



AI Generated

Iran and Israel at War (Part 10)

By

Mark McGee

The current war between Iran and Israel, which has really been going on for almost half a century, is the focus of this series. Iran is an Islamic Republic – also known as a ‘Theocratic republic.’ Israel is a Jewish Republic – also known as a ‘Jewish and democratic state.’ The United States, also involved in the current war, is a Constitutional Republic- also known as a ‘Constitutional federal representative democracy.’

While the United States includes citizens of many religions, the majority religion in the U.S. is Christian (though the number of religiously unaffiliated is growing every year).

We’ve already looked at how **Muslims** and **Jews** look at the war in Middle East, so we are now looking at how **Christians** view the war. It’s a bit more complicated because Christianity is more divided than the other religions about many theological issues – including eschatology (last things).

Many Christians believe that God's final judgment of the nations of the earth will be preceded by many events (including wars), while other Christians do not. Here's some background that I hope will be helpful.

Christian Eschatology

Jesus Christ called Saul of Tarsus, a fierce enemy of Christ and His Jewish disciples, to become the primary apostle to the Gentiles. That was a mystery Jesus kept to Himself until the appointed time to reveal it:

“For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles— if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the

same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.” Ephesians 3:1-7

As I explained in the [last part of this series](#) Paul had to constantly defend his apostolic position as he faced extreme opposition from people who wanted to bring Gentile Christian converts under the Mosaic Law and be circumcised (e.g. Acts 15; Galatians 2). Paul also had to deal with false apostles who wanted to teach and control the theology of Gentile believers (e.g. Acts 20; 2 Corinthians 11 & 12; 1 Timothy 4; 2 Timothy & Titus).

We looked at challenges to the fact of the ‘resurrection of Jesus Christ’ in the last part of the series. That was a ‘past’ event that was and is central to our faith as Christians. In this part of the series I’d like to look at two ‘future’ events that are also central to our faith as Christians, and how centuries of teachings in the ‘Church’ have led to confusion and division because of them.

The Rapture

I've heard many Christian pastors and Bible teachers say that the word 'rapture' is not in the Bible. That's a truth claim, so let's see if they have any good evidence to support the claim.

The word 'rapture' is found in the Latin Vulgate (translated from the Greek by Jerome of Striden – Eusebius Sophronius Hieronymus – during the late 4th and early 5th centuries AD). The Latin word is *rapiemur*. It means 'to seize.' The word is the Latin translation of the Greek verb ἀρπάζω. The Apostle Paul used ἀρπάζω in 1 Thessalonians 4:

“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.”

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18

The English words 'caught up' are a translation of ἀρπάζω and what is meant when people use the term 'rapture.' Pastors and Bible teachers who say that the word 'rapture' is not in the Bible should know about the Greek word ἀρπάζω – which is in the Bible. Their 'truth claim' fails for a lack of convincing evidence.

Notice some important points about the ἀρπάζω (catching up, seizing, rapture) event:

- the Lord Himself would descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God
- the dead in Christ will rise first
- then those who are alive and remain will be 'caught up' (ἀρπάζω) with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air
- we will be with the Lord forever
- comfort one another with these words

Another letter that Paul wrote addressed the same event, but with even more detail:

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 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. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. 1 Corinthians 15:50-58

Notice some of important points in this event that Paul called being ‘changed’ (ἀλλάσσω – ‘altered, made different, exchanged’):

- flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God
- nor does corruption inherit incorruption
- 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
- For the trumpet will sound
- the dead will be raised incorruptible
- we shall be changed
- this corruptible must put on incorruption
- this mortal must put on immortality
- when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory”

- O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?
- The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law
- But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ
- be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord

Paul was describing a future event at the time he wrote it. Christians will be suddenly 'caught up and changed.' That includes Christians who are living at the time of the event and those who died prior to the event. It's not the same event that Jesus told His Jewish disciples about in Matthew 24:

“But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.” Matthew 24:37-44

Jesus was answering a question from his Jewish disciples: ‘Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?’ (Matthew 24:3). The disciples were questioning Jesus about when He would establish His earthly Kingdom with Jerusalem as its capital city. They asked the question ‘before’ Jesus’ death on the cross. After Jesus rose from the dead those same Jewish disciples asked, ‘Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’ (Acts 1:6) Even after Jesus had spent more than three years teaching His disciples prior to His crucifixion and resurrection and more than a month teaching them after His crucifixion and resurrection, the Jewish disciples were still expecting Jesus to restore the kingdom to Israel ‘at this time.’

