

I. THREE PROPHETIC TIMELINES OF END TIME EVENTS BEFORE THE LORD'S RETURN

A. Jesus and others made the analogy that *the final years of natural human history* will be like *a woman in labor* (Mat. 24:8; Mk. 13:8; Isa. 13:6–8; Jer. 30:6–7; 1 Thes. 5:3).

⁸ ***All these are the beginning of sorrows*** [early labor pangs]...²¹ ***For then there will be great tribulation*** [hard labor pains], such as has ***not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be...*** ²⁹ ***Immediately after the tribulation*** [labor pains] ***of those days...³⁰...they [the nations] will see the Son of Man*** [Jesus] ***coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*** (Mat. 24:8, 21, 29–30)

³ ***For when they [unbelievers in Harlot Babylon] say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.*** (1 Thess. 5:3)

B. There are *two important features to this analogy* and we cannot neglect either one:

1. First, that *the pangs of labor* will come upon *the entire earth* (Mat. 24:8; Mk. 13:8; Isa. 13:6–8; Jer. 30:6–7; 1 Thes. 5:2–3; Mat. 24:21, 29; Rev. 7:14).

⁶ ***Ask now, and see...why do I see every man*** [person] ***with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale?*** ⁷ ***Alas! For that day is great...*** (Jer. 30:6–7)

²¹ ***For then there will be great tribulation*** [hard labor pains], such as has ***not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be...*** (Mat. 24:21)

2. *Secondly, and more importantly the glory of the baby* that is coming—which is *the birthing of a new world order* under Jesus' leadership after the time of tribulation (labor pangs) has passed (Isa. 66:8; Isa. 4:2; Zech. 12:10; 13:1, 6–9; Rom. 11:26–27; Rom. 8:19, 22; Isa. 26:19; 1 Cor. 15:51–53). The new world order includes *resurrected saints, redeemed Israel, Jesus direct leadership as King of the earth, and the restoration of creation, a greater connection between heaven and earth* exists as the Heavenly City, sits visibly above the earth over earthly Jerusalem. in the time period known as the Millennial Kingdom (1,000 year reign of Christ) and into the Eternal Age! God will bring good things out of this pain and intensity that falls upon the earth.

⁸ ***Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day?...*** (Isa. 66:8)

C. Jesus revealed *three distinct time frames in the final generation* leading up to His return. When comparing Matthew 24 with 1 Thessalonians 5:2–3 and Daniel 9:27 these timeframes are clear. They are the ***“beginning of birth pangs”***, the years leading up to the final seven, ***“increased labor pangs”***, which is the first 3 1/2 year period within the final seven, and finally ***“hard labor pangs”***, which are the final 3 1/2 years of natural human history, also called the “Great Tribulation”.

1. ***The beginning of birth pangs (Mat. 24:8)***. There are *twenty-one trends* that alert the Church they have entered this generation of His return (40–100 years) (Mat. 24:34). These signs are *discernible, universal* and *simultaneous* as they escalate together, bringing ***“increasing turmoil”*** in the nations, providing the Antichrist a platform to ascend into prominence. (Mt. 24:4–8; Mk. 13:5–8, Lk. 21:7–18)

⁸ ***All these are the beginning of sorrows.*** (Mat. 24:8)

2. **Increased labor pangs:** This period is characterized by external “*peace and safety*” (for the world) as they fall into greater *deception* and *persecute* the saints. Global economic, political, military and religious infrastructures will be set in place for the Antichrist to utilize, occurring during the first 3 1/2 years of the final seven-year period of natural history (Mt. 24:9–14; Mk. 13:9–13; 1 Thes. 5:2–3).

² *For you yourselves know perfectly that **the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.** ³ For **when they [unbelievers in Harlot Babylon] say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. (1 Thes. 5:2–3)***

3. **Hard labor pangs:** This period is characterized by the *great turmoil* the earth will experience as the Antichrist will break a covenant with primarily middle eastern nations and Israel (Dan. 9:27). He will set up the “*Abomination of Desolation*” (Mt. 24:15; 2 Thes. 2:3–4), unmasking his true nature as a cruel, fierce and demonized, king who demands full allegiance. Because of this unprecedented global turmoil, the Bible calls this time period the “Great Tribulation” (Jer. 30:5–7; Mt. 24:15–31; Mk 13:14–27, Lk. 21:25–28). *All four eschatological pressures* will climax under the Lord’s leadership to bring about a new era where He is King on earth: *creation’s groan* (Rom. 8:22), *man’s sin* (Dan. 8:23), *Satan’s rage* (Rev. 12:12) and *God’s zeal for righteousness*, as He *shakes everything* (Hag. 2:6-9; Rev. 15:1), *judging the wicked*, *weakening the forces of evil on the earth*, and *strengthening His saints* (Rev. 11:15-19). *There is no time period like this time period* as God will accomplish much during this great and terrible time (Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1; Joel 2:11; Mat. 24:21).

