ⁵ Then one of the elders said to me, “Stop **crying** and look! The one who is called both the ‘Lion from the Tribe of Judah’^[a] and ‘King David’s Great Descendant’^[b] has won the victory. He will open the book and its seven seals.”

If the book contained plagues, then it seems strange that John was really upset that the book couldn't be read. That wouldn't be showing a lot of Christian love, if John was crying because God wasn't going to release the plagues. However, crying makes a lot of sense, if the book of Life can't be read.

Wait a minute! What is this book of Life? Did John invent it? You may be surprised to find that the book of Life is mentioned throughout the Bible.

Although, this passage doesn't say the book of Life, it is clearly referring to it. This passage shows that 3,400 years ago, Moses knew about the book of Life.

Exodus 32:32-33

Contemporary English Version (CEV)

³² But I beg you to forgive them. If you don't, please wipe my name out of your book.”^[a]

³³ The LORD replied, "I will wipe out of my book the name of everyone who has sinned against me."

David knew about the book of Life and this was around 3,000 years ago.

Psalm 69:28

New International Version (NIV)

²⁸ May they be blotted out of the book of life and not be listed with the righteous.

Paul knew about the book of Life. The way Paul casually refers to the Book of Life, shows that the Philippians knew what he was talking about. So apparently, the Book of Life was well known to the Christians in the 1st century.

Philippians 4:3

New International Version (NIV)

³ Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

The Book of Life is even mentioned in a couple of other verses in the book of Revelation. Here is one of the more interesting ones.

Revelation 17:8

New International Version (NIV)

⁸ The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and yet will come up out of the Abyss and go to its destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because it once was, now is not, and yet will come.

Hummm, your name had to be written in the book before the creation of the world to be saved? Sounds like the unsaved didn't have a chance. Actually, it's not as bad as it sounds. Let's say I had a magic TV. When I turned it on, I saw what was going to happen the next day. As I watched the TV, I saw someone rob a store. So I knew in advance what they were going to do - but I didn't make them do it. I just watched it. The same is true for God, just because he knows what we are going to do in advance, and he can interfere; doesn't mean he made us do it.

So the book of Revelation is about the reading of the book of Life. That isn't the whole story though. If the book of Revelation was just about reading the book of Life, then the book of Revelation would be a very positive book. However, there are a lot of plagues in the book and there is also the Lake of Fire. Remember, the same chapter that has the reading of the book of Life, also has the unsaved thrown into the Lake of Fire. So clearly, we don't have the complete picture. But not to worry, we will get there.

3 SEALS

After the introduction to the scroll in chapter five, the Book of Revelation starts to break the seals in chapter six. Remember, that the scroll can't be read until *all* the seals are broken. So what's with the breaking of the seals?

You have to get a feel for this. temple, with God on the throne. beautiful with an emerald rainbow over the throne. There are court heralds constantly singing God's praise. There are thousands standing around the throne. Then Jesus walks to the middle of the temple and stands in front of the scroll. He is about to start breaking the seals. He is going to open the Book of Life. This is big. This is huge. You are in God's

It's huge and

When he breaks a seal, then huge things happen. This is like a 20 gun salute after each seal. The events are important because they stress just how big this event is. In ancient times, when a king did something important, they would do grand things to stress the event's importance.

Notice what happens when Solomon dedicates the temple.

1 Kings 8:65

New International Version (NIV)

⁶⁵ So Solomon observed the festival at that time, and all Israel with him—a vast assembly, people from Lebo Hamath to the Wadi of Egypt. They celebrated it before the LORD our God for seven days and seven days more, fourteen days in all.

In the same way, the scene in the Book of Revelation is a throne room with God on his throne, and the big event is the reading of the Book of Life. Breaking each seal is a step towards the reading of the book. So when each seal is broken, it's important to stress the event's importance. When the first seal is broken then a white horse with a rider and he goes out to conquer. Now, I would tell you the meaning of every freckle on the white horse, except for one little problem. The problem? I don't know the meaning of every little freckle on the horse. A difference between my book and others that you may have read is that I'm only telling you what is clear. I'm keeping speculation at an absolute minimum. The reality is that you don't need to understand all the little details, to really understand the prophecies.

