

Predicting The Rapture

Is it possible to predict when the Lord Jesus Christ will return to this world? Over the years many people have proposed many different dates, and so far all of them have been wrong. Some people say that it's wrong to set dates. Others teach that it's impossible to know the date because the Bible doesn't tell us – and a few say that the Bible does tell us if you just interpret it correctly.

The purpose of this document is to see what the Bible has to say about the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is an interesting and surprisingly complicated issue. After looking into this subject in great detail I believe there's something important that's been widely missed.

Jesus Promised He Would Return

There can be no doubt that one day Jesus will return. The reason we know this is because Jesus Himself made us that promise! When He was about to go to the cross He told His disciples that He was going to go away. However, one day He would return so that His church might be with Him:

John 14:2-3: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

When Jesus ascended into Heaven after His resurrection from the dead, the crowd of onlookers was told that one day Jesus would return in the same manner that He had left:

Acts 1:9-11: "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

The apostle Paul elaborated on this doctrine in his letters to the Corinthian and Thessalonian churches. He taught that one day the Lord Jesus Christ will indeed return for His church. In that day the trumpet shall sound, the righteous dead shall be raised, and all living Christians will be changed into incorruptible and immortal beings:

1 Corinthians 15:51-53: "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

Paul taught the Thessalonian church the same doctrine. However, he added some intriguing details:

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be **caught up** together with them in the clouds,

to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

In that day when Jesus returns we will meet Him in the air. From that moment on we will always be wherever He is.

This event is often called the "rapture". That name comes from the Greek word that's translated as "caught up", which is "harpazo" (Strong's #726¹). The word means to seize or snatch something; to take away something by force. (I realize "harpazo" sounds nothing like "rapture". It turns out the Latin translation of "harpazo" is similar to the English word "rapture", so it actually comes from the Latin.²)

We know that one day all of these things are surely going to come to pass, because Jesus always keeps His promises. The question is one of timing. When is He going to return? When will the dead be raised? When will we be suddenly caught up to meet Him in the air?

There Are Many Failed Predictions

Throughout the centuries many people have tried to predict the date when Jesus will return. Wikipedia has a long list that ranges from Irenaeus (who thought Jesus would return in 500 AD) to Isaac Newton (who picked the year 2060) AD.³

So far every proposed date that's come and gone has been wrong. However, that doesn't mean Jesus will never return! The apostle Peter tells us that in the last days some people will make the argument that since Jesus hasn't returned yet, that means His promise of returning is false:

1 Source: <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g726/kjv/tr/0-1/>

2 Source: <https://bible.org/question/where-did-term-8216rapture-%E2%80%99-come>

3 Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Predictions_and_claims_for_the_Second_Coming

2 Peter 3:3-4: "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

Yet Jesus will surely return! He will keep His promise. The failure of all previous predictions does *not* mean that He isn't coming back. Instead it means that people's arguments for those dates were wrong.

Just because an argument for one date proved to be wrong doesn't mean that all arguments for all dates are also wrong. After all, eventually Jesus *will* return. Anyone who happens to pick the right date (even if it's just a lucky guess) will be correct! The question is whether it's actually possible to know the date in advance, or if it truly can't be known.

Is It Wrong To Predict The Hour?

Some people say that it's wrong to try to predict when the Lord Jesus Christ will return. Mark 13 is often used to support this idea. In that chapter Jesus speaks of the circumstances surrounding His return:

Mark 13:26-27: "And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven."

Next, Jesus said that no one knew when that event would take place – not even Him:

Mark 13:32: "But of that day and that hour

knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father."

The argument is that since no one knows that hour (not even Jesus!) it's foolish to try to find it. This logic seems sound, except for one thing: Mark 13 isn't talking about the rapture. Instead it's talking about something else.

The Bible teaches that there are two different times when Jesus will return to this world. The Old Testament often spoke of a terrible future event known as the "Day of the Lord", which will be a period of tremendous distress. (For example, see Zechariah 14 or Zephaniah 1:14-18.) The Day of the Lord will be a time when God will pour out His wrath upon this world to punish it for its sins (and to refine the nation of Israel and bring them to salvation). This period is better known as the "tribulation" and will last for seven years.

