

Sure Signs of Christ's Return – Session 2

What to Expect Between Now and Armageddon

A KEY TO UNDERSTANDING BIBLE PROPHECY

In our first session we mentioned one of the most important keys to understanding Bible prophecy. Daniel 4:17 tells us that “the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.” In other words, God is in control of world events and He’s using them to advance His purpose with mankind and the earth (Numbers 14:21, Habakkuk 2:14).

Prophecy builds our faith by giving us a way to confirm that God really “is” and that He is the rewarder of those that diligently seek him (Hebrews 11:6).

Even if we accept that prophecy is important we might find ourselves entirely unsure about how to accurately understand what it really means. That brings us to this week’s key to understanding Bible prophecy. The best place to look for a better understanding of Bible prophecy is in the Bible itself!

2 Peter 1:19-21

19 <u>We have also a more sure word of prophecy</u> ; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:	20 Knowing this first, that <u>no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation</u> . 21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.
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If prophecy isn’t subject to our “private interpretation” then how do we interpret it? Paul expresses a principle in 1 Corinthians 9 that helps us answer this important question.

1 Corinthians 9:9-10

9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. <u>Doth God take care for oxen?</u>	10 <u>Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written</u> : that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.
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Paul’s point here is that the patterns laid down by GOD in the past have been designed to teach those that are willing to learn about the present and future. The same principle is alluded to in Romans 4:23-24 and Romans 15:4.

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The following passages illustrate the principle that Old Testament events provide patterns specifically designed to teach us about the present and future. (This list is by no means exhaustive.)

Pattern	Reference(s)
The pattern of creation helps us understand the plan of GOD for humankind and the earth.	Genesis 2:7, Exodus 20:8-11, Exodus 31:12-17 cp. Hebrews 4:1-10
The pattern of the flood helps us understand the cleansing and saving power of baptism.	1 Peter 3:18-22
The pattern of Abraham and Sarah’s family along with Isaac and Rebekah’s family help us understand the Christian calling.	Romans 9:1-13
The pattern of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt and subsequent journey to the promised land helps us understand the journey of all those GOD calls.	1 Corinthians 10:1-14, Hebrews 4:1-10

WHAT TO EXPECT: EXPANSION OF RUSSIAN CONTROL IN MIDDLE EAST & ASIA

In session 1 we looked at some expectations concerning the nation of Israel based on our consideration of Ezekiel 38. Namely, Israel will need to keep control of the West Bank. They see it as a need for security. However, Bible Prophecy requires that the Jews be occupying the Mountains of Israel and dwelling in the midst of the land (Ezekiel 38:8,12). In addition, Israel will grow in prosperity and become an attractive target for Gog (Ezekiel 12).

Bible Study Tip – Ancient Territory Points to Modern Identity

As we saw in session 1, we can use the territory that these ancient nations controlled to identify their modern counterparts.



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We mention this tip because we expect the nation of Russia to gain control of the territories of Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and parts of Pakistan.

Nebuchadnezzar's Image & Vision of Beasts

Daniel 7 records a vision in which Daniel sees a series of beasts. It corresponds to Nebuchadnezzar's vision of a great image in Daniel 2. Both the image and the beasts describe a series of empires, all of which represent the Kingdom of Men. Daniel 2 illustrates man's perspective which is why the empires are portrayed as a figure of a man. In contrast, Daniel 7 is God's perspective, which is why the empires are portrayed as beasts.



Nebuchadnezzar's vision reveals the events that are going to unfold between his own lifetime and the return of Christ to establish the Kingdom of God here on the earth.

In Daniel 7:7, we are given a clue that is related to this latter day Gog and confederacy of nations. In describing the fourth beast, this verse tells us:

Daniel 7:7

After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great **iron teeth**: it devoured and brake in pieces, **and stamped the residue with the feet of it**: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.

4th Beast → Rome

The underlined portion of this verse has yet to be fulfilled. The confederacy of nations led by Gog (Ezekiel 38) will encompass all the territory controlled by the empires described in the image of Daniel 2. This will be accomplished by the nation of Russia under the direction of Gog.

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Revival of the Fourth Beast & Image Empire

This is the territory that Rome never controlled. As such, it is the “residue” that will ultimately be incorporated into the confederacy led by Gog prior to Armageddon.



The King of the North

In addition to Daniel 7:7, Daniel 11 gives us another clue about the northern power who will control this territory. Daniel 11 is a historical account that dramatically outlines the history of the breakup of Alexander the Great's empire among his four generals. Eventually this land was ruled by just two rival generals, Seleucus and Ptolemy. One was in the north, controlling the territory in question above, and the other was in the south, in Egypt. They are identified as the king of the north and king of the south in Daniel 11.

