

Howards Corner

Age of the Gentiles

Introduction

The Bible which gives us the Word of God has been written by the Hebrew people and little if any has been written by gentiles. The Word of God therefore reflects primarily what is happening and will happen to the Jews as it refers to prophesy. After the Messiah (Jesus) came then the Bible both the Old and New Testament is for all men both Jews and gentiles that will believe that Jesus came to restore a right relationship with God the Father for us all.

This relationship is in both the Old Testament and New Testament but is given in a veiled manner. The Old Testament is still accurate and valid for understanding of God and his plan for us but the Law which is contained in the first five books of the bible has however been fulfilled by Jesus on the cross and are no longer valid for the believer (Christian) but for the Jewish nation who has not accepted Jesus as the promised Messiah and savior the law is still valid.

Jesus came to fulfill the Law by His shed blood on the cross and therefore the law no longer applies to those who are in Christ Jesus. He said on the cross that "It is finished". That meant that He had completed His work to fulfill the requirements of the Law and had taken on the penalty for all sin for all who believe in Him. He then gave to those that are in Him the gift of the Holy Spirit and His word to lead us into righteous behavior. I will explain this in detail in my writings. Jews as a nation however did not accept Him as Messiah and then God opened the way for both believing Jews and gentiles to come into His kingdom.

The nation of Israel is however still under the Law because they rejected the Messiah, and their nation was scatter to all the world but there will be a day when God again calls the nation Israel back into being and it has happened in 1948 to a certain degree. I will talk about this also in detail later in my writings. But individual Jews can and do accept Jesus as Messiah and therefore can be saved because they are now not under the law of sin and death but are under grace provided by Jesus's shed blood on the cross. This is the same as for all believing Christians today.

I will attempt to show you how all this ties together using common language that all can understand. I will try to see through the veil or shadow that is in the Word both Old and New testaments that is, if the Lord lifts the veil for me to see properly. I will start to tell you the story of Israel first and then bring in the gentiles at the start of Christianity. I am not ignoring the long history of Israel and how they got to the point of going into captivity but for this writing I will focus on the point where Israel is in captivity in Babylon at about 605 B C and will be picking up some points as I write but will not tell the whole story prior to that time.

As I try to tell this story in an understandable way I will move with the nation of Israel and the story of the **Age of the Gentiles** to a point when the Church began, and the **Church Age** begins. At that point I will move back and forth because the stories merge but are two separate stories although they are going to have a lot in common in the end times. The Church age will end just shortly before the final 7 years of the Age of the Gentiles. So, stay with me as I try to lead you through to the end of both ages.

The story of the Age of the Gentile

I start the story of the “Age of the Gentile” shortly after it had begun. We would not have known the story except that God had revealed the story by way of a dream which brings Daniel into the story.

We find in Daniel the events that are to happen to the Hebrew people and some of the things that happened to Daniel while he was in captivity in Babylon. So, when we study especially in the book of Daniel, we must read it from the Jewish perspective. God has revealed to Daniel the future history of the Jewish people through visions, dreams, and visitations from Angels. He also revealed the structure of the gentile government that will rule the world as it relates to the Jews. The prophecies of this book have been and will continue to be accurate. Revelation and the words of Jesus in the New Testament add to our knowledge of the history of the Jews and how the Church and Christianity are to fit into the history of Jews. When properly understood all these words from not only Daniel but all the other Old Testament prophets add to our understanding. You cannot understand Revelation and all the other prophets without the book of Daniel. So, I start with one event that is recorded in chapter 2.

I will attempt to make clear to the people that are called of God these words of Daniel's book. I will try to use words that the common man can understand. My desire is to give you a big picture view of about 2600 years of history as it relates to the Jewish people and how that relates to Christianity. I will not try to cover all the book of Daniel in detail nor to cover the book in the order they are written because they are not written in chronological order. The book is written in segments of events with some events that compliment other events. I will attempt to give you the big picture first and then go back and add in more detail as I go.

The nation of Israel after their failure to worship God and their many rebellions have been given over to captivity into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon. This happened in the year 605 BC when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem and carried away captives. Daniel was one of the captives at a young age. Some believe about 14 years old.

Daniel in the land of Babylon was faced with being under the rule of King Nebuchadnezzar who was foreign to his way of thinking. But he had no choice. He was a captive in this strange land. The Lord gave him favor in the eyes of the King and he was known for having wisdom and insight.

Chapter 2 of the book of Daniel tells us that one night the king had a dream, and it was very disturbing to him. He gathered all the conjurers and seers and wisemen to interpret the dream. He however did not reveal the dream to them but insisted that they reveal the dream and the interpretation to him. They replied that no man can reveal the dream. He insisted that they must tell him the dream and the interpretation. They were told that if they did not, they would be sentenced to death along with all the other wisemen in the kingdom.

When they came to Daniel, He asked for time to pray and ask God for a revelation. He did pray and the Lord gave him the vision of what the king had dreamed. He went forward and asked to see the king and say that he had been given an answer to the vision and that the wise men did not need to be killed.

Daniel started to reveal the dream to king Nebuchadnezzar by saying that no man can reveal the dreams of another person but that the God of heaven had revealed the dream to him.

The dream was that of a giant statue. The head was of gold. The arms and the chest were of silver. The belly and the thighs were of bronze. The legs were of iron and the feet and toes were of iron mixed with clay. Then there was a stone cut out not with human hands that rolled down and destroyed the whole statue crushing the feet and the whole statue until there was no trace left of the statue.



Nebucanezzar
statue.pdf

First Kingdom- Babylon

Daniel went on to explain that the head of the statue which was made of Gold was **Babylon**, and that king Nebuchadnezzar was the head and that the other kingdoms would follow him. God had revealed to Nebuchadnezzar the kingdoms that would follow his kingdom. The kingdom of Babylon was the first kingdom of the **Age of the Gentiles** which began when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Israel and carried off captives. The age of the Gentiles is the time when the nation of Israel was given over to gentile nations to control and occupy at different levels until God ends the age. As we now know by history and by God's Word that age will not end until Christ's second coming.

