

Revelation Pure & Simple

REVELATION PURE & SIMPLE

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Dedication

Dedicated to the Holy Ghost and the Friday night fellowship which He so faithfully guided week in and week out for two years in an intense spiritual study of the wonderful and profound book of Revelation.

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Introduction

Man is an addict of prophecy. God created him that way; there is nothing he can do about it. Long before the first civilization had risen out of the fertile plains of Mesopotamia, a thousand years prior to the invention of writing and before the first nomadic warriors banded together to overrun an unsuspecting village, tribal chieftains and aged patriarchs sat in tents listening intently to stories of heroic deeds that would someday be done by a Savior sent from God. Whether on the prowl for green pastures or tilling pastoral farms and gardens, man kept his sights on God and looked with hope into the future. From the beginning, civilization was graced with men who were schooled by God in prophecy and taught the earth's inhabitants about the promise of a future Savior; the One who was to redeem man from death and restore him to an eternal life in paradise with their Father-Creator.

Our unquenchable thirst to know the future dates back to the fall of man and the immediate prophecy about the Savior which God gave to Adam and Eve at the moment of their greatest discouragement. From that instant, man began to look toward the future with an hungry mind and

a yearning heart in hopes that he could pry from dame future's jealous grip her closely guarded secrets of tomorrow.

Seers (as true prophets were called in the infant days of mankind), were universally revered as visionaries of the one and only God. They were men and women who spoke with God and, because of their communication with Him, could advise man on the will of the Creator. Sometimes they could even give a person a glimpse into their own personal future. Men sought out these “seers” and requested that they approach God in their behalf. It might be to ask for God's approval, to dissuade Him from bringing disaster on them, to offer a peace sacrifice, or to ask that some mercy or kindness be granted by God to their household, family or posterity. But for the most part, “seers” were commissioned by God to speak to the whole human race about His plan and the coming One. Before the Great Flood, which wiped out all but eight people from the face of the earth, inspired “seers” of God, like Seth and Enoch, prophesied of God's long term redemption plan. These prophets forecast the coming of a Savior, one who would reinstate man to the peace and glory of the “Garden of Eden” and restore him to a full relationship with the Father-Creator. All ultimate hope for the future was held in the coming of *The Promised One* and all true prophets of God during this Antediluvian Age confirmed the promise of the coming *Messiah*. But God did not rely solely on the “seers” to relate the story. Before the invention of writing, God invented the constellations, those clusters of stars that are universally recognized by the same symbolism and names. The 12 major constellations of the Zodiac and their minor constellations served to tell the whole story of redemption and the ultimate fate of mankind. Each night the story of

God's plan rolled before the eyes of every inquisitive seeker of God. It was the "priests" and "seers" who were educated in the story and able to school man in the future of his race. God gave the story to Adam first, relating in minute detail through the 12 signs of the Zodiac, the first and second comings of the *Savior*. In this manner, by handing down the Gospel of salvation orally from seers, priests and prophets, God kept the inhabitants of the world informed and offered them hope for the future. Adam, as the priest of God, passed this knowledge and ministry on to his son Seth who became a "seer" and high priest for seven centuries of people during the early days of man that preceded the Great Flood. Men like Methuselah were called upon by God to carry on the ministry of teaching people about the redemption plan. The final "seer" of this prehistoric age of Antediluvian antiquity was Noah, whose impassioned pleas concerning a coming Flood, which would cleanse the world of all unrepentant souls, fell on the deaf ears of a violent and evil world. Men understood that they needed someone to save them from the fallen state of their "father and mother", Adam and Eve. The prophets of God had declared through signs and wonders that central to their need was the advent of *The Promised One*, the *Messiah*. Looking to the future was an important part of early man's life and condition. God knew that He could prick man's curiosity with a glimpse into the future, but how many would respond to His conditions for restoration? He sent the "seers" not only to tell man of the future but also to teach them of the requirements for obtaining its promised salvation. To want to know the future is natural. To want to live in full obedience and accordance with God's plan for the future – this is divine.

But as Adam proved, man has a wandering heart. He is

a sucker for anything or anyone who claims it can predict the future. Like that enticing used car with the shiny hood, gleaming hubcaps and rich sounding CD player, man is ready to take up anything that looks good without looking under the hood for its real value. The battle between God's true prophecy and man's willingness and tendency to accept a perverted version is one of the most ancient and most fundamental of all battles. This book hopes to clarify and dispel some of the popular ideas and presumptions about God's plan and provide the reader with a simple, uncluttered vision of the future.

Though God had informed man about his ultimate plan of salvation, man quickly began to find hope in other forms of prophecy, ones in which he could forge out a future without God's involvement or help. The rejection of God that had found a place in their father Adam's heart, if only for a short time, had found secure and welcome lodging in Adam's offspring. Man instinctively began to look for ways that he might be able to control his own destiny. With the help of Satan's supernatural powers, spiritual men and women began devising alternate plans of salvation to compete with the true and singular plan which had been promised by God to Adam. The battle of true and false prophecy soon began to rage. Sages, prophets, sorcerers, soothsayers and mystics, both true and false, appeared early on the earth offering men an alternative glimpse into the future. Men learned early how to call on *Muses*, *familiar spirits*, *devas* and *demon angels* who gave them power and cleverly devised fictions about immortality and salvation. Man turned every which way to find another source of redemption and a viable way to control the future that excluded God. The goal of stubborn man was to become god himself, to become master of his own destiny. To

accomplish his goal man had to oust God. God's plan of salvation had to be replaced with a plan that man could control. Lifting his inquiring mind to the stars, man, with Satan's help, invented astrology, that ancient religion and abominable system which taught man that he could change the future by manipulating persons and circumstances. He employed forms of strange augury, casting his questioning eyes into the entrails of animals, looking for favorable omens such as when certain birds flew overhead, when lightning struck the earth or the lumps on a man's head were aligned in a certain order. He sought soothsayers, witches and self-styled priests to cast spells and summon up demons. He peered with the sage into the crystal ball hoping to get a glimpse of the future and gain a strategic advantage in an upcoming crisis or battle. He employed wise men to interpret the mysterious meaning of divine dreams and even purchased with his soul the works of the Devil himself. Anything, to know and understand the future and have control over his own existence. Anything but God's way.

The Book of Revelation is the greatest and fullest prophecy of all time. It is the end of the Bible and it is, most assuredly, the end of the story. It is the future and destiny of man all rolled into one, presented in its final form. It is the culmination and the fullest expression of what all the "seers", both before and after the Flood, have seen and taught about down through the ages. It is the clear, unobstructed vision of the end, a massive picture window into heaven through which we can see the mysteries of the future. The words of all the "seers" of God, from Adam and Seth, from Moses to Abraham, from David through the prophets, from the aged Simeon in the Temple holding the baby Jesus in his decrepit arms, to the apostle

Paul preaching on Mars Hill, are shown in graphic detail. By looking upon Revelation's visions we become "seers" ourselves. We peer into man's future and come to understand the fate of both simple and great, rich and poor, humble and proud, the repentant and rebellious. We rejoice in God's hopes as they are realized in His faithful saints, and we witness His wrath and judgment upon those who reject His love and thereby have dashed His hopes of salvation for them. Revelation is our window into the future.

Revelation is also the exciting climax of the Bible. It is the Divine Tragedy, but also Paradise Regained; and it is the final report of man's salvation. Its words were sent directly from heaven to the Church to relate in detail the end of the epic struggle over man's eternal soul. The battle has always pitted God's plan of redemption against Satan's counter plan of destruction. Revelation is the last in the series of 66 inspired books; her pages bring to a ringing conclusion all of the skirmishes of faith reported in the books of Joshua, Judges and Esther, all the battles for souls which are reported in Jonah, The Acts of the Apostles and the four Gospels, all of the spiritual wars that were fought in Kings, Jeremiah and the epistles of Paul and Peter. Revelation ties together history with the cords of God's perfect plan of redemption; from Adam's fall to Calvary's blood stained cross; from Jesus' triumphant ascension to the final rebellion at Armageddon; from Joseph who was sold into slavery to the martyrs celebrating their salvation in heaven; from the beginning of time itself to man's restoration in Paradise. Revelation draws history together into one final glorious victory celebration for God and the faithful.

From the outset of man's story God promised that there would be complete and total victory over the forces of

darkness. He did not promise, however, that the victory would be instantly won. The battle for the redemption of the earth would take time and demand the patience of the saints. So, as all good commanders do, God faithfully “kept victory in sight” for his “troops”. Keeping victory in sight is one of the main reasons for the book of Revelation. Revelation is a book for people who believe that God is in control of all things. Revelation let’s faithful believers sit down with their Bible and look into the future as if it were recorded on a video cassette, like an event of history already lived out and finished. Transported by the spirit through the words of Revelation believers can see Jesus coming back and being enthroned at the end of time.

Though “keeping victory in sight” is not the only reason to study Revelation, it would be sufficient even if it were. When we study and understand Revelation we get a clear and inspirational view of the fast approaching victory. Revelation gives us hope. It instigates a zealously in the soul and gives it faith to overcome. Its leaves keep us focused on the goals of God and prevent us from being choked by the cares of this world. When we take Revelation’s teachings to heart we can persist in this present evil world; it is not so hard to believe for the eternal, unseen things (2 Cor. 4.18). When we peer into Revelation with sincerity we get to see the end of the conflict. And a glorious end it is. God wins. Satan is subdued. Death and Hell are vanquished. The saints are redeemed. Jesus receives His kingdom and marries His bride. Justice, love, and grace prevail; man – fallen man – is revived and restored to Paradise. All things are made new. End of conflict. End of rebellion. End of story.

Revelation is about the end of this age of grace. It deals primarily with the Tribulation and how God plans to bring

this age to a preordained conclusion. In the process it tells us about the salvation of the Church, the recall of the nation Israel to God's graces, the judgment of fire on a wicked Christ-rejecting world, and His second coming. At its conclusion we are launched into the one thousand-year reign of Christ, known as the Millennium, and given a brief glimpse into eternity. This is an ambitious undertaking, only God could do such a tremendous and far-reaching work, but He manages to do it in just twenty-two chapters of a single book of the Bible. Even more amazing, He has kept it simple and direct. The adage that a picture is worth a thousand words is never more true than in Revelation. Every picture and spiritual symbol that God uses in Revelation provides the reader with a world of spiritual information replete with implications.

