

Beginning of Birth Pains

by
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In the Olivet prophecy the Lord referred to four specific time frames during the end time, which began when Israel became a nation again after 1900+ years in diaspora on May 14, 1948.

The first, which includes false Christs and wars and rumors of war, He referred to as **“not yet the end.”** This is followed by **“the beginning of birth pains,”** **“tribulation”** and, finally, **“great tribulation.”**

It is of great interest that the first four seals of Revelation, (Revelation 6:1-8), what we have come to know as the four horsemen of the apocalypse, perfectly parallels “the beginning of birth pains” in the Olivet prophecy.

The start of the seven prophetic years of “tribulation,” though, is specifically revealed in Daniel 9:24-27, and that event parallels Matthew 24:9-14 and Revelation 6:9-11.

The picture the Lord gives us in the Olivet prophecy and in Revelation is that “the beginning of birth pains,” which includes the terrifying events of the first four seals, precedes the seven year “tribulation.”

Therefore, even those believers who are expecting (albeit falsely) to escape “tribulation” by being raptured away just before the beginning of the final seven years, will experience the “trouble” and “tribulation” that includes a nuclear world war, followed by famine and pandemic disease that kills 25% of the world’s population (1.75 billion people).

And this is just the beginning of birth pains!

“Times of the End”

Matt. 24:4-6	Matt. 24:7,8	Matt. 24:9-14	Matt. 24:15
May 14, 1948 >	1 st Seal > 4 th Seal	5 th Seal	6 th Seal > 7 th Seal
<i>“not yet the end”</i>	<i>“beginning of birth pains”</i>	<i>“tribulation”</i>	<i>“great tribulation”</i>

The painful, relentless contractions of the birth event itself will begin, oddly enough, with a treaty among many nations as they surrender sovereignty for seven years to a centralized world government for the purpose of restoring world peace and economic prosperity.

Dispensational theologians have fostered the concept of tribulation being limited to the specific seven prophetic years of Daniel's 70th week, but the unified picture presented to us in scripture is one of escalation beginning with the re-establishment of Israel as a nation and becoming progressively worse until it ends on the day of the Lord as He returns to earth to destroy His enemies and set up His millennial kingdom.

The only interim of relative peace and relief from tribulation for most of the world, strangely enough, is the first three and a half prophetic years of what we call "the tribulation." Yet, for Christians during that time, the escalation continues as the awakened wise virgins begin to experience worldwide what Christians are already experiencing in numerous countries, like North Korea, China, Sudan, Somalia, Pakistan, and Iran.

The future prophetic events in the Revelation of Jesus Christ, given to His bond-servant, John, are not just about the final seven years of tribulation. It includes the millennial kingdom age after the seven years and the beginning of our eternal dwelling place with God the Father and God the Son, and it includes the dangerous events leading up to the final seven years of tribulation.

As we examine the events of the first four seals we will see that it is these events that set the stage for the rise of the Antichrist to power in Daniel's 70th week, also called the "time of Jacob's trouble," and it also sets the stage for the awakening of the church for the final, amazing end time harvest of an uncountable number of souls from every nation, tribe, and tongue.

It is, therefore, NOT, a time of fear and dread for believers, but a time of jubilant expectation for those He is now warning and preparing.

"You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs." Matthew 24:6-8 NASB (emphasis is the author's)

Matthew 24:6-8, on its own, is much too general to apply to some specific series of future events. Wars, famines, and earthquakes have been with us from the beginning, but the Lord's identification of future wars, famines, and earthquakes as "the beginning of birth pangs" tells us that, for some reason, wars, famines, and earthquakes will, at some future point in time, be recognizable as "signs of the times."

Revelation is the book for determining the order of end time events, and it is prudent to compare any prophetic end time passages found elsewhere with the book of Revelation. However, Revelation does not reveal the specific beginning of Daniel's 70th week, the seven final years. What it does reveal, in the same chronological order as Matthew 24, is the order of events during the "end times".

Therefore, the events of Revelation and Matthew 24 both cover a specific time span greater than seven years, and when we compare Matthew 24, Daniel, and Revelation we find that the first four seals in Revelation 6 all occur before the event that triggers the specific seven year "tribulation," and this series of events is identified by the Lord as "the beginning of birth pains" or "the beginning of sorrows."

Interestingly, neither Matthew 24 nor Revelation give a specific time for the beginning of the final seven years of tribulation. The final seven years, Daniel's 70th week, is designated as beginning with the Antichrist's covenant-treaty with many (and it is presumed, but not specifically stated, Israel).

