

The End is Not Nigh

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Beginning with 'The End'

Many years ago, I read a book by Mark S Geston entitled 'Out of the Mouth of the Dragon'. The title is taken from a prophecy in the last book of the Bible – the book of Revelation. The titular prophecy foretells deceiving spirits who create the conditions under which the battle of 'Armageddon' takes place. 'Armageddon' is understood to be the final battle between good and evil.

According to the story, several 'Armageddons' took place, human morale is destroyed, and the world degenerates both physically and spiritually. The 'hero' (Van Roarke) journeys to 'The Meadows' where most of the 'Armageddon' battles had already taken place. There he hopes to find the 'right side' to fight on and secure his place in history and for eternity. There is an atmosphere of gloom and hopelessness throughout Geston's book – perhaps designed to reflect the largely pessimistic themes of the last book of the Bible.

In Van Roarke's home town considerable energy is spent building a cathedral. This gives physical expression to the hopes of religious people for a better future – not a better future in this world but only in the next. 'Religion' is depicted as providing an escape from despair - despair which the 'self-fulfilment' of Bible prophecy had created. The cathedral becomes the 'opium of the people' - a device to distract religious people from the 'real world'.

Bible prophecy (correctly understood and otherwise) has not entered into science fiction through Geston's hand alone. Several films have been produced depicting a future malevolent 'Antichrist' ('The Omen' series being the best known). He would bring untold suffering through world domination. Popular science fiction is full of tales of a future 'dystopia'. Some of these tales have even come from Christian writers of fiction.

The word 'Armageddon' is often used colloquially to describe 'a terrible end to our present humanity'. This is deeply pessimistic. It will be shown later that it is not entirely in line with how prophecy has actually worked out in history.

Modern perspectives on Bible prophecy have their origin in a school of teaching known as 'Futurism' (which is an aspect of a larger theological construct known as Dispensationalism). Futurist theology is aggressively negative towards the contemporary church: it is seriously destructive of faith, pessimistic about the future and ruins relationships between believers and unbelievers. It is also promoted heavily by contemporary Christian media to the exclusion of all other views.

The purpose of this essay is to challenge the basic assumptions of Futurism and to show that there are other ways of interpreting biblical prophecy. An alternative view is presented here based partly on 'Preterism' and partly on 'Historicism'.

Most of the prophecies in the New Testament outside of Revelation can be shown to have been fulfilled in the years leading up to and including AD70 when the Romans besieged Jerusalem and destroyed it. This view of prophecy comes from the Preterist school. According to Historicism, the book of Revelation concerns events which took place from the late first century up to the present day and continue into our future.

Although the intended audience for this work is the Christian community, I accept that some of these writings may leak into the non-Christian world and may start to correct the misinformation presented through contemporary 'Christian' science fiction.

Jesus said, 'you will know the truth because the truth will set you free' (John 8:32 KJV). One proof of truth is its ability to liberate.

Reader discretion is advised: the truth is often much less exciting than science fiction, but it is always more useful.

1. Futurism, Preterism and Historicism: Three Views of Bible Prophecy

This essay is taken mainly from a 'school of thought' known as Historicism but with additional material added by the author. According to Historicism, the prophecies of Revelation started to be fulfilled at the end of the first century.

A detailed analysis of prophecies and their fulfilment from Revelation 6 to half way through Revelation 16 is given in E B Elliot's work '*Horae Apocalypticae*'. Elliot provides details of 'history foretold' up to the end of his life – the 1870's. The second half of Revelation 16 covers the period from the 1870's to the present. E B Elliot wrote *Horae Apocalypticae* in response to Futurism which was gaining ground in his day and is exclusively promoted in Christian media today.

Futurism places the *predictive* prophecies in Revelation into our future (Revelation Chapter 6 onwards). Many speculations as to how these prophecies may be fulfilled are available in Futurist 'science fiction' and 'conspiracy theory' circles. Tales and theories have been translated into popular 'Christian fiction' (books and films), in particular, Tim LaHaye's 'Left Behind' series.

Futurist scholars insist that most Bible prophecy be taken literally. 'Inconvenient' prophecies are discounted from having a past fulfilment because they did not get fulfilled 'literally'. Some 'useful' prophecies (which have had a past but non-literal fulfilment) are considered not to have been fulfilled but are 'banked' for futurist use. These 'appropriated' prophecies are then used to 'justify' Futurist expectations. ¹

Some 'Futurist' prophecies are based on 'recycling' of prophecies that have already been fulfilled. Prophecies that are chosen for future recycling are 'cherry-picked' to provide apparent biblical support for 'Futurist' horror stories.

Some fulfilled prophecies may illustrate the form in which a future fulfilment of another similar prophecy may take place. This can be seen by comparing the Fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in BC586 to the Fall of Jerusalem to the Romans in AD70. Similar prophetic language was used to predict each event. But this is not the same as saying that a particular prophecy is 'recycled'.

A final feature of Futurism is the placing of strategic multi-century gaps in sequences of prophetic predictions. These gaps are designed to remove one group of prophecies from historical fulfilment and place them into the future. The gaps are placed as follows:

¹ Article by Erwin W Lutzer <https://www.moodymedia.org/articles/moody-church-dispensational-its-theology/> (Accessed February 2017)

- The prophet Daniel predicted that certain events would take place over a period of 490 years (the prophecy of the ‘seventy weeks’ or ‘seventy sevens’). The Futurist school places a multi-century gap between the end of year 483 and the beginning of year 484 of the 490-year period. If the gap is not inserted then the predicted events of the last seven years can be seen to have been fulfilled during the period AD30 to AD37.
- Daniel chapter 2 has a prophecy of four great empires. In context, the four empires appear in close chronological sequence. This is in fact what happened. In Futurist theology a multi-century gap is arbitrarily inserted between the third empire and a hypothetical yet future empire. There is no historical, prophetic or textual reason for inserting such a gap.
- Futurist theology also places a multi-century gap between Daniel chapter 11 and chapter 12. The prophecies in chapter 12 will be shown to have been fulfilled soon after those of chapter 11. It is not justifiable to bank the prophecies of Daniel chapter 12 for ‘future’ use.
- Futurist theology places a multi-century gap after chapter five of the book of Revelation and the remainder. History shows that prophecies of chapter 6 onwards have in fact been fulfilled already.

The Preterist school maintains that all New Testament prophecy (including those in Revelation) was fulfilled in the years leading up to and including AD70. This view is deemed to be only partially correct as will be shown.

2. The Destructive Impact of Futurism

A fundamental teaching within the Futurist school is that the contemporary church will be largely destroyed amid great pain and suffering (‘The Tribulation’), and that it is removed from this world to heaven. The removal of the church takes place during ‘The Rapture’. The thinking goes as follows:

1. An ‘Antichrist’ figure gains prominence and eventually all nations of the world come under his control. A compulsory one-world religion is created with him (or her) at the head.
2. He takes control of all finance and requires all peoples to accept his mark on their hand or forehead to enable financial exchanges to take place.
3. A ‘Tribulation’ breaks out against Christians and severe persecution follows.
4. A much-depleted Church is removed to heaven for its survival (only 7,000 left after the Tribulation).
5. An ethnic Jewish church forms spontaneously from non-Christian Jews.
6. This new church completes the task of worldwide evangelisation in less than seven years.
7. Jesus returns for 1,000 years and rules the world with this new church from Jerusalem.
8. A final battle then takes place – Armageddon.
9. Jesus defeats the Antichrist and consolidates his authority over the earth.

The negative consequences of this teaching are:

1. Commitment to political and social action is undermined because the Antichrist ‘is coming soon’. (Those who hold to this theology engage in unproductive conspiracy theories and speculations as to who, when and how).
2. Commitment to economic betterment is undermined because no one wants their money to get into the hands of the Antichrist.

3. Commitment to building relationships with our non-Christian neighbours is undermined since these may prove to be the very people who eventually betray believers badly come the 'Tribulation'.
4. Commitment to anything not covered above is undermined due to the 'imminent' return of Jesus.
5. Commitment to Jesus is undermined since Jesus transfers his attentions to a new church.
6. Commitment to worldwide evangelism is undermined since 'The Great Commission' will be completed by the 'new church' in a spectacularly short time.

3. Are We Living in the 'Last Days'

A significant teaching within the 'Futurist' interpretation of scripture is the belief that we are living in the 'last days'. This expression appears six times in the New Testament although there are other similar expressions used throughout the Bible. Prophecies which are contextually connected to where these expressions are found are deemed to be about to be fulfilled. The six uses of this expression are listed below together with a brief comment as to why the 'last days' belong to the past and not to the present or the future.

*'[Jesus]...Hath in these **last days** spoken to us by his son..²'* (Hebrews 1:2, KJV)

This part of the Bible was written before AD70. The implication is that the 'last days' were before AD70.

*'...Ye have heaped up treasure for the **last days**'*. (James 5: 3, KJV)

The letter of James was written circa AD48-60. The 'last days' were about then.

Peter explains the remarkable events of Pentecost by quoting from Joel, *'And it shall come about in the **last days**, saith God, I will pour out my spirit on all flesh...'* (Acts 2:17, KJV)

Pentecost took place in AD34 during the 'last days'.

The implication from the above three references is that the 'last days' were either then present, or were coming soon. A pattern is emerging.

*'Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times [**last days**] some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils'. (...) 'Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats...'* (1 Timothy 4:1, KJV letter written circa AD64)

'This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come'... (2 Timothy 3:1, KJV letter written circa AD66/67)

Paul's first and second letters to Timothy are private pieces of correspondence concerning church government and various pastoral issues. If the expression 'latter days' (last days) refers to a specific period many centuries into the future, then the associated teaching would fall totally outside the chronological context of these letters. Why would Paul warn Timothy of pastoral matters that would not become relevant to Timothy personally? Would it not make more sense if the 'last days' were to arrive in the near future i.e. a few years - or even decades at most - after the mid AD 60s?

² All Bible quotations are from the King James Version

In Paul's first letter to Timothy (4:3) he warns against people who forbid marriage and enforce vegetarianism. One community of Essenes lived near En Gedi (on the shores of the Dead Sea) from the second century BC until circa AD70. This community practised both celibacy and vegetarianism³. Paul warned that these practices were becoming widespread and ought to be opposed by Timothy. There is therefore no need to believe in a future religion in which celibacy and vegetarianism are compulsory.

If we accept that Paul's teaching concerned (then) contemporary issues, then we must accept that his use of the expression 'latter days' (which is identical in meaning to last days) referred to times in the late AD60s.⁴

Did perilous times come soon after the time of writing? Did many 'fall away from the faith'? The Fall of Jerusalem (AD70) was certainly one such time of peril and certainly many unbelieving Jews would have fallen away from the practice of their faith.

*'...there shall come in the **last days** scoffers and saying 'where is the promise of his coming'?*
(In 2 Peter 3:3 KJV written circa AD65-68.)

Considerable prophecy pointed towards the Messiah coming at the time of Jesus. The majority of Jews rejected Jesus as the Messiah. It follows that some would have abandoned 'the faith' since no other Messiah was apparent. The Messiah was expected him to come in AD30 in accordance with Daniel's prophecy of the 'Seventy Weeks'.

If Peter's warning about 'scoffers' was intended to inform his church about what would happen 20 centuries later, then such advice would have been of little value in solving his church's immediate problems. If, however, the warning was about opposition that would appear in the next few years, then the warning makes sense. Peter's letter – like other pastoral letters – generally concerned issues contemporary to their time of writing.

From the first four uses of the expression 'the last days' and one 'latter days', it can be seen that the expression should be seen as referring to the time of writing (i.e., of Acts, Hebrews and James). In the other passages (by Timothy and Peter) the expression can be understood to refer to a time near to that of the time of writing (mid AD60s).

The intent of this section is to demonstrate that the 'last days' have come and gone. There is no scripture that can be quoted definitively to show that the 'last days' are still to come. The expression itself implies a period of years not centuries. The expression 'last days' does not describe a period far removed from the first century to our future.

The intention is not to argue that the passages and associated teachings are no longer relevant: biblical teaching is based on real-life experiences. The principles raised in the above-quoted passages remain relevant for all of the church through the ages – despite the fact that the 'last days' have come and gone.

3 'Vegetarian Essenes?' by Spencer P.M. Harrington Archaeological Institute of America Volume 52 Number 3, May/June 1999, <http://archive.archaeology.org/9905/newsbriefs/vege.html> (accessed February 2017)

4 The intention is not to 'write off' portions of scripture on the grounds that the teaching only applied to a specific period. This teaching against the sect has relevance for today in that neither institutionalised celibacy (as practised by one major religion) nor institutionalised vegetarianism (as practised by another major religion) form part of God's will.

4. The 'Last Hour' and Antichrist

4.1 The Last Hour

'It is the last hour and you have heard that an Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come by which we know that it is the last hour.' (1 John 2:18, NKJV)

There is a sense of progression (last days to last hour) and an imminent ending in this letter. An alternative Christ (Antichrist) was about to appear who would bring specific mis-teachings. One of the great distractions of the Futurist school of prophetic mis-teaching is that 'The Antichrist' is coming soon i.e., in our time. This imminence is not evident from John's writings.

