

SIGNS OF THE SECOND COMING

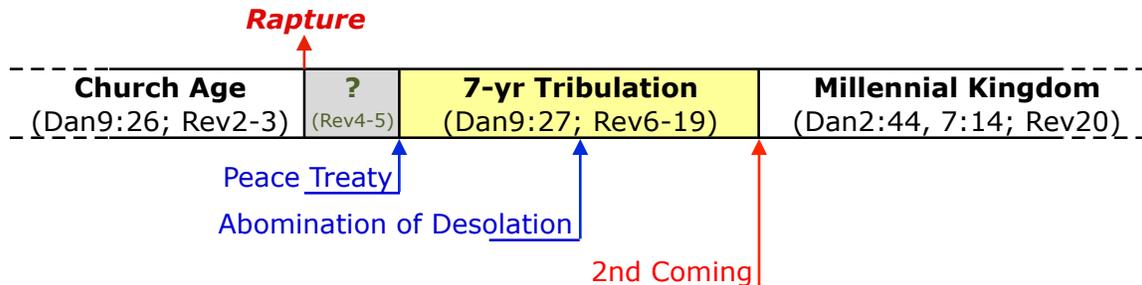
* * * How Close Are We? * * *

S.L.H.
Soli Deo Gloria!

INTRODUCTION. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and Sadducees for failing to recognize the signs of His **First Coming** (Matt16:1-3). Such signs that should have been recognized included: 1) the virgin birth in Bethlehem (Isa 7:14; Mic5:2; Matt2:1-12; Luk1:26-35; 2:1-14), 2) prophesied miracles (Isa61:1-2; Luk4:16-21), and 3) Daniel's prophecy of the 69 Weeks which gave the very day the Messiah would present himself to Israel (Dan9:25; Luk19:41-44).

During His ministry to Israel at His First Coming, Jesus taught there would also be signs that precede His **Second Coming** (Matt24:3ff; Luk21:25-28). For these signs (Mk13:4), Jesus commanded: "And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch" (Mk13:32-37).

The Rapture. Do not confuse the Rapture (Jn14:1-3; 1Cor15:51-53; 1Thess4:13-18; 2Thess2:1-3) with the Second Coming (Matt24:29-30; Rev19:11-21). As shown in the diagram below, that Rapture is an event that precedes the start of the Tribulation (i.e., Daniel's 70th Week), while the Second Coming is the event that closes it. When the Lord Jesus asserted, "But of **that day** and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matt24:36), He was speaking of the Rapture of the Church. The Rapture is an imminent, *sign-less* event that could happen at any moment; indeed, the Rapture could have happened at any moment during the current Church Age which began with the Coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2; c. 32 AD). Whereas the Rapture could happen today, the Second Coming cannot happen for at least 7 years.



Chronological sequence of end time events.

SIGNS OF THE SECOND COMING. Scripture (both O.T. and N.T) provides a vast amount of prophetic material describing the 7-year Tribulation period (i.e., Daniel's 70th Week, also designated "the Day of the LORD") in great detail. Once the 70th Week of Daniel begins, the exact day of the Second Coming can be known, just as the exact day of the First Coming was (Cp., Luk19:41-44). The myriad of prophesied details about the period of the Tribulation make up the *Signs of the Second Coming*. Though by no means exhaustive, consider the following major signs.

- 1) **Revived Roman Empire.** The Roman Empire, the fourth of (only) four Gentile kingdoms prophesied in Daniel (Dan2:31-35,40-45; 7:7-8), ruled the world at the First Coming (Luk2:1). Although the Roman Empire fragmented into a multitude of separate and independent states in the centuries that followed the First Coming, with several of these vying unsuccessfully to conquer the others, Scripture teaches that a revived Roman Empire will rule the world at the Second Coming (Dan2:41-45; 9:26-27; Rev17:18). What could not be accomplished by more than a millennia of military conquest (i.e., the reunification of the European nations as a consolidated empire) appears today to be in a process of realization as these nations voluntarily assemble into the European Union, which began with the "Treaty of Rome" signed on March 25, 1957. It is the revived Roman Empire that will give rise to the Antichrist (Dan9:26-27; Rev17:11; Dan7:7-8).

