

THE MOST ASKED PROPHECY QUESTIONS

JOHN ANKERBERG AND
RENALD E. SHOWERS
WITH CATHY SIMS

Published in coordination with The John Ankerberg Show and Friends of Israel



THE JOHN
ANKERBERG
SHOW



THE
Friends of Israel
GOSPEL MINISTRY

Building bridges. Bringing hope.



HARVEST PROPHECY

AN IMPRINT OF HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS

Bible translations can be found at the back of the book.

Italicized text in Scripture quotations indicates authors' emphasis.


Cover design by Studio Gearbox

Cover photo © Sky Light Pictures / Lightstock; Fishman64, Connect world, joriso, Lucky-photographer / Shutterstock

Interior design by Janelle Coury

For bulk, special sales, or ministry purchases, please call 1-800-547-8979.

Email: Customerservice@hhpbooks.com

 is a trademark of the Hawkins Children's LLC. Harvest House publishers is the exclusive licensee of the trademark.

THE MOST ASKED PROPHECY QUESTIONS

Copyright © 2021 by The John Ankerberg Show

Published by Harvest House Publishers

Eugene, Oregon 97408

www.harvesthousepublishers.com

ISBN 978-0-7369-8425-6 (pbk.)

ISBN 978-0-7369-8426-3 (eBook)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Ankerberg, John, author. | Showers, Renald E., author. | Sims, Cathy, editor.

Title: The most asked prophecy questions / John Ankerberg & Renald E. Showers with Cathy Sims.

Description: Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2021. | Includes bibliographical references. | Summary: "Provides brief, accurate, answers to common Bible prophecy questions"— Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020052647 (print) | LCCN 2020052648 (ebook) | ISBN 9780736984256 (pbk) | ISBN 9780736984263 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Eschatology—Miscellanea. | Bible—Prophecies—Miscellanea. | Prophecies—Miscellanea.

Classification: LCC BT821.3 .A55 2021 (print) | LCC BT821.3 (eBook) | DDC 236—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020052647>

LC eBook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020052648>

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, digital, photocopying, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 / BP / 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION Why study Bible prophecy?	9
1. What time period are we living in today according to biblical prophecy, and what signs need to occur before Jesus returns?	11
2. Is the coronavirus in Bible prophecy?	13
3. Why does the Bible forbid the setting of dates for the Lord's return? . . .	15
4. What was Daniel's vision of the future?	16
5. When will the rapture take place?	23
6. What is a mystery?	27
7. Does Scripture teach that the rapture will take place before the tribulation?	29
8. Where do we go when we are raptured?	31
9. Could Jesus return at any moment?	34
10. The rapture—which position is right, and which is wrong?	38
11. Will the rapture begin the seven-year tribulation period?	46
12. Are the rapture and the second coming two different events?	48
13. Does the millennium require the rapture of the church to be distinct from Christ's second coming?	57
14. How could Jesus rapture us at any moment if the whole world must hear the gospel first?	59

15. How can “the last trumpet” mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15 pertain to the rapture when a trumpet is also said to accompany Jesus’ second coming?	61
16. Is the trumpet of the rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4 one of the seven trumpets mentioned in the book of Revelation?	64
17. What event signals the beginning of the tribulation period?	65
18. How do we know the tribulation will last for seven years?	67
19. What did Jesus teach about the seventieth week of Daniel and the abomination of desolation?	69
20. What period of time do the words “birth pangs” refer to?	71
21. What is the setting of the sealed scroll in Revelation 5?	73
22. What is meant by “the day of the Lord”?	78
23. When will the day of the Lord take place?	80
24. Who breaks the seals in Revelation 5 and 6?	82
25. What are the first four seals in Revelation?	83
26. Is Christ the One who unleashes the Antichrist upon the world?	87
27. Are there Old Testament passages that predict God will bring wrath upon the nations by raising up the Antichrist?	88
28. When will the Lord come “as a thief in the night”?	89
29. Does the Bible teach that there are “broad” and “narrow” senses of the day of the Lord?	92
30. Where does the Bible teach that there is going to be a “narrow” day of the Lord, and is that the second coming of Christ?	94
31. Must the day of the Lord begin in conjunction with Christ’s second coming?	97