The important thing to understand, about the events that occur after the breaking of each seal, is that they are designed to add drama to the breaking of the seals. Notice what happens when the last seal is broken, and the book can be read.

Revelation 8:1

New International Version (NIV)

8 When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

Again, the silence in heaven is designed to add to the drama. Now the Book of Life can be read!!!

3 TRUMPETS

So now that the Book of Life can be read, what happens next? Jesus is standing in front of the scroll, ready to read it. Everyone is holding their breath with excitement. As everyone watches, seven trumpets are given to seven angels.

Revelation 8:2

New International Version (NIV)

² And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.

In our age, we immediately think Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass. It's unfortunate that the Greek word was translated as trumpets. These were not the musical instruments that we refer to as trumpets, and their primary use in the ancient world was not to make music. Trumpets only had one note and they were extremely loud. This makes them unsuitable for bands but great for gathering people together.

Numbers 10:2-4

English Standard Version (ESV)

2 “Make two silver trumpets. Of hammered work you shall make them, and you shall use them for summoning the congregation and for breaking camp.

Judges 3:27

English Standard Version (ESV)

27 When he arrived, he sounded the trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim. Then the people of Israel went down with him from the hill country, and he was their leader.

Nehemiah 4:20

English Standard Version (ESV)

20 In the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us.”

Do you see a pattern? Trumpets were really, really loud and so they were used to call the people together. In ancient times, if a city was attacked and you needed to gather your soldiers, you blew the trumpet. If the king wanted to gather the people for a proclamation, they would blow trumpets. The problem for the translators is that we don't have anything that really works well for a translation. A hundred years ago, a better translation would have been bugle, because for the military, it had similar functions. Except the bugle could tell the Calvary to advance or retreat and could be used for more complex communications. The Biblical trumpet wasn't as flexible, it could only deliver a couple of prearranged signals. Normally it carried only one message – come here now!!!

So why are the angels blowing the trumpets? Remember that the main use of trumpets was to call the people. So after the seals are broken, the book can be read and the angels are calling the people to listen to the reading of the book. Everyone in the 1st century would have clearly understood this.

4 THE LAST TRUMPET

We saw in the last section, that the 7 trumpets are blown to gather the people to listen to the reading of the Book of Life in God's temple. In the New Testament, when we think about God calling his people, we normally think about the Rapture. Are they the same event, or are they two separate events?

Let's look at some passages that talk about the Rapture, and see if we can get an answer to that question.

Matthew 24:30-31

Contemporary English Version (CEV)

³⁰ Then a sign will appear in the sky. And there will be the Son of Man. All nations on earth will weep when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹At the sound of a **loud trumpet**, he will send his angels to **bring his chosen ones together** from all over the earth.

In this passage, God's angels blow a loud trumpet that gathers the saved. In Revelation, God's angels blow loud trumpets that gather the saved.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-16

Contemporary English Version (CEV)

¹⁵ Our Lord Jesus told us that when he comes, we won't go up to meet him ahead of his followers who have already died.

¹⁶ With a loud command and with the shout of the chief angel and a **blast of God's trumpet**, the Lord will return from heaven. Then those who had faith in Christ before they died **will be raised to life**.

In this passage, the dead in Christ will rise in response to a trumpet call. Starting to notice anything yet? Almost every passage in the New Testament that talks about the Rapture has a trumpet call. This passage carries it a bit further.

1 Corinthians 15:52

Contemporary English Version (CEV)

⁵² It will happen suddenly, quicker than the blink of an eye. **At the sound of the last trumpet** the **dead will be raised**. We will all be changed, so that we will never die again.

Here something is added. Notice that this time, it isn't just a trumpet, but it is the last trumpet. The last trumpet shows that there were a series of trumpets, and it is the last trumpet in the series that actually calls the people. In the Book of Revelation, there is a series of trumpets and the last trumpet in the series calls the saved.

