

PROPHECY: END TIMES
Daniel 9:24-27, Matthew 24:15-30
By Raymond White

On the cosmic calendar there are four dates that are of most interest to us: the beginning and end of ourselves, and the beginning and end of everything else. The first, our birth and death, is at least a matter of record. The second, the eschatology of everything, is that overwhelming great unknown.

Before Edwin Hubble, science was not even sure the universe *had* an eschatology. The universe was said to be in a perpetual “steady state” — it just had always been and always would be.

Then Hubble burst our bubble in 1929 by announcing his empirical evidence that everything in the universe was flying apart from everything else. And therefore, at some point in deep history, everything must have been together at one place. Thus the universe must have begun with a catastrophic explosion: a big bang. And if it began, then it must also one day end.

So now that science has its own eschatology, it must stop laughing at the Bible for claiming such things. And we may even be delighted to learn that science’s eschatology is not all that different from the Bible’s — it just took science longer to get there.

So, just what does the Bible say about the beginning and end of everything? Here’s my short list.

Isaiah 60:19 The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. :20 Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall the moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.

This is very eschatological, and very much in agreement with modern science. The sun will one day burn out becoming first a red giant then collapsing into a white dwarf before it vanishes completely.

Will the earth survive? Likely not. Will humans be around to see it? Obviously not, but then again, what is obvious is often not the truth. It depends on what the human race morphs into by then. Yes, the universe is dying. But now it has us, and we’re evolving fast! Most of what we know we have learned in the last century. Human knowledge is growing asymptotically. At our current rate of learning, we might have god like control over everything long before the universe dies.

This verse says two things: Yes, the sun will die. But also, when it dies, we will no longer need it, God will be our light. Now wrap your brain around *that* thought.

Isaiah 65:17 For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

We are in dire need of a new heaven and a new earth. At some point, long before the universe dies, the galaxies out there will be so far away from us that we will not be able to see them, and we will be alone again. But our little planet will have died much

sooner than that by who knows what. Maybe an impacting comet will knock us out of orbit. Or if we survive that, maybe our sun will eat us when it becomes a red giant. But my favorite is that the earth just becomes heavier year by year as it flies through the solar wind picking up plasma which rains down on us constantly. At what point will our planet become so heavy that it must fall out of orbit and spiral into the sun?

Sorry, I didn't mean to scare you. But science has a lot of work to do. We do need a new earth, and eventually a new heaven. So let's get on with it. Will God provide it? Yes, of course. But what exactly does that mean? And what is our part in it?

***Ezekiel 38:2** Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, **:16** And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days and I will bring thee against my land that the heathen may know me when I shall be sanctified in the, O Gog, before their eyes. **:18** When Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord God. **39:6** And I will send a fire on Magog and among them they dwell carelessly in the isles and they shall know that I am the Lord.*

Long before the world dies of natural causes, the human race will likely die from suicide. I am not going to offer esoteric explanations of who Gog and Magog might be, but it is pretty clear who Israel is. When are the "latter days"? I suppose every generation thinks that they are in the latter days. Are we? Could be. If this great holocaust happens, then we'll know.

Who are the people that "dwell carelessly in the isles"? From the perspective of Europe, Asia, and Africa, America is one big island. And it is easy to assume that there is safety in distance: "Hey, we're over here and your war is way over there on the other side of the world. This time we're not getting involved." But in this world of ICBMs, even the oceans might be insufficient shields against those who hate us.

***Ezekiel 47:8** Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea [the Dead Sea]: which bring brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed.*

What could heal the Dead Sea? That would require two things: First, new fresh water in, and an egress, a way for the waters of the Dead Sea to drain out.

Could that happen? Is it geologically possible? That would be difficult since it is 1300 feet below sea level, the lowest place on earth. To drain it would require a massive earthquake that raised its altitude sufficiently. And that would change the climate around Israel that could cause rivers to flow eastward from Israel to the Dead Sea. None of that is unreasonable. Consider that the Himalayan mountains exist because the Indian peninsula floated north and smacked into southern Asia causing the land to buckle upward. Now *that* was catastrophic. Raising the Dead Sea, that would be a small job for God by comparison.