- 2) **Babylonian Globalism.** When the Antichrist rises to power during the Tribulation, he will attempt to exercise world-wide economic and religious control (Rev6:5-6; 13:19-22). The accelerating trend toward a cashless, totally electronic, interconnected global society appears to be setting the stage for this kind of global control to become a reality. Prideful human globalism began at Babel (Gen11:1-9) and will once again be centered in the Babylon of the end times. Thus, just as the Roman Empire must be revived, Babylon must return to prominence (Rev17-18). Ancient Babylon was never destroyed as prophesied (Isa13:19-22; Jer50:40); it will be destroyed by fire in one hour during the Tribulation (Rev18:8-10). Confusion endures regarding how to distinguish prophecies concerning Mystery Babylon (Rev17), which would clearly seem to be Rome (Rev17:9,18), and *literal* Babylon (Rev18). It is an historical fact that the Babylonian mystery religions migrated from Babylon to Pergamos (cf. Rev2:13), then to Rome (Rev17:5); a prophecy of Zechariah suggests a yet future migration from Rome back to a literal Babylon to be built "in the land of Shinar" (Zech5:5-11). It is eerie to watch the ascending European Union intentionally take for herself the Biblical symbols of Babylon.



"Tower of Babel"
by Pieter Brueghel (1563)



EU Parliament Building in Strasbourg



2 Euro Coin

- 3) **Regathering of Israel.** Some have called the nation of Israel the "super-sign" of the end times, for good reason. Prophecy demands that Israel be regathered as a nation prior to the start of the 7-year Tribulation period, since it is the enforcing of a covenant (i.e., peace treaty) by the Antichrist, associated with Israel's security, that initiates Daniel's 70th Week (Dan9:27). After its second national dispersion by the Romans in 70 AD (note Isa11:11-12), Israel once again became a nation on May 14, 1948. Though regathered in unbelief

(Ezek37:1-14), all Israel will be saved by the end of the Tribulation (Rom11:25-27; Cp., Ezek20:33-38). The Temple must be rebuilt and functioning in Jerusalem by the midpoint of the Tribulation (Dan9:27; Matt24:15; 2Thess2:3-4; Rev11:1-2). The city of Jerusalem is to become a "burdensome stone" with "all nations of the earth" aligned against it (Zech12:1-3; 14:1-2). Since the restoration of the nation of Israel in 1948, she has had a single ally, the United States of America; its veto power on the UN Security Council has been used repeatedly to protect and defend Israel. According to Scripture, that relationship between Israel and the USA must end. The USA will join all the nations of the world in opposition to the continued existence of the state of Israel (cf. Psalm 2).

- 4) **Apostasy of the Church.** This sign is different from the others. Whereas the previous signs point to conditions that will exist during the Tribulation period, Scripture prophesies an apostasy of the Church prior to the beginning of the Tribulation, as the Church Age draws to a close (2Tim3:1-13; 4:3-4, 2Pet3:1-16). Unlike the others, this is a sign that can never be definitive, since elements of apostasy began during the lifetime of the Apostle Paul and have "wax[ed] worse and worse" since then (2Tim3:13). All genuine believers, a small remnant within what presents itself as the Christian Church, will be removed from earth at the Rapture of the (true) Church to become the Bride of Christ. What will remain to enter the Tribulation period will be the unregenerate, Harlot Church (i.e., the Bride of Antichrist; Rev17:1ff). The conditions described by the Lord Jesus in the church of the Laodiceans (Rev3:14-17) typifies the apostate church of the end times.

HOW CLOSE ARE WE? Since the Rapture is an imminent event, there is no direct sign that it is near (i.e., no prophecy that must be fulfilled prior to it). However, there can be many signs that the Tribulation period is near, since it is the subject of a great deal of very specific prophecy in both the NT and OT. Such signs of the rapid approach of the Tribulation period include: 1) Jews from throughout the world being regathered to the land of Israel (Isa11:11-16; Ezek20:33-38; 22:17-22; 37:11-14); 2) an effort by them to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem (Matt24:15; 2Thess2:3-4; Rev11:1-2); 3) revival of the ancient Roman empire (i.e., a united Europe) and its return to world dominance (Dan2:40-45; 7:7-8,19-28) with Antichrist as its leader (Dan9:26); 4) a global economy (Rev13:16-17); and 5) world encompassing efforts to broker a peace treaty with Israel (Isa28:14-22; Dan9:27). However, since the Rapture of the Church precedes the start of the Tribulation period, signs that these events are near imply that the Rapture is even nearer!