So in both Revelation and the passages about the Rapture, there are trumpets calling the people. Also both Revelation, and the passages about the Rapture, have a series of trumpets associated with the calling of the saved, and in both cases, it's the last trumpet that actually sparks the calling.

Every major passage that talks about the 2nd coming of Jesus or the rapture includes the blowing of a trumpet to gather the saved. Notice that in those passages, the writers don't explain the trumpet.
century

It appears that the Christians in the 1st knew about the seven trumpets.

Remember, that Paul stayed for many months at some of the churches, and we don't know all that he taught them. Not everything that Jesus said was recorded and not everything that the Apostles said was recorded.

John 21:25

Contemporary English Version (CEV)

²⁵ Jesus did many other things. If they were all written in books, I don't suppose there would be room enough in the whole world for all the books.

Sometimes, we need to read between the lines. So from the way that Paul refers to the last trumpet, it appears that the Corinthian church knew about the last trumpet. If the Corinthian church knew about the last trumpet, then it's likely that all the early churches knew about the trumpets.

However, another clue that this information was common knowledge in the 1st century, were the common images and illustrations used in all the passages in the New Testament about the Rapture. That Jesus, Paul, Peter and John all use the same images and illustrations when talking about the Rapture, makes it clear that the information about the Rapture was common knowledge. Here are some common images and illustrations used when talking about the Rapture. Notice, that they come from Jesus, Paul, Luke, Peter and John.

Lightning:

Matt 24

Luke 17

Zechariah 9:14 – ok, this one isn't in the New

Testament, but it does tie the 2nd coming of Jesus to lightning.

Son and Moon darkened: Matt 24

Mark 13

Acts 2

Coming on clouds: Matt 24

Mark 13

Luke 21

Acts 1

1 Thess 4

Trumpet Call: Matt 24

1 Cor 15 1 Thess 4

Heaven and Earth will pass away: Matt 24

Mark 13

2 Peter 3

Rev 21

Noah and the Flood: Matt 24

Luke 17

2 Peter 3

Comes as a thief: Matt 24

1 Thess 5

2 Peter 3

Look at that list. Notice that in all of the passages, there is at least one reference to the Gospels. It is clear that all the passages in the New Testament, talking about the Rapture, come from Jesus. However, Jesus wasn't telling them something that was new to them. What Jesus said about the Rapture came from was the Old Testament. For example, this passage comes from about 500 years before the birth of Christ. It talks about the appearance of the Lord in the sky - with a trumpet call.

Zechariah 9:14

God will appear over his people, and his arrows will flash like lightning.

God will sound his trumpet

Compare that passage with this one.

Acts 1:9-11

Contemporary English Version (CEV)

⁹ After Jesus had said this and while they were watching, he was **taken up into a cloud**. They could not see him, ¹⁰but as he went up, they kept looking up into the sky.

Suddenly two men dressed in white clothes were standing there beside them. ¹¹They said, “Why are you men from Galilee standing here and looking up into the sky? Jesus has been taken to heaven. **But he will come back in the same way** that you have seen him go.”

It’s clear that what we read in the Book of Revelation has its roots going back into the Old Testament. We call the gathering of the saved by the trumpets in the Book of Revelation, “The Rapture”. There are some misunderstandings about the rapture. One of the biggest is that our bodies will be taken, leaving our clothes on the ground.

1 Corinthians 15:35-37 New International Version (NIV)

³⁵ But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” ³⁶How foolish! What you sow does not come to life **unless it dies**. ³⁷When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else.

Notice the question that the Corinthians asked Paul. What kind of body will we get? Paul then compares our current bodies to a seed that has to die to become a plant. In other words, your current body has to die.

That idea is repeated throughout the chapter, but this verse is probably the clearest.

1 Corinthians 15:50

New International Version (NIV)

⁵⁰ I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that **flesh and blood** cannot inherit the kingdom of God, **nor does the perishable** inherit the imperishable.