But consider another possibility. Suppose a huge earthquake gorged out a huge canyon that connected the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. It would not take very long for the entire Dead Sea region to be flooded to sea level with sea water.

But that's sea water, not fresh water. So? There's a lot that lives in the ocean. True? Of course true. And that would "heal" the Dead Sea.

Is that possible? Well, considering that that's how the Mediterranean Sea became a sea in the first place, yes it's possible. And it was only about 10,000 years ago. That "sea" used to be dry land, cut off from the Atlantic Ocean by giant cliffs at Gibraltar. Then one day the ocean finally broke through, rush passed Gibraltar, and filled the entire basin forming the Mediterranean Sea. Now *that* was a catastrophe.

Would filling the Dead Sea region with ocean water be all that difficult for God? I don't know that it would be all that difficult for us. After all, we did build the Suez Canal, and the Panama Canal, and the Erie Canal, and the Great Wall of China. For heaven's sake, we've landed men on the moon!

And what has God done lately? Well, he dried up the Red Sea for Moses, and saved the human race on Calvary's cross. I think if we teamed up we could heal the Dead Sea, if we put our minds to it.

Ezekiel 47:13 Thus saith the Lord GOD; This shall be the border...

The next few verses give the borders of Israel in the last days. I decided not to include all of that here, you can read it yourself. The point is, when all the earth changing stuff happens, there *will* be an Israel to *have* borders.

Daniel 9:24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon the 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. :25 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. :26 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. :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.

This prophecy of Daniel's is arguably the most important prophecy in the Bible. And why is that? Because it's dated. God not only tells us what will happen but exactly *when* it will happen.

Now don't expect too much from me, this will be a whirlwind explanation of these important verses. To learn more, go to Google, of course. But here is the gist of it.

Messiah the Prince will come. When? In 483 years after the commandment to restore Jerusalem. Let's see, is that right? That's $(7 \times 7) + (62 \times 7) = 49 + 434 = 483$ years after the Persian emperor commands the Jews rebuild their city, that's when Messiah will come.

Okay, so, when did that 483 years clock start ticking? When was that decree issued? Well, the problem is, there are four possible answers: [1] the decree of Cyrus, 538-536 B.C. (2 Chronicles 36:23, Ezra 1:1-4, 6:1-5, Isaiah 44:28, 45:13); [2] the decree of Darius, 521 B.C. (Ezra 6:6-12); [3] the decree of Artaxerxes to Ezra, 458 B.C. (Ezra 7:11-56); and [4] the decree of Artaxerxes to Nehemiah, 444 B.C. (Nehemiah 2:1-8).

I'm not going to get into the deep scholarship of trying to decide which of those is the right clock-starter. So let's just consider them all and see if any looks reasonable

1. 538 B.C. + 483 years = 55 B.C.
2. 521 B.C. + 483 years = 38 B.C.
3. 458 B.C. + 483 years = 28 A.D.
4. 444 B.C. + 483 years = 39 A.D.

It's important to note that we are not thinking of Jesus' birth as the coming of the Messiah, but of his death, when Messiah "shall be cut off, but not for himself"; that is, executed, but not for his own crime but for someone else's.

So, do any of these seem reasonable? 28 and 39 A.D. both seem reasonable. I don't know when Jesus was born and I don't know how old he was when he died, and I'm not including leap years (or leap seconds as the folks at NASA would do) in my rough calculation. So I'm just happy that the arrow hit the target if not the bulls-eye and defer to the more serious scholars if you want the arrow right on the bulls-eye. For now, I'm happy that Daniel got it right on within the margin of error of my poor calculation.

Now consider this: Soon after Messiah dies, the city of Jerusalem and its sanctuary would be destroyed again, this time by the "people of the prince." And indeed, in 70 A.D. Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed by General Titus and the 10th Roman legion.

One final thought: If Jesus was not Daniel's Messiah, then no one is.

Daniel 10:1 ...and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long... 10:14 Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.

In other words, beyond the prophecy of the coming Messiah, other prophecies are for the *far* future, not immediately after Christ but *long* after Christ.

Daniel 11:15 So the king of the north shall come and cast up a mount and take the most fenced cities and the arms of the south shall notwithstanding, neither his chosen people, neither shall there be any strength to withstand. :16 But he that cometh against him shall do according to his own will [willful king] and none shall stand before him and he shall stand in the glorious land which by his had shall be consumed.

