

A Layman's Commentary on the

Revelation of Jesus Christ

As Recorded by the Beloved Disciple John



Jesse C. Jones

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A Layman's Commentary

on

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(As Recorded by the Beloved Disciple John)

by Jesse C. Jones

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Preface

The Lord Jesus was not hesitant in talking about events prior to, during, and following the last days. To insure that His “*bondmen*” knew what would take place during this time He sent an angel to the disciple John to “*show and make known*” those things which must “*shortly come to pass*”. John’s description of what he was shown is recorded in the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation. The book of Revelation gives us God’s final written word on the questions raised when He confronted Adam and Eve after the fall, in Genesis 3:9-19: who is the seed of the woman that will “*bruise thy head*” (be victorious over Satan), and how will the victory be won? Although Jesus bruised Satan’s head and triumphed over him through His death and resurrection (Col. 2:15), the book of Revelation describes how Christ will crush Satan in the final victory, and cleanse the earth in preparation for His earthly rule during the millennium.

The introduction to the book of Revelation in the John A. Dickson King James Version (KJV) of the Bible says: “. . the book of Genesis gives the cre-

ation story, and at the beginning the first promise of the world's Savior, so Revelation at the close of the Bible announces the end of the present order, and sets forth the glory and majesty of Christ in his second coming. He first came in humiliation, the second time He will come in exaltation". When asked "*privately*" by the disciples in Matthew 24:3, when the temple would be destroyed and what would be the sign of His (second) coming and the end of the world, Jesus answered with what has come to be known as the Olivet discourse, documented in Matthew 24-25 (M^t. 13:3-37, Lu. 21:7-36). Jesus' words on the Mount of Olives, and in the book of Revelation, describe what is surely one of the most perplexing and portentous periods in the history, or future, of mankind. If the words of the prophecies described in the Olivet discourse and the book of Revelation are heard and understood then His "*servants*" will be able to "*keep those things which are written therein*" and receive the "*blessing*" promised in Revelation 1:3.

Many of the prophecies of Daniel also provide information as to the timing and significance of end-time events. These prophecies must be conjoined to those revealed to John and recorded in the book of Revelation, as well as those spoken by Jesus on the Mount of Olives, if we are to grasp any meaningful understanding of the last days. Other Old Testament (OT) prophets have also

provided illuminating (and sometimes confusing) descriptions of end-times events, and they must be considered, as well.

This is the goal of this commentary: to provide an analysis of the timing and significance of these cataclysmic events that can be understood by a typical layperson. Primary resource materials include the KJV of the bible published by John A. Dickson publishing Company; Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible; the Interlinear Greek-English New Testaments by George Ricker Berry and Jay P. Green, Sr.; the Interlinear NIV Hebrew-English Old Testament by John R. Kohnlenberger III; lexicons by Brown-Driver-Briggs, William L. Holliday, and Harold K. Moulton; and the Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament by R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke. I have also made reference to Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words and Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament. These resources have been used to help in interpreting the key words and phrases used in certain passages of scripture. Most New Testament (NT) scriptural references are from the KJV of the Bible, although the Greek New Testament (GNT) interpretation is given for particular verses when it is considered to be important for understanding. Old Testament references are from the KJV, the New International Version (NIV), and some are from the He-

brew-English OT. When references to biblical passages other than from the KJV are quoted, the version is cited.

This commentary was written by a layman, who is **not** a Hebrew or Greek scholar. This humbling task was undertaken with oft-repeated prayers for guidance in the interpretations given. I can only hope that I have been a faithful scribe in dealing with God's precious word.

Introduction

A Layman's Commentary on the Revelation of Jesus Christ

To understand the timing of the events that occur during the last days, as described in the book of Revelation, it is important to start with the vision given to Daniel some six centuries before Christ. In Daniel 9:24 NIV, Daniel was informed by the angel Gabriel that,

“Seventy `sevens` are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy”.

The “sevens” referred to in this vision are widely understood to mean “weeks of years”. In other words, one of Daniel’s weeks corresponds to a period of time equal to seven years. Thus, Daniel was told that in a period of 490 years (not necessarily concurrent), that the transgression of mankind would be completed, that sin would be brought to an end, that wickedness would be redressed, that everlasting righteousness would be introduced, that vision and prophesy would be brought to an end, and that Christ would be anointed as king on earth.

The time that has expired since the vision was given to Daniel must approximate some 2600 years: Daniel received the vision about 600 years before Christ, and we have just entered the 21st century (~2000 years after Christ). To understand the apparent discrepancy in time (2600 years versus 490 years), we must continue reading the passage in Daniel through Chapter 9. Daniel 9:25-27 NIV says,

“Know and understand this: from the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler comes, there will be seven ‘sevens’ and sixty-two ‘sevens’. It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two ‘sevens’ the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven’. In the middle of the ‘seven,’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple, he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.”

Daniel was a prophet during the Babylonian captivity of the Jews (606 - 536 BC). Nebuchadnezzar took Daniel and other promising young men of Jerusalem to Babylon in 606 BC. During the following year Nebuchadnezzar

ascended to the throne of Babylon. Daniel was about eighteen years old when taken captive and could not have been much younger than Nebuchadnezzar himself. Thus, Daniel lived through the entire period of the captivity of the Jews, and was an elderly man when placed in a high position in the Persian Empire after Cyrus conquered Babylon in 540 BC. It was about this time that Daniel received the vision and prophecy described above. Artaxerxes I reigned in Persia from 464 to 424 BC, but in 474 BC he was appointed viceroy to his Father Xerxes, and essentially became ruler. He commissioned Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem in the twentieth year of his reign (Ne. 2:1-8): if we assume that the period of Artaxerxes' reign included his time as viceroy this would have occurred in 454 BC. This is thought by many expositors of the word to be the decree referred to in Daniel's vision. If this is the case, the exact year for the start of the all the events referred to in Daniel's vision would be 454 BC. Seven 'sevens' corresponds to 49 years, which gives 405 BC as the year in which the rebuilding of Jerusalem was considered complete. This date seems late, for the scripture mentions several events related to work on the restored temple that had been completed prior at this time. Nevertheless, if we accept Artaxerxes decree as the one referred to in Daniel's vision, then the date that Jerusalem was considered "*rebuilt with streets and a trench*" was in 405 BC. That

the rebuilding work was accomplished during a “*time of trouble*” is without question. Samaritan people in the area around Jerusalem harassed the Jews working on the restoration project to such an extent that the laborers had to work with one arm and carry a weapon with the other.

To continue with our analysis of Daniel’s vision, we note that after 62 additional “*sevens*” (434 years), the Anointed One will “*come*”. Zechariah 9:9 indicates that the king (Anointed One), who is just and lowly will “*come*” to Jerusalem riding upon the foal of an ass. Christians recognize this as describing Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, before He was crucified on the day of preparation for the Passover, later that week. Jesus was hailed as king by the Jews in Jerusalem during His entry; thus, this is widely recognized as the coming of the Anointed One in Daniel’s prophecy.

Luke 3:1-3 records that John the Baptist received a word from God while he was in the wilderness in the fifteenth year of the government of Tiberius Caesar. Tiberius began his rule as emperor in 14 AD, upon the death of Augustus; however, at Augustus’ request he was given ruling authority over the provinces in 12 AD (“The Annals of the World” by James Ussher). Thus, we see that John began his ministry of preparation for the Messiah sometime during the year of 26 AD (Tiberius’ 15th year of reign). The word referred in this scripture was a

call from God for John to go into the country around the Jordan River to prepare the way for the Lord Jesus, and for people to be baptized for the remission of sins. John was fulfilling the prophecy in Isaiah 40:3-5, and preparing the people for Jesus' ministry, which was about to commence. We do not know how long it was after this that Jesus came to John for baptism and subsequently began His own ministry, but the biblical record reflects a period of at least several months, for John turned many of the children of Israel to God during this time. Halley's Bible Handbook gives the approximate time that John preached before Jesus came for baptism as about six months. Of course, John could have been preaching prior to the time he received the word from God to go into the country around the Jordan River. However, if we assume that the baptism of Jesus occurred a few months after John received the call from the Lord to begin his ministry of preparation, then 26 AD would be a likely year for the start of Jesus' ministry. If this is correct, Jesus was probably crucified in 30 AD.

In the calculations below I have made no correction for the differences in the number of days in the Jewish year (360 days), and the Julian year (365 days, 5 hr., 48 min., 46 sec.). Since the Jewish year does not correspond to the timing of the earth's movement around the sun, a correction is made periodically to add a certain number of days to the year so that the seasons will remain fixed.

Other expositors have included corrections to account for this, assuming that Daniel's prophetic years were 360 days long. I have made no attempt to do this, and if I did, it would produce a different conclusion. I have assumed that God knew how many years separated these two events, and how the length of these years were determined in both the Julian calendar, and the corrected Jewish calendar, and that is what He gave Daniel in prophecy.

The tabulation below gives the prophetic dates in Daniel's prophecy calculated in accordance with the above discussion:

454 BC - Artaxerxes (474 BC - 424 BC) decree to rebuild Jerusalem (Ne. 2:1-8).

405 BC - Rebuilding considered complete, $[454 - (7 \times 7)] = 405$ BC.

30 AD - Jesus comes into Jerusalem (Zechariah 9:9) on Palm Sunday,

$[405 - (62 \times 7)] = 30$ AD. There is only one year between 1 BC and 1 AD, so we must subtract one year when figuring the number of years between 454 BC and 30 AD, thus, $454 + 30 = 484$ years, less one year gives exactly 483 years.

20xx AD - God determines that the cup of transgression is nearly full and Daniel's final week of sevens begins. Antichrist comes speaking peace.

20xx AD + 3 1/2 years - Middle of Daniel's final week of sevens, and start of the Great Tribulation. Antichrist causes his image to be erected in the temple and demands the worship of all men.

20xx AD + 3 1/2 years + length of the Great Tribulation - God pours out His wrath on the earth (Re. 6:17, 15:1).

20xx AD + 7 years - The end of Daniel's final week of sevens. Christ returns to earth to rule for a thousand years (Re. 19:11-21).

After the crucifixion of Jesus, God seemingly presses the “pause” button on the timing of events foretold in Daniel’s vision. God seems to have inserted a period of time into Daniel’s vision that could best be described as the “church age”, for almost immediately after the rejection of Christ by the nation of Israel, the focus turned to the Gentiles and the establishment of the New Testament church. This pause extends from the crucifixion of Jesus to the point of time in the future when God determines that the cup of transgression, foretold in Daniel’s vision is almost full, and that His work with the church is nearly completed. At that future time He seemingly restarts the clock, and the events foretold in Daniel's vision will recommence. The final week of "*sevens*" that completes the 70 "*sevens*" determined on Daniel’s people, the Jews, will then start. God divided the 490 years prophesied on the nation of Israel into

periods of 49 years, 434 years, and 7 years. It is as if He were trying to show us that the 490 years is not a concurrent period of time. The vision was for Israel, but because we (the church) have been *grafted* in, the prophecy affects us as well. This point has significant implications for our understanding of events that we will encounter as we continue our study in the book of Revelation.

It is the cataclysmic events of this last seven-year period that we will be concerned with in our study of the book of Revelation. Daniel's vision has some important things to say about this time in history. It talks about the ruler that will come "*establishing a covenant*" with many people at the beginning of the seven-year period. Daniel Chapter 8 indicates that this ruler will come from an area of the modern world that corresponds geographically to one of the four regions into which Alexander's Kingdom was divided after his death in 323 BC. This ruler that comes is thought to be the antichrist, who will come speaking peace and making an agreement with the Jews to allow sacrificial ceremonies to be reestablished in the so-called "tribulation" temple that will be constructed on Mt. Moriah, at the site of the original temple built by Solomon, and close to the location of the crucifixion of Christ and the offering of Isaac by Abraham.

In the middle of the seven-year period the antichrist will cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease, and he will order the erection of the “*abomination of desolation*”, referred to in Daniel’s vision, within the temple. This will be anathema to the Jews, who will rebel, causing the antichrist to initiate severe persecution until “*the end that is decreed is poured out on him*”. The last three-and-one-half years of this seven-year period is the time during which the transgression of mankind will be completed, sin will be brought to an end, and wickedness will be redressed. We will see, as events in the book of Revelation unfold, that this last three-and-one-half year period of time is initiated by “*great tribulation*” (Matt. 24:21). Referring to this time in Matthew 24:22, Jesus told His disciples,

“And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened”.

We will consider the meaning of this scripture later on in our discussion on the timing of the rapture. These last three-and-one-half years usher in the time referred to in Daniel’s vision when righteousness will be introduced that will last forever, vision and prophesy will be brought to an end, and Christ will be anointed King on the earth. The events that occur during this time lead into the period referred to as the “millennium”, the 1000-year rule of Christ on earth.

With this introduction we are now ready to begin our study of the book of Revelation. The following summary of the above will hopefully help to guide us in our consideration of the timing of the momentous events described:

- 1.** There is a period of seven-years duration in the future during which God will cleanse and reclaim the earth. This period of time should rightfully be identified as the 70th week of Daniel's prophecy, not "tribulation", as is often the case. After this "cleansing and reclaiming", Christ will establish His rule on earth from Jerusalem, Satan will be bound in the abyss, and righteousness will prevail for a period of 1000 years.
- 2.** A ruler (antichrist) will rise to power at the beginning of this seven-year period. He will come speaking peace and will make an agreement with the Jews in Israel to allow the OT practice of sacrifice and oblation to be reestablished. This ancient Jewish ceremony will be performed in a temple, which will be located on Mt. Moriah, at the site of the original temple built by Solomon, and near the location of the crucifixion of Christ and the offering of Isaac by Abraham.
- 3.** In the middle of the seven-year period the antichrist will cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease, and he will order the erection of the

“abomination of desolation” in a wing of the temple. The Jewish people will rebel at this, and a period of severe persecution described as the Great Tribulation will be initiated.

4. The first three-and one-half years of Daniel’s 70th week should properly be referred to as a time of *“birth pangs”* (Mic. 4:9), or the *“beginning of sorrows”* (M’t. 24:8). The time of Great Tribulation begins at the mid-point of the seven-year period and continues until the time that the wrath of God is poured out on the earth (Re. 6:17, 15:1). This time of wrath culminates with the battle of Armageddon, after which Jesus will establish His Kingdom on earth. At that time Jesus will assume His throne in Jerusalem and rule the world for 1000 years (Re. 20:4).
5. At the end of the 1000 years God will release Satan from the abyss and the last war on earth will begin during which God will consume His enemies with fire from heaven (Re. 20:7-9). Satan is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone at the conclusion of this war.
6. The final judgment (the Great White Throne Judgment) will then occur when all the dead will be judged from the Book(s) of Life and the Book(s) of Works. After this death and Hades are cast into the lake of fire.

7. God then creates a new heaven and earth, and a new Jerusalem for the first heaven and earth are passed away (Re. 21:1).

Chapter 1

Christ Appears to John

This first chapter of Revelation is introductory in nature. John was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day when he heard a great voice like a trumpet behind him. He turned to see the Lord clothed with a garment down to His feet, with a golden sash about His upper body. His hair was like wool and was as white as snow. His eyes were as a flame of fire, His feet like burnished brass, and His voice sounded like many waters. He had seven stars in His right hand and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword. His countenance was like the sun, and when John saw Him he fell at His feet like a dead man. There is no doubt that this was Jesus for He is described as being like the Son of man, even though His appearance was such that John did not recognize Him. This is the way He often referred to Himself when He was ministering while on earth. However, He did not have the same physical appearance that He did after His death, and during the forty days after the resurrection when He appeared to the disciples and other followers in Jerusalem, on the road to Emmaus, by the Sea of Galilee, to the women at the tomb, and at His ascension. Here He ap-

pears to John in His glorified body as the second person of the trinity, and He identifies Himself to alleviate John's fear (Re. 1:17-18).

In Revelation 1:18 Jesus says:

"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death".

Jesus is the first-fruit of many that will live, die, arise, and live forever. He took the keys of hell and death from Satan when He descended into the "*lower parts of the earth*" and took Satan's "*captives captive*" (Ephesians 4:8-9). Colossians 2:15 indicates that Christ triumphed over principalities and powers at this time. It seems that Jesus Christ's triumph stripped Satan of much of his authority by taking his prized captives, and removing his authority over death and hell.

These captives were apparently the redeemed who lived and died under the old covenant. Hebrews 11:13-14 describes these captives,

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth"

The description of Jesus given in Revelation 1:12-16 is nearly identical to the description of the messenger who answered Daniel's prayer in Daniel 10:5-6. Daniel addresses this messenger as Lord, and the wording in this chapter seems to imply that he could be the pre-incarnate Christ. However, the "*Prince of Persia*" delayed this messenger on his way to Daniel, and even if we accept

the idea that Jesus visited Daniel to deliver this prophecy, it is difficult to envision Him being delayed by the Prince of Persia. We do find scriptures in the Old Testament which seem to suggest the presence of Jesus in the form of a messenger, one of the most notable being that in Genesis 18:1, where He is referred to as Lord. Also, Malachi 3:1 refers to the Lord (Adoni) as the “*messenger of the covenant*”, being sent in the end-times by the Lord (Yahweh). Vines Complete Expository Dictionary of the Old and New Testament states that “the relation between the Lord and the *angel of the Lord* is often so close that it is difficult to separate the two. This identification has led some interpreters to conclude that the *angel of the Lord* was the pre-incarnate Christ.” Nevertheless, to imagine Jesus being detained by one of Satan’s chief princes, or needing assistance to break free from a delaying entanglement does not jibe with our view of Him from the NT. We know Jesus as the Christ in the NT, as our Savior and victor over Satan. No chief prince, nor could Satan himself, now frustrate the goals and intents of the *Lion of Judah*.

In Revelation 1:19 Jesus told John to:

“Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter”.

It is common in Bible prophecy to have more than one fulfillment. In other words, a prophecy can have an earlier, partial fulfillment, and a later complete

fulfillment. We see this in the prophecy concerning the desecration of the temple, which occurred first in 168 BC, and will again take place in the middle of Daniel's 70th week. In the interpretation of many expositors, Antiochus Epiphanes brings about the earlier, partial fulfillment of this prophecy, which is later completed by the antichrist, when he erects the abomination of desolation in the temple. In Revelation 1:19 Jesus tells John that some of the prophetic vision has more than one fulfillment, and its application is to more than one time. The early chapters (Chapter 2 and 3) obviously apply to John's time (~94 AD), when he received the vision, as well as to later as the early churches began to disappear, and later still when the members of these churches are judged. Most of the vision concerns the last seven-year period when the antichrist rises to power and God brings the end of the rule of man over the earth. Finally, the vision ends with a description of the period of the millennium, and the new heaven and earth.

We note in Revelation 1:4 that John is writing to seven churches in Asia that existed at that time. This would appear to be the first fulfillment of the vision, having to do with "*things which are*". Jesus had a message for these churches that addressed their problems and evaluated their works, but He also had a

message for churches of the last days. We will see, as the revelation unfolds, that it is concerned primarily with events that occur during Daniel's 70th week, and following. Chapters 2 and 3 contain the only portion of the book of Revelation that has application to John's day, and a strong case exists for the relevance of these two chapters to churches of the last days, as well.

In Revelation 1:1 John is told that the purpose of the revelation is to show Jesus' servants the things that "*must shortly come to pass*". This is a phrase used many times in the Bible to refer to the last days. A group known as Amillennists in our own day justify their belief that most, if not all, the events described in the Olivet discourse and in the book of Revelation, occurred prior to and during 70 AD, when the Jewish temple was destroyed by the Roman army under the rule of Vespasian and his son Titus. Many Jewish people were killed, and Jerusalem was demolished at this time, but it is a stretch beyond the limit of credulity to believe that all the events in the book of Revelation occurred at this time. Thus, we conclude from this verse that the principal relevance of the book of Revelation is to the last days, a future time in history that only God knows.

As the revelation gets more specific John is told to write to the "*angels*" of these seven churches, which are represented by the seven stars in the Lord's

right hand. Although some expositors have indicated that this is a reference to the pastor or bishop of these individual churches, the Greek word used here is interpreted as “one sent, a messenger, angel”. Apparently, John writes to these seven churches located in Asia minor (present-day Turkey), and the spiritual guardian (angel), over the particular church then communicates the message through believers within each particular church. In the same manner the correction and guidance contained in these letters is communicated to believers in end-time churches by the Holy Spirit enlightening their understanding. These letters are like other letters in the NT: they address problems characteristic of individual churches in John's day, as well as problems common to latter-day churches. God's army of angels contends with Satan's hordes over nations (Da. 10:13), and it seems reasonable to assume that this conflict extends to cities, church denominations, and individual churches and believers. That God assigns His angels to keep charge over individual believers is clear (Ps. 91:11), and it is also obvious that God has assigned angels to certain churches, as is indicated here in the book of Revelation. It is noteworthy that many other churches existed at this time, and that there were more than seven churches in Asia Minor (modern Turkey). Chuck Smith in his book “What The World Is Coming To” mentions one of these churches at Colosse, and points out that it

was a major church. This is the church that Paul wrote to in the letter to the Colossians in the NT. Apparently, these particular seven churches were selected because of their strengths and weaknesses, which were representative of the strengths and weaknesses of churches making up the body of Christ in the last days. The good works, as well as the problems, described in these letters can certainly be identified in churches of the 21st century. In Revelation 1:20, Jesus tells John that the seven stars in His right hand are the angels of the seven churches. The number seven represents completeness in the bible. This seems to further support the view that the problems and works of these seven churches (possibly in conjunction with the other churches to which letters are addressed in the NT), encompass most, if not all of the problems in the body of Christ in the last days.

Jesus also says that the seven candlesticks of Revelation 1:13 represent these seven churches. Is it possible that the contemporary churches to which these letters are addressed are providing all the *light* during these last days? If so, we need to study the message given to each of them with great diligence, asking for wisdom as we try to interpret this guidance as it applies to our own part of the body of Christ.

Chapter 2

Letter to the Church at Ephesus

In the letter to the Church at Ephesus we find Jesus identified as the one that “*holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.*” From this introduction it would seem that Jesus is sending a message to the Church at Ephesus from one who is responsible for their spiritual growth, somewhat like a bishop in modern church vernacular. As such, we would expect His message to be related to the spiritual life of the church, and as we read the letter we see that this is so. John was Bishop of the church at Ephesus for many years, and for him to write this message to the church he knew so well must have been especially heartwarming on the one hand, and gut-wrenching on the other. This church had worked diligently, and had rejected evildoers, including some who said they were apostles and were not, but were liars. This is something that seldom happens in modern-day churches; nevertheless, it is not unheard of for a church body to reject evangelists, ministers, or leaders, found to be ungodly. The collapse of several large television

ministries in the past could probably be traced to evangelists lying about who they were (morally and spiritually). The Roman Catholic Church is currently dealing with priests who have committed sexual sin with underage parishioners, an especially heinous form of lying about who they were. The Episcopal Church has also been in the news regarding their appointment of an admitted homosexual as Bishop. This appointment is reportedly causing a serious rift within this denomination. A few church bodies apply God's judgment to these situations, but it seems that church denominational hierarchy, more often than not, must be dragged into confronting these issues. False teachers, ministers, and leaders could be one of the problems Jesus is trying to get us to address in these last days. There are certainly many examples today of ministers who do not believe the fundamental truths of Christianity, and do not live their lives as they would if they were *in Christ*. Paul calls these ministers "*enemies of the cross of Christ*" (Philippians. 3:18). In Titus 1:11, Paul further states that these "*talkers teach things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake*". The Bible is clear about how the body is to deal with sexual sin, and enemies of the cross of Christ. These sins require severe corrective measures, and we are instructed to remove the offender from the fellowship of the body in cases of grievous offenses.

In spite of the good things Jesus had to say about the Ephesian church, He had something against them; they left their first love. The Greek word interpreted love here means agape love, as defined in 1 Corinthians 13. Agape love is an attribute of the Holy Spirit within us, but for it to be manifested in our lives we must let God have full control, and be obedient to the guidance He gives. Many expositors assume that this criticism applies to the church's lack love for Christ, but the description of agape love in this passage would seem to apply more directly to relations within the church body, and with the outside world. These two criticisms could certainly be applied to churches of today. Many Christians are fearful of mentioning the name of Jesus Christ in secular surroundings, but it is impossible to be effective as "*salt of the earth*" (M't. 5:13) if we never shake any out in our daily lives. We cannot have Christ in us without being *in Him*. If I am *in Christ* contacts that I make in my daily life should sense Christ's presence in my physical appearance, words, and actions. Most of the sermons preached on Sunday in a typical US church include a lot about God's love, but very little about God's discipline and "pruning". Could it be that what the church needs is more preaching about the Lord's chastening? "*For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth*" (Hebrews. 12:6). We need to remember that

we (the church) are Christ's body, charged with **being** Him here on earth. We should heed Paul's advice about the body as outlined in 1 Corinthians 12:14-26,

“For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not part of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole body were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now they are many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need; but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.”

The Lord obviously considered the lack of love a serious matter, for He goes on to say that He will remove their candlestick (more correctly “*lampstand*”, as in the GNT), if they do not repent and do the “*first works*”. The word lampstand refers to the spiritual “light” represented by the Ephesian church to the first century world, and by the churches of the latter days to their world. A lamp consumes oil which in this case represents the Holy Spirit; thus, the church at Ephesus was providing “light” for their world through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Unless they repented and returned to their first (agape) love,

the Lord threatened to come “quickly” to remove their “light”. How many present-day churches could we identify as having this same problem? How many churches you know that are truly lifting up Christ and letting Him draw all men to Himself. Jesus Christ is the One that sends the Holy Spirit to dwell within believers, and the Holy Spirit ministers only what the Lord tells Him (Joh. 16:13). When individual believers fall away from their first (agape) love they “*become as sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal*” (GNT). In other words they become bombastic (loud and full of words without substance: of no use to the kingdom of God).

The message to the church at Ephesus contains a great teaching; if we can let God reproduce it in our lives the world will know that we are Christians by our love for Christ, and for each other (Joh. 13:35). Each of us is unique in body, soul, and spirit. Each one of us has our own chemical makeup, or code (DNA), and this shows up in our unique fingerprint and heel print, voice, appearance, personality, and style (Ps. 139:13-17). I was surprised when access to secure areas began to be controlled by using an eye scan. It seems that we are continually learning how truly unique we really are. God also gave each one of us a human spirit (Ec. 12:7) that is unique. This is one of the lessons that Paul tries to get across in 1 Corinthians 12:14-30. God has a plan for each one of us and

there are things that He can achieve through one individual that He cannot achieve in the same way through someone else. We need to recognize that God uses the less comely parts of the church body to minister to the more sufficient parts, and vice-versa. We need more tears and less sneers for each other's hurts.

This church hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which also the Lord hated. The Nicolaitans were followers of Nicolaus, who was the founder of a heretical sect during the apostolic age. The word Nicolaus means *one who conquers the people*. History records that the Nicolaitanes “abandoned themselves to pleasure like goats, leading a life of self indulgence” (Clement of Alexander). Nicolaus is likened to Balaam, who led the Jews into immorality and wickedness. Similarity in the teachings and church structure under the Nicolaitans, who exercised power over the people, and the practices of the church from the time of Constantine until the reformation, is striking. It was largely resistance to giving up this power over the people that led to the conflict during the Reformation in the late middle ages. Any church in which the members of the body look to the pastor as being the channel they must go through to reach God is guilty of this hateful act. Jesus came to reconcile us to God, and a vital aspect of this reconciliation is the direct access we have to God because “*the*

veil of the temple was rent in the midst” by Jesus death on the cross. Believers into Jesus Christ talk to God directly (not through an intermediary), because of what Jesus did for us on the cross. We come to Him directly to receive His guidance and wisdom about our concerns. God often tells us things about our lives that no other person could understand or know. He hates anything that interferes with this relationship that cost His Son so much, and we should hate it also.

This letter to the Ephesians closes with an interesting statement. Revelation 2:7 says:

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches; to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God”.

The word “*Spirit*” as used in this passage is usually understood to refer to the Holy Spirit. The Greek word interpreted here is widely used in the NT to refer to the human spirit, spiritual beings (including angels), and the Holy Spirit. In this verse the Spirit is talking to churches, rather than individual believers. This seems to be a different ministry than that foretold by Jesus in describing the Holy Spirit coming into individual believers to abide forever (Joh. 14:16, 17). The word “*Spirit*” as used here may refer to the angel of the church at Ephesus, rather than the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy

Spirit seems to be totally effected through the life of the individual believer, and the scriptures describe His role to be that of paraclete, helper, interpreter, and comforter. John recorded the prophecy concerning the church at Ephesus (as well as other churches identified in Revelation), and the angel(s) over these churches then conveyed the message to members of the body that have *ears to hear* (have the Holy Spirit). 1 Corinthians 2:11-12 says that only those who have received the Holy Spirit understand the things of God. These letters contain discipline and guidance that require spiritual discernment. Those who act on the Lord's guidance and overcome the world's evils will be welcomed into the kingdom of God, and they will be given eternal life. They will eat of the tree of life (Re. 22:1-2), located in the new Jerusalem, in the midst of the Paradise of God.

Letter to the Church at Smyrna

For the letter to the angel of the church in Smyrna, Jesus speaks as the person that ministered in Israel for three and one-half years. He identifies Himself as "*the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive*". He speaks as one who suffered under the scourge, was beaten, mocked, spat upon, nailed to a cross, burdened with the sin of the world, and died from suffocation associated with

crucifixion. He tells the Smyrna church not to fear the things they will suffer, which includes imprisonment, affliction, poverty, and death. He promises that they will receive a crown of life if they are faithful unto death, as He Himself was. James 1:12 describes this crown as follows,

“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried [hath been approved], he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.”

This is a crown signifying eternal life given to the man who has endured temptations in which he has proved victorious. The Greek word *peirasmos*, which is interpreted as temptation in the NT, denotes a trial or test, or “to put to the proof”. From this we understand that temptation itself is not good or evil; it is simply a test revealing where we stand in the process of sanctification (becoming holy), and who we really are in Christ. The Smyrna church represents the churches around the world that suffer in poverty, affliction, and sometimes death. Jesus recognizes their works, and, although they are poor in the eyes of the world, they are rich in their spiritual stature with God. There are many churches and Christian groups in third-world countries that fit this description. It seems that persecution, and lack of worldly status often results in spiritual growth; whereas comfort and prosperity foster lethargy and stagnation.

Jesus had little to say against the Smyrnians. However, there were some in this church that claimed to be Jews and were not, but instead were a “*synagogue*” (gathering place) of Satan. The Lord measures a man by looking at his heart (1 Sa. 16:7): He knows those that belong to Him and those that belong to Satan. In the modern-day church these “false Jews” probably represent parishioners that say they are believers but do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Others, may refuse to accept Christ’s lordship over their lives in sanctification. They insist on asserting their right to their body: they continue to do their own thing.