Pure and simple, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Your old body is going to get left behind and replaced by a better one. So when the rapture occurs there will not be piles of clothes everywhere. There will simply be an unusual number of people dying that day. That is why the Christians at Thessalonica were worried that the rapture had already occurred. If they expected to see piles of empty clothes, they wouldn’t have worried about having missed the rapture.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-2

New International Version (NIV)

² Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and **our being gathered to him**, we ask you,

brothers and sisters, ²not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us—~~whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter—asserting that the day of the Lord *has already come.*~~

5 THE TRIAL

It's time for a quick review. In Revelation chapter 5, Jesus is standing in front of the Book of Life and breaks the seals. The Book of Life can't be opened until all the seals are broken. When all the seals are broken and the book can be read, there is silence in heaven for 1/2 hour. We saw that trumpets in the ancient world were used to call the people to assemble. If the city was being attacked, they blew trumpets. If the king had an announcement, they blew trumpets. If they wanted to gather everyone at the temple, they blew trumpets. So 7 angels blow 7 trumpets to call the saved. After the 7th trumpet is blown, the saved are gathered (raptured) and are now standing outside the temple.

When the 7th trumpet is blown, it is announced that the Kingdom of God has arrived.

Contemporary English Version (CEV)

¹⁵At the sound of the seventh trumpet, loud voices were heard in heaven. They said,

“Now the kingdom
of this world
belongs to our Lord
and to his Chosen One!
And he will rule
forever and ever!”

This is the important verse. Now that the 7th trumpet has called the saved, the doors to the temple are opened, so that those who were “raptured”, can see inside the temple.

Revelation 11:19

New International Version (NIV)

¹⁹ Then ***God's temple in heaven was opened***, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a severe hailstorm.

So what are they suppose to be looking at? Right after the temple is opened, we see this verse:

New International Version (NIV)

¹² A great sign appeared in heaven: ...

What in the world is a sign? Are you picturing a stop sign? Maybe, you are picturing a sign saying a house is for sell? Maybe, you are picturing getting a sign from reading tealeaves. Of maybe, you saw your girlfriend holding hands with your best friend – and you're wondering whether that's a sign that your girlfriend wasn't really spending the night washing her hair.

What is the Book of Revelation describing, when it says the people saw a sign? Let's look at the Bible and see how the word is normally used.

Matthew 16:1

New International Version (NIV)

16 The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and *tested him* by asking him to show them a sign from heaven.

So in this passage, the Pharisees and Sadducees want him to show them a sign from heaven to *prove* that he is a prophet.

Exodus 4:1-9

New International Version (NIV)

4 Moses answered, “*What if they do not believe me* or listen to me and say, ‘The LORD did not appear to you’?”

²Then the LORD said to him, “What is that in your hand?”

“A staff,” he replied.

³The LORD said, “Throw it on the ground.”

Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it. ⁴Then the LORD said to him, “Reach out your hand and take it by the tail.” So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand. ⁵“This,” said the LORD, “is so that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has appeared to you.”

⁶ Then the LORD said, “Put your hand inside your cloak.” So Moses put his hand into his cloak, and when he took it out, the skin was leprous^[a]—it had become as white as snow.

⁷ “Now put it back into your cloak,” he said. So Moses put his hand back into his cloak, and when he took it out, it was restored, like the rest of his flesh.

⁸Then the LORD said, “If they do not believe you or pay attention to the first *sign*, they may believe the second. ⁹But if they do not believe these two *signs* or listen to you, take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground. The water you take from the river will become blood on the ground.”

In this passage, Moses is afraid that no one will believe that he represents God. So God gives him some signs to *prove* that he is speaking for God.

If the Book of Revelation is using the word to mean “prove”, then what would God be trying to prove to the people standing outside the temple? To answer that, let’s go back to the Old Testament.

Daniel 7:9-10

New International Version (NIV)

⁹“As I looked,

“thrones were set in place,
and the Ancient of Days took his seat.

His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool.

His throne was flaming with fire,
and its wheels were all ablaze.

¹⁰ A river of fire was flowing,
coming out from before him.
Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.
The **court** was seated,
and the books were opened.