32. What do the dry bones in Ezekiel 37 represent?	99
33. Which modern-day countries will be involved in the Ezekiel 38 battle of Gog and Magog?	101
34. When will the battle of Gog and Magog prophesied in Ezekiel 38 occur?	103
35. Why will Magog lead the attack against Israel in Ezekiel 38?	105
36. What is God's eternal plan for the Jews?	106
37. Will Christians go through the tribulation?	110
38. What are six traits of the coming Antichrist?	113
39. Will Christians see the Antichrist?	115
40. Who is the restrainer in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-8?	116
41. When will the Antichrist be revealed?	117
42. What is the mark of the beast?	119
43. Who are the two witnesses in Revelation 11?	121
44. Who are the "great multitude" that John saw in Revelation 7?	123
45. Who are the 144,000 in Revelation?	125
46. When will the judgment seat of Christ and the marriage supper of the Lamb occur?	127
47. What is the purpose of the judgment seat of Christ?	129
48. What can we expect at the judgment seat of Christ?	132
49. What are the crowns the Bible says we may receive in heaven?	135
50. What if you have not trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior before the tribulation?	139

51. What does the parable of the dragnet tell us about the order of events during the second coming?	141
52. In Matthew 24, is Jesus referring to the rapture or His second coming?	142
53. Who are “the elect” referred to in Matthew 24.31?	144
54. In Matthew 24, is Jesus referring to believers or unbelievers being taken away?	147
55. What did Jesus mean when He said, “This generation will not pass away”?	150
56. What is the battle of Armageddon?	151
57. What is the Babylon that is referred to in Revelation?	153
58. What is the judgment of the sheep and the goats?	156
59. Is the battle of Gog and Magog prophesied in Ezekiel 38–39 the same as the one in Revelation 20.7-10?	160
60. Will Christ return to Earth as a victorious conqueror?	162
61. What does “soon” mean when Jesus said He is coming soon in Revelation 22?	165
62. What is the sequence of future prophetic events as spelled out in the Word of God?	166
63. What is the order of the different resurrections mentioned in the Bible?	169
64. When will Old Testament saints be raised from the dead?	171
65. Who rises in the first resurrection in Revelation 20?	173
66. Has the church replaced the nation of Israel?	175

67. What is the great white throne judgment?	178
68. Will God restore theocratic kingdom rule?	179
69. Why will God release Satan after the 1,000 years?	183
70. What is the millennium?	185
71. Who are the citizens of Christ's millennial kingdom?	187
72. What is the purpose of the millennium?	190
73. Why has God scheduled such a series of monumental future events for Earth?	191
74. What are the different views of the millennial kingdom?	198
75. What was the earliest view of the millennial kingdom?	200
76. What is the significance of the four blood moons?	204
77. Where is America in Bible prophecy?	206
78. What is the New Jerusalem?	208
APPENDIX A What was the length of a year in Daniel 9?	210
APPENDIX B What happens when a person dies?	212
APPENDIX C Does our soul sleep when we die?	215
HOW TO BEGIN A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD	216
NOTES	219

INTRODUCTION

Why study Bible prophecy?

With the events that are unfolding in our world today, people want to know more about Bible prophecy, especially the sequence of the many important events that Scripture says will occur during the end times.

Did you know that approximately 27 percent of the entire Bible contains prophetic material? Half of that has already come true; half remains to be fulfilled. That means that of the Bible's 31,124 verses, 8,352 contain prophetic material.¹ Also, 1,800 verses in the Bible deal with the second coming of Jesus Christ. In the New Testament, approximately 1 out of 25 verses refers to the second coming. Would anyone dare to say to God that what He wrote in Scripture is worthless, unimportant, and shouldn't be studied? In fact, God brags about His prophetic statements as being proof that He exists.

I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, "My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please." ... What I have said, that I will bring about; what I have planned, that I will do (Isaiah 46:9-11 NIV).

In Mark 13:23, Jesus said, "Be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time" (NIV). He also said, "I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am who I am [that is, God]" (John 13:19 NIV).

Prophetic statements in the Bible prove that God exists and that Jesus is God. They are there to warn those without Christ and comfort those who have believed in Him. There is nothing more encouraging to focus on during these difficult days than to realize we have a God who loves us and has a fabulous future awaiting those who love Him. I (John) interviewed Dr. John Walvoord, a great eschatological theologian, before he died, and I asked him, "Why have

you devoted your whole life to talking about the rapture?” He said, “John, there is nothing greater that I can think about than waking up and being in the presence of my Lord and being able to face Him and see Him just the way that He is.” May the Lord use this book to answer your questions and allow you to see Him more clearly.