At the end of this letter we again find the phrase: “*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches*”. This phrase is repeated at the end of all seven letters, thus we must consider it to be important. We know that God speaks to believers through the Holy Spirit within, and we receive the Holy Spirit’s guidance via our human spirit (Joh. 4:24, Ro. 8:16, 1 Co. 2:12). If we hope to hear and understand God we must we must have a *quicken*ed spirit, one that has been made alive to Him. Believers in these last days need to be sensitive to the *messenger* to their church body, to hear what he is saying to them through the Holy Spirit within each member.

Revelation 2:11 says that, “He that overcomes in no wise shall be injured of the second death”.

We will see later in Revelation 20:6, that for believers having part in the first resurrection (rapture/resurrection), the second death (lake of fire and brimstone) has no power.

Letter to the Church at Pergamos

Jesus speaks to the church at Pergamos as one on the offense. This is the same manifestation of Jesus that John witnessed in Revelation 1:16, when the two-edged sword was “*going forth*”. This is thought by some expositors to infer judgment, but it also implies that Jesus is on the offensive. The similarity between this two-edged sword and the “*sword of the Spirit*”, which is identified as the “*word of God*” in Ephesians 6:17, is interesting. The “*sword of the Spirit*” is the only offensive weapon mentioned for the believer to use in standing against the wiles of the devil. Those that have the Holy Spirit have this sword available for use on offense, as well as the breastplate, helmet, girdle, shoes, and shield, for use on defense. There is no mention of this sword having two-edges like the sword in Revelation 2:12. The Greek word used for the “*sword of the Spirit*” is interpreted as “a large knife, poniard; the sword of the executioner” (Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised). Thus, the sword mentioned

in Ephesians 6:17 is not a two-edged sword, as is the sword in Revelation 1:16, 2:12, and 19:15. These scriptures refer to two different types of swords: one (with one edge) wielded by the believer which is the spoken Word of God, to be used offensively when Satan attacks, and one (with two edges) wielded by Christ, the living Word of God who speaks the Word of God as He takes the offensive in battle . Vincent's Word Studies in the NT says that *two-edged* in this scripture means literally, "*two-mouthed*". Jesus used the sword with one edge (the Word of God), with great effectiveness when Satan confronted Him in the wilderness following His baptism. Here He appears as the second person of the trinity, ready to make war by speaking the Word of God, as well as being the Word of God, the second person of trinity. Those that hold to the teachings of Balaam, and the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, face the same awesome power that Christ will manifest in the final battle of Armageddon, when He comes with His two-edged sword, prepared for battle.

Pergamos was located in an area well known for idol worship, and it is to this that Jesus refers when He says that He knows where they dwell, where the throne of Satan is. This may refer to the magnificent altar to Zeus, which was located in Pergamos. Dr. David Jeremiah in his study guide entitled: "Escape the Coming Night", indicates that Asclepius, the god of healing, was known as

the Pergamene God. Although heathens surrounded this church, yet the believers at Pergamos held fast to Jesus' name and did not deny the faith, even when one of their leaders was martyred. Churches in America and Western Europe have not experienced this kind of persecution, but there are many churches throughout the Moslem and Communist controlled parts of the world that have been severely persecuted, and leaders, as well as members, have been killed. 2 Timothy 3:12 indicates that all true believers will suffer persecution. America's churches need a wake-up call, for we face a time in the future that will try men's souls, when the antichrist will proclaim himself as God and demand that all men worship him on penalty of death.

Jesus had a few things against the church at Pergamos: some members held to the teachings of Balaam, who led the men of Israel into fornication with Moabite and Midianite women. 2 Peter 2:15 states that Balaam "*loved the wages of unrighteousness*". For personal gain he was willing to prophesy against the Israelites, who were in conflict with Balak, king of the Moabites, but God would not allow it. Prophecy in today's churches is more enlightened teaching than it is foretelling future events. Old Testament prophecy usually foretold the coming of God's judgment as a result of unrighteousness among the Israelites. Old Testament prophets were also consulted about upcoming major decisions af-

fecting the nation; they were expected to determine God's will. In US churches of today, prophecies about the future actions of God are seldom heard: prophecies given are often relatively innocuous, and have nothing to do with God judging the church, city, state or nation. The prophecy heard in today's churches does not resemble prophecy found in the OT, and it is difficult to believe that our churches, cities, states, and nation are so godly that we do not need correction. We are charged to judge prophecy (1 Co. 14:29). It is a shame that there is so little of it to judge.

The church at Pergamos also included some that held to the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes. We noted earlier, in the letter to the church at Ephesus, that Jesus said He hated the deeds of this sect; now we see Him specifically focusing on their doctrine, which involves the leadership of the church asserting power over the members of the body. Jesus tells them to repent or He will come to fight against them with the sword of His mouth. Churches of today that hold to this doctrine and do not repent will find themselves fighting against the *Word of God*, with His two-edged sword (Rev. 19:13).

Jesus told this church that He would give *hidden manna* to those that overcome. The Greek word interpreted *hidden* here means "to lay up in store". We know that God fed the Jews in the wilderness with manna for forty years, and

therewith sustained their lives. If we apply this scripture to churches during the last days, we conclude that this must refer to the last half of Daniel's 70th week, when antichrist requires all people to receive His identifying mark to be able to buy food (Re. 13:16-17). God will seemingly lay up hidden manna for those that overcome (refuse to take the antichrist's mark) in order to sustain their lives.

Jesus also promises to give the overcomer a white pebble, with a name written thereon, that no man knows except the one who receives it. During this time pebbles like this were employed in voting or balloting, but in this case the pebble seems to be more of a token, given by the Lord to signify the overcomer's victory over the world. Names were very significant during Bible times. Old Testament Jews would not even utter God's name for fear of being irreverent. When the angel Gabriel told Zacharias that he would have a son, he was told to name him John. Later, when John was born, Zacharias' kin marveled that he and Elizabeth did not name him after his father. In this time, a person's name said a lot about who the person was, not only to his family, but also about his relationship with God. God renamed several individuals in the Bible after He chose them, e.g. Abram (Abraham), Jacob (Israel), and Saul (Paul).

The name that is on the pebble received by these overcomers will undoubtedly reflect their life in Christ.

Letter to the Church at Thyatira

To the church at Thyatira Jesus identifies Himself as the Son of God, whose eyes are as a flame of fire and His feet like fine brass. The Greek word used here for fire means to be kindled, to be on fire, burn, flame. This seems to indicate that the Lord is much distressed at the condition of the church at Thyatira. The Greek word interpreted “*fine brass*” in this scripture has been thought to refer to the Lord coming in judgment by many expositors. The word is defined as referring to “orichalcum, fine bronze, a factitious metal of which there are several varieties, the white being of the highest repute, or, deep-tinted frankincense”. The word “factitious” means anything that is not genuine or spontaneous, but is forced or artificial. These characteristics certainly do not describe God who is unique, absolutely genuine, always spontaneous, and forever long-suffering. Therefore, it is suggested that the phrase “*fine brass*” in this scripture could refer to amber-colored frankincense. Frankincense is a sweet-smelling savor used in the preparation of holy incense (Ex. 30:34). It was used in meal offerings (Le. 2:1, 2, 15, 16), with shewbread (Le.

24:7), and as a tribute to Zion (Is. 60:6). It is also mentioned in Song of Songs 3:6, to describe a king (Christ?) coming out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense. All of these scriptures that mention frankincense seem to foreshadow Christ, in one way or another.

The Lord says that He knows the works, love, service, faith, and endurance of this church. He then mentions their works again, and adds that the “*last*” will be more than the “*first*”. The Greek word interpreted as “*more*” in this passage means “more in number”, so we know that Jesus is talking about the same type of works, but just a greater number. This could be interpreted to refer to the works of the end times church(s) being much greater in number than the works of the Thyatira church located in Asia Minor at that time.

Jesus then goes on to say that He has a few things against this church in that they continue to allow a woman identified as Jezabel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and mislead His bondmen to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols. Although the word Jezabel is used in the bible symbolically, it seems likely in this case that there was a woman with this name in the Thyatira church in Asia Minor during John’s time, and that she was teaching false doctrine to that body. Some Hebrew references to the word Jezabel, as used in the OT, indicate that the original use of the word may have im-

plied, “Baal exalts, or is husband to”. This would certainly agree with the meaning here in that Baal was a common name given to the God of fertility in Canaan. Baal is also interpreted to mean owner, husband, or master. As applied to the end-times church, it seems likely that this scripture has reference to false teachings of all types, as well as to consuming (feeding the mind) things that are not godly. We saw in the letter to the church at Ephesus that they would not tolerate false teachers, but here we find a church (type) that allows false teaching and other practices that feed the old sin nature. Referring to Jezebel, Revelation 2:21 - 23 GNT says:

“And I gave her time that she might repent of her fornication. And she did not repent. Behold, I am throwing her into a bed, and into great affliction those committing adultery with her, unless they repent of their works. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches will know that I am the (One) searching the inner parts and hearts. And I will give to each of you according to your works.”

If this scripture applies to the last days it has great significance to us. We know that fornication refers to illicit sexual intercourse, which is often referred to in the Bible as *knowing* a person of the opposite sex without the sanctity of marriage. This act carries overtones of spiritual significance, as indicated by 1 Corinthians 6:16 which says,

“What? Know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh”.

Ephesians 5:32 says that this “*coming together in one flesh*” is a great mystery. It is likened to Jesus’ spiritual relationship with the church. I interpret this scripture to say that when two people come together in the act of sexual intercourse some sort of spiritual connection occurs. If the encounter is illicit (outside of marriage), and either one, or both, of the participants are believers, the consequences are serious indeed. Believers have a spiritual connection to Christ through the Holy Spirit, and such an encounter introduces another (foreign) spiritual presence. This scripture indicates that in some way the spirit of Jezebel will be active in latter-day churches, and some will “*know*” (accept) this teaching. Jesus says that if these adulterers do not repent they will be cast into “*great affliction*”. Thus, we see that married believers caught up in this evil will be afflicted with great distress of mind.

We know the works of both believers and unbelievers will be judged when Jesus returns, and for believers there will be rewards based on the good works they have done (through Christ) on earth (M’t. 16:27; 1 Co. 3:13-15). In Revelation 2:23, Jesus says that He is going to search hearts and give to each of us according to our works. I believe that He is talking to believers for He is writing to the church, and He uses the term “*adultery*”, which biblically refers to a person in a spiritual relationship, or covenant, breaking that covenant to *know* an-

other. This is the sin the Israelites committed time after time: going after other Gods. For latter-day believers this must include anything that takes God's place in our lives: anything that we turn our worship to. God is a jealous God, and He will not tolerate perfidy on the part of those He has given so much for; but He also says that these adulterers can repent and escape the consequences of their mistake. He also says that He will kill her (Jezabel's) children with death. If a believer becomes so consumed by other spiritual influences that he/she could rightly be called a child of Jezebel, God says that He will kill them. For those at Thyatira that do not accept this Jezebel teaching and who do not know the depths (deep-laid plans) of Satan, He says that He will not put any other burden on them.

For those in the church at Thyatira that overcome the world, and keep His works until the end, Christ promises to give them authority over nations. They are to rule with a rod of iron and break the nations in pieces (humble them), even as His heavenly Father broke Jesus. He also promises to give them the morning star, which is probably a reference to Christ (Revelation 22:16). The question arises as to why these Thyatiran overcomers would be given such great authority. We are told in other places in the Bible that Jesus will rule the nations with a rod of iron. We do not possess the knowledge or the authority

within ourselves to act as judges, and this is why God jealously guards His authority to judge people, angels, tongues, nations, and worlds. While on earth we are cautioned against judging one another (Romans 14:10-13), but are advised to judge *things* (teachings, prophecy, actions, etc.), lest we be led astray (1 Corinthians 2:15, 1 Thessalonians 5:21, 1 John 4:1). After we have been resurrected and have been made *one* with Christ, then we will be qualified for this humbling task.

These Thyatiran overcomers will be ruling under Jesus' authority and in the same manner (with a rod) that He will rule. If they are to rule in this manner they will certainly need Jesus in all His fullness, which may be the reason why they are given the promise of the morning star. The overcomers from this church have overcome Satan and some of his most devious plans. Possibly it is the wisdom and maturity gained from these encounters that qualifies them for positions of authority.

Chapter 3

Letter to the Church at Sardis

To the church at Sardis Christ comes as One who has the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars. These seven spirits are not positively identified in the Bible, however, Revelation 4:5 says that these spirits are “*seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God*”. Isaiah’s prophesy about the coming of Christ (Is. 11:2) says that,

“The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord” (NIV).

The Hebrew word interpreted here as “*Lord*”, is *Yahweh*, so we know that this refers to the “*Spirit*” and “*fear*” of God the Father. If we include the “*Spirit of the Lord*” in our enumeration of spirits in this passage we arrive at a total of seven, which we know signifies completeness. Could these be the same spirits referred to in Revelation 1:4, 4:5, and 5:6? Of course, no one but God knows the answer to this question, but we do know that Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would have these spirits, and in Revelation 3:1, Jesus identifies Himself as the

one who has the seven Spirits of God. We also know that the “*seven stars*” mentioned here refers to the angels representing the seven churches, so Jesus must be dealing with a spiritual problem in the church at Sardis. As we read on we see that is so, the Sardis church had a reputation of being a church that was alive and on fire for the Lord, but when Jesus looked on their hearts He observes that they and their works are dead. The Sardis church had refused to let the blood of Jesus purge their conscience from dead works in accordance with Hebrews 9:14, and the Holy Spirit had not renewed their minds (Ro. 12:2). It may be that these “dead” members of the church body at Sardis had not received the Holy Spirit and had only a head knowledge of Christ: did not have Him in their hearts. We know that until the disciples were baptized in the Holy Spirit they had no power to confront Satan. They could not represent Christ with boldness, and could not do the works He did on earth until after Pentecost. James 2:19-20 says:

“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?”

Believing in God with your mind only is not enough. You must believe *into Christ* and have Him *in you* before your life can be changed so that you can do the works of the Lord (John 14:20-21). I have heard that being in Christ is like

being in a building: Satan must come through Christ (the building) before he can attack those within (1 John 5:18).

The old Adamic nature rules in our hearts until we join Jesus on the cross, are baptized into His death, and resurrected in Him. He then becomes part of our lives, quickens our human spirit, gives us a new heart, gives us His Holy Spirit, and initiates His mind-reprogramming ministry (Ez. 36:25-27; Ro. 12:2). The sin nature we inherited from Adam is the part of us that begins to die when we believe into Christ, and give Him control (recognize Him as Lord of our lives). Unfortunately, the psyche, the part of our nature that influences thought and behavior, remains in our lives, thus we continue to be susceptible to lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and the pride of life (1 Joh. 2:16). These are the three influences that we must conquer with the help of the Holy Spirit. When God renews (removes the hard places from) our heart He gives us the ability to hear and consider His wisdom, and choose it over our old memories, lust and pride. We then have a direct connection to God through the Holy Spirit, who constantly provides counsel, allowing us to make choices of good over evil. This is what the Bible refers to as renewing our minds, or sanctification (conforming us to the image of Christ). Of course, how much freedom we give the Holy Spirit in conforming us to the likeness of Christ is up to us. We

have to be willing to lay down our own beliefs, ideas, and desires (basically ourselves), and listen to the Spirit within. We have to be willing to be broken bread and poured out wine.

How many contemporary churches could we describe with the words that Jesus had for this church? How many churches are representing Jesus Christ by continuing the work He came to do on earth: preaching the gospel to the poor, healing the broken-hearted, delivering the captives, restoring sight to the blind, liberating them that are bruised, and proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord (Is. 61:1; Lu. 4:18-19)? How many churches are fulfilling the commission that Jesus gave before He ascended to heaven: go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? How many churches emphasize the winning of souls, and building up of the body of Christ as their principal tasks? In how many churches do you hear preaching about repentance for sins? How many churches include an invitation in their Sunday morning services to receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord? It cannot be because we have not been adequately warned. In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus judges the nations based on these very things: did we feed the hungry, provide drink to the thirsty, provide shelter to the stranger, clothe the naked, visit the sick, and come to those in prison? Sadly, we have come short in carrying out

Jesus' ministry on earth, and He will have to clean up the mess we have made before He can come to rule.

Jesus goes on to tell this church to be watchful and to strengthen the things that remain and that are about to die. He tells them to remember the things they have been taught, and to repent of their dead ways, otherwise He will come upon them unexpectedly, and they will not be ready to meet Him. This sounds a lot like the warning given to those in the church at Thyatira that “know” Jezebel’s teaching. Although Sardis church members were apparently believers, they had not allowed the Holy Spirit to renew their minds, and consequently they had no (or few) works that could survive the refiner’s fire (1 Co. 3:13-15). Therefore, when Christ comes upon them unexpectedly, they will not be prepared to meet Him, and they will have nothing worthy to judge. Some may be like the five foolish virgins in Matthew 25:1-12, and will hear the Lord say “*I know you not*”. Even in the church at Sardis there were a few that “*defiled not their garments*”. These few walk with Christ in white because they are worthy. These are overcomers that will be clothed in white garments, representing righteous acts done in their lives. Christ further states that He will not blot out their names from the Book of Life, but will confess their names before God the Father and His angels. This is a difficult scripture for many to accept

since it seems to imply that Christ will blot names from the Book of Life under some circumstances. Revelation 17:8 states that those that dwell on the earth,

“... whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, ... will wonder, seeing the beast that was and is not, and yet is”.

This indicates that God wrote certain names in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world. Ephesians 1:4 also states that:

“According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, ...”

Thus, we conclude that the names written in the Book of Life are those that God chose before He spoke the world into existence. This statement is loaded with theological questions about predestination, freewill, the omniscience of God, and, more to the point of our discussion, would God write our names in the Book of Life and later blot them out? We cannot address all of these questions in our commentary on Revelation, so we will confine our discussion to the question at hand: does God blot names out of His Book of Life?

The difficulty in accepting the idea that God would blot names out of the Book of Life comes from the belief that if we are once saved, we are always saved. This belief is often attributed to doctrine of the Baptist church, but it is widely accepted by believers of all faiths worldwide. It is based on a considerable volume of scripture, and although I do not know of a specific statement in the bible that says that a believer cannot lose his or her salvation, John's gospel

does shed further light on this question. John 6:39-40 states that it is the Father's will that none of those that He has given Jesus should be lost, and John 10:29 adds that no one can pluck those that are given to Jesus out of the Father's hand. From these scriptures we know that it is the Father's will (desire) that no one seeing the Son and believing into Him should fall into apostasy: no one can cause another to turn away from belief into Jesus (pluck them out of His hand). Whether the believer, of His own volition, can fall into apostasy is not clearly settled here since many other scriptures in the bible indicate that this can happen, even though it is not the Father's will (Jeremiah 2:11, 21; Isaiah 1:21-22, Galatians 3:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:12-18; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-5; 1 Titus 4:1-4; 2 Titus 4:2-4; Hebrews 6:4-6, 10:26-29; 1 John 4:3, Jude 17-18; Revelation Chapters 2, 3). There are many scriptures that imply, without stating it specifically, that rebirth and reconciliation with God is permanent. However, there are also specific scriptures that indicate that it is possible for God the Father to remove your name from His Book of Life. A few of these are listed below:

Ex. 32:32 - Moses asks to be blotted out of God's book.

Ex. 32:33 - God answers Moses and says that whoever sins against Him He will blot out of His book.

Ps. 69:28 - David in praying to God about his enemies says, "*Let them be blotted out of the book of the living (life), and not be written with the righteous.*"

Re. 22:19 - Says that God will take away from the Book of Life the part of anyone that takes away from the words of the book of Revelation.

In addition, there are a few scriptures that seem to indicate that it is possible to lose your relationship with Christ:

M't. 25:1-13 - In the parable of the ten virgins Jesus refuses to admit the five virgins that did not maintain oil in their lamps to the marriage feast of the Lamb. In verse 12 He says that He does not know them.

Hebrews 6:4-6 - This scripture says *"it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they fall away, to renew them to repentance; seeing they crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame"*.

Hebrews 10:26-29 - *"For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins . . . Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace"?*

Although it is very difficult to believe that a person can lose their relationship with Christ and have Him say to us at judgment, *I never knew you*; nevertheless, these scriptures are part of God's Word: we cannot ignore them.

In his book "Apostasy From The Gospel" John Owen says, "...enmity of heart is the first cause and reason why so many fall away from the doctrine of the gospel after receiving it. The only way to prevent this falling away from the

gospel is to love the truth and experience its power in the heart. . . Evangelical doctrine must be understood by the mind, loved by the heart, and willingly and gladly submitted to by the will (Ro. 6:17).” Owen goes on to say that apostasy arises from men’s refusal to accept evangelical truths on God’s authority alone, “Today there are many in the church who subject Scripture to man’s finite, limited and corrupted reason. It is man’s reason and not God’s infallible revelation that determines what is true and what is false, what is good and what is evil. This has been so ever since this principle was first taught to man in the garden of Eden. The poison of these principles is greatly diffused in the world and the gospel is greatly corrupted. Such doctrines as eternal predestination, the total depravity of man concerning spiritual things, the power of Christ’s grace in the conversion of sinners, regeneration, union with Christ, the imputation of Christ’s righteousness for justification, the need for internal evangelical holiness, the need for the grace and help of the Spirit and the divine authority of the Scriptures are all rejected. Reason can see no logic in these things.” This quote emphasizes the importance of believing “*into*” Him (Joh. 6:40 GNT) versus believing “*in*” or “*on*” Him (Joh. 6:40 KJV and others).

Letter to the Church at Philadelphia

To the church at Philadelphia Christ presents Himself as the One who is holy and true, the One who has the key of David. The reference to the key of David comes from Isaiah 22:20-22. In this scripture Isaiah is prophesying about Eliakim, who was greatly honored by having the authority to determine who would be allowed to enter the King's chamber. Here Christ compares Himself to Eliakim in that He has the key to open and shut the door to the kingdom of God. Of course, we recognize Christ as the only door to heaven, and this is an allusion to that. Christ goes on to say that He has set before this church an open door, and no man can shut it. The church at Philadelphia had manifested a little power, and had kept His word and did not deny His name, so Christ opened the door to the kingdom to believers in this church. For believers in the last-days this seems to say that God has opened the door to heaven and is pouring out His Spirit in ways not seen since the outpouring at Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2. I believe the spiritual renewal we have observed in these latter days is at least a partial fulfillment of the prophesy of Joel 2:28. Although there were scattered outpourings in Europe after the reformation, beginning around 1900 God began to accelerate the building of His church

through outpourings of the Holy Spirit. In the US many Pentecostal denominations grew out of the outpouring that began in the early 1900's at Azusa Street in Los Angeles. Sometime around the middle of the twentieth century the Charismatic movement began in earnest, and believers in older, well-established, conservative denominations began to receive the Holy Spirit, and be drawn into a new, more dynamic relationship with Christ. Many non-denominational churches grew out of this movement of the Spirit; and today we find Spirit-led believers in most church congregations becoming salt to Christ's body, and, in many cases, manifesting the gifts and fruit God has provided through the Holy Spirit. Of the seven churches in Revelation, the Philadelphia church seems to best represent Christ's bride (the true church).

Christ goes on to say in this letter that liars who claim to be Jews and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan, He will cause to "*do homage*" before the feet of the saints in the church at Philadelphia. We noted earlier in discussing the church at Smyrna that those who claimed to be Jews, but were not, may represent those in end-times churches that consider themselves to be believers, but are not. It is difficult to understand the timing, and purpose of this act. It could possibly relate to the end of the seven-year period, when Christ judges the nations. Then unbelievers will know the truth, and recognize the bride for

her exalted place in Christ's kingdom. It could also refer to end-time unbelievers secretly respecting believers that remain true to their faith as martyrdom increases under the antichrist's persecution during the last seven years of Daniel's prophecy.

Christ states that because this church "*didst keep the word of my endurance*", He will keep it from the hour of trial that is about to come upon the earth. The word "*trial*" is interpreted "a putting to the proof, trial, or temptation". Those who believe in a pre-tribulation rapture of the church justify their position, in part, on this scripture. It is important to note that the scripture says, "*I will keep you out of the trial ...*". The word "*keep*" in this scripture seems to be the same word used in John 17:15, which is defined as "to preserve, shield" (Moulton's Analytical Greek Lexicon, revised). From this we conclude that Christ is not promising to rapture them before the final seven years of Daniel's prophecy, but is rather, promising to "keep them from the evil one" (Joh. 17:15). We will consider the timing of the rapture later in our analysis of the book of Revelation.

In closing this letter Christ says that He will make the overcomers from this church pillars in the temple of His God, and they will no more go out. The reference to "*pillar*" must refer to the pillars that uphold the earthly temple;

thus, the overcomer will be a leader in the new Jerusalem temple, one who upholds the structure of this spiritual “temple” . The statement that they will go no more out is difficult to interpret, but it may refer to the overcomer remaining in the holy city (new Jerusalem), and not going out through gates in the wall. There is no temple building in the new Jerusalem, so we know that this does not refer to going out of a temple building (Re. 21:22).

Christ goes on to say that He will write the name of the city of His God (new Jerusalem) upon the overcomer. Christ also says that He will write upon him “*my new name*”. We have noted before that in the Bible names have great significance. I believe that the meaning here is that Christ will give these overcomers the name that reflects that person’s spiritual identity, the name he/she will bear for eternity.

Letter to the Church at Laodicia

Christ represents Himself to this church as the “*Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God*”. This certifies that Christ is coming to the church at Laodicia with truth and certainty. He is a faithful and truthful witness to their spiritual condition, and He is qualified to judge their condition for He has been with God, the Father, since the beginning of creation. The

church at Laodicia is the only church receiving a letter that does not have even a remnant of true believers. Christ declares that the Laodician body is neither hot nor cold, and because they are lukewarm He is about to spue them out of His mouth. They believe that they are rich and need nothing, but in fact they are poor, blind and naked. Christ counsels them to buy of Him gold purified with fire that they may be clothed with white garments (righteousness) to hide their nakedness, and eye salve that they can anoint their eyes that they may see. He also says that He rebukes and disciplines those that He loves; therefore, they should be zealous and repent.

Sadly, this seems to me to be the condition of many of the churches in the US. Many are certainly rich and feel that they need nothing. Many members of these congregations attend church only once a week, on Sunday morning, and, unfortunately, many such churches no longer have a Sunday night service. If you visit one of these churches the only greeting you may get is that from the usher in the foyer who gives you the church bulletin. Visitors often leave these churches disappointed with the lack of love expressed, and the lack of any desire of the church members to know and accept them. If a visitor happens to be dressed shabbily, and is otherwise unkempt and unappealing, the reception may be even more frigid. The opportunity to worship and enter into

the presence of God in such churches may be limited by strict adherence to a very structured program and environment, and the message may, or may not, be biblical, and may, or may not have as its purpose the making of disciples of Jesus Christ.

Although negative, I feel that this is a realistic evaluation of the condition of many churches in America. If there is a war taking place on earth between good (God) and evil (Satan), I believe that any honest assessment would conclude that Satan is winning. It strikes me that this is really one of the main messages in Daniel's prophecy: when evil in the world fills the cup of transgression, God will begin preparations to return and reclaim it. As Christians we know the eventual outcome, but Jesus left us (His body) in charge with full authority and power to represent Him until He returns. It saddens my heart to see the loose, immoral, unethical, and downright evil condition of the world under our management. Many people question why God did not stop the catastrophe of September 11, 2001. They ask, "Why would God allow such a thing to happen?" I believe the proper response to this question is, "How could He do otherwise." Unfortunately, America is no longer a Christian nation, and God has made it abundantly clear that when those individuals and nations He has chosen turn against Him, He no longer blesses and protects

them from their enemies. Israel (although they are still God's chosen people) turned away from God and eventually reaped the consequences of that action. Like Israel, America has turned her back on God and we are reaping the consequences. I pray that it is not too late for us, for, though God has promised Israel that a remnant would be saved in the end, I see no such promise in the Bible for America as a nation. We need to *buy* of Christ gold purified with fire, and eye salve to anoint our eyes that we may see.

I believe that the gold in this passage represents the works and actions described by Jesus in Matthew 25:35-40, which qualify us to inherit the kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world. These works naturally follow those that are *in Christ*, for His nature is to do the will of His Father. If we do not do these works then we do not have the nature of Christ, and are thus not *in Him* (Joh. 15:4). The blessing from doing the works of God are multiplied if we receive no credit in the world for these deeds, but instead, store up our credit in heaven with God. 1 Corinthians 3:13-15 describes the scene in heaven when we meet our Lord: "...*every man's work shall be made manifest*". If the works done survive the refiner's fire, we will receive a reward; but if they are consumed we will suffer loss, yet be saved "...*as by fire*".

The “*eye salve*” in this scripture must refer to the things we can do on earth to increase our wisdom and knowledge so that we *see* things from God’s perspective. This would have to include study of the word, spending time with God, acting on our faith to cause it to increase, renewing our minds, etc.

In Revelation 3:20 GNT Jesus says,

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me”.

This scripture is often quoted to describe how Christ stands at the door of every person’s heart and knocks, waiting to be let in to bring salvation. However, in this scripture it seems more in line with the context to conclude that Christ is talking to the Laodician church, standing at the (figurative) door of the church, waiting for individual believers within to open it and let Him in so that He might share the bread of life with them. He is dealing with the whole church, but acceptance must be a personal matter for each individual. Christ has not yet spewed them out of His mouth, but instead is calling out to this dead church to open up to Him and His ministry. This interpretation offers hope for the dead churches of the end-times.

Finally, Jesus closes this letter by saying (Re. 3:21 GNT),

“He that overcomes, I will give to him to sit with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in His throne”.

This must refer again to the role of the overcomers from all of the seven church (types) that will assist Christ in ruling the earth during His millennium reign.

Chapter 4

John's Vision of Heaven

Revelation Chapter 4 describes a scene in heaven at the beginning of Daniel's 70th week.

"After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit; and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne" (Re. 4:1, 2).

John saw all the miraculous things he describes in this chapter, and subsequent chapters, in a vision when he "*became in (the) spirit*" (Re. 4:2 GNT). The word vision is defined as: "something seen by other than normal sight; something seen in a dream, trance, etc. or supernaturally revealed, as to a prophet." Many who subscribe to a pre-tribulation rapture believe that John's being told to "*come up hither*" represents the church being raptured. Three points should be mentioned here:

1. John was, in all probability, still located physically on the isle of Patmos when he saw this scene in heaven, for he tells us that he "*became in the*

spirit” after he had been told “*to come up hither*”. I interpret this to mean that John became totally under the influence of this spirit from God; thus, he was in a trancelike state when he received the vision. Experiences like this are sometimes referred to as “out-of-the-body experiences”. John’s experience on the isle of Patmos could be likened to Paul’s being caught up into Paradise, as recorded in 2 Corinthians 12:3-4:

“... I knew such a man, [whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth. How he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”

I believe it is unlikely that Paul or John were physically transported to heaven in either of these two events.

2. The wording in Revelation 4:1 indicates that John did not actually

“see” the door being opened, rather the door was standing open when

John’s attention was drawn to it by the voice from heaven saying,

“Come up here, and I will show you what must happen after these things.”