Second Kingdom- Medes and Persians

With further study in Daniel and with history we get more information to help us understand the rest of the statue. The second kingdom was made of Silver, and it was divided with two arms and chest of the statue. We find in studying that this was the Kingdom of the **Medes and Persians**. During the reign of the Medes and Persians the Jews were released to return to their land after 70 years of captivity but they were not completely free to be an independent nation. They did return to their land and rebuilt the temple and repaired the walls. Read the accounts of Nehemiah and Ezra. They were still under the control of the Medes and Persians until the Medes and Persians were defeated by the next kingdom.

Third Kingdom-Greece

The Medes and Persians were defeated by Alexander the Great of Greece. The nation of **Greece** was then the belly and thighs of the statue which was made of bronze. Alexander was short lived because he died at an early age. His kingdom was divided into four areas and was governed by his four generals. The Kingdom of the North and the Kingdom of the South and the Kingdom of the West and the Kingdom of the East. There is much written in Daniel about this kingdom and how it affected

Israel. I will not try to cover all the details in this writing but at the end I will give you a website that will give you details.

During the Greek reign Israel was still worshiping God and performing sacrifices in the temple. There was one noticeable event that you should know at this point. The details are in Daniel in Chapter 11. You will find the accounts of a most horrible man that conquered Jerusalem and did great evil things to the Jews of that day. He stopped the sacrifice and set up the “abomination of desolation” in the temple and killed, it is said 40000 Jews.

This man was Antiochus Epiphanes who was a foreshadow of the anti-Christ who is to come in the later days of the Age of the Gentiles. The anti-Christ will do similar but worse things in the last 7 years which are the tribulation years and the end of gentile reign. Christ’s return will end all gentile rule in the world for He is “the stone not cut by human hands which comes down to crush the whole statue”. Jesus warned the Jews about the “abomination of desolation” in Matthew 24:15 so they would recognize what was happening and flee Jerusalem in the middle of the seven years of tribulation. This tells us then that Jesus recognizes that there would be a tribulation and there would be an abomination of desolation set up all of which would be future.

This was also the time of the Maccabees revolt and the cleansing of the temple and restoring of the sacrifice. (Study details at versebyverseministry.org)

Fourth Kingdom- Rome

After the Kingdom of Greece, the Romans took control of all the area including Israel. So, the **Romans** became the fourth Kingdom which was made of Iron and the feet and toes were of iron mixed with clay. This was different kind of kingdom which was not ruled by just one nation but continued to exist in different and diverse forms up until today. This kingdom was in rule at the time of Christ's first coming and was the nation that crucified Christ at the insistence of the leaders of Israel.

Now some of the kingdoms that have evolved from the Roman empire have ruled over the land of Israel and the world up until today. Israel has not been an independent self-ruling nation until 1948. This was brought about by a vote of the United Nations. Israel has been in a constant struggle with other nations until today

but is still strongly influenced by the gentile nations and they do not yet have a temple in which to sacrifice.

This establishment of a nation was prophesied in Isaiah 66:7-9. Though it has been misapplied to mean the return from Babylon after the 70 years of exile. Why was it misapplied? That happens often because history has not yet revealed enough information to us, so we try to make it fit some other event. Prophecy cannot be understood if God has not revealed enough information. That is why our doctrines and theology are often wrong because we try to make scripture fit some other event. If our theology is wrong and has come to the wrong end point, we try to make it fit some other end point.

One example of this is the need to make the toes of the statue to fit ten kings that came out of the Roman empire immediately after the fall of Rome. There are attempts to make some of the European kings that followed Rome's fall fit as the ten toes. If this were so, then the stone cut out without human hands would have to fall on them and then the whole statue would be destroyed completely. That did not happen, but the theology was corrected to say that the church was the instrument that destroys these kings and their kingdoms. The church however has not destroyed them but has blended in with them. Then I guess we thought up the idea that the church had replaced the nation of Israel in God's plan and that the church would grow over time to bring about the kingdom of God and Israel was not in the picture at all. This was and is called the Replacement Theology.

Time has passed and God has revealed new information through history that makes us have to relook at our theology if we are not putting our belief in concrete. You must look at prophecy with an open mind and a careful study of the word and history to see these theories do not fit. They do not fit because we have assumed that things happen in prophecy in a continual timeline but that did not happen that way.

You would have to be blind to not see that Israel is in their land again after 2000 years. So, God has now put them back into the picture again. History and scripture have shown us more information and it is time to rethink our theology in the churches. They are based on old theories and are no longer based on scripture and history. Although they are back in the land and have a nation it does not mean that the age of the gentiles is completed because they are still heavily influenced by

gentile nations and that will continue to varying degrees until the anti-Christ makes a covenant with them for 7 years. Because they are back in the land and are a nation does not mean that they are a Messiah believing nation. I will explain further in the following section.

Daniel chapter 9

Now I want to carry you to another chapter in Daniel. In chapter 9 Daniel was given understanding of what was to happen to Israel and when the Messiah was to come. The angel Gabriel was sent to give him this understanding. He said that **“Seventy Weeks” have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophesy, and to anoint the most holy place.”**

These seventy weeks are not seventy weeks of seven days but is seventy sevens of years which is 490 years. Then he is told that the seventy weeks would begin when the decree is issued by the king to rebuild Jerusalem this was decreed in 445 B C. There would be seven weeks and 62 weeks until the Messiah. Then after the 62 weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing. The “prince of the people who is to come” will destroy the city and the sanctuary. All these things did happen as Jesus the Messiah was crucified, dead and buried then was resurrected. The city was destroyed in 70 A D by Rome.

There remains a seven-year period for Israel. There were 7 weeks and 62 weeks which add up to 69 weeks so there is another week prophesied for Israel. It did not happen after the city and sanctuary were destroyed. So, you see sometimes events are not in sequential order. The reason for the gap of time is for the church age to occur.