4.2 Antichrists in the Church

The antichrists of John's day may be characterised as follows:

1. They attended churches. (1 John 2:19)
2. They had heard the gospel. (1 John 2:19)
3. They rejected the gospel. (1 John 2:19)
4. They left the church and joined with others who proclaimed a different way to heaven based on pagan beliefs. (2 John 7) (From Paul's letter to the Galatians we learn that this process had started some years earlier)
5. They may be led by a false 'messianic' figure who may be termed an alternative Christ (Antichrist). (1 John 2:19)
6. They completely lost the possibility to be saved. (Hebrews 6:6)
7. They should be shunned. (2 John 10).

The apostle Paul warned of a time of falling away (2 Thessalonians 2:3). John's letters could be describing this 'falling away'. The expression 'last hour' would in this case be synonymous with 'last days' used in other scriptures i.e., the upcoming end of the state of Israel.

4.3 'Antichrist' – The Candidates

John's letters were pastoral letters which considered contemporary issues. The warnings against 'The Antichrist', and 'antichrists' must have been of contemporary relevance. The expectation was that the Antichrist would appear very soon. John stated that it was the *last hour*. What does this mean?

One possible answer holds that John wrote his letters in the AD60s. The Antichrist could be the Roman emperor Nero. Nero claimed to be Apollo incarnate and expected to be worshipped as such. John knew that Christians would never agree to this. John therefore saw an inevitable conflict between Roman paganism and the Church.

A second possibility is that the letters were written in the AD80s or early AD90s. The Roman Emperor Domitian titled himself 'King of kings and Lord of lords'. Again, John would have foreseen a conflict. In John's case, this conflict resulted in his exile to Patmos. The expression 'last hour' in this context could be a reference to the end of the apostle's life and with it the apostolic period.

During the second century several sects came into existence. These were characterised by their denial of the deity of Jesus – the deity of Jesus is a major theme in John's letters. In particular, around 100AD a sect called the Naassenes came to prominence. They are described by Hippolytus

of Rome (AD170-235) in his book 'The Refutation of all Heresies'. The inspiration for the sect came from the writings of Mariamne. She claimed to have received 'special knowledge' from James, Jesus' brother. In fact, her 'special knowledge' turned out to be Egyptian and Assyrian pagan beliefs repackaged. Mariamne and her followers have the dubious distinction of being the first pseudo-Christian cultists in recorded history. Hippolytus, in writing about the Naassenes, held the view that '[The] Naassene heresy is the root error from which all other heresies had sprung' (Refutation 5.11.1).⁵

According to the writings of Hippolytus, there appears to have been many cults appearing in the first part of the second century. It is therefore also possible that John was warning the churches under his care against 'antichrist' (as a generic type of person) or '*The Antichrist*' (one particular cult leader) who would appear soon i.e. within the lifetimes of the members of his churches.⁶

In the author's view the balance of evidence favours John's letters having been written in the AD60s and Nero being the most likely Antichrist. In any case, there is no justification for assuming that the Antichrist described in John's first letter refers to someone who's coming is delayed to our era i.e., many centuries later.

4.4 The Relevance of 'Antichrist' Today

The teaching against Antichrist is relevant today despite the fact that John's Antichrist appeared in the first century. John's letter warns against antichrists and provides guidance on their treatment by the church. This teaching is relevant to all ages. We see 'modern' antichrists today as illustrated below: -

The young Joseph Smith had a good knowledge of the Bible, apparently rejected the divinity of Christ, proclaimed himself a 'new Mohammed' and founded Mormonism.

Charles Taze Russell was a leader in the Bible Student movement on the 19th century. He apparently rejected the divinity of Christ, and founded the Jehovah's Witnesses. According to Catholic.com⁷ most 'Witnesses' are ex-Catholics and Protestants.

Mary Baker-Eddy was a student of the Bible. She apparently rejected the divinity of Christ and went on to found the Christian Scientists.

John Thomas 'rediscovered' Bible truth. He rejected the deity of Christ and went on to found the Christadelphians.

Each of the founders of the above modern 'alternatives' to Christian religion had the same background to that of the antichrists described in the Bible: they all understood the gospel (not least due to their knowledge of the Bible), they rejected the deity of Christ and went on to found a religion which sought to attract followers from orthodox Christianity.

⁵ <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/hippolytus5.html> also reproduced in the Catholic New Advent Encyclopaedia <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/050105.htm> (Accessed February 2017)

⁶ Some Bibles put the definite article in italics before 'Antichrist' or 'antichrist' since some original Greek manuscripts contain the definite article and others do not. It is not therefore clear whether John was warning against 'antichrists' (as a generic type of person) or 'the Antichrist' (a specific person).

⁷ <http://www.catholic.com/tracts/history-of-the-jehovahs-witnesses> (Accessed September 2016)

4.5 Antichrist in Early Church Teaching

Antichrist does not appear to have been a major topic of discussion among the pre-Nicene writers. The first mention of the subject appears in Irenaeus' 'Against Heresies', Book 5, Chapter 30. This was written towards the end of the second century i.e., 100 or more years after the topic is raised in John's letters. Writings of early church leaders do not have the same standing as scripture. Since early Christians were 'closer' to the apostles' teaching than we are, it follows that we should take their views seriously, especially when uncertain issues arise. The following is a quotation from Irenaeus' response to a question on whether a particular person in Rome was the expected Antichrist:

*"Although certain as to the number of the name of Antichrist, yet we should come to no rash conclusions as to the name itself, because this number is capable of being fitted to many names. Reasons for this point being reserved by the Holy Spirit."*⁸

The context of this passage is that someone had apparently written to Irenaeus suggesting that 'the Latin man' was the Antichrist. The expression 'Latin man' when turned into a number using Roman numerology (where some letters stand for numbers), gives the number 666. The apparent reference is to the famous passage in Revelation (13:18) where 'the number of the beast is 666.'

Irenaeus is guarded in his response, pointing out that many names and titles in Greek and Latin can have numerical values of 666. Irenaeus goes on to say:

"But, knowing the sure number declared by Scripture, that is, six hundred sixty and six, let them await, in the first place, the division of the kingdom into ten; then, in the next place, when these kings are reigning, and beginning to set their affairs in order, and advance their kingdom, [let them learn] to acknowledge that he who shall come claiming the kingdom for himself, and shall terrify those men of whom we have been speaking, having a name containing the aforesaid number, is truly the abomination of desolation." (Paragraph 2)⁹

And

"Then also Lateinos (ΛΑΤΕΙΝΟΣ) has the number six hundred and sixty-six; and it is a very probable [solution], this being the name of the last kingdom [of the four seen by Daniel]. For the Latins are they who at present bear rule..." (Paragraph 3)¹⁰

A few observations can be made:

- In paragraph 2, a kingdom is divided into 10. This is in accordance with Daniel 7:24.
- In paragraph 3, the kingdom is identified with the Roman Empire (Daniel 7:7)
- Both interpretations are concordant with the Historicist interpretation of Daniel's prophecies.
- Another Antichrist is anticipated apart from the one who appeared 'in the last hour'. His coming would await the fall of the Roman empire and the establishment of the ten successor kingdoms i.e., still some time after Irenaeus' time.

⁸ Introduction to Against Heresies Chapter 30 Book 5. Catholic New Advent Encyclopaedia, accessed April 2021.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Ibid

4.6 The Rise of the Antichrists of Revelation and Daniel

Some of Irenaeus' observations about the future Antichrist (bearing the number 666) may be used by the Futurist school to justify some yet-future events. However, we live many centuries after Irenaeus and we can see how prophecies have in fact already been fulfilled.

The prophecies in Daniel and Revelation were fulfilled when Damasus, the bishop of Rome, accepted the title Pontifex Maximus from Roman emperor Gratian. His successors adopted titles which consolidated the title of 'alternative to Christ'.

After AD476 (when the last emperor of the Roman Empire abdicated) the bishop of Rome remained as the only authority in the land. Over the centuries the papacy acquired civil authority.

In AD 800 Leo III consolidated his position as king maker, and the one through whom kings receive their civil authority, by crowning Charlemagne. This made the pope 'King of kings'.

In 1870 Pius IX established the doctrine of papal infallibility which made the pope God's spokesperson on earth (supreme prophet).

The bishop of Rome became the bearer of all three power ministries which properly only belong to Jesus alone: supreme prophet, our high priest and King of kings.

4.7 The Number of the Beast

The best-known scripture concerning the Antichrist is Revelation 13:16-18

Rev 13:16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:

17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

18 'Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.' (KJV)

According to the Historicist school of thought, this prophecy was fulfilled in the twelfth century. The following declaration was made at Tours by a bishop of Rome:

That the Albigensian heretics are to be shunned. Commercial trade with them is forbidden; neither the sale nor the purchase of things may be undertaken with them, in order that that source of comfort to mankind might at least force them to see the errors of their lives to return to their senses.

Council of Tours 1163, Canon 4: Action against the Cathars

... For this reason, since in Gascony and the regions of Albi and Toulouse and in other places the loathsome heresy of those whom some call the Cathars, others the Patarnes, others the Publicani...and we forbid under pain of anathema that anyone should keep or support them in their houses or lands or should trade with them... With regard to the Brabanters, Aragonese, Navarrese, Basques, Coterelli and Triaverdini... We likewise decree that those who hire, keep or support them, in the districts where they rage around, should be denounced....

Third Lateran Council – 1179 A.D Council Fathers - 1179 A.D. Pope Alexander 3rd, Canon 27

In Roman times slaves had numbers tattooed on their forehead or a hand. The Bible describes 'slavery' in figurative terms as slavery to sin. In a figurative sense they became slaves to the paacy.

4.9 Conclusions on Antichrists

Futurist theology holds that a future Antichrist will appear who will lead a world government, a world religion, and annihilate the church. There is no reason to believe that a future 'super' Antichrist will appear. However, we may expect supreme leaders of religious and civil governments to appear who will try to run the world.

John's letters warn of antichrists. These are people who hear the gospel and reject it. They are 'swept up' by the demonic spirit of antichrist who used them to entice others to fall away. The 'more talented' may be put to work establishing 'new' antichristian religions. When political leaders take on religious titles and powers, they inevitably come into conflict against Christians. This is because only Christ may have authority over religion and civil government at the same time. (This is not to say that atheist leaders would be a better choice: such leaders are by definition hostile to Christ's followers.)

The specific title 'Antichrist' is not used outside John's letters. However, the appearance of this type of person was prophesied centuries earlier by Daniel and their coming confirmed and enlarged upon in Revelation. Two popes in the twelfth century established laws (usurping the prerogative of the state) which forbade trade with certain groups thereby fulfilling Revelation 13:18.

5. Tribulation in Daniel Chapter 12

Daniel 12 is considered within Futurist theology to prove that there will be a future tribulation affecting all mankind. This will be the worst tribulation that the world has ever known.

'At that time...there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time...'

(Daniel 12:1, KJV)

In context, the passage concerns events that took place in Judah after the end of the life of Antiochus Epiphanes (second century BC). The 'career' of Antiochus Epiphanes is detailed in Daniel 11.

The opening verse of Daniel 12 makes it clear that the timeframe in view (for Daniel 12) is a period immediately after the life of Antiochus Epiphanes. The Maccabean uprising is foretold in Daniel 12. The uprising occurred in the mid second century BC. This is made clear in the opening words of Daniel 12:1, '*At that time...*'. This simply connects the writings of Daniel 12 to those of Daniel 11.

The severe repression of the Jews by Antiochus and the subsequent uprising is described in Josephus' Antiquities, Book 12, Chapters 5 and 6. The expression in Daniel 12:1 '*such as never was since there was a nation*' is taken within Futurist theology to refer to the entire world. However, Isaiah 66:8 contains the expression '*a nation*' in reference to Israel (context, vindication of Israel). Therefore, the prophecy could be understood as being applicable to Israel alone.

The sequence of events in the mid second century BC was as follows:

1. The Jews were severely oppressed under Antiochus Epiphanes.
2. An uprising started.
3. A 'hero' was forthcoming - Judas Maccabeus.
4. The temple and its rituals were re-established
5. An independent Jewish nation was re-born.

It is this particular set of events that would not be repeated (Daniel 12:1-3).

Jesus quotes the words of Daniel 12:1 in Matthew 24:21 in reference to a then future tribulation. Futurist theology argues that because Jesus uses the words of Daniel that all the prophecies of Daniel 12 refer to a yet future tribulation. This does not however follow. Jesus' quotation from Daniel 12 could be understood as meaning that the tribulation that he was predicting for Jerusalem (AD70) would not be repeated. Additionally, the victories secured by the Maccabean uprising would not be repeated. The following is the sequence of events leading to the Fall of Jerusalem in AD70:

1. The Jews were severely oppressed under the Romans.
2. An uprising started.
3. A 'hero' was forthcoming – John of Gischala.
4. The temple was destroyed.
5. The Jewish nation was scattered.

Both prophecies (Daniel 12:1 and Matthew 24:21) are equally true but refer to different series of events – each of which would not be repeated.

Had the 'Zealots' in Jerusalem at that time understood the significance of what Daniel had said in 12:1 then they would not have expected victory, since a repeat of the achievements of the Maccabean uprising was specifically excluded by Daniel.

6. Other Prophecies in Daniel Chapter 12 and their Fulfilment

Daniel 11 describes the activities of Antiochus Epiphanes. Chapter 12 continues...

'And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.'

'And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.'