To be called either the king of the north or the king of the south, you had to be an occupying power. Their positions are described as north and south because of their location in relation to Israel. Israel was smack in the middle between the two rival empires, and often the battleground for the two as they fought for dominance in that area.

Verses 40-45 jump in the historical timeline to “the time of the end,” describing what is going to take place in the time period leading up to Armageddon. It describes how a power - the king of the north - will sweep down through the land of Israel, overcome Egypt, and then turn his sights upon the land of Israel. This king of the north corresponds to Gog, and the invasion is the same one made by the Gogian confederacy of nations.

In order for Gog to be called “the king of the north,” he needs to be an occupying power controlling the ancient territory of the Seleucid Empire.

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Daniel 11:40

And **at the time of the end** shall the **king of the south** push at him: and the **king of the north** shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; **and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over.**

We see in Daniel 11:40 above how at the time of the end, both the king of the south and the king of the north come against “him”. This “him” is outlined in Daniel 11:36-39. This is the king in control of the city of Constantinople (modern Istanbul). It is the capital of Turkey today. The Turks have been in control of Constantinople since 1453.

Daniel 11:40 Fulfilled

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The king of the south pushing at “him”• The king of the north shall come against him ... invading Egypt then Israel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Occurs in 1917 when Israel is liberated from control by the Turks in WWI• Invasion of Gog and confederacy of nations down into the land of Israel ... yet future
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Summary of King of North

Gog will go through a sequence of events leading to his direct invasion of Israel.

1. Take control of territory of ancient Seleucid Empire
2. Take control of Turkey (Constantinople)
3. Invade Egypt
4. Invade Israel



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Names of Gog in Prophecy

When we consider the above sequence, we come to recognize that the Gogian power passes through several phases on its way to Armageddon and takes on different titles through that process. For example:

- He becomes “the king of the north” (Daniel 11:40). This title comes into existence when Gog takes control of the ancient Seleucid territory and becomes the occupying power.
- Once the king of the north, he is also considered “The Assyrian”.
- “The little horn of the goat” (Daniel 8:9, 23-25) is a title that is acquired when Gog seizes the city of Constantinople (Daniel 11:40) and re-establishes the eastern leg of the image empire – Daniel 2:33.
- Lastly he is called “Cruel Lord” (Isaiah 19:4) when he conquers Egypt.

WHAT TO EXPECT: POLITICAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND RUSSIA

Earlier in this session we discussed an important key to understanding Bible Prophecy - the use of “patterns” that teach us about the future through events that have taken place in the past. An example of this that directly applies to the northern power who will invade Israel can be found in the nation of Assyria. Assyria invaded and destroyed the northern Kingdom of Israel, whose capital was in Samaria. The southern kingdom of Judah was later invaded by the Assyrians and almost wiped out.

That last invasion was during the reign of King Hezekiah of Judah. The invasion by the Assyrians and their ultimate defeat outside the walls of Jerusalem is a pattern of the latter day battle of Armageddon. Through examination of these historical events we learn that, prior to the invasion and damage inflicted upon Judah, a political agreement was reached between the two countries.

King Hezekiah sought to avoid difficulty with this aggressive nation to his north, who controlled all the territory that would later be part of the Seleucid Empire. Hezekiah made a payment of silver and gold taken from the Temple to buy peace. However it did not last.

Political Agreement with Assyria

• King Ahaz of Judah	• Event outlined in 2 Kings 16:7-9
• King Hezekiah of Judah	• Event outlined in 2 Kings 18:13-16

The Assyrians reneged on the agreement and invaded Judah, taking 46 cities...all but 3. Jerusalem was surrounded by 185,000 Assyrian troops. It was then that Hezekiah, through Isaiah the prophet, prayed to God. God intervened, and that night all 185,000 were killed by an angel. Jerusalem was liberated and “The Assyrian” was defeated.

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This historical event is a pattern that is linked to prophecies of the future describing “The Assyrian” who is to again invade Israel. This title appears in several places in prophecies like Micah and especially Isaiah.

We expect this pattern to be followed. Once the territory to the north of Israel is controlled by Russia, we expect to see Israel enter into a Peace agreement with Russia. Since Russia will control Syria and Iran, those nations will no longer be a threat. Russia will likely let Israel have its way with Hamas and Hezbollah, since the natural gas reserves in the Mediterranean will be a profitable reward for both countries.

As a result, Israel will dwell safely just like it says in Ezekiel 38. But then ... the tables will turn and Israel will quickly become a victim when Gog and all her nations invade.

WHAT TO EXPECT: DETERIORATING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BRITAIN & EU

In session 1 we looked at the key players at the battle of Armageddon. We identified Tarshish with Great Britain and Europe with Magog. You might recall that Tarshish and Magog are on opposite sides at the battle of Armageddon. In other words, we expect growing distance between Great Britain and the European Union (EU).