3. When the rapture occurs the church is not transported to the third heaven, but scripture clearly states that raptured/resurrected saints are raised to the clouds, where they meet Christ:

“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so we shall ever be with the Lord.” (1 Thessalonians 4:17)

4. As John goes on to describe the heavenly scene he observes, the raptured/resurrected church is nowhere in sight. Surely, if this scripture described the rapture of the church, John’s vision would have included some mention of it.

The next thing John records is a vision of God the Father sitting on His throne (Revelation 4:3),

“And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.”

We know this refers to God the Father because Revelation Chapter 5 describes Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, coming in the form of a lamb to take the book from the *“hand of him who sits on the throne”*. The description John gives us of the Father and His throne is enigmatic indeed. The jasper and sardine stones denote precious stones of various colors somewhat like fire, and seemingly translucent. The sardine and jasper stones were the first and last stones on the breastplate of the high priest, as noted in Exodus 28:17, 20. We know the priest represents God’s authority to the Jewish nation, and here in

John's description of the throne scene we get a glimpse of the significance of the arrangement of the stones on the priest's breastplate,

"I am the first and the last; apart from me there is no God." (Is. 44:6 NIV)

John saw a rainbow around the throne that was like an emerald. We know that the rainbow signifies God's promise that the world will never again be destroyed by flood (Ge. 9:9-17). This may have been significant to John, reassuring him that the vision he was about to see unfolded would not include a flood on the earth. We will see later in Revelation 10:1, that the angel who comes to declare that *"time is at an end"*, also has a rainbow on his head.

This vision of God the Father on His throne is frustrating in the sense that no real description of God Himself is presented. John was undoubtedly overwhelmed by what he saw, and the words that he used to interpret this heavenly scene represent his attempt to describe the indescribable. Ezekiel had a similar vision of God's throne, and his description is similar in many ways to that of John. In Ezekiel 1:26-28, God's throne is described as being like a sapphire stone with the color of amber, with fire all around and within it. Brightness was all around like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds after a rain. If it bothers you that John's and Ezekiel's descriptions are not identical, think of the unbelievable scene that they were trying to describe and remember that

eyewitnesses never recall events in exactly the same way. In fact, when witnesses describe an event in exactly the same way it raises suspicion that some sort of collusion is at play. We have none of that here for we know that all scripture is given by the inspiration of God (2 Ti. 3:16), and that prophecy came through holy men of God that were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pe. 1:21). So we conclude that the information provided about the throne (from both accounts) must have been considered adequate for God's purpose, which was to provide enough information for understanding of the meaning only through dedicated study and prayer. Mere words are insufficient to describe the *otherworldliness* of this heavenly scene.

We come now to a very important part of John's vision of God's throne.

Revelation 4:4-5 GNT says,

“And around the throne twenty and four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty and four elders sitting, clothed in white garments; and they had on their heads golden crowns. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.”

The question as to who these elders are is of great significance to our understanding of the book of Revelation. Biblical scholars have puzzled over this question for years and no completely satisfactory answer has been suggested. Most expositors seem to agree that the twenty-four elders are probably made

up of twelve elders from the old covenant, and twelve from the new covenant, but there are difficulties with even this seemingly logical and straightforward suggestion. Marvin Rosenthal in his book “The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church” argues that all twenty-four elders represent Israel. He points out that the Aaronic priesthood was divided into twenty-four groups of priests that represented the entire priesthood, and the whole nation of Israel. We should probably start our search for answers about who these elders were with what the bible says about them.

1. They are clothed with white raiment (Re. 4:4).
2. They have golden crowns upon their heads (Re. 4:4).
3. They have harps and vials full of odors that are the prayers of the saints (Re. 5:8).
4. They worship the Lamb by singing thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, tongue, people, and nation (Re. 5:9).
5. They worship God the Father who is on the throne (Re. 4:10-11, 5:14, 11:16, 19:4).
6. They talk to John (Re. 5:5, 7:13).

7. They are not mentioned in Isaiah's nor Ezekiel's vision of the throne.

We assume this is because these elders were appointed to their lofty positions after Jesus' death and resurrection.

8. Revelation 2:26 says that overcomers will be given power over the nations. These twenty-four elders are probably the first, and most important appointees in Christ's millennium kingdom.

We note that being clothed with white raiment signifies purity, and having crowns on their heads attests to their having overcome the world; their lives reflected glory on God the Father and His Son Jesus. Among the elders' responsibilities is the collection and holding of the prayers of the saints. Possibly this task supports Christ, who sits at the right hand of the Father, interceding and acting as mediator for the saints in response to these prayers.

These elders have come from every kindred, tongue, people, and nation. We can understand how this might refer to elders from the old covenant, since there were relatively few people and nations on earth at that time: this supports the suggestion that all twenty-four elders come from the OT dispensation. It is considerably more difficult to explain how this scripture could refer to elders from the new covenant however, since there were considerably more kindred, tongues, people and nations that need representation. It is possible

that new covenant elders could have been appointed at a time when the world was considerably less populated, as was the case during the time of the old covenant elders. All people and nations could then possibly be represented by a relatively small number of elders. It could also be that these elders represent descendants who are counted as representatives for kindred, tongue, people, and nation.

If we assume that John saw these elders in their resurrected bodies, then we must search the Bible for individuals that could qualify for selection as elders, and, in addition, died and were resurrected before the beginning of Daniel's 70th week, the time of John's vision. For the twelve (or twenty-four) elders from the old covenant we could rely on the scripture from Matthew 27:52-53, which states,

"And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."

This scripture seems to say that many saints who were dead at the time of Christ's resurrection rose from their graves and appeared in what we assume would have been their resurrected bodies. What happened to these saints after this is not mentioned, but it seems reasonable to assume that they and would be logical candidates for appointment as elders, representing the old covenant. Hebrews 11 identifies sixteen individuals from the OT that God refers to as el-

ders. He says that they all died in faith, having seen the promises (of the Savior) afar off, and having embraced them. This seems to justify the identification of at least twelve of these elders.

Identifying twelve elders representing the new covenant is considerably more difficult. New Testament elders had to be made up of people that received Christ as their savior after His death and resurrection, but there is no mention of any such group being resurrected from that time to the beginning of Daniel's 70th week. God could have raised twelve worthies from the new covenant if He chose to do so, but if such an event occurred He would surely have provided some clue for us to uncover through diligent study of His word. No such scriptural pearl has been identified that would allow for such an interpretation, thus this explanation seems questionable, at best.

Another explanation is that John saw the spirit/immaterial souls of these twenty-four elders rather than their resurrected bodies. The points outlined below should help in considering this possibility:

1. We know that at death the spirit/immaterial soul of the saint goes immediately to heaven (Ecclesiastes 3:21, 12:7; Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59), so there are many potential elders among these spirit/souls residing in heaven at the beginning of Daniel's 70th week. Christ led the captive spirits

of the redeemed from the OT dispensation, which were in Abraham's bosom, to heaven after His crucifixion. Thus, they were available for selection as elders (Psalms 68:19, Ephesians 4:8).

2. These immaterial spiritual beings will accompany Jesus at the rapture of the church, at which time they will be reunited with their eternal bodies (1 Thessalonians 4:14). Of course, the rapture/resurrection had not yet occurred when John sees the 24 elders.

3. We noted earlier that the elders were clothed in white raiment. It is evident from Revelation 6:9-11 that immaterial spirit/soul beings can be clothed in white robes.

4. The elders were able to converse with John since they asked him a question (Revelation 7:13). The souls in Revelation 6:10 were also able to cry with a loud voice.

5. These spirit/immaterial souls could have been redeemed out of every kindred, tongue, people, and nation since they, and their descendants, represent this diversity of origin.

If we choose to believe that the twenty-four elders were made up of twelve elders from the old covenant and twelve from the new, this would provide an explanation for the appearance (as spirit/immaterial soul beings) of these elders

to John. If the twenty-four elders all came from the old covenant they could have possessed resurrected bodies, for when Jesus released the captives (spirit/souls) from Abraham's Bosom, many bodies of the OT saints were resurrected, and came out of their graves, as referred to above (M't. 27:52-53). It seems reasonable to assume that these spirit/souls were joined with their immortal bodies at this time, just as will be the case with new covenant believers at the rapture/resurrection.

Understanding this scene in heaven is important to our determining the timing of the rapture of the church. Those that believe in a pre-tribulation rapture may hold that this scripture is evidence of a pre-tribulation raptured church, and the elders, by their rationale, could be selected from worthies of the resurrected church. However, the explanation offered above does not require a pre-tribulation rapture. If the rapture occurred before John appears in the throne room, surely he would have given some indication; but, to the contrary, his description of the throne room makes no mention of a multitude of raptured and resurrected saints.

In Revelation 4:6-8 GNT, John describes the four "living creatures" with the following words:

"...and a glass sea before the throne, like crystal. And in [the] midst of the throne, and around the throne [were] four living creatures full of eyes before and behind.

And [the] first living creature [was] like a lion; and the second living creature like a calf, and the third living creature having a face like a man; and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle. And [the] four living creatures each one had six wings all around, and within being full of eyes. And they had no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, the [One who] was, and is, and the coming [One]!”

The description of these creatures can be compared to that provided in Ezekiel 1:5-10 and Isaiah 6:2-3. Ezekiel describes these living creatures as having the form of a man, but with four faces and four wings. Each of the four had the face of a man, and on the right side each had the face of a lion, and on the left the face of an ox; each also had the face of an eagle. Isaiah identifies these creatures as seraphim, with six wings, two of which were used for flying. These seraphim were worshiping God on the throne saying,

“... Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory” (Isaiah 6:3).

It is interesting to note that John saw each living creature with one face: one with the face of a lion, one with the face of a calf, one with the face of a man, and one with the face of an eagle; whereas Ezekiel saw each creature with four faces, that of a man, lion, ox, and eagle. Isaiah only indirectly addresses this point in that he refers to the creature's face, as if each had only one face. The other difference in these accounts is related to the number of wings; Ezekiel saw only four wings, whereas John and Isaiah saw six wings. We should not be

disturbed by the differences in these three accounts. As mentioned earlier, if the accounts of this mind-boggling scene were identical, we might have reason to question whether the later accounts could have been influenced by familiarity with the earlier ones. The rapid movement of the creatures could have easily confused Ezekiel, for he says that they ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning. Also, we have two witnesses (Isaiah and John) that agree on the appearance of the living creatures, and, in accordance with Deuteronomy 19:15, out of the mouth of two witnesses the matter shall be established. When difficult scriptures are involved I have noticed that God often provides more than one description, to insure that we understand the message He is trying to communicate. The gospels are a good example of this. I believe that the important thing for us to derive from this part of the vision is that God the Father (on the throne), and Christ (at His right hand), are attended and worshipped by living creatures (seraphim) that in some way symbolize the nature of mankind: the placidness of the ox, the fierceness and heart of the lion, and man's spirit represented by a soaring eagle.

We cannot overlook the phrase *"...and a glass sea before the throne, like crystal"* at the beginning of Revelation 4:6. We know from Revelation 21:1 that there is no sea in the new heaven and earth, so we must look for other explanations for

the glass sea, like crystal. In Revelation 15:2 we find another reference to this glassy sea, and this time we find raptured and resurrected believers standing on this sea of glass which is now mixed with fire. From these scriptures it seems clear that this glassy sea is the crystal floor stretching out before the throne. In verse 6, in John's first sighting of the throne room, no one is standing on this floor, whereas in Revelation 15:2 these overcomers were standing before God on His throne with harps in their hands. We must assume that is further evidence that John's first vision of the throne room was before the rapture/resurrection, whereas the vision in Rev. 15:2 was after the rapture/resurrection, when the overcomers were in heaven worshiping God.

Chapter 5

The Book of Judgment

Revelation 5:1-10 says,

“And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when He had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth.”

The book that God the Father holds has been the subject of considerable conjecture: many expositors suggest that this book is the title deed to the earth. If this were true, why would God need to open the title deed to the earth in order to cleanse and reclaim it? A deed describes a specific piece of property

and identifies the previous owner (the grantor), and the new owner (the grantee). To accept Satan as the previous owner of the earth implies that he had (and presently has) greater authority than Adam possessed: dominion over every living thing on the earth. Adam was never given ownership of the earth, and thus, he could not have given such authority to Satan. Adam's authority could more appropriately be classified as stewardship. I do not believe that Satan was given ownership of the earth as a result of Adam's fall, but he could claim the right to rule those things that Adam had rule over. Adam accepted Satan's authority over God's authority. Thus, he subjected himself, and all his descendants (us) to Satan's rule.

Satan is recognized in the Bible as the prince, not king of this world. This is an interesting distinction that obviously relates to some sort of restriction over Satan's span of authority. Ephesians 2:2 refers to Satan as the prince of the power of the air, and Ephesians 6:12 indicates that he rules the darkness of this world through wicked principalities and powers in "*the heavenlies*". Satan's rule is accomplished through the spirit world, which might lead us to believe that Satan focuses his efforts on the unredeemed human spirit. However, we know the Bible says that evil comes from the heart of man (Mark 7:21), which is part of the material body. I am not aware of any scripture that says that Satan's at-

tack on man is through his spirit; therefore, I believe that Satan concentrates his efforts on attacking man's body (actually the biblical heart). In his book "The Spiritual Man", Watchman Nee says that the order of Satan's working in man is always from the outside to the inside, whereas God begins working in man from the inside to the outside. "God begins by working in man's spirit and continues by illuminating his mind, stirring his emotion, and causing him to exercise his will over his body." Satan seems to attack man's flesh by appealing to his lust or pride, and thereby, to diminish the influence of the spirit.

James 1:14, 15 says:

"But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

1 John 2:16 characterizes lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, as coming from the world, not from God. All of these areas of vulnerability are related to the body (or biblical heart), not to the spirit of man. The expression "prince of the power of the air" implies that Satan is ruler over the demonic spirit world, and through his demon army he plots his strategies to attract men in one (or all) of these three areas.

There are two different types of seals: one warrants the authenticity of the document under the seal, and the other assures that the document is not

opened by unauthorized persons, nor before the appropriate time. Legal documents are often sealed by a Notary Public to verify that the document has been signed and properly witnessed by concerned parties. The seals in Revelation 5:1 are obviously of the second type, for the Lamb was the only one authorized to loose them, and there was a definite and designated time for them to be loosed, and the book opened. A deed would not normally need protection from unauthorized opening, nor would it be time sensitive, thus, I believe we can disregard the title deed postulation as a possible explanation for what is contained within the book. The description here seems to suggest that this book contains information that is both time sensitive, and of such great import that only Jesus Christ, the perfect sacrificial Lamb, is worthy to open it. As we delve further into Revelation we will see that the book referred to in this scripture contains God's judgment and wrath to be poured out on the earth. In Daniel Chapters 7-12, Daniel was given visions of the end-times with specific details, some of which we have discussed previously. In Daniel 12:4, Daniel was told that the book (containing the vision) was sealed until the time of the end, when many would run to and fro, and knowledge would be increased. This is surely the same book referred to in Revelation 5:1-10, which contains a description of the events forthcoming in Revelation Chapters 6-20.

We will soon see that as Christ opens the book, cataclysmic events begin to unfold which culminate in God's wrath being poured out upon the earth. Many of these events are foretold in Daniel's vision.

The significance of the seven seals mentioned in the above scripture passage warrant some discussion. In Revelation Chapter 6, we note that as the sixth of these seals is opened significant scenes begin to appear in John's vision. These scenes are all preparatory to the final opening of the book, when the seventh seal is broken. The events affecting the world foreseen in Revelation 6:12-17 actually come about as a result of God's judgment and wrath being poured out. Thus, I believe it is of great importance in understanding of the book of Revelation to realize that none of the events that John records in Revelation Chapter 6:12-17 occur until the book itself is finally opened in Revelation Chapter 8.

With the opening of the first four seals, John sees the release of the four horsemen of the apocalypse, with riders who are spirit beings going forth to conquer and kill men on earth. With the opening of the fifth seal John sees the spirit/souls of those who have been slain crying out for vengeance. The sixth seal describes actual events that occur after the seventh seal is broken, and the book of God's judgement of the earth is finally opened. The important point

in this is to realize that the seals are somewhat like a preface to a book, they are introductory in nature, and tell us what God will do on the earth to satisfy His judgment and wrath, and bring things to a close.

We are probably more familiar with application of seals to a scroll than to a book, and since this book is extremely old, it seems reasonable to theorize that it could well have been a scroll. The Greek word used to describe this document is actually interpreted “*scroll*” in the GNT. Hebrew scrolls were often secured with multiple seals. Whether it was a book or a scroll the Lamb took from the hand of God the Father, the sequential opening of the seals bring scenes of disastrous events described within the book into John’s vision.

There are several interesting things referred to in Revelation 5:1-10. The reference to a “*strong*” angel reminds us that there are different types of angels, some stronger (having more power) than others. Possibly the strong angels are the ones that war against Satan under the leadership of Michael in Revelation 12:7, and do battle with fallen angels in the ongoing war for men’s souls. We know that some angels are guardians over “*little ones*”, some are messengers, some execute the judgments of God, some are ministering spirits, some are Cherubim, and some are Seraphim. They are God’s army and they worship Him and do His bidding at all times.

One of the most tender and heart-wrenching passages in the bible is recorded in this passage of scripture. When the call of the angel with the loud voice goes out for someone worthy to open the scroll, no one came forward immediately, and John began to weep. The wording of this passage is especially poignant in reminding us of what Jesus did for us on the cross. No one in heaven, on the earth, or under the earth was found worthy to open the scroll except the Lamb of God, our Savior. When the Lion of the tribe of Judah comes forward to take the scroll, great rejoicing takes place in heaven. The four living creatures, and the twenty-four elders say with a loud voice,

“Worthy are you to receive the scroll and to open it seals, because you were slain and by your blood purchased us to God out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation. . .” (Revelation. 5:9 GNT).

When the Lamb comes he has seven horns and seven eyes, which are identified as the seven spirits of God sent into all the earth.

Chapter 6

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

In Revelation 6:1-8 GNT the Lamb opens the first four seals on the book which describe some of the things that will take place on earth in accordance with Daniel's prophecy.

“And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying, as a voice of thunder, Come and see. And I saw, and behold, a white horse: and he sitting on it having a bow; and was given to him a crown, and he went forth overcoming and that he might overcome. And when he opened the second seal I heard the second living creature saying, Come and see. And went forth another horse red; and to him sitting on it was given to him to take peace from the earth, and that one another they should slay; and was given to him a great sword. And when he opened the third seal I heard the third living creature saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold, a black horse, and he sitting on it having a balance in his hand. And I heard a voice in [the] midst of the four living creatures, saying, a choinix of wheat for a denarius, and three choinixes of barley for a denarius: and the oil and the wine thou mayest not injure. And when he opened the fourth seal, I heard [the] voice of the fourth living creature saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold, a pale horse, and he sitting on it, his name [was] Death, and hades follows with him; and was given to them authority to kill over the fourth of the earth with sword and with famine and with death, and by the beasts of the earth.”

This scripture is so majestic and loaded with significance that interpretation can only be attempted under great fear of the Lord. Different interpretations

have been suggested for these verses, none of which will be reiterated here.

The interpretation that God has given me is discussed below. The reader should judge this interpretation just as we are encouraged to judge all prophecy (1 Co. 2:15, 14:29).

Although some older versions of the Bible omit “*come*”, “*see*”, or both in this passage, the GNT says that with the opening of these first four seals John is told to “*come and see*” by the living creatures. We note that in his vision John was in the throne room just prior to this chapter. Obviously the scene had to change for John to witness the consequences of releasing these four horsemen. The four horsemen were given power and authority to, 1) overcome and conquer, 2) take peace from the world, 3) bring famine, and 4) kill. However, John did not record the actual occurrence of conquering, world war, famine, nor killing that these spiritual horsemen were empowered to initiate. I believe the devastation the riders foster in the spirit world is progressive, starting at, or near, the beginning of the seven-year period, and continuing through (at least) the time referred to as the “*beginning of sorrows*” in Matthew 24:8. The release of these demon riders must be sequentially timed to achieve their evil mission. When the disciples came to Him on the Mount of Olives Jesus told them that deception, wars, famines, pestilence, and earthquakes would characterize this

time. These same events are initiated by the going forth of the four horsemen. These horsemen are spiritual beings (fallen angels), with great power, held in check until God releases them at the beginning of Daniel's 70th week. Note that the opening of these four seals does not precipitate any physical destruction on earth, instead, they spread spiritual wickedness that will be wrought by the rulers of the darkness of this world through the hearts of men on earth.

In Matthew 24:4, Jesus, responding to the disciples questions about His return and the end of time, told them to take heed that no man deceive them, for many would come claiming to be the Christ. The deception of men is the assignment of the first horseman, who goes forth as a conquerer, to overcome (conquer). We see that the result of opening the first seal corresponds to the event described by Jesus as the start of the "*beginning of sorrows*" in His Olivet discourse. This first horseman is like an advanced guard, sent in early to influence men in deciding who they will follow. As we will see later, the antichrist makes war to *overcome* the saints. We have previously noted that *overcoming* is the work of the first horseman. Revelation 13:12 says that the false prophet (the second beast of Revelation Chapter 13), is the one who causes them that dwell on the earth to worship the antichrist. In other words, the false prophet's mission is similar, if not identical, to that of the first horseman: to

conquer men and bring them under the authority of the antichrist. I believe that this first horseman is none other than the wicked spirit of the false prophet, who has great power and authority, and is sent forth at the beginning of the seven-year period to conquer men spiritually, to make them followers of the antichrist. Later, he appears on earth incarnated as the false prophet, the antichrist's right-hand man, having great power that he uses to win men's allegiance. The false prophet is one of the rulers of the darkness of this world, enticing the spirits of men to accept the antichrist (who is just arising), as political leader of the world.

We are reminded of the scripture in 2 Thessalonians 2:2, which says

"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition."

As the first horseman this spirit being is given a crown in recognition of his great authority in Satan's kingdom. He also rides a white horse, which Satan probably selects because of the purity associated with the color white: Christ comes in Revelation 19:11 riding a white horse. This first horseman also has a bow, which is symbolic of a warrior, but the scripture does not mention any arrows. This could imply a limitation on his effectiveness, possibly related to the fact that his enticements to mankind are all external: he has no direct ability to pierce men's hearts, but must appeal to their lust and pride.

The second horseman is riding a red horse. He is given power to take peace from the earth which will result in men killing one another, especially as we move into the time of the Great Tribulation, the last 3 1/2-years of Daniel's prophecy. We assume he does this by working through man's pride to cause hatred. He was also given a great sword, symbolic of the type of sword used by soldiers in war.

The third horseman is riding a black horse, and is holding a balance in his hand. The balance represents of the high cost of food, which is measured for sale by weight. A choenix of wheat for a denarius (penny) is thought to correspond to approximately a quart of wheat for a day's wages. Three choenices of barley could be bought for a denarius. Wine and oil were not to be hurt, which must mean that they were not to be affected by the famine. We know that wine is symbolic of Christ's blood and oil symbolizes the Holy Spirit, but whether this was the reason that these are exempt from this plague is not clear.

The fourth horseman is riding a pale horse. The rider is identified as Death, and Hades (hell) followed with him. Jesus spoke often to sicknesses and infirmities as if they were entities, spirits if you will, and in Genesis 4:7, we note that sin was mentioned as lying, or crouching, at the door, so it is not unusual for things we consider to be conditions or locations, to be referred to as

entities in the Bible. The rider of this fourth horse must be the angel of death, and the one following him could be the angel of the abyss, who is given the key to the bottomless pit. The power given to this horseman and his follower seems to be connected to the mission given to the first three horsemen. It appears that the destination of the victims of the first three horsemen is Hades (hell), and that they are given authority to kill over a fourth part of the earth with the sword, famine, death, and by the beasts of the earth. Since we know that the spirit/immaterial souls of those that belong to Christ go immediately to heaven (not hell) when they die, this must be a clue that the authority of these horsemen is restricted to the slaying of unredeemed men over one-fourth of the area of the earth, and their spirit/souls are immediately turned over to the angel of the abyss (hell) who follows the fourth rider. We also know that Jesus took the keys (authority) of death and hell after His death on the cross, so I do not believe that these two have any authority over believers. In Revelation 20:14 we see that death and hell are cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. The reference here must be to these two, the fallen angels responsible for death and hell.

We now come to the fifth seal, in which John sees the souls of them that were slain because of the Word of God, and for their testimony, under the altar (Re. 6:9-11 GNT).

“And when he had opened the fifth seal I saw under the altar the souls of those having been slain because for the Word of God, and for the witness which they had. And they cried with a great voice, saying, Until when, holy and true Master, do you not judge and avenge our blood from those dwelling on the earth? And there was given to each one a white robe. And it was said to them that they should rest yet a little time, until might be fulfilled also of their fellow-slaves and their brothers, those being about to be killed, even as they.”

The Greek word *souls* in this passage is defined as “disembodied man”, which seems to agree with the term “spirit/ soul”, that I use to describe the redeemed persona that goes to heaven at death. While on earth these overcomers were slain because of their unwavering testimony for God, and they are now crying out to the Lord asking that their blood be avenged. These souls must include all those that have been martyred for God from the beginning of time until this time during Daniel’s 70th week. They were given white robes and told that they should rest a little season until their brothers still on earth are killed as they were. The white robes indicate that these are overcomers who are to be joined by others slain by the antichrist during his reign of terror. This scene raises a logical question: Where are the rest of the saints, those that died natural deaths during this same time period? We are not given an answer to this

question, but we can conjecture that these slain overcomers have obtained a greater reward than those who have suffered natural deaths, thus they are placed in a position of honor, under the altar of sacrifice.

John sees startling scenes when the Lamb opens the sixth seal. Revelation 6:12-17 (GNT) says,

“And I saw when he opened the sixth seal And behold, a great earthquake occurred. And the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair; and the moon became as blood; and the stars of the heaven fell unto the earth, as a fig tree being shaken by a great wind casts its unripe figs. And heaven departed as a scroll being rolled up. And every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great ones, and the rich ones, and the chiliarchs, and the powerful ones, and the slave, and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and rocks of the mountains. And they say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of the One who sitting on the throne, even from the wrath of the Lamb, because the great day of his wrath is come, and who is able to stand?”

Opening of the sixth seal reveals a vision of a great earthquake on earth, the sun becomes black as sackcloth of hair, the moon becomes as blood, and the stars of heaven fall to the earth. Mountains and islands are moved out of their place, possibly as a result of the great earthquake. The heaven we see as we gaze upward on a clear night departs like a scroll being rolled up. With the sun and moon darkened, as the stars in heaven fall to the earth the heavens are left to the darkness of space. Under these conditions the heavens (as we know them) essentially disappear, like a scroll when rolled up. All men on earth, including the rich and powerful, hide themselves from the one that sits on the

throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. Unredeemed men finally recognize that God is bringing these events about.

Although the events John sees when the first four seals are opened all seemingly begin during the period defined as the *beginning of sorrows*, the events envisioned by the opening the sixth, and possibly the fifth, seals do not occur during this period. I believe we must rely on the basic logic of the flow of events of the vision God has given, rather than in the particular sequence in which John observed and recorded these events. If our understanding of the various periods in the book of Revelation is correct, the Lord dictates His letters to the latter-day churches near the beginning of the seven-year period; from there He moves to the opening of the first four seals, which describe the assignment of certain spiritual powers during the period identified as the beginning of sorrows, a period that starts coincident with the start of the seven-year period, and continues (at least) to the outpouring of His judgment, initiated with the sounding of the first trumpet at the beginning of the *day of the Lord*.

The *day of the Lord* is a period of time which starts near the middle of the seven-year period, and includes the Great Tribulation, God's wrath, and the return of Christ to earth at Armageddon. At the end of the Great Tribulation

the Lord pours out God's wrath on the earth, when the vial plagues are released. The events recorded by John with the opening of the fifth seal are thought to coincide with the mid-point of the seven-years, the time after antichrist has erected his image, and serious persecution begins. Events described after opening the sixth seal span the time when the vial plagues are poured out in God's wrath, as recorded in Revelation Chapters 15 and 16.

The description of the events in Revelation 6:12-17, is almost identical to that in Matthew 24:29 (also Mark 13:24-25, and Luke 21:25-26), which provides a point of reference conjoining these two narratives. In Isaiah 13:9 this same event is foretold:

"See, the day of the Lord is coming - a cruel day with wrath and fierce anger - to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light."

This event, described in Isaiah, is unquestionably the same event described in the first three gospels and the book of Revelation. In Isaiah we are given another significant piece of information: these occurrences on earth and in the heavens accompany what is identified as "*the day of the Lord*". "*The day of the Lord*" is also mentioned in connection with occurrences in the heavens in several other scriptures:

“The great day of the Lord is near - near and coming quickly. Listen! The cry on the day of the Lord will be bitter, the shouting of the warrior there. That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness, a day of trumpet and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the corner towers. . . In the fire of his jealousy the whole world will be consumed, for he will make a sudden end of all who live in the earth” (Zephaniah 1:14-18).

“. . . for the day of the Lord is coming. It is close at hand - a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness.” (Joel 2:2)

“The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord.” (Joel 2:31)

“Wail, for the day of the Lord is near; . . . a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light.” (Isaiah 13:6-10)

“Woe to you who long for the day of the Lord! . . . That day will be darkness and not light.” (Amos 5:18)

We conclude from the above, as well as other scriptures, that the opening of the sixth seal presages a period of time identified as the *day of the Lord*, which includes a period of Great Tribulation, God’s wrath, and the return of Jesus Christ to the battle of Armageddon. We will discuss this in more detail later in our analysis.

We previously identified this sealed book of Revelation as the Book of God’s Judgment, but the Lamb (Christ) is the person that initiates these catastrophes as He opens the book, and calls the things written therein into being.

The first four seals depict the initiation of events in the spiritual realm that occur over a period of time. In other words, these four horsemen set out to delude mankind into acceptance of the antichrist as world leader, and to cause war, famine, pestilence, and death. John mentions no immediate results of their actions on earth. When the fifth seal is opened, John records a scene in heaven; again, no action takes place on earth. When the sixth seal is opened John sees scenes of the catastrophic events that will come to pass in the period identified as *the day of the Lord*, which are heralded with signs on earth and in the heavens. When the final (seventh) seal is broken the book will be fully opened, and John will see the devastation presaged by the sixth seal. The seals are precursory in nature; they set the scene for what will happen when the book is fully opened, and God's judgment and wrath is finally poured out.

Chapter 7

144,000 Israelites Are Sealed

This chapter begins with an interlude in which an angel with the seal of the living God arises from the east. This angel cries out to four other angels, who were given power to injure the earth and the sea, to refrain from acting until 144,000 from the twelve tribes of Israel are sealed “on” their foreheads. Note that the KJV (and other versions of the Bible), interpret the Greek word used here (ἐπὶ) as “in”. I think this is important since use of the word “on” seems to imply that this was a visible mark, which would identify these servants of God as belonging to Him. In Revelation 14:1 the 144,000 are identified as those having the name of God the Father written on their foreheads. The actual meaning of the Greek word ἐπὶ is not totally clear from the many sources I have consulted. The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised by Moulton indicates that the meaning of this word as used in this verse is “to the extent of, both of place and time”, which is an enigmatic definition at best. A derivative of this word that has to do with empowering individuals refers to the placing on of

hands and praying for them to receive. It is not absolutely clear what this mark consisted of, and whether it was visible to all, or just to God. The idea that these angels laid hands on these Israeli servants and prayed for their anointing seems logical to me, but an absolute and definite answer is not clear.