(Daniel 12:2-3, KJV)

These prophecies have not come true literally, so those of the Futurist school regard them as remaining outstanding and therefore refer to our future. This conclusion is not necessarily true.

The comparison between 'stars' and 'dust' is used in scripture to distinguish between those who are 'related' to Abraham by exercising the same faith Abraham, and those who are descendants by 'flesh'. (Genesis 2:17, Romans 9:8). The language is figurative. The whole prophecy should be understood in figurative terms.

Bible prophecy sometimes uses historical events which are illustrative of the future. This is the case here. The Jews of that day (second century BC) were raised from a spiritual state of deadness and indifference to their religion either to one of embracing traditional teaching and practices (*'shining like stars'*), or rejecting their traditional faith and continuing with paganism (to their *'everlasting shame'*).

Mattathias Maccabeus initiated the Maccabean uprising¹¹ On his death bed he exhorted his followers to overthrow paganism and obtain a *'sort of immortality'*.¹² His children and followers initiated the Maccabean rebellion (BC166) and the restoration of the temple¹³ .

'...And it shall be for time. Times and half a time'.

(Daniel 12:7, KJV)

Antiochus Epiphanes held pagan sacrifices in the temple for three years and six months (*time, times and half a time*, 1,290 days) thereby fulfilling the prophecy in Daniel 12:7. Josephus also saw this as the fulfilment of Daniels' prophecy¹⁴ . Since Josephus was a first century Christian, we may conclude that this view of Daniel 12 was also that of the apostles.

'Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the one thousand three hundred and five and thirty days'.

(Daniel 12:12, KJV)

Following the Maccabean revolt, temple worship was restored after a period of cleansing (Daniel 12:12). The fulfilment of his prophecy is described by Josephus.¹⁵ The cleansing of the temple and re-establishment of the sacred objects could easily have taken 45 days – as implied in Daniel 12:12, above.

A festival was established to celebrate victory over paganism called ¹⁶. This is the feast of Hanukkah which was observed at the time of Jesus and today. The description of *'shining like stars'* and the festival of *'lights'* fit together figuratively.

'For the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end'.

(Daniel 12:4 and 9, KJV)

The expression *'time of the end'* is used. Does this imply that the predictions of Daniel 12 concern times close to the return of Christ? Many *'ends'* appear in biblical history: the end of the ancient

11 Antiquities, Josephus, Book 12, Chapter 6

12 Ibid paragraph 3, verse 282

13 Josephus, The Wars of the Jews, Book 1, Chapter 1

14 (The Wars of the Jews, Book 1, Chapter 1, paragraph 1, verse 32 and The Antiquities of the Jews, Book 12, Chapter 7, verse 322) *'This desolation happened to the temple in the hundred forty and fifth year, on the twenty-fifth day of the month Apeliens, and on the hundred fifty and third Olympiad: but it was dedicated anew, on the same day, the twenty-fifth of the month Apeliens, on the hundred and forty-eighth year, and on the hundred and fifty-fourth Olympiad. And this desolation came to pass according to the prophecy of Daniel, which was given four hundred and eight years before; for he declared that the Macedonians would dissolve that worship [for some time].'* (Emphasis added)

15 The Wars of the Jews, Book 1, Chapter 1 verses 39 & 40

16 Antiquities, Book 12, Chapter 7, verse 325 *'And from that time to this we celebrate this festival, and call it Lights.'*

world in the Flood, the end of the old covenant, and the end of biblical Israel. Even Futurist theology divides time into seven dispensations, each of which has ‘an end’. ‘The end’ in this context is the end of the oppression of the Jews by a foreign king and the start of a new era.

‘...Many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall increase.’

(Daniel 12:4, KJV)

This scripture is sometimes taken to be predictive of the modern era. However, this is unlikely given the context. The Bible is not concerned with scientific development or human transportation achievements but the spread of the knowledge of God.

In summary, all of the prophecies of Daniel Chapter 12 can be considered to have been fulfilled in the second and first centuries BC. The details predicted by Daniel are closely similar to the historian Josephus’ writings covering this period. There are therefore many reasons to view the predictions of Daniel Chapter 12 as being wholly concerned with the Maccabean era.

Some Old Testament prophecies are used by Jesus to illustrate how outstanding prophecies would be fulfilled. This does not justify transferring prophecies from the second century BC to our future or ‘recycling’ of prophecies.

7. The ‘Man of Lawlessness’ and His Works

7.1 His Identity

Futurist theology holds that the ‘future’ Antichrist and ‘Man of Lawlessness’ are the same person. The only place in scripture where the Man of Lawlessness is mentioned is in Paul’s second letter to the Thessalonians. As always, it is important to check context. The teaching on the Man of Lawlessness is not provided in isolation from circumstances contemporary to the Thessalonians. Paul’s second letter to the Thessalonians was written circa AD50.

1 ‘Now we beseech you, brethren, by the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering unto him, 2 that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand¹⁷.’

(2 Thessalonians 2:1-2, KJV)

Paul continues with a list of things that must happen before Jesus comes. Paul goes on to say that the ‘*Man of Lawlessness*’ would appear only after ‘*he who restrains him is taken away*’. (2 Thessalonians 2:3). The ‘Man of Lawlessness’ was clearly alive at the time since whatever (or whoever) was restraining him was known to the Thessalonians (‘*And you know what restrains him now*’ - 2 Thessalonians 2:6, emphasis added).

Futurist theology argues that the ‘man’ doing the restraining is the Holy Spirit. However, the omnipresent Holy Spirit would have to be removed from the world for the Man of Lawlessness to appear! Theologically difficult.

¹⁷ The expression ‘day of Christ’ is close to ‘Day of the Lord’ and is considered to be synonymous. This expression is considered later to show that the ‘Day of the Lord’ may be considered to be used to describe more than one event, one of which is the AD70 Fall of Jerusalem).

Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church to comfort it at a time of tribulation. Paul's teachings were in response to then current issues. It makes no sense for Paul to provide chronologically disjointed teaching on some far future matter (a Man of Lawlessness appearing several centuries down the road) and mix it with contemporary issues. The letter generally otherwise concerns issues of immediate contemporary significance to the Thessalonians.

7.2. Those who 'Fell Away'

'Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day [the day of Christ] shall not come, except there come a falling away first...'

(2 Thessalonians 2:3, KJV written AD51-52)

Other translations of the Greek include 'apostasy' and 'rebellion'.¹⁸

In 2 Thessalonians 2:11 it is also stated that powerful deceiving spirits would be sent to that generation. This is in turn a repeat of an earlier prediction by Jesus (Matthew 24:4, 5) of mass deception by false prophets.

The theme of 'falling away' is also mentioned in Paul's first letter to Timothy (Chapter 1 vs 3-7, written AD66/67). John's first letter addresses issues due to those who:

'were with us but not part of us'

(1 John 2:19, KJV).

From Pentecost until AD70 the church considered itself to be the next phase in Judaism and therefore essentially part of the Jewish community. Jews – both Christian and non-Christian – would identify themselves equally and each other as belonging to 'the faith'.

If the expression 'the faith' is understood in a broad sense to mean the Jewish faith in general, then the influence of deceiving spirits together with the breakdown of Jewish society and religion in the years before AD70 would have resulted in many non-Christian Jews questioning the integrity of their faith. The endless infighting between zealot Jewish factions, the violence of the Romans and ultimately the siege of Jerusalem would have demoralised many. Jesus had been rejected as the Messiah and no other messiah with any credibility had been forthcoming. Josephus records a complete breakdown of all moral and civil order before Jerusalem fell.¹⁹

The above texts taken together imply that in the period AD34 to AD70, there may have been 'a falling away' from either the Christian faith and / or the Jewish faith.

7.3 John of Gischala

'Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day [the return of Jesus] shall not come, except ... that the man of sin [Man of Lawlessness] be revealed, the son of perdition...'

18 The NKJV Greek English Interlinear new Testament, Thomas Nelson.

19 Josephus, Wars, Book 4 Chapter 3. *'And, in the first place, all the people of every place betook themselves to rapine; after which they got together in bodies, in order to rob the people of the country, insomuch that for barbarity and iniquity those of the same nation did no way differ from the Romans; nay, it seemed to be a much lighter thing to be ruined by the Romans than by themselves.'*

(2 Thessalonians 2:3, KJV)

Since ‘history provides the best commentary on prophecy’, we should ask, ‘Did a Man of Lawlessness’ appear during the first century and did he do all the things predicted in this prophecy?

One person who was very prominent in the events leading up to the Fall of Jerusalem was John of Gischala. The following is taken from Josephus’ ‘The Wars of the Jews’:

- He hoodwinked the Romans at the Siege of Gischala and escaped, he abandoned the women and children who had escaped with him, and they were slaughtered²⁰.
- Upon arriving in Jerusalem, he persuaded the inhabitants to go to war, saying that the Romans were in a weak condition – which was not the case.²¹
- He established a close relationship with the temple priests but only so that he might betray them into the hands of zealots, resulting in a great slaughter. Many ordinary citizens died and the temple and city were ransacked.²²
- According to 2 Thessalonians 3:4, the Man of Lawlessness would exalt himself above all that is called God and sits as God in the temple. John of Gischala invades and occupies the temple.²³
- He melts down the sacred vessels and plunders the temple. This abuse of the temple artefacts reflects a similar abuse of (possibly) the same vessels by Belshazzar before the Fall of Babylon to the Persians. Jerusalem was invaded shortly after John of Gischala’s act of sacrilege. This is not a specific fulfilment of prophecy but surely it is noteworthy that he repeats the sacrilege of Belshazzar and the same consequences follow?²⁴
- In 2 Thessalonian 2:7, the Man of Lawlessness is restrained. The man restraining him was either Nero or his successor Vespasian. Vespasian had been pursuing John of Gischala for some time. After Nero died, Vespasian suspended his plans to besiege Jerusalem (and capture John of Gischala). Vespasian’s nephew (Titus) resumes the siege. During the period of suspension of the siege, John of Gischala increased his violent activity.²⁵
- In 2 Thessalonians 2:9 it is said that the Man of Lawlessness would deceive the unrighteous with powers, signs and lying wonders. According to Josephus, ‘*a great many false prophets appeared with many lying wonders.*’²⁶ Since John of Gischala had previously promised the people that the Romans would be easily defeated, and it was becoming clear that they were not going to be defeated, it is possible that he procured the services of ‘false prophets’ who created false signs. It is also possible that the ‘false signs’ were the result of demonic activity, since there was heavy demonic influence at that time, in accordance with several scriptures.²⁷
- While on his way to the cross, Jesus predicted that some of the children of women then alive would say to the mountains ‘*fall on us*’ and to the hills ‘*cover us*’ . (Luke 23:27) ²⁸ John of Gischala spent the last days of the siege underground in caverns.²⁹ Although, this is not a

20 Josephus, Wars, Book 4, Chapter 2

21 Josephus, Wars, Book 4, Chapter 3

22 Josephus, Wars, Book 4, Chapters 3-5

23 Josephus, Wars, Book 5, Chapters 3 and 6

24 Josephus, Wars, Book 5, Chapter 13

25 Ultimately, Titus, emperor Vespasian’s nephew (and therefore ‘a prince’) succeeds in destroying Jerusalem and the temple in accordance with the prophecy in Daniel 9:26. Josephus, Wars, Book 4, Chapter 9, Book 5 Chapter 1

26 Josephus, Wars, Book 6, Chapter 5 beginning verse 285 to the end

27 In Matthew 12:45 Jesus predicts that that entire generation would become demonised if it did not accept Christ. In 2 Thessalonians 2:11 a powerful deceiving spirit is sent to misled those who had rejected Christ.

28 Hosea 10:8 (context: destruction of the ‘high places’).

29 Josephus, Wars, Book 6, Chapter 9, Verse 430

specific fulfilment of a prophecy about the Man of Lawlessness it forms part of a prophecy given by Jesus.

The Man of Lawlessness was John of Gischala. His time came to an end when the Lord:

'destroyed him with the breath of his mouth and the brightness of his coming.'

(2 Thessalonians 2: 8, NKJV)

But was John of Gischala destroyed by the breath of Jesus at his coming (in AD70)? Did Jesus return in AD70? Verse 8 is mistakenly considered in Futurist theology to be a picture of the final coming of Christ. It is therefore inferred that the Man of Lawlessness (and his demise) belongs to our near future. This need not be the case. The language used here is figurative and quotes from several Old Testament sources³⁰, and are found together in Psalm 18 and 2 Samuel 22.

'Destruction by the breath of his mouth'

(2 Samuel 22:16 and Psalm 18:8, 15 Context: David's deliverance from the hand of Saul)

Additionally, Job 4:9, Isaiah 11:4, 30:28, 30:33 (judgement of the wicked, the description is figurative), Isaiah 11:4

'The brightness of his coming'

2 Samuel 22:23 (repeated in Psalm 18:12, 14)

In addition, Daniel 7 and Ezekiel 1 picture God using similar 'fiery' language in the context of judgement. Prophetic scripture often uses figurative language to describe divine activity. The fact that humans may not have seen God appearing in 'brightness' and with a fiery breath with their own eyes does not mean that these things did not happen. The image of God coming in brightness is a prophetic image. It depicts a heavenly scene which is typographical of imminent judgement. No one may have seen saw Jesus above the clouds of heaven in AD70 or at any other time. *'This brightness of his coming'* is seen in a prophetic vision.³¹

The context of Psalm 18 and 2 Samuel 22 is that of David marking the demise of King Saul. There are some similarities between the 'career' of Saul and that of John of Gischala. There is no particular reason to associate Psalm 18 or 2 Thessalonians 2:8 with the final coming of Christ.