“And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this

time restore the kingdom to Israel?” And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:4-8

The disciples were apparently surprised when Jesus ascended into the sky headed back to Heaven after telling them to return to Jerusalem and wait to ‘receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.’ They knew Jesus was Israel’s Messiah and they expected Him to ‘restore the kingdom to Israel’ – ‘at this time.’ We know they were surprised by what Jesus said and did because of what happened next:

“Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, “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.” Acts 1:9-11

Even though the disciples still had a lot to learn about Jesus’ plans for setting up His earthly Kingdom, they at least knew that He would return one day to do just that.

As for the Apostle Paul, he was responding to a problem that Gentile believers were having in Thessalonica. Their concern was not about the restoration of Israel’s Kingdom. They lived in another part of the world and had no involvement in Israel’s land or politics. They lived more than 900 miles away in the northern part of Greece (Macedonia). Their concern was that their loved ones who had died may have missed out on the promise of physical resurrection. Here’s how Paul responded:

“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.” 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Can you see the difference? Jesus was responding to questions from Jewish believers about the restoration of the prophesied Kingdom to Israel. Paul was responding to concerns from Gentile believers in another part of the world about whether their loved ones missed out on a physical resurrection. Those are big differences between the two, so it's helpful to understand that since it has caused some many problems in the 'Church' through the centuries.

The Millennium

Next we move to the idea of a 'Millennium.' Though not a teaching of the Apostle Paul, it is important to understand because Jesus Christ 'revealed' it to the Apostle John many years after the Apostle Paul died. By that time John was involved with or at least known by some of the churches that Paul had been involved with years earlier. Some people think John had taken apostolic control of the theology of those churches. Others believe the churches revered John as the last living Jewish apostle of Jesus Christ, and for taking care of Jesus' mother until she passed away (John 19:26-27), rather than him changing the theology Paul would have taught them.

The fact that Jesus Christ told John to write letters to seven of those churches should be carefully noted:

"John, to the seven churches which are in Asia. Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness,

the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." Revelation 1:4-8

Revelation chapters 2 and 3 are directed at those churches. Five of the churches had serious problems that Jesus Christ wanted addressed by church leadership. Jesus warned those churches about dire consequences if they did not 'repent' and change their behavior. The other two churches received words of gratitude and encouragement from the Lord.

Revelation chapters 4 through 22 are primarily directed at things that would happen to Israel and the world at the end of time. This is where some Christians see wars like the one we're watching now between Iran and Israel. In Revelation chapter 5 Jesus Christ will take a 'scroll' in Heaven that is 'written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.' In Revelation chapter 6 Jesus will begin opening the 'seals.' Here are the first six that some Christians believe are connected to wars between nations – in addition to either natural or supernatural events that cause death and chaos on Earth:

1. First Seal: The Conqueror – 'And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.'
2. Second Seal: Conflict on Earth – 'Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword..'

3. Third Seal: Scarcity on Earth – ‘So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, ‘A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine.’
4. Fourth Seal: Widespread Death on Earth – ‘So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.’
5. Fifth Seal: The Cry of the Martyrs – ‘When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’ Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and

their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.'

6. Sixth Seal: Cosmic Disturbances – 'I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"'

Many Christians see a connection between Jesus opening the 'seals of the scroll' and what He told His disciples in Matthew chapters 24 and 25. Interestingly, Revelation chapter 7 deals with – 'One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed.' The first tribe mentioned is Judah, which is the Messianic tribe. Twelve thousand members of each of the twelve tribes will be sealed.

Immediately following that the Apostle John saw 'a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!' One of the elders in Heaven asked John – 'Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?' John responded, 'Sir, you know.' The elder then responded – 'These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'

Jesus said this to His disciples in Matthew 24 – ‘For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.’ That’s the first time the term ‘great tribulation’ is mentioned in the New Testament. Jesus was answering His disciples’ question about what would be the sign of His coming and the end of the age.

