

A Guide to Survival after the Rapture

Johan Malan, Mossel Bay, South Africa (August 2015)

The rapture of believers will be an important dispensational turning-point in the history of the modern world, as it will bring about the formal end of the church dispensation. The fulfilment of this prophecy will occur during the sudden coming of Christ for His church at an hour when nobody expects it (Matt. 24:44; 25:13; Mark 13:33-37). For the unsaved world, the shock effect of the disappearance of millions of Christians from planet earth will be severe. This event will also be intellectually disturbing as it will be impossible to account for it rationally in terms of the scientific worldview with its negation of supernatural, spiritual realities. For more detail on this worldview and its self-imposed conflict with a biblical faith, see:

<http://www.bibleguidance.co.za/Engarticles/Worldview%201.htm>.

The true church of Christ which is composed of only spiritually born again people (unsaved, nominal believers do not form part of it) will be glorified and caught up in the twinkling of an eye. This group includes all the deceased believers who will rise from the dead, as well as the living believers who will be instantly changed from mortality to immortality. Together, they will meet the Lord in the air (1 Cor. 15:51-53; 1 Thess. 4:13-18). They will then be caught away to their home in heaven (John 14:2-3). For more information on this important biblical prophecy, see:

<http://www.bibleguidance.co.za/Engarticles/Catchingup.htm>.

The large group of people who will be left behind will, because of their own negligence, not be spiritually worthy to escape the coming dictatorship of the Antichrist (Luke 21:36). They will explain this highly dramatic event in different ways, depending on what their frame of reference is and how much knowledge they have about biblical prophecies. In most of these explanations it will have to be agreed that there is indeed a supernatural, spiritual world. Even agnostics will concede that they were wrong by denouncing it. However, on the nature of the supernatural realm there will be major differences of opinion.

A very distinct and extreme spiritual polarisation will occur after the rapture, as a small group of people will embrace the Bible and the true Christ, while the large group will become followers of the false, universal, multireligious christ – the Antichrist. The Bible says much about these diverging groups, and particularly also the fact that the relationship between them will rapidly deteriorate, giving rise to the widespread and unprecedented persecution of evangelical Christians.

A true spiritual awakening

The fleshly, nominal Christians who will not be ready for the coming of the heavenly Bridegroom are depicted in the parable of the five wise and five foolish virgins in Matthews 25:1-13. From the spiritual application of this parable it is obvious that the five foolish virgins' dedication to the Bridegroom is marginal as they did not ensure that there is enough oil in their lamps. In the Bible, oil is a well-known symbol of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Sam. 16:13; 1 John 2:20). Despite their Christian confession, this group cannot testify to the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3), and can therefore also not heed the command to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). As formalistic believers who failed to live up to the required spiritual standards of the Bible, the lamps of their witness will go out when the Bridegroom delays His coming and their own expectations are not fulfilled. Humanly motivated religiosity will never pass the test for authenticity (cf. Matt. 7:21-23; Rev. 3:1).

This group's lack of spiritual depth and true dedication is explained in the parable of the sower: "But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles" (Matt. 13:20-21). An emotional reaction to the gospel message (joy) is not enough as that does not necessarily

lead to a spiritual reaction of embracing Christ as Saviour by faith. We should have broken hearts because of our sin: "For godly sorrow produces repentance to salvation" (2 Cor. 7:10).

After the rapture, a relatively large group of pretended believers who only had an outward form of godliness (church membership without salvation – 2 Tim. 3:5), as well as unbelievers outside of the church, will faithfully confess their sins and lost state, and accept Jesus Christ as Saviour. Among them will also be a group of 144 000 Jews who will be representative of all 12 the tribes of Israel (Rev. 7:1-8). They will receive Jesus Christ (Yeshua ha Mashiach) as the Saviour and Holy One of Israel. That will give rise to stern opposition from the orthodox Jews who do not recognise Jesus as Messiah. Followers of Yeshua will also have to take a stand against the prevailing ecumenical view that will incline members of all faiths to join hands and unite around a common world messiah who will welcome all the diverse religions of the world into his fold.

The growing group of Christians from Israel and the Gentile nations will be in conflict with the emerging antichristian new world order which will demand that all faiths cooperate under the leadership of the common world messiah, and completely abandon all their differences. True believers will be severely criticised and opposed, and later in the tribulation period they will be persecuted and also executed. Because they will know what is at stake, most of them will abide by their convictions despite severe pressure that will be exerted on them. They will also be mindful of the judgements that have been pronounced upon the Antichrist and his followers and refrain from sharing in his rebellion against God.

