

# Are we in the end-time tribulation?

There is great confusion and misunderstanding about this period specially highlighted by the Lord himself. And yet Jesus tells us that we should be watching and alive to the events surrounding us.<sup>1</sup> Believers should not be amongst those who walk in darkness and have no idea about the times, but should rather be people who are in the light and have a clear understanding about what time they are in.<sup>2</sup>

There are those in the church that think all eschatology regards things far in the future. These simply have not really examined either Scripture or what is going on (as I will demonstrate). Then there are the many Dispensationalists who have inflexible ideas about a 'great tribulation' which will last seven years, beginning with unbiblical events (such as a secret coming of the Lord and a rapture of saints that are ready). What is needed is a fresh examination of what Scripture actually says along with a thorough assessment of recent history.

This paper needs to be read in conjunction with my paper that posits that the relaxation of the binding on Satan has already taken place,<sup>3</sup> something I will allude to from time to time in this paper. If Satan was released to pursue his global objectives at some point in the recent past, then it seems only logical to examine whether we may actually be in, at least, the beginnings of the tribulations described by Jesus already (though worse is to come).

Even a casual reader of history soon comes to the conclusion that from the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries things rapidly changed. The 20<sup>th</sup> century was unlike any before; everything changed. Let us simply examine a few matters.

## The massive social changes that occurred

It would take many books to itemise all the social changes of the last hundred years, but let us note a few.

### **The royal dynasties**

For centuries royal families had wielded great power; indeed, history was usually written according to national monarchies. After World War I all this changed; monarchies either became merely titular figureheads with little actual power (as the British royal family) or dynasties simply vanished altogether. The Hapsburg Empire, (Austria-Hungary) with its Holy Roman Emperors, vanished. The Romanov Dynasty in Russia was obliterated. The Hohenzollern dynasty (Germany) fizzled away and the Ottoman Empire (Turkey) crumbled. In a short space of time the key players in European and Near Eastern royal politics had all disappeared.<sup>4</sup>

The importance of this change cannot be overstated. No one could have predicted that such a major political change could occur in four years; it was unimaginable. This meant that all sorts of new social orders, alliances, republics and political systems could emerge. Nations

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<sup>1</sup> Matt 24:42; Mk 13:33.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Thess 5:5-6; 2 Cor 2:11.

<sup>3</sup> 'The binding of Satan'.

<sup>4</sup> The British royal family continued but with little real power as Parliament became dominant.

and regions changed hands, borders were redrawn, ethnic tribes either made gains or suffered loss and the mistakes made ensured that more wars were inevitable.

Before 1918 the countries of the world were mostly monarchies; after 1918 they were all republics (at least in practice).<sup>5</sup>

Essentially a whole type of monarchial politics was removed in one fell swoop.

### **Increase in riches**

Many western societies became hugely rich, but the wealth was not equally shared. The individual fortunes of the wealthiest became unimaginable (in the trillions of pounds). Even relatively poor individuals in modern society would be considered incredibly fortunate by many people in the past. Just the fact of running water in various rooms in the home would have been unthinkable for most of world history. Even the poorest in the UK think that a washing machine, a tumble dryer, a television, a gas or electric cooker and central heating are necessities of life; but no one owned such things until the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup>

Many people in history lived their whole lives at subsistence level; relatively few were able to make any sort of significant savings, while owning your own house was the province of the rich alone. However, (until recently after the recession) even poor people were taught to save regularly throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and gradually most working people developed modest savings by their middle age, while home-ownership became the norm.

### **Leisure time**

Modern man had more leisure time than ever before. Simple products allowed for more down-time, such as washing machines and tumble dryers or cookers. Workers in the west had Saturdays off and more vacation weeks; the 40-hour week became the norm. All this led to the development of leisure products, sports events and social changes, such as vacations and world travel.

Before the 20<sup>th</sup> century only aristocrats and wealthy people could engage in expensive sporting events or go on a foreign holiday. Indeed, many people worked from dawn till dusk; 12-14 hour days were commonplace until fairly recently. Only a hundred years ago children under 12 were working 12-hour days. For the working poor, the only leisure time was attending church on Sunday morning and perhaps some relaxation on Sunday afternoon if you were very fortunate; this did not include most women who had much to do on Sunday afternoon.

### **A massive increase in needless slaughter**

The rapid rise of technology is obvious but so is the rapid rise of meaningless slaughter and wickedness. In the 100 years between 1914 and 2014 (today), individuals were responsible for the slaughter of millions of people:

- World War I, 8.5 – 9.7 million combatants killed. Approx. 12-16 million deaths including civilians.
- World War II, approx. 50-70 million killed all told. Most were civilians.
- The 1915 Armenian Genocide killed 1.5 million.

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<sup>5</sup> Royal families in Greece, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and England ceased having any real power. Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia and Turkey lost their monarchies altogether. From 1923 Spain was effectively under a dictator with Royal support; but Spain had little influence in European politics anyway and was neutral in WWI.

<sup>6</sup> I know the Romans had hypocaust systems in Britain but these were relatively rare for rich aristocrats and only provided for under-floor heating at ground floor level and via wall flues.

- Stalin killed between 20 and 60 million.
- Mao killed approx. 30 – 35 million people.
- Pol Pot killed over 1.7 million people.
- Bush and Blair killed over a million innocent civilians in the Iraq War.
- In 2011, 1.06 million babies were aborted in the US alone. 1 out of every 6 deaths in the world is an American abortion. Half of the deaths in the world are an abortion. Abortion is the leading cause of death in the world. 53,714 allied soldiers were killed in the D-Day landings, but the world kills more babies through abortions in just 9 hours.

Nothing like this had happened in history before because wicked rulers did not have the technology to do it. Killing people then was hard work and took a long time. Only man-induced famine could approach such numbers. The greatest number of massacres in history is numbered in the hundreds of thousands at most, such as the slaughter of over 100,000 Christians by Persian rulers in 341.<sup>7</sup>

## The rapid acceleration that occurred in the 20th century

### Understanding

There was a massive explosion of scientific understanding that corresponded with the growth of technological development. As well as developing new products, we gradually understood more.

### Massive rise in world population

I believe it to be true that the number of people alive today equates to the sum of all people who lived up to the time of the Victorians. There are over 7 billion people on earth at this present time.

In ancient times, the population of Nineveh, at the height of its power as the capital city of a world empire, was only just above half a million people.<sup>8</sup> At the peak of its imperial power Rome had a population of about one million; but no European city would reach this figure until Victorian London. In Britain today, the second city of Birmingham alone has a population of two million people. Modern Birmingham is four times bigger than ancient Nineveh and twice the size of ancient Rome. Most ordinary towns and cities in Biblical times, even up to the Roman occupation, were relatively small, the largest only having a few hundred thousand people; say the size of Brighton and Hove.

This huge increase in world population occurred in the last 120 years; mainly as a result of better food production, better sanitation, better housing, better paediatric care and better medical services. It was common, even up to Victorian times, for a couple to have ten children, only for up to eight of them die in infancy. Infant death is now comparatively rare in the western world.

- In 1850 there were only four cities on earth with a population at or approaching one million.

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<sup>7</sup> By Zoroastrian Shapur II. The massacre was over a twenty-year period. Shapur I killed 10,000 in one go on the orders of Roman Emperor Hadrian or Diocletian (sources vary).

<sup>8</sup> 'And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left -- and much livestock?' Jonah 4:11. Exactly what this means is disputed. Many suggest it means only children below the age of rationality, say four-years old. Allowing these to be a fifth of the whole, would give a total population of six hundred thousand.