QUESTION 1

What time period are we living in today according to biblical prophecy, and what signs need to occur before Jesus returns?

This is the one question we are asked the most. People often ask what signs have to happen before the Lord will return for His church. If you haven't studied Bible prophecy in depth, you may be surprised by the answer.

The next prophetic event that will occur is the rapture of believers. There are no signs that need to be fulfilled before Christ comes to rapture His church. The Bible teaches that He may return at any moment. That is why we are warned in James 5:7-9:

Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and has long patience for it, until he receives the early and latter rain. Be also patient; establish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draws near. Murmur not one against another, brethren, lest you be judged: behold, the judge stands before the door.

Because nothing more needs to happen before Christ returns for His church, James urged believers to live in a constant state of readiness.

Based on passages like this, Christ's return is often spoken of as being "imminent"—it is something that may happen at any time. This is different than being immediate. We are not told whether this will happen soon or if Christ will allow for more time to pass. All we know is that He may come at any moment.

However, the Bible does present us with the signs that will precede Jesus' second coming. Many of these appear to be taking shape today. Here are a few.

Nations are beginning to come together as foretold in Ezekiel 38–39. In this passage, Ezekiel prophesies about nations with the modern-day locations of Russia, along with many of the Islamic nations in the Middle East, forming

an alliance that will eventually come against Israel. Although it was once hard to imagine Russia aligning itself with these countries, we see this happening today as Iran and Russia are currently military allies in the conflicts in the Middle East.

Another sign pertains to the preparations being made to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. Passages such as Daniel 9 say there will be a Jewish temple during the tribulation, at which sacrifices will be offered once again. We are told the Antichrist will cause these sacrifices to cease halfway through the tribulation when he sets up the abomination of desolation there.

There are also peace treaties coming into place as Israel and the Palestinians continue their fighting. The only time there will be peace in the Middle East will be at the start of the tribulation, when the Antichrist will confirm a treaty with Israel (Daniel 9:27).

We also see the world moving closer toward having a global currency (which the nations will have during the tribulation, when the Antichrist is in power).

When we look at Daniel's vision of the major empires of the world in Daniel 7, we see that we are currently living in what many people call "the gap of time" (see Daniel's statue on page 22). Rome was the last ruling power of the world. There is no major kingdom ruling the world at this time. But there will be one more major world power, the final kingdom ruled by the Antichrist before Christ returns to Earth to set up His kingdom. We will study about these kingdoms in Question 4.

While we see the world stage being set for the tribulation and the second coming of Jesus Christ, there are no signs that have to happen before the rapture because it is an imminent event—it could happen at any moment. This is why we should live our lives in readiness for His return.

QUESTION 2

Is the coronavirus in Bible prophecy?²

Our culture—and world—has experienced an unprecedented upheaval unseen in our generation. What began as a “growing concern” in the Wuhan province of China has expanded into the lockdown of entire cities, states, and even countries to stop the spread of the coronavirus.

Does the Bible state anything that helps us to know how to respond to the coronavirus? Is this viral pandemic a sign that we are drawing closer to the end times?

A close look at Scripture confirms that such problems are part of our imperfect, fallen world. In Matthew 24:6-8, Jesus taught,

You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these *are* the beginning of sorrows (NKJV).

Pestilences, including even the coronavirus, are not necessarily *the* end. Instead, this sickness is part of what we can expect during the “beginning of sorrows.” Jesus offers the following words of advice in times of trial.

First, Jesus says, “No one knows the day or hour.”

In Matthew 24:36-37, Jesus adds, “Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be” (NKJV). Only God knows when the end will come.

However, there is a parallel provided with the “days of Noah.” What were the days of Noah? In Genesis 6, we read of widespread immorality taking place among humanity. This evil grew to the point that God decided the time was right for judgment. The Lord saved Noah and his family, along with many

animals. However, everyone else was left unprepared and faced the judgment of the flood. They were destroyed when God's judgment came upon the world.

In a similar way, we are told Jesus will return at a time when many are unprepared for His arrival. What is the application Jesus gives in response?

Second, Jesus says, "Be ready."