The angel with the seal and his helpers then seal 12,000 of each of the twelve tribes of Israel. It is interesting to note that of the twelve tribes mentioned here, Dan and Ephraim are omitted, and Joseph, Levi, and Manasseh are included. Ephraim and Manasseh were grandsons of Jacob, not sons, and therefore are not listed among the twelve tribes of Israel in some scriptures. However, in Genesis 48:8-22, Jacob blessed Ephraim and Manasseh, and provided an extra portion of the promised land to Joseph. In so doing he recognized Joseph's sons as tribes of Israel, insuring Joseph's inheritance in the promise land. Ephraim, though younger than Manasseh, was to be head of the more important tribe, according to Jacob's blessing. However, tribal importance was not a factor in determining who would be sealed in this passage of scripture. The tribes of Ephraim and Dan were rebellious against God, but others, including the tribe of Manasseh, were also rebellious. Rebelliousness was not the reason for exclusion here. Since both Joseph and Manasseh are included in this list it seems logical to assume that as many as 12,000 descen-

dants of Ephraim could be included in those that are sealed. The tribe of Dan is excluded in several OT listings of the tribes of Israel because of idolatry, but if that is the reason for exclusion here, it is not so indicated.

In Revelation 14:4, the 144,000 are identified as being redeemed from among men, and they stand with the Lamb on mount Zion, following Him wherever He goes. These sons of Israel, which are identified as servants of God, are redeemed because they are without fault before God (Rev. 14:5). Revelation 14:4 further identifies these as “*virgins*” for they have not been defiled with women. From the Lord’s description of these we assume they are sealed as believers. In this scripture the Lord has identified the tribal affinity of those that belong to Him, and only He knows why the tribes of Dan and Ephraim are not mentioned. In Revelation 12:17, we will see that Satan and his antichrist war against these chosen Israelites and their converts, but God protects them by providing a place of refuge.

The Great Multitude

In Revelation 7:9-10, John sees a new scene at the throne:

“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a

loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

And in Revelation 7:13-17, John has a conversation with one of the elders:

"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these arrayed in white robes? And whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them into living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

We are now at a pivotal point in our study of the Revelation of Jesus. The identity of this great multitude is important to our interpretation of the remainder of the book of Revelation. Try to approach this scripture with an open mind, without any preconceived ideas about the rapture of the church, and when (and if), it will occur.

In the above scripture John observes something new and different in his vision of the throne room. This crowd that could not be numbered was not present in the vision prior to this time. John introduces this scene by noting that he saw it after the sealing of the 144,000. Therefore, we conclude that some significant event must have occurred on earth to cause this great multitude to suddenly appear before the throne. We ask ourselves: what occurrence on earth could cause this great body of overcomers (washed by the blood of Je-

sus and representing every nation, kindred, people, and tongue) to be standing before the throne of God? The only event foretold in the scripture that seems plausible is the rapture of the church, which is recorded in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. How could risen saints be described any better than this?

1. They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.
2. They are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night.
3. He who sits on the throne tabernacles (spreads a tent) over them.
4. They no longer hunger nor thirst.
5. The sun does not fall on them, nor any heat.
6. The Lamb shepherds and leads them to living waters. Revelation 22:1 indicates that this living water is in the holy city.
7. God wipes away every tear from their eyes.

The elder's comment to John in verse 14 that "*they came out of great tribulation*", seems to be the only real stumbling block to the conclusion that this is the raptured/resurrected church, standing before God in heaven. Belief in pre-tribulation rapture would argue against this being the rapture of the church described in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. Although not impossible, it seems

doubtful that this could refer to those left out of some initial (pre-tribulation) rapture, but were raptured at a later time. The fact that this great multitude represents every nation, tribe, people and language, seems to imply rapture/resurrection of the entire body of believers for all time. If this multitude does not include believers that lived and died before the Great Tribulation then we must ask, when will these meet Jesus Christ in the clouds? There is no specific mention in the Bible of more than one rapture/resurrection of the church.

We noted at the beginning of our study that the Great Tribulation would begin near the midpoint of the seven-year period. The sealing of the 144,000 Israelites seems to occur about the same time, near the beginning of the Great Tribulation: coincident with the time that antichrist causes the temple sacrifices to cease, installs his image in the temple, and severe persecution of Jews (and gentile believers) begins. Although John records the vision of the great multitude immediately after the sealing of the 144,000, we know that some time expires between these two events. Revelation 7:14 records the fact that the great multitude was on earth at the beginning of the Great Tribulation, but God shortens those days “*for the sake of the elect*” (M’t. 24:22).

We are reminded again that the order in which John recorded events in the vision does not necessarily coincide with the order in which the actual events

occur during Daniel's seventieth week. Later, we will encounter what appears to be the actual time of the rapture/resurrection in Chapter 10, and the appearance of the 144,000 in Chapter 14. The rapture/resurrection and sealing of the 144,000 are two of the most important events that transpire before God's wrath is poured out, as described in Chapter 15. God will protect the remnant of Jews and the church of Jesus Christ from His wrath: many scriptures in the Bible allude to the fact that God will not pour out his wrath on those that belong to Him.

For reasons that will be suggested later, the rapture is thought to occur during the "*days of the voice of the seventh angel*", at the last (seventh) trump. In Revelation 7:9 we see raptured overcomers who have kept their faith through trying times of hunger, thirst, unbearable heat, and great persecution: trials that come late in the period identified as "*the beginning of sorrows*", and early during the Great Tribulation. The multitude described in Revelation 7:9 must represent the raptured church: the evidence supporting rapture of the church during the Great Tribulation, is very strong.

Chapter 8

Silence In Heaven

Revelation Chapter 8 begins with an awe-inspiring occurrence in heaven.

Revelation 8:1 says,

“And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.”

A period of silence interjected in a speech, or even in everyday conversation, arrests our attention, and we begin to anticipate that the speaker is about to say something important. When we feel that something significant, or momentous, is about to occur, we often resort to silence, possibly in anticipation, or fear, of what is about to take place. When there is silence in heaven, where there is normally so much continuous rejoicing and worship, we know that some great event is about to take place. In this case, God is about to take His revenge on Satan and his followers, and the consequences of His actions will have great impact, not only on fallen angels and sinful mankind, but also on His bride (the church), the Jewish remnant, and His beautiful creation, the earth. It seems like God pauses to take a deep breath before beginning this

terrible destruction. With the breaking of the seventh seal, God's book, which contains His judgment of evil and His entire pent-up wrath against sin, is now fully opened, and nothing will restrain or hold back the terrible catastrophes soon to follow.

It is appropriate at this point to establish a perspective regarding Daniel's seventieth week, the span of time covered by the book of Revelation, and to draw any conclusions we can about the timing and sequence of events occurring during this seven-year period. A significant point in understanding the book of Revelation is to recognize how God chose to organize the periods and events described. We know that the number seven is significant in God's original work of creation, and in the book of Revelation He spews out His judgment and wrath in terms of sevens. God uses the number seven to indicate something being complete, e.g. the creation story, which was completed in seven days, including His day of rest. We note in Revelation Chapters 2 and 3, that there were seven churches. In our interpretation of these two chapters we concluded that the problems addressed (including those in the other church letters of the NT) encompassed all the problems extant in latter-day (contemporary) churches. In Revelation Chapters 6 and 8 we read of the opening of the seven seals on the scroll in the Lord's hand. We have surmised previously

that the opening of the first four seals presage a period of time referred to as the *beginning of sorrows*. With the breaking of the seventh seal, God's book will be opened completely, and the last impediment to the outpouring of His judgment and wrath will be removed. In Revelation Chapters 8 through 11, we will read about the sounding of seven trumpets, which release God's judgments in a period identified as the Great Tribulation. Finally, in Revelation Chapters 15 and 16, we will read of the outpouring of seven vials, which constitute the filling up or completion of God's wrath. Thus, we see that the book of Revelation is organized into periods identified by the **seven churches**, the **seven seals**, the **seven trumpets**, and the **seven vials**. Let us now examine the biblical evidence for the designation of the periods and events that make up Daniel's 70th week.

The Beginning Of Sorrows

I. When asked what the sign of His coming and the end of the world would be in Matthew 24:4-12, Jesus said that a period of time characterized by deception, betrayal, wars and rumors of wars, famines, pestilence, and earthquakes, known as the *beginning of sorrows*, would occur first. Thus, we know that this period precedes Christ's second coming.

2. With the opening of the first four seals in Revelation 6:1-8, John saw four horsemen going forth to conquer and spread deception, betrayal, war, famine, pestilence (Ezekiel 14:21), and death. It seems obvious that this period in the book of Revelation corresponds to the period identified by Jesus as the *beginning of sorrows*.
3. Revelation Chapter 12 describes how the remnant of Israel will be saved when Christ returns. The remnant will flee to the wilderness, where they will be protected for 1,260 days (Re. 12:6). This occurs after the midpoint of the seven-year period, at the end of *the beginning of sorrows* and the beginning of the Great Tribulation when *she* (Israel) is in travail (persecution).
4. In John 16:20-21, Jesus tells His disciples (and through them all believers) that before He returns to earth they will be sorrowful like a woman in travail, but as soon as they see Him they will be filled with joy like the woman after she has delivered the child.
5. Romans 8:22-23 states that the whole creation groans and travails in pain. We ourselves groan within, waiting for the redemption of our body (resurrection and rapture).

We conclude from the above that the period of time described in Matthew 24:4-12 and Revelation 6:1-8, covers a period of time before the Great Tribula-

tion known as *the beginning of sorrows*, and that these passages of scripture refer to the first 3 1/2 years (mid-week) in Daniel's 70th week (Da. 9:27). The *beginning of sorrows* starts with the opening of the first seal, and is described as being like a woman suffering the pains of childbirth. This is described as a 3 1/2-year period of time during which the antichrist will rule the world, eventually bringing great persecution upon the Jewish nation, and believers throughout the world (Da. 12:7). Delivery of the child (in this analogy), corresponds to the flight of the Jewish remnant into the wilderness (shortly after the mid-point of the seven-year period). There they are protected by God until they receive salvation (Re. 12:6, 14). Since the Gentile body of Christ is grafted in (Ro. 11:17), it seems reasonable to look for evidence that they are delivered (raptured/resurrected) about this same time. The woman, who represents Israel, is joyful after she has delivered the child. This *delivery* marks the end of the travail (persecution) of the Jews.

The Great Tribulation

The word *tribulation* is used in the KJV of the Bible 22 times, three times in the OT and 19 times in the NT. Of these citings, four clearly have to do with *the great tribulation* that occurs during Daniel's 70th week (De. 4:30; M't. 24:21,

29; M'r. 13:24; Re. 7:14). Revelation 2:22 KJV uses the phrase "*great tribulation*", but the Greek word in this verse is actually interpreted "*great affliction*" in the GNT, and "*great suffering*" in the NIV. Thus, this leaves us with four clear references to *the great tribulation* that begins at the mid-point of the last seven years.

1. In Deuteronomy 4:30-31, Moses said that in the *tribulation* of the latter days, those that turn to the Lord and are obedient to His voice He will not forsake; thus, we know that some will come to Christ during this time.

2. Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14 indicate that the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel, the prophet, will be erected in the holy place during the end-times. Daniel 9:27 and 12:11 prophesy that the abomination of desolation will be placed in the temple in the "*midst of the week*" (mid-point of the seven-year period). The persecution associated with this causes the remnant of Jews left in Judea to flee into the mountains. Jesus states in Matthew 24:21, that "*then*", or after these things, there will be "*great tribulation*", the like of which has not been seen since the beginning of the world, nor ever will be.

3. Matthew 24:22 states that unless the days of the great tribulation are shortened there would be no one left alive, but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. Jesus is saying in this scripture that the elect will be on earth at

this time, but for their sake the time until the rapture/resurrection will be shortened. We know from several scriptures (1 Th. 1:10, 5:9; Ro. 5:9), that God will not pour out His wrath on His elect; therefore, we know the rapture of the church must occur before the end of the great tribulation, but the time will be shortened for the sake of the elect. It is not clear whether the Lord shortens the Great Tribulation time period, or just shortens the time to the rapture.

4. Jeremiah 30:7 refers to this time as "*the time of Jacob's trouble*", and many of the OT prophets describe this period in Israel's history. God promises to save the remnant of Israel at this time (during *the great tribulation*), which is described in Revelation 12:14-17.

5. Jesus, referring to *the great tribulation* in Matthew 24:29 and Mark 13:24, says that after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give light, and the stars shall fall from heaven. Matthew 24:30-31 announces the coming of Christ for His bride (rapture/resurrection) immediately after these signs in the heavens.

6. In Revelation 7:14 GNT, the elder told John that the multitude in white robes before the throne were those that came out of *the great tribulation* and had washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb.

We conclude from the above that the great tribulation is a period during the last seven years that starts about the time the abomination of desolation is placed in the temple (-3 1/2-years). This period continues through the trumpet judgments until the seventh and last trumpet (Re. 11:15), when angels with the last seven plagues come announcing God's wrath. At some period during the great tribulation the signs in the heavens will indicate that the time has come for Christ to return for His bride (resurrection and rapture). Although we do not know the length of the great tribulation in days, months, or years, we do know that God has promised to shorten the days during this period for the sake of the elect. Matthew 24:22 says, *"And except those days should be shortened, there should be no flesh saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."*

Christ's Second Coming (Parousia)

I. Christ will appear a second time to those that look for Him (Hebrews 9:28). Christ's second coming is referred to most often in the NT as the Parousia, a Greek word which means appearing, manifestation, or coming (1 Thessalonians 3:13, 5:23).

2. The second coming of Christ is referred to over 300 times in the NT. Most of the predictions concerning Christ in the OT also have to do with His second coming.

3. When Christ comes for His bride (resurrection and rapture) our vile body will be changed in a moment, and He will give us a glorified body like His (Philippians 3:20-21).

4. The initial stage of Christ's second coming (rapture/resurrection) will not be in secret, as some have indicated, but will be announced with great fanfare. 1

Thessalonians 4:16-17 says:

"For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall ever be with the Lord" (see also Matthew 24:30, 1 Corinthians 15:52, Revelation 1:7).

The dead saints will be resurrected first in their glorified bodies; then those that are alive will be "*changed*" during their flight to meet Him in the air. This *catching up* of those that are still alive is referred to as *rapture*. This occurs before the last (seventh) trumpet, during the great tribulation (1 Corinthians 15:52).

5. Revelation 10:7 GNT states, "*but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound the trumpet, also should be completed the mystery of God, as he*

did announce the glad tidings to his bondmen the prophets." Colossians 1:27 indicates that the mystery of God is "*Christ in us*". When Christ returns for His bride, the Holy Spirit's ministry within believers (renewing their minds) is finished.

6. Matthew 24:27-31 describe the coming of the Lord for His elect. This passage seems to clearly show that the rapture comes following signs in the heavens that occur during the great tribulation. This possibly refers to a sign in the stars similar to that when Jesus was born. Matthew 24:28 is a verse that has received widely divergent interpretations, but to read it in context seems to indicate that it refers to the resurrected bodies of believers (carcass, or dead body) meeting and joining with the spirit/souls (eagles) who return with Christ in the first phase of His Parousia.

7. In the second phase of Christ's coming He comes to earth with His resurrected saints and angels (1 Thessalonians 3:13, 4:14; Matthew. 16:27; 2 Thessalonians 1:7). He comes to mount Zion where He is joined by the 144,000, who have the name of God written on their foreheads (Revelation 14:1). At this time Christ comes to the final war at Armageddon with the antichrist and his hordes.

8. In 1 Thessalonians Paul says that the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night. This phrase is generally thought to refer to the unexpectedness of His

coming, not to the manner in which He comes. It appears that His coming in accordance with this scripture occurs during the period identified as “*the day of the Lord*” (the last 3 1/2 years). Notice the context in Thessalonians 5:1-3:

“But of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.”

In this passage Paul is talking about times and seasons, rather than about an event that occurs within a particular time or season. It is commonly thought that the prophecy about the kings of the North and South in Daniel Chapter 11 alludes to the antichrist as well as to Antiochus Epiphanes, who ruled as king of the North in 175-164 BC. If this is so, we know that Daniel’s prophetic seven-year period begins with antichrist coming to power using flattery. Talking peace and safety he makes a treaty with the Jews allowing them to resume the sacrifice of animals in the temple, but sudden destruction comes upon them when he breaks the agreement (Da. 9:27), and places his image in the temple, requiring all to worship the image. I see this as a warning to all living in the end-times to be watchful, guarding your relationship with Christ with your very life, for when we see this world leader come to power the “*day of the Lord*” is not far behind.

9. Christ has prepared a place for those that belong to Him, and He is coming again to take us there (Joh. 14:3).

We conclude that Christ's second coming during Daniel's 70th week is one of the most important and well-documented teachings of the bible. The bridegroom's coming for His bride is the first stage of this second coming, and it seems to be coincident with the end of the great tribulation, when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet. The innumerable multitude from every nation, kindred, people, and tongue, dressed in white robes and standing before the throne of God in Revelation 7:9 is none other than the raptured/resurrected church, who meet the Lord in the clouds, and return with Him to heaven, where He has prepared them a place. These are all raptured/resurrected during the time of the great tribulation.

The Great Day of the Lord's Wrath

1. The sixth seal sets the stage for *the great day of the Lord's wrath* (Re. 6:16-17), when the sun will become black as sackcloth of hair, the moon will become blood, the stars will fall from heaven, and men will hide in the rocks of the mountains. The full force of God's wrath will be poured out after the Lamb

breaks the seventh seal, the book is fully opened, seven angels sound their trumpets, and seven angels are given vials containing God's wrath (Revelation 15:7).

2. Many scriptures attest to the fact that the elect will be delivered from God's wrath, and that God will not pour out his wrath on those that belong to Him, but only on sinful men (Isaiah 13:9; Ezekiel 7:19; Nahum 1:2; John 3:36; Romans 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:10, 5:9). Thus, we know that the great day of the Lord's wrath occurs after the rapture, after the church has been removed from earth.

3. Isaiah 2:12-21 states that *the day of the Lord* of hosts shall bring the proud low, and they will hide in the clefts of the rocks.

4. Isaiah 13:9-10 indicates that *the day of the Lord* comes with wrath and fierce anger, the stars of heaven will not give light; the sun will be darkened and the moon will not cause her light to shine.

5. Joel 2:1-2, 10 indicate that *the day of the Lord* is a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness. The earth will quake, the sun and moon shall be dark, and the stars will not shine.

6. Joel 2:31 states that the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before "*the great and terrible day of the Lord*" comes.

7. Amos 5:20 indicates that *the day of the Lord* will be darkness and not light.

- 8.** Zephaniah 1:14-15 describes *the day of the Lord* as a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness.
- 9.** Zechariah 12:6-7 states that in *the day of the Lord* there will be no light, no cold or frost. It will be a unique day without daytime or nighttime, but when evening comes there will be light.
- 10.** Malachi 4:5-6 states that the Lord will send Elijah before the coming of *the day of the Lord*.
- 11.** Acts 2:20 indicates that the sun will be turned to darkness and the moon into blood before *the great and terrible day of the Lord*.
- 12.** 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 indicates that *the day of the Lord* comes as a thief in the night. When they say peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes on them like a woman in travail with child.
- 13.** 2 Thessalonians 2:2-3 states that *the day of the Lord* will not come except there be a falling away first, and the antichrist be revealed. We noted earlier in Daniel 9:27, that the antichrist would break his covenant with Israel in the middle of the seven-year period, and try to force all mankind to recognize and worship him as God, thus revealing his true nature.

14. 2 Peter 3:10 indicates that *the day of the Lord* will come as a thief in the night and the heavens will pass away with a great noise.

We conclude *that the day of the Lord's wrath* starts after the middle of Daniel's 70th week, at the end of the Great Tribulation, and after the time when signs in the sun, moon, and stars introduce the first phase of Christ's second coming, the rapture/resurrection. After the church is removed from earth, God will pour out His wrath. He will not pour out His wrath on the redeemed, nor the Jewish remnant apparently still on earth (Re. 12:6).

The Seven Trumpets

We will now continue with our analysis of Chapter 8. In Revelation 8:2-5 John sees seven angels standing before God with seven trumpets. These angels are about to begin to sound their trumpets, which will usher in God's judgment upon the earth.

"And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake."

The golden altar referred to above correlates to the altar of incense made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold, located in the Holy Place within the tabernacle. Incense was offered on it morning and evening, symbolizing the worship and adoration of the people. The prayers of the saints which come up with incense before God must be prayers for God to avenge their blood on the beast and his cohorts on earth, for the angel immediately takes fire from the altar and casts it to earth, signifying the purification that follows. The fact that God values our prayers so highly that they are collected (in some form) in heaven is both humbling and encouraging.

To continue with Revelation 8:7-13,

"The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth, and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up. And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea, and the third part of the sea became blood; And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed. And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter. And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise. And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, Woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the voice of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to come."

In Revelation 8:7 the first angel sounds, and hail and fire mingled with blood rains upon the earth and causes a third of all the trees and all of the grass to be burned. This scripture is remarkably similar to Ezekiel 38:22, in which Ezekiel prophesies about God executing judgment against a “Northern Army”, which comes against Israel at a time of safety and rest, at a time when Israel was not expecting trouble and had not bothered to arm and protect themselves.

The war between Israel and this Northern Army is certainly one of the most difficult events in the Bible to understand chronologically, but if it occurs during Daniel’s seven-year prophecy, we need to attempt to explain when and how. Some might argue that this war occurred earlier in Israel’s history, but there are many scriptural statements that tend to refute that. I think it may helpful at this point to document the constraints listed in Ezekiel Chapters 38-39 related to the timing of this important event:

- I. It will occur in the latter years after the nation of Israel is repopulated with Jews scattered over the world from previous wars. The land, which was previously a wasteland, will be reclaimed. This description fits the situation in Israel at the present time.

2. It will occur at a time of worldly divisiveness, when the nations of Russia, Siberia, and other lands around the Black Sea can be joined by Persia, Libya, and Ethiopia in a confederation against Israel (Ezekiel 38:5). This also describes the situation in the middle-east at the present time.
3. It will occur at a time when Israel dwells safely, but appears vulnerable to its enemies. This does not seem to describe Israel's situation at the present time. Iran and other nations in the area around Israel are a constant threat at this time (2012 AD).
4. It will occur during the period identified as the day of the Lord according to Joel Chapter 2 (see verse 20). Although it does not appear that we have entered the last seven-years, we do seem to be experiencing many of the events described by Jesus as occurring in the beginning of sorrows (M't. 24:8).
5. A strong earthquake will occur when Israel is invaded bringing much devastation, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. Mountains will collapse and plague and bloodshed will be widespread. This is obviously still in the future.
6. Ezekiel 38:13 records the fact that surrounding nations ask the question, "*Are you come to take a spoil? Hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take away a great spoil?*" We know from this that the attack on Israel must be to gain something valuable.

The seething hatred that Arabic people have for Jews (see Ga. 4:29) may also be a factor here. Sadly, this seems to be the main response of Western nations when dealing with nations threatening Israel: talk.

7. We know that this war begins on a notable day of the Lord (Ezekiel 39:8).

This reinforces our conclusion that the Northern Army comes against Israel during the period identified as the day of the Lord.

8. We know that the Lord kills all but one-sixth of the Northern Army which is turned back.

9. The materials and supplies left by the Northern Army burn for seven years after the war.

10. It takes Israel seven months to bury all the dead corpses from the war.

11. The house of Israel will know the Lord their God from that day forward, and will realize that He is the One that sent them into exile and caused them to be regathered (Ezekiel 39:22). This is a clear statement about the Jewish remnant, and places this occurrence after the middle of the seven-year period.

12. Revelation 20:8 records Gog and Magog coming together in battle against the camp of the saints and the beloved city, Jerusalem, at the end of the millennium. In this instance God causes fire to come down from heaven to devour this invading army. The only explanation for this is that it describes a

second uprising of unbelievers that occurs at the end of the 1,000-year millennium.

Ezekiel 38:8 seems to indicate that this army comes against Israel in the end-times (*latter years*). This timing seems to be reinforced by the references to Israel's regathering and apparent agricultural success in bringing the land back from being a wasteland. Ezekiel 39:22 states that Israel will recognize the Lord as their God from that time forward, which sets the timing sometime during the last 3 1/2 years (see Revelation 12:14). Ezekiel 38:18-22 describes events that seem to parallel some of those occurring in *the day of the Lord's wrath* (Re. 16:13-21). Ezekiel 39:8 also makes reference to "*the day whereof I have spoken*" which could certainly be referring to *the day of the Lord*. Joel 2:20 records the Lord's dealing with the Northern Army during the "*day of the Lord*".

These scriptures lead me to the conclusion that the Northern Army comes against Israel near the beginning of the time we have identified as the *great day of the Lord's wrath*. However, there are a few scriptures that may be problematic with this interpretation:

1. Revelation 20:8 clearly states that Gog and Magog come against Jerusalem at the end of the millennium. This cannot be the war referred to here.

2. Ezekiel 39:9-10, indicate that the spoil of battle left by the defeat of the Northern Army will be burned with fire for seven years. The problem here is with the reference to seven years. If the battle occurs during *the great day of the Lord's wrath*, the fires consuming the spoils would continue through the first few years of the millennium. This is possible, but nevertheless, somewhat troubling.
3. Ezekiel 38:11 says that the Northern Army will come against Israel at a time when they are at rest, dwelling safely, but apparently vulnerable. The only explanation I have for this is that it could possibly refer to the time after the middle of the seven-year period, after the remnant has been relocated to the "wilderness" where they are protected from the serpent (Re. 12:14).
4. Some have proposed that the Northern Army War occurs just before the beginning of Daniel's 70th week. This is difficult to rationalize however, since we know that the beginning of this seven-year period of time is described as a time of peace negotiated by the antichrist as a significant element in his rise to power. Although this could refer to peace between Israel and the nations represented by the Northern Army negotiated by the antichrist, God's involvement in the resolution of the final battle (as described in Ezekiel 38), and the statement that all Israel will worship God after this time does not accord with this interpretation.

Even though the situation in today's world strongly portends a strike at Israel by nations seemingly identified in Ezekiel 38, everything considered, the most likely time for this war seems to be near the end of the great tribulation, as the antichrist's confederation begins to turn against him, and the world moves rapidly toward the pouring out of God's wrath. Many of the disasters referred to as result of this war are almost identical to events that occur after God's wrath is poured out on earth.

In Revelation 8:8-9, the second angel sounds and, as it were, a great mountain burning with fire is cast into the sea. A third part of the sea becomes blood, a third of all the creatures with souls in the sea die, and a third of all ships are destroyed. God's judgment is now precipitating events on earth that are beyond our comprehension. We noted with the first angel's trumpet, that great hail and fire mingled with blood were cast upon the earth. Most of us have seen hail storms, accompanied with lightning and resulting in fires. Thus, it is not too great a stretch for us to imagine large hailstones in great numbers striking men and causing great bloodshed. Most of us are also familiar with the volcanic island Krakatoa eruption in 1883, which precipitated an explosion that darkened skies over vast areas of the globe, and created a tidal wave that resulted in great loss of life. This is the picture that comes to mind with the

sounding of the second angel; however, the use of the adverb “*as*” in this case seems to suggest something different. Apparently, this was not a great mountain that was cast into the sea, but something that was *like* a great mountain. The use of the word “*cast*” also gives the impression that this object was *thrown* into the sea. This must be a large meteor, or comet, that strikes the earth in a location such that the resulting effect impacts one-third of the sea area of earth. The statement about one-third of the sea becoming blood is difficult to relate to our experience, however. It could possibly be interpreted to mean that all life in one-third of the earth’s seas dies, or that the sea turns to the *color of blood*, which is the interpretation of the Greek word *haima*, used here and in Acts 2:20. However, God has turned bodies of water into blood before, and He can certainly do it again if that is what He determines.

When the third angel sounds in Rev. 8:10-11, a great burning star falls on one-third of the rivers and fountains of waters, and many men die because the waters are poisoned. Unlike the burning mountain of the second angel, this event is difficult to explain by any material object falling on one-third of the rivers and fountains of water. However, we have all read about, or been exposed to, the contamination of earth’s water, including the oceans, rivers, and underground aquifers, through man’s mismanagement, and lack of concern

about the environment. In an unusual characterization this star is named “*Wormwood*”. The term wormwood is used several times in the OT, and is interpreted by the English word *absinthe*, which is a bitter plant suggestive of calamity due to idolatry; perverted justice; chastisement; and bitterness, as a result of intercourse with a strange woman. This seems to be an appropriate description of unredeemed mankind on earth at this time. The phrase *intercourse with a strange woman* is an allegorical reference to the great whore who represents the false religion (Re. 17:1-6), promulgated by the antichrist and the false prophet, and prevalent on earth at this time.

We should also note that Revelation 9:1 refers to another “*star*” that falls from heaven which is identified as an angel. It seems more logical for an angel to fall to earth with the power to contaminate the earth’s sources of water than for an extra-terrestrial material object, which we would normally anticipate falling in only one, or possibly a few locations. With the trumpet blast from the third angel, one-third of all the water on earth is rendered unusable. We will see later in Revelation Chapter 16, that all of the water on earth is rendered unusable; therefore, a logical question is: “why does God only poison one-third of the water at this time?” I believe that the answer to this question lies in the fact that God is continuing to draw men to Himself during the early

stages of the outpouring of His judgment, and thus, He limits the extent of the plagues on earth at this time. We will come back to this later in Revelation Chapter 15.

When the fourth angel sounds, in Revelation 8:12, one-third of the sun, moon, and stars are “*smitten*” (“*struck*”, in the GNT) so that one-third of each is darkened, and the earth receives no light for one-third of the day and night. This phenomenon has been described by some expositors as a one-third reduction in the amount of radiation received from the sun and reflected from the moon, rather than one-third of the sun and moon being darkened.

This provides a physical explanation (reduced nuclear reactions), but it does not seem to agree with the statement “*receive no light for the third of it*”. The literal interpretation of this scripture seems to argue that God darkens the sun, moon and stars for a period of time, but use of the word “*struck*” in the GNT is somewhat troublesome. We also have the statement that a third part of the day and night “*do not appear*”, so it seems impossible to conjecture what God does here, but it is almost like He turns off the nuclear reaction switch controlling one-third of the sun’s, moon’s, and star’s surface. We are on fairly solid ground in saying that this “*darkening*” lasts for a limited period of time, for we will soon see God intensifying the radiation from the sun. We also noted pre-

viously that the sun and moon were darkened just prior to the start of *the great day of the Lord's wrath*, so God uses these signs in the heavens for limited periods of time to warn mankind of impending catastrophes. In Revelation 8:13, an angel flying through the midst of heaven announces with a loud voice that further, and more terrible catastrophes (three woes) are to come.