Daniel describes an end-times battle the "king of the north" and the "willful king." Who they are and where they're from we'll have to wait and find out.

Daniel 11:21 *And in the estate shall stand up a vile person to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom, but he shall come in peaceably and obtain the kingdom by flatteries.*

Another villain. This one called the “vile person” because he gets control of everything by trickery rather than war.

Daniel 11:31 *And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.*

This is the prophecy that Jesus pays attention to in **Matthew 24**. His disciples are looking for signs of the end-times; wars, earthquakes, famines, and such. But Jesus says, nope, none of those. The sign of the final end is a very simple thing, the “abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel.”

Daniel 11:40 *And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind with chariots and with horsemen and with many ships and he shall enter into the countries and shall overflow and pass over.*

These prophecies of an end-time war do seem consistent, always a king of the north, and this time opposed by the king of the south.

Daniel 12:1 *And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation ...*

There will be a bad time worse than any other. And when you consider that Jerusalem has been destroyed twice, a time of trouble worse than those has to be pretty bad.

Zechariah 12:3 *And in that day...all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. :9 ...I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.*

Israel will stand alone against all the nations of the earth. That makes Israel a pretty small minority. But tilted as it is, this is a war you don't want to be on the wrong side of.

Zechariah 14:2 *For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle and the city shall be taken...:3 Then shall the LORD go forth and fight against those nations...:4 And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. :5 And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains...*

All nations will be on the wrong side of this war, including ours. That does not bode well for us.

Zechariah 14:8 *And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be.*

So Jerusalem will become a water producer. How that might happen I have no idea.

Zechariah 14:12 *And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand on their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth.*

Sounds like a nuclear war. How else can a fire do its work of death so fast that it destroys the flesh and eyes before the victim can fall to the ground?

Malachi 4:1 *For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.*

Again, this could well be a nuclear exchange. It could be divine fire from heaven like that which destroyed Aaron's two sons and Ahab's soldiers trying to arrest Elijah, but it doesn't have to be.

Matthew 24:15 *When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand)*

This single event, innocuous by itself, is the trigger that brings all the bad stuff. Sort of like the butterfly effect. Small things sometimes have major consequences.

Matthew 24:21 *For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. :22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.*

This time the human race messes things up so badly that everything will die, and we are completely unable to rescue ourselves. Things are so dire that the only thing that can save us is God's direct intervention which brings a quick end to the bad stuff.

Matthew 24:29 *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: :30 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.

God does intervene, and that intervention is the return of the Son of God. And when he returns, that changes everything, the whole nature of the universe, or maybe just earth's perspective of the universe. Our view of the universe would certainly be different if we were, say, falling into the sun, or flying away from the sun, or being transported to a different universe with different physical laws.

Matthew 24:34 *Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.*

“This generation” does not mean Jesus’ generation, it means the generation that sees the signs. In other words, the generation that sees the beginning of it will see the end of it. In other words, it will all unroll quickly, within a single generation.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 *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: :17 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.*

This is an astonishing view of final events. First, the return of the Lord with an entourage of angels. Then a general resurrection. Then a protecting extraction of his people, a “catching away,” or as some call it, a rapture. But whatever the actual events are and whatever their sequence, the laws of nature, if not suspended, are at least adjusted to allow such things to happen. Or maybe not. Maybe all this supernatural stuff is not so supernatural after all. Maybe, when we see it, it will all be quite natural after all. Like quantum mechanics, which still seems to many of us to be a bit supernatural.

1 John 2:18 *Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrist; whereby we know that it is the last time. 4:3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God and this is the spirit of the antichrist...*

The end-time villain is generally called the antichrist, but I don't see any verse that attaches all that villainy to that name, unless we assume that they're all the same person.

2 John 7 *For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.*

None of this convinces me that “antichrist” is a specific person as is Daniel’s “willful king” and “vile person,” and Ezekiel’s “Gog” and “Magog”. I think we give the word “antichrist” more meaning than the Bible does.

Finally, there’s the Book of Revelation, which is so filled with disaster after disaster that it defies me sharing even a small part of it with you now. Just read it. Maybe someday, I’ll come back to this and add a tour of that book.