Notice how this passage closely resembles the Book of Revelation - the throne in chapter 4, the thousands and thousands of attendants in chapter 5:11 and the books being opened in chapter 20:12.

The Book of Revelation is really just an expansion of Daniel 7. With that in mind, notice the word “court” in Daniel 7:10. The word “court” describes a trial and that certainly fits with the Book of Revelation, because Revelation chapter 20 is about judgement.

Revelation 20:12

Contemporary English Version (CEV)

¹² I also saw all the dead people standing in front of that throne. Every one of them was there, no matter who they had once been. Several books were opened, and then the book of life^[a] was opened. The dead were judged by what those books said they had done.

Also in Revelation 11, there is another reference to judgement.

New International Version (NIV)

¹⁸ The nations were angry,
and your wrath has come.
The time has come for **judging** the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets
and your people who revere your name, both great and small—
and for destroying those who destroy the earth.”

That verse shows that the Book of Revelation is also about the judgement of the unsaved. However, when we look at the rest of the Book of Revelation, we see that the judgement not only includes the dead but also includes Satan and the Beast.

What do you need for any trial? Proof of guilt. So what are the signs designed to prove? The signs are designed to prove that Satan and the Beast are guilty.

So the people standing outside of the temple are going to witness the evidence. They are not seeing things as they are happening. Remember Revelation 11:15, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah”? That verse is saying that the Great Tribulation is over and God’s kingdom has arrived. That means that what comes next in Revelation is happening **after** the kingdom has been established. So everything that is going to be shown about the beast has already occurred.

Of course that makes total sense, because evidence for a trial is always historical. So it shouldn’t

surprise us, when we read Revelation chapter 12, that it clearly refers to the birth of Jesus, and that would make chapter 12 historical.

Revelation 12:5

New International Version (NIV)

⁵ She gave birth to a son, a male child, who “will rule all the nations with an iron scepter.” And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.

Remember, that I said it wasn't just the unsaved that were on trial. If we want to know who was on trial, then we should pretend that we arrived late to a trial. As we watch the judge passing judgement, all we have to do is notice “who” is being sentenced. We would know the ones being sentenced, were also the ones on trial. So let's see, who got sentenced in Revelation.

New International Version (NIV)

¹⁰ And the *devil*, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the *beast* and the *false prophet* had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Well, I suspect you all know the devil, but who are the beast and the false prophet? Remember, that Revelation is just an expansion of Daniel 7? In Daniel, right after describing the court, the next verse talks about judgement on the beast. That makes it clear that the beast in Daniel 7 is the same beast that is in the Book of Revelation.

Daniel 7:11

New International Version (NIV)

¹¹ “Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire.

What do we know about Daniel's beast? Well, if you want to understand the 4th beast that is still in the future - then you need to examine the 3 beasts that are now historical and Daniel's use of images.

Daniel 8:5-8

New International Version (NIV)

⁵ As I was thinking about this, suddenly a goat with a prominent horn between its eyes came from the west, crossing the whole earth without touching the ground. ⁶It came toward the two-horned ram I had seen standing beside the canal and charged at it in great rage. ⁷I saw it attack the ram furiously, striking the ram and shattering its two horns. The ram was powerless to stand against it; the goat knocked it to the ground and trampled on it, and none could rescue the ram from its power. ⁸The goat became very great, but at the height of its power the large horn was broken off, and in its place four prominent horns grew up toward the four winds of heaven.

This passage is universally considered to be about Alexander the Great. He was the large horn that was broken off at the height of his power. The four horns that replaced the horn were Alexander's top four generals. They split the empire into four parts – one for each general.

Ok, what does this tell us about the 4th beast? First, the beast in Daniel 8 is not a country. The generals actually split the empire into 4 separate countries, but Daniel still considers them part of the beast. So the horns are separate countries but they are still part of the same beast. So the beast is actually composed of four different countries. If the beast isn't a single country, then what is it? The beast appears to be ethnic and cultural. In the case of the Greek generals after Alexander, the empire became Greek. All four of the countries spoke Greek. All four of the new countries dressed in Greek clothing. All four of the new countries started playing Greek sports. You get the idea. Also, all four countries were ruled by Greeks.