In Table 1, below, an attempt has been made to organize the significant periods and events of the last seven years sequentially, in order of occurrence. An estimate as to the time that these periods and events occur is also included. Important OT and NT scripture references related to these events are also listed. Table 1 includes events and scriptures that we have not yet discussed, but in order to keep from getting totally lost in the myriad of detail in the Revelation story, it has been included here.

Table 1 -- Timeline For Daniel's Seventieth Week

Time	Period/ Event	OT Refs	NT Refs	Occurrence
Beginning to Mid-Week (3 1/2 yrs)	The Beginning of Sorrows	Eze. 14:21, Is. 13:8, Mic. 4:9, 5:3, Ps. 48:6	M't. 24:4-8, M'r. 13:6-8, Lu. 21:7-11, Re. 6:1-8, 11:3-6, Joh. 16:20-21, Ro. 8:22-23, 1 Th. 5:3	Deception, betrayal, wars, famine, pestilence, death, earth-quakes, seals 1-4 opened, appearance of the two witnesses
Mid-Week (~3 mo?)	Abomination of Desolation	Da.9:27,11:31, 12:11	M't. 24:15, M'r. 13:14, Re. 13:14-15	Daily temple sacrifices halted, beast's image worshipped, miracles, deception
Post-Mid-week thru Rapture (~1 1/2 yrs?)	The Great Tribulation	De. 4:30-31, Jer. 30:7, Eze. 14:22	M't. 24:21-22, 29-31, M'r. 13:24-27, 1 Co. 15: 51-53, Heb. 9:28, 1 Th. 4:14-17, 2 Th. 2:1-3, Re. 6:9-11, 7:1-17, 8:1-13, 9:1-21, 10:7, 12:1-17, 13:1-17.	Martyrdom, betrayal, deception, war, ini-quity, fleeing of the remnant, 5th seal opened, sealing of the tribes, mark of the beast, first six trumpets sound, mystery of God finished, 7th angel about to sound

Table 1 (cont'd)

Time	Period/ Event	OT Refs	NT Refs	Occurrence
Post- Rapture to Christ's Return (-1 1/2 yr?)	The Great Day of the Lord's Wrath	Eze. 7:19, 13:5, Is. 2:12-21, 13:9-22, 24:21- 23, Joe. 1:15, 2:1-2, 10, 31, Am. 5:20, Ob. 1:15, Zep.1:14- 18, Zec. 12, 14:1-7, Mal. 4:5-6.	Lu. 21:34-35, Ro. 5:9, 1 Th. 1:10, 5:2-3, 9, Ac. 2:20, 2 Th. 2:2-3, 2 Pe. 3:10, Re. 6:12-17, 10:1-6, 11:15-19, 14:1-15, 15:1-8, 16:1-16, 17:1-18, 18:1-24.	7th trumpet sounds, signs in the heavens, men hiding in moun- tains, sun and moon darkened, hail and fire min- gled with blood, the sea becomes blood, rivers and ground water turned to blood, men scorched by sun, great earth- quake, torment, vision of those victorious over the beast, death and resurrection of the two wit- nesses, last seven plagues.

Return of Christ until Judgment (~3 mo?)	Armageddon	Is. 26:21, Jer. 23:5-6, Zec. 8:3, 7-8, Mal. 3:1-3.	M't. 16:27, Joh. 14:3, Ac. 1:11, 3:19-21, 2 Ti. 4:8, 2 Th. 1:7-9, Jude 1:14-15, Re. 1:7, 14:16-20, 19:1-21, 20:1-3.	Christ comes with His angels and saints, meets the sealed Israelites on Mt. Zion, gospel preached to all nations, Babylon falls, earth reaped, antichrist and false prophet cast into lake of fire, Satan bound in bottomless pit.
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Chapter 9

The Fifth Angel Sounds

Revelation Chapter 9 continues to announce catastrophes as the fifth and sixth angels sound their trumpets. There is an important difference here however, for the plagues of the last three trumpets are identified as “woes” in verse 12. Moulton’s Analytical Greek Lexicon identifies the Greek word interpreted “woe” as a “calamity”. It is hard to escape the impression that some greater significance applies to these last three trumpets.

“And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto to the earth, and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit [pit of the abyss]. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth; and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. And it was given to them that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and upon their heads were as were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the

sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails; and their power was to hurt men five months. And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon” (Revelation 9:1-11).

The first questions that arise from this passage of scripture are: who is this that has fallen from heaven and has been given the keys to the bottomless pit (abyss), and exactly what is the abyss? There is scriptural evidence (Ro. 10:7 GNT) that the abyss is just another name for the abode of the dead, a part of hell, or Hades (Sheol in the OT). The Greek word interpreted “abyss” is also often interpreted as “hell”, and the Hebrew word “Gehenna” is also interpreted as “hell” in most versions of the bible. If the abyss is a region of hell where the dead reside, then the keys that Christ had in Revelation 1:18 undoubtedly include the key to the abyss.

Another scripture pertinent to this discussion is 2 Peter 2:4, which indicates that God chained angels who sinned in the abyss. Could these fallen angels take the form of *locusts* and emerge from their prison to attack men who do not have the seal of God in their foreheads? We note at the end of this passage that these “*locusts*” have a king over them who is the angel of the bottomless pit. Could the one who was given the keys and who opened the abyss be the same angel whose name in Greek is “*Apollyon*”, which means destroyer? The

wording in the GNT for this scripture implies that this “*star*” (or angel) was originally in heaven, but at some time in the past had fallen to the earth (been cast out of heaven). Contrast this with Revelation 20:1, in which it is recorded that John saw an angel come down (descending) from heaven with the key to the abyss. There is clearly a difference in the wording describing these two angels who were given the key. The angel in Revelation 20:1 is one of God’s holy angels, for he comes from heaven with the key to the abyss, and a chain to bind Satan for a thousand years. The angel in Revelation 9:1 (above) apparently “fell” from heaven at some previous time, and he (or “it” in the GNT) receives the key while on earth. He was thus a *fallen angel* with considerable authority, for God identified him by name in both the Hebrew and Greek languages. It seems pretty obvious that this “*king*” in verse 11 is the “*star*” referred to in verse 1, and many expositors have proposed that this *fallen angel* is none other than Satan himself. He does have great authority, which makes this suggestion believable, and Satan was likened to a “star” falling from heaven previously in Isaiah 14:12 and Luke 10:18. There is certainly no question that this was either Satan, or one of the important fallen angels under his command. Notice that he was “*given*” the key, so we know that someone with greater authority possessed the key and gave it to this fallen angel at the appropriate time. Christ

had the keys of hell and Death in Revelation 1:18, so we suspect that He also held the key for the abyss. This may be further justification for assuming this angel was Satan.

These *locusts* have been identified by some as being modern-day helicopters, and in many ways there is a strong similarity. Helicopters have wings (rotors) that make a sound that could be described as being like chariots of many horses running to battle. They also have weapons that could be compared to the sting of scorpions. They also carry armament that could be characterized as breastplates of iron. However, the description of the locusts seemingly having crowns on their heads, looking like horses, having faces of men and hair like women, and having their “*stings*” in their tails, is not descriptive of helicopters. The command that they should not hurt the grass, nor any green thing, neither any tree, does not appear to be a fitting order to a squadron of helicopters, nor does the order that they should only torment, and not kill, men that do not have the seal of God in their foreheads. Joel 2 describes a plague of locusts that precedes the day of the Lord, and Joel's description in some ways parallels that in Revelation 9:3-11. Everything considered, the information we are given here seems to better fit the description of fallen angels, freed from their prison in the abyss, and taking a visible form that appeared to John like a *locust*.

Another important point in this scripture is the mention of the period of five months, during which the locusts were given power to hurt the men that do not have the seal of God in their foreheads. This is the only specific period of time given for any of the judgments in Revelation, and it serves as a rough benchmark for the timing of the other judgments. If our timetable for Daniel's 70th week, shown in Table 1, is a reasonable assessment of the sequence and timing of the apocalyptic events occurring during this period, we know that our narrative must be near the end of the great tribulation at this point. We also know that the great tribulation starts after the middle of the week, when the abomination of desolation is set in the temple. We assume that the great tribulation extends over a period of time long enough for occurrences such as martyrdom, war, fleeing of the remnant, implementation of the mark of the beast, and the first six trumpet judgments to be executed. Near the end of the great tribulation the rapture/resurrection occurs and we enter the period of time known as the great day of the Lord's wrath. We know that the timing of the rapture/resurrection during the great tribulation will be shortened for the sake of the elect (Matt. 24:22), which we assume to mean that the timing of the rapture/resurrection is accelerated in order to take the saints from the earth so that some will be saved from martyrdom. Another assumption we might make

is that the saints will be on earth at the time of the locusts, since they are told to harm only those that God has not marked. Assuming that a period of at least 1 1/2-years would be required for the events announced by the first five trumpets to be completed the plague of the locusts would occur about five years into the seven-year period. Since the plague of locusts lasts for five months, events subsequent to this (the last two woes and the seven vials of wrath) would have to occur during the last 1 1/2 years of the seven-year period.

Revelation 9:12 indicates that the first woe is now past and there are two more woes to come hereafter.

The Sixth Angel Sounds

“And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in [at] the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men. And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat upon them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt. And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood, which neither can

see, nor hear, nor walk: neither repented they of their murders, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts” (Re. 9:13-21).

We mentioned earlier that there are men on earth who belong to God at the time of the fifth trumpet, for the locusts were prohibited from harming those who have the seal of God on their foreheads. Since the rapture/resurrection is thought to be coincident with the last, or seventh trumpet, this should not be surprising; however, the end of the Great Tribulation is approaching, and if God is going to shorten the time to rapture/resurrection (M’t. 24:22), He is running out of time.

When the sixth angel sounds four angels bound at the great river Euphrates are loosed. We need to look at Revelation 16:12 for further information about who these angels are, and what they were prepared to do. According to this verse we see that one of these angels causes the waters of the Euphrates to dry up so that the kings of the east can pass over to the battle of Armageddon. We do not know how much later the armies cross over, but it seems reasonable to assume that the time between the sounding of the sixth and seventh angel is relatively short. We are near the end of the Great Tribulation when the sixth angel sounds, and we know the rapture must occur soon (if it has not been moved to an earlier time). Following this, the seven vials of wrath must be poured out before the battle of Armageddon. As indicated above, we have

surmised that the Great Tribulation ends about five-and-one-half to six years into the seven-year period. This suggests that the Great Day of the Lord's Wrath must be about a year in duration. In Jewish wedding tradition, after the bridegroom and his bride have consummated the union, tradition has it that they do not part for any reason (war, etc.) for a year. If Christ's taking His bride (the church) at resurrection/rapture is analogous to this, the Great Day of the Lord's Wrath must be at least one year in duration, since we know that it cannot begin until the saints are removed from earth: Christ would not leave His bride to return to earth for the battle of Armageddon for at least one year.

According to Genesis 15:18, the Euphrates River is the northeastern boundary of the land given to Israel by God. This is a river that northern and eastern armies would need to cross to enter into the holy land. We know that this passage is talking about the armies that are coming to make war with Christ at the battle of Armageddon. The size of the army that crosses the river is given by John to be two million. This army is described as riding on ferocious looking horses whose mouths issued forth fire, smoke, and brimstone and whose tails appear as serpents. By these three plagues (fire, smoke and brimstone) were a third of men killed. The GNT wording here seems to imply that a third of the men involved in the battle were killed, rather than a third of all men on earth,

as implied by other versions of the Bible. The description of the vehicles (horses) on which this great army moves is difficult for us to relate to any military vehicle we are familiar with. The breastplates are described as being “fiery”, and one interpretation of the Greek word used here is “glistening”, which could imply some sort of windshield, but this may be a bit of a stretch. We could envision a vehicle whose firepower came from the front (mouth), and whose rear also had weapons that could hurt men, but the military vehicle that comes to mind (a tank) does not seem to entirely fit the description given by John. We must remember that John is trying to describe something that is totally overwhelming to his visual senses and understanding, and even though the Lord is giving him the vision, the descriptions given in the book of Revelation must come through John’s mind and body, as influenced by the Holy Spirit.

Revelation 9:20 seems to imply that if the men that remained alive after these plagues had repented of their evil works they could have received forgiveness. The wording of Revelation 9:20 in the GNT clearly states the meaning that they did not repent:

“And the rest of the men who were not killed by these plagues, repented not even of the works of their hands, that they should not do homage to demons . . .”

Chapter 10

The Mystery of God is Finished

“And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, And sware by him that liveth forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things that are therein, that there should be time no longer: But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.” (Revelation 10:1-7)

In this scripture we see another mighty angel descending from heaven in a cloud. There are several things about this scripture that seem to imply that this mighty angel is our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord is mentioned seven times in conjunction with a cloud, or clouds, in the book of Revelation. The angel's face is described as being like the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire, which is very similar to the description of Christ in Revelation 1:14-15 and 2:18. He has in his hand a little book that must be related in some way to the book that the

Lamb (Christ) took in Revelation 5:7. He comes to announce the reclaiming of the earth, and He roars as a lion roars in victory, as over a vanquished foe. He sets his right foot upon the sea and his left on the earth, which seems to be symbolic of the fact that both sea and land are about to be reclaimed. On the other hand there are several arguments against this angel being Christ. The use of the word “*another*”, in verse 1, seems to imply that this angel is like other angels that have brought messages and released plagues prior to this time. In addition, in verse 6 the angel seems to swear by Christ, for he swears by Him who lives forever; by Him who created the heaven and the earth, and all that is therein; and the sea and all that is therein; that time shall be no longer. Revelation 10:7 seems to imply that this mighty angel could be the seventh angel who is about to sound, but refrains from doing so until later in Revelation 11:15. He could also be the same “*strong*” angel in Revelation 5:2, who proclaims with a loud voice, “*who is worthy to open the book, and loose the seals thereof?*” I do not believe that the “*strong*” angel of Chapter 10 is Christ, but he must be one of the most important and mighty angels in all of heaven.

Understanding the content of the little book in the strong angel's hand, is difficult if not impossible. We know that the Lamb (Christ) took the book of God's judgment of the earth from the hand of God the Father in Revelation

5:7, and it does not appear that the little book of Chapter 10 is that book. John is later told to take the little book and eat it, so that he might prophesy before many people, nations, tongues, and kings. When John eats the book in Revelation 10:10-11, it is sweet as honey in his mouth and bitter in his belly. The little book of Chapter 10 could possibly be the last book in the Bible: the book of Revelation. The words of this great prophecy were sweet in John's mouth, but the terrible catastrophes to come upon mankind, and God's beautiful creation, made his belly bitter. John was told to "eat" the book so that he could prophesy to many people, nations, tongues, and kings. This certainly fits the description of what has happened with the book of Revelation.

When the strong angel cries in a loud voice, seven thunders utter their voices. He is about to announce the most significant event of all time: the end of this age. The seven thunders must be heaven's response, acknowledging this momentous occurrence, and the end of Satan's rule on the earth (John 12:31; 2 Corinthians 4:4). Psalm 29 provides a vivid picture of the thundering power of the Lord's voice: it breaks the cedars of Lebanon and makes them "*skip like a calf*", it divides flames of fire, it shakes the wilderness, it causes the deer to calve, and it strips the forests bare. John was about to document these utter-

ances when a voice from heaven told him to seal up those things that were uttered and write them not.

In this scripture the angel vows to Christ that the end will no longer be delayed. At the beginning of our commentary on the book of Revelation we noted that God was waiting for the *cup of transgression* to be filled to initiate Daniel's seventieth-week prophecy. Here the announcement is made that the end of time has come, and the angel adds the statement that the "*mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets*". When the seventh angel is about to sound the trumpet the mystery of God will be finished. God has finished His judgement of the earth, and all that is left is His wrath, which He is about to pour out. The "*mystery of God*" may refer to the scripture in Colossians 1:26, which indicates that the mystery is "*Christ in you, the hope of glory*" (see also Ephesians 3:8-9). An additional argument supporting this interpretation relates to 2 Thessalonians 2:1-6, in which Paul explains to the Thessalonians that the rapture will not occur until a falling away occurs first, and the man of sin (antichrist) is revealed. 2 Thessalonians 2:6 says "*And ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his own time*". This scripture refers to some power that restrains Satan from revealing antichrist in his full fury until the proper time. Since only God, Christ, or the Holy Spirit has the

power to restrain Satan, I believe this refers to the Holy Spirit within believers that will be removed from earth at the rapture. We receive Christ when we are spiritually born again, as Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:3-5. We receive Christ's Spirit (the Holy Spirit) as the *earnest* (or witness) that we belong to Him, and are a child of God (Ro. 8:16; 1 Joh. 5:10). Several OT scriptures also refer to God giving believers a new (human) spirit, and Ezekiel 36:26-27 adds that He will give us His Holy Spirit, as well.

For the above reasons, Revelation 10:7 is thought to apply to the time of the rapture, when believers (still alive), who have the Holy Spirit within, join Christ in the clouds. With the church no longer on earth, the Holy Spirit's ministry within believers, initiated by Christ after He ascended into heaven, would seem to be finished. We know that Christ's body (the church) is His presence on earth. When this "body of Christ" is removed from earth nothing is left to restrain Satan from revealing his man: antichrist.

If there are any that receive salvation after this time they will apparently not be blessed with the internal ministry of "comforter" (the Holy Spirit). They may be like the redeemed from the OT: they are persuaded by the promises, embrace them and confess that they are pilgrims and strangers on earth (Hebrews 11:13). When Christ returns to earth for the battle of Armageddon, His

bride will accompany Him. Those remaining on earth that have come to believe after the rapture, and have refused to take the mark of the beast, will not have the Holy Spirit within, but they will have the actual presence and comfort of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ as He reigns during the millennium.

Chapter 11

The Seventh Angel Sounds

In the Bible God often describes events from more than one perspective, thereby providing additional information which helps immensely in interpreting and understanding scripture. We see this in the story of creation in the first and second chapters of Genesis, as well as in the NT gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. This is a technique used also in the book of Revelation.

As we begin this chapter we note that the vision reverts to the time near the close of the period identified earlier as the *beginning of sorrows* (see Table 1). Revelation 11 begins with John being given a reed with which to measure the temple of God, the altar, and those that worship therein. He is told to leave out the court located outside of the temple, for it is given to the gentile nations to trample underfoot for 42 months. In this passage of scripture the temple and altar are thought to refer to the Holy Place (Sanctuary) and the Holy of Holies. The outer court is the large enclosure that encloses the temple where all Israelites could come to worship. We understand from this that God

claims as His own and protects the temple (the Sanctuary and the Holy of Holies), and those that worship therein, but the antichrist's confederacy (gentile nations) will be in control of Jerusalem (everything outside the temple) until the time that Christ returns to earth. When God measures something it usually means that He is about to claim ownership: He wants to establish clearly what He is claiming and what He commits Himself to protect. To God, the temple is the believers who are committed to, and worship within, the temple.

Revelation 11:3-13 tells about two witnesses in Jerusalem, whose prophecies start during the period we have identified as "The Beginning of Sorrows", after the antichrist begins his persecution of the Jews and continues for forty-two months, ending just before the seventh angel sounds.

"And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed with sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will. And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and a half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts to one another; because these two prophets tor-

mented them that dwell on the earth. And after three days and a half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them that saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them; Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them. And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

In this scripture we see God fulfilling prophecy by bringing His two witnesses to prophesy and preach the gospel. They are described as the two olive trees and two candlesticks: very similar to the description of the Golden Candlestick located in the Sanctuary of the Tabernacle, that symbolizes the continuous existence, uninterrupted worship, and unceasing light provided by God's people. This seems appropriate to the mission of these two witnesses who make a last appeal to the Jews in Jerusalem, and others throughout the world that hear their prophecies through the medium of radio and television, to receive Christ. Their ministry is accompanied by miracles, undoubtedly to validate their message. When they have finished their work, the antichrist is given power to kill them, and their bodies are left in the street for three-and-one-half days, probably for the antichrist to make the most political mileage he can out of what he sees as a great victory. Imagine his chagrin when after the three-and-one-half days the two witnesses arise and stand on their feet, and at the

beckoning call of a voice from heaven, they ascend in a cloud. What had appeared as a great victory for the antichrist was turned into a great defeat.

The question associated with the two witnesses is, who are they? The names most often heard in response to this question are Moses, Elijah, and Enoch. Neither Elijah nor Enoch died, thus they are considered candidates. Moses died, but was buried by God, thus he is considered a possibility. Moses was also the prophet associated with the plagues in Egypt. Since the two witnesses have power to smite the earth with plagues, Moses has more than one reason for being considered. Likewise, Elijah prophesied and it did not rain in Israel for three years. This is similar to the miracle performed by the two witnesses when they shut heaven for the period of their prophecy. Moses and Elijah were both with Jesus at the transfiguration, which may be another argument in favor of their being the two witnesses. Malachi 4:5-6 also predicts that Elijah will appear on earth before the great and terrible day of the Lord. John 1:21 also supports the contention that Elijah and/or Moses was expected to return to the earth in the future. Although we do not know the identity of these two witnesses for certain, the preponderance of the evidence seems to point to Moses and Elijah.

When these two witnesses ascended up to heaven there was a great earthquake and a tenth of the city of Jerusalem was destroyed, and 7,000 men were slain. This frightened the Jewish remnant and caused them to glorify God. Although the remnant had supposedly fled to the wilderness earlier, near the middle of the seven-year period, they are apparently close enough to Jerusalem to feel the effect of the earthquake, and to be aware of the events concerning the two witnesses. They appear to be drawing nearer to God and His Christ as a result of these events.

Revelation 11:15-19 brings to a close Christ's first telling of the events that occur during Daniel's 70th week.

“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward to thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth. And the temple was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail.”

We see our Lord Jesus Christ claiming the kingdoms of the earth as His own in this passage of scripture, to reign forever and ever. Actually, as we will see in

the retelling of this prophecy in Revelation 13 -22, Christ will reign as King over the earth for 1000 years, and will then assume His reign in the new heaven and new earth, forever. As we noted in Revelation 10:7, when the seventh angel prepares to sound, God's kingdom will no longer be within man's heart, as it is in this present day, and shortly thereafter Christ will assume His reign with and over us as our earthly King, who can be touched, embraced, and worshipped: we can talk to Him face-to-face. Although there are no details of the battle of Armageddon in this passage, we see that this chapter brings the seven-year period to a close, for the time of the judgment is at hand, the time for God to reward His saints, and the time for God to destroy those that destroyed the earth.

There has been considerable interest, and no small amount of conjecture in recent years about what happened to the Ark of the Covenant, herein referred to as the Ark of His Testament. The Ark was symbolic of God's presence, and it was located in the Holy of Holies within the Tabernacle, and later in the Temple built by Solomon. According to scripture the Ark contained the two tables of stone inscribed with the ten commandments (Exodus 25:21; Deuteronomy 10:3-5), a pot of manna, Aaron's rod that blossomed, and the book of the law (Exodus 16:33-34; Deuteronomy 31:26; and Hebrews 9:4). In

spite of the conjecture about its location, the whereabouts of the Ark have remained unknown since the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans in 586 BC. We assume that God removed His presence from Israel at this time, reappearing as the Anointed One (Jesus) in 4 BC. With the crucifixion of Jesus in 30 AD, God turned His attention to the church, the bride of Christ. Although God was no longer represented by the Ark of the Covenant in the Temple after 586 BC, the Jewish nation remained God's chosen, the apple of His eye. God's covenants are everlasting, and he brings them to fruition in spite of our failures and rebellion. In the book of Revelation we see God calling the Jewish people to recognize Jesus as the Messiah through the efforts of the two witnesses, and the sealing of the 144,000 virgins. God promises to save a remnant (one-third) of the Jews at the end of this seven-year period.

To return to the above scripture, how can the Ark of the Covenant be in heaven when the last mention of it was seemingly with the Chaldeans? The Ark represents God's presence and it seems logical that it should be in heaven where God is in His throne room. During the OT when God led the Israelites, He ministered to them spiritually through His presence in the Holy of Holies, where He would be seated on the mercy seat, the cover over the Ark. During

the church age, God is present within believers in the person of the Holy Spirit; He is no longer seated on the mercy seat ministering through the high priest to the Israelite nation. The vision of the Ark in the temple is the first time that a material artifice from earth has been mentioned as being in heaven, so it stretches our understanding of the nature and material substance of created things to another level. God could have transported the Ark from earth to heaven, but more likely the Chaldeans destroyed the earthly Ark (only with God's permission, of course), and what is observed here is a heavenly, or perfected (resurrected) version.

Chapter 12

Satan is Cast Out of Heaven

In this chapter we encounter a pause in the revelation of Daniel's 70th week prophecy, and John is given a vision of two great battles in heaven directly affecting the Jewish nation and its ultimate salvation. Accordingly, scenes unfold that seem to begin with God's plan for establishing the Jewish nation (~1900 B. C.), until the final battle at the end of time, when the dragon (Satan) makes war with the remnant. Revelation 12:1-17 says,

"And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew a third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up to God, and to his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven,

Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth he hath but a short time. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

The woman we see in Revelation 12:1-2 represents the nation of Israel. The wording here is very similar to that in Joseph’s dream in Genesis 37:9, where Jacob, Rachel, and the brothers of Joseph were identified as the sun, moon, and stars, respectively. Jacob, Rachel, and their twelve sons (including Joseph), represent the Jewish nation in the OT, and here we see a symbolic representation of Israel in the NT by the woman. She is travailing in birth, being in pain to bring forth her child. The Jewish nation was in dire straits in the time just before Jesus’ birth. They longed for the promised Messiah to come and deliver them from the Romans, and to reestablish the power and prestige of Israel. Sadly, they failed to understand the prophecies about Jesus, and thus they failed to recognize Him when He did come.

The second wonder we see in this scripture obviously represents Satan. The seven heads with crowns are thought to represent the six worldly empires of the past (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome) with the seventh, and final empire, to be led by the antichrist. The ten horns are thought by most expositors to represent ten kingdoms that make up the antichrist's empire. Daniel 7:7-8 also mentions this beast with the ten horns, and relates Daniel's vision about a *little horn* that rises up and *plucks up* three of the original ten horns. In Daniel 8:9-14 we see that the *little horn* is the antichrist, and it would appear that he takes control of this final empire by conquering, or in some other way overcoming, three of the ten kingdoms. Daniel 8:8 indicates that the *little horn* rises up out of one of a he goat's *four horns*, thought to represent the four kingdoms into which Alexander's empire was divided after his death. This is the basis for conjecture that the antichrist will rise out of one of the four geographical areas that made up Alexander's divided Grecian empire. Many believe that Antiochus Epiphanes, who rose to rule the Syrian portion of Alexander's divided regime, was the precursor to the antichrist. Thus, the antichrist is thought to be destined to rise from this region of the world.

Lucifer was originally a very important angel who chose to rebel against God and, as a result, lost his position in heaven and had his name changed to

Satan (also devil or dragon) to reflect his nature. After his rebellion he no longer resided in heaven, but he apparently retained visiting rights, at least when summoned or invited. In the book of Job, when the sons of God (important angels) presented themselves before the Lord, Satan came with them. When the Lord asked him where he had come from, Satan replied, *“from going to and fro in the earth and from walking up and down in it”*. He and the angels who joined him in this rebellion were no longer residents of heaven where God resides, but Satan retained right of access. The question God asked Satan about where he had been implies that he was no longer a resident of heaven, but was on earth, and out of the immediate presence of God in heaven. Revelation 12:4 does not state that Satan was cast out of heaven as a result of this rebellion, but that *“his tail drags a third of the stars of heaven, and he casts them to the earth.”* The angels who joined Satan’s rebellion seemingly lost their place in heaven as a result of their choice, and they are thereafter referred to as evil angels, or demons. This is similar to what happened to Adam in the Garden of Eden when he chose to “know” evil; he lost his access to God. From this act of rebellion we gather that angels have the ability to choose between good and evil. Satan and his demons apparently took up residence in the abyss (bottomless pit, Sheol, or hell) at this time, but they were given freedom to roam the earth

and its atmosphere to do Satan's bidding. Regarding this Jude 1:6 says, "*And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.*" These are not chains we are familiar with, but chains unto darkness, meaning confinement to the earth and its environs, with their abode being the abyss, or Hell.

Satan's big goal was to stop God's plan for redemption of mankind, thus he stood before the woman ready to "*devour*" her child as soon as it was delivered. Matthew 2:16 documents Herod's decree to kill all boys two-years old, and under, born in Bethlehem and in all its borders. Obviously, Herod was under Satan's influence when he issued this edict. But God had foreseen this attempt to kill the baby Jesus, and He used the wise men to frustrate Herod's evil plans. After Jesus' work on earth was completed, He was caught up to God's throne, as stated in this passage of scripture. Finally, when the time for Christ's return to earth draws near, the woman flees into the wilderness, where God protects her for a period of 1,260 days. We recognize this as a reference to the flight of the remnant from Israel at the midpoint of the seven-year period. Many people believe that that the term "*wilderness*" refers to an area of Edom, or Idumea (present-day southwest Jordan) that was the location of the ancient fortress city, Petra. This area is highly inaccessible, being surrounded by mountains and

cliffs, and thus it affords great protection against attacks by enemies. Another argument for this being the “*wilderness*” referred to is that Edom is one of the regions mentioned in Daniel 11:41, that will be spared from antichrist’s attack against the Holy Land, thus it will be a place of refuge outside the antichrist’s control.

Revelation 12:7 records a war in heaven with Satan and his angels fighting against Michael and his angels. Satan and his demons are seemingly back in heaven after they had been cast out in Revelation 12:4. Revelation 12:8 makes it clear that Satan and his demons have no right of access to heaven after this second defeat, and Revelation 12:9 indicates that Satan is cast out **with** his angels in this war. The wording in Revelation 12:12-17, identifies the timing of this war with the antichrist’s persecution of the remnant, and Satan’s last acts of desperation, for he “*has but a short time*”. We have noted earlier that this is about the middle of the seven-year period, when the antichrist is resurrected from his deadly head wound, and he immediately initiates severe persecution. In an attempt to destroy the remnant, the antichrist apparently sends an army (flood) in pursuit, but God saves them by using an earthquake to open up a crevasse in the earth that “*swallows*” the antichrist’s hordes.

We cannot leave our discussion of Revelation 12 without commenting on another related event that occurred after the crucifixion. Something happened to Satan's authority when Christ was crucified and went into the bowels of the earth triumphing over Satan and his minions (Col. 2:14-15). We know from Ephesians 4:8-10, that Jesus descended into the lower parts of the earth to lead captivity captive after His crucifixion. 1 Peter 3:18-20, indicates that after He died on the cross, Christ was quickened by the Holy Spirit to preach to the spirits in prison (a place of custody). These and other related scriptures indicate that Jesus preached to the saints from the OT (Hebrews 11:13) located in that part of Hades referred to as Abraham's Bosom (Luke 16:22). After they received Him as their savior He led them to heaven to be joined by their fellow believers from the new covenant. Satan lost many of his prized prisoners at this time, and Christ apparently took the keys of hell and death from him, as well. We noted earlier that Christ had these keys when He appeared to John in Revelation 1:18. These keys were a symbol of authority. Their loss, as well as that of many of his most prized prisoners, was a severe blow to Satan's prestige and authority.

