

Benware: An Overview of Future Events

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Note: As a student of the Bible I've read Benware's work on prophetic and End Time Scripture, and agree the far majority of his conclusions are as God's Word teaches. I believe he is correct and his thoughts should be studied under the truth of Scripture. Following is a summary of the next and imminent events we wait for. A table of relevant Scripture aligned with the timeline is included at the end.

Revelation 22:20

[20] He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

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[Benware: Understanding End Times Prophecy - Chapter 11](#)

CHAPTER ELEVEN: An Overview of Future Events

A person's first flight in an airplane is always a memorable one. After getting past the fear, he or she is always impressed with the view. The world takes on a brand-new look from several thousand feet up, and the relationship between buildings, trees, roads, and rivers takes on new meaning.

Likewise, in the military, reconnaissance missions are flown over enemy lines to obtain information on the strength, position, and movement of enemy forces. Those flights provide the "big picture," giving a perspective that would not be possible from the ground. As we turn our attention to many of the details of future events, it is helpful to first get the big picture.

Without an overview clearly in mind, it is possible to get lost in all the details. This quick "flyover," which is from the perspective of pretribulational premillennialism,

will highlight the relationships between seven key prophetic events. These will be detailed in parts three and four.

1. THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

The first event in the sequence of upcoming end-times events is the rapture of the church out of this world. The Lord Jesus will return from heaven and will suddenly and supernaturally remove the church (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

Jesus will not return all the way to the earth as He will at the second coming but, rather, will meet believers in the air. Christians who are alive at this time will be caught up to meet the Lord Jesus and will at that moment receive their glorified bodies. Those Christians who have died since the church began at Pentecost will also be involved in the rapture, having their physical bodies raised from the dead.

These Christians have been with the Lord since their death, but only now do they receive their resurrected, glorified bodies (1 Cor. 15:51-53). This will be part of the "first resurrection" (Rev. 20:5-6). All Christians who are part of the church, the bride of Christ, will be taken by the Lord to heaven and will be with Him there (John 14:1-3).

2. THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

Immediately following the rapture of the church, the judgment seat of Christ will take place in heaven. All those who are involved in the rapture (church saints) will also be involved in this event (Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:11-4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10).

This will be a time when the Lord Jesus evaluates the works of those who are His people. The issue at the judgment seat is not the salvation of the individual, since that matter has already been settled. The issue at the judgment seat of Christ is the works of Christians. If the works done during their life are good and acceptable to Christ, they will receive reward. If their works are considered worthless, there will be a loss of reward, but not the loss of salvation. A variety of rewards will be given, and they apparently have some impact on life and responsibility during the final kingdom of God. Following the judgment seat of Christ and before His second coming to the earth, the marriage of the Lamb (Christ) will take place (Rev. 19:9).

This event eternally unites the newly rewarded church with the Lord Jesus.

3. THE SEVEN-YEAR TRIBULATION (THE SEVENTIETH WEEK OF DANIEL)

After the church is removed from the earth at the rapture, the world will experience a period of time commonly called the tribulation. There could well be a short period of time between the rapture and the actual beginning of the tribulation during which some necessary alignments and developments take place. Based on Daniel 9:24-27, this period begins when the man known as the Antichrist signs a treaty with the nation of Israel.

The Antichrist will seem at first to be the protector of Israel, but he will turn out to be the great persecutor of Israel. The seven-year Tribulation is divided into two distinct parts of three and a half years each. These two parts have significant events and judgments.

There are two primary purposes for the tribulation. The first and great purpose of God is to save the nation of Israel (and many Gentiles as well) and bring them under the new covenant, which is the covenant of salvation. To bring Israel to the point where they will respond in a positive way to God's gracious offer of salvation, God will employ many miracles. He will also allow intense persecution to come upon Israel, which will cause Israel and others to come to faith in Christ. It will be a time of unprecedented salvation, and it is likely that no other seven-year period in human history will rival the great numbers of people who are redeemed (Rev. 7:9-17).

The second purpose of the tribulation is to judge wicked people and nations. The unrighteous have willfully and arrogantly refused to live in obedience to the Creator. And while God is slow to anger and full of mercy and grace (Ex. 34:6-7), eventually unrepentant sinful people and wicked angels must be dealt with. As a result, the tribulation will be an unprecedented time of trouble and judgment on this earth (Revelation 6-18; Matt. 24:4-28). In three series of judgments, close to 80 percent of the world's population will perish, and life on this planet will be chaotic. The Lord Jesus noted that if God had not limited the length of the tribulation no human being would make it through that time alive (Matt. 24:22).

The tribulation will also be a time of unique activity for Satan as well. Using the

Antichrist, Satan will attempt to destroy God's people, thwart God's purposes, and cause all on the earth to worship him. His hatred for God will be focused on the people of God and will be seen in his aggressive attempt to put all of God's people to death. Satan will successfully deceive many on the earth through his use of amazing and powerful signs and wonders. Multitudes will follow him (Matt. 24:21-24; 2 Thess. 2:1-12; Rev. 13:1-18). But all this will be to no avail. When the time is right, the Lord Jesus will return to the earth and seize control over this planet once and for all.

4. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST TO THE EARTH

The terrible time of tribulation will come to an end when the Lord Jesus comes in power and glory from heaven to the earth. This coming will be a universal revelation as both those saved (during the time of tribulation) and unsaved witness this event.