Although Christians are often persecuted, it's not God's will for the church to suffer His wrath. When Paul was teaching the Thessalonian church about the wrath that God was going to pour out upon the world during the Day of the Lord, he said this:

1 Thessalonians 5:9: "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,"

The church is often persecuted and suffers the wrath of man, but we won't experience the wrath of God. Jesus will return to this world before the Day of the Lord and take His church out of it. All genuine Christians will be removed, leaving everyone else behind. (That being said, there will be many people left behind who *thought* they were saved but weren't.) In 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4 the apostle Paul was talking about the moment *before* the Day of the Lord when Jesus will return for His church.

Mark 13 is talking about something entirely different. Verse 13 speaks of the "abomination of desolation", which takes

place *during* the Day of the Lord. Plus, in Mark 13:27 the Lord Jesus Christ returns to this world and sends angels to gather those who are still alive. There are no angels involved in the event that Paul speaks of in 1 Thessalonians 4! Paul says that the dead will be raised while Mark says that only the living will be gathered.

The reason these two accounts conflict with one another is because Mark and Paul are talking about two different events. The event that's discussed in Mark 13 is Christ's return at the *end* of the Day of the Lord. The event that Paul spoke of in 1 Thessalonians 4 is Christ's return *before* the Day of the Lord. Jesus said that no one knows the day or hour when He will return *at the end of the Day of the Lord*. However, there's no verse which says that same thing about His coming *before* the Day of the Lord begins! Instead Paul taught something very different. He said that the Lord's return for His church *shouldn't take us by surprise*:

1 Thessalonians 5:2-4: "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief."

The apostle Paul isn't the only person who taught this. This same idea can also be found in the book of Revelation. That book is a prophetic revelation that God the Father gave to Jesus, who then gave it to the apostle John:

Revelation 1:1: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:"

This means the book of Revelation contains information that wasn't previously known. It contains a revelation that *God the Father gave to Jesus* (which seems to mean it contains information that even Jesus didn't previously know, because if He had already known it then God the Father wouldn't have had to reveal it to Him). In that book Jesus tells us that if we don't watch then we won't know the hour of His return:

Revelation 3:3: "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."

This means that if we *do* watch – if we know what to watch for, and if we watch for it – then we *will* know the hour of His return. Jesus doesn't want us to be surprised when He returns! The only people who will be caught off-guard are those who weren't watching.

The book of Hebrews tells us that it's possible to see the day of His return approaching:

Hebrews 10:25: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

Why can we see the day approaching? Because Jesus gave us signs to look for, and we can watch for them. When one sign after another comes to pass, that means the day of His return is drawing nearer.

Although this may seem surprising, there is a precedent for it. One of the best foreshadowings of the rapture that can be found in the Old Testament is what happened to the prophet Elijah. He was suddenly caught up to Heaven while walking along the road, talking to Elisha:

2 Kings 2:11: "And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."

This is a fantastic picture of the rapture. One moment he was having a normal conversation while walking down the road, and the next moment he had been caught up to Heaven.

Did this event catch Elijah by surprise? No, it didn't. The Bible tells us that both Elijah and Elisha knew that he was going to be caught up to Heaven that day. Neither of them knew the exact moment it would happen, but the fact that it was going to take place that day didn't surprise either of them:

2 Kings 2:3: "And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace."

2 Kings 2:9: "And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me."

It's true that the Bible doesn't give us a specific date when the Lord Jesus Christ will return. (If it did then we would all have that verse memorized!) Instead we're given a set of signs to watch for, which will come to pass in a specific order. Jesus will return after all of those signs have come to pass. Since we will know the hour of His return *if we watch*, that may mean He will return the same hour when the last sign takes place.

This is a very important point. The reason we're told to

watch for the signs is because that's how we will know the hour of Christ's return, and *He doesn't want His return to catch us by surprise*. Stop and think about it: if we're told to watch then there must be something specific we're supposed to be watching for. Otherwise that command would be impossible to obey.