Chapter 13

The Antichrist and False Prophet

Revelation 13:1-10 says,

“And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power to the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God; to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindred’s, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. If any man have an ear, let him hear. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: and he that killeth with the sword shall be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and faith of the saints.”

The beast that rises up out of the sea is clearly identified as the antichrist, even though his description is almost identical to that of the dragon in Revelation 12:3. The difference between these two visions relates to the “*crowns*” (or diadems), which were on the “*heads*” in Revelation 12:3, and on the “*horns*” in Rev-

elation 13:1. Revelation 12:3 refers to the six heads (kingdoms) that had had kings (represented by the crowns), whereas Revelation 13:1 refers to the time of the antichrist's rise to power, when kings were appointed (recognized) over ten countries supporting him. The seven heads refer to the seven kingdoms leading up to the eighth kingdom of the resurrected antichrist (see discussion of Rev. 17:9-11, Chapter 17). The NT Greek word "*drakon*", interpreted by the English word "*dragon*", is used 13 times in the book of Revelation, and in every case it refers to Satan, or the devil. The English word "*beast*" is used to interpret two different Greek words, 1) "*Zoon*", which means a living being, or animal, and 2) "*Therion*", which means a wild beast. The book of Revelation uses the Greek word "*Therion*" exclusively to describe the antichrist and the false prophet.

Revelation 16:13 identifies the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet as three separate entities, and Revelation 19:20 states that the beast and the false prophet are cast into the lake of fire. According to Revelation 20:2-3, the dragon is cast into the bottomless pit, where he is bound for a thousand years. Thus, we see that there are three separate, evil beings involved in the events occurring in the book of Revelation. The first beast (the antichrist) is Satan's man; he is the embodiment of Satan on earth and the spirit of Satan motivates him in all his actions, especially after he is healed from being wounded unto

death (Revelation 13:3). He is described as having seven heads and ten horns, just as Satan (the dragon) was described in Revelation 12:3, since he is the earthly representative of Satan's kingdom. This beast is also described in the book of Daniel. Daniel 7:15-27 NIV gives the interpretation of the vision that Daniel received,

"I Daniel, was troubled in my spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed me. I approached one of those standing there and asked him the true meaning of all this. So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things: The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever - yes for ever and ever. Then I wanted to know the true meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others and most terrifying, with its iron teeth and bronze claws - the beast that crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell - the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. As I watched this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom. He gave me this explanation: The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time. But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, power, and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him."

The four kingdoms mentioned in verse 17 correspond to Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome. All of these kingdoms have fallen by conquering armies, with the possible exception of Rome, which seems to have imploded, due to internal corruption, and inability to properly protect and govern its widely distributed holdings. The prophesy indicates that the fourth kingdom will control the whole world, and the Roman Empire certainly fits this description, for from 46 BC to 180 AD the empire extended from the Atlantic Ocean to the Euphrates River, and from the North Sea to the African desert (population 120,000,000). The Roman Empire began to decline in 180 AD and finally fell in 476 AD. No kingdom has arisen since to replace Rome in ruling the world.

The Roman Empire was divided into East and West in 395 AD, and out of the ruins of the Western Empire arose the Papal Empire which ruled the world for an additional 1,000 years. The Papacy developed gradually, becoming a world power in the 6th century AD, and reaching the height of its power in the 13th century AD. The Papacy has been described as “the Ghost of the Roman Empire come to life in the garb of Christianity” (Halley’s Bible Handbook). The Reformation (13th and 14th century) spelled the death of the ruling Papacy.

Ten kings (or rulers) apparently arise from the embers of the Roman Empire, and following them, the horn that *“had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully”* (antichrist), subdues three kings (Da. 8:24; 2 Th. 2:3-10; Re. 13:1-10). It is not clear whether these ten kings will be in power when antichrist arises, or whether they are appointed (or accepted) by antichrist on his rise to power: Revelation 17:12 indicates that these kings *“receive power as kings one hour with the beast”*. But within what is assumed to be a very short time (one hour in Daniel’s prophecy), he removes them from power. It may be that three of these ten resist his rule and he subsequently conquers them. The prophecy goes on to state that the saints will be under antichrist’s control for three-and-one-half years, after which antichrist’s power will be given to the saints forever. This must refer to the last three-and-one-half years of Daniel’s seven years for we know that it is at the end of the seven year period that Christ returns and the whole earth will be given to the saints.

The second vision in the book of Daniel concerning the end times is documented in Chapter 8. The part of the vision we are concerned with is interpreted in Daniel 8:19-26 NIV:

“He said, I am going to tell you what will happen later in the time of wrath, because the vision concerns the appointed time of the end. The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia. The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the large horn between his eyes is the first king. The four horns that

replaced the one that was broken off represent four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power. In the latter part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked, a stern-faced king, a master of intrigue, will arise. He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy the mighty men and the holy people. He will cause deceit to prosper, and he will consider himself superior. When they feel secure, he will destroy many and take his stand against the Prince of princes. Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power. The vision of the evenings and mornings that has been given you is true, but seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future.”

The shaggy goat referred to in this scriptural passage is the third gentile world power, the kingdom of Greece. The large horn between his eyes represents Alexander the Great, the mighty king referred to in Daniel 11:3, who conquered Media-Persia (the two-horned ram). After conquering a large part of the world, Alexander died at age 33, in 323 BC, leaving no apparent heir. After 22 years of fighting, four men assumed rule over four sectors of the Grecian Empire: 1) Cassander - Macedonia, 2) Lysimachus - Thrace, 3) Seleucus - Syria and Babylonia, and 4) Ptolemy - Egypt and Arabia. The prophesy states that in the latter part of their (the four rulers) reign, a stern-faced king, who is a master of intrigue, will arise. This leads many expositors to conclude that the king referred to (in the first fulfillment of this prophesy) is Antiochus Epiphanes, who arose from the Seleucid controlled Syrian and Babylonian part of the empire, and ruled from 175 BC until 164 BC. He devastated Jerusalem in 164 BC, and defiled the Temple by offering a sow on its altar, and in many other ways

persecuted the Jews. This led to the Maccabean revolt in 165 BC, and the cleansing and purification of the Temple. Many prophecies of the old testament have more than one fulfillment, and this prophecy is thought by most expositors to have two fulfillments: one through the actions of Antiochus Ephiphanes in 164 BC, and the second and complete fulfillment through the actions of antichrist at the “*time of the end*”.

The 9th Chapter of the book of Daniel includes the most well-known of Daniel’s prophecies: the prophecy of the seventy sevens. Daniel 9:26-27 NIV says that:

“...The people of the ruler that will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He will confirm the covenant with many for one seven. In the middle of the seven he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.”

That this passage refers to antichrist can hardly be doubted due to the mention of the covenant made with many for seven years, and the subsequent breaking of the agreement in the middle of the seven-year period. The erection of the abomination of desolation (described in Rev. 13:14-15) is further evidence that this prophecy refers to the antichrist.

The prophesy given to Daniel provides background information about antichrist not available in any other part of the Bible. To summarize what Daniel says about antichrist:

1. He arises from the embers of the fallen Roman Empire (Daniel 7:8), quite possibly from the Syrian/Babylonian portion: the Northern kingdom of Alexander's divided empire (Daniel 8:8-9).
2. He subdues three kings (Daniel 7:24), and seemingly remains in power for 6 years, 4 months, and 20 days (2300 days according to Daniel 8:13-14).
3. His kingdom consists of ten kings, which rule with him for "*one hour*", after which they are apparently removed.
4. He rises to power through intrigue and coercion (Daniel 8:23).
5. He makes a covenant with the Jews (and possibly others) for seven years, but breaks the covenant after three-and-one-half years by taking away the sacrifice and offering (Daniel 9:27).
6. He tries to change the times and the laws (Daniel 7:25).
7. The end-time saints are under his rule for three-and-one-half years (Daniel 7:25).

8. He erects an image of himself in a wing of the Jewish Temple (the abomination of desolation), and requires (on penalty of death) that all people worship him (Daniel 11:31-33).

There is a remarkable similarity in the visions given to Daniel and John, who are separated in time by over 600 years. Of course, we should not be surprised since God's messenger gave both visions. In Daniel 7:19-27 the four beasts are identified as being four kings, or kingdoms: Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. In this case, the kings would be Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus (or Darius), Alexander, and various Roman emperors leading up to antichrist. In John's vision a single beast (antichrist), exhibits the characteristics of all four of these kings and their empires. The lion represents the fierceness of the Babylonians, Persia is represented by the strength of the bear, the leopard represents the stealth and swiftness of Greece; and the fourth beast represents the power of the kingdom of the dragon (Satan), led by the antichrist, to whom he gives power, authority, and dreadfulness.

The reference to the antichrist rising up out of the sea in Revelation 13:1, is confusing because other scriptures (Re. 11:7, 17:8) refer to his rising out of the bottomless pit. Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary indicates that the Greek word interpreted *sea* in this scripture refers to the wild and restless con-

dition of nations, while Moulton's Analytical Greek Lexicon interprets it as "the deep, or hell". In Romans 10:6-7 the word *abyss* is substituted for *sea* in a quote from Deuteronomy 30:12-13. This lends some credence to the interpretation that the spirit of the antichrist rises out of the bottomless pit, and the physical antichrist comes to power at a time of great confusion and restlessness within the nations of the world.

In Revelation 13:3 we see what appears to be a fulfillment of Genesis 3:15, when God told Satan that Christ would bruise his head. In this verse one of the heads of the beast receives a wound unto death, but his deadly wound is healed. We assume this refers to the seventh head, the initial kingdom of antichrist, whose deadly wound is healed and he returns as the ruler of the eighth kingdom (see Re. 17:10-11). We know that Christ inflicted a severe wound upon Satan after the crucifixion, when He took the keys of hell and death from him. This was a severe reduction in his power and authority, and could possibly be referred to as the wound to the beast in this scripture, but this is doubtful. It more likely refers to an attack upon the person of the antichrist sometime near the middle of the seven-year period.

We note beginning with Revelation 13:4, that the people of the world worship the dragon and the antichrist, who is given authority to continue for

forty-two months. The antichrist's rise to power starts near the beginning of the seven-year period, and for a short time he seems to rule under relatively peaceful conditions. However, things start to deteriorate as his true nature begins to manifest itself, and conditions get so bad that an assassination attempt is supposedly made on his life. He is miraculously healed from this deadly wound, after which he begins to manifest Satan's evil nature totally. If he was actually resurrected here it would seem that he came back to life under the full and unbridled power of Satan. He reverses his earlier agreement with Israel and takes away the daily sacrifice in the temple. With the assistance of the second beast (the false prophet) he causes them that dwell on the earth to erect an image (to himself) and place it in the temple. All people are required to worship this image on penalty of death. This is the "*abomination of desolation*" that was prophesied by Daniel to occur about the middle of the seven-year period. The antichrist then makes war with the saints and overcomes them, and exercises power over all kindreds, tongues, and nations. Everyone on earth, except those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, worship the antichrist. Table I indicates that these events were initiated three-and-one-half-years into the seven-year period, during the period of the Great Tribulation. Revelation 13 seems to support the chronology of events suggested

above; however, I have described them through the actions of the antichrist rather than the through the actions of the two beasts, as given in Revelation 13.

Revelation 13:9 is an alert, and Revelation 13:10 is a warning. Anyone that leads another into captivity shall himself go into captivity, and anyone that kills with the sword will himself be killed with the sword. This seems to say that even saints that kill (evil) men shall be killed themselves. It will certainly take great patience and faith to stand by doing nothing when fellow believers (and possibly family members) are persecuted and martyred.

Revelation 13:11-18 continues the narrative,

“And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire to come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast, saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six-hundred-threescore-and-six.”

In this scripture the false prophet comes up out of the earth, in contrast with the first beast, who rises out of the sea. We can identify this beast as the false

prophet from Revelation 16:13, 19:20, and 20:10, which refer to him in conjunction with the antichrist and the dragon. The false prophet apparently comes from the inhabited earth, which seems to imply that he is not an incarnate demon like the antichrist, who comes up from the abyss, but instead is selected from evil mankind, possibly a leader already associated with the false religion in vogue at that time. The antichrist gives the false prophet his power, which actually comes from Satan, and he uses it to cause them that dwell on the earth to worship the antichrist. He is able to perform miracles, and he uses this power to deceive men and to cause them to build an image of the antichrist. He has the ability to give breath to the image and to cause it to speak. Some expositors have suggested that the image is nothing more than a very sophisticated robot, programmed to speak. However, this is difficult to accept due to the use of the word "*life*" in this passage of scripture, whereas the word "*breath*" is used in the Interlinear GNT. If the image *breathes*, this implies something more than a sophisticated computer controlled device. This miracle, if such it is, may be no more than a slight embellishment of the miracle performed by Pharaoh's magicians, when they used enchantments to cause their rods to become snakes (Ex. 7:12). The false prophet causes all those that will not worship the image to be killed. He also imposes a requirement for all

people to receive an identification mark in (GNT gives “on”) their hand or forehead. No one is allowed to buy or sell unless he has this mark, or the name of the antichrist, or the number of his name, on his or her hand or forehead. As indicated earlier, I believe God will provide hidden manna (Re. 2:17) to sustain those that belong to Him during this time. The technology required to imbed an identification mark in a person's hand or on their forehead is available at present. In fact, a considerable amount of information can be stored on a very small computer chip placed inside the body in a convenient location. A scanner is then used to read this information. This technique is presently being used to identify dogs, as well as some mentally impaired human beings.

The meaning of the number of the antichrist's name has been the subject of much conjecture. Just about every well-known, evil man that has lived since the book of Revelation was written has been identified as the antichrist by using a method that assigns an appropriate number value to each letter of the person's name, and then sums the numbers to equal the number of the antichrist's name, 666. The wisdom required to “*count the number of the beast*” seems beyond our grasp. However, there are a few observations we can make about this. The number of the beast is the number of a man, and most readers familiar with the Bible know that the number six is the number of a man. This

is because the number seven is the perfect, or complete number, usually related to God, and the number six falls just short of seven. It is therefore imperfect and incomplete, like man. In this verse we have three sixes, very suggestive of three imperfect and incomplete entities, all represented by the antichrist. Satan is a great imitator, and he comes in these last days in the form of an evil *trinity* with the antichrist representing Christ, the false prophet representing the Holy Spirit, and the dragon representing God the Father. This evil trinity is not fit to be compared to the holy trinity, and thus it is identified by a number signifying imperfection and incompleteness thrice over.

Chapter 14

The 144,000 Join Jesus

Revelation 14:1-5 opens with Christ standing on Mount Zion with the 144,000 servants who were sealed in Revelation 7:4. Christ has returned for the final battle of Armageddon and these undefiled Israelites from the twelve tribes stand with Him singing a song of victory that no man could learn, except the 144,000 who were redeemed from the earth.

“And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion! And with him were a hundred forty (and) four-thousands, with the name of his Father having been written in their foreheads. And I heard a sound out of Heaven, as a sound of many waters, and as a sound of a great thunder. Also I heard the sound of harpers harping on their harps. And they sing a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders. And no one was able to learn the song except the hundred (and) forty-four thousands, those having been redeemed from the earth. These were the ones who were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are the ones following the Lamb wherever He may go. These were redeemed from among men as (a) firstfruit to God and the Lamb. And no guile was found in their mouth, for they are without blemish before the throne of God” (Re. 14:1-5 GNT).

Revelation 14:3-5 suggests two postulates worthy of our consideration. The GNT states that the 144,000 *“have been purchased from the earth”* and they *“follow the Lamb wheresoever he may go”*. It also says that, *“they are without fault before*

the throne of God.” Although this seems to imply that the 144,000 were taken to heaven when they were “*purchased*” (Revelation 7:3), I believe that the preponderance of evidence in the Bible supports the view that these Jewish virgins are sealed about the middle of the seven-year period, at the time the antichrist begins his pogrom, and they accompany the Jewish remnant into the wilderness (Petra?), where they minister for 1260 days under God's protection. When Christ returns to earth to the battle of Armageddon, they join Him on mount Zion. They follow the Lamb wherever He goes and thus, when He comes to earth, they join Him to do battle with His enemies.

The description of the 144,000 as “*firstfruits*” indicates that these are “Jewish firstfruits”, with more Jewish “fruits” to follow, brought into Christ through their ministry. The Bible is clear about what is required to receive eternal life: to believe **into** Jesus Christ, and this applies to all, whether Jew, Muslim, Hindu, or Gentile. The Greek word interpreted as “*redeemed*” in this passage means to “acquire by ransom, or price paid”. These were redeemed when Christ claimed them as His own, and His angels marked them in their foreheads with His Father's name. These were actually sealed in Revelation 7:4, and marked for service in spreading the gospel to the Jewish remnant during the last three-and-one-half years. They are *firstfruits* in the same sense as be-

lievers who participate in the rapture/resurrection and return with Christ to rule the earth.

The Everlasting Gospel is Preached

In Revelation 14:6-7 John observes an angel:

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.”

In this scripture we see the fulfillment of Matthew 24:14 which states:

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come”.

This spread of the gospel has usually been attributed to television and radio, and this is certainly an understandable interpretation; however, this scripture seems to point to a more focused preaching of a brief message over a short period of time, and from a particular location. Also, this is at a time in which the antichrist has control all over the world and, as such, it seems unlikely that widespread Christian television and radio ministry would escape his censorship. The angel announces his message in a loud voice from the middle of heaven, which is thought to refer to the meridian (the location of the sun at

noontime). This seems to argue for a literal interpretation of this passage. It is clearly stated that this angel is preaching to men on earth. Two other angels follow with additional messages; however, there is no positive indication that they are preaching to men on earth. An argument could be made that the first angel's message, if not all three, is (are) actually communicated to men on earth during the last days through the prophecy, the book of Revelation. However, this would be a bit of a stretch. God can certainly dispatch an angel to preach to men on earth if that is what is required, but you would anticipate that this would be a spiritual message to men's hearts.

Babylon Falls

Revelation 14:8 continues,

“And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”

There are three words in this passage that we need to consider: Babylon, wrath, and fornication. We will encounter the word Babylon several more times before we finish the book of Revelation, and we will see it used in relation to religion, politics, and the world economy. In this particular scripture it is used in a negative religious context: Babylon refers to the antichrist's world

religion, led by the false prophet. The antichrist and the false prophet have forced all nations to accept this apostate religion, and thus God is very angry. He is about to pour out His wrath on mankind, and this angel refers to a common OT expression that God will pour out His cup of fury on evil. The word “*fornication*” means illicit sexual intercourse. Here it refers to spiritual intercourse with false gods. Vines Complete Expository Dictionary gives this definition of fornication: “metaphorically, the association of pagan idolatry with doctrines of, and professed adherence to, the Christian faith”.

The Mark of the Beast

Revelation 14:9-13 introduces yet another angel:

“And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”

In this passage the third angel announces a warning to people on earth that any who worship the antichrist, or his image, or receive his mark on their forehead or hand, will drink of the wrath of God. It is interesting that the cup they drink of will be poured out without mixture. The GNT says, “. . . *the fury of God is mixed undiluted in the cup of his wrath*”. Psalm 75:8 speaks of God’s cup of wine being full of mixture, and the wicked of the earth will drink the dregs. We assume the wrath here is not diluted.

Those that are guilty of worshipping the antichrist are to be tormented with fire and brimstone without rest day or night. This must refer to those that are cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, who will suffer torment for eternity. This is a controversial belief, with some arguing that torment after judgment is of limited duration. Folks that believe in limited torment are called annihilationists, and they argue that there are many scriptures that refer to the “destruction” of the wicked (M’t. 7:13-14), rather than eternal punishment in the lake of fire and brimstone. Hebrews 10:27 also speaks of the fire that will “consume” God’s adversaries. This question is not absolutely resolved in the Bible: there are good reasons for both positions, but I would tend to believe the stronger evidence is on the side of eternal torment.

Revelation 14:12 seems to carry the same message as Revelation 13:10, that the patience and faith of the saints are the two things that sustain them through these terrible days on earth. Revelation 14:13 is difficult to understand since those that die after this would appear to be unbelievers. Vincent's Word Studies In The NT makes the point that wording similar to this in John 13:33 can refer to periods of time up to the present. The Greek word used here is *arti*, interpreted as "now" in the GNT . This word is often used in the Bible to refer to periods of time "up to" the present. Logic would argue that Saints that die up to this point are blessed, for they are taken from a world of severe trial to their rest in heaven, and their works follow them there.

Christ Comes to Thrust in His Sickle

Revelation 14:14-20 continues,

"And I looked and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And

the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.”

John sees Christ sitting upon a white cloud, holding in his hand a sharp sickle, and an angel comes out of the temple with a message to thrust in His sickle, for the time to reap has come. This angel’s message must have come from God the Father, since only He knows when the cup of indignation is full and the earth is ready for reaping (M’t. 24:36). Christ then thrusts in his sickle and begins to reap the earth. This is symbolic of Christ’s warring with the antichrist’s army in the final battle of Armageddon. An angel who also has a sharp sickle then joins Christ. He is told by another angel to gather the “*clusters*” (“*bunches*” in the GNT) of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe. This angel then joins Christ in reaping the earth and casting the grapes into the great winepress of God. This is an obvious reference to the battle of Armageddon and a fulfillment of the scripture in Joel 3:12-14, that indicates there will be “*multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision*”. The blood comes out of this winepress (battle) in such great quantities that it stretches for 1600 furlongs (-200 miles), and reaches as high as the horse’s bridles. This sounds almost unbelievable, but I believe what John saw here was the blood from the 200 million men, which would be one million per mile, spread out over the pathway of

the army's frontal attack position, with blood spattered as high as the horses
bridles.

Chapter 15

The Seven Vials of God's Wrath

We are coming to the close of Daniel's 70th week and we are told that God's wrath (fury) is filled up with these last seven plagues (Re. 15:1-8).

"And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the last seven plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest. And after that I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. And one of the four beasts [living creatures] gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power: and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled."

Here we see those who have been victorious over the beast standing on a "sea of glass". In Revelation 21:18 the term "clear glass" is likened unto "pure gold". Possibly these overcomers were standing on an expanse of gold, pure and translu-

cent, signifying the purity and holiness of God's heaven. This "*sea of glass*" is mingled with fire. In Revelation 3:18 God counsels His saints "*buy*" gold tried in fire that they might be rich. These overcomers have *bought* gold by doing the works of God and taking victory over the beast and his image; God thus describes them as being rich. 1 Corinthians 3:13 states that every man's works will be tried by the refiner's fire to prove what sort it is, whether it is consumed like stubble or is purified like gold. These overcomers seem to be "*standing*" on their works, which have survived the refiner's fire.

The words to Moses' song are given in Deuteronomy 32:1-43. This song sets forth the mercy shown to the Israelites, who later turned from God to the worship of false gods, which brought on God's vengeance. As a result of their perfidy, their sins became as those of Sodom and Gomorrah, and their wine as the poison of dragons and the venom of asps. He describes their vine as coming from Sodom and Gomorrah, their grapes as being filled with poison, and their clusters as being filled with bitterness. This pretty well describes the condition of mankind on earth at the time He pours out His wrath.

Deuteronomy 32: 36 NIV, says the Lord will execute judgment when He sees that the strength of His servants is gone and none are left, slave or free. There is nothing that holds Him back now.

The song that the overcomers sing is also described as “*the song of the Lamb*”. By our being *grafted in*, the NT church is also included in this prophetic song. I believe this song is given as a warning to the latter-day church. As much as God loved the people of Israel, He had no alternative but to pour out His vengeance on them because of their turning to other Gods. In the same way, people in end-times churches can become enemies by turning away from God and worshipping the antichrist. Deuteronomy 32:36 is an arresting scripture, for it seems to imply that none of God's servants (believers) will be left when He comes to avenge and repay: all will apparently be either raptured, martyred, or will have turned to the whore church of the false prophet. This condition occurs just before God pours out His wrath on the earth. None of His true servants can be left on earth since He has promised that His wrath would not fall on His own.

In Deuteronomy. 32:37 NIV God asks,

"Now where are their gods, the rock they took refuge in, the gods who ate the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their drink offerings?"

In Revelation 15:5, John sees the temple (“*holy place*”) of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven opened, and seven angels come out. This is the same temple referred to in Revelation 11:19 as the temple of God, and in Revelation

14:17 as the temple that is in heaven. It seems that angels are dispatched from the temple as they receive their assigned tasks. In this scripture the seven angels receive seven golden vials (or bowls) full of the wrath of God that are soon to be poured out on the earth. Revelation 15:8 states that no man (GNT says no one) can enter the temple until the seven plagues of these seven angels have been fulfilled.

Chapter 16

Plagues on the Earth

Revelation 16:1-21 tells what happens when the last seven plagues are poured out on earth:

“And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image. And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every soul died in the sea. And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and the fountains of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments. And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory. And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain. And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds. And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God

Almighty. Behold I come as a thief, Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.”

When the first angel pours out his vial an evil and grievous sore falls upon men having the mark of the beast, who do homage to his image. This is very similar to the sixth Egyptian plague, in which festering boils broke forth upon the men of Egypt. In Job 2:7 Satan smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the top of his head. When the first angel pours out his vial we see God's wrath coming to fruition; those that belong to Satan receive the same curse that Satan put on Job. Notice that this plague falls only on men having the mark of the antichrist and do homage to his image. From this we might assume that even at this late hour, there could be some on earth that have not taken the beast's mark, nor have done homage to his image, and thus will not suffer from this plague.

When the second angel pours out his vial on the sea it becomes blood, as of a dead man, and every living soul in the sea dies. Compare this to the angel sounding the second trumpet (Revelation 8:8), when one-third of the sea became blood and one-third of the creatures in the sea died. The third angel then pours out his vial on the rivers and fountains of waters, and they become blood. The angel of the waters then told God that this was righteous in that the men left on earth had poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and it was appropriate that they should be given blood to drink. These plagues affecting the waters are similar to both the first Egyptian plague (Ex. 7:20-25), which differed in that it only lasted seven days, and the judgments of the second and third angels of Revelation 8:8-11, which affected only one-third of the seas, rivers, and ground waters. When these two angels pour out their vials of wrath, all the water on earth will become blood: there will be no water to drink.

When the fourth angel pours out his vial on the sun, men are scorched with great heat and they blaspheme the name of God, and still refuse to repent of their deeds. We noted earlier when the fourth angel sounded his trumpet one-third of the sun was darkened (Re. 8:12), but here the radiation from the sun is increased so that men cannot be exposed to it for any length of time. This

seems to imply that the earlier darkening was temporary, for with the fourth angel's vial the sun's intensity is greatly magnified.

The fifth angel then pours out his vial upon the seat (throne) of the beast, and his kingdom becomes full of darkness, and they gnaw their tongues because of the pain. This plague is similar to that of Exodus 10:21-23, when darkness was so thick that it could be felt, and none of the Egyptians arose from their places for three days. These followers of the antichrist are feeling God's vengeance; gnawing one's tongue could only be the reaction of a person under great distress.

The sixth angel pours out his vial upon the river Euphrates. The water then dries up so that the way for the kings of the east (from the rising of the sun) might be prepared to come to the great and final battle between good and evil, the battle of Armageddon. The Euphrates River forms the northeast boundary of the land God promised to the Israelites (Ge. 15:18; De. 1:7; Jos. 1:4). It provides a natural defense for Israel, shielding it from attack from the east. Here, it is dried up so that nations of the east can join other nations from across the world in coming against God, and His chosen and faithful in the valley of Megiddo, a plain lying between the mountains of Israel and the hills of Galilee, where many famous OT battles took place.

The Unclean Spirits

In Revelation 16:13 John saw three unclean spirits (demons) come out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. To John they looked like frogs, which were especially vile to Jews. God used an infestation of frogs in one of the Egyptian plagues and they covered the land and were in the houses. In this case these frog-like demons were sent forth with the ability to perform miraculous signs in order to gather the kings of the earth to the battle of Armageddon, to the battle of that “*great day of God Almighty*”. These kings from all over the whole earth join the kings from the east in preparation for the final climactic battle against God, Christ, and the chosen and faithful. Vincent’s Word Studies in the New Testament indicates that Armageddon is a word compounded of the Hebrew *Har mountain* and *Megiddo: the mountain of Megiddo*. Megiddo was located in the plain of Esdraelon, about 60 miles north of Jerusalem. It was situated such that it was a chosen location for army encampments in every major encounter in Palestine from the time of Nebuchadnezzar, to the march of Napoleon Bonaparte from Egypt to Syria. Believers in the US have difficulty accepting the fact that this country is not part of the Lord’s army at Armageddon, but the fact is that we have moved away from be-

ing the God-fearing nation we were for ~200 years. Even now our commitment to Israel is suspect, at best. Oh, that we would believe God's warning in His covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12:3: "*I will bless them that bless thee [Israel] and curse them that curseth thee [Israel]*" (parenthetical words added).

The Seventh Angel Pours Out His Vial

When the seventh angel pours out his vial into the air a great voice out of the temple says, "*It is done*", and there were voices, thunders, lightnings, and a great earthquake, like none since men have been on the earth. From this earthquake Jerusalem will be split into three parts, cities of the world will fall, islands will disappear, and mountains will be leveled. This is very similar to the description in Revelation 6:12-17, when the sixth seal is opened and a foretaste of *the day of the Lord's wrath* was given to John. Great hail will fall from heaven with hailstones weighing as much as 75 lbs., greater even than the seventh plague of hail released by the Lord on Egypt. Zechariah 14:1-21 provides some interesting details about the battle of Armageddon: verse 12 describes the plague that the Lord will use against His enemies in extremely lurid language,

"And this shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand

on their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth."

This sounds very much like what happened in the aftermath of the atomic bombs, dropped near the end of World War II on the Japanese cities of Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

Revelation 16:17 states that when the seventh angel pours his vial into the air a great voice out of the temple said, "*It is done*". This sounds very much like the last word that Jesus spoke from the cross, "*It is finished*" (Joh. 19:30). We know that Jesus was referring to the fact that the work that He was sent to do as our Savior on earth was finished, and all that remained for Him to do was to bring these chosen ones home to eternal life through His role as Mediator of the new covenant, at the right hand of God in heaven. The Kingdom of God on earth was established in the heart of men, and those that received Christ were given citizenship in this kingdom of the heart. In Revelation 16:17 the words "*It is done*" refers to the end of the present world order as we know it, the end of man's rule on earth, and the end of the Kingdom of God in the hearts of men. After this Christ will rule His kingdom from His throne in the earthly city of Jerusalem for a period of a thousand years, and then from new Jerusalem forever.

Chapter 17

The Great Whore

Revelation 17:1-18 provides additional clarifying, or background information, somewhat like a sidebar in a manuscript. In this chapter John is called aside by one of the angels that poured out the seven plagues, and he is shown the judgment of the great whore (world) church established by the antichrist and the false prophet.

“And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the

foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. And here is the mind of wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition. And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful. And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.”