This 7-year period has not happened yet, but it has been prophesied for them. The scripture goes on to explain that the “prince who is to come” will make a firm covenant with the many for one week but in the middle of the week he will stop the sacrifice and grain offering. This is the missing week and will happen at another future time. This is the one we call today the “anti-Christ”. He will make a covenant with Israel for 7 years but will in the middle of the week (3.5 years) declare himself to be God and will require all to worship him. He will set up a statue in the sanctuary

and it will be an abomination and makes the sanctuary desolate. But he will be destroyed at the return of Jesus.

The one (Antiochus Epiphanes) that I told you about in the Grecian kingdom, that set up the abomination, he was a foreshadow of the anti-Christ. He was recorded in scripture to give us understanding of what will happen in the future. Jesus spoke about the “abomination of desolation” also to give the Jews warning about the time to come in the middle of the week of the covenant with the anti-Christ. They were warned to flee when that happens. Why were they warned to flee if there is not to be another nation Israel in Jerusalem to flee from and how can there be another temple to set up an abomination in? The truth is that there will be another temple built in Jerusalem at some future date. When that happens or shortly before that happens a covenant will be negotiated with Israel by the anti-Christ to last seven years.

If you have understanding and wisdom you will understand that the Jews still have another seven years as a nation that is future, and the scriptures tell us that it will be a “great Tribulation”—a time of Jacobs troubles. They will be put through a fiery furnace as the furnace heat breaks down the impurities and leaves the precious metals. You can read about it in Revelation and in other prophetic writings in the Old Testament. All are not saved. Revelation indicates that two thirds are lost but one third will be saved at that time. Jeremiah tells us that the remnant will finally believe in Jesus as their Messiah and will weep together as one who has lost their only son and then the Lord Jesus will come and set up His Kingdom on earth.

Ministry of Messiah Jesus

Let us go back now to what happened after the Messiah (Jesus) was cut off and has nothing. This Jesus was the Messiah (Christ) and was betrayed by the Nation of Israel and crucified by the Romans at the insistence of the Leaders of the nation Israel. This Jesus had preached his message and had offered proof that He was the Messiah by His ministry of healing and teaching and by many prophetic writings in the Old Testament.

The Jews were expecting someone different than who Jesus appeared to be. They had two thoughts about the Messiah. One was that He would be a suffering Messiah and one was that he would be a king come to deliver them from the Romans and set up His kingdom. They could not see that by rejecting Him as king

and crucifying Him they have made Him the suffering Messiah. They could not see that the possibility of there being two different comings of Jesus. Had they accepted him as Messiah then there would have been no need for a second coming but the kingdom would have been established at that time. However, God knew that they would not accept Jesus. Good thing for us gentiles who then got the message of salvation for us.

They not only were looking for two different Messiahs they had specific signs they were looking for that only the Messiah could perform, and Jesus performed these miracles before them. One of which was healing of leprosy, and another was healing of a demon possessed man blind and mute. The Pharisees saw these and still did not believe.

The first 12 chapters of Matthew Jesus was presenting Himself to the Jews as their Messiah but in chapter 12 He healed a man who was demon possessed blind and mute and the people were amazed and said, "Could this be the son of David?" The Pharisees then said, "**It is only by Beelzebub the prince of demons that this fellow drives out demons**". When they said this, it was a commission of the "Unpardonable Sin" and Israel was no longer to receive the kingdom. After this Jesus began to speak in parables only to Israel. Parables were used from that point on so that the unbelievers would not understand but only the believers would.

There were many other signs and scriptures that had been given such as His birth to a virgin (Isaiah 7:14). John the Baptist came to witness Jesus was the one to come and that He would baptize us with the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament was full of signs to identify the Messiah. Daniel gave the timing of His coming. Remember that I told you about the 70 weeks in Daniel 9. They should have been looking for Him at that time. The problem is that the leadership did not want to find Him because it would end their positions of power. The ordinary people however were looking, and many did receive Jesus as Messiah, but the whole nation wound up being destroyed and dispersed to the world in 70 AD.

This is a lesson for us today. Beware of leaders that do not teach the words of Jesus and rightly divide the word of truth. If we follow them blindly, we will end up going against the will of God and wind up being where they are which is lost.

Jesus continued His ministry knowing that the Pharisees and others were plotting to kill Him. He also knew He was to be betrayed by one of His disciples, but He kept teaching and doing other miracles.

Jesus prophetic teaching

A summarized covering of Matthew 24 and 25 and Luke 21

There are many scriptures in the Old and New Testament that are prophetic and reveal what is ahead in this world and what has happened and what is now happening. It however requires diligent study and seeking the Holy Spirit's guidance to understand. The word of God is veiled so that those unbelievers will not understand but the believers are given understanding. If you are a believer then you should be studying prophecy. These are warnings for the believer not to error in our walk.

Mathew 24 and 25 and Luke 21 are some of these prophetic writings from Jesus' mouth and given to us so that we will understand and not be fooled by the world's ways.

As Jesus was ending His ministry, He told His disciples many of the things that would happen in the future. These are primarily in Matthew chapters 24 and 25 and Luke 21. Jesus explained what would happen to Israel (the destruction of the temple and the city) and the end of the age and His return for the church. It is important to understand that there are parables and teachings that are directed at three different happenings.

Happening one was the destruction of the temple and the city. This is not answered in Matthew but is answered in Luke. Happening two is His return for the church. Happening three is His second coming to judge the world and to set up His Kingdom which is the end of the Age of the Gentiles. These are three different events which has confused the church for a long time.

As the disciples were coming out of the temple with Jesus and the disciples commented on their amazement about the temple buildings and Jesus answered "I tell you the truth. Not one stone will be left on another; everyone will be thrown

down.” Later they asked 1- When will this happen? 2-What will be the sign of your coming? 3- and the end of the age.

The answer that did not have a question.

Matthew 24: 4 through 8 tell us that there will be false Christs and that there will be wars and rumors of war, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places, but all these are the beginning of “birth pangs”.

As the times pass the events of wars and earthquakes and famines and pestilence will increase in frequency and strength like a woman’s birthing process. So, we will see in history a gradual increase in such things until the return for the church and the second coming of Christ to set up His kingdom. We have been seeing these things happening in the last 100 plus years.