- By 1900 there were 19.
- By 1960 there were 141.
- By 1970 the urban population was accelerating at 6.5% per year; that is, doubling the earth's population every 11 years.

### **Urbanisation**

After 1850, cities became the focus of the world's population; then mass movements of people led to big social changes.

Urbanisation was the result of the Industrial Revolution, which sucked poor people that aspired to better things from rural areas to work in factories in growing cities like Birmingham and Manchester. Different cities focused on different industries. For example Stoke became the centre of ceramic production and the area around Stoke is called 'The Potteries'.

One example of social change following an exodus from rural areas is the migration of poor black sharecroppers (recently freed from slavery) from the Mississippi Delta to growing urban centres like Chicago, which led to increasing social problems with segregation and then the civil rights movement. This resulted in the development of urban blues and electric blues music, which led to soul music, rock n' roll and then the start of youth culture and all the music genres that followed. Without Muddy Waters there would have been no Led Zeppelin or Rock n' Roll. Without Rock n' Roll there would have been no youth culture.

### **Rapid consumption of energy**

If 'Q' equals the energy derived from burning 33 billion tons of coal, by 1850 the total energy consumed since the time of Jesus is less than 0.5Q. At 1850 the rate had risen to 1Q per century. By 1970 the rate was 10Q per century. That is, half of the energy consumed in the previous 2,000 years was consumed between 1850 and 1970.<sup>9</sup>

### **Acceleration of economic growth**

In France, during 1910 to 1939, industrial production rose by 5%; between 1948 and 1965 it rose by 220%. Until the recent recession, for 60 years most industrialised nations grew at rates between about 4-10%. E.g. between 1960-1968 the USA growth rate was 4.5% while Japan was 9.8%. This means that there was, on average, nearly a doubling of total output of goods and services in the industrialised nations every 15 years.

### **Communications technology**

This allowed ideas to spread more rapidly but it also allowed for diseases to spread more swiftly or for invasion by an enemy.

For example, after the rapid exodus from the American East Coast cities to the Wild West to make their fortunes in the mid-1800s, people relied upon the Pony Express for mail to reach them from home. Stage coaches were the only means of travelling, in great discomfort, to western towns and wagon trains the only way to get goods.

Then came the telegraph, which could transmit short messages by wire, followed by the railroads, which opened communications even further. Yet after the 20<sup>th</sup> century began there was the development of tarmac roads and then passenger aircraft for personal travel. For the transmission of information there were telephones, the mail service (using roads, rail, sea and air), then faxes and telex services followed by the internet and social media.

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<sup>9</sup> Taken from notes made many years ago, I believe from Alvin Toffler's book, 'Future Shock'.

Instead of information taking several weeks to reach the addressee (as in 1860), people want it immediately today.

### **The acceleration of technology**

In 1900 most people rode bicycles or horses; within 70 years man was on the moon and in space satellites and also able to drive at high speeds in a personal car. In 1910 trains were the fastest means of travel; within sixty years people were travelling at supersonic speeds.<sup>10</sup> In 1960 people stored some information in books, photographs, tapes, vinyl and film; by 2000 they were storing huge amounts of data in small pieces of plastic.<sup>11</sup> In 1914 the military began dropping bombs out of bi-planes by hand; in 2014 they send un-manned drones across the world to drop massive amounts of guided ordinance by remote control. The speed at which technology developed is beyond belief.

#### *Example transport*

- 6,000 BC the fastest transport was by camel caravan at 8mph.
- 1,600 BC it was by chariot at 20mph.
- In 1784 AD it was by mail coach at 10mph.
- In 1825 it was by steam engine on land at 13mph and by sailing ships at sea at 8mph.
- In 1880 locomotives ran at 100 mph.
- In 1938 aeroplanes flew at 400+mph.
- In 1960 rockets travelled in excess of 4,800mph.

#### *Example products*

The following things we take for granted did not exist in 1900:

Vaccination, antibiotics, laser surgery, hospital x-rays, television, home radio, transistors, radar, sonar, home telephones, mobile telephones, fridges, computers, central heating, indoor bathrooms (for the poor), kitchen cookers, electric lights in homes, street lamps, biro, felt tip pens, portable batteries, electric guitars, keyboard synthesisers, motorways, high speed trains, car ferries, food processors, washing machines, tumble dryers, microwave ovens, toasters, dishwashers, safety razors, teabags, teddy bears, aircraft, windscreen wipers, light bulbs, tractors, Cornflakes, plastic, helicopters, cellophane, instant coffee, movies, military tanks, submarines, crosswords, stainless steel, zips, machine guns, robots, insulin, traffic lights, self winding watch, frozen food, loudspeakers, rockets, radio satellites, radio telescopes. We could go on.

## **Two reasons for this acceleration (amongst many)**

### **Technology is self-developing**

Technological innovation arises from three things: a) creative ideas; b) practical applications; c) diffusion through society. The time between these three factors determines how quickly ideas are put into practice. The fact is that this time gap is now much shorter than ever before.

More than 90% of all the scientists that ever lived are alive today. This means that many ideas are developed, enhanced, tested and put into operation much more quickly than in the past.

<sup>10</sup> On Concorde and in military aircraft.

<sup>11</sup> First floppy discs, then CD Roms, then DVDs, then memory sticks, tablets and smart-phones.

Appollonius of Perga discovered conic sections 2,000 years before they were used in engineering. Paracelsus discovered ether as an anaesthetic centuries before it was used. The first English patent for a typewriter was listed in 1714 but they were not manufactured for 150 years. Even the combine harvester was invented in 1836 but not marketed until the 1930s.

The time taken for a major scientific discovery to be translated into a useful technological form is continually shrinking. Between 1939 and 1970 it took 76% less time to translate an idea into technology. The gap is even smaller now.

The more technology you have, the easier it is to develop new technology based upon the tools provided by the earlier technology. Technology feeds itself.

## Education

Francis Bacon famously said that '*knowledge is power*'. In the past those few with certain knowledge were able to develop power over those without it. What has happened in recent decades is that knowledge has been made more widely available than at any time in history. Accelerating knowledge provision means acceleration of social change.

Before the Gutenberg press of moveable type, say roughly 1500, Europe produced less than 1,000 new books a year through the efforts of scribal monks copying them by hand at great expense. After the invention of the printing press, ideas were very rapidly transmitted through the production of many books; this was one of the reasons for the great success of the Reformation. By 1950 Europe produced 120,000 new book per year. By 1965 the world was producing 1000 new titles every single day.

The number of scientific articles, reports, studies and books is continually growing and this accelerates the development of knowledge. By 1500 only eleven chemical elements were known. Up to 1900 seventy were listed, but after 1900 a new one was being discovered every three years.

This availability of knowledge means that massive amounts of useful information is made available to students in schools and universities that was not available in previous history (this does not mean that they are cleverer, far from it). The availability of books, often for free, meant that individuals could develop on their own at their own speed. Even a rock musician could sing, '*libraries gave us power*'.<sup>12</sup>

## Aside

The downside of the acceleration of ideas and technology is the psychological effects on the personality. The speed of developments cause confusion, multiplies choices and increases the complexity of life (note the difficulty for older people using automated check outs). It causes us to occupy all our time continually adapting to new situations and reduces peaceful thinking time, giving less time for attention on one problem. In an increasingly complex world, the individual has to continually adapt to survive.

The continual change in society gives rise to a feeling that the world is rushing by at great speed and the individual finds it difficult to keep up.