The whore is described as sitting upon many waters, which represents peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues (Rev 17:15). Thus, we know that the whore’s influence and power arise from her influence over many people and nations.

The word whoredom is used many times in the Bible to describe religious apostasy, a turning away from God to the worship of idols. The kings of the earth have committed spiritual fornication with this whore church: they have submitted to, and accepted the whore church doctrine, which promotes pagan idolatry under the guise of, and professed adherence to, the Christian faith. As a result, inhabitants of the earth have become intoxicated (mad) with the wine of her fornication. Sadly, many denominations and individual churches in our

land seem blind to the wiles of the devil in this regard. They drink the wine of the whore's fornication until they are willing to accept almost any abomination: homosexuality, same-sex marriage, pedophilia, pornography, abortion, adultery, and fornication, as well as many other less grievous offenses. Satan can raise up forms of religion that incorporate just about every Christian precept, except belief in salvation, based on the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Even Satan's ministers present themselves as ministers of righteousness (2 Co. 11:15). Satan has been successful in preparing a significant part of the contemporary Christian church for the coming of the antichrist and his whore church.

The whore is holding a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and uncleanness of her fornications. Jeremiah 51:7 refers to a golden cup that represents Babylon, a focus of great evil in the OT, and we note that Revelation 16:19 says that God remembered Babylon, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. Thus, we have considerable evidence that the golden cup in the hand of the whore represents Babylon. However, we assume this refers to a spiritual Babylon, and the three cities that have been suggested as likely candidates include Babylon, Jerusalem, and Rome.

Upon the head of the whore was written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE

EARTH. The mystery of iniquity (2 Thessalonians 2:7), was already at work during Paul's life, but the full revelation of this mystery is held in check until the "*one that restraineth*" is taken out of the way. When believers are raptured near the end of the Great Tribulation, the influence of the Holy Spirit on earth will be greatly diminished. When Christ returned to heaven after His resurrection He sent the Holy Spirit to reside within, and minister to and through, individual believers. When these believers are taken from the earth, this aspect of the Holy Spirit's ministry is completed, and God then prepares to pour out His wrath on the earth and those left behind. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the believers on earth before the rapture restrains the evil plans and activities of Satan, but when the believers are raptured that wicked one (antichrist) will be without restraint. Iniquity within the harlot church will then be fully revealed.

In Revelation 17:7, the angel begins to explain to John the mystery of the woman and the beast that carries her. The beast is described as one that lived, and died, and lived again when he arose out of the bottomless pit. Compare this to Revelation 1:4, which describes God as "*. . . him which is, and which was, and which is to come*". This is another instance of Satan trying to counterfeit God and His Christ. We commented earlier in Chapter 13 on the antichrist's

(beast's) rising out of the bottomless pit. Here we have additional evidence that the antichrist is wounded unto death, but his deadly wound is healed, and he lives again. We noted previously that the antichrist rises to power proclaiming peace, and making a treaty with the Jews, allowing them to resume daily sacrifices in the temple. He apparently reigns for three-and-one-half-years in relative quietude before things begin to get out of hand and he begins to meet resistance, as his true nature surfaces. This seems like an appropriate time for an assassin to strike a blow to his head, but instead of death and subsequent burial, he is restored to life. The scripture says that he ascends out of the bottomless pit. We know that the bottomless pit is the abode of the dragon and his demons. The antichrist's spirit, which goes to hell at his death, is apparently replaced by the spirit of Satan himself when he is restored to life, for he becomes an absolute fiend after his resurrection. This is all part of a gigantic charade to mimic Christ's death and resurrection, for believer's also have their human spirit replaced by the Spirit of Jesus Christ when they participate in Christ's death and resurrection (Ro. 8:15; 1 Co. 2:12). All those that continue to dwell on the earth whose names are not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will wonder at this seeming resurrection. They will undoubtedly look on this resurrected beast as a god.

Revelation 17:9 states that the seven heads are seven mountains, or kingdoms, on which the woman is sitting, and in Revelation 17:10, we see that there are seven kings, five of which are fallen, one still exists, and one is yet to come. In our previous discussion on Revelation 13:2, we identified four kingdoms associated with the beast (antichrist): Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. In this verse we find there are seven kingdoms (and kings) leading up to the final reign of the beast, who is identified in Revelation 17:11 as the eighth king, but of the seven. Two kingdoms that preceded the Babylonian empire are included here, Egypt and Assyria. Rome is the sixth kingdom that still remains when the antichrist comes to power. Although the current Roman empire is in disarray, and greatly weakened, the implication from this passage of scripture is that the antichrist rises up from this empire. To properly explain this scripture the antichrist's reign must represent both the seventh and eighth kingdoms. His initial reign, beginning when he arises out of the sea, lasts for the first three-and-one-half -years, and undoubtedly represents the seventh kingdom. His second reign lasts for the final three-and-one-half years, and possibly begins when he arises out of the abyss after his deadly wound. This second reign represents the eighth kingdom. This would explain the meaning of Revelation 17:11, and be in accord with the number of kingdoms in Revelation 17:10.

The ten horns on the beast represent ten kings that will receive their kingdoms coincident with the rise of the antichrist. They will rule for one hour, which is interpreted as being a limited period of time, and they will give their power and strength to the beast. We conclude from this that at the beginning of Daniel's 70th week a person of fierce countenance, understanding dark sentences, rises up within a confederation of ten nations, loosely identified with the Roman Empire, as it existed after Constantine's death. These ten kings seemingly are given rule during the antichrist's rise to power, but soon after he consolidates his ruling authority, he removes them. During the consolidation of his reign this king (antichrist) subdues the rulers of three nations. His power is greatly increased over the next few years until he controls the whole earth (Da. 7:23). In establishing his expanding kingdom he encourages the growth of the harlot church (represented by the whore) under the control and guidance of his assistant, who we recognize as the false prophet. The ruthless enforcement of his policies eventually begin to cause unrest that leads to his assassination from a deadly wound to the head. Satan seizes this opportunity to enforce absolute fealty from those left on the earth, so he resurrects the body of the antichrist with his own evil spirit. The antichrist thus fits the description of Revelation 17:8, which says that the beast was, and is not, and ascends out of

the bottomless pit, and goes into perdition. Whereas the antichrist was totally evil before his assassination, he returns as an absolute fiend, demanding the worship of all people, severely persecuting the Jews and Christians, and allowing no one to buy or sell unless they receive his mark of identification. It is at this time that he places the abomination of desolation (his image) in the temple and demands that all people worship him. This is what he has desired since the beginning: worship, for he longs to be God's equal. It is also the time alluded to in Revelation 17:16, which states that the ten kings allied with the antichrist turn against the whore, make her desolate, eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For some reason that is not given the antichrist and his ten-nation kingdom turn against the harlot church that he and his henchman (the false prophet) organized and nurtured. As indicated above, the antichrist is very jealous of any person or entity that receives worship; possibly the harlot church turns away from worshipping him and his image and thus earns his ire.

Revelation 17:18 GNT states that the whore is "*the great city, which has kingship over the kings of the earth*". As indicated above, biblical expositors have understood this to mean Babylon, Rome, or Jerusalem. The context of this scripture leaves little doubt that it refers to the location of the antichrist's power base; the thing that is not clear is whether this refers to his economic and po-

litical power base, or his religious power base. We have interpreted the scripture references to the whore in Revelation 17 as applying to her representation of the harlot church, having religious authority over peoples, nations, multitudes, and tongues. In Revelation 18 we will see her representing the world's commerce, having power over trade, business, banking, and transportation. It is not clear whether this "*city*" is the seat of the antichrist's religious authority through the harlot church, or whether this refers to the seat of his commercial power base through the ten underling kings.

Let us move on to Chapter 18 to see if we can begin to understand this mystery.

Chapter 18

The Fall of Babylon

Revelation 18:1-24 describes the fall of the antichrist's economic power base. The economic collapses in 1929 and 2009 are the only events in recent memory that might be compared to this, but there will be no recovery from the collapse described here. God's judgment on spiritual Babylon includes much more than just the crash of markets of trade.

“And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye not be partakers of her sins, and that ye not receive her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her as even she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup that she hath filled fill to her double. How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit as a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore, shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning. Standing afar off

for fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the world shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all. The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, And saying, Alas, alas that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in shops, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like this great city! And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! For in one hour is she made desolate. Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles, and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her. And a mighty angel took a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of the harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.”

In this chapter John sees a very powerful angel come down from heaven with glory that shines over much of the earth. It is tempting to interpret this as referring to Christ, but there is not enough information given about this angel to

assume that he is other than one of Christ's greatest and most powerful angels, who is given the honor of announcing the fall of the antichrist's commercial empire. The angel cries with a mighty voice that Babylon is fallen, is fallen. Although this is a quote from Isaiah 21:9, the repetition is interesting. The Interlinear Hebrew-English OT renders this, "*she fell, she fell*", and the context implies that the repetition is due to the excitement of the message bearer. It seems clear from this scripture that merchants and tradesmen from across the world establish lucrative business relationships (committed fornication) with this great commercial center and its destruction generates much distress. These merchants trade fine merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones, silk, linen, and thyine wood, used for incense and inlaying, to their contacts within the city.

In Revelation 18:4 we see a warning from heaven asking God's people to come out of the city before its destruction so that they will not be partakers of her sins and plagues. It seems unlikely that believers would be in this city at this time when God's wrath is being poured out. This verse could be interpreted as pertaining to a period of time leading up to the city's destruction since it refers to partaking of sins, a phrase that may imply acts occurring over a considerable period of time. The most likely interpretation is that it is a call to

Jewish people living in this city. Jeremiah 51:6, 45, records a plea for Israelites to flee Babylon during the time of the Lord's vengeance, which is understood to refer to the end-times, thus reinforcing this interpretation. People come to God under the most trying situations, and even though the pervasiveness of the Holy Spirit is diminished after the rapture of the church, this scripture could possibly pertain to end-time Gentile converts, as well.

The judgment of this great commercial center is going to be devastating, for she is to receive double what she has given, and her plagues of death, mourning, famine, and fire will come in one day. The kings of the earth, and the merchants, tradesmen, and shipmasters that were made wealthy through trade with the great city will stand afar off and cry, and cast dust on their heads. However, the saints, prophets, and apostles in heaven will rejoice, for God will have avenged them. A mighty angel casts a great millstone into the sea in Revelation 18:21 saying, thus, with violence shall the great city be thrown down. It may be that the destruction of the city is, in part, caused by the tidal wave created by the millstone. The voice of harpers, musicians, pipers, and trumpeters will not be heard any more, nor will there be any craftsmen or merchants in this city ever again. This city was apparently the engine that drove the an-

tichrist's worldwide economy. Thus, it figured strongly in the death of prophets and saints all over the world, and their blood cried out for revenge.

To return to our discussion of exactly which city is referred to here, I believe we need to start with what most expositors have concluded about the focus of Chapter 17, and Chapter 18. There is considerable agreement that Chapter 17 refers to the whore's headquarters, the city from which the false prophet administers the antichrist's religious base; whereas Chapter 18 refers to his economic power base, which obviously has entanglements throughout the end-times world. I personally believe a case can be made for these two chapters to be referring to the same city. Note that Chapter 18 seemingly continues to describe the destruction of spiritual Babylon, which we identified as the golden cup in the whore's hand. Further, Revelation 18:3 refers to God's anger at the fornication precipitated by the whore, as well as many references to "*her*", which we also assume refers to the whore. The question that remains is, Which city is it that is referred to here? To suggest any answer to this we must fall back on our own human intuition, which is always suspect. I offer the following:

- I. I would tend to eliminate Babylon simply because it does not exist at this point in time, and I do not see any activity on the horizon to indicate that

it is likely to be re-built and become the center of religion and commerce in the time we seem to have left until the “beginning of sorrows”.

2. I would also question that it could be referring to Jerusalem due to the other seemingly unrelated events that occur in Israel during the last seven years. Also, Jerusalem is historically the home of the Jews, God’s chosen nation and not a likely location for a competing religious system.
3. This leaves us with Rome that has several features that would argue in its favor. It is located on seven hills, it has a history of being the religious center for much of the Christian world since the time of Constantine, and the antichrist comes to power through the evolved Roman kingdom. Everything considered Rome seems to be the likely location of the antichrist’s religious and power base described in Revelation 17-18.

Chapter 19

The Marriage of the Lamb

The first six verses of this chapter (Rev. 19:1-6) record the joyous praise in heaven over God's judgment of the great whore,

"And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto our Lord and God: For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts [living creatures] fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

In this scripture all heaven seems to be praising God for His judgment of the great whore. This is the time of the return of Christ, and evil on earth is being dealt with dramatically. We note the use of the word "*Alleluia*" several times in this passage, and, as most readers know, this is a Hebrew word meaning *Praise ye Jehovah*. We encounter this word often in praise songs during worship, and it seems to lift us up into God's presence in a special way. Can you imagine the

rapturous feelings of those gathered around God's throne as they praise Him face-to-face?

Revelation 19:7–10 introduces the marriage of the Lamb:

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, these are the true sayings of God. And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, see thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

The symbolism between Jewish marriage rites and the process the Lord follows in claiming His bride (the church), stealing her away in the rapture, and ultimately making her His wife, is both beautiful and revealing. We cannot deal with this very interesting allegory in any detail in our study of the book of Revelation, but Zola Levitt, a Jewish Christian, has written a book entitled “A Christian Love Story” that deals with this subject. When Christ takes His bride from the earth the overcomers will receive their immortal bodies in accordance with the promise in 1 Corinthians 15:42–44, and they will be with Him forever. These bodies will be like Christ's resurrected body (1 John 3:2). In a Jewish marriage this can be compared to the groom coming completely unannounced in the middle of the night and stealing his bride away. The bridegroom comes after completing his task of constructing a wedding cham-

ber called a *chuppah* . When the bridegroom's father says that the wedding chamber is ready, the bridegroom goes to retrieve his bride. The wedding chamber seems to correspond to the abodes in the father's house that Christ prepares for His bride (John 14:2-3 GNT). John 2:16 indicates that the Father's house is the temple, and John 2:21 further identifies the Father's house as the temple of His (Christ's) body. Christ's body is now represented by the church, which includes all believers who have been regenerated through His death and resurrection. As on earth, the many abodes (or bodies) in heaven are the many members of the body of Christ, which comprise God's temple. Thus, we see that the wedding chamber, or abode, that Christ is preparing for us is the immortal body in which we will be clothed after we meet Him in the air. Christ fashions this immortal body and delivers it to our spirit/immaterial soul; it then becomes our abode for eternity. 2 Corinthians 5:1-2 GNT is helpful in understanding this:

“For we know that if our earthly house of [this] tabernacle is taken down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven. For also in this we groan, greatly desiring to be clothed with our dwelling place from heaven.”

In the rapture, Christ comes in the clouds to gather His elect, accompanied by angels and the spirit/souls of those who are raptured and resurrected. There is little information in the bible about what happens after this. Many believe

that this will be the time when the believer's works are judged at the judgment seat of Christ (Ro. 14:10). If so, this could be compared to the consummation of the Jewish marriage. A marriage is consummated (completed) when the bride and groom come together in the physical act of love: by this act they are said to *know* one another. As our judge Christ *knows* us completely, and through His judgment of our works we come to *know* Him in a way that we have not experienced before.

The marriage supper is the last step in the Jewish marriage rite, and it celebrates the consummation of the marriage. In the same manner, when Christ presents his bride to the Father arrayed in fine linen, which represents her righteous acts, the celebration in heaven will begin. Our Lord will have completed His work of salvation and sanctification.

1 Corinthians 15: 35-50 provides a wonderful description of the mortal (natural) body that we sow in death, and the immortal (spiritual) body that we are given by God at rapture and resurrection.

"But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come? Thou fool, that thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is the glory of the sun, and

another glory of the moon, another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have born the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

This passage compares our natural body to a seed placed in the ground. The new life, the pattern of which is contained within the seed, rises out of the seed only after the seed loses its identity (dies). Although God gives our resurrected bodies the form He chooses, based on our works, there is something about our earthly bodies that shapes the pattern for our immortal bodies. The wording here seems to imply that each one of these spiritual bodies is unique.

2 Corinthians 5:10 GNT says,

"For we all must be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, that each may receive the things [done] in the body, according to what he did, whether good or evil."

Vincent's Word Studies indicates that this *receiving* is literally through the medium of the body. Thus, the believer's immortal body in some way manifests the righteous acts done while on earth. However, we also know that our

immortal body retains something (DNA?) that identifies us as the person we were on earth, for the bible indicates that we will recognize people in heaven. Further, the apostles and many others recognized Christ when He appeared to them after resurrection, even though His appearance was changed. There was something about Christ's immortal body that allowed His friends to recognize Him, and we know that when He appeared to Thomas He bore the scars of His death on the cross. 1 Corinthians 15:30 states that each of the “*seeds*” will receive its own immortal body. This seems to leave no doubt that each believer will receive his/her own unique immortal body when we meet Christ in the clouds. Our true spiritual identity seems to be vested in the spirit/immaterial soul given to us while we are still in the womb, and which upon physical death immediately goes to heaven. Our human spirit is really who we are, and our physical body is just the house we live in while on earth. Our soul integrates our body with the spirit God gives us in the womb and thus, we are born a tripartite person: body, soul, and spirit. God made us after His triune image: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (Genesis 1:26-27). Like the seed, our old house dies (decays) while we are in the ground, but we receive a new house upon resurrection. Like the seed, our old house contained the embryo for new life within itself. Christ takes this embryo and fashions an immortal body using our right-

eous works, much like He did our original earthly bodies while still in the womb (Psalms 139:15-16). He then clothes our spirit/immaterial soul with this new body after we are resurrected. Our new house (abode, or body) is perfectly designed by God to reflect our inner spirit. After all, our spirit (in deliberation with the Holy Spirit) is the source of inspiration for the righteous works done in our body while on earth. At His judgment seat, when the union is consummated (completed), Christ will determine our reward, or lack thereof, based on our life and works after being saved.

Revelation 19:10 makes an interesting statement: “*the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*” Vines Complete Expository Dictionary indicates that this applies to the Jewish remnant (see Re. 12:17), which will give testimony concerning Christ and Israel during the time of Jacob’s Trouble (the last half of the seven-year period). The context of this scripture seems to argue that it could well be reminding John that the source of the prophecy (the book of Revelation) is the spirit of Jesus.

Revelation 19:11-21 records the second coming of Christ to the earth:

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white

and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit upon them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.”

The first few verses in this passage constitute some of the most moving words in all scripture. Here we see our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, prepared for His victorious return to earth with all the symbols of His kingship, but dressed in a vesture dipped in blood. Isaiah 63:2-3 indicates that when Christ returns the blood of His enemies will be splattered on His garments during the battle of Armageddon, but in this verse Christ has not yet engaged the enemy. It is through Christ's blood shed for us on the cross that we have received salvation, and His sacrifice is so much a part of what He did while on earth that it seems appropriate for Him to be identified in this manner. Therefore, I believe that the blood on His vesture in this scripture symbolizes His blood shed on the cross through which our sins are forgiven and we are reconciled to God. It is

Christ's blood, shed on the cross that protects us from the enemy. He is identified by the name that John so often used to describe Christ, the Word of God.

When Christ returns He brings His army of saints and angels with Him, but it is not clearly stated in this scripture that they are actively involved in the battle. However, in Zechariah 14:14, it says that "*Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem*". This must be a reference to the Jewish remnant (now believers) awaiting deliverance. Christ uses the sword of His mouth to slay the nations. This is undoubtedly the same two-edged sword we saw when He dictated the letter to the church at Pergamos. We see here another example of the power of the manifested and spoken word of Christ. His words have creative power, and, in this instance, destructive power. Zechariah 14:12 indicates that the Lord will smite the people that fight against Jerusalem so that their flesh will “*consume away while they stand on their feet*.” This is a battle between God's spiritual army and the hordes of the antichrist, and it will be no contest. The beast and the false prophet will be cast alive into the lake of fire and brimstone; but the others will be slain by Christ's two-edged sword in this battle and will be sent to Hell, where they await the end of the millennium to be delivered up during the second resurrection.

The statement about the antichrist and the false prophet being cast into the lake of fire and brimstone "*alive*" is interesting. They are apparently still clothed with a fleshly body when they are dealt with in this way. In the parable of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16:19-31, we read about two immaterial spirit/souls, one sent to Abraham's Bosom, a part of Hades reserved for the righteous OT saints after death on earth, and the other sent to the pit, a part of Hades where those spirit/souls that do not belong to Christ are incarcerated until judgement at the Great White Throne. In the story the rich man complained to Abraham about the heat, and asked him to have Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and come to cool his tongue. The rich man's spirit/soul was expressing feelings we normally attribute to our earthly body. He also spoke, and mentioned parts of the physical body: the tongue and finger. We need to recognize that this is a parable, and some of the incidentals referred to are used to demonstrate the point of the parable, and not to imply that material body elements exist in heaven or hell. Nevertheless, the question that arises from this is: do all those that end up in the lake of fire and brimstone receive an eternal body before being cast into the inferno. When we get to Revelation 20:11-15 we will see that this question is not answered; the wicked dead judged at the Great White Throne are cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, and no

mention is made about clothing them with a body. I assume from this that in some mysterious way immaterial spirit/souls have feelings and emotions and can react to the environment they are in.

Chapter 20

Resurrection and Judgment

Revelation 20:1-3 introduces a second angel with the keys to Hell:

“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.”

In these first three verses of this chapter we encounter two of the many mysteries in the Word: why did God not cast Satan into the lake of fire and brimstone with the beast and the false prophet at the beginning of the millennium, and why is he released at the end of the millennium? These two questions are obviously linked: God must have some additional task for Satan to perform that causes Him to withhold final judgment until the end of the millennium.

We are told in Revelation 20:8, that after the millennium Satan goes out to deceive the nations, and to gather them to battle, so we know what Satan does, but the purpose of this post-millennium insurrection is not given. As we read further in Revelation 20, we see that Satan is able to attract an army, the num-

ber of which is as the sand of the sea. Where do all these people come from? We assume that all unbelievers were eliminated before the millennium began, and Satan and all his demons were bound for the thousand years, so where did all these new followers come from? The government of Christ during the millennium will be one of absolute power and authority: He will rule with a rod of iron, as we saw in the last chapter (Re. 19:15). However, when Christ judges the nations after Armageddon, some of the “*sheep*” (M’t. 25:32) who enter the millennium will undoubtedly be new believers whose minds have not been renewed through sanctification. Since the Holy Spirit’s ministry as sanctifier (2 Th. 2:13) will apparently end with the rapture, some of these may turn to sinful ways, and eventually fall away into apostasy. If children born during this time continue to be under the curse of Adam and have a sin nature, what hope do they have for salvation? We know that God has no grandchildren: the children of believers will not belong to Christ just because their parents do. If these citizens of the millennium world receive salvation as a result of mixing saving faith from God with the Word, just as pre-millennium believers do, then there will undoubtedly be some that do not receive (Hebrews 4:2). At any rate, we know that during this period of a thousand years many rebellious souls arise ready and waiting to join Satan in his last hurrah. Possibly it takes this second

purging to wash the stain of sin out of mankind forever, and prepare overcomers for the new heaven and earth.

Revelation 20:4-6 continues:

“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 which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years”.

In these verses John sees the raptured/resurrected saints with Christ ruling the world during the millennium. Although this passage specifically mentions only saints beheaded for their witness, and those that had not worshipped the beast nor taken his mark, we know that saints from all time, from both the OT and the NT (Daniel 7:22; 1 Corinthians 6:2, 15:23; 1 Thessalonians 4:14), will be “alive” at this time. All OT saints that were in Abraham's bosom, believers that were resurrected or raptured or were killed or died during the seven-year period, and any believers that survived to the end of the seven-year period will live and reign with Christ during the thousand years. Revelation 20:6 states that the second death has no power over those included in the first resurrection. The second death refers to those that are cast into the lake of fire and brim-

stone (Revelation 21:8), none of which are included in the first resurrection.

Those included in the first resurrection will be with Christ forever.

Revelation 20:7-10 describes the battle at the end of the millennium:

“And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever”.

At the end of the thousand years Satan is loosed from his prison to go out and gather the nations from the four corners of the earth against the saints in Israel and Jerusalem. This seems to imply that many of the saints living at that time will be in Jerusalem and Israel. Fire comes down out of heaven and devours Satan's army, and Satan is then cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where he is tormented forever. We discussed this final war in our analysis of Revelation 8, but several points are brought up in this scripture that should be analyzed. We know from our earlier discussion that Magog represents countries north of Israel, generally those around the Black Sea, but where are the four quarters, or corners, of the earth? The Greek word used here is interpreted as corner, extremity, or quarter. Possibly the meaning of this phrase is that this army is gathered from the extremities of the earth, from the outer-

most parts. This army goes up on the *breadth* of the earth: another term that is difficult to understand. This term is used in Ephesians 3:18 to mean “expansive”, and in Revelation 21:16 to mean “width”. The meaning here may be that this army comes up on the width, or middle of the earth, as opposed to the four corners. The Tropic of Cancer, which identifies the northernmost parallel of the earth, at which the sun can be observed directly overhead at noon, passes near Israel and Jerusalem. Thus, they would seem to be representative of the middle of the earth.

With these verses we finally see Satan cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where he will be tormented day and night forever. There is some disagreement among expositors as to whether those cast into the lake of fire actually live in torment forever; however, this scripture seems to support the interpretation that they are tormented forever. The GNT states, “*that they shall be tormented day and night for the ages of the ages*”. The Greek word interpreted as “brimstone” in this scripture is *theion*. Vines says this word was originally defined as “fire from heaven”, which probably refers to lightning. Since lightning normally leaves a sulfurous smell, and sulfur was used in pagan purifications, the word *theion* became known as “brimstone”.

Revelation 20:11-15 introduces the Great White Throne judgment, which is known as the judgment of all unbelievers.

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that 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, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire”.

We have now come to the final judgment, and the things of the earth no longer have a part in the future plans of God. When we look at the picture of the earth taken from the moon it takes our breath away with its great beauty and potential for life: to think of its total destruction greatly saddens our hearts. This was God's creation, which He characterized as good in every respect. Mankind took only 6,000+ years to contaminate it so thoroughly that God is forced to destroy it. This catastrophic annihilation introduces a new creation, one beyond our ability to imagine. 2 Peter 3:10 describes this event by stating that the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the earth and the works therein shall be consumed with fervent heat. Here Christ is seated on a Great White Throne ready to judge those that are resurrected, based on their works. This is not primarily a judgment to determine the destination of the

resurrected souls of the dead: the Bible makes it clear that all unbelievers are ultimately headed for the lake of fire and brimstone. Rather, this is a judgment of each individual's works, to assess his culpability. We thus conclude that there must be a hierarchy of torment to which unbelievers are sentenced. We assume that the degree of evil perpetrated by their works determines their placement in this hierarchy.

Two different books (or sets of books) are mentioned in Revelation 20:13. One set of books is the book(s) of works, from which the dead are judged for the things done in their body while on earth. Another set of books is opened which is identified as the Book of Life. This book contains the names of all believers who join in God's rest. Since this passage of scripture mentions only *"the dead, small and great"*, we might be led to wonder why the Book of Life is consulted here if those judged are only the wicked dead: their names would not be found in the Book of Life. Therefore, it seems doubtful that **only** works of wicked dead are judged at the Great White Throne judgment. Many scriptures refer to the fact that all men must be judged for their works, whether good or bad. Jude 14-15 GNT says:

"... Behold, the Lord came with myriads of his saints, to do judgment against all, and to rebuke the ungodly of them concerning their ungodly works..."

At this juncture we face the difficult task of trying to understanding when those living during the millennium are judged, if not here. Little information is given in the Bible regarding earthly society during this time. If we are to draw any conclusions regarding the judgment of those living and dying during this time we must necessarily make some assumptions about the time of the millennium:

1. The earth is populated by human beings, as well as by all of the immortal bodies of believers who have been raptured or resurrected. I base this totally on the Judgment of the Nations (M't. 25:31-46), which we assume occurs at the end of the battle of Armageddon, just prior to the beginning of the millennium. There will be some human beings (both sheep and goats) that survive the battle. Only the sheep will be allowed to enter the millennium kingdom.

2. There will be children of all ages as well as animals during the time of the millennium. The animals will be tame and peaceful. Suckling babes will play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. From this we assume that children will be born, and people will die, during this time. Isaiah 11 describes this time as one in which the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord.

3. Satan will be bound in the abyss during the millennium, but we assume that human beings entering the millennium will not necessarily be fully sanctified, and thus will continue to choose between King Jesus' guidance, and their own willful way. Satan has considerable success at the end of the millennium in deceiving followers to rebel against Christ. We assume that these all perish in the final battle with Christ (Revelation 20:9).

If believers die during the millennium they must be judged, and those who survive the millennium must be judged as well. Since this is the last judgment mentioned in the Bible it seems reasonable to assume that they are judged here with the ungodly who survive the millennium, or those that die during this time who are resurrected.

If the millennium believer's works are documented in this set of books, they will be judged accordingly: not for their salvation, but for the rewards they will have earned (1 Co. 3:13-15). We know that the only works for the believer that are recorded here will be works that survive the refiner's fire. The question that remains is: are both the good and evil works of unbelievers recorded? Like many of the questions we have addressed in this study, there is little information available to guide us, but the holy nature of our God seems to argue that the answer to this question is yes. If these books include the good works

done by unbelievers as well as the evil, God's judgment would undoubtedly be based on the total record, both good and bad; in which case the sentence of pain and suffering would vary in degree. The believer's dead works will be consumed by the refiner's fire, and their righteous works will clothe them. There is no equivalent statement regarding the works of unbelievers, and we know they will not have righteous works with which to be clothed. In fact, it is not clear that unbelievers will receive an immortal body to replace their mortal body. We assume that the antichrist and the false prophet were cast into the lake of fire and brimstone in their mortal bodies, for the scripture says that they were "*alive*". Satan is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone in his immaterial body, so we conclude that it is not necessary to have a body to suffer under the conditions experienced therein. We referred earlier to the parable in Luke 16:19-31, where the rich man asks Abraham to allow Lazarus to dip his finger in water and come to cool his tongue, for he is suffering in flame. This was the rich man's spirit/soul that was sensing the pain, so we conclude that this immaterial entity of our being can suffer, whether in hell, or in the lake of fire and brimstone.

The Three Judgments

We now turn to the three judgments mentioned in the Bible: 1) the judgment of saints following the rapture/resurrection, 2) the judgment of nations at the end of the seven years, and 3) the Great White Throne judgment at the close of the millennium. The Bible makes it absolutely clear that all men will stand before the judgment seat of Christ (Romans 2:3, 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Hebrews 6:2, 9:27), and be judged by their works (1 Corinthians 3:13; 2 Corinthians 11:15; Ephesians 6:8; 2 Titus 4:14; Revelation 3:15-16, 14:13).