So, let us look at some of these items and see if we have some “birth pangs” going on.

World wars

It used to be wars were localized to smaller locations but did not spread to the whole world but now with World War 1 we see many nations being involved and a much larger area. Maps were changed and kingdoms set up and kingdoms taken down. The Ottoman Empire was taken down and the British Empire was raised up. The maps were redrawn for the land of Palestine and the British took over the rule of that land. The British then were favorable to restore the land to the world’s Jews. That did not happen at the end of World War 1 but did happen after World War 2. The world of borders and rulers were changed around the world. God sets up kingdoms and takes down kingdoms.

This has been made possible by increase in transportation and communications. Then within a few years we saw another World War 2 happen and it encompassed a much larger area, and many more countries were involved and even greater increases in transportation and communication abilities and then the atomic bomb was invented and was used for the first time on human beings. We are not sure when the next world war will happen but there are many lesser wars going on and it is just a matter of time until it breaks out on a global scale. Revelation tells us this will happen, and billions will be killed. Study the revelations of the seals in book of

Revelation. After World War 2 the worlds borders were again changed, and one was the Nation of Israel was established in 1948. God sets up kingdoms and takes down kingdoms as He chooses.

Transportation

For ages, the basic transportation was either walking or riding a horse or using sail boats. That has drastically changed and now we have all manner of cars and aircraft and rockets and trains, and fast boats and submarines and we do not know what is coming next. We can now go around the world in a short time. Man carrying space craft can go at lighting speed to other parts of the earth and now to other planets and the moon. What will we do next? Will we be there to do good or evil? I think there will be a limit that God sets on what we can do.

Communication

I guess writing is old but was done by hand using scrolls and other media. Runners were used to get messages to others. Well, all that changed with the printing press. We now see many amazing forms of communication such as computers, television, cell phones, satellites, and internet. All these have exploded over the last century and especially in the last twenty years. These forms of communication are good if they are for good purposes, but they can create much evil. It makes it easier for evil powers to control the population. Remember that fire if used to heat our homes and cook our food are good but if used wrong can bring about much destruction. Birth pangs?

Pestilence

With travel escalating because of faster transportation and faster communication we are exposed to any pestilence that occurs in the world to spread rapidly. We are seeing an example now in our society with Covid 19 and other spreadable diseases. These appear to be escalating more rapidly now. Birth Pangs?

Earthquakes and famines and natural calamities

Jesus said these things would be the beginning of birth pangs. I see these happening at a greater rate than before. A study of earthquakes shows more severe activity in the last few years. Famines and natural calamities are growing in number and severity.

Weather

The natural occurrence of hurricanes and tsunamis and other things are worrying the scientists of today. Many are blaming these things on global warming. But the word warns us that these things will grow in intensity as we get closer to the end of the age.

Israel

The most obvious sign we see is that Israel is now back in their land after 2000 years and they are the center of world attention. They are oppressed on all sides. Jesus said learn the lesson of the fig tree when you see the leaves coming out then the time is right at the door. Israel is often referred to as a fig tree. So, when you see all these things coming together be warned. Israel is our time clock for the end of the age. They have a nation again but do not have a temple to worship in yet.

Question one – When will the temple be destroyed and no stone left on another?

As we read Matthew you do not find the answer as to when question one will happen. In Luke, the question will be answered. Look at Luke 21 and we will find the answer. “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies you will know that its destruction is near.” They will fall by the sword, and they will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled down by the gentiles until the times of the gentiles are fulfilled which is the return of Christ. This was fulfilled in 70 A D when Titus came to destroy the temple and the city, and all the stones were thrown down. You can still see those stones today around the temple site. This was the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written.

They were warned to flee the city also when they see the “abomination of desolation” set up which is in Matthew 24:15. They will not be captured and taken as prisoners to the nations at that time because that had already happened at the time the temple was destroyed. This is another future time. Matthew goes on in verse 21 “For there will be great distress unequalled from the beginning of the world until now and never be equaled again”. This is the description of the middle of the “Great Tribulation” which will happen right before Jesus’s second coming. They are two different events. Do not get confused and get off track. The fleeing from the surrounding armies in 70 A D has already happened. The future fleeing is when the “abomination of desolation” is set up at the middle of the 7-year covenant with the anti-Christ and he declares he is God. Therefore, you must use wisdom when

studying prophecy because there are similar events described in scripture and sometimes many years between events. The bible is a spiritual book and cannot be understood without the Holy Spirit providing spiritual understanding of just not this one scripture but the whole word.

Question two—What will be the signs of your coming?

This question is also a little complicated to answer. First, we must understand that there are two events that could be Jesus's coming. The first event to happen is when He comes back for His church. This is Jesus' coming. Scripture tells us that there are no signs before His coming for His church. It will happen suddenly without warning as a thief in the night.

Although we do not know the day or the hour it is my belief that the coming for the church will be some time before or at the time the anti-Christ reveals himself by making the covenant with Israel, but the scriptures do not tell us when, so we are reminded to stay ready. The reason I think it is before the tribulation period is because the scriptures say that the church is not appointed for wrath and the tribulation will be the wrath of God.

Matthew 24:36 through 25:30 are parables that describe Jesus' coming for His church which is those that are "born again" or "born from above" and are therefore the **Body of Christ**. Be aware of the parable of the "wheat and the tares" for there are counterfeits in the organizational church. They look like Christians but bear no fruit because the Holy Spirit does not abide in them. Therefore, when I use the word church, I am not referring to the organizational church but to the true church.

No one knows the hour not even the Son. It will be like the days of Noah. Noah and wife and children entered the Ark, and the door was shut, and no one could get in. Only those that are His in the church can get in. The same story is given in the parable of the ten virgins. Those that did not have oil for their lamps could not get in after He had come. The oil is representative of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Have we been "born again" and thus have the Spirit in us? We should take care to always walk in the Spirit. Therefore, we must abide in Him and He in us so that we can bear much fruit.