But, alas, Revelation, though the greatest prophetic word ever given to man, full of faith-building promises, is the least studied book of the Holy Scriptures. Christians are too lazy, too caught up in the cares of this world, or too afraid to put in the effort. As one writer put it, "Christians find it easier to revere the Word of God than to study it." Where Satan hasn't discouraged the reading of Revelation, ignorant teachers and sorry doctrines of the Church¹ have. Through the centuries the Church has picked its own pocket, and the people have been robbed of their right to be "seers". Revelation is the greatest single divine gift given to mankind (other than the gift of the Son Himself), one which can fill our yearning to know the future; and yet for the most part it is greeted with fear and received with

1. In this writing, when Church appears alone and is begun with an upper case it will designate Christianity at large, i.e. Catholic, Anglican, Eastern forms of Orthodoxy, all Protestant branches, etc., but is not intended to include any group, whether they claim to be Christian or not, that does not hold to the dual nature (Divinity/Humanity) of Jesus Christ.

a skeptic's heart. What shame on the Church! What loss to our faith! What wasted and untapped riches we have squandered because we have fallen asleep and schooled ourselves to be ignorant of Revelation! Sadly, many Christians have been taught not to study Revelation. They have been tricked into thinking that they run the risk of contracting a kind of spiritual insanity. If they insist on studying Revelation, it is widely believed, they will end up totally confused and permanently deceived. Church goers were told for centuries that Revelation was too complicated a book, full of dark sentences and bizarre religious symbols. No mere mortal, believer or not, could possibly understand its mystifying messages. Orthodox/Catholic Christians of both the Eastern and Western varieties, have taught for 16 centuries that Revelation is an historical expose on the Imperial Roman Empire, a convoluted and jagged prophecy of Rome's slow decline and fall. The adherents of Orthodoxy have ignorantly believed that the book's prophecies were fulfilled when the Visigoths overran Rome in the fourth and fifth centuries. Such insidious historicizing of Revelation's prophecies are erroneous and far from being divinely inspired, yet acceptance of them has prevailed throughout the last millennium of church history. But as we shall see, the brunt of Revelation and its wonderfully exciting prophecies of Christ's return still await their glorious fulfillment.

So, as we shall discover, the purpose of Revelation is not merely for the satisfying of man's idle curiosity for wanting to know the future; it is intended to prepare us for that future. Any study of Revelation ought to increase the believer's faith for actively living its meaning and content. It should strike a godly fear into every reader and believer. It directs us to the path of righteousness and provides road

signs for a way that is pleasing to God. Knowing that the earth will be judged and burned up with “fervent heat”, should motivate man to do anything to avoid such frightening judgments and seek God’s deliverance and mercy. To “live” Revelation by faith, the believer must first read and understand its meaning. It is extremely important in these last days that the believer has faith for the things preached and proclaimed in Revelation. All parts of the infallible Word of God are extremely precious and have been given to us by God, “for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness”.² Every book in the Bible, every part of God’s Word deserves our full attention and deepest labor. Revelation, certainly, is no different. In fact, Revelation is so important that God has attached a unique promise to it for those who will incorporate it into their everyday faith. God has promised that those who read, hear and **KEEP**, the words of Revelation will be blessed. Note the third verse of the first chapter of Revelation:

*“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and **keep** those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.” (Rev. 1.3)*

Above all, it is not enough to simply read or hear or understand the things written in Revelation, but the saint must also **keep** its meaning. If we say we believe what is written in it we must also live like we believe it. It is not enough to know prophecy, nor is it enough to understand what one should do about it; we must not only be a hearer of Revelation but we have to be a doer also. God’s Word tells us that if we live in the spirit, we should also walk in the spirit. Practice what you preach, put into action what you believe. **We are invited to know Revelation, asked to**

2. 2 Tim 3.16

understand it and expected to live it. I hope this work on Revelation will enable the Christian to achieve this kind of active belief in his personal walk with Jesus. The primary goal of this study is that we should come to know and obtain the heavenly blessing promised in verse three. We shall teach Revelation so it can be read and understood, but one must **keep** the words if they are to receive the blessing.

Revelation is not an exclusive book meant to be understood only by intellectuals, the clergy or Bible teachers. As the Bible says about prophecy in general, Revelation is not of any private interpretation.

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” (II Peter 1.19-21)

Christians do not need a special revelation from heaven to unlock its meaning. Scripture is the key that unlocks Revelation’s meaning. We do not need angels making night visitations to “specially” anointed ministers or to some “chosen leader” to uncover Revelation’s supposedly secret meaning. Neither do we need theological training. What we need is faith, patience, prayer and a willingness to understand the full gospel as revealed throughout the entire story of the Bible. To get a grip on Revelation’s symbols and spiritual meanings we must have a mind to travel anywhere within the covers of the Holy Bible, from Genesis 1.1 to Revelation 22.21. Herein lies the major source of the born-again Christian’s ignorance and inability to

cope with Revelation. Too many Christians have closed out some portion of the gospel. It may be that they do not like prophecy, or they reject the Old Testament. Maybe they don't believe in the Second Coming, or the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Every part of the Bible and all parts of its message must be absorbed into our faith if we hope to gain a full understanding of Revelation. It is the words of Scripture, nestled in the historical books, the Psalms, the prophetic books of old, the Epistles and, of course, the Gospels, that hold the key to understanding the symbols of Revelation.

Rest assured, Revelation is a much simpler book than people make it out to be. If you have worries about understanding it, calm your fears, this study will clarify the meaning of Revelation for any student of the Bible whether novice or experienced believer. The book is written in a simple chronological order. In fact, the meaning of many of its symbols, events and characters are interpreted and explained for us within the pages of Revelation itself by the angel or messenger who has given the vision. In the end, the study of Revelation lets us see God's plan clearly; we know what He plans to do, why He will do it, and what effect it will have on us and the inhabitants of the world. What more can we ask for from prophecy; what more should we expect; what more should we know about the future?

Acknowledgements

Except where otherwise noted all scriptural quotations in this book are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

Charts and tables made by the author.

Other Material by Terry Myers Smith

Terry Myers Smith wrote and published several books and many articles throughout his life. For more information about Terry and to read his writings, please visit www.elishasoutcasteagles.com

The Rapture and Daniel

No study of Revelation can be properly undertaken which does not include the realities of the Rapture or take into account the magnificent end-time prophecies of Daniel. Without a clear knowledge and understanding of both the Rapture and Daniel it is impossible to put together a sensible chronology of events or to make sense out of the myriad characters and scenes described in its pages.

Because the Rapture is the “*prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*”¹ it has engendered debate and controversy in the Church from the very first day Jesus taught on it. Whenever the spiritual stakes are high, as they are for the Rapture, it is a guarantee that Satan will go on the offensive and the battle will be fiercely contended. The fight over the Rapture began even before Jesus left this earth. When Peter asked Jesus what manner of death John would suffer, Jesus told him that it was none of his business. He asked Peter; What was it to you even if John would never see death?

1. Phil. 3:14

Because Christ had asked Peter this rhetorical question and used John as an example, people immediately jumped to the conclusion that Christ was promising John would be raptured. *“Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die...”* (John 21.23). Though this erroneous presumption was dispelled by the very next words of Scripture, *“yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?”*, the rumor persisted and gossip about the resurrection and Rapture of the Church had taken on a life of its own that would soon turn into heresy.

In less than a generation’s time the gossip grew into heretical proportions and Paul was forced to confront the controversy head-on. The apostle to the Gentiles warned the Thessalonians about ignorant men who were traveling in his wake disturbing the Church and subverting true faith by teaching falsehoods concerning the resurrection. Already, not a generation after Christ, men were telling Christians that the resurrection had taken place and that they had missed it. *“But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.”* (2 Tim. 2.16-18). Since then, teachers and theologians have engaged in every conceivable argument about the Rapture and the second coming of Christ. Will it take place before the Tribulation, in the middle, or at the end? Will it be one event, two, three, or more? Who will be raptured and how many? Cynics claim it will not take place at all. Others dismiss it because it causes division. Doubters say it is just too mysterious to understand. None of these arguments or positions are acceptable. If it is in God’s Word we ought to seek its

meaning, regardless of its popularity, divisiveness, or ease of understanding. If God wanted to hand knowledge out on a silver platter to just anyone He would not have had His Son teach in parables². Jesus said, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” (Matt. 7.7-8).

To understand the Rapture we must be spiritual detectives. We must ask the right questions, seek out answers, and knock on God’s door. The word *rapture* does not appear in the King James version of the Bible, though it is used in some translations, such as the Vulgate. The word’s origin is owed to Jerome and his Latin translation of the Scriptures in the 4th Century A.D. Since that day it has been the expression commonly used by the Christian world to describe the “catching up”, or resurrection of the dead in Christ, along with those who are alive at the time of the event. The Rapture is a unique part of the resurrection because it combines the instantaneous transformation of both the dead and the living into immortal beings to be with God in heaven forever. It is a resurrection of **body, soul and spirit** into eternal life. The Rapture, however, is only one part of God’s grand resurrection design for mankind. As we shall discover, the resurrection of human beings of all degrees of salvation, as well as damnation (Acts 24.15), will take place in multiple stages. The Rapture is the resurrection of the *first fruits* unto God. This first-fruits resurrection is a special event, as well as a judgment. The Rapture is the prize held out to faithful believers. It is the ultimate expression of the blessing promised to those

2. Matt. 13.13 & Lk 8.10

who “read, hear and keep” the words that are written in the pages of Revelation.

Jesus was not the only one who taught that there would be a rapture of living people. It was confirmed and taught in the epistles which were written by the apostles. The Apostle Paul wrote this to believers in Greece,

“Behold, I show you a mystery, we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written,

Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”³

So we see that not all people will “sleep” (die). Granted, this is a mystery, but God wants to show this “mystery” to believers and has revealed it in His Word. Some of us shall be “caught up” to God while we are yet alive. Paul also wrote a letter to the Thessalonians espousing very clearly this doctrine of the Rapture.

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall

3. 1 Cor. 15:51-55

not prevent them which are asleep.

For the Lord himself shall 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 and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”⁴

Could it be any more plain? God will catch some saints up alive into heaven. They shall not see death.

Are There Any Precedents for the Rapture in the Bible?

God’s Word provides two examples that give us encouragement to believe in such an “unbelievable” phenomenon. The first episode occurred early in man’s story, before recorded history. Enoch, a man who was the seventh generation from Adam, was “translated” into heaven without ever seeing death. “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” (Hebrews 11.5) The second example is more famous, that of the prophet Elijah who was “caught up” in full view of his servant Elisha. Songs are sung and sermons preached about this glorious incident when a sweet chariot swung low and picked up the prophet to carry him home to heaven (2 Kings 2). These examples stand as two witnesses for the truth of the Rapture. And as it says in the Bible, all things shall be established by two or three witnesses. The Rapture is a real doctrine of Scripture and it is God’s promise of mercy to His faithful followers.

No Man Knows the Day Nor Hour, Only the Father

Jesus warned the Church about the Rapture’s mysterious nature. He said no man knows the day nor hour of the

4. 1 Cor. 15:51-55

Son of Man's return, not even Jesus knows the exact time, but only the Father. (Mk. 13.32) This is crucial. The reader should never forget this warning from Jesus. Too many *False Christs* have deceived people by their claims that they knew when the Rapture would take place. Jesus told us that it would come at a time when we think not (Matt. 24.44) and that we have to be very careful that it does not come upon us as "a thief in the night" taking us by surprise so that we are left behind (Matt. 24.43). Jesus told many parables about this aspect of the Rapture. He always emphasized that it would happen suddenly and that believers must not let it catch them off guard. Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians literally spoke about that day coming as a thief in the night.