If the expression in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 is taken figuratively, and scripture is used to interpret scripture, then what was predicted was delivered in AD70.

³⁰ Other references where this expression is used: Job 4:9 (context: divine judgement against the evildoers), Daniel 7:10 (context: judgement against 'the horn'), Isaiah 11:4 (context: earthly reign of Jesus), Isaiah 30:28,33 (context: judgement against Assyria), Ezekiel 21:31 (context: judgement against the Ammonites).

³¹ Jesus predicted at his trial that some of those present would see him coming with power. Stephen when tried probably before the same people saw Jesus 'on the clouds of heaven'. Some of those at their trials may have seen Jesus when he came in AD70.

7.4. The Man of Lawlessness and the Antichrist Compared³²

The biblical texts describing the Antichrist and the Man of Lawlessness are contained in different letters, written by different authors, many years apart, written to different churches in very different circumstances. A comparison between the different sources is made as follows:

- ‘Antichrists’ were religious people who believed that they had a better way of salvation apart from Jesus. Their way of salvation was based on ‘special knowledge’ after the gnostic tradition. Antichrists were ‘inclusive’ and adopted pagan beliefs.
- The Man of Lawlessness (by definition) was an irreligious and violent person – a megalomaniac who bullies his way to power and commits sacrilege. Many (innocent) people are victims of his lawless activities. The Man of Lawlessness were ‘exclusive’ and Zionist.

We see significant differences in characteristics between the man of Lawlessness and the Anti-Christ. Finally, although the ‘Man of lawlessness’ came and went a very long time ago, there are lessons here for the church for all the ages. Nations that reject God may be misled by Christ-rejecting leaders who lead them to destruction.

8. The Next Coming of Christ

8.1 The ‘Doctrine’ of Imminence

Futurist theology supports a ‘Doctrine of Imminence’. According to this, Jesus can return at any time, and that time is ‘soon’. The doctrine is based on the view that no one knows the day nor the hour of Jesus’ return (Matthew 24:36, 44). However, there is a flaw in the logic: it does not follow that Jesus can come at any time since there are preconditions to his coming. One precondition at least includes getting the gospel to the ends of the earth (Matthew 24:14).

The ‘Doctrine of Imminence’ is damaging. If we believe that Jesus can and will come soon, then our motivation for doing anything to further his kingdom is lost due to perceived lack of time. If the return of Jesus is in some way determined by our choices, then we will be motivated.

8.2 The ‘Day of the Lord’

Several scriptures describe the Day of the Lord as coming ‘like a thief in the night’ (1 Thessalonians 5:2, 5:4 and 2 Peter 3:10). The expression ‘Day of the Lord’ does not refer to the final coming of Christ. Appendix 1 lists the occurrences of the use of the phrase ‘Day of the Lord’ in prophetic literature and the events foreseen in context.

The expression ‘The Day of the Lord’ is first used in Zephaniah’s prophecies. In this context the expression refers exclusively to the Fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians (BC586). Thereafter in prophetic literature the expression is used to describe similar devastating events which may or may not involve Jerusalem.

³² The Westminster Confession of faith Chapter 25.vi. ‘There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ; nor can the Pope of Rome, in any sense, be head thereof; but is that Antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalts himself, in the Church, against Christ and all that is called God.’

Four 'Days of the Lord' are described in Joel: the first is historic (three references to the destruction of the land by locusts (Joel 1), the second is associated with the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Joel 2), the third is the Fall of Jerusalem in AD70 (Joel 2) and the last one is yet future (Joel 3).

In 1 Thessalonians 5:2 it is written that the 'Day of the Lord' would come as a thief in the night. Jerusalem fell at night to the Babylonians (Jeremiah 39:4) and also to the Romans (Josephus, The Wars of the Jews, Book 6, Chapter 1 verse 68). Both invasions started on the same day of the Jewish calendar (the ninth of Av). Both invasions resulted in substantial looting (hence the reference to thieves). The Thessalonians were specifically told that this 'Day of the Lord' would not come as a surprise to them (chapter 4:4). The expression 'Day of the Lord' in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 therefore refers to the forthcoming Fall of Jerusalem in AD70.

In Peter's second letter, Peter sees the 'Day of the Lord' as the Fall of Jerusalem. He quotes from Joel 2 as commented upon above. However, Peter and Joel use language which is typical of both the Fall of Jerusalem and the final judgement – this is because the two events have close similarities.

The Fall of Jerusalem is preceded by a significant number of signs (false prophets, wars, rumours of wars, earthquakes and famines, 'the abomination that causes desolation'). That 'Day of the Lord' was predictable to those believers who had listened to the prophets and knew the 'signs of the times'.

In each of the above 'days of the Lord', God is not seen by those who are being judged. The final 'Day of the Lord' (Revelation Chapter 1 – sic 'The Lord's Day') is the only one where all of the world will see Jesus.

In conclusion, the 'Day of the Lord' is an expression of divine judgement against nations. Most of these days have gone. There is one more 'Day of the Lord' to come and that is the judgement of the nations of the world (Joel 3:15, 2 Peter 3:10, Isaiah 34, Revelation 20:7).

The original 'Day of the Lord' (the Fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians) did not come as a surprise to those who had listened to Jeremiah, since Jeremiah had spent half his life warning that it was coming. (The same theme is taken up in 1 Thessalonians 5:4 where those Christians who live godly lives will not be surprised when a 'Day of the Lord' comes). The Fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians and Romans was seen ahead of time and therefore was no surprise to believers.

The next 'Day of the Lord' includes Jesus' next coming. This is described later.

9. The Tribulations of Matthew's Gospel³³

9.1 Three Tribulations

Matthew Chapter 24, 'The Olivet Discourse' attracts more discussion than any other passage on prophecy. Futurist theology contends that:

³³ 'The Tribulation' and other aspects of Futurist teaching are summarised in www.Bibleprophecyandtruth.com/prophecy/rapture?gclid=Cj0KEQIAhs3DBRDmu-rVkuif0N8BEiQAWuUJr7INnDdCjPbljRKLtitC4xAG473IYA5P5QsK3r8cUL4aAojr8P8HAQ (Accessed January 2017)

- all tribulations described are yet future (Matthew 24:9, 21 and 29),
- all prophecies in this passage are yet future, and that
- the church is the object of the tribulations.

Given the severity of the tribulations, the impact on the morale of the church is bound to be serious. Is the Futurist view accurate to scripture?

The Olivet Discourse is also included in Mark's gospel. Luke records similar material but his account is based on what Jesus said in the temple in Jerusalem the previous day. Textual differences between the three accounts are used in Futurist theology to argue that the tribulations in Matthew's account are a different tribulation to that given in Luke's gospel. However, these differences can be accounted for in that the statements made by Jesus were made on different occasions, were recorded by different writers for different purposes and with different audiences in mind. There are no conflicts between the accounts and therefore no grounds for believing that different tribulations are being described between the gospels.

9.2 Tribulations Witnessed by the Apostles

Jesus anticipated that the apostles would be alive at the time of the AD70 tribulation. Later it is shown that the apostles would also witness other signs.

'Take heed that no man deceives you'

(Matthew 24:4, emphasis added)

'And you shall hear of wars...see that you be not troubled'

(Matthew 24:6, emphasis added)

9.3 Tribulations of the Apostles

'Then they shall deliver you up to be afflicted'

(Matthew 24:9, KJV, emphasis added)

Mark 13:9 expands the Olivet discourse as follows:

'But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten...'

The apostles would be delivered up and killed ie., this prediction applied specifically to them.

9.4 The Next Tribulation and The Coming of Christ

'For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall the coming of the Son of man be.'

(Matthew 24:27, KJV)

The AD70 tribulation was preceded by a number of clear events: false prophets, persecution, the presence of the Romans at the gates of Jerusalem, family breakdown, many people deserting the faith. The false prophets declared that the messiah had already come. In reality, the coming of Jesus would be seen by the whole world as he descends from heaven, as described later. Table 1 lists the prophecies where lightning is used in a figurative sense to illustrate divine judgement against unbelievers.

Table 1: OT Texts to which Matthew 24:27 Refers

Reference	Context
2 Samuel 22:15 Psalm 18	Judgement of Saul (described poetically).
Job 36:31-32	Judgement of 'the peoples'
Psalm 77:18	Judgement of the earth (the Flood) and on the Egyptians (Moses' day)
Psalm 78:48	Judgement on the Egyptians (one of the ten plagues)
Psalm 97:4	Judgement against idolatry
Psalm 135:7	Judgement against Egypt and other nations
Psalm 144:6	Deliverance of David from his enemies
Jeremiah 10:13	Judgement on the nations due to idolatry
Zechariah 9:14	Judgement against Israel's enemies, amid much bloodshed (15) and false prophecy (10:2) caused by idolatry.

Zechariah 9 & 10 most closely fit the context in which Jesus refers to lightning preceding judgement. However, in all cases the focus of the passages is on the judgement of God's enemies. In some cases, the use of 'lightning' is in the context of God's people being delivered out of various 'tribulations.' But the people who suffer most are those who are (metaphorically) struck by lightning. The use of the metaphor 'judgement by lightning' does not refer to tribulations out of which God's people may be delivered, but the tribulations to which those who are under His wrath are subjected. This is made clearer in the next verse (28):

'For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together'.

(Matthew 24:28, KJV)

Matthew 24:28 borrows imagery from several Old Testament passages. These are shown in Table 2.

Table-2: OT Texts to Which Matthew 24:28 Refers

Reference	Context
1 Kings 14:11	Judgement against the house of Jeroboam for leading Israel astray
Jeremiah 7:33	The aftermath of 'judgement against an obscene religion' ³⁴
Jeremiah 9:22	The aftermath of the judgement against Jerusalem when the city was overtaken by the Babylonians (BC587).
Jeremiah 16:4	Jeremiah is warned of the fate of his people.

34 As described in the passage heading in the NKJV

Reference	Context
Jeremiah 19:7	The aftermath of judgement due to idolatry
Ezekiel 39:4	Judgement against Gog ³⁵

In all cases, the references to the gruesome end described in Matthew 24:28 are in the context of those who have displeased God. ‘The tribulation of those days’ (Matthew 24:28) must refer to a tribulation for unbelievers only.

The reference to ‘eagles’ confirms the presence of the Roman army. (The eagle was its symbol). This verse does not refer to some supposed ‘rapture’ whereby Christians are removed from the world but the aftermath of the Fall of Jerusalem when Jews were slaughtered and deported.

Matthew 24:29 continues:

‘Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened and the moon shall not give out its light...’

Table 3 shows texts from which the imagery of Matthew 24:29 is taken. In all cases the imagery is metaphorical and refers to divine wrath against unbelievers.

Table 3: OT Texts to which Reference is Made in Matthew 24:29

OT Reference	Context
Isaiah 13:10	Fall of Babylon to the Medes & Persians 539BC ³⁶
Ezekiel 32:7	Fall of Egypt to the Babylonians 568BC at Mitzraim ³⁷
Joel 2:10, 31	Fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians 586BC
Joel 3:15	A future judgement on all nations
Amos 5:20, 8:9	Fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians 586BC

The OT imagery used in Matthew 24:29 shows that it is the Fall of Jerusalem that is foreseen.

9.5 Conclusions on the Tribulations of Matthew 24

Each of the three tribulations of Matthew 24 has been considered. They are tribulations (1) witnessed by the apostles, (2) tribulations against the apostles present on the Mount of Olives listening to Jesus in Matthew 24, (3) the tribulation of the Fall of Jerusalem to the Romans and (4) the tribulation at the return of Jesus in judgement.

10. False Prophets of the First Century

There are three groups of false prophets mentioned in Matthew 24 (verses 5, 11 and 24). False prophets will always abound; the focus is on the specific groups of false prophets and specific messages.

³⁵ The Gog and Magog prophecies of Revelation 20 are regarded in both Futurism and Historicism as being still in the future.

³⁶ <http://www.livius.org/articles/person/cyrus-the-great/cyrus-takes-babylon/> (Accessed February 2017)

³⁷ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Nebuchadrezzar-II> (Accessed February 2017)

Futurist theology contends that our near future will be characterised by the appearance of false prophets. This is based on certain teachings in Matthew 24. The following response demonstrates that the false prophets to whom Jesus is referring are those of the latter half of the first century.

Jesus begins by saying *'Beware false prophets'* (Verses 4 and 5). The warning was directed to those present, therefore the 'false prophets' may be considered to have appeared during the lifetimes of those listening to Jesus on the Mount of Olives.

There are close similarities between the historical and spiritual aspects of the AD70 Fall of Jerusalem (to the Romans) and the BC586 Fall under the Babylonians. One of which is the appearance of false prophets.

The prophet Jeremiah records that many false prophets existed in his day, proclaiming that Israel would be delivered from Babylon (Jeremiah 26). Hananiah was chief among them (Jeremiah 28). Zechariah the king of Judah chose to believe the false prophet and lost his kingdom.

