

**God's Eternal Plan #13**  
**An Overview of Prophecy**  
Acts 1:611

**Some of you are students of prophecy, and you are familiar with the prophetic program of God as outlined in the Word of God.** But I realize that there are some of you who have not studied the subject before, and for that reason we are going to begin our study today with a panorama of prophecy in general. I will try to give you a "bird's eye view" of the prophetic program as it is unfolded in the Scriptures, so that we can get a perspective of the coming events and see them quite simply in their relationships one to another.

**When our Lord took the disciples aside, into the Upper Room, just before His death, He spoke to them not only of His approaching death, not only of the new relationship which they would sustain to Him when He was in heaven and they were still on this earth, but the Lord also talked to them about His coming to this earth again.** Those familiar words in John 14:13 give us this promise, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." **And the disciples had that promise ringing in their ears.** And then shortly after the death and resurrection of Christ, Acts 1:11 says when the disciples gathered together with the Lord on the Mount of Olives, they watched Him as He was taken bodily away from them into heaven, as the angels once more shared this message, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." **And from the time of our Lord's ascension, those who have had the truth of the Word of God have held to the promise that the Son of God made that He would come again!** And generation after generation, from the time of the ascension of Christ, have lived confidently expecting the fulfillment of what Jesus promised, "If I go away, I will come again." **And the next event in the prophetic picture of God's program is what we call the "rapture" of the Church!**

**The word "rapture" to us means joy!** It is an emotional experience that sets the heart aflame and excites the mind and quickens the pulse. The word "rapture" itself is not found in the Bible, but the word "rapture" as we use it in connection with the prophetic Scriptures means, "a change, or a translation." It means literally "to snatch away." **And the promise that the Lord made that He would come and take us to Himself is explained in greater detail in 1 Thessalonians 4.** This is a passage to which we will refer to on other occasions, but I want to direct your attention to it briefly in this study. In Thessalonica the believers there had heard of our Lord's promise, and they were looking for the

Coming of Christ. **They were convinced that Christ would come at any moment.** And they were living each day in the light of the promise of His coming.

**Then, an unexpected thing happened - some of those believers died.** And those other believers were discouraged that their loved ones had surely missed the promise of the "rapture," so Paul tells them in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, "But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words."

**At the time of the "rapture" the Lord does not descend to the earth, but will, from the air, give an authoritative command, as a General calls his troops for "muster."** And when our Lord issues this command from His vantage point in the clouds, first of all, "the dead in Christ will rise" out of their graves, and they shall begin to ascent into the clouds "to meet the Lord in the air." And then, immediately after this resurrection of the believers, the Lord will catch up those "who are alive," and these two groups shall become as one in the ascent "to meet the Lord in the air" together! **And that is the hope that is given to every believer.**

**And it matters little if we go to meet the Lord by way of resurrection, or by way of translation.** The process by which we come to be with the Lord is the insignificant part of it. The important truth of the matter is that together we shall "meet the Lord in the air; and thus we shall always be with the Lord."

**Following the rapture, there are two events that are prophesied concerning the Church.** The first event that takes place in heaven following the rapture is the Judgment Seat of Christ. This is explained to us in 2 Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." **This event is only for believers!** And every believer who has been translated into the Lord's presence will be examined so that the Lord may give a gracious reward to those who have faithfully discharged their service for Him.

**The second event prophesied concerning the Church is called the "Marriage of the Lamb."** This is the event following the Judgment Seat of Christ, in which the Church, called in the New Testament the "Bride," is presented to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Bridegroom. This is referred to in Jude 24, "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." **Now the word "to present" is the word that is used by the Greeks for the presentation of the bride to the bridegroom.** We have been told in 2 Corinthians 11:2, "For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." And after the church is translated into glory, and has been examined to receive rewards for faithful service, the church will be presented to Christ as the realization of His purchased possession for all eternity.

But in addition to the Judgment Seat of Christ and the Marriage of the Lamb, which will take place in heaven, there are some events that will at the same time be taking place on the earth.