In Matthew 24:44, Jesus provides His application: "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (NKJV). We will not receive a warning before Jesus comes. He has given us all the preparation we need in His Word already.

Hundreds of prophecies speak of Christ's yet-future coming and activities. Today, more people have access to Scripture than ever before—more than six billion people worldwide. Despite the growth in Scripture access and global evangelism, many remain unprepared, either without knowledge of Christ's salvation or as believers who are living without expectation of the Lord's impending return.

Hopefully, God is using the coronavirus pandemic to help people (both believers and nonbelievers) realize that our world can change in an instant. We should always be ready to meet the Lord.

The application to "Be ready" involves action. We may be told to wear a mask or practice social distancing due to a virus, but we are also called to pray and live with a passion for the Lord. Such events should lead us to our knees in prayer rather than behind doors in fear as we place our trust in Christ.

QUESTION 3

Why does the Bible forbid the setting of dates for the Lord's return?

In light of the biblical teaching that the return of the Lord is imminent, there is nothing that has to take place before the Lord returns—it is always hanging overhead and could happen at any moment. This rules out setting dates for the Lord's return.

Tragically, there have been some prophetic teachers who have set dates and said that the Lord will return on a particular month, day, or year. That is contrary to the Word of God. It is tragic that some sincere people feel compelled to set dates, because when that date comes and goes and the Lord has not returned, it causes the unsaved world to laugh at these Bible teachers, along with the whole concept that the Bible foretells the future.

While the Bible doesn't permit us to set dates, it clearly spells out many significant things that will happen in the future, such as Matthew 24:7-8: "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains" (NIV). As students of the Word of God, we are to be watching world events constantly and comparing them with what the Bible teaches. We are to try to discern—without violating the Word of God—when things in the world are moving in the direction that the Bible indicates they will move as the world comes closer and closer to end time events.

We, as Christians, should be looking at what is going on in the world from the perspective of the prophetic Word of God. That gives the believer a tool to gain insight into why things are happening the way they are and where things are headed for the future.

QUESTION 4

What was Daniel's vision of the future?

The Old Testament prophet Daniel gives us the skeletal outline of all future Bible prophecy. In Daniel 7, God delivered a significant prophecy in the form of a vision.

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head while on his bed. Then he wrote down the dream, telling the main facts. Daniel spoke, saying, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it.

"And suddenly another beast, a second, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: 'Arise, devour much flesh!' After this I looked, and there was another, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it.

"After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words" (verses 1-8 NKJV).

This vision described four world empires that would rise and fall, and a final world empire that will be led by a powerful global leader. This prophecy also warned of an alignment of nations that will come against the nation of Israel in the last days.

The first thing Daniel saw in his prophetic vision was a sea that was being whipped into a stormy condition by the winds of the heavens. Since this is a vision, the images are symbols, but symbols are very real things. When the sea is used symbolically in the Bible, it represents the nations of the world, particularly the Gentile nations. That is what it represents here—the Gentile nations in a state of chaos. God was portraying one Gentile nation or kingdom rising up against another in order to conquer and assimilate it. As Daniel was watching this vision, one at a time four different animals rose out of that storm-tossed sea. God was representing through each of these animals the nations that would affect the whole future course of Gentile world power, from Daniel's day, when Babylon was the great world power, up to the second coming of the Messiah and then to Earth in the future.

The first wild animal that came out of the sea was a winged lion, which represented the ancient kingdom of Babylon, the great world power in Daniel's day (verse 4). Winged lions were the national symbol of Babylon. Standing at the entrances of the royal palaces of the Babylonian kings in the capital city of Babylon were huge stone images of winged lions. So, the winged lion represents Babylon.

Then Daniel saw a second animal, a bear, rising out of the sea—a bear that was lopsided, with one side raised higher than the other (verse 5). The rise of this second animal was God's way of indicating that Babylon would not remain the great world power forever but eventually would be conquered by a second great Gentile kingdom. We know from our historic vantage point that this second kingdom was Medo-Persia. This part of Daniel's prophetic vision was fulfilled in 539 BC when the Medes and the Persians conquered Babylon and assimilated it. Why would God represent Medo-Persia in the form of a bear? In that part of the world in ancient times, a full-grown bear was larger than a full-grown lion. The Medo-Persian kingdom ended up being much larger than the Babylonian kingdom. It not only conquered Babylon, it also conquered two other great kingdoms: Lydia (located where Turkey is today) and Egypt.