In 1 Kings 13 a man of God (unnamed prophet) from the Lord declared that divine judgement was coming. A false prophet later contradicted this prophecy.

In 1 Kings 22 Ahab, king of Israel, refused to listen to a true prophet telling him not to go to war against Ramoth Gilead. Instead, he chose to believe the false prophets of Baal, went to war and lost his life.

In Acts 5:36 a false prophet named Theudas is described, his existence is confirmed by Josephus. Josephus also mentions other false prophets alive at the time of Nero (AD54-68) and Felix (AD52-58).³⁸

In Josephus' day false prophets also proclaimed the salvation of Jerusalem amid tribulation (Wars, Book 20, Chapter 8, Section 6).³⁹ It is ironic that Futurist theology puts forward the same message: there will be a deliverance of the church amid tribulation. It is not the church that comes under tribulation.

False prophets were busy during the siege of Jerusalem, as described above in connection with the Man of Lawlessness and Matthew 24:24.

The consistent message of the false prophets was that divine judgement would not be forthcoming. Maybe God had changed His mind or maybe God was really on the side of the of those hearing the message of the false prophets. The consequences have always been fatal.

False prophets will appear throughout the ages. Jesus was referring to those who would appear in the years up to AD70. These would be characterised by delivering messages of divine deliverance amid tribulation.

The proliferation of false teachers and prophets over the last 100 years is cited as 'evidence' that we are living in the last days. This however ignores the context of Jesus' warning (the first century).

38 Josephus, Wars, Book 2 Chapter 13.5 *'But there was an Egyptian false prophet that did the Jews more mischief than the former; for he was a cheat, and pretended to be a prophet also, and got together thirty thousand men that were deluded by him; these he led roundabout from the wilderness...'*

39 There is a good discourse on this subject at <http://www.Bible.ca/pre-flavius-josephus-70AD-Mt24-fulfilled.htm> (Accessed October 2016)

11. Wars, Rumours of Wars, Earthquakes and Famines

'And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars...and there shall be famines and pestilences'

(Matthew 24:6-7, KJV)

The proliferation of 'wars, rumours of wars, earthquakes and famines' since the start of the twentieth century is used within Futurist theology as another sign of the last days (Matthew 24:6-7). But Jesus implies that these should actually come to an end before his final coming (Matthew 24:36-41). In any case these events began to occur shortly after his time on earth. A famine is recorded in Acts 11. There were severe earthquakes around the Mediterranean during the first century.⁴⁰ One earthquake resulted in the deliverance of Peter from prison (Acts 16:26).

It is sometimes argued that earthquakes are becoming more common today than ever before. This is hard to substantiate since we may only have a hundred years or so of accurately kept records to compare to millennia of geological time.

The reference to earthquakes is theological and not geological: earthquakes symbolise divine judgement and wrath and therefore any hope of a peaceful life before the next 'Day of the Lord' is in vain.

12. Family Breakdown

'And many shall be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another'.

(Matthew 24:10, Mark 13:12, KJV)

Family betrayal (Matthew 24:10) and the 'love of many growing cold' describes for conditions in Jerusalem in AD70, which included family break up and betrayal.⁴¹ The prophecy can therefore be considered to have been fulfilled fully within Jerusalem in AD70.

13. The Progress of the Gospel

In Matthew 24:14 it is written that the end will not come until after the gospel has been preached 'in all the world'. On this basis since the end of the world has not yet come, and Jesus has not returned, all of the prophecies in this passage are considered (within Futurism) to refer to a yet future age. However, there is another way of viewing the text. The Greek word used for world is variously translated 'entire world' and 'inhabited world'. The latter expression is used to mean the Roman Empire (G3625, oikoumene). The following is a list of the occurrences of the use of G3625 in the New Testament:

Table 4: Use of Greek Word 'Oikoumene' in The New Testament

Scripture Reference	Text	Context / Comment
Acts 11:28	And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there	The famine took place AD 45 to AD 46. It is described both by Eusebius

⁴⁰ <http://newjerusalemcommunity.blogspot.co.uk/2011/01/earthquakes.html> (Accessed February 2017)

⁴¹ Josephus, The Wars of the Jews, Book 4, Chapter 3, 'There was also a bitter contest between those that were fond of war, and those that were desirous for peace. At the first this quarrelsome temper caught hold of private families, who could not agree among themselves; after which those people that were the dearest to one another brake through all restraints with regard to each other, and every one associated with those of his own opinion, and began already to stand in opposition one to another...'

Scripture Reference	Text	Context / Comment
	should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.	and Josephus. It was limited to Palestine, so the prophecy uses the world in a limited geographical sense. ^{42 43}
Acts 17:6	And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.	The known or Roman world was in view.
Acts 19:27	So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.	The 'world' is distinct from Asia. Therefore 'world' would have meant perhaps the Roman world since 'Asia' would have referred to the Parthian empire.
Acts 24:5	For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes:	The word 'world' would have been limited in scope to the lands where Jews lived.

A very frequently used Greek alternative word translated world is G2889 (kosmos). This is taken from a primary word meaning 'order'. This means 'world' in the abstract sense of human social and political order.

It can therefore be concluded that when 'oikoumene' is used, that the physical world, limited perhaps to the territorial extent of the Roman Empire is implied. When kosmos is used it refers to the world of humanity in an abstract sense.

How feasible is it that the Roman Empire or the 'inhabited world' were reached by the gospel before AD 70. The table below lists 23 of the 46 Roman provinces and territories which the gospel may have reached by AD70. In the case of 23 provinces, there is biblical or other historical evidence that the gospel may have reached those areas by AD70.

Table 5: List of Roman Provinces and Regions

Roman Province	Evangelisation Mentioned in the Bible	Evangelisation Affirmed from Other Sources
Achaea (Athens, Thessalonica, Corinth)	Acts 17,18	
Africa Proconsularis		Phillip visited Carthage according to Eusebius (Eusebius conflates Philip the Evangelist and Phillip the apostle, but this does not affect the point).
Arabia Petrea	Acts 2	
Asia	Acts 2, 13, 18	
Bithnia (Phyigia)	Acts 2	
Alpina		Evidence not yet found
Aquitania		Evidence not yet found
Baetica (Spain)	Romans 15	
Ballearic Islands		Evidence not yet found
Belgica		Evidence not yet found

⁴² Refer to:

https://biblehub.com/library/pamphilus/church_history/chapter_viii_the_famine_which_took.htm especially the explanatory footnotes.

⁴³ The famine is described in Josephus Antiquities XX 2.5 and 5.2.

Roman Province	Evangelisation Mentioned in the Bible	Evangelisation Affirmed from Other Sources
Britannia		Even before the Romans invaded Britain in 43AD, there was an established trade with Rome. British prisoners of war were transported to Rome in AD50, and returned in AD51. The Welsh Triads record that among the returnees were Christians. ⁴⁴
Cappadocia	Acts 2	
Cilicia	Acts 15	
Corsica		Evidence not yet found
Creta	Acts 2	
Cyprus	Acts 11, 13, 21	
Cyrenaica (Libya)	Acts 2, Acts 11	
Dalmatia	2 Timothy 4:10	Titus had departed to Dalmatia.
Egypt (Aegyptus)	Acts 2	Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius both wrote that Mark evangelised Alexandria and hence Egypt.
Epiru		Evidence not yet found
Gallacia	Galatians, Acts 14 (Lyaconia)	
Gallacia (Spain)	Romans 15	
Germania Inferior		Evidence not yet found
Germania Superior		Evidence not yet found
Illyricium		Evidence not yet found
Italia (Rome)	Acts 2, 28	
Judea	Acts 2	
Lugdunensis		Evidence not yet found
Lusitania (Spain/Portugal)		Evidence not yet found
Lycia (Pamphylia)	Acts 2, Acts 14 (Perga)	
Macedonia	Acts 16, 20	
Moesia Inferior		Evidence not yet found
Moesia Superior		Evidence not yet found
Nabonensis		Evidence not yet found
Noricum		Evidence not yet found
Pannonia		Evidence not yet found
Pontus	Acts 2	
Rhatia		Evidence not yet found
Sardinia		Evidence not yet found
Silicia		Evidence not yet found
Tarraconensis (Spain)	Romans 15	
Sicilia (Pamphylia)	Acts 2, 13, Acts 28 (Malta)	
Syria	Acts 9	
Numidia		Evidence not yet found
Mauritania Tingitana		Evidence not yet found
Mauritania Caesariensis		Evidence not yet found

Clement of Rome wrote in the second century:

⁴⁴ <https://csm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/True-Science-agrees-Bible-final.pdf> 'True Science Agrees with the Bible', Page 140, Malcolm Bowden. Retrieved June 2021.

*...Paul...After preaching both in the east and west, he gained the illustrious reputation due to his faith, having taught righteousness **to the whole world**, and come to the extreme limit of the west, and suffered martyrdom under the prefects.⁴⁵ (Emphasis added)*

Note that in Acts 24:5 (Quoted above) Paul's message is considered by his critic to have extended to 'the world'.

So how plausible is it that the gospel had in fact reached the whole of the inhabited world by AD70? From historical sources both inside and to a lesser extent outside the bible and Christian writings, it is possible that the prophecy given in Matthew 24:14 could have been fulfilled before AD70.

14. No Mid-Tribulation Rapture, No Rapture

Futurist theology argues that Jesus will save what is left of his church (mid or post tribulation). This is necessary otherwise there would be no one left in his church on earth. Matthew 24:22 is cited as evidence:

'And expect those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elects' sake those days shall be shortened.' (KJV)

Jesus predicted that if those days (the Fall of Jerusalem) had not been cut short then there would have been no survivors (verse 2). The Fall of Jerusalem is described in 'The Wars of the Jews'⁴⁶. In his book Josephus describes a period when the Romans invited the besieged occupants of Jerusalem to surrender and go free. Many did do so. It all happened in AD70; no 'rapture' is foreseen.

Matthew 24:40-41 is often quoted as evidence for a 'rapture':

40 Then two shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 41 Two shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. (KJV)

However, these verses are explained in Luke 21:24 :

And they shall fall by the sword's edge. And shall be led away captive into all nations. (KJV)
This is what happened after the Fall of Jerusalem.

15. The (Ongoing) Judgement of the Nations

One purpose of biblical eschatology is to provide the church with insight into contemporary events and those things which are about to happen. This is so that the church can understand the contemporary age and know how to respond to what is immediately upcoming. We do not need to know the details of more distant events since *'tomorrow has enough troubles of its own'* (Matthew 6:34).

There are a number of principles which emerge from developments in the church in the first century. These principles are valid throughout the ages. The following sequence is not a fixed pattern by any means but shows types of events that may take place today.

45 Chapter 5 vs 27-29.

46 Josephus, Wars, Book 5, Chapter 10

1. There is an initial dramatic expansion of the church (Acts 2).
2. Opposition and persecution break out. (Acts 4:1-4, 5:17-2, 7:54-60 and many others)
3. The church may reach 'saturation' where the harvest in a particular area is completely gathered. (Matthew 24:32)
4. When a particular region has become 'hardened' to the gospel, the remaining unbelievers may become prey to demonic spirits (Matthew 12:45). The consequences of which are a sharp rise in immorality, social discord and persecution.
5. Severe persecution breaks out and the church and the faithful may leave (Acts 8:1, Jeremiah 51:6, Revelation 18:4).
6. Imminent national judgement becomes apparent to the church (Matthew 24:25)
7. A weakened church in a particular locality may cause religious people who have heard the gospel fall prey to 'another gospel' and join up with other religions. (1 John 2:18,19, 2 John 7).
8. Conditions in the unbelieving world become more severe and 'deceiving spirits' are released (2 Thessalonians 2:11)
9. A charismatic leader appears who abuses civil authority, promising heaven but delivering hell. A 'Man of Lawlessness' appears.
10. A 'Day of the Lord' is appointed. But God does nothing without telling his servants the prophets first. (Amos 3:7, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-10)

The foregoing should be seen as a possible sequence of events not an unavoidable timetable. Those who 'have a knowledge of the times' and prophetic understanding are needed to tell the church where a nation is at before God at a given point in time.

16. Bringing History Up to Date

16.1 From the End of the First to the End of the Twentieth Century

Futurist theology has a dreadful view of the future of the church. Major aspects of this teaching have been tackled. The theological 'minefield' of Matthew 24 has been traversed without unnecessary tribulation. Not all details of Futurism have been addressed but sufficient to present views of prophecy where there are no gaps within series of prophecies, scripture is used to interpret scripture, and there is due regard for context.

Horae Apocalypticae (E B Elliot, 19th century) provides details covering the end of the second century to the 1870s. A large number of prophecies in Daniel and Revelation can be shown to have been fulfilled between the end of *Horae Apocalypticae* and the present. The outstanding prophecies for the near future are now be addressed. The more distant future belongs to later generations. The following is the author's contribution to a prophetic understanding of what has happened since the middle of the 19th century to date.

16.2 The Second Half of the 19th Century

The relationship between God and the gentile world post AD70 is provided in Revelation Chapter 6 onwards. A series of 21 judgements is presented (Chapters 6 to 16). Judgements 1 to 19 are described in E B Elliot's *Horae Apocalypticae*. This covers the period from the end of the first century to the middle of the 19th century. These judgements are listed in the Appendix.

16.3 The Sixth Bowl of Wrath

'And the sixth angel poured out his vial of the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up. That the way of the kings of the east might be prepared'.