But Why Doesn't God Want Us To Know When it Will Happen?

Not knowing when Christ will return is God's way of motivating us to be in a perpetual state of readiness. Believing that Jesus can show up at any time has a purifying effect on us. It makes us want to get rid of anything that could cause us to be left behind. If we want to be raptured more than anything else then we will not want to be found in a state of sin: drunk, adulterous, lying, cheating, stealing, hating or being steeped in the world. We will put away the works of the flesh and seek God to grow the fruits of the spirit in us.⁵ We will pick up our cross and follow after the Lord daily. We will die to self; live to Christ. The book of 1 John chapter 3 says it like this:

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet

5. Galatians

appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

Jesus ended a parable about His appearing making this plea to his disciples.

“And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.” (Luke 21.34-36).

God wants us to be ready, waiting and watching. There will be no time to pack, no time to say good-bye, no time to look back, no time to repent. It will all happen in a “*twinkling of an eye*” The time to prepare is now. And everyone who has this as their hope will be pure even as Jesus is pure.

Therefore it Stands to Reason: Rapture is Pre-Tribulation

The element of surprise is an excellent reason for concluding that the Rapture happens prior to the start of the Tribulation. Many Bible teachers think this doctrine is a cop-out, just a malaise of wishful thinking. But it is the only logical conclusion one can draw if they study the whole picture in an unbiased effort to discover the truth. Where is the element of surprise if the Rapture takes place after the start of the Tribulation? Its purifying affect is diminished or entirely negated when we begin to believe that it will happen after the start of the Tribulation.

Daniel is the Key to Revelation’s Time Frame

The popular teaching among Christians today is that the Rapture will trigger the Tribulation and immediately the seven year period of judgment will commence. But there is not a single word in Scripture to assure us this is true. All we know for sure is that it will happen at a time when we think not, in the twinkling of an eye, and that no man knows the day or hour. For all we know, the Tribulation could start that moment, one day later, four months later, or a year later – who knows. In contrast, we are told in the Book of Daniel that an event quite distinct from the Rapture is foreordained to trigger the start of this seven-year period. A prophecy in Daniel, chapter nine gives explicit information about the timing of the events of the Tribulation, a time which Daniel calls the “70th Week”.

Just because God, in His wisdom, has chosen to keep the time of the Rapture secret does not mean He is doing everything by the seat of His pants. Every event, every judgment, every act of Christ has been carefully planned and orchestrated. Everything to do with the end-times judgment will come in its perfect time and in its own order. Daniel makes this abundantly clear. In just a few short verses we are told when and how the Tribulation begins, when and how it ends, how long it lasts, and its defining moment when, at the exact halfway point, the Antichrist sets himself up as God in the Temple at Jerusalem.⁶ Shortly, we shall see how these facts make it only reasonable to assume that the Rapture will take place prior to the Tribulation.

6. In other places, Daniel also designates the precise timing (right down to the exact day) of the reestablishment of the Mosaic daily sacrifice and oblations, which will be established once again in Israel during the Tribulation; the exact day of the stoppage of those same daily sacrifices and oblations; and pinpoints, down to the day, the cleansing of the temple, the return of Christ and the coronation of Jesus as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Daniel provides us with times for:

1. *The Exact Length of the Tribulation*

2. *The Beginning of the Tribulation*

3. *The End of the Tribulation*

4. *The Timing of Important Religious Events*

Daniel's "70th Week" – The Tribulation

The Tribulation lasts seven years. We know this because of Daniel's prophecy of the "70 weeks" and his definitive statement in the last verse of the following quote from Daniel 9.24-27.

"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the

consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”

Because most of the prophecy has already been fulfilled, we know beyond doubt that one week is equivalent to seven years. Here is the interpretation explained by its fulfillment:

God told Daniel there would be 70 weeks determined on his people and the Holy city. Notice that the prophecy then breaks down the groups of “weeks” into three subdivisions. The first is a period of seven weeks (or 49 years) from the declaration to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem to its completion. The fulfillment of this took exactly 49 years, from the moment Artaxerxes gave the royal command to rebuild until the completion and dedication of the work on the city and the new Temple. The second division is of a 62-week duration (or 434 years). It was also fulfilled when Jesus was crucified (*cut off*) exactly 434 years after the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Therefore, it is beyond all doubt that a week in Daniel’s great prophecy spans a seven-year period of time. It is simple to conclude, then, that only one week of the prophecy, the final week, has not yet been fulfilled. The week? Obviously, it is the Tribulation, the seven-year period described in graphic detail and fully related in the Book of Revelation chapters 4-19.

What Is the 70 Week Prophecy All About?

The Tribulation is the culminating prophecy of the 70 *Weeks* of Daniel. The first verse of the prophecy (Dan. 9:24) declares exactly what God intends to accomplish by the end of the 70 *Week* period. They are the six fundamental promises of redemption and salvation for his people and his Holy City, all of which will be fulfilled and completed when the curtain of the Tribulation comes down.

1. **FINISH THE TRANSGRESSION:**

The transgression started at the tree of knowledge by Adam and Eve will be finished. God's people (all true believers, called the commonwealth of Israel) will be finished with rebellion and disobedience.

2. **MAKE AN END TO SIN:**

An end of sin for God's people (remember this prophecy is for his people and his city, not necessarily for all mankind). When we see Jesus we shall be made like Him.⁷ There is no need for further sacrifice, and now no need to ask for continuing forgiveness. The believer is pure even as Christ is pure.

3. **MAKE RECONCILIATION FOR INIQUITY:**

Jesus' blood has paid the price for iniquity. The full and complete reconciliation comes when He takes His throne in Jerusalem to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. God's people are brought back to Him; reconciled to their Father-Creator.

4. **BRING IN EVERLASTING RIGHTEOUSNESS:**

No more injustice. No more corruption in government. The righteous judge will be on His throne ruling the nations with a rod of iron.

5. **SEAL UP THE VISION AND PROPHECY:**

Many men, from Alexander the Great, to Napoleon to Hitler will have tried to fulfill the vision and prophecy before its time, but the last week of the prophecy is the designated time to finish all that has been prophesied concerning God's plan of the ages. The Antichrist will come and set up his

7. 1 John 3:1-3

throne, but his defeat will seal up the prophecy and put an end to the vision. Jesus said it is the time when all things will be fulfilled.

6. **TO ANOINT THE MOST HOLY:**

This event will happen in Jerusalem. This is the day promised to King David when one of his seed will sit on his throne to rule for ever and ever.

The Start of the Tribulation

Many Christians are confused about when the Tribulation begins and how to know if we are in it or not. But Daniel tells us the precise moment and event that triggers the start of the Tribulation. It is not the Rapture, or the creation of the ten unified nations, the mark of the Beast, or any of the usual things bantered about on the winds of spiritual gossip. Daniel says that the “vile person” **confirms the covenant with many for one week**. When the Antichrist makes and confirms the covenant with Israel (and many other nations) then, and only then, does the Tribulation begin. When the Antichrist strikes a deal, that unholy peace plan or some sort of international treaty that has as one of its focal points the covenant God made with the Jews including the law and sacrifices of Jewish religion, then the wise will know that the Tribulation has begun, and the seven-year clock will begin ticking down to its last day and hour.

The End of the Tribulation

Daniel also tells exactly how and when the Tribulation will end. Daniel 8.13-14 tells us the Temple will be cleansed from *the abomination that maketh desolate* and 9.24 tells us that

Jesus' coronation will take place within the final "week". Jesus' return to the earth, His defeat of the Antichrist, His triumphant entrance into Jerusalem, and His cleansing of the temple will all precede His glorious coronation which will be the crowning and final prophecy of the 70th Week. The Tribulation officially ends when Jesus is anointed the most Holy, crowned king of the earth and is seated in His rightful throne in the Temple at Jerusalem.⁸

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8. God has allotted 2,300 days (220 days short of seven years) for the chain of the three most significant religious events of the final week to take place. The three things are: 1.) the reinstatement of the daily sacrifice under Jewish law, 2.) the end of the sacrifice and the placing of the abomination of desolation, 3.) the elimination of the Antichrist and the cleansing of the temple. The reinstatement of the Jewish sacrificial system will begin 220 days after the Antichrist has confirmed the covenant. The new Jewish temple, which will have already been built by the time the Antichrist confirms the covenant, will probably be dedicated either on the day of the signing of the covenant or some time within this 220 day period. The daily sacrifices and oblations will begin just a little over seven months into the Tribulation, perhaps on the most holy of all Jewish days, the Day of Atonement. But the Antichrist will put an end to the Jewish rites at the midway point of the Tribulation and institute his own laws and system of worship with him as the god of the new religion. Daniel 12.11 tells us that the span of time from the cessation of the daily sacrifice through the abomination of desolation, to the end will be 1,290 days, or just 30 days more than half of the Tribulation. Daniel 9.27 tells us that the abomination of desolation (or image of the beast that is set up to be worshiped in the holy of holies) is placed in the temple "in the midst of the week". Therefore, we might conclude that the daily sacrifice is stopped 30 days before the middle of the Tribulation period and 30 days later the image of the beast is set up in the temple. The Antichrist's power to force people to take the mark and worship his image lasts 1,260 days, or 42 months, or three and a half years, or exactly one half of the "week". The Antichrist's power to overcome the saints also lasts one half of the Tribulation. It is reasonable for us to assume that when the Antichrist sets up the image everything changes. Jesus told the people that when they see this happen flee for the hills, don't even stop to get your clothes. At the end the Lord will cleanse the temple and set up true worship with Himself at its center. But we shall talk in more detail about these things as they are discussed in the context of our study. For now we should just see that the period of seven years and its careful division by God to order the events of the Tribulation are definitively established in the prophecies of Daniel.

Abomination of Desolation

This, we are told, will take place in the middle of the Tribulation. This is the moment of time that the Devil and the Antichrist spirit have long waited for, since the dawn of human history. The Devil has always wanted to be God; now He takes the throne. This is the moment when Satan and his *anointed one*, the fake Christ, the False Messiah, sit before the whole world as God, demanding the worship of all the earth's inhabitants. This is the act, the placing of the image of the beast in God's holy temple in Jerusalem,⁹ that causes absolute desolation (or absence of God's Spirit) in all the earth. Now man is left completely to his own devices and evil imaginings. Man has never experienced a world not influenced, affected, or controlled by the overspreading influence of the Holy Spirit. We can only guess at the horror of a world without God's influence. The desolation that comes by the abomination of Satan taking over the temple makes the world a place barren of goodness and overflowing with sin. It will be a place devoid of conscience, without love, full of fear, hate and rebellion. It will be a world given over totally to unrestrained selfishness and wickedness.

