

THE
Last Days
CALENDAR

Understanding God's Appointed Times

THE
Last Days
CALENDAR

Understanding God's Appointed Times

Steven L. Sherman

REDEMPTION  PRESS

© 2003 by Steven L. Sherman. All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America

Published by Redemption Press, PO Box 427, Enumclaw, WA 98022

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any way by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without the prior permission of the copyright holder, except as provided by USA copyright law.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptures are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. The “NIV” and “New International Version” trademarks are registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by International Bible Society.

Scripture references marked KJV are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

Scripture references marked NASB are taken from the New American Standard Bible, © 1960, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

ISBN 978-1-63232-063-6

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2003100417

Will there really be a “secret rapture?”
When might the rapture take place?
How is Antichrist to be revealed?

A new understanding of the chronology and nature
of end time events as revealed through the Hebrew
calendar and the festivals of the Lord.

Table of Contents

Foreword.....	9
Preface and Acknowledgments.....	13
Introduction for Students of the Bible.....	15
Chapter 1: After Distress.	19
Chapter 2: Kept “from the Hour of Trial” . . . So How Long is an Hour, Anyway?	27
Chapter 3: The “Completion” of God’s Wrath	37
Chapter 4: The Seventh Trumpet Sounds at the Rapture?	45
Chapter 5: The Mystery of God: So, What Is the Big Mystery?	53
Chapter 6: “We Will Not All Sleep”	63
Chapter 7: “In the Middle of the Seven”	73
Chapter 8: The Saints Will Be Handed to Him.....	83
Chapter 9: “The Dragon Gave the Beast . . .”	91
Chapter 10: “Like a Lamb . . . But He Spoke Like a Dragon”	103
Chapter 11: The “144,000” are Not Christians!	111
Chapter 12: “These (!) are My Appointed Feasts”	121

Chapter 13: As in Noah’s Day	135
Chapter 14: Trampling Jerusalem Three and One-half Years .	147
Chapter 15: Why Is There a Special Blessing for Waiting 1,335 Days?	159
Chapter 16: Noah had Forty Days’ Rain, but Believers “Reign” for 1,000 Years	171
Chapter 17: “I Will Walk Among You and Be Your God”	185
Chapter 18: The Lord Chooses Jerusalem (Again!)	195
Chapter 19: Millennium’s End	213
Chapter 20: A New Heaven—A New Earth	223
 One Final Argument	 233
About the Author	237

Foreword

Purpose and Intent

Numerous books, magazine articles, and tracts have concerned eschatology (the biblical study of last things) in recent years. Some of these written works were intended for a general audience. Other texts and essays, composed by theologians, are strictly for other scholars' review. Much of the theological terminology found in the latter group is foreign to the average reader.

The common person has scant knowledge of biblical terms and events. Others, who attend church on a regular basis, have not read the Bible in its entirety or have read it without delving thoroughly into its prophecy treasures. My first purpose in writing *The Last Days Calendar* was to reach both categories of readers—enlightening people with little or no Bible knowledge and bringing new insight concerning end time events to more seasoned Bible students.

To accomplish this first purpose, definitions or explanations of biblical and theological terms frequently appear following words

The Last Days Calendar

or expressions the first time they appear in the text. Since the Word of God is divinely inspired and the ultimate source and standard of truth, full Scripture quotations and references immediately follow verses or passages cited to afford the reader an opportunity to fact check or challenge my statements.

I invite the reader to act as did the believers in Berea, who “were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day” (Acts 17:11). Please review the concepts presented in this book to line them up with your understanding or to find them disproved in God’s Word. I welcome all correspondence, positive or negative in review, on the concepts presented herein. The scope of prophetic Scripture as it unfolds in the coming future holds such awesome terrors for the unbeliever and challenges for the Bible believer that anyone with compassion for others’ suffering would welcome refutation of basic tribulation concepts, right?