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<sup>12</sup> Manic Street Preachers, 'Design for life'.

## Interim conclusion

From the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the world dramatically changed. Something happened in human history so that the 20<sup>th</sup> century was like no other before it.

It is my claim that Satan was released from his bondage sometime in the mid-late 1800s and began his work of bringing the world together into a unified empire based upon sin. Thus mankind was released into his full potential, but directed towards iniquity.

This had been hindered at the time of Babel as part of God's plan to save the elect. At Babel mankind was ready to expand his technology:

**And the LORD said, 'Indeed the people *are* one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them'. Gen 11:6**

The tower of Babel was but one structure showing the immense ability of mankind (see for example the Great Pyramid which is such an amazing feat of engineering and mathematical engineering that modern man could not repeat it). Man was developing to be very powerful even by the time of Babel. So God halted this development:

**Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth. Gen 11:7-9**

So great was this judgment that some of the tribes that moved out from Babel descended into primitive stone age people and wandered into far lands. Such were Native American 'Indians' or Australian Aborigines and the various small tribes in the Amazon basin. For 3,000 years these people had an extremely primitive culture as far as technology is concerned; yet they descended from the Babel tower builders.

Thus the judgment at Babel resulted in hindering man's progress and particularly restricted the ability of warlike emperors from gaining too much ground or producing long lasting dynasties. This was the restraint ('binding') put upon Satan explained in Revelation 20.

Yet God warned us that this restraint would be removed at the end so that man's sin could come to fulness in a global empire that serves Satan.

**He cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. ... Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth.**

Rev 20:3-8

So, if my thesis is correct, we should see not only a heightening of iniquity but also a rapid development of technology and engineering after the release of Satan. He is seeking to make man as powerful as possible so that he can control that power and threaten God's purposes on the earth; chiefly to destroy the church.

And this is what we see in history. After about 1880 there is a rapid development of power, engineering and technology that makes man more and more powerful. In 1880 man could destroy relatively small numbers with cannon fire and explosives. 65 years later man was able to destroy whole cities and hundreds of thousands of people with one bomb. By 1950 mankind had the ability to destroy the earth.

All this goes to show that the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond is an exceptional time in human history. It is characterised by a progressive increase in power and technology but also by an equal rise in wickedness and killing.

**First Point: The 20<sup>th</sup> century was like none other before it. A dramatic change occurred in human history in the last 120 years.**

## Is there an end times great tribulation?

No serious student of the Bible would deny that the end times features a time of great suffering for the church which Jesus and the apostles call a time of tribulation, or great tribulation.

3 As He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

4 And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you.

5 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.

6 "And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

7 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.

8 "All these *are* the beginning of sorrows.

9 "Then they will deliver you up to **tribulation** and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.

10 "And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.

11 "Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

12 "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

13 "But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

14 "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

15 " Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand),

16 "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

17 "Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house.

18 "And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.

19 "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!

20 "And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.

21 "For then there will be **great tribulation**, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.

22 "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.

23 "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here *is* the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe *it*.



24 "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

25 "See, I have told you beforehand.

26 "Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; *or* 'Look, *He is* in the inner rooms!' do not believe *it*.

27 "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

28 "For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.

29 " Immediately after the **tribulation** of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

30 "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

31 "And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

32 " Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer *is* near.

33 "So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near -- at the doors!

(Matt 24 and parallel passages in Mark13 and Luke 21)

For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer **tribulation**, just as it happened, and you know. 1 Thess 3:4

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you,

2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.

3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,

4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

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9 The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,

10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,

12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. 2 Thess 2

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,

2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,

3 forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. 1 Tim 4:1-3

But know this, that in the **last days** perilous times will come:

2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,

4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! 2 Tim 3:1-

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These are the ones who come out of the **great tribulation**, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Rev 7:14

The Scriptures leave us in no doubt that there is a period of great tribulation that comes on mankind in the end. However, we are not told how long this period is, but we do know that it coincides with the release of Satan from bondage and the development of his global antichristian empire.

If Satan was released just before the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, then there is every reason to consider that the tribulation has been going on sometime already.

**Second Point: Scripture is clear that there is a period of great tribulation at the end. However, there are differences of interpretation as to what this means and when it occurs.**

## Differences of interpretation regarding the great tribulation

### Eschatological theories

Although there are basically four sets of systems regarding the end in evangelical theology,<sup>13</sup> the details regarding the great tribulation are fragmented into many strands. Dispensationalism alone has several views about what the tribulation is, how long it lasts, what happens in it, and when it occurs.

### Frameworks for interpretation the book of Revelation

In addition to the variant of eschatological view we must also consider the ways that these views interpret Revelation.

#### *Preterist*

The prophecies were fulfilled with the destruction of Jerusalem and the fall of heathen Rome. It merely covers the early church having no relevance after John's time.

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<sup>13</sup> Historic Premillennialism; Dispensational Premillennialism; Postmillennialism; Amillennialism. This writer is an Amillennialist, which is the historic, traditional Calvinist view. Some Calvinists (primarily a minority of Puritans) were Postmillennialists but hardly any have been Premillennialists (or Chiliasts).

Problem: Revelation claims to be a prophecy (1:3; 4:1; 22:7; 10, 18, 19). The Second Coming is described and this has not yet occurred. E.g. liberal teachers and some modern American fanatics.

### *Historicist*

The prophecies are predictive of progressive history from the cross up to today, being partly fulfilled, partly unfulfilled. The visions are sequential. It symbolically teaches the Fall of Rome (the seals), the rise of the Roman Catholic Church, the rise of Islam (locusts), the French Revolution etc. It depicts the Antichrist as the pope.

Problem: this does great injustice to many symbols, especially the Antichrist. Tends towards a rationalist approach failing to see the spiritual application. It ignores the matter of time constraints within the book (e.g. 11:2, 12:6, 14). Most importantly, it makes the book useless to those it was originally written for by John. Many historicist interpreters vary greatly from one another on details; there is no universal agreement. E.g. the Reformers, many older commentaries, AJ Gordon, AB Simpson.

### *Idealist*

The book is a summary of the continual war between God and Satan, or Christianity with paganism. There are no historical claims or predictions, just a picture of spiritual truth.

Problem: this ignores the prophetic nature of the book, which is clearly described and explicitly stated. It diminishes the book's value to real people in history.

### *Simple Futurist*

Only the first three chapters relate to the present time or the time of John; from 4:1 refers to the Great Tribulation onwards; chapters 6-22 have reference to the absolute future of the Lord's Appearing (6-19), a supposed Millennium (20) and the eternal state (21-22). They use a strong literal interpretation. [Note that this is the view of John MacArthur.]

Problem: This is the mainstream Dispensational view, mostly Pre-Tribulational. If Rev 20:1-4 does not teach a future millennium (which it does not) then this view is false. This divests the bulk of the book, and the warnings in it, of any value to believers prior to the end. E.g. JA Seiss, CI Schofield, AC Gaebelien, HA Ironside etc.

### *Extreme Futurist*

Even the first three chapters are a prophecy about the future Second Coming - being a prediction of the condition of the Jews after the first Resurrection; or they represent church periods throughout history. [E.g. many Brethren authors like W Kelly.]

Problem: This is extreme Dispensationalism and Pre-Tribulationism. The problems of Simple Futurism apply equally.

### *The spiritual view*

This is the view of this writer. It claims the Revelation was written to encourage the saints of all ages that Christ has the victory over Satan and the church will triumph as God's plan and decree is fulfilled perfectly. Thus it is similar to the historicist view but is not limited to its traditional interpretations (thus it denies that the antichrist is the pope, for example). Neither are the visions sequential but are parallel, looking at truth from different angles.