This bear had three ribs between its teeth, representing the remains of three victims it had devoured: Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt—the three great Gentile kingdoms that Medo-Persia conquered. Why was this bear lopsided, with one

side raised up higher than the other? The Medo-Persian kingdom was a partnership kingdom, formed in 550 BC, when one ruler was able to bring together two national groups, the Medes and the Persians, to form one kingdom. After a while, the Persians became the dominating partner. They gained more control and authority than the Medes, and so God represented one side of the bear—symbolizing Persia—raised up higher than the lower side of the bear, representing the Medes.

After the bear, Daniel saw a third beast rising out of the troubled sea (verse 6). It took the form of a leopard with four wings and four heads. This was God's way of indicating that the Medo-Persian kingdom would not last forever, but eventually would be conquered and assimilated by a third great Gentile kingdom, represented by this leopard. From our vantage point today, we know that the third kingdom was Greece—initially under the leadership of Alexander the Great. This part of Daniel's prophetic dream or vision was fulfilled by the year 331 BC, because by then Alexander and his Greek-Macedonian army completely conquered the Medo-Persian kingdom.

Why would God represent this leopard with four heads? When Alexander the Great died at 32, while out on the field with his men conquering more territory, there was no one in the Greek kingdom with the same charisma, administrative ability, and influence to replace him. No individual could hold the kingdom together as one unit, so the four leading generals of the Greek army subdivided Alexander's kingdom into four divisions. Each of those generals took over one of those divisions to rule.

Finally, Daniel saw a fourth beast rise from the sea (verses 7-8). We have to call this a nondescript beast, because there was no animal alive that could accurately represent this particular creature. This was God's way of indicating that Greece would not remain the great Gentile power forever but would be conquered and assimilated by this fourth Gentile kingdom, represented by this nondescript beast. Today we know that fourth kingdom was Rome. This part of Daniel's prophetic vision was fulfilled in 146 BC, because by that time Rome had conquered the Greeks.

The major emphasis of this fourth beast was its tremendous strength and overwhelming destructive power. That was certainly true of the ancient Roman Empire. It was able to conquer and bring under its dominion almost all of the ancient Mediterranean world and even some regions beyond the Mediterranean Sea. It was so powerful that the western half of that Roman Empire lasted for almost 1,000 years and did not fall until AD 476, when barbarian tribes overran

it. But the eastern half of the Roman Empire continued to exist for almost another 1,000 years, until it was finally destroyed in 1453 by Muslim forces.

Daniel was curious about this fourth beast with ten horns on its head:

I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron and his nails of brass, which devoured, broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet; and of the ten horns that were in his head (Daniel 7:19-20).

An angel interpreted this fourth beast and the ten horns:

Thus he said, “The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise” (verses 23-24).

The angel indicated that this fourth kingdom would pass through two phases: the first phase was the conquering phase (and that was certainly true of the ancient Roman Empire). But in the second phase, that kingdom would be characterized by ten divisions with ten equal rulers—basically, a confederation of divisions allied together for the purpose of strength and influence in the world, but not totally integrated. It would have ten equal rulers ruling over them at the same time.

The ancient Roman Empire never consisted of ten divisions with ten equal rulers ruling over it at the same time. So, scholars have concluded that this part of Daniel’s prophetic vision has not yet been fulfilled. Therefore, God was indicating that sometime in the long-range future there would be a revived form of the Roman Empire that at first would consist of ten divisions with ten equal rulers.

Many scholars are convinced that this is the direction the European Union is heading, possibly fulfilling this phase of Daniel’s prophetic vision in the near future, constituting a revived Roman Empire that initially will have ten divisions with ten equal rulers. The number of countries in the European Union fluctuates, but it has been indicated that national boundaries will be erased, and Europe will be reorganized into regions. So, the number ten in the book of Daniel could be referring to ten regions rather than ten nations: ten regions, confederated for the purpose of power and influence, but not totally integrated

with each other; ten regions with ten equal rulers governing that confederation. These are things we see right now, and it looks as if it won't be long before this prophetic vision that God gave Daniel some 2,500 years ago will be fulfilled.

But as Daniel was considering the ten horns that appeared in this vision, he saw a further development:

I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another little horn [an eleventh horn], before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things (verse 8).

