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What Needs to Happen Before Christ's Return?

By Steven J. Hogan

~ A Saturday Morning Post #70 ~

Many *"things"* need to take place before Christ returns to rapture the church. Matthew 24:33-34 says, *"When you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place."* Last week I described six of them: **1) Birth pains** (wars, earthquakes, famines, economic distress) will be occurring all over the earth. **2) A one-world leader** will be the desire of people from all over this planet. **3) The United States** will fall from her #1 position, and then sooner or later, the Antichrist will begin ruling the world. **4) The technology** needed by the Antichrist to control the world will be developed, and accepted by the masses. **5) The Jews** will be hated by all the nations. **6) Lawlessness** will increase significantly all over the world. But many more things need to happen before the coming of Christ:

7) Preaching the Gospel: There's been considerable progress in reaching the world with the gospel, particularly in the past 200 years.

But missiologists say there are many unreached people groups, many tribes and tongues that have not yet heard the gospel. I personally believe we have a ways to go in getting the gospel to all the nations. As for us, the end of this age is now in sight, and Christ is commanding us to be witnesses *"to the remotest part of the earth"* (Acts 1:8), and to *"go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."* Mark 16:15

8) Aligning the Nations: For the past 100 years, we have seen God sovereignly realigning the nations, redesigning the global map, so it's in line with His plan for the end-times. I admit, this is a complex geography lesson that's difficult for most Christians, including myself, to completely understand. But from Daniel 2:36-44, Daniel 7:1-8, 15-18, and Daniel 8, we know Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece and the Roman empire will be kingdoms on earth before Christ's return. From Ezekiel 38, we read about Magog, Tubal, Meshech and Gomer, allied with Persia, Ethiopia and Put, all against Israel. Then Daniel 7:7-8, 23-27 tells us about Antichrist's 10-nation empire being established. We also know there's little or no mention of the United States, Britain, Russia and China, as major players in the end-times. Now I can't predict when all this rearranging and realigning of nations will be completed, but as I look at what's going on in the world, I am convinced that a lot more needs to happen before Christ's return.

9) Wars: Along with the unspecified wars that are part of the birth pains, the prophesied wars of Psalm 46, Ezekiel 38 and Daniel 11:36-45 also need to occur before Christ's return. From Daniel 7:7-8, we understand that the Antichrist will be conquering nations and consolidating his kingdom. And as you know, wars and nation-building don't happen overnight. But you and I will be hearing about these wars in the coming years, knowing they are leading to the return of the King. *"He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth… cease striving and know that I am God… I will be exalted in the earth."* Psalm 46:8-10

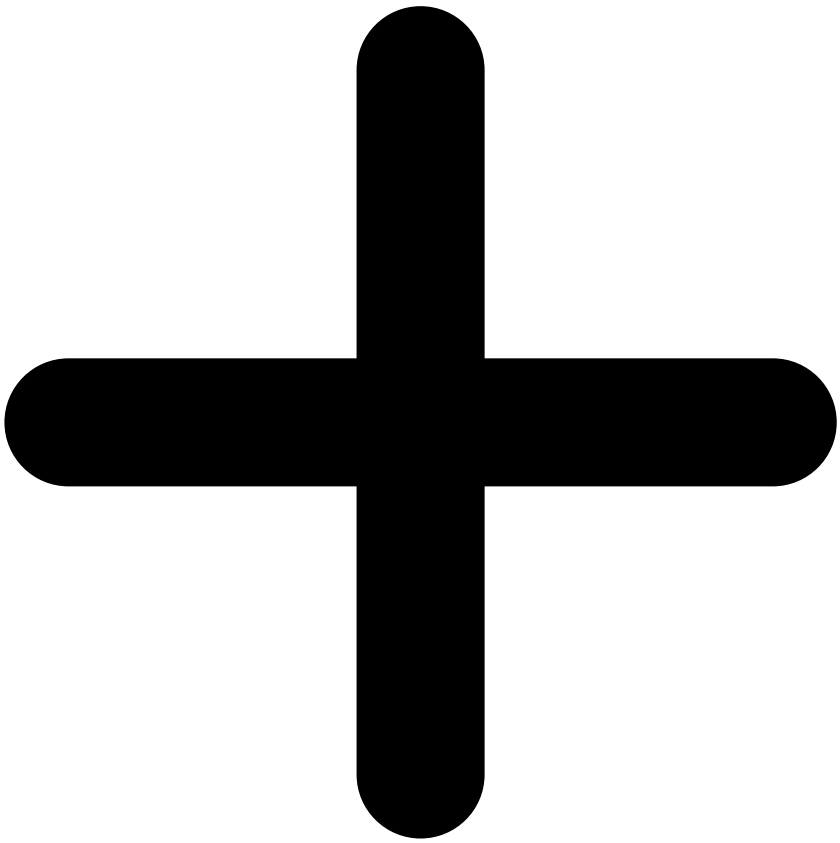
These nine conditions are general, indefinite and nonspecific. Nevertheless, they are given by God so you can know what's going to

happen, and when they are taking place, you will be encouraged, for you know Christ's coming is getting closer. God really wants you to *"see the day drawing nearer"* (Hebrews 10:25), and to know that you will soon see your Savior.

More prophesied events still need to happen that are specific, distinct and definitive in nature, and will occur at a point in time or in a narrow time frame:
10. A peace treaty will be signed between the Jews and other nations. Daniel 9:27
11. The temple will be rebuilt, and the Jews will offer sacrifices. 2 Thessalonians 2:4-5
12. The Antichrist will be revealed, desecrating the temple in Jerusalem. Matthew 24:15
13. Two witnesses will be preaching the gospel to the Jews. Revelation 11:3-11
14. The mark of the beast will be given to an unbelieving world. Revelation 13:14-17
15. Great persecution will be directed against Jews and Christians. Matthew 24:9, 21
16. Warning signs will appear in the heavens at the end of this age. Revelation 6:12-17.
All these things will be occurring in the not-too-distant future, during Daniel's 70th week.

We live in the stage called the *"beginning of birth pains."* For many Christians, life isn't very difficult at this time, but these early labor pains will turn into hard labor pains. When we see all these events taking place, we will have increasing hope, for we know Christ's coming is just around the corner. This hope will help us get through the pain of great tribulation. Can you imagine actually being alive during the 70th week? Yes, it will be hard, but we'll also be hopeful, for we know it will only be a few short years before we see our Savior coming in the clouds to take us to be with Him. Luke 21:27

Can God super-accelerate these end-time events so that, in a matter of 5 to 6 years, He could send His Son to earth to rapture us, and take us to heaven? Of course He can. But when I look at these 16 different things all needing to happen, I can't help but think that we are still years away from the return of Christ and the rapture of the church. Whether it's 10, 20, 30 years, or more, I don't know, and no one knows, but God Himself. For now, let's love our Lord, lay down our life and live for Him, and be looking for His return. *"In a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay."* Hebrews 10:37





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