

Chapter 17 – What Is the Timeline for the Last Days?

Perhaps there has never been a book so misunderstood and so misinterpreted as the Apocalypse (Revelation), written by John, an apostle of Christ. Despite the development of numerous charts issued in attempts to map out the seven bowls, seven trumpets, and seven seals compared to the Day of the Lord, Great Tribulation Period, and Judgement Day, Biblical theoreticians and scholars have struggled to fully map out the correct sequence of events. Rather than concern ourselves with what others have suggested, since the views are many, we'll instead use the language of these prophecies to devise an inclusive timeline chart based upon the original Data.

Tracing the origin of prophecy stands as the best method to learn how prophecies build upon each other until we reach the last visions received by John. We will start with an example concept from the first and last chapters of Revelation:

Revelation 1:1a *“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place.”*

Revelation 22:20 "He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!"

It is difficult to avoid getting caught in the brambles of seemingly contradictory phrases and confusing statements related to the concept of timing. How could Christ have stated that He "is coming soon" when He spoke these words thousands of years ago? Did He already come spiritually into our lives? Did He mean He would physically come again to earth sooner, rather than later? We will find that "soon" often means "[swift or quick](#)" as derived from Ezekiel and others shown below.

The apostles thought Christ would establish His kingdom physically on the earth ([Acts 1:6-7](#)). They knew His heavenly kingdom was established already and permanent, but they also knew about prophecies yet unfulfilled wherein Christ would literally sit on His earthly throne. All throughout the New Testament (N.T.) we see hope of a future, physical, second coming.

What Does "No More Delay!" Mean?

Christ's "delay" from a human perspective has led to an outcropping of beliefs that interpret Christ's kingdom as spiritual or heavenly based, not including an earthly base in the future. For the impatient, passages that speak of a kingdom on earth are sometimes interpreted as fulfilled by the Church on earth in a spiritual sense. These theories are the equivalent of

snatching low-hanging fruit and demonstrate a willingness to settle that is not completely supported by the prophecies.

By trying to assert that these prophecies have already come to pass, people have often watered down the core concepts found in prophecy and transferred these passages into non-physical realm meanings. These interpretations fit with ancient Greek and earlier beliefs that state the physical realm is corrupt, or neutral at best, while only the spiritual realm is good. In these cases, we see prophecies of believers getting transported to Heaven, then the earth blows up in the end. This is a concept that some prominent Greek philosophers brought into the Church (see [Chapter 9](#)).

The answer to our question about Christ's delay to earth is found in Scripture. Christ is certainly coming back to establish a kingdom on the earth according to the Bible, but this concept goes against Greek myths that came into Christian culture. However, we find answers within the context of the Old Testament (O.T.) bringing the same terms into the N.T.

When we see phrases like "no more delay" or "I am coming soon" in the N.T. we need to consider the full meaning as drawn from the O.T. The answers are found after we follow the breadcrumbs.

Isaiah 46:8-13

*"Remember this and stand firm,
recall it to mind, you transgressors,
remember the former things of old;
for I am God, and there is no other;*

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*I am God, and there is none like me,
declaring the end from the beginning
and from ancient times things not yet done,
saying, 'My counsel shall stand,
and I will accomplish all my purpose,'...
I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass;
I have purposed, and I will do it.
Listen to me, you stubborn of heart,
you who are far from righteousness:
I bring near my righteousness; it is not far off,
and my salvation will not delay;
I will put salvation in Zion,
for Israel my glory."*

Isaiah 10:20-23 "In that day the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no more lean on him who struck them, but will lean on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. For though your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return. Destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness. For the Lord GOD of hosts will make a full end, as decreed, in the midst of all the earth."

Paul stated in Romans 9 that the timing mentioned by Isaiah

is yet future. We also see his reference to the prophetic “non-delayed” theme about the second advent.

Romans 9:27-28 “And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: ‘Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved, for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and *without delay*.’”

In Hebrews 10 we notice a reference to [Habakkuk 2:3](#). First, the Savior comes, then He will act quickly when He comes.

Hebrews 10:36-37 “For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For,

‘Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and *will not delay*,’”

Revelation 10:5-7 “And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven and swore by him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there would be **no more delay**, but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, **the mystery of God would be fulfilled**, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.”

No more delay? There has been a huge delay from our perspective, but God’s timing is not our timing. The ancient language seems to have been misunderstood by our modern terms. He knows exactly when all things will come to pass. What does He want us to learn about this? We will later

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examine how God's timing is tied to hope. There is a sense that these prophecies give us what we need to live today, while knowing what the future holds.

Ezekiel 12 states a correlation of the term "delay" to occur in far-off days, yet that these days are "near" (not in terms of time). People usually think of things happening in the near future to be in a matter of days. Our commons conceptions of time within the scope of our lives are woefully insufficient to easily grasp the prophetic meaning of time that these statements refer to. Put your goggles and scuba flippers on. Let's dive into the language of time as it appears in the Bible.