So, we are warned to “be ready at all times” because it will be sudden without warning. Everything will be going on normally like marriage and eating and drinking. Two will be in the fields one will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the hand mill, and one will be taken and one left. It is important to remember you want to be the ones taken for they will be with the Lord. The other parables speak to the servants that took care of the work of the church and the servants that ignored that work. Then another parable about the talents reaffirmed the same message of judgement for those in the church. For we will be judged at Jesus coming for His church to get our rewards or lack of rewards. So, we are to persevere to the end and not take our eyes off the prize of resurrection and eternal life.

Question three –What will be the signs for the end of the age?

There are many signs about Jesus’s second coming which is the end of the age of the gentiles. First Israel must exist, and the anti-Christ must make a covenant with them for 7 years. Remember the parable of the “fig tree” when you see the leaves coming out summer is near. When you see all these things happening the end is right at the door. There will be wars, earthquakes and famines that will be like birth pangs (getting stronger and more frequent).

We see in Matthew 24 verse 9 going through verse 35 and again in Matthew 25 verse 31 through verse 46 the words pertaining to the end of the age which is the second coming of Christ.

The reason for the break in the scripture in Matthew 24: 35 is that the word has been presented in a chiastic form with the first section of verses 9 through 35 being interrupted with Matthew 24 verse 36 through Matthew 25 verse 30 being an account of the coming for the church.

This form of writing gives the first message to be compatible to the last message. Therefore, all that is in between is a different message. So, we see the description of the signs of the end of the age are in two segments separated by the long segment with the description of the coming for the church. Therefore, we cannot assume that the writings in scripture are in chronological order or necessarily continuing with the same theme.

Let us then look at Matthew 24 :9-35 to explore some of the information given to describe the signs of the end of the age.

You will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death and hated by all nations because of Christ—many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other—false prophets will arise and deceive many—wickedness will increase, and love will grow cold—but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. The gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations and then the end will come.

In the middle of the 7-year covenant, between the anti-Christ and Israel, the anti-Christ will declare he is God and will set up the “abomination that causes desolation”. We are given a way to understand this by Jesus as He refers us to the book of Daniel where you will find the foreshadow of the anti-Christ in the person of Antiochus Epiphanes who set up an abomination of desolation in the temple of that time. Also, we must look to the book of Daniel chapter 9 to understand the 7-year covenant with the anti-Christ.

The warning then was to those in Jerusalem to urgently flee to the mountains. As I mentioned in the section on question 2 this fleeing is not the same as the fleeing before the destruction of the temple in AD 70. Be wise and do not get confused.

Therefore, we must understand the whole bible to understand many prophetic writings. We must study the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. Our new covenant under Christ is not founded in the law for He fulfilled the law for us, but the prophets and other words are still necessary for understanding all the word. Many churches do not teach prophesy or encourage members to study the writings such as Daniel and Revelation. Without these teachings you cannot understand the bible properly and therefore are led to wrong conclusions such as believing that of replacement theology which says the church has replaced Israel in Gods plans. It is obvious that Israel is in the middle of Jesus teachings on the end of the age with instructions to the people to flee from Jerusalem and that there would be a temple to have an abomination set up in. Ignorance of scripture leads to many errors. IF you believe in replacement theology then read Jeremiah chapters 30 and 31. It is obvious that Israel will be restored.

There will be great distress unequalled from the beginning of time until now and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been shortened no one would survive but they will be shortened. False prophets and false Christs will appear and perform many miracles and signs to deceive even the elect if possible. I have told you ahead of time. Do not go after them.

This will be the “great tribulation” which is the last 3.5 years of the tribulation. Which is the fulfillment of Jacob’ troubles so this time is for Israel which is to bring them to the point that they as a Nation will weep and mourn as for a lost son (see Zachariah 12:8-14) and will acknowledge that Jesus is Messiah and say the words recorded in Matthew 23:29 For I tell you that you will not see me again until you say, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord”.

This then is one of the reasons for this tribulation. The Jews as a nation had to come to the point of brokenness and repent and turn to the Lord as a nation and seek Him. Then and only then can Jesus’ return and set up the kingdom, for the Nation of Israel had rejected Him at His 1st coming and has now accepted Him like an only son. The other reason was to bring Satan under judgement and to defeat him and lock him in the abyss for 1000 years so the nations could not be led astray. This is the defeat of Satan in his earthly rule of the earth and all the nations of the earth that follow him. Jesus had defeated Satan spiritually in the spiritual realm at the cross. There will be total peace for 1000 years because the Messiah Jesus will be on the throne ruling.

For as lightning comes from the east is visible even in the west so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Immediately after the distress of those days –the sun will be darkened –the moon will not give its light—stars will fall from the sky—the heavenly bodies will be shaken. **“At that time, the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory”. He will send his angels with a loud trumpet call and will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.**

Therefore, it will be obvious that Jesus has returned. There will be no doubt and the world will mourn and the remnant of the Nation of Israel will be saved.

We now see another scene in Matthew 25:31 which will carry us to verse 46.

“When the Son of Man comes in great glory and the angels with Him, He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on the right and the goats on the left.”

This then are the nations of the world that are left after the tribulation and the war that happened at His second coming. The church has already been raptured and as recorded in Revelation 19 we will return with Him. The church has already been judged and given its rewards. So, the judgements that follow are for those left on this earth.

To the sheep on his right, He said “Come you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

- **For I was Hungry, and you gave something to eat.**
- **I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.**
- **I was a stranger, and you took me in.**
- **I needed clothes and you clothed me.**
- **I was sick and you looked after me.**
- **I was in prison, and you visited me.**

They wanted to know when they did this, and He said that when you did this to the least of these my brothers you did it to me.

Then He will say to the goats on the left “depart from me” you who are accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. This group also said when did we not do these things for you, and He will say when you did not do these things to the least of these brothers you did not do them for me.

Then they will go away to eternal punishment but the righteous to eternal life.