Well, let's see how what we learned compares with the current fad, that the 4th beast is going to be ten European nations representing the Roman Empire. Last I heard, they don't speak Latin in Europe nor do they wear togas. Even besides this, Rome doesn't fit the description of the beast.

First, Rome didn't devour its victims. Rome only cared that the conquered countries paid their taxes. Most of the conquered countries kept their own governments and Kings. Remember, King Herod? He wasn't Roman.

Daniel 7:7

New International Version (NIV)

⁷ “After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast— terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns

Notice, that the first beast is compared to a lion, the second, a bear and the third, a leopard.

Daniel 7:4-6

New International Version (NIV)

⁴ “The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a human being, and the mind of a human was given to it.

⁵ “And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear. It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, ‘Get up and eat your fill of flesh!’

⁶ “After that, I looked, and there before me was another beast, one that looked like a leopard. And on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule.

Here is the Book of Revelation referring to this passage in Daniel.

Revelation 13:2

New International Version (NIV)

² The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.

That means the 4th beast combines all the strengths of the first three beasts. The 3rd beast is compared

to a leopard, which is known for its speed. Alexander is known for the amazing speed with which he conquered the world. So was Rome a leopard? It was founded about 700-800 BC and grew very slowly. More like a snail than a leopard.

When we look at major empires, we immediately think of Rome. What other empire could the 4th beast be? Is it a future empire that hasn't yet appeared?

We saw that the empire explodes upon the earth and grows super rapidly. We also saw that it destroys the boundary markers between countries.

Daniel 7:24-25

New International Version (NIV)

²⁴ The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. ²⁵ He will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people and try to change the set times and the laws. The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time.

Remember Alexander, he was the big horn and the 4 horns that replaced him were his 4 generals that became 4 kingdoms. So here we also see that the 10 horns are going to be 10 kingdoms or countries. From the 3rd beast, we know that these 10 countries are ethnically and culturally related. They "will come from one kingdom" in the same way the original conquest was made and then the territory was subdivided. One of the kings will conquer 3 of the other kings and then he will speak out against God and then he will conquer Israel.

Revelation 13:4-8

New International Version (NIV)

⁴ People worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, "Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?"

⁵ The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months. ⁶ It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. ⁷ It was given power to wage war against God's holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. ⁸ All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.

There is a special religious aspect to the beast that is different from any of the former beasts. I guess you could count the fact that the emperors claimed to be gods fulfills that one. But many empires in history had rulers who claimed to be gods, including the Egyptians.

Well, if the 4th beast isn't Rome then who is it? The surprising thing is that there is an empire that fits the prophecy exactly – and it's still around.

The Bible says that the beast will explode on the earth and destroy the old boundary lines between the countries. It will also have a religious character that is different from any of the other beasts. It will breakup into 10 separate countries. It will hate Israel and it will try to destroy it.

~~The Arabs started the Muslim religion about 600~~

AD and it exploded on the earth and came very close to conquering most of the world within 100 years of its birth. That means it qualifies as the leopard. The Arab Muslims totally reworked all the boundary lines of all the countries. That means it “crushed and devoured its victims”.

It started 1,400 years ago. Are they still the same culturally? They speak Arabic, dress the same way they did 1,000 years ago and have basically the same culture they had at the beginning.

Today if you count the modern Arabian Muslim nations, you will find that there are about 10 of them but the number keeps changing. For example Yemen may sometimes be two countries or sometimes only one. Here is a list of the current Arabian Muslim countries. Remember we are talking **Arab** Muslim countries:

1. Saudi Arabia
2. Yemen
3. Jordan
4. Kuwait
5. Iraq
6. Oman
7. Qatar
8. Bahrain
9. UAE
10. Lebanon

You may think that countries like Egypt belong in the list, but ethnically they aren't Arab. I guess we could count Palestine and that would make 11. The important thing to remember is that although the number of Arab countries varies from time to time, it always stays close to ten. Even though the number does change every once in a while, it is interesting to see that currently there are ten horns.