¹ *...And there shall be **a time of trouble** [hard labor pains], **such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. (Dan. 12:1)***

²¹ *For then there will be **great tribulation** [hard labor pains], **such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be... (Mat. 24:21)***

D. Jesus said when the beginning of birth pangs began, this generation would not pass away before all three time frames were completed. A biblical generation is 40–100 years (Gen 15:13-16; Acts 7:6; Num. 32:13; Ps. 90:10; Mt. 1:17; Mat. 24:33–35).

³⁴ *Assuredly, I say to you, **this generation** [40–100 year period] **will by no means pass away till all these things take place. (Mat. 24:34)***

II. BEGINNING OF BIRTH PANGS - 1948 OR 1967 - LASTS FOR UP TO A GENERATION (40–100 YEARS)

A. *Israel is the primary “timing indicator”* God has used in His redemptive program in human history (Luke 21:20) and the prophetic timetable in the end times. The entire end-time storyline affecting the entire earth is given in the context of Israel’s replanting in the land and return to the Lord. **The three key events in modern Israel** before entering the “Great Tribulation” is their *rebirth as a nation* (1948), *possessing Jerusalem* (1967) and joining other nations in *a covenant with the Antichrist* (Dan. 9:27).

B. In several places, the Lord said that when He **returned Israel to the land**, He would never remove them again (Amos 9:15; Isa. 14:1; Ezek. 36:16–38). In 1948 Israel became a state and in 1967 when she began rule over Jerusalem after “Six Day War”.

1. After 2,000 years without a homeland, in a weak and broken state scattered throughout the nations (Ezek. 36:19-21), after having survived the Holocaust, Israel miraculously won statehood having kept their national identity intact (Ezek 36:24).
 2. In a period of around 100 years, over five million Jews have migrated to live in Israel, making it larger than the Exodus which occurred 3500 years ago in Moses' day.
- C. Jesus gave **21 global trends** that combined with prophetic people and sign events, signal the generation in which He will return (Mt. 24:3–28; Mk. 13:3–23, Lk. 21:7–26).
- D. *Most of these trends are negative.* We study the negative trends to *resist* them in their popularity in our culture, *expose* them by the Holy Spirit and *act* in the opposite spirit as we release the Kingdom.
- E. God's people must be strengthened so that they escape the snare of fear and lust to stand in victory (Lk. 21:36). Both Jesus and Paul emphasized the call to *watch*, in the context of describing pressure in the end times (Mt. 24:42; 25:13; Mk. 13:9, 33, 34, 35, 37; Lk. 21:36; Rev. 16:15; cf. 1 Thes. 5:6).
- ⁴²***“Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.” (Mt. 24:42)***
- ³⁶***“Watch...and pray always that you may be counted worthy [have strength] to escape all these things... and to stand [in victory] before the Son of Man.” (Lk. 21:34-36)***
- F. *How do we watch?* We are to grow in understanding by watching the biblical signs of the times unfold, understand them and allow God to produce urgency in us. As our understanding increases, it produces greater urgency in us, spurring us into conversations that prepare our communities and build bridges with like-minded individuals and ministries.
- G. *These trends are deception by false christs and prophets* (Mat 24:5, 11, 24), *national/international warfare* (24:6), *rumors of war* (24:6), *ethnic conflict*, (24:7), *economic warfare* (24:7), *famines, pestilences, great earthquakes*, (24:8), *Christian persecution* (Mat. 24:9; Mk. 13:13) and *martyrdom* (Mat. 24:9), *falling away from faith* from being offended (Mat. 24:10, 12), *relational betrayal* (Mat. 24:10), *lawlessness* as seen increase in sin and rebellion (Mat. 24:12), *maturity in the Church* as seen through endurance (Mat. 24:13), *anointed, world-wide proclamation* (Mat. 24:14; Mk. 13:9–11), *troubles* (Mk. 13:8), *commotions* or “instabilities” (Lk. 24:9), *signs in the sky, distress in the nations, and disturbances in the sea* (Luke 21:9, 25) and *anti-semitism* culminating in the siege against Jerusalem, mass deportation and extermination of Jews (Lk. 21:20, 24). Matthew gives fifteen major trends, Mark adds “troubles” and Luke adds five more.
- ⁵***“Many will come...saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many...⁶ And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars...⁷For nation will rise against nation [Gk. ethnos, or ethnic conflict], and kingdom against kingdom [economic warfare]. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places...⁹ “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation [Christian persecution]and kill you [martyrdom], and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. ¹⁰ And then many will be offended [falling away], will betray one another, and will hate one another...¹²And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³But he who endures [Christian maturity] to the end shall be saved. ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Mt. 24:4-12)***