**Following the rapture of the church there will unfold a seven year period referred to in Jeremiah 30:7 as "Jacob's trouble."** In Matthew 24:21 this time is referred to by Christ as "the great tribulation." Daniel's prophecy of the "seventy weeks" in Daniel 9, tells us the length of time from Daniel's time to the coming of the Lord! And then, also, tells us the period of time in which God will pour out judgments on the earth before the Second Coming of Christ (the rapture is not the Second Coming of Christ, just the beginning of the events leading up to the Second Coming). We will look at this Tribulation Period in much more detail at a later date, but let me simply speak to you in this overview message concerning some of the events of this Tribulation Period.

**After the rapture of the church, the nations of Europe will form a federation and will elect one man as their head.** This man is referred to in Daniel's prophecy as the "little horn." Christ called this man "the abomination of desolation." Paul calls this person "the man of sin." John refers to this person as "the Beast." **This individual will emerge on the world scene as an answer to the threat of world economic collapse, and to offer world peace. And the nations of Europe will federate under one head.** And the first official act of this head of the Federated States of Europe will be to attempt to settle the ArabIsraeli dispute. He will make a covenant with the little nation of Israel to guarantee to preserve and to protect them from their Arab neighbors, who will be federated with Russia from the north.

**Realizing that a RussianArab alliance threatens Israel, and that any war generated in Israel will threaten the entire world, this head of the Federated States will guarantee Israel peace and the prevention of a major world war!**

For three and one half years the world will exist in a "cold war" state where the RussiaArab alliance wonders if they dare attack Israel, and the Western alliance builds up their strength and rattles their rockets to seek to prevent an invasion of Israel by the RussianArab alliance.

**Then in the middle of the seven-year period, there will be an invasion of Palestine, which will be only the first of four such invasions!** According to Daniel 11, the first invasion will be when the Arab nations are joined by the Russians from the north. This RussianArab alliance will destroy Jerusalem and challenges the rest of the world to do anything about it. **At that moment, God will destroy the Russian-Arab alliance the same way He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.** And that will leave the land vacant for the Federated States of Europe to move in and for the "Beast" to establish himself as the world ruler politically, and that he has become the only god that can be worshiped religiously. And for three and one half years he seeks to dominate the world, ruling as king and as god. **And at the end of the tribulation period, an alliance of nations from the Orient will move across the TigrisEuphrates River to contest this European ruler's right to rule the world.** Two hundred million men will march from the east to join battle with the Federated States of Europe. It is at this moment that the Son of God will invade this earth, and will destroy the nations thereof.

During the Tribulation Period there will be such judgments poured out upon this earth, by God, that it will make the plagues of Egypt look like a Sunday School picnic.

At the end of that seven-year period Zechariah 14:4 tells us that the Son of God shall descend from heaven, "And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south." **Acts 1 tells us that Jesus ascended from the Mount of Olives, and that is the place where He will touch this earth again!** This will begin the thousand year reign found in Revelation 20:4 that we refer to as the "Millennium." The word "millennium" in itself does not have a religious connotation, such as, second advent, resurrection, judgment, etc. "Millennium" is a combination of two Latin words: "mille" meaning "thousand," and "annun," from which we get "annual," meaning "year." Therefore, we read these words in Revelation 20, "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them; and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

We must remember that Jesus Christ is coming back to this earth to reign as Lord of lords and King of kings, but He can only reign over saved ones, therefore we find that immediately after His coming back to earth there will be a judgment to separate the "sheep" from the "goats," as seen in Matthew 25:31-33, "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left." **This judgment is to determine, among those living through the tribulation, who has accepted Christ and who has rejected Him during the tribulation!** Verse 41 tells us to the "goats" He will say, "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." **There is no escaping the responsibility of either accepting or rejecting Christ as Savior!**

**At the end of the thousand-year reign of Christ on this earth, there will be the Great White Throne Judgment.** At the *Judgment Seat of Christ* only saved people will be present; but at the *Great White Throne Judgment*, only lost people will be present, but they to will be judged for their ungodly works!

When God has finished judging this world, He will establish the "new heaven" and the "new earth" where the saved of all eternity will dwell with Him, as seen in Revelation 21:18, "Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. Then He who sat on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said to me, Write, for these words are true and faithful. And He said to me, It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

**My friend, God is moving through the ages on a straight and perfect plan!** Have you allowed your life to be included in that plan?