

3. THE RISE OF BABYLON

The last world empire is symbolically called ‘Babylon,’ which was also the first world empire that Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar saw in their dreams. It was the Babylonians who conquered Israel in 586 BC destroying the first Jewish temple built by Solomon. The final ‘Babylon’ will be a coalition of many or all countries. Nebuchadnezzar’s vision of a great statue represented four empires, generally interpreted as Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman. The fourth kingdom is described as strong as iron shattering and crushing everything. The feet and toes of the statue were part clay and part iron, representing a future, unstable multicultural coalition of many nations, a belated extension of the Roman Empire that surrounded the Mediterranean Sea.

The people will have different allegiances and this extensive empire won’t hold together for too long. Eventually, God will step in and set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, the Kingdom of God Jesus spoke about. When the Messiah returns, he will shatter and crush the unstable worldwide coalition and establish his kingdom which will stand forever (Dan 2:40-43).

Daniel had a later vision of four beasts representing the same four empires of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. The fourth beast is described as an awe-inspiring, terrifying, and viciously strong animal! It had large, iron teeth and devoured and crushed things and trampled under its feet whatever remained. Different from all the previous animals, it had ten horns and it devoured *the entire Earth*, trampling it down and crushing it (Dan 7:7, 23). The leader is a global dictator.

An angel interpreted the meaning for Daniel. The four great animals are four kings, founders of kingdoms, who rise to power on Earth, but eventually, the saints of the Most High receive the kingdom and possess it forever (Dan 7:17-18). The four kingdoms, represented by

wild animals, are earthly kingdoms established by men opposed to God and his plan. God allows their establishment, but eventually, he will establish his kingdom on Earth, putting an end to corrupt secular empires that don't acknowledge him. The fourth kingdom is the Roman Empire, represented by the legs of iron, but the feet and toes represent an extension of that kingdom in the last days that will be defeated at the return of the Messiah. Rome and Babylon are symbolic names for this end-time kingdom. The ten horns represent ten kings, leaders of the most powerful nations. On observing the economic, social, and political integration happening in our world today, the probability of a world empire is great, if not inevitable. It is driven by ever-developing technology in transport and communications, multiculturalism, AI, climate change, and a general recognition that the planet has reached a dangerous phase. The European Union currently consists of 28 states and has ongoing negotiations with a dozen others.

The Bible teaches that the end of the age is closely tied to what will happen in Israel and Jerusalem. The angel Gabriel declared to the prophet Daniel:

Seventy sevens/weeks are decreed for your people and your holy city to put an end to transgression, to bury sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to bring an end to vision and prophecy, and to anoint a Most Holy Place (Dan 9:24).

Gabriel said: The people of the 'ruler who will come' will destroy the city and the sanctuary. That was what the Roman armies did in 70 AD. The final week of Daniel's seventy weeks (490 years) is the seven years before the Messiah's return. Gabriel said: He (the ruler who will come) will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven'. In the middle of the 'seven,' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple, he will set up an Abomination that causes Desolation, until his decreed end is poured out on him (Dan 9:27). The seven years are divided into two halves of 3 ½ years each.

Antichrist's early years (Dan 9:24-27, Rev 6:1-8, 13:1-4)

Not much is said about the first period, but the beginning is marked by the rise of the Antichrist, who makes a covenant with Israel for seven years promising Israel protection and religious liberty and allowing a third temple to be built where the Jews would re-establish their system of sacrifices and offerings. However, in the middle of that time, he'll forbid sacrifices and offerings and put an image of himself in the temple demanding universal worship.

The opening of the first four seals (Rev 6:1-8) describes in symbolic language the rise of Antichrist as he conquers the entire world, bringing it into submission. This empire is called 'Babylon' in Revelation but is often recognized as a revival of the Roman empire which was in power when Revelation was written. It covered much of Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. The opening of the second to fourth seals reveals the distress caused by a conqueror who takes peace from the world, causing widespread bloodshed, famine, and disease. The rider of the fourth horse is called Death, having the power over a quarter of the Earth to kill through warfare, famine, and plague leaving them for animals and birds to devour.

The rise of the last world empire is described in Revelation 13:1-4. The empire is called a beast because it is dangerous, terrifying, and powerful, crushing and devouring its victims and trampling underfoot whatever is left. Satan gives it his power, his dominion, and great authority. The whole earth will marvel at this great empire and they will worship it and Satan, the power behind it.

The following events will occur during this time:

1. Just before or at this time, the third temple will be built in Jerusalem (Mt 24:15, 2 Thess 2:4, Rev 11:2).
2. Satan will empower a final worldwide empire, symbolically called Babylon, a renewed form of the Roman empire that will take peace from the world (Dan 7:22-24, Rev 6:2-4, 13:1-4).
3. Antichrist will rise to power (Rev 13:5-6, Dan 11:36-39) together with the false prophet (Rev 13:11-18).