Does The Bible Teach Imminency?

Some people claim that it's impossible for there to be signs which take place before the rapture because the rapture is “imminent” and can take place at any time. The problem is that the Bible repeatedly contradicts this idea.

There are many examples of this. For instance, in Revelation 2 and 3 there are 7 letters that Jesus wrote to 7 churches. Those letters give a prophetic overview of the entire church age, from the days of the apostles to the time the Lord Jesus returns. This interpretation is widely accepted by those who believe in a literal tribulation and millennium.

However, if those letters are a prophetic overview of the church age then the doctrine of imminency must be wrong. You see, if the rapture had taken place a thousand years ago then some of those letters would never have been fulfilled because that part of church history would never have taken place! Since the church is removed from this world at the rapture, *all 7 of those letters must come to pass before the rapture can take place*. Since there's something that must take place before the rapture, that means for much of the past 2000 years the rapture wasn't imminent! Instead it was waiting for the last sign to come to pass. The rapture will only happen once *all* of the signs that must take place first are fulfilled.

Here's a simpler example. Jesus told Peter that when he was old he would be martyred:

John 21:18-19: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou

shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.”

As you can see, Jesus told Peter that he would live long enough to grow old and then he would be martyred. This means the rapture couldn't possibly have happened during Peter's lifetime because then this prophecy wouldn't have come true. If the rapture had happened when Peter was young then he would never have grown old; if it had happened before he was executed then he would never have died the death that Jesus said he would. On top of that, in order for Jesus to make a definitive statement that Peter would grow old and then be martyred *He had to know when He was going to return* (or at least that it wouldn't be during Peter's lifetime).

Do you see what I mean? The rapture couldn't happen until after Peter died – and there are many other examples like this where God made promises to people that couldn't have been fulfilled if the rapture happened first. (To give just one more example, in Acts 23:11 God told Paul that he would testify of Him in Rome. That means the rapture couldn't happen until after Paul did that.)

The 7 letters to the 7 churches are one of the signs of the rapture, but it's not the only one. There are more (which will be discussed in a bit.)

Is It Dangerous To Predict The Hour?

Failed predictions have led to a tremendous amount of pain and suffering because of how much faith people had in specific dates. There are stories about people who believed in a prediction so firmly that they quit their job, gave away all their possessions, and then waited for Jesus to return on the expected

date – only for nothing to happen, at which time they realized they had ruined their life.

It's true that Jesus commanded us to watch for His return. That means we need to know the signs of His return so we can be obedient and watch for them. Once the signs come to pass, He will return.

However, people who try to pick dates are going beyond the information that's found in the Bible and are making guesses about what might happen in the future. There's an enormous amount of uncertainty involved whenever you do that because the Bible never gives us a specific date! If enough people pick dates long enough then eventually someone will be correct because Jesus is indeed going to return. However, there's no way to know if a guess is correct until that date comes to pass. For that reason it's not wise to put much faith in any specific guess.

There may come a day when those who are watching for signs start to realize that a lot of them have been fulfilled and there aren't many left. They may notice that world events are lining up and there may not be much time left. They might even be able to make an educated guess about when the Lord Jesus Christ might return. However, those guesses can never be more than just a guess.

There are a few reasons for this. First, the person who is making the guess might have missed something very important. All you have to do is miss one clue in order to arrive at the wrong answer! This is compounded by the fact that God has given us *some* information but He never said that He gave us everything that we need to arrive at the date in advance.

In fact, there have been times when He has left out very large and significant facts. For example, take this passage from Daniel 9:

Daniel 9:24: “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to

bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.”

In this passage an angel told Daniel that God had set aside 70 periods of 7 years (or 490 years) to “bring in everlasting righteousness”. After this period was over the Jews would never rebel against God again. They would remain faithful to Him forever.

When Jesus came and died on the cross, 7 + 62 (or 69) of those periods of 7 years had been fulfilled:

Daniel 9:25-26: "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined."