(Revelation 16:12, KJV)

This prophecy concerns a period towards the end of Elliot's life. We live later in history and have the advantage of being able to see how this and later prophecies have been fulfilled.

The Euphrates was the traditional eastern boundary of ancient Israel. The drying up of the Euphrates symbolises the gradual demise of the Ottoman Empire (which controlled the territory of Palestine at that time). The countries either side of the Euphrates rebelled against the empire. The Ottomans lost control of 'Palestine' in 1918. This provided for the eventual formation of the Jewish state of Israel in 1948.

The picture of 'kings from the east' recalls two biblical narratives: the Jews who came to Israel from Babylon in Nehemiah's day, and the wise men who came to honour Jesus at his birth. Both passages speak of a new beginning.⁴⁷ The kings from the east (God-fearing) contrast to the kings of the earth (God-judged). The drying up of the Euphrates also calls to mind the drying of the Red Sea and the Jordan.

'And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.'

(Revelation 16:13, KJV)

The dragon in prophetic scripture always refers to the devil (Revelation 12) and by extension those who are part of his kingdom, whom he uses on earth. Frogs are unclean animals and their speech is unclean (deceitful).

'The Beast' is associated with imperialism. From Daniel 7, The Beast is an empire or kingdom of significant size having a pagan basis. The final (fourth) beast in Daniel's vision was the Roman Empire. In Revelation 11 to 13 'The Beast' is identified with those in authority who oppose (persecute) Christians.

'False prophet' is introduced in Isaiah 9:15 and is described as being 'the tail'. In Revelation chapter 9 creatures come from the east with 'stings' in their tails. 'Sting' refers to death (Revelation 9). So, the conquest of parts of Europe by eastern powers in the 7th century fits this prophecy.

17. Nineteenth Century to the Second World War

17.1 Historical Prelude to the Twentieth Judgement (Sixth Bowl of Wrath)

Elliot presents the first French revolution as being the first of the bowl (or vial) judgements. Subsequent upheavals in Europe were the outworking of the remaining judgements. At the end of the eighteenth century the devil decided to give the Holy Roman empire (the second beast of Revelation) a make-over. He

⁴⁷ In Futurist theology it is sometimes argued that the re-establishment of Israel in 1948 was a complete 'game changer' and that all previous understanding of prophecy has to be disregarded in favour of this 'new' perspective. This is not the case with Historicism: nothing is changed. The coming into existence of the state of Israel had been anticipated by Historicist Bible scholars for a long time beforehand. These included E B Elliot in the 19th century, refer to <http://www.historicism.com/Haynes/tomorrow1.htm> (Accessed October 2016)

decided to move away from the religious-political model of empire (the Holy Roman empire under the Habsburg dynasty had been strongly Catholic) to a 'secular' (atheist) model based on military force and oppression. The French Revolution brought 'secular humanism' to the fore and the Napoleonic wars successfully signalled the rise of a new European order (new Roman empire).

In 1806 the last emperor of the Holy Roman empire (Francis the second) saw that the 'writing was on the wall' and dissolved his empire. This prevented Napoleon from gaining legal, political, and moral authority for ruling over Europe. Napoleon's plans (and hence the devil's plans) were scuppered finally at Trafalgar and Waterloo. Whilst 'Europe' was falling into 'secular humanism' England had had a Christian religious revival which subsequently blessed the world with a period of relative peace, prosperity, the furtherance of the gospel, abolition of slavery and Europe being freed from Napoleonic tyranny.

During the following hundred years the devil got busy laying the foundations of a 'New World Order'. The concept of a 'New World Order' goes back to Plato's Republic and envisages political leadership through a self-selected elite. Progress in industry, trade, and communications meant that global government was a possibility. There was a repeat of the policy pursued at the building of the Tower of Babel: combining political and religious leadership to oppose divine authority, and achieve global governance.

The Tower of Babel was constructed of bricks held together by tar. Tar is not appropriate as a construction material. Figuratively speaking, both the goals of the project and the construction materials were inappropriate. In the writings of Daniel the prophesied forthcoming Roman empire was made from iron and clay. Again, both the objectives and the building materials were wrong. This becomes typical of the works of darkness: both the intentions are wrong and built upon the joining together of 'materials' which do not adhere. Put in a cultural sense, multiculturalism as a tool for achieving the consolidation of nations and world governance will not work.

17.2 The Sixth Bowl Judgement – river Euphrates Dries Up

Rev. 16:12 The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East.

The sixth bowl sees the river Euphrates 'drying up.' This has several prophetic meanings as follows:

- The 'drying up' of the river Euphrates symbolises the decline of the Turkish Ottoman empire (late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries). Nations along the river rebelled against Turkish rule. The Ottoman empire finally collapsed (as a military force) at the battle of Armageddon (19th to 25th September, 1918), near Megiddo, Palestine. The empire ended politically in 1923 with the establishment of the Turkish Republic.
- The river Euphrates is part of the traditional border of the land promised to the Jews. The Jews were largely excluded from Israel after the Bar Kokbar riots. The 'drying up' of the border may be taken to imply the removal of obstacles to the return of the Jews. The river Euphrates symbolises the eastern extent of the land promised to Abraham (Genesis 16:18). Abraham would have crossed the Euphrates on his way to Canaan on his journey to take possession of the promised land.
- The drying up of the river is a copy of the Red Sea and the Jordan river. Ezra and Nehemiah came from Babylon in the east to re-establish Israel.
- In the New Testament wise men came from the east to honour Jesus. They came from Babylon crossing the river Euphrates on the way. The expression '*to make way for the kings of the east*' is related to some Jews leaving Babylon under Nehemiah and Ezra, and the wise men who came to honour Jesus (likely from Babylon itself. east of Israel).

The drying up of the Euphrates therefore symbolises:

- Deliverance (Egypt, wilderness)
- Journeying to Israel to establish the nation
- People coming to Jesus.

17.3 False Prophets

Rev. 16:13 Then I saw three impure spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

The dragon is clearly the devil. The beast is an ungodly empire. Frogs are unclean animals (according to Jewish law). The symbology means false or unclean speech. The prophecy is fulfilled in the rise of 'Christian' cults, false religions, and various forms of socialism from Marxism to Naziism and Fascism, evolutionary and uniformitarian theories, and negative criticism of the Bible (liberal; theology). This part of the Sixth Bowl Judgement focusses on Europe rather than the Middle East.

Frogs were one of the plagues of Egypt. The Egyptian god Heqet was associated with the annual flooding of the Nile. The association with the Euphrates drying up speaks of irony on the part of the author of Revelation: the river upon which the frog-god depended was drying up. This represents the rise of intellectual opposition to the secular lies of the false prophets of the Enlightenment.

The reference to 'false prophet' should be interpreted against the biblical descriptions of false prophets as follows:

- In 1 Kings 13 a false prophet contradicted a message given to a 'man of God' by saying that God had changed His mind over a forthcoming judgement. The genuine prophet ('man of God') died.
- In 1 Kings 22 the Israelites were told by their prophets that they would be assured of victory against the Syrians. The consequence was the defeat of the king of Israel.
- In Jeremiah 28 a false prophet predicted that divine judgement would not take place against Jerusalem and that Nebuchadnezzar would go back by the way he came. False prophets predicted 'peace, peace' and there was no peace.
- Jesus warned of false prophets as recorded in Matthew 24. False prophets assured the people of victory over the Romans. The Fall of Jerusalem in AD70 took place anyway.
- Bar-Kokhba predicted victory against the Romans in the late AD120s. The outcome was the annihilation of Israel and mass deportation of the Jews.

There is a consistent theme here: false prophets contradict the threat of divine judgement.

During the nineteenth century Utopian socialist ideals emerged from the writings of Karl Marx. This false prophet of atheism foresaw a victorious class struggle which would result in the evolution of an ideal society. 'Revolutionary change' rather than 'repentance from sin' was the message. The consequences were and are disastrous.

17.4 A Further Response to the Sixth Bowl Judgement – Mobilisation for War

Rev 16:14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

The reference to 'demonic spirits performing signs' repeats a warning given in 2 Thessalonians 2:9. That warning was fulfilled in AD70 in Jerusalem where false 'miracles' were performed – according Josephus' *Jewish Wars*. The warning in Revelation is about the supernatural forces at work in the false prophets, priests, and kings.

The reference to the 'kings of the earth' is taken from Lam 4:12:

Lam 4:12 The kings of the earth ...would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy should have entered into the gates of Jerusalem. (KJV)

The prophecy was fulfilled at the invasion of Israel by the Babylonians (and allies) in the early sixth century BC. The expression 'kings of the earth' therefore represents the traditional enemies of the Jews among surrounding nations.

The expression 'whole world' refers to the geographical extent of the ancient Roman empire. The Greek word implies the 'inhabited earth' of the Roman empire not the whole planet. A different Greek word is used to describe the 'whole' earth.

Similarly Jeremiah 25:26:-

Jer 25:26 And all the kings of the north, far and near, one with another, and all the kingdoms of the world, which are upon the face of the earth: and the king of Sheshach shall drink after them.

Again, in both cases, the kings represent the traditional enemies of Israel – not those of the entire planet but those of the 'known' or 'inhabited' world.

Two groups of peoples are foreseen: those geographically near and those who are part of the Roman empire. In the former case these would be the Ottomans. The Ottomans occupied Palestine, formerly Israel. The conquering forces were led by descendants of the most distant Roman colony - Britannia.

The expression 'the great day of God Almighty' is an expansion of the 'day of the Lord.' In scripture 'the day of the Lord' refers to a time of limited judgement against a particular nation. The final judgement and the resurrection of the dead is described much later in Revelation. What we are seeing here is the climax of the 20th judgement.

Rev 16:15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

Jesus describes his forthcoming judgement of Jerusalem (AD70) as one which takes place at night. Hence people were 'without clothes' due to being asleep. The First World War emerged very quickly, with little warning of what was to come.

The reference to Jesus coming like a thief is based on Old Testament and New Testament scriptures:

Joel 2:9 They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief.

1Th 5:2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. (Context: forthcoming Fall of Jerusalem AD70)

The reference in Joel is to the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians and the reference in Thessalonians to the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans (AD70). Taken together, the two references and the prophecy in Revelation speak of a day when Israel will be invaded.

The second part of Rev 16:15 refers us back to the letter to the Laodicean church (Rev. 3:14). European society was materially wealthy but spiritually poor. The benefits of industrialisation and trade had similarly made the people of the 18th and 19th centuries materialistic and but the false messages of the 'frogs' had made society less spiritual.

World War I appeared quite suddenly in history. This was the war that was supposed to be over by Christmas. The world was massively misled concerning what was to come.

The war on the Western Front became stalemate. On 10th December 1916 the Germans proposed an armistice. The armistice proposal was denied.

Under the Sykes-Pico agreement, the Middle East was to be carved up between the British and the French. Britain and France needed access to middle eastern oil reserves. The armistice was denied to prolong the war in the Middle East.

A consequence of prolonging the First World War was that size million people died during the reminder of the war. The cost of Franco-British imperialism was very high. The innocent and armed forces civilians were the ones who suffered.

17.5 Climax to the Sixth Bowl Judgement – The War

Rev 16:16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

The word 'Armageddon' (Mount Megiddo) is 'Megiddo' in the original Greek text (Both in the Majority text and Critical text). When scripture is used to interpret scripture, it is necessary in this instance to refer to 'Megiddo' rather than a nearby mountains (like Carmel or Tabor). Megiddo is referred to several times in the Old Testament but the most appropriate references are: -

- Judges 5, where Canaanites were destroyed in a battle by the Jews. The Canaanites were traditional enemies of the Jews.
- 2 Chronicles 35, where Josiah, an otherwise righteous king, disobeyed God and was killed.
- 2 Kings 9, where Ahaziah, an apostate king was killed.

These fit in with the battle of Megiddo which took place between 19th and 25th September 1918. The battle was between the British Army which represented the allied powers and the Turkish army which represented the 'local' Middle Eastern powers.

The Ottoman empire was the successor to the Byzantine empire (fell 1453), which was the successor to the Roman/Byzantine empire (dissolved AD1453), which was the successor to the Greek empire (defeated 280-275BC), which was the successor to the Medo-Persian empire (conquered 331BC) which was the successor to Babylon (conquered 539BC).

The Ottoman empire was the last descendant in a line of dynasties going back to Babylon. The Ottoman empire commenced to decline in 1683 when Christian forcers from the west defeated the Ottomans on September 12th at the Battle of Vienna. These number five empires in total, a number which will be enlarged upon later when 'the beast' of chapter 17 is considered.

In summary, the sixth bowl of wrath began to take effect in the Middle East in 1683 and concluded in the Middle East in 1918.

17.6 Prelude to Twenty First Judgement – the Seventh Bowl of Wrath

Rev 16:17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. ¹⁸ And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.

The period following the First World War saw mixed success for the kingdom of darkness. Although a terrible regime had been put in place in Russia, which proceeded to expand over eastern Europe, Europe itself saw a measure of growth, peace, and prosperity. There was no European tyranny – just yet.

The British empire had been damaged by the war: loss of trade with the commonwealth countries had caused those countries to develop other trading relationships. Industry had been damaged and there were

crippling war debts. Nonetheless, influence in the Middle East for both the French and the British preserved their empires - for the time being.