1. Judgment of saints resurrected or raptured near the end of the Great Tribulation.

Although this judgment is not described specifically, there are many scripture references that make it clear that the believer will be judged, not for his sins, but for his works. Our works will be tested by God's refining fire to determine what "*sort*" they are. Works that were accomplished at the urging of the Holy Spirit, and for which we did not receive credit on earth, will not be burned. 1 Corinthians 3:14-15 states,

"If any man's work abide which he hath built thereon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

Christ, our judge, will reward us in His kingdom. Greater rewards probably equate to greater responsibility and authority under Christ. When Christ comes for His bride He will take us to the bridal chamber that He has prepared, where the marriage will be consummated (John 3:28-29). It is at this time that the bride and Christ actually become one (Ephesians 5:25-32), although this was foreshadowed on earth by the relationship between Christ and the church. As indicated in this scripture, this is a great mystery, but in becoming one with Christ in the bridal chamber He deals with who we are as resurrected saints. It is here at His judgment seat that Christ examines and evaluates our refined works. We emerge from the chamber arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints (Re. 19:7-8). The crown and possibly the apparel we receive will reflect the worthiness of our works. Christ will then present us to His Father, and to celebrate at the marriage feast that has been prepared.

2. Judgment of the Nations

This judgment is described in Matthew 25:31-46, and, as indicated, it occurs after the Battle of Armageddon, after Christ has come to His throne at the beginning of the millennium. Many people will be left on earth after this battle, and only the sheep will be allowed to enter the millennium reign of Christ.

Christ's judgment is righteous, and the sentence rendered correctly assigns them to the right with the sheep, or to the left with the goats. He tells the sheep that they have inherited the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world, but He tells the goats to depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. This is obviously a reference to the lake of fire and brimstone.

The sheep were apparently unaware of the good works they had done, for they question Christ as to when they saw Him hungered and fed Him, when they saw Him thirsty and gave Him drink, when they saw Him as a stranger and took Him in, when they saw Him naked and clothed Him, when they saw Him sick and visited Him, and when He was a prisoner and they came unto Him. These were obviously humble people that did these works without becoming prideful, without even thinking they were doing anything noteworthy. These acts were not an effort, but were just a natural expression of who these (elect) people were. By the same token, the goats (unbelievers) never were aware of the needy around them.

The people left on the earth at this time had to be judged, for the world was about to enter the millennium under Christ's rule: all men must appear before the judgement seat of Christ (2 Co. 5:10).

3. The Great White Throne Judgment

The Great White Throne judgment is described in Revelation 20:11-15.

This is the final judgment and, as argued above, it must include all those that have not been judged previously. Most expositors refer to this as the judgment of all unbelievers, and the scripture reference only mentions the resurrected dead, which lends credence to this interpretation. However, we must recognize that the millennium ends with many believers (and possibly some unbelievers) still alive. In accordance with 2 Corinthians 5:10, all men must be judged, so, unless we surmise a judgment not mentioned in the Bible, the believing and unbelieving dead and alive at the end of the millennium must be judged here. The wording in Revelation 20:11-15 does not prohibit the inclusion of these millennium survivors, but no mention is made of other than the resurrected dead. Revelation 20:15 may imply that there were believers included in this judgment, but the wording is certainly inconclusive.

Another point worth mentioning is that the scriptures do not state that these resurrected dead receive immortal bodies. It seems logical that believers judged here would be clothed with their immortal bodies, just as are the believers raptured earlier. The bible provides no clear answer as to the fate of the unbelievers in this regard. As indicated above, we know that the antichrist

and the false prophet were cast into the lake of fire and brimstone “*alive*”, and it is tempting to assume that the unbelievers alive at the time of this judgment suffer the same fate. I leave it to the reader to search his own heart for the answer to these questions.

Chapter 21

A New Heaven and Earth

As we approach the end of the book of Revelation God stretches our imagination more and more. We have discussed many tumultuous events in the first 20 chapters of this book, but we now enter a whole new world in which we have no experiences to draw on that would foster any extrapolated understanding of the marvelous things described. That being said, there are a few things about this time in God's creation plan that we do know:

- 1.** All evildoers, unbelievers, Satan, the antichrist, the false prophet, and all fallen angels have been removed by being cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. Only God the Father, Christ, the Holy Spirit, other heavenly beings, overcomers from both the OT and NT, and elect angels, will reside in the new heaven and the new earth.
- 2.** The earth and heaven that we cherished has passed away. The actions and inactions of mankind, both believers and unbelievers, failed to nurture and protect this beautiful creation of God.

3. The new heaven and earth will be totally different from the old. There will be no seas, and light will be provided continuously by God and Christ rather than from the sun and moon. This light is different from that of the sun, moon and stars. It seems to permeate everything and not radiate from a particular point. Thus, it is doubtful that there will be shadows in this new world: this light may well permeate our bodies. Keil and Delitzsch, in their commentary on Psalm 84 say, "This is the only instance in which God is directly called a sun in the sacred writings. He is called a shield as protecting those who flee to Him and rendering them inaccessible to their foes, and a sun as the Being who dwells in an unapproachable light, which, going forth from Him in love towards toward men, is particularized as the gentle and overpowering light of the grace and glory of the Father of lights." There is a river that flows from the throne of God and Christ, and there will be trees yielding fruit. There will be roads, and walls, and gates constructed of the most precious stones. And there will be a city, the new Jerusalem, which is apparently the capital of the new earth. This city is constructed in the form of a cube, 1400 miles in each direction, approximately 2.75 billion cubic miles.

4. We assume that there will be buildings and possibly houses, but there will be no temple building, since God the Father and Christ make their abode in the holy city: They are the temple.

5. There will be no marriage there. However, if Isaiah 11 applies to the new earth as well as to the millenium, children and animals will have a place there.

6. There will be activities taking place on the new earth that require traffic to and from new Jerusalem, for gates are provided to give continuous access to the city.

7. There will be no sorrow, pain, death, or tears in the new heaven and earth.

All things will be new.

Let us now turn to the text of this marvelous chapter: Revelation 21:1-27 describes this wonderful new world:

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and

idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as a crystal; And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, a hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolyte; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of the Lord did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

The reference in Revelation 21:2, to the city being like a bride adorned for her husband is interesting because the word *bride* is often used as a metaphor for

the church. In Revelation 21:9-10, the city is actually identified as the bride, so we are obliged to try to understand this. Revelation 21:2 seems to describe the magnificence, beauty, and holiness of new Jerusalem, and I believe that Revelation 21:9-10 continue that train of thought. Galatians 4:22-26 sheds some light on this subject through the use of an allegory about the sons of Abraham by Hagar and Sarah, and the two Jerusalems, the old and the new. In this scripture Hagar represents the Jerusalem that now exists (the old), and Sarah represents the new Jerusalem, which is described in Revelation 21:9-27. I believe God is trying (for our benefit), to distinguish between the old and new Jerusalem by using the metaphor "*bride*" to separate the new (heavenly and eternal) from the old (earthly and temporal). Galatians 4:26 introduces yet another metaphor by stating that the new Jerusalem is the mother of us all. God is describing one of His greatest creations in these passages: this is where overcomers will make their abode, as well as God the Father, Christ, other heavenly beings, and a multitude of angels. The use of the words bride and mother seem fitting in this context.

Beginning with Revelation 21:5-8, God emphasizes, once again, the great reward of the overcomers in contrast to the fearful, the unbelieving, the abominable, murderers, whoremongers, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, who have

their part in the lake of fire and brimstone, which is the second death. It may surprise some readers to find the fearful and “*all liars*” listed here. We need to remember that perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18), and if our love is perfect we can be bold in the day of judgment. This kind of love does not come from within us however, but is manifested through us when we give full control of our lives (temples) to Christ, through the Holy Spirit. The use of the adjective “*all*” with the noun “*liars*” emphasizes that no liars will be exempt from this terrible fate. However, the GNT uses the phrase “*the lying ones*”, which may imply that what was being described here are those whose lifestyle is to lie. Moulton’s Analytical Greek Lexicon, Revised, defines this Greek phrase as, “maintainers of religious falsehood, corruptors of the truth of God”. Our tendency at times is to wink at what we refer to as little white lies, those that we consider unimportant and inconsequential. Satan is described as the father of lies (John 8:44): when we lie, by speaking, or failing to speak, we invoke his presence. He is anxious to get a foothold in our lives and it doesn’t take a major fracture in our armor for him to establish a beachhead. If he is successful in getting us to accept lying as a lifestyle, he will then begin to exercise his authority in other areas of our lives.

Revelation 21:10-27 describes the new Jerusalem in her great beauty and glory. God seemingly uses only the most precious materials in building the holy city. This points out the great love that He has for the overcomers, who will make their abode therein. The angel that took John to see the holy city had a golden reed with which he measured its dimensions. We noted earlier that when God sends an angel to measure anything it signifies His ownership and protection.

The holy city has twelve gates, which are named after the twelve tribes of Israel. This demonstrates the continuing love of God for the nation of Israel, in spite of the Israelites failure to follow his laws in the OT, and their rejection of His Son in the NT. These gates provide accessibility between the new heaven and earth, and the holy city. This raises some interesting questions:

- 1.** Who is it that passes through these gates, and for what purpose?
- 2.** Do all believers live in the holy city, or just those who have accomplished great works while on earth (overcomers)?
- 3.** Who is it that lives outside the wall of the holy city in the new heaven and earth?
- 4.** What business is it that precipitates the traffic in and out of these gates?

Isaiah 35:8, which may refer to the new earth and holy city, states that there will be a highway there for wayfaring men (travelers). This highway will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those that walk in that “Way” (Interlinear NIV Hebrew-English OT). This is an obvious reference to the redeemed, and it seems to be validated by use of the word “way”, which is often used in the NT to describe those that follow Christ. We do not know the answers to these questions but Isaiah 35 gives us some basis for conjecture about life and commerce in the perfect world that God is preparing for those that belong to Him.

Chapter 22

Epilog

Revelation 22:1-5 continues the description of the holy city from Chapter 21:

“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bear twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.”

In Revelation 22:2 the tree of life, first mentioned in Genesis 2:9 in the Garden of Eden, is now found in the holy city growing on either side of the river of life. In the story of the fall of Adam and Eve the fruit of this tree had the power to give eternal life, and thus it is thought to symbolically represent Christ. Of course, Christ will be living among the overcomers in the new Jerusalem, so there will be no reason for symbology. Whereas, Chapter 21 stated that there were no seas in the new Jerusalem, in this chapter we see that there are rivers. Ezekiel Chapter 47 also appears to describe the new

Jerusalem: in particular the “holy waters” that flow from the threshold of the temple. Ezekiel 47:12 describes this tree(s):

“And by the river on the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed (fail): it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months (every month), because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine (healing).”

From these verses we note that the tree brings forth new fruit each month, twelve different types of fruit during the year. This fruit is to be consumed by the residents of the holy city, which we assume enhances holiness within their bodies: what a wonderful place to live! The leaves of this tree are for the healing of the nations. This is difficult to interpret, but it seems to relate to care and attention, and possibly peace, for the nations. Another interesting point in this passage is the mention of months. If we can interpret these words literally, there will be months and years in the new creation, but there will be no change in the seasons, as is presently the case on earth. It may be that God will choose to use the Jewish calendar, however.

Our contact with God will be face-to-face, and this boggles the mind. God will have many, many people with which to interface, but He will probably have a means of fellowshiping with the redeemed so that we all get to be around Him with some frequency. What an honor: can you imagine passing the day

with the Creator of the universe, His Son Jesus Christ, and their Holy Spirit?

To be absolutely honest, I can't.

Revelation 22:6-21 is an epilog in which the angel gives John certain instructions about the prophecy and warnings related to the end of time:

“And he said unto me, these sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things that must shortly be done. Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book. And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel that shewed me these things. Then sayeth he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God. And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

Whereas Daniel (Dan 12:4, 9) was told to shut up the words and seal the prophecy he received regarding the end-times, John is told here to **not** seal up the prophecy of the book of Revelation, because the time is at hand. The end of time was much nearer when John received this prophecy (~90 AD), than when Daniel received his prophecy (~600 BC). Still, when we consider this in 2012, it does not appear that the end of time could have been imminent when John received this direction. I believe that this seeming discrepancy is explained by the fact that God keeps time as recorded in the prophecy of Daniel. He does not include the pause in time between Christ's death and the beginning of Daniel's 70th week in the prophecies of the NT writers. It would have been difficult for these men, all Jews, to understand the time of the church age in relation to the timing of the prophecy of Daniel. They all died believing in Christ's soon return, and from their vantage point in heaven, where earthly time does not have heavenly significance, this will be true to them. For contemporary mankind the time is short, and we need to keep the things written in this book of prophecy if we expect to join Him in the new creation.

Revelation 22:14-17 encourages those that read the book of Revelation to live so that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter into the holy

city. The reminder in Revelation 22:15, about those outside the gates, is probably there to remind readers of the book of Revelation of the consequences of not obeying His commandments. From the context of Revelation 22:11-17, the prophecy is a warning for those still alive as the end approaches, when evil-doers are still on the earth spreading Satan's lies and enticements.

Revelation 22:18-19 applies to expositors of the Word, and I am particularly sensitive to my responsibility as one who has attempted to interpret God's book of prophecy. I pray that I have been a faithful scribe and have not injected anything of myself into this commentary. I have attempted to hear God in everything included herein, and if I have been successful, He will use it as He sees fit: if I have failed to hear Him it will come to naught.

Scriptural Conclusions From This Study

(Scripture references are from the book of Revelation, unless noted otherwise)

1. The book of Revelation was written to contemporary church bodies and mankind, to offer a blessing to those that live in the end-times: those that read and hear the prophecy, and keep those things written therein (1:1-4).
2. The book of Revelation is actually the revelation of Jesus Christ, who appeared to John in His glorious eternal body and told John to write the things he saw, and the things that are, and the things that will be: past, present, and future. (1:1, 12-19).
3. Some prophecy in the Bible has more than one fulfillment (1:19).
4. The seven churches of Revelation were actual churches at the time of John's vision and their problems are discussed in the letters of Revelation 2 and 3. These churches, and their problems, also appear to represent contemporary churches and their problems, and this is the primary reason for their inclusion in the book of Revelation.
5. Problems in the churches mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3 (as well as in contemporary churches) include: failure to judge false leaders, failure to exercise direct access to God, lack of love for Christ and within the body, failure to

believe *into* Christ, sexual sin, spiritual adultery, dead works, and being lukewarm (neither hot nor cold).

6. Christ holds the angels of these churches in His right hand (1:16), thus He can bless these churches, or spew them out of His mouth (3:16).

7. It is the overcomers in churches that will enter the gates of the holy city (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21).

8. In Chapter 4 John is given a vision of the throne of God surrounded by twenty-four elders, and four living creatures. The KJV uses the English word “beasts [living creatures]” but the GNT clearly identifies them as “*living creatures*”. The Bible never uses the Greek word “therion”, or “wild beast”, used to describe the antichrist and the false prophet, when referring to holy creatures.

9. The book (or scroll), which only the Lamb is worthy to take from the Father’s hand (5:1-7), contains all God’s judgment and wrath against unredeemed mankind and creation. When Christ opens the book, after breaking the seventh seal, God’s judgments (8-11), and wrath (15-16), will be poured out.

10. The opening of the first four seals on the book release the four horsemen of the apocalypse (6:1-8). The mission of these evil angels is 1) to conquer men,

2) take peace from the world, 3) bring widespread famine, and 4) to kill over a fourth part of the earth. These four horsemen begin their evil work during the period referred to by Jesus as the "*beginning of sorrows*" (M't. 24:8): the first half of Daniel's 70th week (3 1/2 years).

11. The judgments of God described in the book of Revelation are arranged in chronological groups of seven seals (*the beginning of sorrows*), seven trumpets (*the great tribulation*), and seven vials or bowls (*God's wrath*). When the seventh seal is opened the angels with the seven trumpets are released. When the seventh trumpet sounds the seven vials are poured out on the earth, and when the seventh vial is poured out a great voice from the throne says "*it is done*" (16:17).

12. In Revelation 7 angels come to seal 144,000 servants of God, 12,000 from each tribe of the Jewish nation. This is in preparation for the promise God made to the Jews that a remnant (one-third) would be saved (Micah 2:12; Zechariah 13:8-9)).

13. In 7:9 we catch our first glimpse of the raptured church in heaven before God's throne, clothed with white robes with palms in their hands. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. In 7:14 this innumerable throng is described as coming out of Great Tribula-

tion, so we know that the rapture occurs during the Great Tribulation, at the sounding of the last trump, the seventh trumpet (1 Co. 15:52; 1 Th. 4:16).

14. In Chapter 8 the first four angels sound their trumpets and there are great fires on earth, and the seas, rivers, and ground water are poisoned. The sun, moon, and stars are also smitten so that the earth is darkened a third of the day and night.

15. In Chapter 9 the fifth and sixth angel sound. The fifth angel releases demons out of the bottomless pit having the appearance of powerful locusts. These locusts are ordered to restrict their torment to only those men that did not have the seal of God in their forehead. The angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek is Apollyon (destroyer), leads them. These demon (locusts) are given power to torment men for five months.

16. The sounding of the sixth angel releases an army of 200 million men to come to the battle of Armageddon.

17. In Chapter 10 a mighty angel comes to announce Christ's reclaiming of the earth (11:15), to declare the end of man's rule (10:6), and to declare that the "*mystery of God*", which is Christ in you (Col. 1:27), should be finished.

When the church is taken out of the earth (10:7) the ministry of the Holy

Spirit within the redeemed is finished. 2 Thessalonians. 2:6-7 also alludes to the Holy Spirit being taken out of the way at this time.

18. In Chapter 11 the ministry of God's two witnesses (thought to be Moses and Elijah) is described. These two have great power and they cause the antichrist much grief. Upon completion of their ministry the antichrist is allowed to kill them, but God resurrects them, in full view of their enemies.
19. The seventh angel finally sounds in Chapter 11, and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ (11:15). This brings us to the Great Day of God's Wrath, and completes the first telling of the story of Daniel's 70th week prophecy in the book of Revelation.
20. Revelation 12 refers to the two satanic insurrections in heaven as Satan attempts to frustrate God's plan for creation. The second insurrection occurs about midway through Daniel's 70th week and ends with Satan and his army being permanently cast out into the earth.
21. The antichrist miraculously recovers from a deadly head wound about the middle of the seven-year period. After his resurrection he seems to be Satan incarnated as he proceeds to persecute and kill Jews and believers. God protects the remnant of the Jewish nation and brings the Great Tribulation to an early end to save the elect (M't. 24:22).

22. The antichrist and his false prophet force those that dwell on the earth to construct an image that they place in the temple (the abomination of desolation). All mankind is required to worship this image that is enabled to speak. The antichrist and the false prophet are able to deceive those dwelling on the earth by using miracles. To control the masses they require all people to receive a mark in their hand or forehead. Without this mark no man can buy or sell anything.
23. When Christ returns for the battle of Armageddon He and His angels come with sharp sickles, which are thrust into the earth to gather the clusters of the vine. In this battle blood flows over a path 184 miles in length as He deals with this 200,000,000 man army (9:16).
24. When God pours out His wrath noisome and grievous sores come upon men who have the mark of the beast or worship his image (16:2), all sources of water are turned to blood (16:3-4), the sun scorches men on earth (16:8), the antichrist's kingdom is turned to darkness and his minions gnaw their tongues in pain (16:10), the kings of the whole earth are gathered to the battle of Armageddon (16:16), and a voice from heaven, says, "*it is done*" (16:17).

25. God turns the beast and his armies against the whore church (false religion) at the end and they make her desolate, eat her flesh, and burn her with fire (16:16-18).
26. Plagues, death, mourning, and famine come (18:8) to destroy the antichrist's economic base identified as the great city Babylon. Her judgment comes in one hour (18:10).
27. Christ comes to earth the second time on a white horse and his eyes are as a flame of fire, which means He is coming in judgment (19:11). He is clothed with a vesture dipped in blood. Christ slays the beast's army with the sword that goes out of His mouth (19:15). The antichrist and the false prophet are cast into the lake of fire and brimstone (19:20).
28. Satan is imprisoned in the bottomless pit for a thousand years, and is released at the end of the millennium to deceive the nations one last time (20:7-8), to make war with God's army. He is defeated when fire comes down from heaven, and he is then cast into the lake of fire and brimstone with the antichrist and the false prophet.
29. The Great White Throne judgment is described in 20:11-15. Books documenting the works of men, and the Book of Life are opened at this judgment. This is primarily a judgment of the wicked dead, although there are

many believers and unbelievers left alive at this time that also must be judged. There are three judgments revealed in the bible: 1) the judgment of the redeemed, 2) judgment of the nations, and 3) the Great White Throne Judgment.

30. The holy city (new Jerusalem) comes down from God out of heaven (21:1-2).

Although surrounded by high walls, gates are provided for traffic into and out of the city. God has developed the holy city with great love and care, for He created it for the bride of Christ, the true church.

31. God says that those who keep the sayings of the prophecy of the book of Revelation will receive a blessing (22:7), and those that add or take anything away will be taken out of the Book of Life (22:19).

Afterward

Bible Study Guides for the New Testament (Preface)

Editor's Note: This Afterward is the Preface in all the other books of the new testament in the Bible Study Guide Series. It seemed appropriate to add it here for reference as the book on Revelation actually completes the series, but was written before all the others and had a different and very special cover graphic than the rest of the series.

Writing a book was not on my mind when this effort was initiated some years ago. In fact, it began when a member of my Sunday School class commented that his son had talked about committing suicide the previous week. As a result, I felt an urge to see what the Bible had to say about hope, with a view toward helping his son cope with his suicidal feelings. The result of that effort was an article entitled: "Hope and the Miraculous Three Pound Computer," located in Chapter 6 of the book [After the Big Bang](#). My next writing endeavor was a fallout from a Sunday School class discussion about temptations, or trials, and their purpose in our lives. An article entitled "The Trials of Job" located in Chapter 7 of the same book resulted from that effort. After this I began to feel a prodding from the Lord to continue studying and writing. The chapters in this book document what I subsequently learned about two of

God's greatest and most marvelous creations: earth and mankind, who He made to exercise dominion over it.

Some of the material presented in these New Testament Bible Study Guides conflicts with commonly held viewpoints, and differs as well on the definitions of some words used to explicate them. One thing I have learned through this effort is that the meaning of many of the words used in the Bible is not uniformly agreed to by expositors, and in many cases, not agreed to by the various versions of the Bible. For example, in the KJV of the old testament (OT), the word "soul" is used over 780 times. Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words notes that in over 400 of these uses, the Hebrew word used is misinterpreted. I mention this not to heap criticism on the KJV, for it is my personal Bible, and I love it dearly, but to point out the importance of consulting Hebrew and Greek sources, and good conservative lexicons, when trying to understand difficult scripture. The meaning of some words is not absolutely clear even then. Nevertheless, this is the process I have followed in this effort.

I am a retired engineer: my education and work experience sparked a great interest in details. I found that to understand the technical difficulties and

problems that arise in the operation of complex machines, a good understanding of the details of the design is absolutely necessary. What is presented herein is an analysis of important details in God's creation of the earth and man: his habitat and milieu. However, no description is completely adequate to portray the unbelievable complexity and efficacy of tripartite man. Scientists and engineers have tried to duplicate the various subsystems in God's design of man for years, with limited success. Part of the problem is that we do not understand many of the operational details, but the greatest impediment is probably the fact that man is composed of three parts: spirit, soul, and body, two of which (spirit and soul) are immaterial, and are thus largely beyond the scope of scientific and medical analysis. The third part, the highly complex body, is strongly influenced by these two immaterial parts. God has given mankind a great challenge in trying to understand tripartite man. What better model could we find for our study than our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: spirit, soul and body in perfect relationship. When Jesus came to earth He emptied Himself, and was formed in the likeness and fashion of a man. Like us, He was a tripartite being, but without a sin nature. Thus, He was the perfect man, the ideal for all to emulate.

I read a book several years ago by Watchman Nee in which he made the observation that one of the primary ways God speaks to us is through our intuition. After that I began to try to follow the guidance I received in this manner, and what is presented herein is largely a result of that attempt. I hasten to add that all readers will not agree with my conclusions. I have learned much about God's creation, and His design of man through this effort: that may be the primary purpose He had in mind. My hope is that readers will find new ideas in these words that drive them to the absolute authority: God's Word - the Bible.

As references I have used the King James Version (KJV), the New International Version (NIV), the New Living Translation (NLT), the Revised Version (RV), and Recovery Versions of the bible, as well as the Interlinear NIV Hebrew - English Old Testament (OT), and the Interlinear Greek - English New Testament (GNT). I have also used Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament, Moulton's Analytical Greek Lexicon, the Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon, and Webster's New World Dictionary for word in-

terpretation. Unless otherwise noted, scripture passages quoted are from the KJV.

The John A. Dickson New Analytical Bible and Dictionary, Authorized King James Version, Chicago 1950, was a primary reference source. This Bible was given to my wife and I in 1957, and is one of my dearest treasures. It has been rebound once, and is in need of a repair job at the present time. Thus, the reader can appreciate the usage it has had over these 62 years, most of which has been during the last 25 years. The book introductions have been generally quoted from this source, with changes (mostly grammatical) made only when considered necessary.

Finally, I want to recognize the lady that takes everything I have written, and makes the necessary changes for placing it on the internet. Ms. Sandra Crosnoe is the daughter of two of my, and my deceased wife's, dearest friends, Ted and Jimmie Crosnoe (also deceased). When God moved us (my wife and I), to a Methodist Church in Pasadena, Texas, in 1962, Ted, Jimmie, and their two daughters were among the group of several families in the church that were touched by God in a mighty way that led to a weekly Bible study, that resulted in many changed lives. As the years passed by, and the families went in

different directions, we were not able to maintain the close relationship we had in Pasadena. We settled in Lubbock, Texas, in 1982, and I got the call to start writing on the Bible. Sometime after that Sandra was in Lubbock and we got together for dinner. When she learned of my involvement in writing on the Bible she immediately volunteered to help in making it available by publishing it on the internet. She may not have known what she was getting into, for God has not ceased from giving me Bible subjects to study and write about. This series on the New Testament has been our greatest undertaking, and Sandra's help (as always) has been essential. She has corrected my grammar, argued with me on interpretation, prepared the pictorial cover pages, and generally polished the appearance of the various books in ways that I could never have accomplished on my own. Without her help, this (and other) documents would never have been made available to the general public. I do so appreciate all her work. I believe Ted and Jimmie will give her a "well done" when she joins them in heaven. Her personal website is [Finding Gems and Sharing Them](#).

These bible study guides are available at no charge to read, print, download and share on a platform called Scribd (no membership is required to read/download). They are all listed and linked as a group in [Bible Study Guides by](#)

[Jesse C. Jones on Scribd](#). Upon completion, most of them will contain study questions in the Appendix. Other works available are listed and linked with [Books for Believers and Seekers](#). If you hit a pop-up page on Scribd asking you to become a member to read free, simply click the 'x' in the upper right corner to remove the pop-up and continue to our links on Scribd. My personal website is [Revealed by Fire - Jesse's Studies](#) if you wish to see my latest articles and updates.

It is my sincere hope that these works will guide you to a personal ongoing relationship with Jesus and a life led and anointed by the Holy Spirit.

JESSE JONES

Appendix

Questions from Revelation

Chapter 1

1. What does verse 7 refer to?
2. Explain verse 10.
3. Why do you think John was told to write what he saw in a book, and send it to the seven churches listed in verse 11?
4. Is the description of the Lord in verses 12-16 similar to any other of His appearances?

Chapter 2

1. Explain what it was that caused the Lord to be against the church at Ephesus.
2. What was the candlestick that the Lord threatened to remove in verse 5?
3. Who were the Nicolaitans, and why did the Lord hate them?
4. Explain verse 7.
5. What was the sin of the Smyrna church?
6. Explain verse 11.
7. What is the doctrine of Balaam?
8. Explain verse 17.
9. Who was Jezebel and what was her sin?
10. What is the morning Star?

Chapter 3

1. Explain verse 5.
2. What is the key of David?
3. Explain verse 12.
4. Explain verse 18.

Chapter 4

1. Who were the elders that sat in the 24 thrones and had crowns of gold upon their heads?
2. Identify the seven Spirits of God mentioned in verse 5.
3. What do the four beasts mentioned in verse 6 represent?

Chapter 5

1. What is the purpose of the book mentioned in verse 1?
2. Who is He that can loose the seven seals and open the book?
3. What is the significance of the golden vials full of odors which are the prayers of the saints?

Chapter 6

1. Give your opinion about the identity of the riders of the four horses.
2. Describe what happens when the fifth seal is opened.
3. Relate the events that occur when the sixth seal is opened to the narrative in Matthew 24.
4. What is the significance of the great day of His (God's) wrath?

Chapter 7

1. How does the sealing of the servants (Jews) relate to the saving of the remnant promised by God?
2. Who do the great multitude in verse 9 represent?

Chapter 8

1. What is the significance of the half-hour silence mentioned in verse 1?
2. In what phase of the last seven years does the sounding of the first four (of the seven) angels correspond to?

Chapter 9

1. In what phase of the last seven years does the sounding of the last three angels occur?

Chapter 10

1. What is the mystery of God mentioned in verse 7 and what is its significance?
2. What is the little book mentioned in verse 8?

Chapter 11

1. Identify the two witnesses in verse 3.
2. Identify the three woe's referred to in Chapters 9 and eleven.
3. What is the significance of the seventh angel sounding in verse 15.

Chapter 12

1. What is the purpose of this chapter?
2. Who is the child born to the woman clothed with the sun?
3. Describe the results of the two different times that Satan was cast out of heaven (see verses 4 and 9).
4. Explain what is happening in verses 14-17.

Chapter 13

1. Who is the beast described in verses 1-3?
2. Who is the beast described in verses 11-13?
3. Explain verse 18.

Chapter 14

1. Who are these 144,000 described in verse 1?
2. Explain the timing of verse 6 if the rapture has already occurred.
3. Who is the One sitting on the white cloud?
4. How can verse 20 be understood?

Chapter 15

1. Why is the timing God's wrath important to the timing of the rapture?

Chapter 16

1. Describe the results of pouring out the seven vials of the wrath of God.
2. What was so great about the hailstorm in verse 21?

Chapter 17

1. Who is the great harlot mentioned in verse 1?
2. Who is the beast described in verse 8?
3. Identify the kings listed in verses 10-12.

Chapter 18

1. Explain verse 4.
2. What current city would be represented the city Babylon in this Chapter?
3. Explain verse 24.

Chapter 19

1. What important event is described in verse 7?
2. Who is the person riding the white horse in verse 11?
3. What battle (war) is referred to in verses 19-21?

Chapter 20

1. Why do you think God loosed Satan after he was bound and imprisoned (see verse 7)?
2. Explain verse 11.
3. Describe the book of life and its significance.

Chapter 21

1. Explain the meaning of the word “overcometh” in verse 7.
2. Who is the Lamb’s wife described in verse 9?
3. Explain the absence of any temple here.

Chapter 22

1. Explain verse 11.
2. Explain verse 12.
3. Explain verse 15.
4. How can Jesus be the offspring of David (verse 16)?

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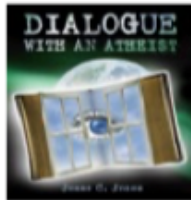
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