So it should be obvious after just a quick glance at Daniel that the beginning, middle and end of the Tribulation are very clearly established by God's Word. There should be no doubt or confusion: the Tribulation begins on the day that the Antichrist signs the peace covenant with Israel; it ends exactly seven years later when Christ is crowned King of kings and Lord of lords; and in the middle (three and a half years into it), the Antichrist sets up *the abomination of desolation* in the Temple. (See the chart below)

9. [2 Thess. 2:3-4](#), [Matt. 24:13](#), [Mk. 13:14](#), [Rev. chap. 13](#)

Therefore, it seems the only reasonable conclusion at which we can arrive – the Rapture must precede the Tribulation. Our reasoning goes like this. We ask ourselves: Since we know that the Tribulation starts when the Antichrist confirms the agreement with Israel (Dan. 9.27), and we know that the Tribulation lasts seven years (Dan. 9.24-27), where is the element of surprise if the Rapture happens after the Tribulation begins? Once the Tribulation starts everyone will be able to know that Jesus must come back to earth in seven years. Therefore, everyone will know that the Rapture must happen within seven years. Once the Antichrist signs the agreement with Israel and the events of the Tribulation start to unfold, just as Revelation and Daniel have recorded, people will be able to commence a countdown of days, 2,560 to be exact, until Jesus is anointed in Jerusalem as the Most Holy and the vision and prophecy is sealed up and finished. We are forced to conclude that the element of surprise would be virtually gone if the Rapture happened after the Tribulation began. God's primary purpose for promising the Rapture and for keeping its hour secret is to supply a major motivation of holiness and purification for the believer. The leverage and power of the Rapture would be totally undermined if a person knew it must happen within a matter of a certain number of days.

Further, as we get deeper into Revelation we shall discover that the believers during the Tribulation are called to martyrdom, there is no indication they are Raptured. They did not believe in the Rapture, did not give their lives to Christ and now they will have to give up their mortal bodies to gain their heavenly souls. Their lot has been sealed because they waited too long to give their lives to Christ and now they must lose their life to save it.

But Can't We Know the Times and Seasons?

Though we cannot know the exact time of the Rapture we are supposed to watch for its coming. We can know the signs of the times and the subtleties of the season in which we live. Again, Jesus is our witness. He rebuked the pharisees for not making the effort to read the spiritual signs at His first coming.

“The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven.

He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red.

And in the morning, It will be foul weather today: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times

A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the purification for the believer. The leverage prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed.” (Matt. 16.1-4)

This is where being a spiritual sleuth becomes important. We must try to detect every bit of fulfilled prophecy that points to Jesus' appearing in the clouds. He admonishes us to be awake and ever alert during our “watch”¹⁰. He gave us an example of watching for signs in the Gospel of Luke:

“And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees;

When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.

So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.

10. [Lk. 12.35-40](#)

Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.

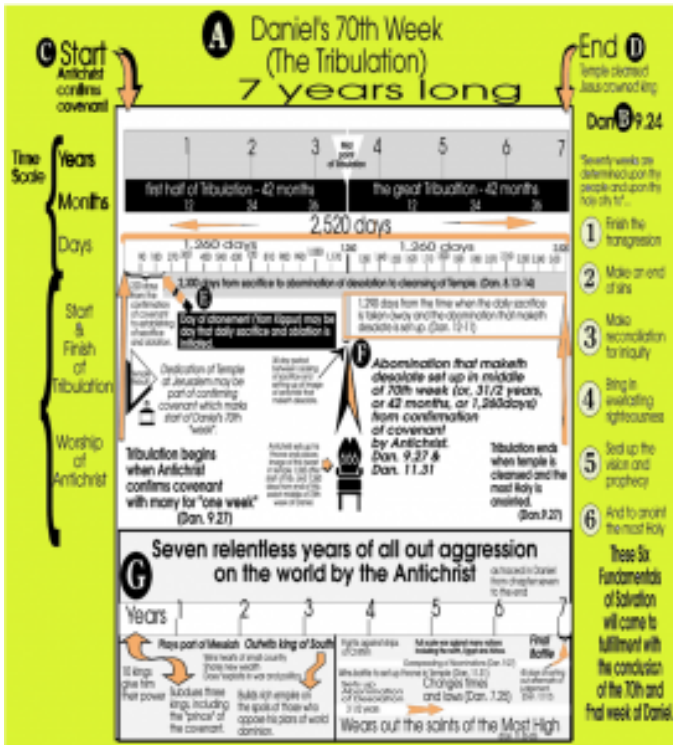
Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.” (Luke: 21.29-36)

Sure sounds like Jesus wants us to keep up the surveillance, looking for all the evidence that proves his return is near.



The reader may even want to blow this chart up and study it or use it as a supplement with the other charts in the book to help get a clear overview of the chronology and order of Tribulation events.

Who Will Be Raptured?

For any serious and sober-minded Christian this is the million-dollar question. There is a prevalent feeling (often taught by popular prophetic teachers) among Evangelical, born-again and Pentecostal Christians that should trouble every teacher and preacher in the Church. Most Christians who know about the Rapture seem to be taking it for granted, as if once they are born-again they have some automatic birth-right that assures them they will be taken out of the world regardless of their personal holiness or godly behavior. They fail to realize that even Paul did not

take the Rapture for granted. He said that he did not assume he would be awarded the Rapture or even the resurrection, but that he counted all things as dung in order to win the excellency of Christ and that he pressed forward for the mark of the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus.¹¹ The Epistle of James points out that it is not enough to believe, even the devils believe and tremble¹². We must live holy lives if we will be among the Raptured.

Like the marching saints of the old spiritual, we also sing, “Lord I want to be in that number”. It is perhaps the most important question of all: who will be among the raptured? Chapters 4,5 and 14 of Revelation shed some light on this question, but from what we already know of God’s desires, the precedents of Scripture, the warnings of Jesus, and the teachings in the Epistles, we can draw some basic conclusions before we get to those chapters. The saint who wants to be raptured must clearly be watching and waiting for the Lord’s return. He must not say to himself, “*the Lord delays His coming*”¹³. The saint must be ready; not spending his or her time in drunkenness or the pursuit of selfish or carnal desires. They will reject idolatry and disdain any sort of flirtation with “another god”. He or she will not be mistreating their fellow man or their neighbors, but walking, as much as God has required of them, as Jesus walked when He was on this earth. This saint will have hope in the world to come and not in this present world¹⁴. He will be in God’s service and yielded to the Holy Ghost. We will have more to say about who shall be raptured as we continue our study of Revelation, but one thing is

11. [Phil. 3:8-15](#)

12. [James 2:19](#)

13. [2 Peter 3](#), [Lk.12.45](#), [Matt. 24.48](#)

14. [Heb. 11](#), [Matt. 6.21](#)

abundantly clear from our detective work – we should not take the Rapture for granted, no one has their ticket punched just because they answered an altar call, go to church regularly, participate in a ministry, or pay their tithes regularly. Remember what Jesus said:

“Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” (Matt. 7:21-22 see also Lk. 13:25)

He also admonished us to pray that we be accounted worthy to escape all the things coming on the earth. The key words are pray, be accounted, worthy and escape. We must ask God for deliverance and ask Him to account us worthy (for we are not worthy and we have no inherent right to be raptured) so we will escape the Tribulation’s trials and evils. To be raptured is God’s pure mercy and not something which we have a right to expect. We cannot earn it by our righteousness. Answering an altar call does not assure us of being part of the Rapture. It is not like signing up for a vacation cruise or taking on an insurance policy that has no premiums to pay.

In Matthew 25, Jesus taught two great parables concerning the attitude we should have while waiting for His return. The first is about a group of virgins waiting for a bridegroom to come. The second is about a group of servants who are given stewardship and responsibility in behalf of their master who is away. We are not able to go into all of the symbolism now (we will later), but both

groups have members who did right and were rewarded and both have those who failed to do the bidding of their master and were punished. The first parable is about waiting for the Rapture. The second is about faithfully “occupying”, as Jesus put it,¹⁵ until He comes to get His Bride. The virgins were faithful to their espoused. They were dressed in the right “garments”. Five of them had their lights burning, and their lamps filled with oil (the Holy Ghost). Five went into the celebration with the Bridegroom. Five were locked out. In the other parable, His servants were given works of faith to do. Some returned a “profit” to the Lord. One, thinking God was “a hard man”, did nothing and kept everything to himself. He was cast out of the kingdom of God.

Where Does the Rapture Fit into Revelation?

Studying Revelation will help us to **keep** the words of the book and allow us to enter into the blessings it offers. Foremost, among those blessings is being found worthy to be part of the first fruit resurrection, or the Rapture. We begin our detailed study of Revelation with chapter four. The first scene depicting the events of Daniel’s 70th Week takes place in heaven. The Tribulation has not begun. John is taken up to heaven and finds himself with redeemed people from the earth waiting for the redemption process to begin. †

15. [Lk 19:13](#)

The Lamb is Worthy

How fitting that the Alpha and Omega, The First and The Last, as Jesus calls Himself in Revelation, would reserve the Bible's last word exclusively for Himself. Revelation is not, as is often assumed, the Revelation of John. It is not John's writing at all. He was nothing more than a dutiful reporter of God's messages. The author is God the Father. The Revelation is about Jesus. That means it reveals Jesus in all His true glory. The book's opening verse declares this fact:

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:"

Revelation, then, is the Revelation of Jesus Christ given to Him by His Father, delivered by an angel to John who is merely, as all good prophets are, true to his mission of simply reporting what God has told him. This is the final

word from God on His Son Jesus, and for that reason alone Christians should take Revelation very, very seriously.

Jesus reveals Himself in His glorified state in chapter one and gives us God's reason for delivering the message in Revelation. We see him as the eternal God/Man with eyes aflame, His feet of burnished brass and His white hair depicting the wisdom of the *Ancient of Days*. He holds the Seven Churches in His hands and is the Master and leader of them all. He is the judge and the Father of the Church. He is capable of doing and accomplishing all of the things in the prophecy He is about to outline for John. When John sees Jesus he falls at His feet and worships Him.

In the second and third chapters Jesus dictates letters to seven separate churches located in Asia Minor, each letter talks of the Church and its spiritual condition. The letters serve multiple purposes and are designed to tell the individual believer both about his personal walk and the course of Church history as it would run throughout the Age of Grace. While they are representative of churches that existed at the time that Revelation was penned, they are also prophetic of the entire 2,000 years of church history, and serve as a kind of spiritual mirror for the individual believer so they may take a close look at their personal faith. (We shall not in this study take a look at these letters, but God willing I shall have an entire publication devoted to church history and the implication of these letters on the Christian life.)