A second intention in writing this book was to explain and help interpret biblical prophecies (100% accurate predictions of future events), looking at many through the context of the Hebraic and Hellenic cultures in which God’s spokespersons delivered their messages. Light may be shed through knowledge regarding contemporary customs as prophecies were first received. As a Jewish believer in Christ, a natural-born descendant of Jacob and the Jewish people, I utilize background knowledge to help the reader understand both Old and New Testament passages and hopefully help interpret prophetic messages for our modern audience.

Now one vital key, *the* key to understanding Bible prophecy in context, is the fact that all Old Testament Scripture (the Hebrew Scriptures, or *Tanakh*) proclaim Jesus Christ as the true Messiah sent to redeem the world.

Foreword

Just as the first coming of Jesus Christ to Earth was promised in numerous places in the Old Testament, there are clear passages and symbolic pictures and allusions to the Second Coming of Christ. An understanding of the feasts, fasts, and festivals found in the Old Testament, for example, with their frequent descriptions of the nature of Jesus Christ in His person, is therefore most valuable in comprehending Bible prophecy. For one example, God Himself used the traditional Jewish wedding ceremony as illustration of His relationship to the Church, the body of true Christian believers. Therefore, knowledge of Jewish betrothal and marriage customs can be most helpful to interpret the meaning of Christ's wedding illustration(s) in its proper context (see chapter 18). For another example, knowledge of customs associated with synagogue services of Bible times could heighten our understanding of Jesus' teaching in His role as the finest Jewish rabbi (teacher) ever.

The third purpose motivating the writing of this book was to present my viewpoint, which developed and emerged over several years of intense study, challenging certain prevalent interpretations of Bible prophecies regarding the last days of Earth. Points in question include tribulation theories and misunderstandings concerning believers' endurance, "date setting" Christ's return, a "secret" rapture, etc.

I have striven for the highest possible accuracy in sharing the concepts presented within and have sought to share my heart with you, the reader, in a concise manner and in simple terms. May the Lord Himself richly bless the reading of this book and consume any controversy it stirs in minds sincerely fixed on plumbing the truths of the Bible, to His own glory.

Steven L. Sherman

Preface and Acknowledgments

“I had not intended to write a book on prophecy . . .”

I had not intended to write a book on prophecy. These pages stem from a wonderfully rich home Bible study. After ten years of personally searching the Scriptures and having taught through several books of the Bible, I was afforded the privilege of teaching through the Book of Revelation at my church. Due to the numbers in attendance, it was necessary to adhere to a lecture format, utilizing a microphone. When that series was over, several friends desired to study prophecy further in an intimate atmosphere.

Sometime after we started, the new weekly Bible study group received from me what amounts to one chapter of this book at each of our meetings. The saints were delighted to learn prophecy in this manner and were always encouraging with an expectant “What excitement comes next week?” attitude. I gratefully acknowledge their help in poring over the text of this work, correcting and clarifying where necessary, and for their faithfulness and prayer support.

The Last Days Calendar

For me, the writing of this book was not a burden but a delight. The real work that took place was in its editing. The Bible study was originally typed and the data had to be input into a computer. In addition, the material needed to be edited, bullet points made, fonts for titles selected, chapter summaries created, and so much more. I thank my precious Lord and Savior for Matt Sherman. Matt is my first-born son and my brother in Christ. I can never repay him for the countless hours he sacrificed working to get this book in a presentable format.

A special acknowledgment of gratitude is extended to a wonderful Christian brother and a successful professional athlete—Anthony Pleasant. Because of his personal encouragement and faithfulness, in both prayer and financial support of my ministry, this book was able to be published.

This prophetic literary work is based upon the inerrant, divinely inspired Word. It was birthed of a group of committed Christians who desired to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. May it bless all of those who read it and glorify our heavenly Father.

Steven Sherman

Introduction for Students of the Bible

First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised?”

—2 Peter 3:3–4a

In our foreseeable future even those who have enjoyed expression of religious freedoms will be persecuted for faith in Christ. As they are dragged to prison and even martyrdom, will they will be ridiculed with “Where is this coming your Jesus promised?”