Therefore, this is the judgement of those that are left on the earth at Christ second coming. These are people that still have their natural bodies and will live in the kingdom of Christ for a thousand years. There was no mention of faith, but it appears these were believers in the tribulation years and helped their fellow man

in those troubled times. It reminds me that it is never too late to show kindness and mercy to our fellow man.

Although these are not a part of the church for, we have already been raptured and have received our new glorified bodies and will rule and reign with Christ for those 1000 years.

I would suggest that you read the 12th chapter of Daniel for further enlightenment as well as chapter 7 and 9. They are a must to understand bible prophesy!

Jesus is betrayed and crucified.

Shortly after these teachings Jesus was betrayed and went through a mock trial because the Leaders of Israel had already decided to kill Him. They however needed the Romans to do the crucifixion because they were a nation under captivity by the Romans. The Romans gave them liberty with their religious activities, but they did not have the authority to bring a judgement of death. He therefore had to be brought before Pilate who was the governor at that time. With much reluctance Pilate gave in and crucified Jesus. Though the word says that the Jews would have the greater guilt.

On the cross He shed His blood as the "Lamb of God" which takes away the sins of the world. On the cross He said, "It is Finished". When He died on the cross the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom which now allows all that are in Christ to come directly to God the father which was not allowed under the Law for only the High priest could enter and only once a year.

Jesus was crucified and was buried in a tomb. The grave though could not hold Him. On the third day He was resurrected and walked among the disciples and to many other witnesses. His walk was with powers that were like we will have in our resurrected bodies if we are in Christ. He was able to walk through doors and to appear instantly at many places. We are told that we will also be resurrected and do not fully know what that will be like, but we will live with Him for eternity. After his time in the resurrected state after 40 days, He ascended into the heavens with many witnesses where He now sits at the right hand of the Father God. He is our eternal High Priest to intercede for all that are in Christ Jesus. It is not recorded all the things He taught or said in those 40 days, but a few are recorded. The disciples

were given insight and more teachings. Therefore, it is important for us to search the writings of the Apostles and Paul others in the New Testament to get to get understanding.

Church Age Begins

In Acts 1:4-5 Jesus says “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” Then in chapter 2 it is described the baptism that was promised. The power was poured out on all of them. They had received the gift that the Father had promised. This power then ignited a rapid growth of the church as they operated in the Spirit and witnessed to Jerusalem then later to Judea and Samaria and to the whole world. This then was the beginning of the Church Age.

The church was growing and adding converts but for few years the Jew were still in the land under Roman control. The Jews had been judged by Jesus and told that their land would be left desolate, and they would not see him again until they said, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord”. That will not happen until Jesus’ second coming.

In the meantime, the Jews were persecuting the Christians and killing some but during this time the church is spreading out to other parts of the world because of this persecution. So, the church and the Jews were co-existing, but this would end in 70 A D when the Jews rebelled (It started in 66 A D), and the romans came and surrounded the city and destroyed the city and the temple (all the stones had been torn down) as I described in the section of Matthew 24 and 25 and Luke 21. The Romans then fulfilled these scriptures. They say over a million Jews were killed and the rest were scattered to all the nations of the world. There was no longer a nation of Israel in a structured form and no temple.

What happens to the age of the gentiles?

We are discussing the Age of the Gentiles, so I want to elaborate on how this age continues while the new age of the church is beginning. But we now have the church age beginning while the age of the gentiles is going on. So, while the church is beginning to flourish, we need to see what is happening to the Jewish nation and the age of the gentiles.

The fourth kingdom (Rome)

If the Jews had accepted Jesus as Messiah at His first coming, then the feet of the statue of Nebuchadnezzar and the stone being cut not by human hands would have destroyed the statue and the 4th kingdom of the age of the gentiles but that did not happen so the age of the gentiles goes on.

We have an unknown gap of time before the final 7 years of Israel's history begins which is fulfillment of Daniel chapter 9. That gap of time is then the church age which we will discuss again a little later. So, God has set aside the Jewish nation, but they are to return at some point to fulfill the words of the scripture. They have not been replaced by the church.

The Jews were dispersed to all corners of the earth except those Jews that accepted Jesus as Messiah. They had become a part of the church, but many could not break loose from the law and would not receive Jesus as Messiah, so the church slowly became predominantly gentile.

The Church Age has existed alongside the suspended Age of the Gentiles until today. At times, the church has intermingled so much with the fourth kingdom it is hard to tell what the world's gentile reign is and what is the Church reign. I will not try to explain what church rule was and what was world rule at this time but simply say that the Jews were removed from the forefront of God's plan but had shifted to the church age. This did not mean however that God had abandoned Israel but that he had set them aside until a later time.

The kingdoms of this world which are the kingdoms described in Nebuchadnezzar's statue are still at work. Remember that prophecy does not necessarily follow in chronological order or that it is in continuing sequence. Therefore, the legs' part which is Rome may go on for a long time before the final feet and toes are seen. The toes are then the final nations that are in power at time the anti-Christ makes his covenant with Israel starting the last 7 years for Israel.

The fourth kingdom of Rome has not ended but is no longer defined by Roman borders. They have become a blend of different kingdoms that are given dominion over the world especially as it relates to the land of Israel and the scattered peoples.

The feet and toes of the statue are described as being a blend of iron and clay and as such are nations that are both strong as iron and as brittle as clay.

That is what we have seen through history since the end of the Roman empire. Although we cannot precisely identify the boundaries, we see them as an ever-changing kingdom ruled at various time by various nations. These changes are still going on today. God is still setting up kingdoms and taking down kingdoms.

You can see this when you look at especially the European nations that grew to have power and to establish colonies throughout the world. Then you see some of those that were powerful have fallen into weakness and have little power today. I point to the British empire which at one time it is said that the sun never set on the British empire. Today the British has almost disappeared and has been replaced by other nations which have become independent. The other nations of France, Germany and Spain have descended to a lower level of power also. So, the nations are still forming, and we do not know what the structure of the world will be at the return of Christ which is "the stone cut out without human hands".