The Antichrist and the false prophet

Shortly after the rapture there will be dramatic events in the political and religious spheres. The withholder against the revelation of the Antichrist will then be gone, i.e. the true church of Christ as the temple of the Holy Spirit (2 Thess. 2:6-7). This event will enable the Antichrist to reveal himself without opposition as diplomat, prince of peace and a saviour with supernatural powers.

The Antichrist will be revealed during a time of major international crises which will call for strong global leadership and united actions to be resolved. The following prophetic scenarios are connected to the time of his revelation:

- An attempted Islamic-driven, Russian-supported war of annihilation against Israel (Ezek. 38 & 39; Ps. 83). This massive military mobilisation will have the potential to develop into a full-scale world war, and could even be rendered more ominous by the deployment of nuclear missiles. Is there a human leader who is able to defuse such an explosive situation? If so, he will have to be a messianic "saviour" with the virtually unthinkable ability of gaining the veneration and loyalty of all faiths. Without an exalted status of this nature it will be nigh impossible to establish peace and reconciliation among these highly hostile groups who are firmly intent on the destruction of Israel. If such a leader does appear on the scene he will be openly hailed, welcomed and worshipped as saviour, particularly if he further claims to have supernatural powers and is also able to demonstrate them.
- A big military mobilisation in the Middle East will probably involve the oil-producing states in the Persian Gulf area, thereby almost immediately suspending all oil exports from this region. That will cause severe disruption and send shock waves throughout the world economy, causing oil prices to skyrocket and stock markets to tumble. An economic collapse of this nature will negatively impact on the interests and quality of life of all people on earth. It is obvious that a leader who succeeds in averting such a threatening war in an advanced stage of the deployment of forces will also be praised and trusted as an economic saviour.
- Apart from the scenario of an ominous war in the Middle East there are already global problems of such a serious nature that a new world order and a world government with executive powers is regarded to be the only solution to address the deepening crises. These problems include a deteriorating world economy with impending bankruptcies in various

countries, political tension and threatening wars, overpopulation and famine, large natural disasters and serious contamination and overexploitation of natural resources, rising tension and conflict among certain religious groups, international terrorism, poverty, unemployment and uncontrolled migration from poor to rich countries, etc. A global government can only function well under a strong, dynamic and generally accepted world leader. When such a person has proved his worth as a diplomat, prince of peace and a builder of bridges between various religious groups, he will be accepted without opposition. Most people, with the exception of fanatical and blood-thirsty terrorists, are yearning for safety, peace, harmony, cooperation and economic prosperity. The Antichrist will promise them such a state of affairs.

When this dynamic person appears on the world scene, he will deceptively pretend to be a prince of peace and be welcomed by most people with open arms: "And all the world marvelled and followed the beast ... and they worshipped the beast" (Rev. 13:3-4). He will be admired for warding off a threatening third world war, averting the collapse of the world economy, establishing peace between hostile nations and religious groups, and providing the ideological and religious framework for a united world and its denationalised planetary citizens. He will soon achieve a position of world leadership: "And he was given authority over every tribe, tongue, and nation" (Rev. 13:7).

The Antichrist's rise to uncontested leadership will be supported by a display of supernatural powers which he will use to gain authority and respect, but these powers will be demonic in origin: "The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders" (2 Thess. 2:9). However, governments will be so impressed with his achievements in various other areas that they will accept him as world leader and world messiah. They will conclude a formal covenant of seven years with him: "Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week [of seven years]" (Dan. 9:27). These nations will also include Israel, who will accept him as their promised messiah instead of the true Messiah, Jesus Christ (John 5:43). He will also grant the Jews the right to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem so it can function alongside (and on an equal level with) the Muslim mosques on the Temple Mount.

The Antichrist will have an important collaborator in the false prophet. His assistant will be a multireligious spiritual leader who will also wield great supernatural powers of an occult nature: "And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men" (Rev. 13:12-13). He will deceive the followers of all religions to accept and worship the Antichrist as Christ, World Teacher and Universal Messiah.