## **Views of the great tribulation**

Having given this overview of systems we much now consider what the interpretations of the great tribulation are. These are the most significant views:

*Postmillennialism*

There are several variants of this today, however all are triumphalist claiming that the church grows stronger and stronger to dominate the earth and usher in a golden age, at the end of which Christ returns. The Charismatic global revivalism and dominionism is but one example. Thus there is no great tribulation at all.

Problem: this is a clear failure to read Scripture properly, which teaches the falling away of the church and a period of tribulation for the world and the persecution of the church.

*Futurist Dispensationalism: Pre-Tribulationism*

The great tribulation is a short period of time occurring after those who followed God were secretly raptured away leaving those behind to suffer tribulation, experiencing wars, hardships, famine, disasters etc. People who are converted after the rapture suffer. Many claim that the tribulation lasts seven years in two halves: 'the beginning of sorrows' and 'the great tribulation' (JN Darby, Hal Lindsey).

Problem: suffers from the general criticism of Dispensationalism and particularly the silence of Scripture on any secret rapture before the Second Coming. Christ also comes for a third time to set up his kingdom on the earth.

*Futurist Dispensationalism: Mid-Tribulationism*

These believe that the rapture occurs in the middle of the tribulation but before the worst of it occurs. [Pre-wrath Tribulationists reckon it is before the seven bowls; Seventh Trumpet Tribulationists believe it is before the bowls but at the sound of the seventh trumpet.]

Problem: suffers from the general criticism of Dispensationalism and particularly the silence of Scripture on any secret rapture before the Second Coming. Christ also comes for a third time to set up his kingdom on the earth.

*Futurist Dispensationalism: Post-Tribulationism*

Such believe that the rapture of Christians occurs after the tribulation, during the seventh trumpet (which equals the trumpet of 1 Cor 15:52).

Problem: suffers from the general criticism of Dispensationalism but agrees with Amillennialism on the time of the rapture.

*Utopianism*

Some theologians, such as some Roman Catholics, deny the tribulation but aver that the antichrist establishes a utopian period.

Problem: fails to see that the end is a time of contrasts; i.e. sinners in the antichristian kingdom experience hedonism but those falling foul of the kingdom experience tribulation.

*Preterism*

Denies a future or present tribulation claiming that it refers to the historic past when the Roman legions destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD. Problem: see above on Preterism.

*Historicism*

There are various explanations of the tribulation being a past event, such as the falling away of the church under Roman Catholicism (Dark Ages). The antichrist is the papacy. Problem: see earlier.

### *Amillennialism*

The teaching of Jesus, the apostles and Revelation describe a tribulation to be suffered by the church and society, as well as a falling away of the church itself. Since there is no secret rapture before the return of Christ as King, the church will go through this period. There are various interpretations as to its timing, length and severity.

**Third Point: The best eschatological interpretation is that there is a period of great tribulation at the end which the church goes through. However, there are differences of interpretation as to what this means and when it occurs.**

## Features of the tribulation in the Gospels

There are features pertinent to the beginning of the trials (Matt 24:3-8) and others which occur towards the end, immediately before the return of the Lord (Matt 24:29). There is also a parenthesis which specifically applies to the events preceding the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD (Matt 24:15-22).

What we are interested in here is the factors that comprise the earlier part of the tribulation, namely:

4 And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you.

5 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.

6 "And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

7 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.

8 "All these *are* the beginning of sorrows." Matt 24:4-8

So, the beginning of the tribulation involves:

- Widespread deception.
- Wars and rumours of wars.
- Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.
- Famines.
- Pestilences
- Earthquakes in various places.

Mark agrees with this but Luke adds:

11 "There will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven.

12 "But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute *you*, delivering *you* up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake.

13 "But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony.

14 "Therefore settle *it* in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer;

15 "for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist.

16 "You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put *some* of you to death.

17 "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake." Lk 21:11-17

The persecution of the church here seems to be a reference to the general persecution of the church throughout history, which, of course, comes before the end time tribulation. Matthew implies that there is a greater, more universal persecution after the initial tribulation. Revelation certainly shows that the universal persecution of the church is coupled with the reign of the beast in the antichristian world government. Therefore, I am inclined to place verses 12-17 into the pre-tribulational period. Therefore we can simply add verse 11 to our list.

So, the beginning of the tribulation involves:

- Widespread deception.
- Wars.
- Rumours of wars.
- Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.
- Famines.
- Pestilences. [Famines and pestilences are two different Greek words which sound almost the same, causing a play on words *limos* (pron. lee-mos), *loimos* (loy'-mos).]
- Earthquakes in various. [Gk. *seismos* (sice-mos') continuing the alliteration.]
- There will be fearful sights.
- And great signs from heaven.

'Fearful sights' is one Greek word *phobetron*, which means 'that which causes terror or fright'. 'Fearful sights' thus means 'terrors'. 'Signs' means something out of the ordinary, something different from the normal course of events.

This means that there are nine separate types of events in the early part of the tribulation. In the Bible 9 is the number of judgment. I don't want to make an issue of this but it seems appropriate.

So, the question is, 'are we seeing these events today and in recent times'?

**Fourth Point: the beginning of the end is a time that demonstrates wars, rumours of wars, nation rising against nation, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, fearful sights, and great signs from heaven.**

## Paul's Information

Paul also identifies general characteristics of the last times, as opposed to the last day or last hour. Although there is one sense in which the last day can apply to the whole of the Gospel age, Paul clearly appears to have in mind the latter part of this period. A perceptible change occurs in the generally accepted mores of the world.

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day*

*will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. ... The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. 2 Thess 2:1-4, 9-12

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. 1 Tim 4:1-3

But know this, that in the **last days** perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! 2 Tim 3:1-5

### Summary of events at the end

- There is a great apostasy. There is a departure from the faith as a result of deception. Doctrines of demons prevail. Many have a form of religion but deny its power. True Christians must turn away from such people. This apostasy involves lying, hypocrisy and seared consciences; and also legalism and cultic behaviour (forbidding to marry, vegetarianism etc.).
- The truth is not loved.
- People have pleasure in unrighteousness. Men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.
- The revealing of the man of sin sitting in the temple of God. People believe THE lie.
- A coming of a lawless one with power and miracles working by deception.

I will expound more on this shortly.

## A time of extreme contrasts

I want to make the point that the end is a time of great contrasts; this must be borne in mind. For some there is peace and security but for others there is terrible torment and affliction. Some are massively wealthy as a result of the antichristian mercantile empire, but others are down-pressed and enslaved.

Jesus told us that the end would be a time when people are marrying and given in marriage and everything was like before; following the precedent of the flood and the judgment on Sodom.<sup>14</sup> Paul tells us that it is a time of peace.<sup>15</sup> Yet other texts show us that some, at this

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<sup>14</sup> Lk 17:26-30; 'And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and

very same time, are being killed (especially believers).<sup>16</sup>

The key difference is between those who profit from the end-time mercantile empire: businessmen, the ruling elites, wealthy patrons, politicians, those employed by the beast (civil servants, military, police etc.). Those who give themselves up so sin and follow the beast may do well; those who resist the beast will be martyred.

**Fifth Point: the end, and the tribulation, will be a period of great contrasts.**

## Corresponding features experienced today

### **Widespread deception, especially in the church**

No one can doubt that that is happening right now. The level of deception in the church and the world is just beyond belief. Most people are so dull<sup>17</sup> that they have no clue as to what is really going on because they believe the lies of the media and governments. A full analysis of this would require a very large book.