Just in the last century we have seen drastic changes. World War 1 brought about the end of the Ottoman empire and set up the British rule of Palestine. Then World War 2 saw major changes with Israel back in their land and the emergence of Russia and China and the USA as powers and then more recently the Middle east has seen great changes in power structure. We now see both Israel and Iran (Persia) growing in power. The world now is focused on the middle east, which is where it all began, and it all will end.

The United Nations has come into play now as a group of nations that rule but have not yet established a strong rule but are more in a leadership role for the nations. We also have the European common market formed. We do not know yet what effect that will have on the world and Israel.

God for sure is still setting up kingdoms and taking down kingdom. We are still headed to some world government structure that will be in place when Christ returns. Therefore, be assured that God is in control and will bring about exactly what He has said would happen and that Israel will have their final 7 years and that the Millennial kingdom will take place as He has said, and all the details will happen

as He has said. The world still thinks they are in control but are wrong and one day will suddenly realize that God's word is true and will be completely fulfilled.

Back to the Church age

Let us go back now to where we left off with the church age beginning and the persecutions that happened. Now that the Jews were no longer persecuting the church the growth exploded to the whole world. Paul's ministry went out to the gentile world and so did the other apostles. The Jews in the church became more and more a minority group. Over a long period, the church became gentile.

There were times of persecution and time of ease. The Romans became the ones to persecute the church and that happen for a long time until Constantine made Christianity the official religion of Roman empire. The Roman empire eventually divided into the west which was in Rome and the east which was in Constantinople. Therefore, the church became the Roman empire. So, we see the two legs come into being. How much was the Church of Jesus Christ and how much was the continuation of the fourth kingdom Rome I do not think we really know at this point. Apparently, it was some of both, so the church and the fourth kingdom has blended.

The Canon of scripture was decided, and the writings of the Apostles and other selected writers were combined into what we call the Holy Bible. Which has been given to us to guide and direct our understanding of what Jesus had taught and wanted us to know as a witness to the world until His return which He promised He would.

I am not a historian of this period, so I do not know all the details but see that at the fall of the western Roman empire it became the Roman Catholic Church and ruled from Rome. It looks like the Roman church was a continuation of the fourth kingdom of Rome. The Roman Catholic Church continues to exist to the present time.

The Pope became head of the church and ruled the European countries through various kings and continued to be a state-run church. These times became the dark ages. The church became secluded in Monasteries and other places away from the people. The word was not available to the common man and therefore the church

authorities made all the decisions and told the people what to do. There was no knowledge of the scripture among the people.

Then the Catholic church started to move around 12th century to root out “heresies” and lasted several hundred years climaxed with the Spanish inquisitions of the 15th century. The state started to persecute those believers that would not bow to the Catholic church. They were tortured and killed in many ways that were brutal. The Catholic church had become a brutal monster far from the gospel of Jesus. Queen Isabella of Spain expelled all the Jews from Spain and tortured and killed many. This period also produced the practice of selling indulgence or in other words people were buying their salvation but that is not possible. The church or so-called church was indeed corrupt.

This is another reason I think that the Roman Catholic church was a continuation of the fourth kingdom and was and is a part of the Age of the gentile rule. They have been against the Jews, and they have been against the poor – the down and out which Jesus came to set free. They continued to persecute the true believers in Jesus. So maybe they had a dual role of both world rule as the fourth kingdom and a role as the church which had lost its way and became like the world and that their “lampstand” had been taken away and passed on to the Reformation Church. Remember the Roman Catholic Church is still operating, and I am not sure how they will affect the end times as the fourth kingdom. They are still a world power and have much influence in much of this world and represent millions of members. The rest of the world still think of the church and the Pope as Christianity. I will be interested in seeing how the Roman church handles Israel and their return to the land especially if the Pope gets personally involved in negotiating a peace.

Change indeed did happen!

I believe that God started to move at that time to begin the wake-up call for His people. Martin Luther began the reformation with his nailing of the 95 Theses to the church door. The reformation had begun. Other things also started to happen such as the printing press and Columbus sailing to open the Americas. God opened the Americas as a place for the persecuted believers and the Jews to escape to. Christians were being persecuted by all the kings which were led or influenced by the Roman church. So, they fled to the Americas to find freedom of worship.

Then came the “Great Awakening”. The gospel was then preached to the poor and uneducated by many evangelists such as John Wesley and others. The message of salvation of grace was at last preached to the people and not kept only to the sophisticated noble class. The word was on the streets for the common man and bibles were now available for them.

Stages the church through the church age.

This then was the beginnings of the Philadelphia church. Which began around 1648. So, I will now take another pause to present the stages of the church through history.

In the book of Revelation starting In Chapter two and ending in chapter 3. Jesus gives His message to seven churches in Asia Minor which is today southwest Turkey. These letters are both to the churches of that day and to churches of today with the message Jesus wanted us to know and a prophetic revealing of the development of the church through the course of time until His coming for the church.

We know that this is a representation of the progression of the Church through the ages is because by the time we reached the age of the missionary church it was evident that the pattern had become obvious.

In Revelation Jesus told John to record the things he had **seen** and the things that **are** and the **things that will come after that**. In chapter 1 are the things John saw. Then in chapter 2 are the **things that are** which are the 7 churches These seven churches are representative of the progression of the church age which has lasted to our day and will until Christs return. After that in chapter 4 says and **after this** and then for the rest of revelation is about what happens after the church age ends.

- Ephesus -Apostolic Church—30 to 100
- Smyrna-Persecuted Church –100 to 313
- Pergamum -Roman Empire Church –313 to 600
- Thyatira – Roman Catholic Church – 600 to 1517
- Sardis – Reform Church – 1517 to 1648
- Philadelphia – Missionary Church 1648 to 1900
- Laodicea – Apostate Church 1900 to?

These churches each represent various stages of the church age. (Study versebyverseministry.org for details). We just came out of the Philadelphia church age which ended around 1900. The Philadelphia church age was the awakening time of the church with evangelism spread around the world. We entered the Laodicea church age which is the last of the church age around the turn of the last century and have taken on the pattern of the church of Laodicea. We have entered the last times of the church age.