Millions of American Christians anticipate a secret and silent pre-tribulation rapture, whisking them away to the glorious marriage supper of the Lamb. This concept is alluring. Massive book and video sales centering on the rapture theme are today’s best sellers. Many strong evangelical movements hold to this doctrine in their statements of faith; many Christian educators do not present the pre-tribulation rapture as one of several theories or possible interpretations but as fact.

The Last Days Calendar

It *would* be a source of comfort to not pass through a coming great tribulation. Although this doctrine has wide appeal, does existing biblical evidence confirm it as truth?

It is helpful in understanding eschatology that the book of Revelation is considered as first and foremost an epistle addressed to Christ's Church. Although the Apocalypse represents mixed genres, its symbols, when properly interpreted, help encourage and exhort Christian believers. Revelation's prophecies were declared a millennia ago for the benefit of God's Church as much as for the coming "tribulation saints." The foreknowledge of the end of the age has been revealed to the elect so that the elect will be encouraged to stand firm even while facing death. As psychologist and Holocaust survivor Victor Frankl put it, "The last of our human freedoms is to choose our attitude in any given circumstances." Understanding Revelation and other biblical end times prophecies grants us increased sagacity to make wise attitude choices in the face of martyrdom and death.

Indeed Christ shall return for His Church, but will its purity shine from the fires of tribulation persecution? My new work, developed from individual and group-led prophecy study over more than a decade, provides fresh insight concerning:

- the ministry of the "144,000"
- the "two witnesses"
- the nature, purposes, and populace of those who will dwell in the coming millennial kingdom
- the possible timing of the rapture, return of Christ, and fulfillments of biblical festivals
- many more prophetic insights

A Jewish believer, I have not only prepared this volume through intensive study of hundreds of Revelation-parallel biblical passages but have helped amplify the meaning and symbolism of Bet Hillel-

Introduction for Students of the Bible

styled synagogue liturgy and the traditions associated with the biblical Levitical festivals and other Jewish observances, a fascinating study for any Christian. I have brought the benefits of interpreting the Scriptures in the light of their original culture and context settings.

Jesus Christ fulfilled the spring cycle of biblical festivals in His First Advent by instituting the New Covenant at the Passover, being entombed during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, resurrecting on the Festival of Firstfruits and sending the promised Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

What does the Bible reveal concerning the Second Coming and the fulfillment of the wheat and grape harvests, the Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and the Jubilee?

I believe that I have been able to make a clear connection between the “fall cycle” of biblical festivals and the return of Christ as well as have shed new light on Chanukah (the Feast of Dedication of John 10), Talmudic statements regarding Messiah’s coming(s), and much more. I also explore, in ways that are moving for the reader and simple to follow, clear passages of Scripture concerning the some of the many allusions and “types” found in the Old Testament and in Jewish tradition that help clarify apocalyptic passages.

Chapter 1

After Distress . . .

“If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.”

—Matthew 24:22

To better understand this prophetic verse concerning end time events, we need to examine the context in which Jesus Christ spoke it. Matthew 24 is part of a passage Bible theologians (people studying the knowledge of, nature of, and doctrines of God) have labeled, “The Olivet Discourse.”

“No one would survive, but for the sake of the elect . . .” Jesus spoke these words while sitting on the Mount of Olives and communicating a discourse, a lengthy and formal answer to a several-faceted question from His disciples. According to the three Bible accounts of The Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24–25; Mark 13; Luke 21), Jesus had just left from speaking publicly to the crowds in front of the temple in Jerusalem. As He walked on, His disciples remarked how beautiful and massive the stones were that adorned the gorgeous temple buildings. Jesus replied that “the time will come when not one stone would be left on another; every one of

them will be thrown down . . .” (Matthew 24:2); a prophetic event that history records occurred in A.D. 70.