#### *An example of deception working in the world*

For example: I explain in my paper on child abuse<sup>18</sup> how very organised paedophile rings are in operation amongst high-level establishment figures in virtually every nation on earth. This includes royalty, nobles, politicians, the judiciary, the police force, local government, the media, the entertainment world and more. The level of degeneration in this is truly sickening: physical abuse, sexual abuse, rape, torture and murder. Much of it involves Satanism and satanic rituals. Yes, some of your beloved leaders are Satanists who abuse and kill children.

Very few are brought to book because the police, politicians and judiciary are complicit through loyalty to secret societies like Freemasonry. Investigation after investigation has been dropped. Thousands of complaints ignored. Reports by professionals dumped. Cases brought to court dropped. Evidence in police possession lost or destroyed. Victims were smeared. Even honest policemen (like Lenny Harper<sup>19</sup>), local politicians (like Stuart Syvret<sup>20</sup>) and social workers, were discredited, slandered, obstructed and removed by very high level powers when they got too close for comfort.

The sheer fact of the Jimmy Savile case alone is proof of this. He had high level protection from royalty, politicians, judges, the media, the IRA, criminals, and the police. Thus he got away with awful crimes against hundreds of vulnerable people, allowed free reign in

brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.'

<sup>15</sup> 1 Thess 5:1-3; 'But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labour pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.'

<sup>16</sup> Matt 24:9; 'Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.'

<sup>17</sup> Part of the satanic plan is to make people want to be dumb, such as by using all their relaxation time in pointless mind-numbing pursuits; such as: getting drunk and partying, watching video games, watching endless TV soaps, drugs etc.

<sup>18</sup> 'Suffer the little children'

<sup>19</sup> Senior investigative officer in the Jersey Haut de la Garenne case, until smeared and dumped.

<sup>20</sup> Jersey politician, slandered, removed and framed.



multiple hospitals (including necrophilia in mortuaries), despite there being widespread knowledge, and accusations, of his crimes. While he was engaging in truly horrific crimes, he was lauded by the establishment, dined with Prince Charles, befriended by Lord Mountbatten and Prince Phillip, feted by the BBC and had New Year dinners for a decade with Margaret Thatcher. The accusation (yet to be investigated) is that he was not alone in his crimes but was a procurer of children for abuse and murder by high level figures.

Savile is the archetype of deception. On the face of it he appeared as the quirky entertainer, the loveable fool, the children's entertainer, the hard-working charity worker, the disciplined athlete and so on. Underneath he was using all this credibility to coldly and rationally pursue the most heinous and perverse sexual abuse, rape, necrophilia and possibly murder, upon people aged 5 to 75. He was also complicit with the ruling powers to kidnap children from care homes for the pleasure of paedophiles like himself.

However, the wheels are turning as more and more people have been writing up the truth. Multiple web sites have recently appeared seeking to expose paedophilia. More and more victims are coming forward. There are now 130 MPs<sup>21</sup> calling for a completely independent enquiry (like Hillsborough) to determine why the police have not done their job for 60 years, why all the investigations into child sexual abuse were a whitewash and why evidence against cabinet ministers was destroyed.<sup>22</sup>

Now the point here is that the common person has no clue about the level of this criminal activity, or that tens of thousands of children go missing every year and are abused. Some are filmed being tortured and killed for the pleasure of perverts.<sup>23</sup> The level of deception is so great that a British Prime Minister, who was voted for by many Christians, managed to continually abuse, rape, torture and kill multiple children from care homes (mostly on a yacht) without hindrance. This level of deception would be thought not credible as the plot of a novel – but it is real.

Most people would be shocked to know the sheer amount of lies that politicians and the news media spout every day – despite the prevailing opinion that they are generally liars. It is truly astonishing the depth of deception involved. It is not just lies but the ignorance of important facts. What threatens the establishment is simply ignored or covered up; Tory grandee Norman Tebbit has even admitted this on record.

For example, the cross-party<sup>24</sup> petitioning of the Home Secretary for an independent enquiry into child abuse by 130 MPs (the number is growing) is hugely important and pretty rare. Yet no mainstream news channel mentioned this for several weeks until it was mentioned in passing as part of a bigger story on the missing Geoffrey Dickens' paedophile dossier. Similarly the recent news about an ex-cabinet minister who raped a young girl, with the police case being dropped despite testimony and evidence, then the victim being smeared, received no coverage at all, again until the dossier story.<sup>25</sup> Allegations against the cabinet minister involved in all these incidents have been published on the web for years but still there is no action by the police or the media. This includes a video of him present

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<sup>21</sup> Such as Tom Watson.

<sup>22</sup> This was finally instigated by the Home Secretary after this paper was written, though the leader and framework immediately resulted in calls of a likely whitewash.

<sup>23</sup> This is not a theory; the films have been found. In fact some have shown cabinet ministers present but were lost by the police.

<sup>24</sup> In fact it is members from every party. The petition was initiated by Zac Goldsmith but aided by Tom Watson and Simon Danczuk.

<sup>25</sup> This forms one of many questions put to the Home Secretary in the demand of MPs for an enquiry.

during the abuse of a child, which was conveniently lost by the police, just as the dossier was after it was given to him.

We now know that paedophile Cyril Smith also had evidence of his criminal activities given to the Metropolitan Police decades ago. Nothing was done. People would be shocked to know that the cabinets of several Prime Ministers over the last 50 years have included many paedophiles, not one or two; many. There is a huge cover-up regarding criminal activity in Westminster by senior politicians that most people have no clue about at all. The guilty survive by deception.

Massive establishment deception would need a book, from the death of Kennedy to the death of Princess Diana and more.<sup>26</sup> However, the deception in the church is even more pervasive, as regular readers will be aware.

### *Deception in the church*

Just as the nation of Judah completely apostatised from God in the run up to the Babylonian exile, so the modern church has apostatised, committing idolatry, amongst other great sins.

The simple fact is that the modern church is so far removed from God's word that almost nothing that goes on in most churches has any basis in truth at all. Unbelievable? No; it is a simple observable fact.

#### FALSE LEADERSHIP

Biblical church leadership is solely by a team of equal elders (that are older, wiser, mature believers who can all teach and pastor) with no senior leader and no accountability to anyone but God and the congregation. These are usually working people unless they also have an itinerant ministry. I know of not one local church that works in this way; not one.

#### FALSE MINISTRY

The basis of church ministry is mutual edification and encouragement based upon every member ministry, each participating according to their gift. Very few work this way, if any. A few try to.

#### FALSE VENUE

The local church is a family that meets in a home and nowhere else. It is thus small in numbers; small enough to allow open participation and care and also enable ease of leading. Though there are some house churches around, most of these are not Biblical at all. However, most churches fail in this completely.

#### FALSE TEACHING METHOD

Teaching in the local church is not by a sermon; it is by a combination of didactic teaching and prophetic ministry. All ministry involves questions and answers and open discussion. Catechism of new believers is essential. I know of no church that does this.

#### FALSE WORSHIP

Worship is of the heart, pure, reverent, simple, and involves no musical instruments. I know of no church that does this in conjunction with the aforementioned points.

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<sup>26</sup> Kennedy was accidentally shot by one of the Secret Service agents in the following car after the first shot by Oswald; Diana was murdered by the British establishment, as was civil servant David Kelly. There is ample hard evidence to demonstrate these for anyone that has the tenacity to find it.