Peace and unity

The Bible describes the Antichrist's term of office as the "tribulation" (Matt. 24:29), which is clearly divided into two halves of 3½ years each. The first half is largely characterised by the establishment of a false peace and global unity under the leadership of the Antichrist (Dan. 9:27). The second 3½ years (or 42 months) is described as a "great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matt. 24:21; cf. Rev. 13:5). The Antichrist will then institute a military dictatorship and order the summary execution of all his adversaries (Dan. 11:44; Rev. 13:15).

However, during the first half of his rule he will be so considerate, accommodating and positive towards all people that very few of them will see any evil in him. It will be very difficult to unmask the Antichrist as an accomplice of Satan, since he will promote peace and unity, as well as a mystical world brotherhood of all faiths. The only people who will, at this stage, refuse to cooperate with him and his millions of followers will be newly repented Christians who will proclaim Jesus Christ as the only true Saviour of the world. In the light of biblical prophecies they will denounce the world messiah as a false leader and Antichrist. Among them will also be the

144 000 Messianic Jews (Rev. 7:1-8), as well as two special witnesses whom the Lord will raise up in Jerusalem to guide the believing remnant in Israel on the right way during this time of great deception by the Antichrist (Rev. 11:3-12). They will minister for 1 260 days (Rev. 11:3), which equals 42 months or 3½ prophetic years of 360 days each. That is another clear proof that these periods are literal and should not be regarded as symbolic expressions.

There will not be large-scale physical persecution during the first 42 months, but deception, coercion, intimidation and victimisation will indeed be used against people who fail to observe and apply the ideological principles and religious arrangements of the new world order. Religious equality aimed at ultimate religious unity will be a basic building block of globalism. To this end, ecumenical structures will be expanded and given considerable powers. Membership will be compulsory, and churches will not be allowed to keep on functioning if they reject these structures by refusing to join them. Official recognition of the world messiah as the common head of all faiths will soon be universally enforced.

These developments will prompt a marriage between religion and politics, in the sense that the political head of the world will also be the global religious head. Obviously, only false religions will associate and cooperate with him, and he will imbue them with considerable status and powers. This evil woman (an ecumenical mother organisation of all the non-Christian religions) will ride on his back (Rev. 17:1-6), and she will have the power to persecute and even execute all believers who do not accept and worship the world messiah.

All those who received Jesus Christ as Messiah will not be able to join this ecumenical structure, and will be committed to reject all pressure which the prostitute woman and her spiritual husband (the Antichrist) may exert on them towards observing the demands of global ecumenism. That means that evangelical churches will not be able to continue existing. Most of their members will anyway have left with the rapture, but those who are subsequently saved will have to assemble informally and secretly, as unobtrusively as possible. Churches that do join the ecumenical structures will thereby lose their status as churches of the Lord Jesus as they would then become the church (and, by implication, the bride) of the Antichrist. Of course only false churches will be allowed to continue existing, which underscores the fact that the dispensation of the Christian church will have been concluded. People will still be able to be saved but it will not be possible for them to state and express their faith openly within official church structures.

Otherwise, evangelical Christians will enjoy a relative degree of freedom during the first half of the tribulation period. They are advised not to resign their work and flee away from towns and cities as that would make life even more difficult for them. If no pressure is imposed on them to sign an oath of allegiance to the new world messiah, they should hold on to their work in order to survive a bit longer. However, they should reach out to needy believers by assisting those who have no employment or a place to stay. They should also collect Bibles and good Christian literature, or have it printed, and store it in safe places. Good Bible translations such as the KJV and the NKJV will soon be unobtainable.

Mustering of power in the north

The Antichrist will, right from the onset, revive the ancient power base of the king of the North (Dan. 11:40-44). That refers to the area northeast of Israel which was, during different periods in history, referred to as Babylonia or Assyria, or also as the Syrian Province in the Greek and Roman Empires. The dominant northern Arab states are part of this area which extends to the Persian Gulf. One of the titles of the Antichrist will be “the king of Assyria” (Isa. 10:12-14). He will attach special symbolic significance to the ancient city of Babylon on the banks of the Euphrates River in the present Iraq, because the nations of the world became separated from here during the confusion of tongues. Babylon as well as the highly developed region of the wealthy oil-producing countries close by, will be transformed into a new point of convergence for the nations

– a modern tower of Babel – from where a united new world order and its alliance of world religions will be controlled. The world trade will also be controlled from here, and these riches will prompt unprecedented sin and fornication (Rev. 18:3).