Daniel saw an eleventh horn appear among the other ten horns, pushing its way up through the head of the fourth beast and uprooting three of the original ten horns. Since the original ten horns were interpreted by an angel as representing ten kings or rulers, it is obvious this eleventh horn also represents a ruler who will rise to power from within this revived Roman Empire (possibly the European Union) that has been established and functioning for an undisclosed period of time with ten equal rulers. And it indicates that as he rises to power, he will overthrow three of the original ten rulers and thereby gain controlling authority over this revived Roman Empire.

We are told this little horn had eyes like the eyes of man. In the Bible, eyes are sometimes used symbolically to speak of intelligence. Eyes are related to perception, and thus understanding and insight. Spiritual blindness illustrates a lack of understanding, as stated in Isaiah 44:18: "They do not know, nor do they understand, for He has smeared over their eyes so that they cannot see, and their hearts so that they cannot comprehend" (NASB). The implication is this eleventh ruler will be a very intelligent man. Apparently, he will be noted in the world for his brilliance and ability to tackle difficult world problems and come up with plausible solutions for them, thereby gaining tremendous global influence. But we are also told that he has a "mouth speaking great things" (verse 8). That arrogance distinguishes him from the other rulers.

The interpreting angel told Daniel about this eleventh horn, "He shall be diverse [or different] from the first [ten rulers]" (verse 24). How will he be different? The first ten rulers will be content to be equal in authority with each other. But not this eleventh ruler. He will want to be the dominant ruler of the revived Roman Empire. That is why the angel said at the end of verse 24, "He

shall subdue three kings.” He will overthrow three of the ten and so gain controlling power.

Then we read what the angel said about the mouth “speaking great things”: “He shall speak great words against the Most High” (verse 25). In the book of Daniel, “the Most High” is a reference to the God of Israel, the true and living God who created and is Sovereign Lord over the entire universe. The Hebrew language literally says of this eleventh ruler that “he shall speak words *at the side* of the Most High.” In other words, he will consider himself to be on an equal level with the Most High, the implication being that once this ruler comes to full power, he will try to raise himself to the level of absolute deity. He will claim he is the true and living God.

In Daniel 11, this same man is further described: “He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things [literally *monstrous things*] against the God of gods” (verse 36). He is going to try to exalt and magnify himself above every god, even the true and living God.

In 2 Thessalonians 2, the apostle Paul calls this same man “the man of sin,” or literally, “the man of lawlessness.” Paul said, “The man of sin [will be] revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (verses 3-4 NKJV). Paul indicates that when this man comes to full power, he is going to walk into the temple in Jerusalem and take control of it. And when he does, he will boldly claim that he is the God of this universe, providing us his true identity: the Antichrist.