What should be of great interest to us is that the parallels of Matthew 24 (Mark 13, Luke 21), Daniel 7 and 8, and Revelation 6 demonstrate that **the "beginning of birth pains" includes the rise of the Antichrist to political power, a nuclear world war that devastates a large number of Muslim countries, including the total destruction of the city of Damascus, raises Israel to the status of a world power, the worst worldwide famines and pandemic disease of all time, all of which wipes out 25% of the world's population or approximately 1.75 billion people.**

And all that before the final seven prophetic years of Daniel's 70th week!

In **Left Behind?** I demonstrated that the first six seals represented tribulation (the Greek word transliterated as *thilipsis*, Strong's #2568) and that it was not until the opening of the seventh seal that God's wrath, the Greek word transliterated as *orge* (Strong's #3709) is manifested.

Therefore, the first six seals of trouble or tribulation, whether included in the seven years of "Daniel's 70th week" or not, are for the purpose of producing repentance, not for the outpouring of God's retributive wrath, and there can be no valid argument that the church will not be present during the first six seals.

During tribulation God's grace and mercy is still available for those who repent and believe. After the seventh seal is opened there is no more opportunity for repentance. This, then, is a time of God's retributive wrath with only those who are "sealed" or protected in some specific way by God escaping the outpouring of God's wrath.

As will be demonstrated, it is these first four seals, corresponding with Matthew 24:6-8, that will set the stage for the final seven years.

The first seal of Revelation 6 coincides with "nation against nation", and it indicates a time when regional wars are continually breaking out all over the globe, with one starting before the last one is finished. We could easily conclude that this seems to describe what has been taking place in the world for the past fifty years.

Because the entire end time prophetic focus is on Israel and the Middle East, it is my assumption that the first four seals are centralized in the Middle East but have global consequences.

The four horses and their riders represent the spiritual entities that will influence and empower their human counterparts. To understand this influence of spiritual entities on men we have the example given to us by Daniel. When the angel appeared to Daniel he reported that the reason he had been delayed was that the "prince of Persia" resisted him. This was obviously not a human prince, but a Satanic entity influencing political powers and events in Persia.

Likewise, Paul, in Ephesians 6:12 said, ***For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.***

The four horsemen of the apocalypse are "spiritual forces of wickedness", but their influence is worked out through men.

This is much like a puppet show. What we see are the puppets unknowingly yielding to the influence of an invisible puppeteer pulling the strings.

The white horse rider has a bow, a long range weapon, and his activity is that of a usurper and a conqueror. He is “given” a crown, indicating that his conquest results in his assumption of political leadership that he did not have prior to the conquest. This event is most likely the Antichrist’s rise to power as described in Daniel 7, where the Antichrist becomes the head of a ten nation federation of country states through military conquest over three nations and the surrender of sovereignty by seven others without a fight.

This fourth beast kingdom (the revived Roman empire) prophesied by Daniel was partially fulfilled by the original Roman empire as it occupied all or part of the modern nations of Italy, England, Scotland, Ireland, France, Monaco, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Bulgaria, Romania, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Yugoslavia, Croatia, Bosnia, Hungary, Armenia, Turkey, Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Morocco, Syria, Lebanon Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, and Israel.

However, the specific prophecies concerning the fourth beast kingdom were only partially fulfilled by the ancient Roman empire. Daniel 7:8-28 describes an end times ten nation federation of country states arising out of the same area occupied by the Roman empire in which a political leader, described as the “little horn”, obtains control of three of the country states by conquest, and surrender of the other seven without a fight.

The modern states comprising this fourth beast (revived Roman empire) kingdom that will ultimately rule almost the entire world will likely be composed of both Muslim and non-Muslim country states.

However, the specific identity of the white horse and rider, its human counterparts, and the modern country states involved is still speculative. What believers need to be able to identify is the event itself:

1) A ten nation federation of country states will be formed out of territory that was, at one time, a part of the Roman empire; 2) A coup will take place in one of the country states; 3) This “little horn” who usurps leadership of one of the countries will then gain control of two other country states by rapid military conquest; 4) The other seven country states will surrender sovereignty to the “little horn” without a fight.

Because Daniel’s prophecies are extremely detailed and those related to the past were fulfilled exactly as Daniel described, we can expect the details of the initial rise of this fourth beast kingdom to also take place exactly as described, and, therefore, be recognizable.

Wide awake Christians all over the world will recognize the leader of this ten nation federation of country states as being the Antichrist, and this first seal event is the most likely source of the announcement, “**Behold, the bridegroom!**” that wakes up the virgins in the parable of the ten virgins.

The events described by Daniel that expose the identity of the Antichrist will also awaken the church to the fact that the Lord is coming soon, and, though we will point our fingers at the Antichrist at this time, who will believe us? Compelling world circumstances, and the immediate onset of the second seal will cause our cry of alarm to fall on deaf ears.

(The Parable of the Ten Virgins Unveiled describes what will be happening in the true church from the time of this announcement all the way through the first five seals of Revelation.)