In a deceitful way, the Antichrist will claim descent from Mohammed through one of his parents. By doing so he will unite the hostile factions of Islam under his banner and become the unopposed king of a modern caliphate. Through his other parent he will claim descent from King David of Israel, and because of that he will be accepted as the Messiah of Israel. This position will be foundational to his envisaged title as world messiah. Because of his supernatural powers and diplomatic successes to bring peace on earth and save the world economy from a major collapse, the other religions will also assign messianic titles to him. He will be declared a modern incarnation of Krishna by the Hindus, and to the Buddhists he will be the fifth Buddha, or Maitreya Buddha, who is awaited to introduce the messianic era of peace and prosperity.

The Antichrist will give the Jews permission to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, thus ensuring that they remain loyal to him and refrain from joining the minority group of Jews who follow and serve Jesus (Yeshua). The latter group will not be interested in the restoration of the temple and all its animal sacrifices. According to Revelation 11:2, the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem will have an enlarged outer court which will be opened up to the Gentiles to also give them access to the temple during the first 42 months. In this way, other faiths will become part of the Jewish temple service since the deceptive idea will also be entertained by ecumenical Jews that we all worship the same God (see the Jewish website www.godsholymountain.org in which this interfaith idea is promoted). However, the true unity of the global alliance of religions will be based upon the fact that they all worship the false “god of this age” (2 Cor. 4:4). During that time, orthodox Jews will continue with their sacrificial service but define its value as contributing towards the interfaith objective of global religious unity.

In due course, tensions will begin to rise and it will become evident that big rifts are forming in the new world order of the Antichrist. While these crises are expanding and deepening the day will rapidly approach of the Antichrist’s transformation from a false prince of peace to a heartless dictator such as the world has never seen. Opposition against him will lead to an assassination attempt in which he will sustain a mortal wound. When he is revived through the intervention of the false prophet (Rev. 13:3, 12), his metamorphosis will occur suddenly and in a dramatic way, depicted by the scenario in Revelation 6 with the opening of the seals.

When the first seal is opened a white horse runs out which represents the Antichrist and his false peace (he has a bow but hides his arrows). When the second seal is opened the Antichrist changes from the rider on the white horse of peace to the rider on the red horse of war. He will then himself remove the false peace which he has earlier established on earth when he deceptively pretended to be a global prince of peace (Rev. 6:3-4). That will happen in the middle of the tribulation period, after which the “great tribulation” will break out in all its severity. During that time, two further capacities of the Antichrist will be revealed, viz. the rider on a black horse who rations vital commodities, as well as the rider on the pale horse who will gather as many people as possible for death and hades. Through his different activities the Antichrist will be responsible for the death of a quarter of the world population (Rev. 6:8).

The formidable crisis in the middle of the tribulation period

At the midpoint of the year-week of seven years a crisis will arise that will become manifest by radical changes in different areas. The broad framework within which this crisis will play out is the long-running war between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. God promised that in the end-time He will send a King (Jesus Christ) to judge His enemies who will have as their ultimate leaders the Antichrist and false prophet, both of whom will be specially empowered by Satan. After their judgement and the binding of the devil, the Lord will establish a reign of peace on earth in which Christ Himself will rule from the restored throne of David.

However, the kingdom of darkness committed itself to pre-empt the promised revelation of God's kingdom, to deceive as many people as possible – particularly also Israel who are destined to play a prominent role in the millennial kingdom – and then to mobilise as many military forces as possible to fight against Christ and His heavenly army in Jerusalem during His second coming. This protracted war will reach its final phase in the middle of the tribulation when the Antichrist and his government will be faced by strong opposition. At the same time, there will be a war in heaven between God's angels and the fallen angels of Satan:

“And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. ... Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time” (Rev. 12:7-10, 12). That will be the final run-up to a physical confrontation between two messiahs on the Mount of Olives – the true One and the false one (2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 19:19-20).

From the midpoint of the tribulation onwards, eschatological events will take a turn for the worst on earth, and Satan will further empower the Antichrist to become sole ruler on earth and crush all opposition by force: “And the dragon [Satan] gave him [the Antichrist] his power, his throne, and great authority” (Rev. 13:2). Up to that stage the Antichrist will have reigned in partnership with ten other kings who had authority over ten geopolitical regions in the world. However, they will willingly relinquish their power and transfer it to the Antichrist (Rev. 17:12-13).