We have already made the assertion that the Rapture has to be a pre-Tribulation occurrence and certain details in the scene described in chapters four and five, into which John is suddenly thrust (by being caught up to heaven), serve to buttress our belief in a Pre-Trib Rapture. Pay particular attention to terminology used in the first two verses of

chapter four, in which John is brought “in the spirit” up to heaven:

“After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which 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.” (Rev. 4.1-2)

In the twinkling of an eye John is transported to heaven. John is used by God as a living symbol of the Rapture. The apostle’s presence in heaven is brought about by a sudden supernatural transformation. The description of the instantaneous event reminds the student of the Bible of the language used to describe the “mystery” of the Rapture in the books of 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians. Chapter four opens with John noticing an open door in heaven, hearing a voice like a trumpet, getting the command to “come up hither” and immediately being changed in the spirit. Just as heaven will be opened to receive the saints that will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, so John saw an open door admitting him to heaven. Just as a trumpet will sound the alert for the Rapture, so John heard a voice “like a trumpet” calling Him to come up to heaven. And, just as we shall be “changed in the twinkling of an eye” to be with the Lord, so John was “immediately in the spirit” and standing before God’s throne.

From this point on, John should be considered the stand-in for all the faithful believers of the Church of God. He stands before God and Creation as the representative of all true believers who have humbled themselves before God and attained to salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. In future chapters we shall see John acting as the agent of the Church as he prophesies of the future, measures things for God’s

judgment, worships the Lord, hears His messages, witnesses His judgments and receives blessings from Christ. In this case John is performing a type of “dress rehearsal” of the Rapture. Instantly, at the sound of a trumpet, he is caught up in the spirit to heaven. This is exactly how the Rapture will happen for the faithful believers, suddenly and without notice; and since, as we shall shortly see, the Tribulation judgments have not yet started, this “rapture” scene, with John representing the raptured church, must mean that the Rapture occurs before the Tribulation begins.

Right away John finds himself in the middle of a great “worship service” before the throne of God in heaven:

“And he that sat [upon the throne] 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.

And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

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.

And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.

And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which

was, and is, and is to come.

And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” (Rev. 4.3-11)

John must have been familiar with most of what he encountered in this glorious celestial scene. He was no intruder in heaven; he knew God through Christ, he surely knew how to worship in spirit and truth, and since the treasure of his heart was there, it had already become his home. He certainly recognized God sitting on His majestic throne. He saw the creatures perched about Him and understood that they were angelic beings of the very highest order and authority. The apostle, being familiar with the writings of the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah, surely recognized these creatures as the seraphim and cherubim of the visions of those ancient seers. Hovering around the throne, these high-ranking angels reflected the glory of the four highest categories of God’s creatures. The first looked in appearance like a man, of all the creatures the only one created in God’s own image; the next a lion, king of beasts and ruler of the animal kingdom; then an eagle, the bird which flies in the loftiest heights and is the grandest of all winged creatures; and last a calf, or bull, which as the great beast of burden and largest source of food, is the most important of all domestic animals. In the middle of these sublime creatures John saw seven lamps which he undoubtedly recognized as signifying the seven-fold spirit of the Holy Ghost. He had also noticed the sea of crystal

and knew that it stood for the pure water of life that flows continually from God's merciful throne. The one element present in all of this that may have baffled John was the so-called twenty-four "elders" who were seated in a circle around the throne.

At first John had no way of knowing who these elders were much less who they represented though, as he observed the scene, he may have gleaned a few clues about their identity. Just before he mentions the elders, John makes note of the rainbow that encircles the throne of God. The rainbow belongs to man. It is a sign that holds symbolic meaning and significance for man only. God gave it to man to reassure him of His love and affirm his promise that He would never again destroy the whole earth. The rainbow holds no personal significance for the angels and is removed from the specific business and destiny of heaven. This symbol encompasses God's throne because there are men and women present who will appreciate its meaning and connection to the plan of redemption.

The clothes the elders wear also offer insight into their humanity. Only saints (or true believers) are entitled to wear "white raiment". Jesus makes reference to the white raiment of the saints in verses 5 and 18 of chapter three. White raiment is equated exclusively with the righteousness of redeemed man. Angels would not be dressed in white robes, they have not been redeemed from or overcome sin. They are not covered in the cleansing blood of Jesus to wash their garments white. Neither would they be wearing golden crowns as the twenty-four elders do. Golden crowns are the reserve of men and women who have overcome in their struggle against sin on the earth. Jesus promptly says in Revelation (vs. 6) that He has made the saints *kings and priests* unto His God. Now these men

and women join in full worship with the cherubim and seraphim throwing their honor and glory, represented in their golden crowns, at the feet of God Almighty, acknowledging with rejoicing and humble hearts that they were created for His pleasure.

“And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” (vs. 9-11)

The elders, therefore, must be saved people from the earth. But we are not reduced to conjecture, speculation or even sound deduction on this point. In the next chapter the elders themselves tell us they are saints from the earth.

“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 saints.

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to 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.” (Rev. 5.8-10)

Only a group of redeemed mankind could sit before the throne of God in heaven and sing: the Lamb has **“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.”** We are forced to ask, then, who are these people and where did they come

from; and even more important, how did they get there? The only reasonable answer is that they are saints from the earth who have been raptured. There is no other way for them to get there. But what about the timing of this worship service, what can we conclude about it? Can it help us understand when the Rapture occurs? Yes, it definitely can.

When John first arrives in heaven and witnesses this great worship scene Jesus is not present. Only the angels, “beasts” (better called seraphim) and the redeemed men are there praising God. Christ makes His entrance when God asks for someone worthy to step forward and open the seven- sealed book of judgments. When the elders are worshiping God the book of the seven seals has not yet been presented to Christ. As we shall see, the Tribulation begins the moment that Christ cracks open the first seal of this book of judgment, but that does not happen until chapter six. We are forced to conclude, then, that redeemed people are in heaven before the Tribulation begins – thus, the Rapture will occur sometime prior to the Tribulation.

We shall see that chapter five establishes the book of the seven seals as decrees of solemn judgment designed solely for the purging process of the Tribulation and that chapter six begins this cleansing process of fiery judgment. The raptured saints are present in heaven to witness these great events. Chapter five opens and suddenly the book of judgment is seen in God’s hand. The worshipers in heaven wait breathlessly as the Lamb of God, the only being in the universe found worthy to open the book, takes it from the hand of God and prepares to initiate the judgments written within it.

“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 Juda, 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.”
(Ch. 5.1-6)

For the moment John must have forgotten all about the twenty-four elders and who they might be. He had wept for a moment when he thought there would be no one able to bring judgment on the earth. John must have known that Jesus had won this right. But God had allowed him to forget momentarily in order to show us how tragic it would have been for mankind had not Jesus come to earth, given His life, and purchased the earth's ownership rights by the sacrifice of His blood on the cross at Calvary.

“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 saints.

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to 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.” (vs. 7-10)

What a relief to all those present. Jesus takes the book from the hand of God and the process of taking back control of the earth from Satan and faithless man is underway. In their relief the elders break into a spontaneous new song never before sung on earth or in heaven. Their song of praise makes it known beyond a shadow of a doubt that they represent the redeemed, raptured souls of mankind. They sing, “*Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of **every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation...***” Only men and women could sing this song, not the angels or any other creature. They have been saved by the blood of the Lamb out of every nation, tribe, people, language and race. John now knows that these are resurrected people who have been raptured and they are in heaven with Him to witness the breaking of the first seal, which will lead to the purging and restoration of the earth. They end their song praising God and acknowledging that they will be *kings and priests* and will shortly return to earth with Christ to reign with Him upon the earth (vs. 10).

It further stands to reason that the number 24 is a purely symbolic number and must represent much more than just 24 saved souls. There are many, many more than 24 nations, 24 peoples, 24 languages or 24 ethnic groups. But they tell us they are redeemed from **every** kindred, tongue, people and nation. These are people from the ages; saints who have lived their lives in each dispensation of time, by obedience and faith. They have waited patiently for the salvation of God to appear – some for thousands of years.

The vision of only 24 elders must be a representative picture of a larger group, albeit, a relatively small and select group, perhaps faithful “virgins” who, during their lives, had taken up their “crosses” to follow Jesus. These people had been scrupulously careful to obey God’s voice and live by faith as Abraham, David, Elijah and the prophets all had done. They had won “*the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*” (Phil. 3.14).

“And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.” (vs. 11-14)

The scene depicted in chapters 4 and 5 sets the stage in heaven for something big that is about to happen; namely, the redemption of the earth. As writer and teacher, Gordon Lindsay, put it, “the heirs (the raptured saints) are now present in heaven”. The final phase of the redemption process is about to be initiated. Enter Jesus, the one and only person who can take hold of the title deed to the earth and open its seals. The primary purpose of chapter 5 is to establish that Jesus has paid in full the purchase price for the earth. By treading up a hill called “the skull”, and

by freely shedding His innocent blood for all mankind at Calvary, He has been deemed worthy to break the seals on the earth's deed and give His "adopted"¹ brothers and sisters their inheritance. The heirs are excited and they say with a loud voice *"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."* (vs.12).

God has the raptured saints stationed in heaven before the Tribulation begins for more than one reason. They are not there just for the opening of the "will" or to give the Lamb of God His due worship, they are also there because they are "elders", leaders of faith, people of courage who can help God and the angels with the spiritual battles that lie ahead in the days to come. They were instrumental in casting Satan out of the heavenlies in the battle that ensued at the moment of the Rapture (Rev. 12). They helped displace Satan and his minions from the heavenlies and were instrumental in casting them down to earth.

The Rapture has occurred just as God's Word said it would, at a time when the unsuspecting world and slothful believers were uncaring and unaware. It has come as a thief in the night. While the relatively small group of faithful ones who watched and waited for Jesus' appearing are celebrating in heaven, multitude upon multitude of believers mourn on earth. They have missed the Rapture. They have been taken by surprise just as the parable in Matthew 25 (read this parable) said would happen to the five foolish virgins. The sudden appearance of so many saints in heaven is heaven's great gain; it is earth's devastating loss. The 19th Century student of Revelation,

1. Rom. 8:15,23; 9:4 ; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5

Joseph Seiss, captured the spiritual consequences of the Rapture in this passage;

[The rapture] takes out of the world the best material in it. Being made up of the truest and most devoted of God's saints, and being caught away to God, and to His throne, the earth is left minus the presence, prayers and activities, and moral forces of its holiest population. The removal of these faithful ones to their Lord is such a depletion of the salt of the earth that it gives the field almost entirely to the devil and his angels... Hence, while heaven thrills with rejoicing over [Satan's] defeat there, and his ejection to earth comes with a song of triumph in heaven, there is a sad note of woe and pity for dwellers on earth. *'Woe to the earth and the sea! because the devil is come down to you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time'.*✠

The Chronology of Events

The problem with most studies of Revelation is that they quickly become convoluted and we soon lose all sense of direction. Teachers talk about the Second Coming, the Antichrist, the number 666 and the Mark of the Beast, the Tribulation Martyrs and Armageddon as if they were events that stood unrelated to each other, until all of a sudden we find ourselves in the middle of the study standing among the tall timber of gigantic prophetic statements overwhelmed and unable to realize where we are or where we are going. Unless we study Revelation systematically there is a real chance that we will get lost. Instinctively we ask a multitude of questions as we travel through Revelation. What is the order of events? What event precedes what event? When do each of the important characters make their appearances on the scene? When will Jesus come back? Who will be judged and when? When is the Mark of the Beast issued? Who will be saved and when are the saints martyred? When do the judgments fall and

in what order do they descend? Will the Church go through them; will I go through them; will my loved ones go through them??? Because there is so much happening and so many prophecies being fulfilled simultaneously, most studies hit us with tall statements and a great deal of conjecture and leave us with more questions than we had at the start. Bewildered, we stand spinning around in a forest of wonder. It becomes a classic case of “not being able to see the forest for the trees”.