Jesus had walked from the temple to the Mount of Olives. This mount is due east of Jerusalem and faces opposite the temple’s entrance, which faced eastward to the mount. The mount rises today to a height of about 2,700 feet, some two hundred feet higher than the frequently mentioned Bible mount of Zion. Jesus and His disciples were afforded a magnificent view overlooking the city and especially the temple itself.

As Jesus was seated and perhaps looked toward the temple entrance, Peter, James, John, and Andrew came to ask Him a question privately: “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3b). Jesus offered a lengthy and detailed reply (Matthew 24:4–51) and after that the parable of the ten virgins, the parable of the talents, and His account of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25).

Parables are illustrative and memorable stories designed to convey truth. The parables of Matthew 25, among others, are known as Kingdom Parables, prophecies of a future time when Jesus Christ as King Messiah will reign supremely on Earth. The term “Messiah” is from the Hebrew “*moshiach*,” a term meaning “anointed,” that when translated to the Greek is “*Christos*,” our English “Christ.” The Hope of Israel, the Messiah, would be the One on whom God would pour out His Spirit (Isaiah 11:2).

In Bible times, Hebrew kings and priests, and often, prophets, were anointed with oil, symbolizing an anointing outpouring of God’s Holy Spirit. The Messiah would fulfill all three anointed offices in one person. He would be a magnificent Prophet (delivering God’s word to His people), Priest (who intercedes on behalf of His people before God), and King (who rules His people with God-ordained authority).

Jesus replied in part to the questions of Matthew 24 concerning the end of the age with parables of the coming Messianic kingdom. The parable of the ten virgins looks at a bridegroom (Jesus Christ), a long time in “returning” (time between Christ’s ascension to Heaven after His resurrection and His return to Earth for His Church) for his “bride.”

“At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’ Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’ ‘No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’ But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. Later the others also came. ‘Sir! Sir!’ they said. ‘Open the door for us!’ But he replied, ‘I tell you the truth, I don’t know you.’ Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.” Matthew 25:1–13

The biblical “virgin” may symbolize spiritual purity, specifically, one who is not guilty of idolatry. Biblically speaking, individuals or even nations guilty of idolatry or spiritual fornication are known as “adulterers” or “prostitutes.” Israel is called a brazen prostitute and an adulterous wife in Ezekiel 16.

When the “cry rang” to meet the bridegroom in the parable of Matthew 24, foolish virgins were left unprepared, and their lamps were extinguished for lack of oil. Oil is a natural material that

The Last Days Calendar

symbolizes the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit in the believer. The Holy Spirit resides permanently inside the Christian believer.

The term “fool” in the parable means “unbeliever.” For example, “a fool says to himself in his heart, ‘God does not exist’” (see Psalm 14:1; 53:1). Before the bridegroom returns (the end of the age), each person going to Heaven must have oil in their lamp (become a true believer).

It is essential to note that in Christ’s parable, once the door to the wedding feast was shut, no one further was allowed to enter. Those who attempted to fill their lamps following the return of the groom were left outside, ultimately, in “outer darkness” (one Bible description of eternal judgment in Hell). Today is the day of salvation, dear reader!

The “foolish virgins” may have looked like they were indeed pure. They may have been very religious persons. They may have heard of the groom’s coming return for His bride. Similarly, there are today churchgoers who have read the Bible, heard sermons, served in church, and prayed regularly. These things cannot atone for sin. God has already paid a price for your “lamp oil.” Jesus Christ purchased men for God with His atoning blood (Revelation 5:9). Through faith may God’s gift of grace, eternal life, be received (Ephesians 2:8–9). The individual must trust in Jesus Christ for salvation or else, when He returns for His bride (the true, believing Church), the door will be shut and outsiders will be cast to damnation.

Note that the disciples’ question in Matthew 24 actually has two parts to it:

As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this [destruction of Herod’s temple] happen, and what will be the sign of

your [second] coming [to earth from heaven] and of the end of the [this present] age?" Matthew 24:3

They are asking a twofold question: 1) When is it that Herod's Temple will be destroyed? 2) What will be the sign of Your triumphant return at the end of this age?