The final political and military usurpation of power towards autocracy will also coincide with religious self-exaltation. The Antichrist will then no longer be content with the title of world messiah to an alliance of world religions, but will claim the position of God Himself. He will “sit as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thess. 2:4). That will bring about the immediate abandoning of all forms of religion so that all people should exclusively bow down before the Antichrist and his image to worship him as God.

There will be a public demonstration of this religious coup in Israel's rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, as the Antichrist will enter into the Most Holy to profane it and declare himself there to be God. He will also set up an image of himself and issue a military decree that all people who refuse to worship him or his image in this capacity will be executed (Rev. 13:15). That will happen at the starting-point of the second half of the tribulation, which is described as the “great tribulation” (Matt. 24:21; Rev. 7:14).

Daniel describes this coup as follows: “But in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate” (Dan. 9:27). This will be the abrupt end to Israel's restored temple service, and the beginning of compulsory idolatry which will be enforced by military means. The evil woman on the back of the beast (the alliance of false religions) will also be rejected and faced with the choice of either worshipping the Antichrist as God or be killed. All her traditional places of worship will be destroyed: “And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire” (Rev. 17:16).

Most of the Jews will refuse to worship the Antichrist as God, and because of that they will abrogate their covenant with him as their messiah. He will react furiously and order genocide of the Jews. The Lord Jesus has warned Israel specifically about this crisis, saying that they will flee in great haste and in peril of their lives (Matt. 24:15-22). They will have to flee quickly for survival from Jerusalem and surrounding regions to the mountains next to the Dead Sea, and

possibly even further to Petra south of the Dead Sea in Jordan. Millions of other people on earth, including those who have become Christians during the tribulation, will be fugitives who will be killed wherever they are found (cf. Rev. 12:17). All believers in Jesus Christ, whether they are Jews or Gentiles, will be adversaries of the Antichrist. They will support the persecuted Jews as they will know about Israel's national conversion when the Messiah comes.

The number of the beast

Through his appearance and actions the Antichrist will seemingly play such an important role to save the world economy from destruction that his global government will, apart from a political and religious power base, also have an economic power base. He will institute a cashless world economy in which no one can buy or sell without a number (Rev. 13:16-18). Before a person would be allowed access to this system he will have to take an oath of allegiance to the world ruler (the Antichrist) which will include full recognition of him in all his capacities – i.e. as head of the global government of which he will be the final authority, head of the world religion in which he must be worshipped as God, and also head of the world economy over which he will have plenary power. The Bible describes this number as “the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name” (Rev. 13:17). It will therefore not only be a personal identity number but also the number of the Antichrist.

It will be impossible to accept the number only for the sake of financial transactions since the recipient of the number will, through his oath, also be obliged to worship the Antichrist and his image with the express exclusion of all other deities. Receiving the number will therefore be a formal rejection of Jesus Christ as Saviour and King of the world. Consequently, such persons will sell their souls to Satan and then receive the just retribution for their evil deed, which will be eternal perdition together with the Antichrist and the false prophet (Rev. 14:9-11). They will share in the judgement of their leader.

At the same time, the allocation of numbers will serve as a world-wide system of monitoring people's actions and movements since all transactions will be registered on a global computer network. It will therefore be possible to determine exactly where a person is and what the natures of his transactions are. Since the number will be implanted on the holder's hand or forehead, he will not be able to conceal his identity or locality. When cash is completely withdrawn from circulation, life to the adversaries of the Antichrist will immediately become utterly perilous. They will be excluded from the formal economy as they will not be able to buy anything or pay for services – neither will they be able to work for an income. They will not be able to transfer any of the money that they may have in bank accounts, or use it in any way, as they will not have access to the system of electronic funds transfer.

Apart from the financial dilemma in which such people will be, they will also be political fugitives who will be outlawed because of refusing to worship the Antichrist. That will be regarded as high treason and punishable by execution in public places – often by beheading (Rev. 20:4). Although such people will die as martyrs they will, spiritually speaking, be conquerors because they did not bow the knee before Satan's false god (Rev. 12:11). However, the majority of people will gladly accept the number and have no problem with worshipping the Antichrist as their God and Saviour (Rev. 13:3-4, 8). Satanic deception causes spiritual blindness and a lack of discernment.