I don't think I even need to point out that the Arab Muslims hate Israeli. So that fits the description of the beast hating “Israel”. In the Bible, Israel is God's holy people. When the United States fought the first Gulf War, even though Israel stayed out of the war, Iraq launched missiles against them. Currently, the Arab world feels that the land of Israel was stolen from them by the European colonial powers and given to Israel. I don't expect them to have warm feelings towards Israel in the near future.

The point being that the Arabs built a religious empire, that totally matches the description of the beast given by Daniel and Revelation.

Bear in mind, I'm not saying that the Muslims are evil. Most Muslims are very nice people. In fact many of the Muslim countries are appalled by what they see on the TV from Christian countries. In many Arab countries, the women hide their ankles. Then they look at our TV, piped in by satellite, and most anything goes. In countries, where women are killed for adultery, they watch our TV shows,

where sexually nothing is out of bounds. The people in most Muslim countries are far more moral than the people in most Christian countries. In the Old Testament, the neighboring countries—— worshiped Baal. Many of the Baal worshipers were also very nice. Just because someone is in a false religion, that doesn't make them bad people.

So many of the Muslims are nice people, but their religion does deny that Jesus is God, and that puts their religion into conflict with Christianity.

The conflict between Jews and the Arab Muslims goes beyond religion. At the end of World War II, the British gave Palestine to the Jews. Palestine is part of the Arab Muslim world, and so Palestine is part of the beast, since it is part of the Arab Muslim world. Arab Muslims believe that the British stole their land to give to the Jews. Therefore the Jews are living on stolen land – their stolen land.

So it is easy to see why the Arab Muslims will persecute Jews and Christians during the Tribulation. Actually, many Muslims believe that all people should be Muslim, and have no problem with using holy war to convert people to their point of view. They even have a word, “Jihad”. I believe that the Bible says they will get their holy war.

If the beast represents the Arab Muslim empire then who is the false prophet? Let's see, do the Muslims have anyone who claimed to be a Biblical prophet? Oh, right. Mohammad. He also just happens to deny that Jesus is more than a regular prophet. In fact Mohammad claims the he, Mohammad is a greater prophet than Jesus.

7 THE JUDGEMENT

To understand the judgement after the trial, we need to leave the Book of Revelation. Remember, when we pointed out that all the passages in the New Testament, talking about the return of Christ, are related to the last trumpet of Revelation? I think it's time we went back and looked at those passages some more.

Let's look at some passages in the Gospels, where Jesus talks about his return.

Matthew 24:38-39

New International Version (NIV)

³⁸ For in the days before the **flood**, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage up to the day **Noah** entered the ark; ³⁹and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the **coming of the Son of Man**.

Luke 17:26-30

New International Version (NIV)

²⁶ “Just as it was in the days of **Noah**, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man.²⁷ People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day

Noah **entered the ark**. Then the **flood** came and destroyed them all.

²⁸ “It was the same in the days of **Lot**. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. ²⁹But the **day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven** and destroyed

them all.

“It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed.”³⁰

Both passages talk about God punishing the wicked. In both the Flood and Sodom, God punished the wicked, but removed the godly before the judgement. Look at that last verse in Luke. Jesus says that will be just like that when he returns. What would “just like that” mean? People are going to be eating and drinking and getting married and then God is going to first remove the Godly and then he will destroy the wicked. This is going to occur when he returns.

Think that’s the only New Testament passage that talks about this? Think again.

2 Peter 3:3-7

New International Version (NIV)

³ Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. ⁴They will say, “Where is this ‘**coming**’ he promised? Ever since our ancestors died everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” ⁵But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. ⁶By these **waters** also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. ⁷By the same word the **present heavens and earth** are reserved for **fire**, being kept for the **day of judgment** and destruction of the **ungodly**.