⁸ *And there will be ... troubles... (Mark 13:8)*

⁹ *But when you hear of wars and commotions [literally, “instabilities”]...these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately. ¹¹...there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven...²⁵...there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring...” (Luke 21:9, 11, 25)*

²⁰ *“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies [anti-zionism], then know that its desolation is near. ²¹ Then let those [Jewish people] who are in Judea [Israel] flee...²⁴ And they [Jewish people] will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations [anti-semitism]...(Luke 21:20–24)*

- H. Normal labor for a woman usually is 12 hours of birth pains before going into “active labor” for one hour (12:1 ratio). By keeping this parallel, it would be 42 years for 3 1/2 years of labor or 89 years for 7 years of labor (entire week of Daniel). The ratio would not fit if comparing the final 2,000 years since Jesus’ ascension to 3 1/2 years of the “Great Tribulation”.
- I. When these things occur, the Church is to know that we have entered a new time frame, “*The beginning of birth pangs*”—we will never go back to the past but have entered “labor” until labor (tribulation) is finished and the new world order arrived.

III. THE SECOND TIME FRAME: INCREASED LABOR PANGS - FIRST 3 1/2 YEARS OF 7 YEARS

- A. The final seven year time frame is described in Daniel 9, having two parts, equally divided into 3 1/2 years. The Jews mentioned a “week” to refer to either seven days or seven

Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week [seven year period]; But in the middle of the week [3 1/2 years] he [Antichrist] shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering [break the covenant]. (Dan. 9:27)

- B. This seven-year period begins with the Antichrist “confirming a covenant” with many Middle Eastern (Muslim) nations along with Israel that will bring the earth into a time of false “peace and safety” as well as unprecedented prosperity as the entire world will seem to change for the good. (Ps. 55:20; Isa. 28:14–15, 16–22; Dan. 9:27; 11:23, 28, 30; 1 Thes. 5:3)

³ For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. (1 Thess. 5:3)

- C. Israel will enter this agreement in order to secure political peace, economic prosperity and religious protection to practice Judaism on the Temple Mount in a rebuilt temple (Mt. 24:15; Mk. 13:14; 2 Thes. 2:4; Rev. 11:1–2; 13:12–18; Dan. 9:26–27; 11:31; 12:1; Isa. 66:1). *What they think will bring them safety, will actually bring death and destruction.* Soon after making the agreement, the Antichrist will *betray them*, breaking the covenant (Isa. 33:1; 24:16; 33:18; Dan. 9:27) and Israel will be *trampled down* by this covenant, their strength being *completely shattered*, including their military, infrastructure, societal fabric, leadership, human will (Isa. 28:15, 18–19; Dan. 7:19, 23; 9:27; 12:7; Isa. 30:12–14).

D. The first 3 1/2 years of the 7 years has four main activities that will occur during that time: **counterfeit world peace** (1 Thes. 5:3), **the Harlot Babylon system** (17:1–5), **persecution of the saints** (Rev. 17:6) and **the great falling away** (1 Tim. 4:1).

1. **Counterfeit World Peace**: Many of the escalating negative trends, such as terrorism, famine, ethnic conflict and wars will force the nations of the earth to build a one-world government, the perfect stage for the Antichrist to ascend and present temporary solutions to difficult problems that will solidified in an international agreement. (1 Thes. 5:3)
2. **The Harlot Babylon system**: will **dominate the earth** and bring the earth into **great material prosperity**, promoting it's **humanitarian religion of peace and tolerance**, resistant to Jesus while defining love, hate, kindness and bigotry, wickedness and many other concepts with its own meaning (Rev. 17:1–5, 7; Isa. 24:5–6). While it will provide temporary **peace and safety** which seems to be good, God calls it **lawlessness** as immorality, violence, witchcraft, murder and many other iniquity will abound (Mat. 24:12). Today, there are many forerunners using Christian terms but promoting these values. Any leader who says the name “Jesus”, while killing babies, marrying same-sex partners and proclaiming all religions lead to the same place is deceived and a deceiver (Mt. 24:5). This false peace and justice will pervade the earth briefly, just as in the days of Noah (Mt. 24:37–38).