From Revelation 7:9-17 it is obvious that there will nevertheless be millions of people in the world who will refuse to accept the Antichrist and his number, and also to worship him. When they will arrive in heaven after their death on earth they will call on God to take revenge on the antichristian persecutors. The deceased saints are ensured that it will indeed happen but only after all the martyrs have come in (Rev. 6:9-11). Christians have to gain absolute clarity for themselves on what exactly is at stake with the offer of the number, so as to avert the possibility of selling their souls for temporary earthly gain. Friendship with the Antichrist, even though he may come in the image of an angel of the light, leads to eternal death. He will be the man of sin

and the son of perdition (2 Thess. 2:3) whose mission it will be to lead as many people as possible to hell.

End of the tribulation period

As the end of the tribulation approaches, natural disasters such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and fragments of heavenly bodies which will strike the world, will dramatically increase (Rev. 6:12-13; 16:18). Because of all the air pollution the moon will become like blood and the sun like sackcloth. Many people will know that God is judging the world because of the evilness of its inhabitants, but most of them will still not repent and recklessly proceed to blaspheme God (Rev. 9:20-21; 16:8-9). When high buildings collapse due to earthquakes, people will flee to the mountains and desire to die, fully realising that Christ whom they have betrayed and rejected as Saviour, will then be their Judge (Rev. 6:15-17). There will be no way to flee away from Him and escape His judgement.

To those who have accepted the number of the Antichrist and also worship him, it will be too late to turn around and undo their absolute, formal and conscious denial of Jesus Christ. Their foolishness will be comparable to that of Esau who succumbed under the pressure of a temporary crisis and sold his birthright as the main heir of his father for a mess of pottage: "... lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears" (Heb. 12:16-17). He had no godly sorrow for his sin and was only sorry for himself when he realised what he had lost because of the terrible mistake that he made. Spiritual fornication refers to loving the world above God, and pursuing your temporary needs above the eternal interests of your soul. Friendship with the depraved world renders you spiritually speaking an adulterer and enemy of God (Jas. 4:4).

In the light of biblical prophecies, the Antichrist will know that Jesus Christ will return to earth at the end of the seven years of tribulation to judge the wicked and reconcile Himself to a remnant from Israel and the nations who will mourn for Him (Matt. 24:29-30; Rev. 1:7; Zech. 14:4-5, 12-13). This divine intervention at the Messiah's second coming, will be the consummation of Israel's long history of salvation since their restoration from the Babylonian captivity up to the point of their national spiritual reconciliation to the Messiah at the end of the tribulation period. After that, everlasting righteousness will prevail (Dan. 9:24), and the entire remnant of Israel will be established in the new covenant (Jer. 31:31-34).

In Daniel 9:24-27, this very important part of Israel's history of salvation is discussed within the framework of 70 year-weeks, each of which represents seven prophetic years, adding up to 490 years of 360 days each. However, at the end of the 69th week they rejected the Messiah and caused a long interruption in the further course of their history of salvation. As a result of that, the church dispensation for the evangelisation of the entire non-Jewish world was instituted. The disciples were commissioned to go out into the entire world to make disciples of all the nations and baptise believers in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). It was part of God's counsel that His Son would not only be a Saviour to Israel but to all nations on earth (Isa. 49:5-6; cf. Acts 13:46-47).

Why did Daniel not indicate that there would be a long interval between the 69th and 70th weeks of Israel's history of salvation? Because the church age was a mystery that was not revealed to any of the Old Testament prophets. Paul describes the body of Christ among the Gentiles as a "mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints" (Col. 1:26). The end of the church age will occur equally mysterious at Christ's secret coming for His saints. Paul says: "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet" (1 Cor. 15:51-52). After that, the spotlight reverts back to Israel as a nation.

After Israel rejected their Messiah they were scattered from their land, and the dispersed Jews would only return to their land close to the end of the time of world evangelisation (Luke 21:24) to set the scene for the 70th year-week before their national spiritual restoration. The 70th year-week is meant as a time of trouble and testing for Israel and the unbelieving nations who, like Israel, have rejected the Messiah (Jer. 30:7; Rev. 3:10). This year-week is not part of the church dispensation. For more information on the 70 year-weeks, and particularly the 70th year-week which must still be fulfilled, see: <http://www.bibleguidance.co.za/Engarticles/Countdown.htm>.