But this is not necessary if we refuse to fall into the intellectual trap of turning the simple into the complicated. As a scientist or historian might lay out their work systematically, setting limits and boundaries that help to define their purpose and work, so God has defined the scope and boundaries of Revelation by making the seven-year period known as the Tribulation the focal point of the entire book. The lion’s portion of Revelation falls within this seven-year period. The events of Revelation which precede or follow the seven-year time span are partly defined by the very fact that they are separated from this great period of judgment. Within this seven-year period God has revealed a carefully orchestrated sequence of events that begin with the Antichrist’s peace plan and end with Armageddon and Christ’s triumphant return to earth which lead to His coronation as King of kings and Lord of lords. Because this seven-year period of judgment provides the setting for Revelation’s themes of judgment and redemption, it helps us to see how all elements relate to one another and how each one fits into God’s overall plan and purpose.

For the sake of simplicity, God has divided The Tribulation into two equal halves. The first three and a half years are devoted to the judgment of the first four seals.

As we shall see this division helps us to understand the spiritual condition of the world as the Tribulation progresses and moves toward its predetermined end. For instance, we are told that the Antichrist has power to kill the saints for 42 months (that's three and half years). It helps us to understand that during the first half of the Tribulation the saints are not martyred but are somehow safe from the Antichrist's grim executions. Also, it is during the first half of the Tribulation that the Antichrist and his Kingdom are established. The greatest part of the judgments that fall on the earth in the first half have to do with allowing this demonic demagogue to solidify his power. The world makes its choice. It has rejected Jesus, the one who came in His Father's name, but received the one who came in his own name¹.

God also chose to record the story, as it is presented in Revelation, in two equal parts. Chapters 4-11 relate the sequence of events of the seven-year period in an outline type format. Chapters 12-19 go back and fill in the details of the important events and primary characters. As we shall vividly see, the chronology, quite fittingly, starts and ends in heaven at God's Holy Temple. Chapter four begins in the Temple with John and the raptured saints pouring out worship to God and the Lamb who is worthy, and chapter eleven concludes at the Temple with the saints pouring out the seven last plagues of judgment on the earth, which is deserving of God's great wrath.

The first half establishes the order of events of the Tribulation. The second part zeros in on the events and characters of the Tribulation, filling in important details that were not covered in the outline given in the first half

1. John 5:43

of the vision. This technique of telling the story of the Tribulation allows God to lay out the sequence of events first and then introduce and discuss the major persons, places and things in relationship to one another and in reference to His overall plan. In other words, Revelation uses the outline method, one of the most basic devices known to man to organize a message in a clear and orderly way. The first half of Revelation is an outline of events; the second half fills in the details of the outline. This shall become more and more clear as our study progresses.

A quick outline of the sequential chapters will help the reader to see the order of events during the Tribulation. The tribulation chart in the next chapter will provide a handy and quick reference throughout the rest of the study of Revelation. Time studying this brief summary of events and the accompanying chart would be time well spent and very beneficial to the understanding of the prophecies of Revelation 4-19.

A SUMMARY OF THE OUTLINE GIVEN IN CHAPTERS 4-11

Chapter Four:

The Rapture and a Great Worship Service in Heaven

The first order of business for the Lord is to take the faithful believers, who have been looking for His Son's appearing, out of the impending Tribulation. In the opening chapter dealing with the Tribulation period we see this company of saints before God's throne, in heaven, waiting to take part in the great judgment that will be started by the one who is worthy: The Lamb of God, Jesus.

Chapter Five:

Jesus Found Worthy to Open Seven Sealed Book

A book (or scroll) is presented in heaven. Everyone present knows that it represents the title deed to the earth.

At first no one is allowed to break the seals of the book, until Jesus enters the throneroom portrayed as a Lamb who has been slain. This “Sacrifice Lamb” will shortly begin opening the seven seals of the book and the process of redeeming the earth will commence. Those who sing a “new song”, the raptured saints, who have been redeemed out of every “kindred, tongue, people and nation”, burst into joyous songs of worship. The stage is set. The “first fruits” of Jesus’ salvation work are present to share this moment of vindication and glory with Christ.

Chapter Six:

The First Five Seals Are Opened by the Lamb

Four of the seven seals are immediately broken open. The Antichrist is given authority to rule on earth. War, famine, pestilence, death and Hell are then released in rapid succession. This takes us to the halfway point of the Tribulation. With seal five, the saints, those who oppose Satan and the Antichrist and refuse His mark, are persecuted and slain. The tribulations and trials of judgment on the earth are building. The Antichrist’s victories and his new world order make the world’s future look hopeful to the lost and humanistic mind, but to believers who were left behind after the Rapture the evil Antichrist and His motives are all too apparent. When the sixth seal is opened and the sun, moon and stars are darkened and an earthquake shakes the whole earth, all mankind comes to the awful realization that God is now fighting against them. This is past the midway point of the seven year period.

Chapter Seven:

God Seals 144,000 Jews; Martyrs Are Resurrected

Judgment is stayed for a moment while God turns His attention to the Jews, marking 144,000 of them as

witnesses that cannot be harmed. He also turns His attention to the Church and has a mid-tribulation resurrection of martyred saints. Persecution, salvation, earthquakes and men's hearts failing them for fear knowing that God is now fighting directly against the Antichrist kingdom which they serve, are all part of the sixth seal judgment. God is no longer withholding judgment. The saints are continuing to be killed until their "number is filled". The seventh seal is about to be opened. We are now over five years into the Tribulation.

Chapter Eight:

Seventh Seal Opened

The seventh seal elicits silence in heaven. Now all creatures in heaven and earth await the fury of God which is about to be poured out onto the earth. It is a most reverential and solemn moment. Seven angels with seven trumpets prepare to disperse their judgments upon God's command. The first four angels sound their trumpets and great catastrophes decimate the vegetation, rivers, seas and skies. Earth's environment is turned into a crucible of judgment. Men, animals and vegetation all begin dying. But it is only a foretaste of what is to come.

Chapter Nine:

Fifth and Sixth Trumpets Bring Supernatural Evils to Earth

We are now about a year and a half away from the end. Locust-like spirit beings torment men followed by 200 million demonic horsemen who slay a great portion of mankind. Now begins the spiritual phase of persecution from demons and fallen angels who have been held in prison by God to be released for this very moment in time. Locust-like beings torment men for five months but do not kill them. Men want to die but cannot find death, yet they

will not repent of their hatred of God or of the worship of themselves. Following close on the heels of these creatures come an army of demonic beings which have a hideous, mutated form, being a cross between a horse, lion and devil. These end-time gargoyles kill a third of mankind. And still men fight on against the Lord, so great is their hatred of truth and God.

Chapter Ten:

Jesus Takes Possession of the Earth

The seventh angel is about to sound the final trumpet unleashing the final seven plagues of God. The end is very, very near now. Jesus appears with one foot on the sea and one on land to take possession of the earth, the ownership which He bought with the price of His blood at Calvary. As the “Mighty Angel” He takes possession of the earth and prepares the way for the final defeat of those who oppose His kingdom.

Chapter Eleven:

The Earth Is Measured for Final Judgment

Now God measures the earth for final judgment. He tells John to measure the temple. The cup of iniquity is full. The sixth trumpet judgment ends with an earthquake. The final trumpet is sounded. Only a few days or weeks are left before the final battle of Armageddon. In this the final chapter of the chronology of events, we find out that God has had two special witnesses, probably Elijah and Moses (or men like them), who have fought with the Antichrist and the False Prophet for three and a half years. We also find out that God has let the temple be overrun by the Gentiles for as many years. Now everything is coming to a head. The sequence of events ends with the declaration that it is time for the final seven plagues to be emptied out on the earth before Jesus returns with His faithful followers.

The chronology fittingly ends with the temple of God being opened in heaven. We see the ark of His testament as a great earthquake rattles Jerusalem and God sends great hailstones to batter the earth. †

The Tribulation Begins

In chapters four and five the Rapture has occurred and the Lamb of God has been found worthy to pass judgment on a rebellious, idolatrous earth for the purpose of purging it and reclaiming it for Christ and His people. The stage is now set for us to be able to coherently and systematically follow the events and judgments of the Tribulation as laid out in chapters 6-11. Jesus is poised and ready to break the first seal on the book of judgment that will signal the beginning of the Tribulation. A time of trial and testing as the world has never known before, or ever will know thereafter, is about to start its irreversible process. Not during the great world wars of this century, not in slaveries, holocausts, genocides, or ethnic cleansings; not in the cruelties of the Roman Empire, not during plagues, diseases, viruses, famines or plunderings; not in rebellions, chaos, anarchy, civil wars or revolutions, has the world seen what the seven years of The Tribulation will bring upon its people. As soon as the Lamb breaks the first seal the seven

year period of God's judgement on earth will commence. From that moment on, the inhabitants of heaven will be able to count 2,560 days (or 84 months, or seven years) until Jesus Christ is crowned King of kings and Lord of lords in the Holy City of Jerusalem. But the people of earth will also be able to count 2,560 days until Christ's coronation in Jerusalem. At the exact moment when Jesus is opening the first seal in heaven, a corresponding event will be happening on earth also sending an unmistakable message to the inhabitants there that the seven-year Tribulation is now officially underway. The event is the aforementioned peace covenant of the Antichrist.

According to the prophecy of Daniel (Dan. 9.27), the "vile person", Antichrist, "*confirms the covenant with many for one week*". It should be emphasized that this "covenant" prophetically proclaims the commencement of the Tribulation; it is the false peace engineered by the false Messiah, the Antichrist. It is a deal struck with many nations, but the agreement between Israel and the Arab world will be at its core. The rebuilding of the Jewish Temple, its grandiose dedication, and the reestablishment of the Mosaic law, with its accompanying religion, will be key components of this sinister, but good and peaceful looking, agreement. The accord will be received around the world. The earth will be filled with a feeling of universal hope for the future of mankind. But this accord will set in motion the chain of events that will lead to the Mark of the Beast, the setting up of the "abomination of desolation", and the final Satanic round of persecution on the Church and the Jews. It will set the stage for the Antichrist to make his unholy demands that all the people of earth worship him as ruler and sole king of the earth. He will demand to be honored as the ancient emperors and potentates of

old were honored, as a deity of divine origin who has been elevated to the one and only “god” of this world.