The opening of **the second seal** follows immediately on the heels of the white horse and its rider. This 2nd seal includes a red horse with a rider who has a “great sword” and he is given power to “take peace from the earth”, indicating a great war, war that is distinct from the events associated with the 1st seal. It is quite likely a war in which nuclear weapons are used.

That we are on the brink of such a war is obvious to all, and, because it is specifically prophesied, it will happen.

This coincides with the Lord's description in Matthew 24 of "kingdom against kingdom" (i.e. groups of countries against other groups of countries).

This event is also likely to coincide with the Gog-Magog war reported in Ezekiel 38 and 39. However, Ezekiel specifically states that Israel will be living in peace at the time of the Gog-Magog war, and the possibility exists that the ten nation federation of country states, which almost certainly includes some Muslim nations, has initiated or participated in a limited peace accord with Israel at this time.

This is not "the" treaty or covenant signed by "many nations" that initiates Daniel's seventieth week. That treaty will actually involve many nations, Muslim and non-Muslim, surrendering their sovereignty to a centralized government for the specific term of seven years.

The peace accord will apparently intervene between Israel and their current hostilities with the Palestinians and its supporters so that Israel is temporarily in a state of "peace."

It has been speculated by some, on the basis of current events, that a strike by Israel on Iran to destroy Iran's nuclear capabilities could be the catalyst that produces this peace accord between Israel and its Palestinian neighbors.

The red horse and its rider who takes peace from the earth is identified in Ezekiel 38 and 39 as Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal and the many nations with him.

"Gog", the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, is the specific "spiritual force of wickedness" identified as the red horse and its rider, and, like the white horse and its rider, Gog has human counterparts, knowingly or unknowingly carrying out the will of the "spiritual force of wickedness."

The Muslim nations that will not be included in the invading Gog force, but were a part of the Roman empire include Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Iraq, Cyprus, Lebanon, and Jordan. These Muslim nations are, therefore, potentially a part of the fourth beast kingdom and are the likely source or origin of the peace accord in place at the time of the Gog invasion of Israel.

(See [Comparison Chart of the Ten Nation Federation and Gog-Magog.](#))

The likelihood that America will somehow be involved in this world war is extremely high even though the central conflict of the war will be Israel and the invading nations.

We do know from prophecy that Israel is not defeated or destroyed after becoming a nation again on May 14, 1948, and, since the restoration of Israel to nationhood is the prophetic event that starts the "times of the end", we can assume that Israel comes out, not only unscathed, but gloriously triumphant, during the Gog-Magog war.

We can also assume that the ten nation fourth beast kingdom is still intact after this war, and it would be important to note that the nations initiating the Gog-Magog war are not included in the federation of ten nation states we have already identified as the fourth beast kingdom led by the "little horn."

Therefore, the Gog-Magog alliance of primarily Muslim nations is separate from, and allied against, the ten nation federation of Muslim and non-Muslim country-states led by the "little horn".

This war, described in Ezekiel 38 and 39 as the invasion of Israel by Gog, of the land of Magog and all his allies, depicts an unusual consortium of nations led by Gog, "the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal", specifically including Turkey, Iran, Ethiopia, Libya, and Algeria. The

military alliance also potentially includes geographical areas currently identified as Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tadjhikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tunisia, and Morocco.

Their motive is to plunder Israel, and we may assume that their Satanically inspired spiritual motive is to thwart God's plan by annihilating the troublesome state of Israel.

Saudi Arabia, Yemen, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and the merchants of Tarshish (Spain, near Gibraltar, or, possibly, all those whose shipping trade routes come and go through the straits of Gibraltar, which would include the United States) will protest the pending invasion of Israel, but they will take no action to prevent the invasion once it is started, proving that the fourth beast kingdom's peace accord with Israel, guaranteeing them safety, has no real substance.

From God's perspective the plan is to reveal His glory to the nations and His favor toward Israel, and the war that Israel could not possibly win on its own is won by God's supernatural intervention. This intervention includes an earthquake off the Richter scale, with gigantic one hundred pound hailstones, and burning sulfur falling on the enemy gathered against Israel.

In the confusion, the enemy mistakenly turns its weapons on their own allies. In addition, God strikes the "bow" from the enemies' hands and causes their arrows to fall short (i.e. nuclear missiles), **and exactly eighty-five percent (85%) of the invading force will be destroyed in a single day.**

In Ezekiel 39:6 a passage that can easily be interpreted as nuclear warfare appears.

I will send fire on Magog and on those who live in safety in the coastlands...(of the invading nations)..., ***and they will know that I am the LORD.*** (insert is the author's)

Although the causal source is the will of God, this does not appear to be fire from heaven. God sends (in the sense of issuing an order) fire on the Magog homelands, which may or may not be nuclear retaliation by the protesting nations and their allies or even by the fourth beast kingdom.