However, the devil will try to avert the fulfilment of God's plan for Israel and the church by taking full control of the whole world himself. Consequently, the Satanic triumvirate (the dragon, the beast and the false prophet) will use all power at their disposal to obliterate all God's people – i.e. the covenant people Israel as well as believers among all nations. Finally, they will also fight against Christ on the day of His return in order to save their antichristian new world order from destruction. In anticipation of that day, demons will be sent out to all governments to instigate the leaders towards deploying troops in Israel for the battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16:13-16). However, it will be a futile exercise to fight against Him who has all power in heaven and on earth. The Antichrist and false prophet will be cast alive into the lake of fire, and all their followers will be killed (Rev. 19:19-21). Satan will be captured and bound in a pit together with his demons (Rev. 20:1-3). Christ will then restore the throne of David and rule over the world from Jerusalem (Luke 1:32; Acts 15:16-17; Jer. 3:17).

A suitable strategy

All those who find themselves in the tribulation period, should realise that although the world will be spiritually very dark after the church as the temple of the Holy Spirit has suddenly been removed, that does not mean that the Holy Spirit Himself has also been withdrawn from the world! God remains omnipresent and He will still regenerate repentant sinners in the tribulation period so that His Spirit can, through them, reach out to other lost sinners with a message of salvation. The foolish virgins of the church dispensation can therefore still obtain the oil of the Holy Spirit that was absent in their lives. They will nevertheless have to pass through the tribulation, but as believers they can walk this difficult path by faith while also assisting those who are either totally ignorant on the Bible or only have a vague knowledge of salvation and a mere form of godliness (church membership without salvation).

However, it is very unlikely that independent evangelical congregations will be allowed to keep their doors open during the tribulation period – at least not for very long. The religious wing of the Antichrist's new world order will demand that all churches become members of an alliance of world religions, of which the Antichrist will be the spiritual head. For their own survival, evangelical believers will have to keep a low profile as far as meetings are concerned, which should be as informal and unobtrusive as possible. That does not mean that they should do nothing and only think about their own safety, as the souls and eternal destiny of thousands of other people will be at stake. These needy people should not be deprived of a last chance to settle their case with God, and for that purpose they are dependent upon other believers who can give them sound guidance as well as evangelical literature.

Christians will only enjoy limited freedom of movement during the first 42 months, before the Antichrist will clamp down at the middle of the seven years to remove all freedom. His compulsory numbering of economically active people will be enforced by then – not right from the beginning of the seven years. Money and other assets should as far as possible be used during the first 42 months, and supplies stored in secret places – also Bibles and spiritual literature. After that, Christians will have no access to their own money in the cashless monetary system and will forfeit all rights to it.

Survival chances during the second half of the tribulation will be very slim. Evangelical Christians will not be part of the political, religious and economic structures of the beast, and because of

their refusal to accept it they will be branded as rebels who are to be ruthlessly hunted down and executed. Whatever the circumstances, threats or demands, Jesus Christ must never be denied, and the Antichrist never accepted in any capacity. Never ever succumb to any form of threat, extortion or bribery to betray other Christians by revealing their identity or hide-outs. All of them should try to stay alive as long as possible to assist others in making peace with God. Mercy will still be shown to all who have not entered into a covenant with the Antichrist.

For a wide range of articles and books on eschatology (teaching on end-time events), visit the website: www.bibleguidance.co.za. The following books contain expositions on the Antichrist and the tribulation period:

Sketch of the Book of Revelation:

<http://www.bibleguidance.co.za/Bookimages/Revelimageeng.jpg>

Biblical Prophecies:

<http://www.bibleguidance.co.za/Engbooks/PDF/Endtimepdf.pdf>

The Day of the Lord – A Commentary on Revelation:

<http://www.bibleguidance.co.za/Librarylists/Bookschaplist/TheDaychaplist.htm>

The Hour of Darkness – An Exposition of Revelation:

<http://www.bibleguidance.co.za/Librarylists/Bookschaplist/Thehourchaplist.htm>

The Kingdom of Satan:

<http://www.bibleguidance.co.za/Engbooks/PDF/Satanskingdompdf.pdf>

Israel – A Historical, Contemporary and Prophetic Perspective:

<http://www.bibleguidance.co.za/Librarylists/Bookschaplist/Israel%20English.htm>

Prophetic Programme in the Seven Feasts of Israel:

<http://www.bibleguidance.co.za/Engbooks/Seven%20Feasts/FeastsofIsrael.pdf>