At this point only one period of 7 years was left. This last period is the Day of the Lord:

Daniel 9:27: “And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”

All of this is straightforward. However, there's one very important fact that the angel didn't mention: there's a gap between the 69th period of 7 years and the 70th. Not only is there a gap, but so far that gap has lasted nearly *two thousand years*. It would have been very easy to read those verses and think that the Day of the Lord would begin immediately after Jesus rose from the dead (which seems to be what the disciples thought was going to happen!), but that's not what took place.

That's why it's unwise to place much confidence in dates. There's no way to know if there's an important clue that we weren't given which would change the date entirely.

The only way to know for sure when Jesus will return is to wait for the signs to come to pass. Once the last sign has come to pass, the Lord will return (and it seems that He will return that very hour).

What Are The Signs?

Here's the key question: what are the signs that we're supposed to be watching for? What signs will tell us that the hour of our Lord's return is at hand?

One sign that's already been mentioned are the 7 letters to the 7 churches. These letters give a prophetic overview of the entire church age, from the days of the apostles to the apostate church of the last days. Those letters indicate that we're living in the time of the church of Laodicea, which is at the end of the age. The final letter describes the modern-day church perfectly:

Revelation 3:14-18: "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I

will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."

Since we're in the days of the final church, that means we're in the time of history for Jesus to return.

However, that's not all. There are additional signs that can be found in Revelation 12:1-5. Here's that passage in its entirety:

Revelation 12: "1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: 2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. 3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. 4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. 5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne."

It's important to understand that verse 5 isn't talking about

the birth and ascension of Jesus. It's talking about the church! The reason we know this is because the book of Revelation was written to tell us things that *had not yet taken place at the time it was written* (Revelation 4:1). The birth of Jesus was already in the past when John wrote Revelation!

First of all, the details of these verses don't match what happened at Christ's birth. It's true that Jesus was threatened by Herod shortly after He was born, but He avoided that threat by moving to Egypt for a time (not by going up to Heaven). He didn't ascend to Heaven until after His crucifixion and resurrection – and when He did ascend He wasn't in any danger! By that point in His life the dragon (the devil) was no longer threatening Him. Revelation 12:5 doesn't match the life of Jesus at all. This passage is talking about a child who was saved from the devil by being taken up to Heaven immediately after his birth. That didn't happen to Jesus!

Second, the phrase “caught up” in verse 5 is “harpazo” – the same Greek word that's used in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 to describe the rapture. As we already discussed, that word means to seize by force or catch away. It does *not* refer to a slow, steady ascension! The word “harpazo” is *not* used in Acts 1 to refer to the ascension of the Lord, but it *is* used in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 when Paul is talking about the rapture. When Paul says that we will be “caught up” to meet the Lord in the air, that's the word he used.

Revelation 12:5 is talking about the rapture of the church. Revelation 2:27 says that one day the church will reign with Christ over the world and rule with a rod of iron – which is exactly what Revelation 12:5 says. Plus, the church was born out of Israel. The apostle Paul told us that the Gentiles are a wild branch that was grafted into the family of God (Romans 11:17). The church is a much better match for the identity of the child.

Verse 5 is telling us that one day the church will be caught up to God and to His throne. Why does that happen? Verses 3 and 4 give us the answer:

Revelation 12:3-4: "And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born."

Revelation 12:9 tells us that the dragon is "that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan". These verses are saying that one day the devil will invade this world with his entire army of fallen angels. Since this is described as a sign that we can see in the heavens, that means when the devil invades this world he will do so in a visible way. In other words, *people will be able to see the devil and his army in the sky*. To the world this will probably look like an alien invasion, but it will actually be demons. Normally we can't see demons but this time they will be visible for all to see.