4. Worldwide famine, pestilence, and death will follow the warfare, a quarter of humanity will perish (Rev 5–8), and a third of the environment will be ruined (Rev 8:7–12).
5. Before persecution begins, angels mark God’s servants (Christians) with a seal for their eternal security (Rev 7:1–8). As God’s people, they are symbolically depicted as the tribes of Israel, as in Galatians 6:16, where they are called ‘the Israel of God’ (genuine Christians dependant on faith not works). Christians are sealed with the Holy Spirit when they are born again. This further sealing by having God’s name written on their foreheads is mentioned four times. In 3:12 the recipients are those who are victorious. In 7:3, they are our God’s servants, 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel. In 14:1, the 144,000 again. In 22:4, God’s servants. In 3:12, Jesus said he would write on them the name of his God, the name of his God’s city, New Jerusalem, and his new name. In 14:1, the Lamb’s name and his Father’s name are written. In 7:3, 14:1, and 22:4, the names are said to be written on their foreheads. This sealing of the Christians proves that they go through the Great Tribulation and indicates that they will be protected and preserved, despite being martyred. As Jesus said: Everyone will hate you because of me, but not even one hair of your head will be lost. By your endurance, you will receive eternal life (Lk 21:17-19).

These events precede the time of Great Tribulation during which Antichrist wages war on the saints.

❖ **Nuclear war**

Antichrist has no regard for any god but exalts himself above them all and depends on a god of fortresses, presumably his nuclear military apparatus (Dan 7:7-8, 11:37-39, Rev 6:2-6). Any modern-day world dictator depends on his nuclear arsenal and the Antichrist is no exception. Famine and plague follow warfare in a quarter of the Earth’s surface (Rev 6:8) and a further two million die at Armageddon (Rev 9:15-18). Jesus said: If God had not reduced those days, no one would survive, but he reduced them for the sake of the elect (Mt 24:22). Christians are still there!

The end will come like a flood: War and desolation will continue until the end as God has decreed (Dan 9:26). He will attack the mightiest fortresses with the help of a foreign god and will greatly honor those who acknowledge him, making them rulers over many people and distributing land at a price (Dan 11:39). Symbolized by the apocalyptic horsemen, the Antichrist and his forces will be responsible for the deaths of millions of people. Death and Hades are given power to kill over a quarter of the Earth.

Daniel's last vision (Dan 10 –12) was received in the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia. It concerned a great war (10:1) in a time yet to come (10:14). Participants include demonic powers, the prince of Persia, the prince of Greece, and Michael, an angelic power who protects Israel (Dan 12:1).

When the sixth angel pours out his bowl of wrath on the Euphrates River, he is preparing the way for the kings of the East to advance on Jerusalem: possibly a Russia-Iran-Iraq-Syria coalition together with the seven 'stans: Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. Demonic powers are in league with Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet, gathering the kings of the whole world to join the battle of Armageddon.

❖ The temple

The third temple that will be built before Jesus returns, where the Antichrist will set himself up proclaiming himself to be God will likely be destroyed by the earthquake when Jesus descends to the Mount of Olives just one kilometer away, if not already destroyed by warfare. Malachi, the last OT prophet said: The Lord you seek (the Messiah) will suddenly come to his temple ... Who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? (Mal 3:1-2). Isaiah said: Suddenly, in an instant, the Lord Almighty will come upon them with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with windstorm and tempest and flames of devouring fire. Then the many nations that came to fight against Ariel (Jerusalem) will become like a dream, those who came to demolish her walls and besiege her, will be like a vision in the night (Isa 29:5-6).

Daniel prophesies about a despicable person whose armed forces will rise up to *desecrate the temple* fortress, abolish the daily sacrifice, and set up the Abomination that causes Desolation (Dan 11:31, 12:11). He may have been *seeing* Antiochus Epiphanes who profaned the temple in 167-68 BC, but Jesus assures us that the real fulfillment of his prophecy is at the end of the age. He said: When you see standing in *the holy place* the Abomination that causes Desolation, spoken about by the prophet Daniel - let the reader understand (Mt 24:15) ... At that time there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now and never to be equaled again (Mt 24:21). He was not talking about the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, but the Great Tribulation before the Day of the Lord. He said: If those days had not been reduced, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect, those days will be reduced (Mt 24:21-22). Paul confirms that this profaning of the temple would occur shortly before the Day of the Lord, when the man of lawlessness (the Antichrist) appears and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat *in God's temple*, proclaiming himself to be God (2 Thess 2:3-4).

All this implies that a third Jewish temple will be built on Mount Zion in Jerusalem before Jesus returns, with sacrifices and offerings being offered to God.

In a vision regarding the end times, John is told to measure God's temple (Rev 11:1). This measuring of the temple and altar implies that they will be rebuilt by the Jewish religious authorities of the day. Daniel prophesied (9:27) that the 'ruler who will come' (the Antichrist) will confirm a covenant with many for one week (seven years) and in the middle of that time he will put an end to sacrifice and offering at the temple and set up an Abomination that causes Desolation. The temple-building may be part of his covenant with 'many' which will include Muslims, without whose cooperation a temple could not be built. In some way, this would help solve the Palestinian problem; the status of the land, the temple, and the refugees.