The prophecy Jesus gave concerning the second temple in Jerusalem was specific and unique. Jesus not only predicted the temple's destruction but that every one of the massive stones would be removed so that "no stone remained on another." According to an ancient historian, Josephus, as chronicled in his *The Antiquities of the Jews*, some of the temple stones were as large as thirty-seven feet in length, a dozen feet high, and eighteen feet wide, each. This prophecy of destruction was fulfilled in A.D. 70 by General Titus' Roman army, who completely destroyed Jerusalem and its temple buildings, including the separating of all temple stones.

Titus had issued orders to preserve the temple and its furnishings as victory trophies to the Romans, when a stray torch tossed into the sanctuary resulted in a devastating fire. Gold ornamentation throughout and gold leaf on the temple roof melted from the intense heat, liquefied, and collected in the spaces between the temple stones. The stones needed to be pried apart, each from every other, after the fire ended and the base structure cooled so the greedy Romans could collect their melted gold. All that remains today from this wondrous structure is its foundation.

The second part of the disciples' question included a request to Jesus to identify a miraculous sign announcing the end of the age. A supernatural phenomenon was eagerly sought, just as the First Advent (the incarnation and birth of Christ) was preceded by a miraculous sign, the annunciation of a virgin birth:

The Last Days Calendar

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” Isaiah 7:14

The sign of the coming of the Son of God was an “earthly” sign, a natural occurrence of birth, albeit a supernaturally-conceived child. Jesus, born of a virgin, was birthed in a stable and worshipped by humble shepherds. The sign of the Christ’s Second Coming will be in stark contrast, a heavenly sign:

“At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.” Matthew 24:30

The very King of Kings, resurrected and glorified, will shine brighter than the noon day Sun and reign on Earth, but if “those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.” (See Matthew 24:22.)

The term “those days” refers to the period immediately preceding the heavenly sign announcing the glorious appearing of Christ. “Those days” at the end of the age are characterized by great distress:

“For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.”
Matthew 24:21

The elect (those who will inherit eternal life) are subject to tremendous persecution just before the return of Jesus Christ to Earth. Within this time of unparalleled suffering will come worldwide suffering from God’s righteous judgment, so great in fact, that if this time was not “cut short” as Jesus said, the utter annihilation of man would be the end result.

After Distress . . .

“If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened . . . immediately after the distress of those days . . . the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky . . .” Matthew 24:22–30

The saints of God will be rescued out of the great distress as the Lord sends angels with a loud trumpet call to gather them to Heaven, cutting short their persecution on the earth. The elect are those Christian believers meeting Christ in the air before His return to the earth to establish His kingdom on Earth. This event is commonly known as the “rapture” of the church. (See 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18.)

Let us examine the given Bible timeline carefully. [I realize that many rapture-believing scholars place the rapture at a different juncture, as will be addressed later in this book.] For the sake of the elect those days are “cut short.” The elect will suffer great distress until the rapture. The rapture does not occur until the sign of the Son Man appears in the sky. The sign itself does not appear until after the distress of those days. In other words, placed in order of occurrence:

1. Distress of those days—days cut short for the sake of God’s elect
2. Sign of the Son of Man
3. The rapture

Jesus Christ said of these difficult times, “All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved” (Matt. 10:22).

A defense of the timing of the rapture as outlined here, plus much insight into the events surrounding the tribulation, rapture, and coming reign of Christ on Earth follows.

Summary of Chapter One

- Christ promised to end, coincident with His triumphant return to Earth, days of intense persecution for God's people.
- In the midst of Christ's return, the Bible also warns of cataclysmic suffering so great, life itself is in danger of being extinguished. Just when "those days" are "cut short" is of vital interest to anyone facing such difficulties on Earth.
- The Bible speaks of hardship and persecution of the true follower of Christ, but great is the reward in Heaven for those who are persecuted for righteousness sake. (See Matthew 5:10–12.)