Why is the devil going to invade? It's because he knows that the rapture is imminent and he wants to attack the church the moment *after* we are raised from the dead. The birth in verse 5 is the resurrection: it's the moment we're given our new bodies and become incorruptible and immortal. The devil knows that this is going to happen, and when it does he intends to attack us with everything he has (just as he's been attacking the holy and immortal angels of God for thousands of years). However, the devil isn't going to get the opportunity to strike. Jesus is going to snatch us out of this world and take us to Heaven, where we will be out of the devil's reach. That's why the rapture happens at an instant! It's to save us from the wrath of the devil.

Why does the devil choose to invade this world when he does? It's because of this sign:

Revelation 12:1-2: "And there appeared a great

wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered."

This passage tells us that right before the birth in verse 5 (which is our resurrection), a woman clothed with the sun will be in terrible pain. Genesis 37:9 tells us that the woman with the sun, moon, and the stars is *Israel*. That means this verse is telling us that one day the nation of Israel will be in terrible pain (comparable to the pain immediately before the birth of a child).

If we take all of these verses together we're given a clear picture:

- Something terrible will happen to Israel that brings horrific pain to the nation.
- The devil will see that pain and realize the time has come: the birth pains means that the birth is at hand. He will invade this world in a way that the whole world can see so he can attack the church the moment it's resurrected.
- The Lord Jesus Christ will come to this world, raise the dead, catch us up to meet Him in the air, and then take us up to God and to His throne.

That gives us two very specific signs to watch for: something terrible will happen to Israel, and very soon afterward the world will be invaded by what looks like aliens. But that brings up a problem. The second sign (an alien invasion) is going to be easy to see. No one is going to miss that. However, that's the *last* sign. When that sign takes place it means the hour of Christ's return has come. Once you see that sign you may only have a few minutes left. But what about the first sign – the trouble that happens to Israel? All sorts of terrible things have happened to the Jews since the book of Revelation was written. How can we know which one to look for?

The answer to that can be found in Revelation 12:1. The pregnant woman, clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, with a crown of 12 stars, is called a “great wonder” that appears in the heavens. That means before the devil invades, and before something terrible happens to Israel, there's a specific sign in the heavens that appears. That sign seems to trigger the countdown to the Lord's return.

Since this sign appears in the sky, the woman is most likely a constellation. After all, where else would you find a woman in the heavens that's composed of the sun, moon, and stars? (The word which is translated "heaven" is Strong's #3772, which can indeed mean "the sky"⁴.) There's only one constellation of a woman in the sky which the sun and moon go near, and that's Virgo. From 4000 BC to 4000 AD there's only one date when Virgo is clothed with the sun, has the moon at her feet, has a crown of 12 stars, and had a planet (Jupiter) inside her for 9 months. That date is September 23, 2017. (I discuss this topic in much greater detail in my book “The Sign of the Dragon”, which is available for free on my blog.⁵)

Many terrible things happened to the Jews in the past, such as the Holocaust. However, the countdown to the rapture didn't begin until the sign of the woman took place in 2017. That means we're looking for a Holocaust-type event to happen *after* 2017. We're now in the window when we should be watching for the rest of the signs.

Applying These Things To 2024

Up to this point we've discussed a lot of principles. Let's put everything we've talked about into practice by discussing the theory that Jesus will return in 2024.

The first sign in Revelation 12 is the sign of the woman. There's a good case to be made that this sign was fulfilled on

4 Source: <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g3772/kjv/tr/0-1/>

5 See <http://stories.cyragon.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/SignsOfTheRapture.pdf>

9/23/17. On that date the constellation Virgo had the sun on her shoulder, the moon by her feet, had 3 planets in the constellation Leo (which is above the head of Virgo), and Jupiter was within Virgo for 9 months. That's an exact match for the "great wonder" described in Revelation 12:1-1.⁶ There isn't another exact match from 4000 BC to 4000 AD.⁷

The next sign is Israel in terrible pain, followed quickly by the devil's invasion of this world. Israel has definitely been attacked since 2017, but as the devil hasn't appeared it seems that we're waiting for something that's worse than what Israel experienced on 10/7/2023 (when Hamas invaded and killed more than a thousand people). But what's that going to look like?