Groundwork for Remainder of Tribulation Set in the Four Seals

Each time Christ breaks open a seal a new judgment or series of judgments is initiated. Once a judgment begins it continues on for the rest of the Tribulation unless God gives it a specific time limit, as in the case of some of the seven seal judgments. Otherwise, once a judgment starts it remains a seething, boiling undercurrent of trial and tribulation reacting with each new one that is added every time another seal is broken. The effect is that as each seal is opened there is a mounting and escalating judgment.

With the quick and successive opening of the first four seals the world finds itself in a political, social and military situation that is outrageously unjust. Those who put their fate totally into the hands of the “master of the peace accord” will receive special consideration, military protection and socio-economic privilege. Dissenters will feel the harsh oppression of a tyrant. Those who resist his designs of world conquest and his social and religious “reforms” will be treated with devastating cruelty, torture and murder. Before the world knows it, they will have a cruel tyrant for a leader, but one of their choosing who they adore and worship. The world, which has rejected Christ and hates God, will get what they deserve: a charismatic leader who inspires the worship of mankind but is full of lies, deceit, hate and every evil intention. He will promise salvation but deliver destruction. After the Antichrist is installed as leader of the New World Order (we use this for lack of a better name, real name is yet unknown), the world is thrown into warfare and the threat of war. It is rapidly plagued by every manner of disease, famine and economic

confusion. Death begins to roam the earth like a heartless street gang selecting at random one in every four persons who is not saved, sending these unhappy souls directly into the eternal flames of Hell.

The First Four Seals Are Opened in Rapid Succession

The above description is just a thumbnail sketch of the effects of the first four seals. They begin one right after the other with lightning speed. Unlike the judgments to come, these first four judgments have no supernatural elements about them, other than the fact that they have the unbreakable force of God's supernatural will behind them. These are judgments caused by the unbridled ambition of man. They are the fruit of his sin. The Bible tells us the wages of sin is death and the grim reaper will be given power to kill over a billion people by war, famine, plague and persecutions through these initial judgments. These judgments will be entirely administered by the hand of man on himself; they will be done with supernatural fury and with the force of Hell behind them.

Though each of these first four judgments have been common to man throughout history, they will serve two very important spiritual purposes of the Tribulation. They lay the foundation for the power and authority of the Antichrist and they set the political, military, economic and social tone around the world for the rest of the Tribulation.

In order, the first four seals are:

1. The revival of the Roman Empire (or New World Order) with the Antichrist at its head.
2. War and devastation.
3. Famine, pestilence and economic confusion
4. Death and Hell resulting in death and damnation

for a fourth of the world's population.

The “beasts” which are around the throne of God announce each judgment by saying to John, “Come and see”. We get a picture of John perched in heaven, peering down to earth as each judgment begins. The commands “come and see” are ominous and authoritative at the same time. They give us the sense of the intensity and supernatural nature of the judgments, but they also convey a sense of urgency, that the seals will be opened rapidly one after the other and the judgments will descend instantly onto the earth. The seraphim are telling John to “Come and see” quickly, before the next judgment begins!

The First Seal

“And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.

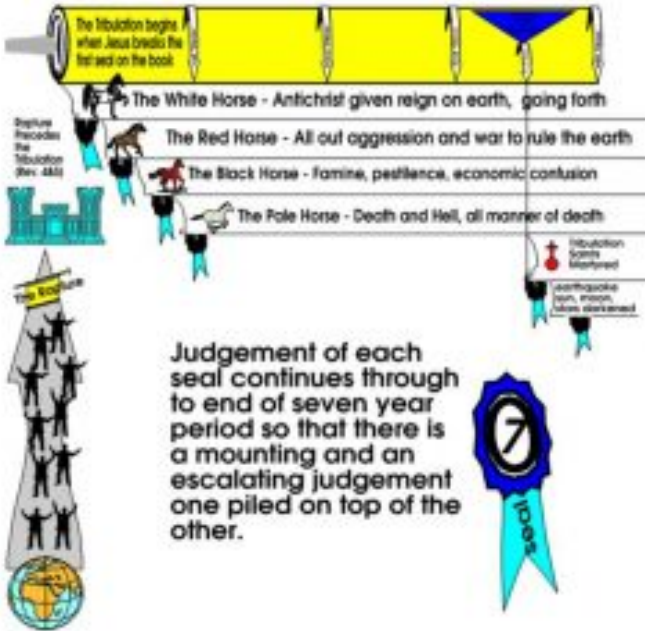
And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.” (Rev. 6.1,2)

There has been a great deal of debate as to whether the rider on the white horse is Christ or the Antichrist. Many respected researchers have concluded that because it is a white horse and that the rider has a crown that it must refer to Jesus. This does not make sense however, for a number of reasons. Christ is not given power to go forth conquering and to conquer at the beginning of the Tribulation. Just the opposite is true. He is in heaven opening the seals that unleash things like war, famine and Hell. These first judgments, in fact, are presided over by the Antichrist and his kingdom. The Antichrist is even given power to

overcome and kill the saints¹. From the moment the Antichrist signs the false peace accord in the Middle East he is given divine license to defy all other powers in the world, fighting and winning great battles and wars. The world, we are told in Revelation 13, even says, *“Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?”*

1. Dan. 7.25 & Rev. 13

THE 7



SEALS



conquering, and to conquer

power was given to him to take peace from the earth

but see that thou hurt not the oil and the wine

power was given to kill a fourth part of the earth

and power was given to him to wear out the saints for 42 months

144,000 Jews sealed by God, men try to hide from God's wrath

And after he had opened the seventh seal the seven angels prepared to sound their trumpets

A. Redemptor of the thousand years (ant)
See Daniel to identify kind of sign destroyed. Kind of seal life size.
Kind of trumpet never pronounced
Kind of the word's light gone

The First Blow *Men terrified throughout to sound the trumpet*

The Second Blow *Kind of mankind killed by darkness however from sea*

The Third Blow *Seven final Judgments (Rev. 18&19)*

There is silence in heaven, and the powers of the saints are rewarded by God before the seven trumpets begin to sound.

The seventh trumpet: seven final plagues last only about 90 days or there would be no flesh of all left on earth.

- Ⓐ Great scores
- Ⓑ All die in the sea
- Ⓒ All waters turn to blood
- Ⓓ Men scorched by fire
- Ⓔ Darkness and great pain
- Ⓕ Armageddon
- Ⓖ Earthquake, hail from heaven

Some students of Revelation have insisted that since the horse is white and white is associated with Christ it must be Jesus on the horse. But it makes sense again, that the Antichrist, who is an imposter masquerading as the real Messiah, would be perceived to be riding a white horse. One of the major attributes of the Antichrist is his ability to deceive. He presents himself to the world as its only hope and Savior. He is the ultimate “man riding in on a white horse” to save the day. The apostle Paul wrote this about him,

“And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” (2 Thess. 2.8-12)

There has also been much speculation about the bow that the rider of the horse is carrying. But it can be pointed out that there is no arrow provided for the rider with which he can vanquish his foes. This can be construed as his ultimate weakness. Ultimately the Antichrist will be defeated by Christ at the Lord’s return. This vile man will not be able to stop the real Messiah from forming and establishing His own everlasting kingdom.²

It is most reasonable to conclude, then, that the first seal releases the Antichrist on the earth. He is the rider of the white horse coming to “save” the world, but he really deceives it and draws it into the snare of Hell. Ultimately, he will fail in his bid to take over the world, because Christ will stop him, but he is given power to conquer a faithless world and to test the patience of the saints gaining apparent power over them. When he arrives on the scene the world greets him with open arms.

2. Dan. 2.44

The Second Seal

“And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.

And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.” (vs. 3,4)

Having received such awesome powers from Heaven, the Antichrist starts a military campaign to subdue the whole world. The book of Daniel gives a detailed account of his ongoing military campaigns and aggression against the countries of Africa and the Middle East³. Daniel’s prophecies serve to confirm that as soon as the Antichrist rises to power he starts waging war. Daniel also tells us that the Antichrist ascends to power by using flatteries.⁴ He is handed the reigns of government by the leaders of a ten nation kingdom (which is likely to be the foundation of a new Roman Empire that it may include most of Europe only, but will probably be much more expansive and may include the nations of the Western and Southern Hemisphere as well). This is the culmination of all the Antichrist kingdoms that have come before (Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome⁵). The European Community (EC) is a likely forerunner of this new union of “Rome”. But this covenant of countries, this union, will be unable to sufficiently yield to one another’s authority. It may be they will not entirely trust each other. They will be at loggerheads until the *prince* of the covenant, as Daniel calls him, or the real engineer and force behind the new union,

3. See the second half of Dan. 11

4. [Dan. 11.21](#)

5. [Dan. Chaps. 2,7,8,11](#)

comes up with a compromise scheme. This man will not be the Antichrist but he will be the architect of the union. He and the others will decide to install a relatively unknown figure, a seemingly benign person, as a figurehead for the community. They will all think that they can manipulate this man and use him as their puppet until they can all agree upon some better compromise plan more acceptable to all the members.

To their great surprise, however, they find this man to be a genius of subtlety. He is anything but a stooge to be controlled by earthly powers. He is nobody's fool, except Satan's, that is. This new, charismatic, dynamic leader comes up with an ingenious peace plan and convinces the countries of the world, including Israel and the Arabs, to sign it. Either just before, or directly after this covenant, the *prince* of the league becomes shocked and alarmed by the character of the Antichrist. Suddenly aware of the dangers involved in his leadership, the leader of the ten kings and originator of the kingdom of the ten kings, has second thoughts about his choice. Along with two other members of the union he tries to renege on the deal that installed the Antichrist as the head of the World Union. But it is too late. The entire kingdom is no match for Satan's man. The first war of the Antichrist's career is against these three nations who tried to become obstacles to his plans of world domination. Without hesitation the Antichrist makes war with the leader of the union. The *prince* of the covenant, and his two co-conspirators go down in swift and shameful defeat. Like a new bully in town who goes after the toughest guy on the block, the Antichrist annihilates the rebellious armies in a show of military genius that amazes the world. His foe could be one of the great Superpowers like France, Germany, England or the United States; whoever it is they

are roundly defeated in the Antichrist's inaugural military campaign.

“And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries.

And with the arms of a flood shall they be overflowed from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant.” (Dan. 11.21-22)

Daniel gives more detail about this important confrontation early in the career of the Antichrist. Daniel calls the ten leaders of the final kingdom “horns” and dubs the Antichrist, the “little horn”. In a dream he sees the Antichrist deal violently with three of these leaders.