¹ ...“**Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot [one-world system with it's origins in ancient Babylon] who sits on many waters [people groups]... (Rev. 17:1)**”

3. **Persecution of the Saints**: The leaders of the earth will be **intoxicated from the benefits** (power, wealth, security) **of the Great Harlot** and will **persecute, murder and hate the saints** for their stand for truth and exposing of wickedness as the gospel will go forth into all the nations in power (Rev. 17:6; Mt. 24:9–14).

⁹ “**Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake... (Mat. 24:9)**”

4. **The Great Falling Away**: Many in the Church at this time will fall away from the faith due to persecution, deception and the enticement of what the Harlot Babylon offers (Rom. 11:17–24; 2 Thes. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 6:4–8).

³ **Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day [Jesus return] will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition... (2 Thes. 2:3)**

⁴ **Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons... (1 Tim. 4:1)**

E. This 3 1/2 period is also characterized by **hatred, offense, relational betrayal, deception, lawlessness, the proclamation of the gospel to all people and regions of the earth**. (Mt. 24:9–14; Mk. 13:9–13; 1 Thes. 5:2–3)

IV. THE THIRD TIME FRAME: INCREASED LABOR PANGS - THE FINAL 3 1/2 YEARS OF 7 YEARS

A. The third time frame in the end times is also known as the “**Great Tribulation**” (Mat. 24:21; Rev. 7:13–14) —the **final 3½ years** of this age, **the heavy labor pangs** in the transition before Jesus installs His kingdom on

earth (Mt. 24:15-31; Mk. 13:14-20; Lk. 21:25-28; Jer. 30:5; Rev. 6–19). This time period begins with the “Abomination of Desolation” spoken of by Daniel and Jesus (Dan. 9:27; Mat. 24:15).

¹⁵“When you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place...¹⁶let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains...²¹For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. ²²And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved.” (Mt. 24:15–22)

²⁷...He [Antichrist] shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering [in the rebuilt temple]. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate... (Dan. 9:27)

B. This Abomination of Desolation occurs when the Antichrist sets himself in the rebuilt temple of Jerusalem as God. This is what John the apostle saw as the “image of the Beast,” a demonically empowered idol that the Antichrist and False Prophet use to demand worship or face death. This image will be able to walk, talk, breathe (Rev. 13:14–16). Since it sits in the temple of God, it is an abomination (Dan. 8:13; 9:26, 27; 11:31; 12:11; Mt. 24:15; Mk.13:14; 2 Thes. 2:3-4; Rev. 13:12-18). John emphasizes this image ten times (Rev. 13:14, 15 [3x]; 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4). It is the key prophetic sign of the final 3 1/2 years.

¹⁵ He [the False Prophet] was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast [Antichrist], that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. (Rev. 13:15)

C. It is an “abomination” in that the Antichrist demands to be worshipped and also that those in the earth do worship it! The Antichrist will end the sacrifices in the Jew’s temple that the covenant had allowed them to continue and in its place, institute worship of Himself (Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; 2 Thes. 2:4).

...⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. (2 Thes. 2:4)

D. It’s “desolation” has three aspects. First, the Antichrist and the False prophet will kill anyone who does not worship the image. Second, worshipping this image and engaging at this level of idolatry will bring great desolation (curses) upon creation and society as it has turned away from God. Third, God will desolate in judgment all who yield to the Antichrist in the Lake of Fire. The Abomination of Desolation is referred to 7 times in Scripture, Daniel 5x (Dan. 8:13; 9:26, 27; 11:31; 12:11) and Jesus 2x (Mt. 24:15; Mk. 13:14).

E. All four eschatological pressures will climax as God transition the earth under Jesus’ leadership: creation’s groan (Rom. 8:22), man’s sin (Dan. 8:23), Satan’s rage (Rev. 12:12) and God’s zeal for righteousness, as He shakes everything (Hag. 2:6-9; Rev. 15:1), judging the wicked, weakening the forces of evil on the earth, strengthening His saints and transitioning the earth under His leadership (Rev. 11:15–19).

F. The Bible refers to the final 3 1/2 years of natural human history in many ways—requiring us to draw closer to discern and providing us more insight to what is occurring at this time as each passage contains some overlapping and some distinct information: the Great Tribulation (Mt. 24:21; Rev. 7:14), Time of Jacob’s Trouble (Jer. 30:7), Time of Trouble (Dan. 12:1), Half a Week (Dan. 9:27), A Time and Times and Half a Time (Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 12:14), Forty-Two Months (Rev. 11:2; 13:5), 1,260 days (Rev. 11:3; 12:6) and a Short Time (Rev. 12:12; 17:10).