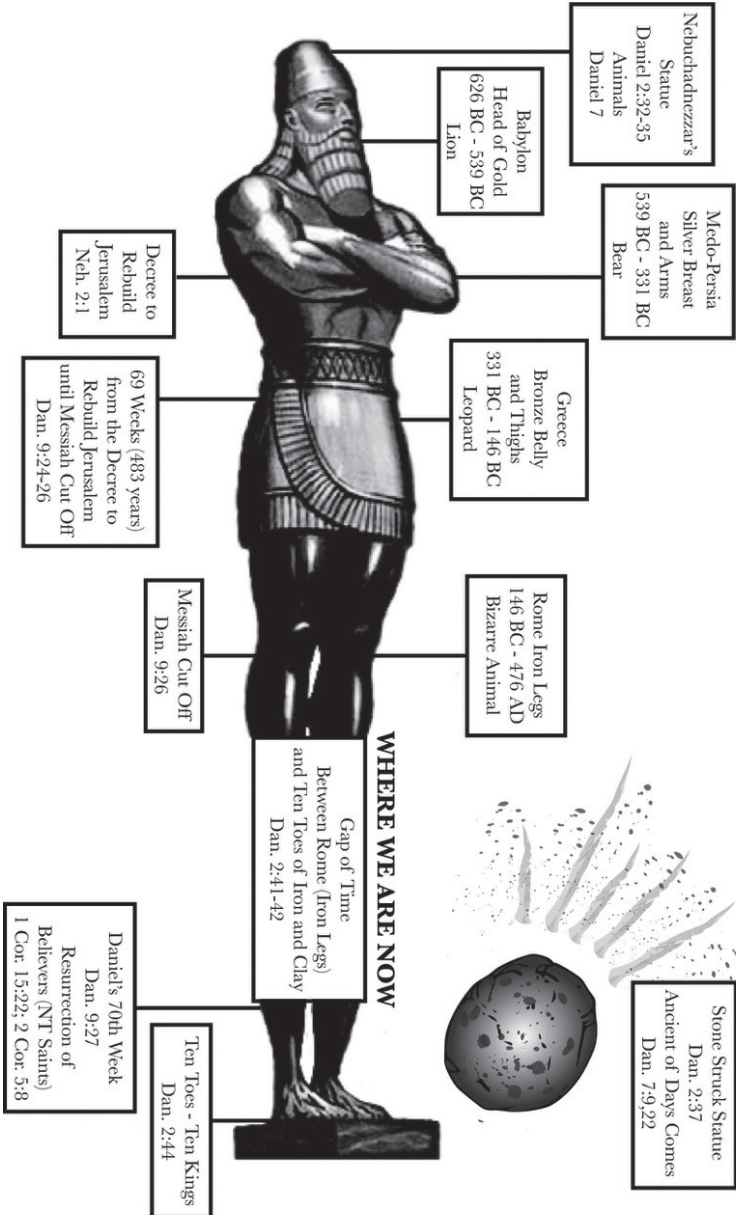
The next thing the angel said the Antichrist will do is “wear out the saints of the Most High” (Daniel 7:25). There will be many people saved during the seven-year tribulation period in which this leader will rise to power. In Revelation 7, John saw 144,000 Jewish men who will be saved (verse 4), plus “a great multitude” from every tongue, tribe, and nation (verse 9) who will be washed in the blood of the Lamb of God during the tribulation period (verse 14). When these tribulation saints refuse to acknowledge that the Antichrist is God, he will wage all-out war against them.

Coming back to Daniel 7:25, the angel told Daniel that this man would also change “times and laws.” Apparently, the Antichrist will try to change time periods and laws from the way God had established them in order to demonstrate the fact that he is deity. Times and laws “shall be given into his hand until a time, and times, and the dividing of time”—in other words, three-and-a-half years. But then God will take away the Antichrist’s power, and the greatest kingdom,

an everlasting kingdom, “shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him” (verses 26-27).

The prophecy of the four kingdoms is given in both Daniel 2 and Daniel 7. The first time was through King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the statue. The second time was through Daniel’s vision of four beasts.

DANIEL’S STATUE



QUESTION 5

When will the rapture take place?

There are three foundational passages in the New Testament that teach us about the rapture of the church.

The first is John 14:1-3. Jesus, the night before He went to the cross, gathered with His apostles in the upper room. At the end of John 13, Jesus had forewarned His disciples that He would leave them soon, which greatly disturbed them. In order to calm their fears, He made a great promise to them:

Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God; believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.

Jesus was referring to the future, when He raptures the church from the Earth. We know He is referring to His coming to rapture the church instead of His second coming after the end of the great tribulation because He indicates that when He comes, He will receive the believers unto Himself. He is not going to come down to where we are, He is going to remove us from where we are to be where He is: "I will come again and receive you unto Myself."

The purpose of this coming is "that where I am, there ye may be also." Jesus was saying: "I'm coming to take you to be with Me where I am," in the Father's house. The fact that He ties this promise in with the concept that He is going to be preparing dwelling places for us in the Father's house in heaven strongly implies that when He receives believers to Himself, He is going to take us back to live with Him in those dwelling places in the Father's house in heaven.

The second key passage is 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, where Paul said, "Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

Paul was emphasizing the fact that there would be an entire generation of Christians who will never experience physical death because the Lord is going to come and remove us from the Earth while we are still alive. He is telling us not every Christian will die, but everyone will be changed.

Paul stressed that the change will involve a change in our body. Believers now have a mortal body, subject to disease, deformity, and death; but when this change takes place, we will receive an immortal body, which will never die again, nor be subject to disease and deformity (see 1 Corinthians 15:42-49). Along with immortality, our bodies will be glorified with our sinful nature removed. We will have spiritual bodies (meaning bodies characterized by the Holy Spirit—this does not mean immaterial bodies). Our bodies will be like Jesus': "We will bear the image of the heavenly man" (1 Corinthians 15:49).