Many will respond with sorrow as they realize that their judgment is at hand. Others will rejoice because they understand that His coming will bring to an end the kingdoms of mankind and will inaugurate the millennial kingdom of the Messiah. Five important events occur in connection with the second coming of the Lord Jesus. They are, in order:

1. The judgment of the living Gentiles.

Although literally billions of people perish during the tribulation, millions are still alive at the end, and it is necessary for them to be judged to determine whether they can enter the millennial kingdom.

The first group to be so evaluated is the Gentiles. In what is commonly called the "sheep and the goats judgment" (Matt. 25:31-46), saved Gentiles (the sheep) are allowed into Messiah's kingdom, whereas the unsaved (the goats) are not allowed entrance but, rather, are cast into hell.

2. The judgment of Israel (cf. the parable of the ten virgins in Matt. 25:1-11).

This also is a judgment to determine which Israelites will enter into Messiah's kingdom. Saved Israelites (the wise) are allowed in, whereas unsaved Israelites (the foolish) are refused entrance into the kingdom of Messiah.

3. The resurrection and rewarding of Old Testament saints and the saints who perished in the tribulation (Rev. 20:4-6; Dan. 12:2, 13; Rev. 6:9).

It is at the second coming that these people are given their resurrected bodies and are rewarded according to the works that they have done.

4. The binding of Satan (Rev. 20:1-3).

When the Lord Jesus returns, He will have Satan cast into the Abyss, where he will be completely restricted. He will not be able to exercise any influence during the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ on this earth. When the Scriptures speak of the binding of Satan, this includes the host of demons that do his bidding.

5. The actual establishing of the messianic kingdom.

Daniel 12 suggests that there will be a seventy-five-day period between the second coming and the beginning of the messianic kingdom. It may be that during these weeks the administration of the kingdom is established and the borders of the nations are defined.

5. THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM OF JESUS CHRIST

Once all the enemies of Christ are removed and all necessary resurrections and judgments take place, the wonderful period of the millennium will begin. The great unconditional covenants given centuries earlier will now be fulfilled. Every promise made by God will be accomplished, and Israel in particular and Gentiles in general will enjoy the blessings of Christ's rule.

The millennial kingdom will be characterized by righteousness, peace, and joy. All people everywhere will worship the Lord Jesus, who will be present in His glory. The curse that was placed on the creation at the fall of mankind will be removed, causing the desert and all of the earth to bloom and become fertile. Because of this, mankind will experience an unprecedented prosperity that will reach to every individual. Apparently very long life spans will characterize the kingdom. This, coupled with the absence of disease, will cause the population of the earth to increase rapidly.

Also, the removal of the curse will immediately affect the animal kingdom. Animals

will once again universally be vegetarians. No longer will lions eat lambs; rather, they will nap together in peace and harmony. When the messianic kingdom begins, only believers will inhabit the kingdom, and they will gladly worship the King.

But even though all are believers at the beginning, the kingdom will be made up of people with two different types of bodies: resurrected bodies and mortal bodies. Those with resurrected bodies received them either at the time of the rapture (church-age saints) or at the second coming (Old Testament and tribulation saints). The other group is made up of those who made it alive through the tribulation and as believers entered the messianic kingdom. However, their bodies were not changed, and thus they will marry and reproduce.

As the kingdom period proceeds, the children born into the millennium, like children in every other age, must come to the place where they personally respond to the Lord. In this environment of truth and righteousness, most will probably become believers and follow Him, but others will not. Only a few will actually be outwardly rebellious and receive the Lord's rod of iron (Ps. 2:9; Isa. 11:4); most will worship the Lord Jesus Christ.

But the millennial kingdom will have more and more unbelievers as time goes on. It is these unbelievers that Satan, when he is released from the Abyss for a short time at the end of the Millennium, will find willing to rebel against the rule of King Jesus (Rev. 20:7-10).

6. THE JUDGMENTS OF THE END TIMES

After the messianic/millennial kingdom is over and before the final eternal kingdom of God begins, three judgments will take place (Rev. 20:7-15; 1 Cor. 6:3).

First is the final judgment of Satan and the fallen angels. They will be cast into the lake of fire, and there they will spend eternity. Second, unbelievers will be judged at the great white throne judgment.

All unbelievers from every age will be resurrected at this time and forced to face their Creator God. Because of their sinful actions, their unbelief, and their refusal to receive His gift of eternal life, they will be cast forever into the same lake of fire as

Satan (Rev. 20:12-15).

The third judgment will be that of the heavens and the earth. The present heavens and earth have been contaminated by sin and by the presence of wicked beings, and this necessitates their cleansing. The judgment of fire will completely destroy the old heavens and earth and prepare the way for the creation of a new heaven and a new earth (2 Peter 3:7-10). One other event might occur at this time as well. If some believers die during the millennium (the Scriptures do not specifically address this issue), it is logical that they be resurrected in preparation for the eternal state.

7. THE ETERNAL STATE (THE ETERNAL KINGDOM OF GOD)

It was God's purpose from the very beginning to rule over and fellowship with people and with angels. His rulership was challenged, and His fellowship was marred by the entrance of sin and rebellion. But with the death of Jesus Christ on the cross to pay for sin and satisfy the wrath of God, fellowship was once again a reality. And with the defeat of the usurper Satan and the collapse of all the kingdoms of mankind, the Lord Jesus is King of Kings and the kingdom is now delivered over to the Father. In the eternal kingdom of God, there will be a fullness of joy, full and unhindered fellowship, and meaningful living on a new earth (Rev. 21:1-22:5). This will forever be the experience of those who are the children of God.

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