Paul says many things about this age. It is described as the “apostate church” with the hearts of many growing cold and with need to return to our first love, having a form of godliness but not with power. Jesus said to the Laodicean church “You are neither hot or cold but are lukewarm, and I will spit you out of my mouth,” you say that you are rich and need nothing, but you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked but buy from me gold refined in fire and become rich with white clothes”. Please read the rest of what Jesus said to that church.

Remember that these church ages can go on for a long time even hundreds of years, but we must recognize what is happening around us. The churches of today are less and less evangelical and are focused more on social matters. The world around us is getting further and further away from following the Word of God and the teaching of Jesus and walking with the Holy Spirit. This looks like lukewarm to me.

A lot of people believe there was a Jesus but have not accepted His message of salvation from the law of sin and death. The form of godliness is all around us but has no substance or power. The church of today does not preach the whole word but has forgotten to preach that there is a day of judgement and that all are not going to heaven. Hell is real and eternity is real, and everyone is going to live for eternity, but the difference is where you will spend this eternity. Heaven or Hell?

There is a reason it is called salvation. We have a hope in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus the Son of God to receive this gift of eternal life if we will honestly believe and surrender our lives to him. It is done by grace through faith alone and not by our works. Righteous works will come from abiding in His word and walking in His spirit, but we cannot trust in those works for our salvation. We cannot trust in our membership in a church organization, we cannot trust in our

denominations, we cannot trust in our parents or grandparent's faith, and such things but only in the shed blood of Jesus on the cross. We must submit ourselves to Him for our hope of salvation, resurrection, and eternal life.

So, the age of the church is coming to an end and the age of the gentiles is coming to an end and we do not know the time or the hour of the two endings but if we are wise and have studied the Word of God, we will certainly see some signs. Around the turn of last century when the Laodicea church began other things, were also happening that give us some understanding of the times. God was stirring the Jews around the world to return to the land of Israel. Many started the journey back to the promised land. World events were happening, and we had our World War 1. This world war caused many things to happen one of these was the Ottoman Empire was eliminated as the ruler of the land of Palestine and the British empire took control. God was indeed setting up kingdoms and taking down kingdoms. Always keep your eyes on Israel. They are our time clock to determine the end of the age.

Along with the world war other thing were happening Which I explained earlier about transportation and communications and knowledge were increasing at a faster pace. Jesus said that there would be war and pestilence and famine and earthquakes but that these things were not the end but that as they begin to be like "birth pangs" which grow in both frequency and severity then we should be on alert for we are closer to the end of the age.

The next event to happen will be the gathering up of the Church to Christ (Rapture) which will be the **end of the Church age** at some time before the Tribulation time which will be 7 years of judgement on the earth. At the end of the tribulation Christ will return. He is now the last of the statue of Daniel. He is the Stone cut out without human hand that crushes the feet and all the Statue. When He returns all the kingdoms of the earth will be destroyed and He will set up His Kingdom which will last 1000 years on this earth and Jerusalem will be the Capital of his Kingdom. (The Millennial Kingdom.) This then is end of the **Age of the Gentiles**.

Although the Jews now occupy a nation of Israel in varying degree since 1948 but do not have a temple. The age of the gentiles has not yet ended and will not until the time of testing is complete at the end of the Great Tribulation. The nation of Israel will accept that Jesus is the Messiah and believe at that time of trial. They will

understand and will grieve together as a nation that they rejected and put to death their Messiah and will repent as though they were mourning for the death of an only son. Then the whole nation of Israel will be redeemed and rescued by Jesus at His second coming. Then the Millennial kingdom will begin. Then all that are the Church and other believers from all ages will rule and reign with Christ on this earth.

So much of the Church today have failed to understand the complete teaching of the Bible and have not taught the congregations the complete word of prophesy. I suppose it is because it is difficult to understand and takes a lot of study and seeking the Holy Spirit to show us the truth. Sometimes when our theology gets off track, we try to make the scripture fit the theology error.

We must be diligent to rethink what scripture is telling us in the light of history and new evidence which has come about in these end times. We must realize that God is continuing to reveal to us through history and His word. The obvious truth is that the Church still exists today and so does Israel exist. Paul told us that the nation of Israel has been set aside for a time but not permanently. The end point of our theology has caused us to look for an ending that is not consistent with the whole teaching of the Bible. The churches of today have failed to study Daniel and Revelation and all the Old Testament prophets and put it alongside God's revelations of history.

The most significant error of theology of the church is to think that coming of the Church and Christianity were "the stone that was cut out without human hands and crushed the toes and the whole statue". The ten toes are evident in Revelation as ten Kings of the later days that will rule at the time of the reveling of the Antichrist. I understand that there are a lot of theories that there were kings and rulers that could be superimposed to make them fit, but history has proven this to be wrong. There are now theories that try to make the European Union out to be the ten kings but that is only speculation.

By now I guess your brain is tired and trying to understand all of this. I have much more to say about prophesy and God's word such as Paul's prophetic writings and Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel and Psalms, but I will let you digest this first. Maybe I will write more at another time on Revelation and the Old Testament prophesy that help to understand the last 7-year tribulation period.

Our job now is to look to Jesus and His word and to persevere in our walk with Him. Keep your lamps bright and your oil supply full.

Your fellow follower of Jesus.

Howard

Postscript

For details about the statue and the different kingdoms and other details such as the stages of the church and more on Daniel and Revelation and all the other prophets of the Old Testament visit. versebyverseministry.org You **will also find a link from my website to this teaching site.**

I have studied for a lot of years, but Stephen Armstrong taught me more in the last year of studying his teaching at versebyverseministry.org than I had learned in these many years. I recommend his teachings. I cannot tell you which thoughts of my writing came from Stephen's teachings, and which came from my previous studies, and which came from the Holy Spirit, but I suspect the Holy Spirit orchestrated the whole thing.

Steven Armstrong died this year from Covid 19 at the age of 55. I will miss him dearly although I never met him or talked to him, we were brothers in the Spirit of Christ.