Paul also emphasized the extreme rapidity of this transformation. The change will take place faster than "the twinkling of an eye." "The twinkling of an eye" meant the amount of time it takes for a ray of light to hit and bounce off the eye—quicker than the blinking of an eye. That is how quickly the change will occur.

The third and most extensive passage on the rapture is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18:

I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so will God bring with Him those also who sleep in Jesus. For this we say unto you by the Word of the Lord: that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so shall we ever be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Jesus indicated the day is coming when He will come out of heaven and bring with Him the souls of those Christians who have already died. When they died, their souls were separated from their bodies; their bodies were buried in the ground; and their souls were ushered immediately into the presence of God in heaven. Paul said for the Christian "to be absent from the body [is] to

be present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8). These souls stay in heaven until Christ comes to rapture the church. Then He will bring their souls with Him out of heaven down toward the Earth.

We are told that Jesus will come with the blast of a trumpet, “the trumpet of God,” with “the voice of the archangel.” Apparently, a great archangel will accompany Him as an escort from the Father’s house in heaven. When that happens, the bodies of the Christians who have died will be resurrected from the dead. Their descending souls that are coming down from heaven with Christ will be reunited with their newly resurrected bodies.

Then Paul said that those Christians who are still alive on the Earth when the rapture takes place, together with the resurrected Christians, will be caught up from the Earth to meet the Lord Jesus in the air.

The whole concept of being snatched up or caught up from the Earth is where the concept of the rapture comes from. The English word *rapture* is derived from a Latin verb that means to be snatched or caught up. So, the bride of Christ, the church—including both the resurrected believers and those who are alive on Earth at the time of the rapture—will be caught up from the Earth “together...to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

These verses tell us that in this coming of the Lord, He stops in the air above the Earth. He doesn’t come the whole way down to the surface of the Earth. As He descends from heaven, He stops in the air above the Earth and waits there as His believers are caught up to meet Him in the air. Paul concluded with these words: “And so shall we ever be with the Lord” (verse 17). This is significant because it means once we are raptured to meet Christ in the air, we will never be separated from Him again. Wherever Jesus goes from then on, we will go with Him.

To put it all together: Christ ascended to the Father’s house in heaven on the day of His ascension (Acts 2). He has been away from us here on the Earth ever since then, in the Father’s house. But according to John 14, while He has been away, He has been busily engaged preparing living accommodations or mansions to which He can bring His bride, the church. At the appropriate time, He will come out of the Father’s house in heaven. Then Jesus will

- bring with Him the souls of those church saints who have already died.
- descend toward the Earth, but not the whole way down.
- stop in the air, then resurrect and glorify the bodies of the

Christians who have died, reuniting the returning souls with those resurrected bodies.

- transform the bodies of the living Christians into a resurrection-type or immortal-type body.

Then, together, those resurrected Christians and living transformed Christians will be caught up from the Earth to meet the Lord in the air. That is what we call the rapture.

QUESTION 6

What is a mystery?

The word *mystery* in the Bible refers to new revelation that has been given for the first time. It is the Greek word *mysterion*, which means “something not previously known.” A mystery is a whole new revelation from God—first to the apostle Paul, who then passed it on to the believers whom he was addressing. He was saying something new in 1 Corinthians 15:51-53:

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality (NKJV).

The mystery wasn't about resurrection from the dead, because the Old Testament indicated that people would be resurrected from the dead. Daniel 12:2 is an example of this. And when God told Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, Abraham believed God would resurrect him from the dead: “Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death” (Hebrews 11:19 NIV). So, resurrection was not the mystery Paul was talking about.

We see in this passage the new thing that is being revealed here is the fact that not all Christians will die. Look at how Paul defines the mystery: “I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51 NKJV). There is going to be a time when Christians who are alive on the Earth will escape death all together, an event the Bible describes what we call the rapture of the church. Not all Christians are going to experience death, but all Christians, dead or alive, will be changed. They will be transformed from a mortal body, which can suffer, decay, and die, to a glorified one that will never die again.

The implication is that those who have already died will be resurrected from

the dead with an immortal body—one that will never experience death again. And the bodies of Christians who are alive when this event takes place will be changed instantaneously from a mortal body, subject to death, to a body that will never die. So that is the new truth (mystery) that Paul was delivering.