It’s clear from a careful study of Matthew 24 and Revelation chapters 6 and 7 that the children of Israel (twelve tribes) are in view. That’s confirmed as we look at when Jesus Christ opens the ‘seventh seal’ in Revelation 8. It contains ‘seven trumpets’ that all connect to Israel and battles in and around the region of Israel. You can read about it in Revelation chapters 8 – 11. The seventh trumpet of the seventh seal concerns the ‘proclamation of the Kingdom.’

The following chapters in Revelation detail the many battles and wars in Heaven and on earth. In Revelation chapter 14 the Apostle John saw ‘a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads.’ Again, a direct connection to Israel. Revelation chapter 15 is also important to read because John ‘saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.’ Revelation 17 details what wrath from God is in each of the bowls:

1. First Bowl: Loathsome Sores
2. Second Bowl: The Sea Turns to Blood
3. Third Bowl: The Waters Turn to Blood
4. Fourth Bowl: Men Are Scorched
5. Fifth Bowl: Darkness and Pain
6. Sixth Bowl: Euphrates Dried Up
7. Seventh Bowl: The Earth Utterly Shaken

Revelation chapters 16 – 19 detail the continued wars on Earth that eventually lead to Jesus Christ defeating the armies of the world:

“Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written:

KING OF KINGS AND
LORD OF LORDS.

And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth

of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.” Revelation 19

What follows is a period of a ‘thousand years’ (Millennium – from the Latin mille annus – Revelation chapter 20) where Satan is bound and where Jesus and His followers ‘reign.’ At the end of the thousand years Jesus will release Satan from prison. Satan will quickly ‘go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.’ They will surround the ‘beloved city’ (Jerusalem), but fire will come down from God out of Heaven and devour them. Satan, ‘who deceived them,’ will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone to be tormented day and night.

What follows that event will be the Christ’s judgment of everyone who had ever lived:

“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and

books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” Revelation 20

Revelation chapters 21 and 22 detail how God creates ‘a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.’ Then the Apostle John ‘saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.’ Revelation chapters 21 and 22 detail the beauty and glory of the ‘New Jerusalem.’ Why that names? Why call this majestic city where Christ will reign ‘New Jerusalem.’ The answer seems clear that all of this connects back to God’s promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the children of Israel through His prophets.

This is definitely a 'prophetic' Revelation, but it leads to the question about the 'mystery' Body of Christ. Where are we? Remember what Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 4? 'And thus we shall always be with the Lord.' Christians will be with Christ, always. However, we need to be cautious in attempting to squeeze Christians and Israel together at every opportunity. There is a difference.

Further Notes on the New Jerusalem

An angel showed John the 'holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,' and told John he was showing him 'the bride, the Lamb's wife.' The city has a 'great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel.' The 'wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.' That is clear evidence that the 'New Jerusalem' is connected directly to Israel.

So, where's the Apostle Paul? Where's the Church – the Body of Christ? Only the twelve apostles of Christ and the twelve tribes of Israel are mentioned in the 'New Jerusalem.' This has confused Christians for centuries, but I think the answer is clear in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians. Christians will 'always be with the Lord.' That's the answer. We will be with Him wherever He goes. I believe Christians will have a different role than Jewish believers during the times we read about in much of Revelation, but we will be with Jesus wherever He goes.

We know from Paul's letters that Christians will 'judge the world' and 'angels' (1 Corinthians 6:2-3). That's an extremely privileged and powerful position for Christians. Why would that happen? Because we will 'always be with the Lord.' Jesus is going to judge the world and angels, and His Body (Christians) will judge with Him. Amazing! Right?

We also know from 2 Timothy 2:12 that Christians will ‘reign with Him.’ How will we reign with Him? In whatever way Jesus assigns us to reign. That may be one of the things Paul saw when he visited ‘Paradise’ but was not allowed to ‘express’ what he saw (2 Corinthians 12:1-4). The one thing I do know is that the life Jesus Christ has planned for us in the future is far beyond our most vivid imaginations. He loves us – deeply.

Next Time

Many Christians don't believe in a 'Millennial' reign by Christ because they say the word is not in the Bible. How should Christians answer that claim? I'll share some thoughts in the next part of Iran and Israel at War.

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