Ezekiel 12:23-28 *And the word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, what is this proverb that you have about the land of Israel, saying, 'The days grow long, and every vision comes to nothing'? Tell them therefore, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: I will put an end to this proverb, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel.' But say to them, **The days are near**, and the fulfillment of every vision. For there shall be no more any false vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel. For I am the LORD; I will speak the word that I will speak, and it will be performed. **It will no longer be delayed**, but in your days, O rebellious house, I will speak the word and perform it, declares the Lord GOD."*

*And the word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, 'The vision that he sees is for many days from now, and he prophesies of times far off.' Therefore say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: None of my words will be delayed any longer, **but the word that I speak will be performed**, declares the Lord GOD."*

Notice that our modern meaning and the context meaning of "delay" are not the same. The biblical meaning of delay in these

prophetic passages is that God will certainly carry out His will where it is not far off or something to be forgotten. He decided to act, so all prophecies will be fulfilled. Even though it may be thousands of years in advance, it will not “come to nothing.”

We can be assured by God’s word, even when spoken thousands of years ago. It is not far removed from us because time is not the same in eternity ([2 Peter 3:8](#)). When God speaks, it is if the event He planned already occurred. Also, when prophesied events finally occur, they will happen quickly. “Delay” is not a simple term with a short answer.

The naysayers of Ezekiel’s time thought the timing of God’s prophecies and promises were “growing long” or stretching out farther. God replied they were incorrect. His prophecies were nearer or closer than they thought. He already established timing of fulfillment. They thought He kept pushing back the countdown to postpone His promises.

Habakkuk 2:2-3

And the LORD answered me:

*“Write the vision; make it plain on tablets,
so he may run who reads it.*

*For still the vision awaits its appointed time;
it hastens to the end—it will not lie.*

*If it seems slow, wait for it;
it will surely come; it will not delay.”*

Both Habakkuk and Ezekiel stated that God’s promises will

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surely happen. This is the main point of these passages relating to the “delay” term. They were not meant to occur immediate to the time of the prophecy.

Now that we have some background from the O.T., we notice similar timing terms carry over into the N.T.

Luke 18:6-8 *And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”*

2 Peter 3:1-7 *“This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, ‘Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.’ For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.”*

Scoffers will not know when the end will come. It is because of sin that they will not know. There is a definite correlation of knowledge of God’s certain word of prophecy only being revealed to the righteous (wise, just). Simply reading Bible

prophecies or even understanding the original language is not enough according to the Bible itself. Good works follow understanding the Bible through the reception of His word by His Spirit. God grants true knowledge of His future revelations to those who are righteous.

Prophecies about Christ coming soon stem from the original prophecies that Moses wrote. There are early prophecies about Christ as the expected Savior mentioned in [Genesis 3:15](#) and [Genesis 22:17-18](#). However, within the Song of Moses we receive the first glimpse about the means of the Lord's coming.

Deuteronomy 32:35

*Vengeance is mine, and recompense,
for the time when their foot shall slip;
for the day of their calamity is at hand,
and their doom comes swiftly.*

It should be noted that all passages we reviewed about timing stem from the Song of Moses. This hope of justice upon the evil of the earth was ingrained into God's people and repeated by several prophets and apostles.

Terms like recompense and swiftness appear again and again, misleadingly giving the impression of something that is bound to happen imminently. Later prophets built upon previous terms so that the hearer or reader can trace the contextual meaning, simply creating a sequence of events rather than codifying their proximity to one another. They followed the Song of Moses as a basis but did not repeat the entire prophecy. They often added new information to the base prophecy.

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The book of Revelation serves as a greatest-hits record, playing mostly repeats of previous prophecies. We will not understand the final book of the Bible if we don't understand the origins of these threads, such as the Song of Moses to Isaiah to Christ to John. Perhaps unsurprisingly, God wants us to read and understand all of Scripture, not just parts. Surprisingly, there are not many new concepts found in the prophecies mentioned in Revelation when we apply this threaded breadcrumb approach.

The concept of the Song of Moses prophecy is repeated by Isaiah in several passages, including [Isaiah 35:4](#) and Isaiah 62:11 stated here –

Behold, the LORD has proclaimed

to the end of the earth:

Say to the daughter of Zion,

Behold, your salvation comes;

behold, his reward is with him,

and his recompense before him.

When we go back to examine Revelation 22, we have a better understanding that “coming soon” is tied to recompense and swift judgment. This is based upon this Song of Moses and related prophesies in Isaiah. “Coming soon” means quick in relation to judgment upon the earth.

Revelation 22:12 *“Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense*

with me, to repay each one for what he has done.”

The message of the prophetic gospel is clear, as we will examine through this book. The Church, Christians, and blood descendants of Israel will be on earth during tribulation and the Great Tribulation Period. There is no avoiding this with a secret or public rapture prior to this coming period. However, the righteous are not destined for God’s wrath. Wrath and tribulation are different terms. We need to understand that believers will enter tribulation but not wrath.

1 Thessalonians 5:2-4 “For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, ‘There is peace and security,’ then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.”

Key Takeaways from 1 Thessalonians 5

Wise = righteous = God’s word believed = in the light = spared from wrath

Unwise = unrighteous = reject God’s word = in darkness = destined to wrath

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1 Thessalonians 5 makes it clear for us. We need to be prepared for the coming great judgment upon the earth. There will be no surprise for believers, only unbelievers will be surprised how quickly events will occur.

All types of people will be on earth during dark times, but hope is offered to all who believe in God's final message to us. We are given this hope a little later in [1 Thessalonians 5:9](#). Not to worry, everything that we need to know was written for us in advance as He "declared the end from the beginning."