The aftermath results in Israel's status being elevated to "Super-power" along with the ten nation federation of country-states headed by the white horse rider (the fourth beast kingdom ruled by the "little horn").

There are numerous resources for the study of the Gog-Magog war, but the main points believers need to remember are: **1) Israel will be living in (relative) "peace"; 2) A military alliance of Muslim states including Turkey (currently not openly hostile to Israel) and Iran will plan an invasion of Israel; 3) Saudi Arabia and other Muslim and non-Muslim countries will protest the pending invasion; 4) The invading forces will be defeated supernaturally by the intervention of God, and the nuclear and biological weapons that the Gog-Magog forces intended for use on Israel will be turned on themselves; 5) Israel and the nations allied with Israel will retaliate against the Gog-Magog countries, causing extensive destruction of the Gog-Magog homelands, which includes the complete destruction of the city of Damascus; 6) Israel will emerge as a Super-power; 7) this event followed by the sudden appearance of two witnesses (Elijah and Enoch?) on the streets of Jerusalem will cause a revival of Christian conversions in Israel. Yet, religious Jews will resist the two witnesses just as they resisted Christ.**

Immediately following the short but deadly world war is the opening of **the third seal** in which the black horse and its rider represent worldwide famines (and we can assume economic chaos). The "fire" falling on the homelands of Magog will likely destroy the immediate grain and food crop production and the ability of that geographic area to produce and distribute food

crops for a number of years. Thus *"A quart of wheat for a day's wages, and three quarts of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!"*

The black horse and its rider will be immediately followed by the opening of **the fourth seal** in which the pale horse and its rider, "Death", represents the death of twenty-five percent (25%) of the world's population by continuing regional wars, famine, pandemic disease (including the possibility of man-introduced biological weapons) and even by wild animals gone berserk.

This last distinctive of a notable number of people being killed by wild beasts gives us a horrifying picture of what the world will be like at that time for many people.

The total deaths from war, famine, disease, and wild animals reach almost **two billion** people based on the population of earth in 2010. This is an astonishing number, but, like the detailed prophecies of Daniel, we can expect that the God who sees the end from the beginning **knows** exactly what will happen.

The first four seals of Revelation are likely to take place in rapid succession, and this horrific series of events perfectly sets the stage for the seven year covenant-treaty that will be initiated by the Antichrist (the "little horn" of the fourth beast kingdom) between **many nations**, a treaty that yields the sovereignty of each country to some centralized form of world government for a period of seven years with the promise of restoring world peace, security, and economic stability.

This treaty is **the** event that starts the final seven year countdown to the last day, also known as "Daniel's seventieth week" or "the time of Jacob's trouble."

Therefore, whether you believe in the dispensational theory of a pre-tribulation "rapture" or not, most of you who are reading this commentary **will** be present for the shocking events of the first four seals of Revelation.

Yet, this is **not** a time to dread. This is the time of the awakening of the "wise virgins" (Matthew 25) to fulfill the commission we were given by the Lord until "the end of the age."

*Arise, shine; for your light has come,
And the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.
For behold, darkness will cover the earth
And deep darkness the peoples;
But the LORD will rise upon you
And His glory will appear upon you. Isaiah 60:1,2 NASB*

“Times of the End”

<p>Matthew 24:4-6 <i>“not yet the end”</i> false Christs and wars and rumors of war</p>		
<p>Matthew 24:7,8 <i>“the beginning of birth pains”</i></p>	<p>Daniel 7:10; 7:19-23; 8:9,23-25</p>	<p>Revelation 6</p>
<p>nation against nation</p>	<p>the rise of the Antichrist and the fourth beast kingdom – “given a crown”</p>	<p>1st Seal: Revelation 6:1,2 – the white horse rider (conquering war)</p>
<p>kingdom against kingdom (i.e. groups of nations against groups of nations)</p>		<p>2nd Seal: Revelation 6:3,4 – the red horse rider (world war) Ezekiel 38 & 39</p>
<p>famine</p>		<p>3rd Seal: Revelation 6:5,6 – the black horse rider (famine as a result of war)</p>
<p>famine, disease</p>		<p>4th Seal: Rev. 6:7,8 – the pale horse rider (1.75B dead by continuing wars, famine, disease, and wild animals)</p>
<p>Matthew 24:9-14 tribulation</p>	<p>Daniel 9:24-27 beginning of the 70th week</p>	
<p>martyrdom and evangelization</p>	<p>the Antichrist confirms a covenant with many (includes Israel); the saints are given into his hand</p>	<p>5th Seal: Revelation 6:9-11 – martyrdom; Rev. 7:9-17 – evangelization of every nation, tribe, and tongue)</p>
<p>Matthew 24:15 great tribulation the “revealing” of Antichrist</p>	<p>Daniel 9:27 the “revealing” of Antichrist</p>	