### FALSE DOCTRINES RAMPANT

In addition to all these failures, there is present in the church every heresy that has ever been known to man from the last 2,000 years. Most Christians do not really know what the Gospel is and hardly any church teaches the truth of Biblical doctrine. Instead, ideas that stem from the world's philosophies, paganism, false religions and the occult are taught instead.<sup>27</sup> The result is that very large numbers of churchgoers are not really saved at all.

The essence of the demonic deception of the end is to turn everything in the church into the very opposite of what it should be. This satanic plan is now well under way.<sup>28</sup>

### Wars

I could write a small treatise on this, or I could simply ask you to look at a useful YouTube animation called, '*World Battleground, 1000 years of war in 5 minutes*'. This proves the point in very graphic and audible terms. It shows that the biggest wars with the largest deaths and the greatest use of military power all occurred in the last 100 years.

Also, the oft-repeated statement by politicians that we have had 60 years of peace since WWII is a fraud. This is usually said to bolster support for the EU. In fact there have been more wars in that time across the world than in previous centuries. Many of these have involved British soldiers (Gulf War, Croatia, Kosovo, Iran-Iraq War, Iraq War, Korean War, Vietnam War, Sierra Leone, Aden, Yemen, Afghanistan War etc.).

Only since 1914 has the world ever seen a true world war (the Napoleonic Wars came close).

### Rumours of wars

This is when there are fears of wars, or hidden wars, when the public doesn't really know what is going on or doesn't care. It also means that there is a heightened state of fear about wars even if there is no active participation in one. Such would include the Cold War that dominated 1945-1991 or the War on Terror that we are currently in. It also refers to wars that are distant from us that do not occupy the front page of newspapers, such as Chechnya, or the many small-scale wars, insurrections and police actions in various provinces, such as conflicts in Indonesia, the Philippines, Grenada, Argentina etc.

To this we can add the multiple civil wars, coups, and regime changes, such as Burma, Laos, Syria, Egypt, The Congo, Cambodia, Lebanon, the Armenian genocide etc.

In the last hundred years there has been a war going on somewhere the whole time, often several at a time; sometimes wars that occupied many countries at once.

### Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom

We are seeing this happen every day. There are uprisings all the time as ancient tribal loyalties are coming to the fore once more. Often these are a reaction to the foolish actions of politicians to artificially carve up nations and remake them for political agendas, such as the making of Iraq after WWI or the restoration of Israel in Palestine after WWII.

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<sup>27</sup> For instance: hierarchical leadership, based in privileged clergy, is straight from the world, and this comes from the practice of demonic spiritual structures. The excesses of radical Charismatics (such as evidenced in the Toronto Blessing) come from Hindu Kundalini yoga and Mesmerism. Many of the ideas of the power religion of the Signs and Wonders Mvt. are from various eastern religions and occult philosophies, such as Soka Gakkai Buddhism. Charismatics are deeply affected by Latter Rain heresies, which in turn drew from the well of occultism through New Thought, Quimby, Unity and other sects.

<sup>28</sup> I am writing a paper that explains this in more detail.

Disturbances to nations bringing political and social instability or even outright war have been increasing in recent years; hence Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Ukraine, to say nothing of the ongoing terrorism in Israel, which is really a small ongoing war.

### Famines

I do not need to comment on this as it is a sadly familiar feature of modern news. What is shocking is that famines continue to occur as a result of human actions and the vast efforts of charitable organisations to eradicate famine have not only failed, but in many cases have made the situation worse as they have funded the local militia causing the problem. Some charitable aid programmes have been proved to make the famine worse, extending the natural duration of the famine.

Certainly famines occurred throughout history, but the sheer size of modern populations means that recent famines will affect much greater numbers. However, we do not need to prove that modern famines are worse, simply that famines are a notable feature of life during the tribulation. No one can doubt that this is the case.

### Pestilences

Again there have been many pandemics throughout history, notably the bubonic plague that devastated Europe in the Middle Ages. However, partly due to the larger world population, the last hundred years has seen some of the worst pandemics of all time. In addition, we are seeing new diseases that have not appeared in history before.

If we just take casualties, the biggest cause of death occurred in the Spanish Flu epidemic of 1918-19.

It is difficult to draw historical comparisons because we have much less recorded accurately diagnosed information from the past. However, as we can see from the table below, there appear to be higher numbers of deaths from pestilence in the last 100 years than previously. This is only logical. If a pandemic disease affects 30-40% of people alive, then there will be greater numbers of deaths in larger populations (all things being equal). However, some diseases will be less effective in a population with better food, sanitation and medical treatment than a historic situation.

Name	Disease	Place & Time	Number killed
Black Death	Yersinia pestis, a type of bubonic plague.	Europe 1346-53.	25 million (30% of pop.).
Plague of Justinian	Bubonic plague.	6 <sup>th</sup> – 7 <sup>th</sup> centuries.	40% of Constantinople pop.
Plague in China and India.	Bubonic plague.	1855-90.	12 million.
Various pandemics	Cholera.	19 <sup>th</sup> century	Tens of millions.
Russian Flu	Influenza	1889-1890	1 Million.
Spanish Flu	Influenza	1918-1919	Infected 500 million (33% of world pop.), 50 million dead.
Asian Flu	Influenza	1957-58	2 million.
Hong Kong Flu	Influenza	1968-69	1 million.
Various outbreaks	Typhus		
Smallpox	Caused by the Variola virus.	20 <sup>th</sup> century	300-500 million.
	Measles	20 <sup>th</sup> century	Approx. 200 million.
	Tuberculosis	20 <sup>th</sup> century to present.	2 million per year.
	Malaria	Now	500 million cases per year.
Viral haemorrhagic fevers	Lassa Fever, Rift Valley Fever, Ebola virus etc.	Now	Potential for millions.
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (type of pneumonia).	Now	Potential pandemic.
AIDS		1980s-Now	Tens of thousands.

To this we must add the effects of modern western diets and lifestyle which cause greater incidents of disease than historically. Cancer is one of the world's top killers and this is directly attributable to lifestyle, environment and, particularly, diet. Very few people died of cancer in the past. Heart disease is also a modern pandemic, which is directly linked to western lifestyle and diet. To these we could add the deaths from smoking, drug taking and such like. A little-known new factor is also death by doctor; in America this is the third top cause of death.<sup>29</sup>

All things considered, I think it is safe to say that the last hundred years has seen a massive increase in what could be called pestilence of some kind.

### **Earthquakes**

God tells us that there will be great earthquakes in various places. His word does not say more earthquakes than ever before, just great earthquakes.

Without any doubt that has been the case in the last 100 years. However, it is a fact that some of the greatest ever earthquakes took place in the last century.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Magnitude<sup>30</sup></b>
Chilean Earthquake	1960	9.5
Good Friday Earthquake (Alaska)	1964	9.2
Indian Ocean Earthquake	2004	9.1-9.3
San Francisco Earthquake	1906	7.8
Great Hanshin Earthquake (Japan)	1995	7.3

### **Fearful sights or terrors**

As we have noted, what is translated as 'fearful sights' rally means 'terrors'. So, this is not necessarily some natural visible event, such as a fearful astronomical situation or atmospheric sight.

Regarding that which causes terror, I am certain that the last hundred years has given more than its fair share of that. Indeed, we have had terror on a scale never seen in history before.