Anti-EU sentiment is strong in Great Britain today and it seems to be growing. Demand is growing for a referendum on Great Britain's withdrawal from the EU. In January 2013, British Prime Minister David Cameron said that if elected in the 2015 General Election, a Conservative government would negotiate new agreements with the European Union and would then hold a referendum on whether to remain in or leave the EU.

The UK Independence Party (UKIP) headed by Nigel Farage is actively campaigning for Great Britain's withdrawal from the EU. The party is gaining significant traction: it had its best ever showing in local elections this spring when one in four voters supported UKIP in 35 councils in England and Wales. UKIP had 147 councilors elected, of whom 139 were gains.


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WHAT TO EXPECT: A TIME OF TROUBLE SUCH AS NEVER WAS

Setting the Scene

It's important to understand the order of events leading up to and after Armageddon. A convenient way to remember them is the phrase "Rail Road Junction At Mile Seven."

Rail	Return of Jesus Acts 1:10-11, 1 Thess. 4:13-18	
Road	Resurrection 1 Cor. 15:12-19, 1 Thess. 4:13-18	
Junction	Judgment Acts 17:29-31, Matthew 25:31-46	
At	Battle of Armageddon Rev. 16:16, Joel 3:9-14	
Mile Seven	Marriage Supper of The Lamb Rev. 19:5-10, Matt. 22:1-14, Rev. 17:14	

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A Time of Trouble

Daniel tells us that the time when Christ returns will be “a time of trouble, such as never was.”

Daniel 12:1-3

1 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and <u>there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time:</u> and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.	2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.
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In Luke 17 Jesus corroborates the description recorded by Daniel with two notable examples from the Old Testament: the Flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. He tells us that the time period when he returns will be like the time when GOD's judgment was poured out on the societies of Noah and Lot.

Luke 17:26-30

26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. 27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, <u>until the day that noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.</u>	28 Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded ¹ ; 29 But <u>the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.</u> 30 Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.
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¹ Ezekiel 16:49 Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.

Jesus adds some very important context to what we find in Daniel. His return will occur just before a “time of trouble, such as never was” that will bring an abrupt end to a period of great prosperity. Jesus highlights that aspect of the time of trouble experienced by both Noah and Lot (Luke 17:27, 29). One day things seemed to be going along well for people and the very next day their lives were in ruin.

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Sidebar: The violence and wickedness of Noah's society (Genesis 6:1-12) and the sexual immorality of Lot's society (Genesis 19:1-14) are well documented in scripture. And yet, when Jesus describes those societies he mentions things that seem entirely benign (i.e. eating, marrying, planting, building, etc.). Obviously there isn't anything inherently wrong with the activities Jesus mentions. Jesus is actually making the point that the violence and wickedness of Noah's society and the sexual immorality of Lot's society were symptoms of a much larger problem – people had ceased to have room for God in their lives.

In a period of great prosperity, what could create “a time of trouble, such as never was?” One possibility is a worldwide economic collapse.

It's not hard to imagine how U.S. and world economic woes could develop into a full-fledged crisis. The last few years have seen the debt ceiling debate, the fiscal cliff, quantitative easing, sequestration, the current governmental shutdown and the possibility of government default. And that's just in the U.S. Eurozone countries like Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Cyprus are dealing with serious economic problems of their own.

In his 2003 book, The Dollar Crisis, economist Richard Duncan explained why a severe global economic crisis was inevitable given the flaws in the international monetary system. He was among the few who saw the collapse of 2008-9 coming (others include Peter Schiff, Gerald Celente and Marc Faber). In The New Depression: The Breakdown of the Paper Money Economy, Duncan explains what's next. The economic system that emerged following the abandonment of sound money requires credit growth to survive. Yet the private sector can bear no additional debt and the government's creditworthiness is deteriorating rapidly. Should total credit begin to contract significantly, this New Depression will become a New Great Depression, with disastrous economic and geopolitical consequences.

WHAT TO EXPECT: THE KINGDOM OF GOD, HERE ON THE EARTH

Even though we expect a “time of trouble, such as never was” we shouldn't lose sight of the fact that there is a positive purpose. The immediate impact of Armageddon and the world crisis leading up to it will be that God will be known to Israel and all nations of the earth (Ezekiel 38:23, 39:25-29). This serves God's ultimate purpose to fill the earth with His glory (Numbers 14:21, Habakkuk 2:14). After Armageddon, that process will begin in earnest with the establishment of His kingdom here on the earth ruled by Jesus Christ and the faithful who have received immortality by God's grace through faith.