In Isaiah 17 there's an unfulfilled prophecy about Israel. It describes a time when Israel will be attacked with such severity that there are only a few remnants left of the entire nation:

Isaiah 17:4-6: "And in that day it shall come to pass, that the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean. And it shall be as when the harvestman gathereth the corn, and reapeth the ears with his arm; and it shall be as he that gathereth ears in the valley of Rephaim. Yet gleaning grapes shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof, saith the Lord God of Israel."

God compares the nation of Israel to an olive tree that only has a few olives remaining. Whatever caused this was utterly catastrophic and left almost no survivors.

This same prophecy tells us that when this comes to pass,

6 Source: <https://www.unsealed.org/2017/01/the-revelation-12-sign-compendium.html>

7 Source: <https://www.unsealed.org/2017/05/the-celestial-c-section-defense-of.html>

the city of Damascus will be destroyed:

Isaiah 17:1-3: “The burden of Damascus. Behold, Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap. The cities of Aroer are forsaken: they shall be for flocks, which shall lie down, and none shall make them afraid. The fortress also shall cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of Syria: they shall be as the glory of the children of Israel, saith the Lord of hosts.”

This is pretty shocking because Damascus is one of the oldest continually inhabited cities in the world.⁸ Yet one day it will be utterly destroyed and turned into a place for flocks to lie down. On top of that, the city will be destroyed in a single night:

Isaiah 17:14: “And behold at eveningtide trouble; and before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us.”

It seems that an attack was launched from Syria which destroyed the nation of Israel, leaving only a few survivors. In response Israel retaliated and completely destroyed Syria in the span of a single night.

It's not difficult to see these things coming to pass in 2024. Last year Hamas invaded Israel and massacred hundreds of Jews. In response Israel invaded Gaza and began destroying Hamas – but Israel hasn't attacked Iran, the nation that backed Hamas. Since Iran is developing nuclear weapons, at some point Iran could launch a nuclear attack on Israel from Syria. If Israel's missile defense failed to intercept it, the attack could destroy much of the nation and may prompt Israel to retaliate against Syria with its own nuclear weapons. That would fulfill Isaiah 17

⁸ Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Damascus>

and be a perfect match for Revelation 12:2.

All of these things could happen – or none of them could happen. The problem is that Revelation 12:1-5 doesn't tell us how much time passes between the sign of the woman and the sign of the dragon. It's very tempting to look at news stories and speculate about what might happen next, but that doesn't change the fact it's just speculation.

One theory is that 7 years will pass between the sign of the woman and the return of Christ. This is based on the idea that the period of 2017 to 2024 is a foreshadowing of the seven year Day of the Lord. The Bible tells us that before the Day of the Lord begins there will be a sign in the heavens. Specifically, the sun will go dark:

Joel 2:31: "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come."

There will be another sign in the heavens when the Day of the Lord comes to an end: the sun will go dark once more. After that final sign, Jesus will return:

Matthew 24:29-30: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

These two passages tell us that *before* the Day of the Lord begins the sun will go dark, and at the *end* of the Day of the Lord (7 years later) the sun will go dark again.

There are parallels between that series of events and 2017. On 8/21/17 there was a total solar eclipse. It began in the 33rd state (Oregon) and ended in South Carolina at the 33rd parallel. It happened on the 233rd day of the year and was 133 days before the end of the year. It took 1 hour and 33 minutes to cross the nation and ended on the 33rd second. The last total eclipse to cross the entire nation happened 99 years earlier (3x33). Why does this matter? Well, it turns out that this eclipse took place 33 days before the sign of the woman was fulfilled on 9/23/17,⁹

But that's not all. The 2017 eclipse took place 40 days before Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. It crossed over 7 cities named Salem: 1 in Oregon, 1 in Idaho, 1 in Nebraska, 1 in Kentucky, 1 in Tennessee, 1 in Georgia, and 1 in South Carolina. Revelation 2-3 has letters to 7 Gentile churches, which give a prophetic overview of the entire church age. This means there's a case to be made that the 2017 eclipse was prophetic and signaled the start of a 7 year period.¹⁰