The two world wars alone caused more terror unleashed than the world had ever seen. WWII has often been termed as 'All hell let loose'; indeed a recent history of the war had this title (by Max Hastings). Obviously the holocausts were a terror unimaginable to past people. The sheer scale of numbers alone dwarfs massacres of the past. However, both wars were ridden with terror inducing events all the time. For example: the Blitz in British cities or the bombing raids of the RAF in Germany. Never before had whole cities been alight with fierce fires that drew the air from the ground and roasted thousands to death at once. Dresden alone is one case of this. Or take the onward march of the Russian tanks towards Berlin crushing refugees to death who could not get out of the way. Then there were the concentration camps in Germany and under the Japanese where untold horrors took place. Then there were the atom bombs on Japan where devastation and massacre

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<sup>29</sup> Such as wrongly prescribed medication, new dangerous medication, wrong diagnosis, wrong surgical procedures, effects of vaccines, hospital acquired diseases etc.

<sup>30</sup> Moment magnitude scale (formerly Richter scale).

occurred in moments on a scale unknown to previous history. And this is just focusing on WWII alone.

It is pointless continuing a list of atrocities, massacres, tortures and inhumane treatment. It is my contention that the last 100 years has seen far more of this that occurred in past history. We have found new, efficient ways to cause terror.

However, there are many natural events that also cause terror and great loss. We could mention the tsunamis caused by earthquakes, the effects of volcanic eruptions, the devastation caused by typhoons, floods and hurricanes or tornadoes and such like.

It would take a book to itemise these but I think it is clear to most people that there has been a great profusion of such things in the last hundred years. Indeed, we have begun to see unusual events, such as damaging tornados in Britain. One caused damage in Selsey and another in Birmingham in recent years alone. The UK has also seen massive devastation caused by floods, such as last year's in Somerset, or the cyclone that destroyed millions of trees in 1987. Frequently we find people saying on news reports that such events are the worst in living memory, or the worst since records began. This shows that the last century has seen unprecedented terrors in the UK alone.

### **Great signs from heaven**

The real cases of this are for the future I suspect. However, there have been a number of astronomical scares in my lifetime, such as passing comets thought to threaten earth.

### **Persecution of Christians**

Luke implies that persecution is endemic throughout history, while Matthew and Mark imply that there is a worsening of persecution in the middle of the tribulation. Revelation shows this persecution from the heavenly perspective of a war between Satan (the dragon) and God and that this is played out on earth with Satan's servants (the beast and the false prophet: i.e. civil and religious power) against the church.

So we can add this factor to the list as something that is intensified at some point in the tribulation. Thus the question is, 'have we seen an intensification of persecution in the last 100 years?'

The various agencies which carefully document these things tell us that there was a greater persecution of Christians in the last century than any other. Open Doors estimates that 100 million Christians face persecution with 100,000 dying every year.<sup>31</sup> Another survey in 2010 said that at least 75% of religious persecution around the world was directed at Christians.<sup>32</sup> National news outlets completely ignore this travesty. Therefore, this final stage of church persecution is well under way but not yet complete.

### **The great apostasy**

We have already touched on this in the deception present in the church. As a result of deception, many in the church fall away from the faith; in other words, many are shown to be merely professing believers and not true Christians. At the end these fall from outward faith.

A key sign of the end times is the apostasy of the church; Christianity crumbles from its historic obedience to Scripture. Surely this is happening right now.

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<sup>31</sup> Weltverfolgungs index 2012, p2.

<sup>32</sup> Aid to the Church in Need, Religious Freedom in the World – Report 2010, Conference Persecution of Christians.

### **The truth is not loved**

The key to all the error of the end is that the truth is disobeyed because it is not loved. This happens in the church when true Biblical doctrine is either ignored or denied and all sorts of error and aberrations follow. It is also true in the secular world where common sense and traditional mores are abandoned in favour of blasphemies and iniquity. Gay marriage is but one example of this.

### **People have pleasure in unrighteousness**

There has always been unrighteousness and those that loved it. However, these folk were normally scandalised in society for centuries. What happens at the end is that unrighteousness becomes something valued by society and legalised by governments.

For example: when governments legislate policies that oppress the poor, the sick, the disabled, the weak and the needy, then that nation loves unrighteousness. When a government makes the rich richer and the poor poorer, that nation is unrighteous. When the media celebrates such policies, that nation loves unrighteousness. When a government legislates to sanction abortion, that nation is unrighteous. We could go on.

Ordinary people love unrighteousness just as much in ways unheard of in previous history. Just read any day's news media to see examples of this.

For example: it is now considered normal behaviour amongst teenagers to have sexual relations (heterosexual or homosexual) and take photographs of such acts and pass them around your friends via smart 'phones. Kids are considered to have failed to become adults until they have done this and it is occurring at younger and younger ages. It is now considered normal behaviour to have had scores of sexual relationships before settling down. Virgins are considered to be weird. Recently 8,000 children were arrested for sexual crimes against other children as young as less than one. Many consider that hard core pornography is educational and most kids have been exposed to it before their adolescence. Few see any problem with teenagers (and younger) exposing themselves to the most severe, brutal, graphic violence in video games, often for hours at a time. As a result fights in the street involve exceptional acts of violence, such as repeatedly stamping on someone's head, because they have become inured to the reality of violence.

We could go on and on listing forms of the love of unrighteousness, but my reader will be familiar with such. Paul's summary of the love of unrighteousness includes:

- Self-love; self-obsession. This encapsulates the modern age; it is riddled with selfishness. Even in supposedly Christian churches there is a huge emphasis upon self-esteem in psychological counselling. This is the opposite of the self-denial that Jesus taught. The reason that the world is so restless, unfulfilled and unhappy is because it is self-focused. True contentment results from giving yourself to help others.
- Fixation on money and wealth. The desire to get rich quick. Nothing needs to be said here. Those with money seek more through all sorts of unrighteous means, such as banker speculation on money that doesn't exist. Those who are poor often seek money by lotteries. In the past the emphasis was on working hard to improve one's lot.
- Boasting. It was once considered good moral behaviour to be humble about one's achievements. Today people boast about things they can't do. Programmes such as the X-Factor demonstrate this; such boasting is even seen as entertainment.
- Pride: never has there been an age where there was so much hubris in the world.
- Blasphemy: the world is full of blasphemy today; indeed it is even common in supposedly Christian churches. The world punishes people who disrespect

homosexuals, women or Muslims based on law; yet Christ and the true God are blasphemed every minute and no one cares.

Paul also adds: disobedience to parents, being unthankful, unholy actions, unloving behaviour, unforgiveness, slander, lack of self-control, brutality, despising good, treachery, being headstrong, being haughty, and loving pleasure rather than God. None of my readers will doubt that such things are overwhelmingly present today, even within the church.

### **The revealing of the man of sin sitting in the temple of God**

I have made the case elsewhere<sup>33</sup> that this has nothing to do with the rebuilding of a temple in Jerusalem and the antichrist sitting enthroned within it. This is one of the farcical notions of Dispensationalism.

God's temple is not made of bricks and mortar, or stones, but is the elect, chosen people in Christ. Man was made to be the temple of God but sin has ruined that for most people. What the devil seeks to do at the end is to use mankind to take that role for himself. He does this by so corrupting man that mankind in general becomes the epitome of Satan himself; the devil is manifested in mankind at the end. This is what the revealing of the man of sin means.

Man was created to be holy and to express God. At the end, the majority of people on the earth are so full of sin that they express Satan in his fulness.

The key factor here is believing Satan's great lie that man can become God. The essence of the antichristian kingdom is the claim that the Antichrist is God and that men can become god-like.

### **A coming of a lawless one with power and miracles working by deception**

There are two ways to understand this.