This passage also ties the 2nd coming of Jesus with a judgement on the ungodly and it also compares that time to the time of the flood. It adds a couple of other interesting points. The first is that the present heavens and earth are going to be destroyed. The second, is that the destruction is going to be by fire.

Want more passages? How about this passage?

2 Peter 2:5-9

New International Version (NIV)

⁵ if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the **flood** on its **ungodly people**, but **protected Noah**...⁶if he condemned the cities of **Sodom** and **Gomorrah** by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the **ungodly**; ⁷and if he **rescued Lot, a righteous man**,... ⁹if this is so, then the **Lord knows how to rescue the godly**

from trials and to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment.

This passage again says that God is going to destroy the ungodly, in the same way he destroyed the wicked during the flood and he destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. However, he makes clear that he will protect the righteous, just like he protected Noah and Lot.

This next passage puts a name on the event. It calls it the “Day of the Lord”. Notice, that it uses the same thief word picture that is used in Matt 24 and refers to the destruction of the heavens and the earth, like 2nd Peter 3.

2 Peter 3:10

New International Version (NIV)

¹⁰ But the **day of the Lord** will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

The “Day of the Lord” is used in other passages of the New Testament. It is used in ways that make it clear that the early churches knew all about it.

1 Corinthians 5:5

New International Version (NIV)

⁵ hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the **day of the Lord**.

Acts 2:20-21

New International Version (NIV)

²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious

day of the Lord.

²¹ And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’

1 Thessalonians 5:2

New International Version (NIV)

² for you know **very well** that the **day of the Lord** will come like a thief in the night.

Modern Christian teaching says that there is going to be a great time of tribulation. The AntiChrist is going to rule the entire world and persecute any one who believes in Christ. However, before this time of tribulation the Christians are going to be taken from the earth. So the Christians won’t experience the tribulation. After the tribulation then Jesus will come back to earth to reign. I find that teaching very curious, since Jesus obviously didn’t teach that.

Matthew 24:30-31

New International Version (NIV)

³⁰ “Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the **Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven**, with power and great glory.

³¹ And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and **they will gather his elect** from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

Remember, that the 2nd coming of Christ is about the “Day of the Lord”, where Jesus punishes the wicked. This has to be after the tribulation, since the Day of the Lord, is followed by the judgement of the unsaved and the beast.

Those verses tie the 2nd coming of Jesus with his gathering of the elect. There are also some verses b

Paul that more directly show that Christians are going to experience the Great Tribulation. In this passage, the Christians at Thessalonica are worried because they think they've missed the 2nd coming of Jesus.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-2

New International Version (NIV)

2 Concerning the *coming of our Lord Jesus Christ* and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, ²not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us—whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter—asserting that the *day of the Lord* has already come.

Listen to why Paul says they don't have to worry.

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

New International Version (NIV)

3 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness^[a] is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. **4**He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

There's more in the chapter, but those verses show that the anti-Christ will be revealed before the return of Christ, and the gathering of the Christians. Paul is saying that before Jesus comes back, Christians will know positively the identity of the anti-Christ. It won't be subtle. That would mean that the anti-Christ has been at work for a while. If the anti-Christ is that obvious, then the tribulation has started. So Paul is saying that Christ won't return until after the tribulation has started. If the tribulation has started then Christ won't come until the tribulation is scheduled to end – and that is about 7 years.

There is one passage that is used to show that Christians will be taken up before the Great Tribulation

1 Thessalonians 5:9

New International Version (NIV)

9 For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

They say that since Christians are not to suffer wrath, then Christians aren't going to go through the Great Tribulation. There is one big problem with that point of view. If you look at chapters 3 and 4, then you know that verse is part of a discussion of the 2nd coming of Jesus and the Lord's Day. Remember the Lord's Day is like the destruction of the wicked by the Flood and the destruction of Sodom by fire. At the 2nd coming God will destroy the wicked. So in the context of 1 Thess 4 and 5, that verse is saying that Christians are not appointed to suffer *God's* wrath. It *isn't* talking about the *anti-Christ's* wrath.

The bottom line is that Christians will experience the Great Tribulation. You have to admit that make

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