Three significant political developments took place in Europe: Fascism and Naziism united to build a new Roman empire, and the League of Nations formed to try to establish a new world political order (starting in Europe). The possibility of a European economic community was also floated at this time. Outside Europe, Japan was flexing its muscle and seeking domination of east Asia (invasion of Manchuria, 1931).

Rev 16:19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

World War Two comprised three globalist and internationalist rivals: the 'free' world of Britain and the United States, the German/Italian/Japanese alliance, and the Soviets. To understand the prophetic significance of these, one must appreciate what 'the Great City' is. The expression 'Great City' is further described in the following scriptures:

- Jeremiah 22 & Lamentations 1: In both cases the reference is to Jerusalem following its fall to the Babylonians.
- Jonah: references to Nineveh, which was full of paganism.
- Revelation 11:8 and 14:8: in both cases Europe under papal domination. These two scriptures refer respectively to the beginning and conclusion of the Reformation in Europe.

The division of the 'great city' into three parts refers to the division of the world between the allies, Russian, and German-supporting powers in the Second World War. This imagery is drawn from the Fall of Jerusalem which was divided between the forces of John of Giscal, Simon bar Giora, and the Romans.⁴⁸ The three-fold division lasted only 4 weeks as the Romans were eventually victorious but amid great loss of life. The Second World War was fought mainly in Europe but most of the nations of the world were drawn into it one way or another.

'*Babylon came in remembrance before God*' is an ironic reflection of 'Noah was remembered by God.' Noah and his family were brought to safety but Babylon is doomed.

The reference to the '*wine of fierceness of God's wrath*' is taken from Jeremiah 32:15.

Jeremiah 32:15 Thus said the Lord God of Israel; Take the cup of this unmixed wine from mine hand, and thou shalt cause all the nations to drink, to whom I send thee.

Rev 16:20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

Rev 16:20 is taken from flood imagery – Noahs' flood. The general judgement of the Second World War and its aftermath saw the defeat of the left-wing totalitarian regimes (Naziism, Fascism), the defeat of Japanese imperialism, the defeat of Chinese imperialism, the decline of the British empire due to the Suez Crisis (1956), the loss of many eastern European countries due to the expansion of the Soviet empire, France lost some of her colonies and several African countries became independent, the 1973 Oil Crisis gave prominence to middle eastern politics and the decline of the political influence gained under the Sykes-Picot agreement.

The Soviet Union fell in 1991. Newly liberated countries in Europe joined yet another attempt to re-create the Roman empire -the European Economic Community. The United Nations was formed as a 'world government' in waiting.

Communist China is now world dominant, subjugating nations through bribery, corruption, debt-diplomacy, and military threats. The European Union is on its last legs: Brexit plus the inevitable cracks due to trying to make 'iron stick to clay' through multiculturalism in 'Europe', are appearing. Political Islam is becoming increasingly influential.

⁴⁸ Jewish Wars, Josephus, Book 5.

The globalist elites of 'The West' have come into the open from their Bilderberger secret conferences into the World Economic Forum: all those conspiracy theorists seem to have been right all along. The 'Great City' is still divided between differing competing factions seeking world government. It seems that the devil is hedging his bets as to which regime will achieve the objective of de-throning Jesus: the 'real' world leader. But what of the future? Refer to Revelation 17 for the answer.

18. Babylon, the Beast and the Whore

Rev 17:1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:

John spoke to one of the seven angels who had one of the seven vials (bowls). Which angel? And by extension, which vile or bowl? The fact that John was speaking to one of the angels previously described in Chapter 16 shows that the forthcoming events are linked to the events described earlier; we are not looking at a new phase in history but a continuation of previous judgements. At the end of Chapter 17 the fall of Babylon is described.

The expression 'great whore' is a figurative expression of idolatry (Isaiah 57:3). The expression 'many waters' and other details in this passage refer to Jeremiah 51:55 where the fall of Babylon is described as though being overtaken by a flood. The fact that 'the whore' is sitting on 'many waters' is a reference to 'many nations' (Isaiah 17:13) and a sign of upcoming judgement ('waters' reflects Noah's flood). Babylon was the principal city of the world's first empire. The vision is therefore that of the fall of another empire - the world's last.

So, who or what is the 'Whore of Babylon'? The picture of the judgement of the whore is taken from Nahum 3. The context in Nahum 3 is that of judgements against Nineveh because of its witchcraft and 'selling' of nations. The 'waters' are defined in Revelation 17:15 as 'many nations'. The picture of the woman sitting on many waters is a parody of Jesus who walked on water; the implication is that 'the whore' is mimicking Jesus. 'Spiritual prostitution' is idolatry.

...Rev 17:2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. 3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

There are several scriptural references to the 'kings of the earth,' perhaps Psalm 2 is the best known. These kings represent anti-Christian powers. The 'kings of the earth' is also a reference to Jeremiah 51:7 where the 'kings of the earth' are those who were under the influence of the spirit of Babylon; they invaded and took Jerusalem. By extension in this context the 'kings of the earth' may not extend to the entire world but only to those who are under the beast's (whore's) influence i.e., those seeking an alternative kingdom to that of Christ – a new Babylon.

The 'great city' that rules over the 'kings of the earth' has been discussed previously. Formerly it represented various pagan-dominated cities (Jerusalem, Nineveh, Babylon both literally and as Europe figuratively). The 'great city' rules over the kings. This is the reverse of the proper order of governance: kings should rule over cities. The 'great city' represents the aspiration of political leaders who do not know God; their loyalty is to the ideal of world government.

We are considering something that has a religious basis (not Christian), with implications of violence and international influence. Political leaders have chosen to engage with this 'entity' and many peoples have suffered due its activities. This can be seen from the now familiar reference to the 'wine of wrath.'

The picture of the 'woman on the beast' is a parody of a scene from the legend 'The Rape of Europa'. According to the legend, Europa (who gave her name to Europe) was abducted by the Zeus, who had disguised himself as a white bull (in some versions, a chestnut-coloured bull). They had relations and the result was the 'Minotaur' of Crete. If the progeny of a virgin and a god was the Minotaur of Crete, what would be the offspring of the 'Whore of Babylon' and 'The Beast'?

The expression 'the wilderness' could be a reference to the wilderness through which the Hebrews wandered. The reference can provide a geographical clue to the meaning of the prophecy.

The word 'fornication' in this context is the allure of world government. This is the ultimate form of idolatry in which man is his own god. The opening statement in this passage refers to political leaders who saw ancient Babylon as the model for political organisation of mankind. In the Babylonian context the 'earth' was the extent of the 'civilized world' i.e., Babylonia. In our day 'globalists' have the same agenda but their ambition is to control the entire world.

Several organizations are in competition to achieve global governance: the freemasons, the illuminati (perhaps), the Bilderbergers, the World Economic Forum, Communist China, the United Nations, 'political' Islam and a recently emerged 'BRICS' grouping: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. There is no shortage of candidate organisations and movements competing for world domination.

'The wilderness' describes the territory in which the Hebrew people sojourned after leaving Egypt. The land is in the Sinai Peninsula.

The colour scarlet is symbolic of blood. So, we are considering some entity which is violent. Which 'candidate' countries or movements already have blood on their hands?

We have encountered the 'beast with seven heads and ten horns' before - Revelation 13. Following the fall of the Roman empire in AD476, the only civil structure that was left was the Church of Rome. The territory of the western Roman empire ultimately divided into ten kingdoms (hence ten horns on the beast), seven of which were under Christian kings, the remainder under pagan kings. The last of the three pagan kings were conquered by an army 'borrowed' from the related Byzantine empire. The Roman empire was then fully re-constituted in territorial, political, and religious terms under one leader.

What we see in Revelation 17 is the return of 'the beast' which is a reincarnation of demonic imperialism, copying the Roman empire. The ten kings may represent ten nations which will subjugate themselves to the authority of the re-emergent beast. The beast of Revelation 13 had both temporal power and spiritual (religious) authority. So also, likely will be the next version of the Roman empire.

Rev 17:4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication.

The territory of the wilderness through which the Hebrew people journeyed for 40 years has since become rich.

The woman is exceedingly wealthy. The reference to the 'golden cup' refers to Belshazzar's Feast (Daniel 5:1-4). Vessels from the temple in Jerusalem were used to worship the pagan gods of the Babylonians, whilst the city was under siege by the Medes and Persians. Shortly after, Belshazzar was deposed by the invading Medes and Persians. In the same way that golden cups from the temple in Jerusalem were used to toast the pagan gods of Babylon, thereby incurring divine indignation and the fall of Babylon, so also the 'new' Babylon will fall.

Rev 17:6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

What may characterise the 'Whore of Babylon' such that those 'who know the times' may recognise it? The Fall of Jerusalem (AD70) was understood by the Church beforehand; the fall of ancient Babylon and ancient Jerusalem likewise. From the specific prophecies above we may conclude:

- it is spiritual/religious,
- it is wealthy,
- it has international political influence,
- it engages in trade,
- it persecutes Christians,
- it is a successor to the Ottoman Empire,
- geographically it may be associated with the 'wilderness'.

The traditional Protestant / Reformed theological view is that Revelation 17 and 18 refer to the Catholic church. However, this is not at all likely in contemporary history. Christians are the most persecuted people in the world. Again, which nations or religions have blood on their hands?

Rev 17:7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. 8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

The expression 'bottomless pit' has been used before in Revelation 9. There, the angel who opened the pit released spiritual forces which conquered the Byzantine empire. The implication is that the next version of the Roman empire would rise in a similar way.

An interregnum period is foreseen between the next 'beast' and the previous beast. This point is developed further below.

Those who 'wonder' are those whose names are not written in the book of life. The names of Christians are written in the book of life. So, Christians will understand these times when they come.

The 'perdition' connection is considered below.

Rev 17:9 And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.

Sometimes Bible commentators have chosen to misread 'seven mountains' for 'seven hills' and pointed to the city of Rome as the new Babylon. There are two cities lying amid seven mountains: one in Scandinavia (Bergen) and the other in Sinai.

Rev 17:10 And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.

The kings represent kingdoms. The five fallen are: the Babylonian empire, the Medo-persian empire, the Greek empire under Alexander the Great, the Roman empire including its legal and historical extension - the Babylonian empire, and finally the Ottoman empire. The sixth 'king' is the political and religious successor to the Ottoman empire. Just as the Ottoman empire was coming to an end, a new empire was being formed.

In October 1917 the Russia revolution led to the eventual formation of the Soviet Union. The Communists' final victory did not take place until 1921. The Soviet Union dissolved exactly 70 years later. This number of years is of biblical significance. So why did so many countries languish for up to 70 years under communism? Divine judgement for anti-Jewish persecution both in Russia and eastern Europe perhaps

Rev 17:11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

If we take the Soviet Union to be the sixth 'king' then there is currently an 'interregnum' until the seventh and eighth 'kings' appear. A similar 'interregnum' also appears earlier in Revelation. Following the fall of the Roman empire in AD476, the ten successor kingdoms were not consolidated under a common ruler for several years. After this time another 'beast' emerged. So, we see a repeat of an historical pattern.

There are several references to 'Perdition' in the New Testament. These are helpful in providing clues to the circumstances of the last empire and its king. The following analysis is based on a presumed consistency in the use of language and theological concepts throughout scripture, and the consistent application of divine judgement in similar situations, and when considering similar types of people.

- John 17:12 states that Judas Iscariot was destined for perdition. Judas betrayed Jesus. Judas Iscariot's motives are not clearly defined. However, it has been speculated that Judas wanted to 'engineer' a confrontation between Jesus and the religious leaders, force Jesus to reveal himself as the Messiah, the king of Israel, and hence force a confrontation with the Romans to establish the messianic age. This explains how after successfully betraying Jesus, he tried to offer his fees back, since what had happened (the crucifixion) was presumably not what Judas had intended.
- The 'Man of Lawlessness' (Pauls' second letter to the Thessalonians, Chapter 2). He has previously been identified as John of Gischala. Gischala provoked a fight between the Jews and the Romans (AD70), and the Jews lost. In the same way the woman on the beast wages war against Christ and loses (Revelation 17:14).
- 1 Timothy 6:9 describes those who have an extreme love of wealth as going to perdition. The 'whore of Babylon' has great wealth (Revelation 17:4).
- Philippians 1:28 states that the adversaries of the gospel will go to perdition. 'Scarlet' is the colour of the blood of the saints, implying persecution of those who follow Christ. This is also matched in the description of the whore and the beast in Revelation 17:6.
- Hebrews 10:39 speaks of those who have heard the gospel but rejected it. This corresponds to the beast being full of blasphemous names. This parallel suggests that the final king may be an apostate, or an anti-Christ.
- 2 Peter 5:7 speaks of those who reject the possibility of a coming judgement by God. The false prophets had the same message. This is expounded upon later in Revelation 18:7 where the whore never sees herself as being a 'widow' i.e., never facing loss or 'judgement'. This implies that the final king and his 'beast' do not contemplate ever coming to an end. They, too, go into 'perdition'.

'Perdition' is getting a little crowded.

Rev 17:12 And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. 13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

The 'kings' give their power to the beast. In the same way the 'kings' of the 10 kingdoms gave their authority to the newly re-emerged Roman empire - Revelation 13 (verse 4 in particular). There are sufficient clues in these chapters to recognise clearly these events when they take place, provided of course that one's name is written in the Book of Life.