2017 significant for other reasons as well. It was 500 years after Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the Wittenberg church, starting the reformation.¹¹ It was 100 years after the 1917 Balfour Declaration, which declared Britain's intention to establish a Jewish homeland.¹² It was 50 years after Israel took control of both Jerusalem and the Temple Mount in 1967.¹³

There's more. On 4/8/24, 7 years after the 2017 eclipse, there will be a second total solar eclipse. It will cross the United States in the opposite direction from the 2017 eclipse, forming a giant X over the country.¹⁴ That eclipse will pass over 12 cities named Salem: 1 in Texas, 3 in Arkansas, 1 in Kentucky, 1 in

9 Source: <https://www.unsealed.org/2017/06/the-divine-message-of-august-eclipse.html>

10 Source: <https://www.alittlestrength.com/articles/2022/2210-shadow.htm>

11 Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ninety-five_Theses

12 Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balfour_Declaration

13 Source: <https://mfa.gov.il/Jubilee-years/Pages/1967-The-Reunification-of-Jerusalem.aspx>

14 Source: https://nationaleclipse.com/maps/map_2017_2024.html

Illinois, 4 in Indiana, 1 in Pennsylvania, 1 in Maine. The Salem in Kentucky will witness both eclipses.¹⁵ Revelation speaks of 12 tribes of Israel – and the church is the union of the Jews and the Gentiles into the body of Christ.

That means the sun is going dark, then a period of 7 years is passing, and then the sun is going dark again. The path of the eclipses crosses one another in a circuit that takes the sun over Salems that may represent the body of Christ (7 Gentile churches and 12 tribes of Israel). The theory is that all of this is foreshadowing the Day of the Lord, and Jesus will return not long after the 2024 eclipse – although the exact day is uncertain.

1 Corinthians 15:52 says that the trumpet will sound at the moment the Lord Jesus Christ returns for His church. 8/21/17, the date of the first eclipse, was the date of a new moon. 4/8/24, the date of the second eclipse, is as well. (The only time a solar eclipse can happen is during a new moon.¹⁶) Psalm 81:3 says that the new moon is a solemn feast day and a time for the blowing of a trumpet.

The evening of 4/8/24 (the date of the second eclipse) is the first day of Nisan¹⁷, which God said was to be the first month of the Hebrew year (Esther 3:7). This means 4/8/24 is, Biblically, the last day of the previous year and the first day of the next year.

In Revelation 4:4 there are 24 elders, which symbolize the raptured church. The number 24 appears in the date of the 2024 eclipse 3 times: the year is 24, and the month (4) + day (8) is 48 (which is 24x2). On top of that, 2024 is the year of the dragon¹⁸ – and the last sign that's fulfilled before Christ returns is the sign of the dragon.

The area where the 2017 and 2024 eclipses cross includes part of the New Madrid Seismic Zone.¹⁹ Matthew 27:51-52 says that after the crucifixion “the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;

15 Source: <https://www.alittlestrength.com/articles/2022/2210-shadow.htm>

16 Source: <https://www.weather.gov/fsd/suneclipse>

17 Source: <https://www.hebcal.com/holidays/rosh-chodesh-nisan-2024>

18 Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_zodiac

19 Source: <https://rdavidbower.com/2017/08/14/earthquakes-and-two-solar-eclipses-a-divine-warning/>

and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose". In other words, an earthquake preceded the resurrection.

The 2017 and 2024 full solar eclipses form a X over the United States. That also happens to be the letter "tav" (as written in ancient Hebrew), which is the *last* letter in the Hebrew alphabet. On 10/14/23 there was another eclipse that crossed the United States (although this one was a "ring" eclipse, and not a total eclipse like the other two). Its path, when combined with the 2017 and 2024 eclipses, forms the Hebrew letter "aleph" – the *first* letter in the Hebrew alphabet.²⁰ In Revelation 2:11 Jesus says that He is "Alpha and Omega, the first and the last". (If Revelation had been written in Hebrew it would have said that Jesus was the Aleph and the Tav.)