Traditionally, commentators believe that there is an end-time Antichrist who rules the earth through a global empire. There is also the view that the end time antichrist (there have been many antichrists John tells us) is the fulness of mankind united in sin and service to Satan; a corporate antichrist.

No one can say for certain, but it may well be both. There will certainly be a corporate expression of the man of sin, but there may well be a figurehead of that in an individual ruling a totalitarian world empire.

Either way, at the end there will be manifestations of real power and miracles by the working of Satan to deceive the nations.

### **Interim conclusion**

It would be perfectly reasonable to claim that we are actually in a time of tribulation similar to that prophesied by Jesus.

Now some will claim that there have always been such things and modern times are no different. However, this is not really true. Certainly there have always been wars, rumours of wars, famines etc.; but (as I have shown) there has been a significant difference from the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards. For example, no world war occurred before 1914; millions of abortions never occurred in the past; there were no equivalent holocausts to that of the Jews, Chinese or Russians.

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<sup>33</sup> 'The Antichrist'.



If Satan was released sometime in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (as I claim in my paper), then it naturally follows that the period since then is also the time of a great tribulation. We are in this time now; however, we are not yet in the period of the worst of it.

## **The second part of the tribulation**

Most agree that there is a beginning of sorrows, a beginning of the tribulation, and many agree that there is a later great tribulation. However, I suggest that the tribulation is split into three parts: the beginning, the latter more powerful tribulation and a final terrible ('great' tribulation) Matthew 24 certainly seems to be able to be divided up into this.

The second part of the tribulation begins thus:

9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.

10 "And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.

11 "Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

12 "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

13 "But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

14 "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

15 "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand),

16 "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

17 "Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house.

18 "And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.

19 "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!

20 "And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.

21 "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.

22 "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened."

This passage becomes tricky because the Lord deliberately conflates a warning for Christian Jews at the time of the fall of Jerusalem in 70AD (v15-22; which they observed at the time and were saved, Jews were not). This warning about the terrors happening in the fall of Jerusalem serve as a warning regarding the terrors at the end of the age. However, we are not told to flee the mountains or run from a housetop without packing a suitcase. This was applicable to Jewish Christians as the Roman armies approached.

Thus the aspects of the second part of the tribulation that affect us are:

9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.

10 "And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.

11 "Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

12 "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

13 "But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

14 "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Or in list form:

- Christians will be delivered up to tribulation martyred, and hated by all nations.
- Many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.
- Many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.
- Lawlessness will abound.
- The love of many will grow cold.
- He who endures to the end shall be saved.
- The gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations,
- And then the end will come.

This latter part of the tribulation is connected, therefore, to the terrors of the Fall of Jerusalem. Just as the Lord warned about the awfulness of the actual future siege of Jerusalem coming in forty years from his death, so he connects the warnings of the end with this event.

Thus he immediately talks about Christians being hated by all and killed.

### **Is this happening now?**

This is difficult because it is partly, but partly not.

The chief feature of this period is the persecution of Christians. The picture painted of this time in the Book of Revelation is that there is a determination of a totalitarian antichristian government to eradicate all Christians from the face of the earth. Now this does not mean all professing Christians; indeed, such people serve Satan's purposes quite well. The attack is on hard-line, consistent, Biblical Christians; these alone pose a threat to Satan.

Is this occurring now?

No; not globally. We in the west have this to come. However, we must mention the context that more Christians have been martyred in the last 100 years than in all the previous centuries. Believers have faced terrible persecutions (including torture and execution) for decades. In some cases these have been on our doorsteps. There have been Christians crucified in Egypt only miles away from other western Christians holiday-making in Egyptian coastal resorts. This is part of the contrasts of the tribulation.

So, this is one area where: a) there has always been persecution; b) there is considerable persecution going on now but, c) we have not yet seen this prophecy completely fulfilled; it is for the future.

The same is true of all the other features of this period. They are going on now to some degree but not in the fullest sense.

Therefore, I think it is safe to say that we are in the cusp of a change from one part of the tribulation to another. The worst aspects of the tribulation are yet to come in an undetermined time, maybe years, maybe decades, probably not centuries.

We are in the tribulation, but not the worst part of it.

The second part of the tribulation merges into the third part. Most notable in this third part is the emergence of a world government that solidifies the opposition to Christianity.

## The third aspect

23 "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here *is* the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe *it*."

24 "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect."

25 "See, I have told you beforehand."

26 "Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; *or* 'Look, *He is* in the inner rooms!' do not believe *it*."

27 "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."

28 "For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together."

29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken."

30 "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

31 "And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

32 "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer *is* near."

33 "So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near -- at the doors!"

Firstly we need to isolate the end statements:

27 "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."

28 "For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together."

29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken."

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31 "And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

32 " Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer *is* near.

33 "So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near -- at the doors!"

All these are applicable to the actual revealing of the Son of Man in glory and power. The darkening of the moon, for instance, is not a part of the earlier tribulation but part of the changes to the heavens and earth that occur when Jesus returns. The heavens will shake.

Thus we see the following items that form part of the final aspect of the tribulation:

23 "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here *is* the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe *it*.

24 "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

25 "See, I have told you beforehand.

26 "Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; *or* 'Look, *He is* in the inner rooms!' do not believe *it*.

The last item in the tribulation is a prevalence of fake Christs (messiahs). The overwhelming characteristic of the final part of the end regards false Christs. Indeed, the whole antichristian world empire will be one false Christ since it will claim to be as God and as Christ, pretending to Godhead. It is the fulfilment of the age-old lie that man can be as God and in this end-time kingdom he thinks that he is God.

Thus the final aspect regards the domination of the world in a final antichristian kingdom.

Now this is difficult to illustrate with texts because it requires quoting whole chapters of Revelation and offering interpretation thereof. I will do my best to avoid this.

This is represented in various ways in Revelation, but most well-known by the symbol of the beast. There are two beasts, the first from the sea who terrifies the nations and rules them with a rod of iron.<sup>34</sup> The beast from the earth is also the false prophet who is the right hand man for the first beast.<sup>35</sup> He looks like a lamb (pretends to be Christ) but speaks from Satan. One represents civil power the other religious power. The final antichristian kingdom will be a double-edged sword, man ruling as an emperor over the whole globe but also dominating religion that worships the beast (and thus Satan through proxy).<sup>36</sup> The end time antichristian kingdom will be a religious-political entity.

This is what Satan has wanted since Eden, the whole world united in worshipping him so that he can feel like he is God. The beast is a false Christ; an antichrist ('instead of Christ').

The first beast, the delegate of Satan (the dragon in Revelation) makes war on the saints (Rev 11:7).

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34 Rev 13:1, 'And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name'.

35 Rev 13:11-12 'Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed'.

36 Rev 13:3, 'they worshiped the beast'.

## What is yet to occur?

Really there are only three certain new things to occur.

The first is the preaching of the Gospel to go out to the whole world. This will be hard to determine, but at least the translation boards have very nearly translated the Bible into every known language. This aspect must be very near completion.

The second is the development of a global empire under the complete domination of Satan through the beast and false prophet. This has not yet occurred; but globalisation is fast growing.

The third is that the global persecution of Christians is so severe that it looks as if the church will be completely wiped out – then the Lord returns.

These things have not yet occurred and we cannot postulate when they will.

## Conclusion

Are we in the tribulation? I believe that we are and have been since the late 1800s. Are we in the 'Great Tribulation'? No; not yet, but it may not be far away.

Scripture quotations are from The New King James Version  
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