In Revelation 17 we see a 'third beast' which resembles the first and second Roman empires. The first Roman empire (western half) divided into ten kingdoms upon dissolution. The second Roman empire occupied the same territory as the first. The third empire will be a re-construction built on ten kingdoms i.e., as a reversal of the fall of the Roman empire.

Rev 17:14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

In this scripture we see a repeat of the battle of the Milvian bridge where Constantine defeated paganism. May we anticipate a future Constantine acting as a proxy for Jesus who will defeat the 'beast'? Or will Jesus come literally in person and fight 'the beast'?

Rev 17:16 And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. 17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

The fall of the final incarnation of the Roman empire will die through self-destruction. A kind of political suicide. The first Roman empire was based on a unifying government as distinct to a unifying culture, religion, ethnicity, or 'race.' In Daniel Chapter 7 it was predicted to be made from 'iron mixed with clay'. This is prophetic language that indicates the lack of social cohesion within the empire.

The last Roman empire will destroy itself due to the same lack of social cohesion between the 10 'kingdoms', and the dominant power. 'Multiculturalism' and international political consolidation fail again. This goes back to the Tower of Babel: made from materials which would not stick together, to achieve a goal that cannot stand up to God.

The diverse political, cultural, and religious structures cannot co-exist. The cracks between the bricks will become evident sooner rather than later. All attempts at achieving global government will fail since the divine order for human governance is the independent nation, country, kingdom, or tribal 'homeland' based on national self-determination. This has been the case since the fall of the Tower of Babel.

The evolution of the last 'Roman Empire' will follow that of the first. The 'four horses of the apocalypse' represent conquest (white horse), famine, economic collapse, and death (other horses).

Jesus will return to sort out the mess and establish his Millennial kingdom. The devil will be bound and prevented from establishing any more empires for a while. After this he will be allowed to try again. This time there will be a war and the final judgement.

Then the kingdom of Christ will come in its fullness.

Later prophecies after Revelation 18 lie too far into the future to be considered with any accuracy.

19. So, What is Going to Happen?

To respond to the question 'what is going to happen?' we may commence with sorting out what is **not** going to happen.

- There is no imminent return of Christ. There are too many outstanding prophecies which need to be fulfilled. 'The Day of the Lord' which came like a 'thief in the night' was a prophecy about the forthcoming wrath of God against those Jews in Jerusalem in AD70 who did not regard Jesus as the Messiah.
- There is no 'Tribulation' against the church. The tribulation of Matthew 24 was a prophecy about AD70.
- The 'great falling away' described in Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians may be the same mentioned in John's first letter, or to non-Christian Jews in Israel circa AD70.
- The antichrist of John's first letter was probably Nero but there are also other possibilities. Either way, there is no need to consider that this antichrist is part of our future.
- The antichrists described figuratively in Daniel and Revelation have been known within the Protestant churches for centuries. There is no reason to believe that the present 'Pontifex Maximus' or any future Pontifex Maximus poses a great threat to the contemporary or future church. Types of 'antichrist' will appear from time to time, however.
- 'The mark of the beast' is a figurative expression which describes the identity of certain individuals in the twelfth century.
- 'The Man of Lawlessness' was John of Giscala who took over the temple of God and abused the high priestly offices in AD70. Types of 'men of lawlessness' will appear from time to time: men who abuse religion for political gain.

By contrast, what is going to happen? At present, divine history is completing Revelation chapter 16. Isaac Newton noted that the full meaning of prophetic predictions only become apparent at the time of their fulfilment; the Bible is not a horoscope.

We can conclude that a new empire will emerge with one dominant political leader and ten associated countries. This will be a repeat of what happened after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, after AD476. This empire will resemble the Ottoman Empire. It will destroy itself through internal strife. (The self-destruction of political entities that are in conflict against God is common throughout scripture and secular history). There is a subtle possibility that the new Babylon will finally be destroyed in the same way as the biblical Babylon: invasion by the successors to the Medes and Persians. The prophecy against Babylon given in Isaiah 13 would then be fulfilled in full.

The duration of the empire will be a 'little while' according to Revelation 17:10. No indication is given as to what 'a little while' means but prophetic periods in scripture include a generation (40 years) and a lifetime (70 years).

The future of the contemporary state of Israel is a little clearer:

14:1 Behold, the day of Jehovah comes, and your spoil shall be divided in your midst.

2 For I will gather all nations to battle against Jerusalem; and the city shall be taken, and the houses plundered, and the women raped. And half of the city shall go into exile, and the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

3 And Jehovah shall go out and fight against those nations, like the day He fought in the day of battle.

4 And His feet shall stand in that day on the Mount of Olives...

(Zechariah 13:7 – 14:4, KJV)

And saying these things, as they watched, He was taken up. And a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

(Acts 1:9-11, KJV)

16: 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.

17 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 we shall ever be with the Lord.

(1 Thessalonians 4: 16-17, KJV)

I saw in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him.

(Daniel 7:13, KJV)

Behold, He comes with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, and those who pierced Him will see Him, and all the kindreds of the earth will wail because of Him. Even so, Amen.

(Revelation 1:7, KJV)

1:For, behold, in those days and in that time, when I will bring again the exiles of Judah and Jerusalem, 2 I will also gather all nations and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat. And I will fight with them there for My people and for My inheritance Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and divided My land. 3 And they have cast lots for My people, and have given a boy for a prostitute, and sold a girl for wine, so that they might drink.

(Joel 3:1-3, KJV)

Mat 25:31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

Mat 25:32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

(Mathew 25:31-32, KJV)

The sequence of events is as follows:

The present state of Israel will be invaded and the consequences will be quite gruesome (Zechariah 13:7-14:5).

Jesus returns (1 Thessalonians 4:16) and the righteous dead are raised (Vs 17). Jesus and his church enter into judgement of the nations (Daniel 7, 1Thessalonians 4:17, Revelation 1:7, Mathew 25:31-32). The form that the judgement takes is that of causing nations attacking Israel to fight among themselves (Joel 3). The 'Valley of Jehoshaphat' (Joel 3:2) does not exist. The reference is to the gathering of nations against Israel is taken from 2 Chronicles 20 when the traditional enemies of Israel gathered in the valley of the Dead Sea and warred among themselves. The theme of Israel's enemies destroying each other also occurs in the stories of Gideon and Jehoshaphat.

The next coming of Jesus will not be an unexpected event in the lives of believers. We may not know the day nor the hour but the preceding events will tell us the year and the month.

Subsequent to the judgement of the nations, Jesus' millennial reign commences. There is then a final battle between good and evil. The non-Christian dead are raised and the final judgement of unbelievers commences. These events are a very long way into the future.

20. Conclusion

Futurist eschatology is bankrupt. It does not explain the past nor have any of its predictions come true.

Substantial prophecy claimed for the future can be shown to have been fulfilled in the years up to and including AD70 (Matthew 24-25, Paul's letters, John's letters, Revelation).

Prophecies from Daniel, Matthew, Mark and Luke's gospels incorrectly associated with the 'End Times' have been shown to have been fulfilled up to the end of the first century AD. We are not living in the 'Last Days' the 'End Times' or 'the last hour'; those times ended centuries ago.

There is no future super-Antichrist who becomes a world political and religious leader. The Antichrist of John's first letter was probably Nero. Nero appeared in the 'final hour' just before Jerusalem fell.

The Man of Lawlessness was a different person to the Antichrist. Historically, a case can be made for identifying him as John of Giscala.

The prophecies in the second half of Revelation 16 cover the period from the 19th century to date.

The 'Sixth Bowl of Wrath' concluded with the fall of the Ottoman empire and the demise of many European empires (1918). Following the fall of the Ottoman Empire 'the great city was divided into three'. The Ottoman empire was divided three-fold and its successor re-appears in Revelation 17.

The 'Seventh Bowl of Wrath' concluded with the end of the Second World War the fall of Soviet communism and Maoism.

Revelation 17 and 18 feature a re-emergence of the 'great city' of Revelation 16. It will include an alliance of ten 'kingdoms'. The ten member states will destroy 'the whore' and with it the infernal aspirations for world government – until the end of the Millennial reign of Jesus.

The coming of Christ will be preceded by tumultuous events involving Israel. Believers will be aware of Jesus' coming weeks or months in advance due to the nature of these events.

A final battle between good and evil will at the end of the millennial reign of Jesus when the living, the dead and fallen angels will be judged by Jesus and his church.

Epilogue

This essay began by considering the potential for prophecy to be self-fulfilling, possibly in a damaging way. This is the main theme in Geston's book 'Out of the Mouth of the Dragon'. Futurist eschatology – false and ill-conceived – has a negative impact on the contemporary church. This essay does not portray a very positive view of the future of mankind in the short to medium term. Nonetheless the church remains intact and comes out victorious in the end. Futurism does not see a positive future for the church.

Appendix-1: Occurrences and Meaning of the Expression 'Day of the Lord'

Isaiah 2:12	Babylonian invasion 597/587BC
Isaiah 13:6	Babylonian invasion 597/587BC
Isaiah 13:9	Babylonian invasion 597/587BC
Isaiah 63:4	Vengeance on Edom (enlarged in Ezekiel 25 and Obadiah below) 586BC
Jeremiah 46:10	Destruction of Egyptian forces by the Babylonians
Ezekiel 13:5	Babylonian invasion 597/587BC
Ezekiel 30:3	Destruction of Egypt and her allies by the Babylonians
Joel 1:15	Destruction of the land of Judah by locusts 9 th century BC
Joel 2:1	Destruction of the land of Judah by locusts 9 th century BC
Joel 2:11	Destruction of the land of Judah by locusts 9 th century BC
Joel 2:31	Destruction of the land of Judah after the restoration from captivity and after the Day of Pentecost (See Acts 2:20). In fact, AD70.
Joel 3:14	Judgement of the earth after the restoration of Israel and at the time when Jesus rules from Zion
Amos 5:18	Judgements against Israel, 8 th century BC
Amos 5:20	Judgements against Israel, 8 th century BC
Obadiah 1:15	Judgements against Edom, 6 th century BC
Zephaniah 1:7	Babylonian invasion 597/587BC
Zephaniah 1:14	Babylonian invasion 597/587BC
Zechariah 14:1,2	Fall of Jerusalem specifically mentioned. Circumstances are uncertain but the prophecy remains outstanding.
Malachi 3:1-3	Possibly the AD70 judgement by Jesus when the believing and unbelieving Jews were separated.
Malachi 4:5	Prediction of a day of judgement after the coming of Elijah (John the Baptist) (Therefore AD70)

Acts 2:20	Prediction of a day of judgement after the Day of Pentecost (Therefore AD70)
2 Corinthians 1:14	Uncertain
1 Thessalonians 5:2-4	After AD50 but Paul expected it to be within the lifetimes of the members of the Thessalonian church (Therefore AD70)
2 Peter 3:10	The Fall of Jerusalem. The prophetic quotation is taken from Joel 2. The language is largely figurative.
Revelation 1:10	John was in the spirit 'on the Lord's day'. The expression could equally be translated 'on the Day of the Lord'. Such a translation would be in keeping with the theme of judgement evident throughout Revelation.

Appendix: 2 List of the 21 Judgements of Revelation

Taken from E B Elliot's 'The Last Prophecy' excepting Judgements 20 and 21 which are the author's own interpretation of world events

Number	Group	Type	Dates
1	Seal - 1	Judgement against pagan nations by the Roman Empire. White horse.	Roman emperors Nerva to Commodus 96 to 180
2	Seal - 2	Judgement against the Roman Empire. Red horse. Civil discord.	From Roman emperors Commodus to Diocletian 180 to 284
3	Seal - 3	Judgement against the Roman Empire. Black horse. Inflation, economic failure, poverty.	
4	Seal - 4	Judgement against the Roman Empire. Dappled horse. Plague, death.	
5	Seal - 5	The fall of pagan governance in Rome.	The fall of Diocletian 311
6	Seal - 6	Dissolution of Roman paganism under Constantine.	Constantine established as emperor. The Edict of Milan.311
7	Seal - 7	Barbarians outside the Christianised Roman Empire kept at bay despite rising apostasy within the empire.	311-395
8	Trumpet - 1	Gothic invasions begun. Barbarian invasion from the north.	395-565
9	Trumpet - 2	Barbarian invasions from the west.	
10	Trumpet - 3	Further barbarian advances.	
11	Trumpet - 4	Further barbarian advances.	
12	Trumpet - 5	The rise of Islam	612-755
13	Trumpet - 6	The Turko-Muslim invasions	1063
14	Trumpet - 7	Revolutions and turmoil in Europe	1789- The seven Vial judgements below are an extension to seventh trumpet judgement.
15	Vial (Bowl) - 1	French revolution	1789

16	Vial (Bowl) - 2	Campaign of destruction of European naval power by the British.	To 1815
17	Vial (Bowl) - 3	Franco-German war	1792
18	Vial (Bowl) - 4	Napoleonic power rises to its height.	1809
19	Vial (Bowl) - 5	End of papal power	1809
20	Vial (Bowl) - 6	Demise of the Turkish empire, demise of European imperial power.	1820-1918
21	Vial (Bowl) - 7	Second World war, communist oppression.	1938- 1989