That's not all. The Hebrew letter "aleph" has within it the letter "dalet". The numerical value of "dalet" is 4 and the value of "aleph" is 1. (In Hebrew the letters are also numbers.) In Revelation 4:1, door is opened and the apostle John is told to go up to Heaven.²¹

But here's the thing: the only signs that can actually be found in Revelation 12:5 are the sign of the woman and the sign of the dragon. None of these other things can be found in the text. Revelation 12:1-5 doesn't mention eclipses at all. It also doesn't say there will be a period of 7 years between the signs. What if the actual period is 40 years, or 120? Those are Biblical numbers as well! What if these eclipses don't mean anything in particular, just like the many other eclipses that have happened in this nation's history? For that matter, eclipses happen over other nations as well; is it really likely that these two over the United States have special meaning? And does it really matter that the Chinese Zodiac has decreed this to be the sign of the dragon?

20 Source: <https://natsab.com/2022/02/18/the-alef-the-tav-eclipses-and-the-exodus/>

21 Source: <https://endtimesdarknessdescending.wordpress.com/2023/07/14/titanic-signs-of-judgment-4-the-aleph-dalet-american-eclipse-triad-and-the-rapture-code/>

If the rapture does happen in 2024, people will look back at all of these things and say that it should have been obvious. After all, look at all the signs! But if 2024 comes and goes and nothing happens, it will be obvious that all of this was circumstantial and meant nothing. *That's the problem with building an argument on evidence that isn't in the text.* Even if it is significant there's no way to know that in advance! It could just be a coincidence – like all of the other arguments that were used to support the many other dates that have been suggested in the past.

The only way to know when the rapture will happen is to *look for the signs that are actually in the text.* Watch the nation of Israel and look for something terrible to happen, followed soon after by an invasion of what most people will think are aliens (but are actually demons). When that happens, the hour of the Lord's return has come.

When is that going to happen? Revelation 12 doesn't say, which is why we have to watch. Perhaps the 7 year theory is right and it will be 2024. Or maybe it will be 40 years, or 120, or 400, or some other time interval. Since the passage doesn't tell us there's no way to know in advance (and that will *always* be true until the signs actually come to pass).

Application

If there's no way to know then what's the point? Why bother thinking about any of this at all?

There are a few reasons. Suppose that you were going about your day when suddenly the signs of Revelation 12:1-5 came to pass. You look up in the sky and see the devil and his fallen angels, and realize with absolutely certainty that the Lord Jesus was about to appear.

What would your reaction be? Would you be happy or upset? Would you be overjoyed that the time of His return was finally here, or would you be angry that He was cutting your time in this world short?

The apostles longed for the Lord's return. In fact, the Bible itself ends with a prayer that the Lord would return (Revelation 22:20). If His return angers us then that probably means there are things in this world that we love more than Him, which is a problem. This is a good way to check the condition of our heart and see if we truly *do* love God more than everything else in life.

There's another reason as well. Once the Lord returns, your time in this world is over. You can't go back and fix anything. The moment Jesus returns it's too late. Some people will be ashamed when He returns:

1 John 2:28: "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

The Bible doesn't tell us the exact date that the Lord Jesus Christ will return. All we have is this moment, so we had better make good use of it. If there's something that we need to repent of then now is the time. If there's something we need to do, or a relationship that we want to put right, then now is the time. We shouldn't assume that we have all the time in the world because we might not. You don't want to find yourself full of regret when your time in this world comes to a close, thinking to yourself "If only I had known! I would have done things differently."

Incidentally, do you know what Jesus wants to catch us doing when He returns? Jesus Himself gave us the answer:

Luke 12:35-38: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself,

and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.”

Imagine the lord of a large estate, coming home late at night. When he arrives, he finds that his servants were watching for his return and were ready to serve him. His house was in order and everything was in place, even though he arrived long outside normal business hours. That is what Jesus wants:

- He wants His servants to be watching for Him
- He wants His servants to be ready when He returns

Are you watching? Are you ready?