“After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.

I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.” (Dan 7.7-8)

The Antichrist will “uproot” three of the ten horns and the rest of the union will immediately fall into line. The swift, humiliating defeat of this military giant sets the world on its ear and makes the Antichrist confident to wage war wherever it takes him. Much of the world follows him to the grave and marches into Hell behind him in awe, just the way they followed Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Napoleon, and Adolf Hitler.

The Third Seal

“And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.”
(Rev. 6.5,6)

When Christ opens the third seal famine and pestilence follow quickly on the heels of war. There are food shortages in scattered places around the world. Economic confusion and turmoil upset the world economy. Though we in the United States have never endured famine's boney grip, the rest of the world has from time to time. Africa has suffered many famines in its history. In India from 1769-70 10-20 million people perished from a single year of famine. In 1889 a similar number died by famine in China. The great potato famine in Ireland during the 1840s caused death and wholesale emigration of its population. In this century Ethiopia and Bangladesh have suffered immense devastation and loss of population. And the Tribulation will see even greater shortages of food and greater loss of life by famine, but the upper classes will maintain their opulent lifestyles including their luxuriously decorated banquet tables covered with succulent delicacies, flowing with the world's most expensive champagnes.

We can say this because of the sense we get from the command made by the angel to the rider that he not hurt the oil and wine. The upper classes and the elite will escape the pangs of any food shortage. Perhaps even, some countries are temporarily spared the effects of war and social chaos. The Antichrist's kingdom probably flourishes

in the first few years of the Tribulation. His policies and unique solutions to world problems give men faith to follow after him. They pin all their hopes on this one man to solve all of the world's pressing problems.

After World War I it took a wheelbarrow full of paper money to purchase a cup of coffee in Berlin. Inflation had gone wild in that war torn country. During the Tribulation inflation and unemployment will be out of control in large segments of the world. It is likely that the gap between the rich and the poor will widen (until the Antichrist tries to redistribute the wealth), until it brings the Antichrist kingdom to the brink of revolution. There will be large scale rioting in the streets. But the Antichrist, with the promise of a new social order, will give a modern spin to the French Revolution's slogan "Equality, Liberty and Fraternity" and give the masses cause to believe in his "gospel" of salvation. Just as the Austrians hailed the coming of Hitler as their new Savior and handed their country over to him, so the people of many nations will invite the Antichrist to come into their country and take over their government. In large places, maybe even entire continents, he will be received with open arms by a desperate population looking for a savior. For the first half of the Tribulation he will offer solutions to great and terrible problems and he will seem to have the answers. But just as resistance to the Antichrist's claims will never be totally silenced, so the problems of famine, food shortages, inflation and unemployment, once they begin, will not subside for the duration of the Tribulation.

The Fourth Seal

"And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of

the fourth beast say, Come and see.

And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him.

And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.” (Rev. 6.7,8)

The next horseman, or spirit, unleashed on the earth is Death. Death always follows war and famine. Thirty seven million soldiers died in World War I; a year following the war 20 million people world-wide died from influenza. An estimated 7-10 million succumbed in Europe alone. Plague has always been the most feared of man’s grim reapers. It is not restricted to the battlefield or solely confined to the warrior’s profession. It knows neither rich nor poor, strong or weak, race nor creed. Plague sweeps down like a swarm of locusts devouring a field of wheat. It is as an enormous cloud; who can run from its approaching shadow? And wherever its inescapable pall hits it brings sickness and death. In A.D. 285 a plague so devastating hit Rome that 5,000 bodies a day were being burned or dumped into the Tiber River. In less than 20 years during the Middle Ages (1334-54) three quarters of Europe was eliminated by bubonic plague. King and beggar were made equal as the “Black Death” took no care whether he knocked on the rotten door of the country shack or the gilded gate of a prince’s palace.

Plagues and diseases have ravaged every nation on every continent at one point or another. Man has found ways of controlling or combating each epidemic, but new strains and viruses have always managed to find their way into the world. These are the unwelcome debt collectors of the wages of sin. AIDS, Ebola and other frightening plagues with strange sounding names have assaulted mankind in

the second half of the twentieth century. What new plague will surface for the seven-year period of the Tribulation? We can only guess. God only knows. We do know, however, that people begin dying in droves almost as soon as the Tribulation begins. Misery and evil of every sort fill the earth. Hell follows after Death. The people who are dying in wars and by pestilence and starvation due to economic ruin are either supporters of the Antichrist, or rebels against him, and upon their deaths they are cast directly into Hell's insatiable flames. The political and military gospel of the Antichrist sends people to Hell from the very outset. Power is given to this rider to select people who are faithless and ripe for Hell and to kill them by four means: war, famine, disease and wild beasts. The fourth judgment within this judgment is unique to our time. Apparently, wild beasts will roam the earth in many places slaughtering the local inhabitants. While environmentalists and ecologists are worried about saving the wild animals, God's Word is telling us that the wild beasts of the earth will be moved somehow to "rebel" against man and begin attacking them with fury and unanticipated regularity. Already, in the suburbs of the United States a new kind of animal audacity is being experienced. Coyotes, bears and moose are learning to coexist and adapt to civilization. At the end, animals will be marauding throughout the world in menacing and deadly fashion as has not been experienced since the early days of man's history.

All this adds up to one fourth of the world's population dying a cruel death. Today, the world's population is at about 5.3 billion people. That means that 1 billion 500 million people will die by war, famine, plague and wild beasts. This massive number of deaths, more than have died by all the plagues and wars of all history, will take

place primarily in the first half of the Tribulation alone. The second half of the Tribulation will see even greater mass death. The riders, *Death* and *Hell*, have power over a fourth of the earth to kill them. Their objective is to pick out those who are in a condition to go directly to Hell. One thing is certain, the earth will be full of death and sorrow.

The Antichrist's reaction will be to fight back with all he has; and his supporters will only become more defiant and obstinate toward God. For the first three and a half years the earth will be spoiled by the judgments of the first four seals. But God has prepared supernatural judgments for the second half. Judgments five, six and seven are about to be poured out onto the earth; it is the beginning of Great Tribulation, judgment of unprecedented proportion. †

Seals Five and Six: Judgment with Mercy

A just judicial system will make mercy available even to convicted criminals. Though they are required to comply with court directives, a fair-minded judge will first look for the truth, impose a just sentence and then make room for the defendant to receive appropriate mercy. If the defendant shows remorse for his crime and adheres to the stipulations set down by the law then mercy can be shown through devices like probation, parole, or even a full pardon. Judgment must come, but mercy can be dispensed if there is a willingness to live by the terms of the court.

So it is with God. Unrighteousness demands justice. We are told in His Word that He is a righteous judge and that He will not be mocked. But we also know He is a merciful father and wants us to escape the sentence prescribed under the law. God works continually to get us to accept His mercy so we do not have to suffer His judgment. That is why the Scripture declares, *“Where sin did abound, grace did*

*much more abound.*¹ Judgment or mercy? It's up to us. It's our choice. Jesus told a parable which illustrates that God is simultaneously a God of judgment and a God of mercy. Paraphrased, the parable, from Matthew 18, goes like this:

A servant once owed an enormous debt to the king, so the king pronounced judgment ordering the man, his family, and his belongings to be sold into slavery in order to pay off the debt. The servant, however, came worshipping the king and begged his mercy. The king, being a forgiving soul, heard his plea and completely wiped out the debt. The servant escaped the sentence due him and escaped scot-free.

But the servant, Jesus tells us, did not respond in kind. He went straight out and demanded that a fellow servant repay a much smaller debt to him. Jesus said the man even took his debtor by the throat and demanded payment. When the unfortunate debtor could not pay, the unmerciful servant had him thrown into prison. When their fellow servants heard about the hypocrisy of the first servant they “were very sorry”, and informed the king of the injustice done by the unforgiving servant.

The king promptly summoned the wicked servant and turned him over for the judgment. For his hypocrisy the servant, who could have had mercy, received the judgment he had originally been sentenced to – and more.

The primary reason for this parable is to show us God's forgiving character and to warn us that we shall be judged if we ourselves do not forgive our debtors. But there are some finer points of faith to be searched out in this story as well. We should know that God is both a righteous judge and a merciful father. If we take advantage of His mercy

1. Rom. 5:20

we shall escape judgment. If we abuse His mercy, or reject it, we shall receive the full, unrestrained judgment due us under the law.

Seals Five and Six: Pictures of Mercy and Judgment

Nowhere in Revelation is God's duality as Righteous Judge and Merciful Father more evident than in the fifth and sixth seal judgments. In them we shall see mercy being offered and judgment being set; both exist side by side in a world besieged by the great and terrible Tribulation. During the Tribulation mercy is ever available, while judgment continues to descend upon an unrighteous, unbelieving world and on those who deny their faith in Christ.

God's terms of mercy are simple. We must accept that His Son, Jesus, died in our place and has paid the price for our sins. There is no other way or means to be saved, but to accept this and acknowledge that we deserve death, that Jesus died in our place, and that He is our Savior who is due our total devotion and worship. This is the only way to be linked up with His love. Those who do not take full advantage of this merciful offer will reap judgment as their final reward, just as the unforgiving servant reaped a terrible judgment for his evil works. During the judgment of the fifth seal the line between mercy and judgment is dramatically drawn. People will be required to turn to God with a repentant heart and be forgiven. They will be required to die for their faith, or suffer a fiery eternal judgment in Hell.

The Tribulation is a time of sorting. God will sort out the good from the bad, the wheat from the chaff, that which can be harvested and used from that which must be gathered and burned. The Tribulation is a time of burning and cleansing. It is the link between the Age of Grace, the

time in which we now live, and the promised future Age of Christ's perfect rule on earth. Once the Tribulation begins the Age of Grace is over and the Millennium of a perfect government is at hand.

When the Tribulation begins God's offer of salvation will still stand, people will be saved during the Tribulation², but the price will be much higher than it is now during the current Age of Grace. The word Tribulation denotes pressure. The world has already become a pressure cooker because of the first four judgments. By the time Jesus opens the fifth seal the world is reeling from the effects brought on by the first four seals. The Antichrist has been in power for about three and a half years. He has set up his throne in Jerusalem and announced that he is god. He is now the supreme dictator and ruthless tyrant of the earth. Adolph Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Napoleon, all pale in comparison to this man of sin. He is the tyrant of tyrants. He and his allies wage war against any country or union of nations that oppose his will. Because of the stressed economic situation, he has commanded that no one be able to do business with any person or country that does not worship his image and bare the Mark of the Beast on their forehead or right hand³. Among the lower classes and unfortunate masses, famine, plague and disease are ravaging the population. Poverty and despair spread rapidly in various parts of the earth. Desperation grows on every continent as large parts of the population are forced to scrounge for the very necessities of life.

Note that the last aspect of the four seal judgments was

2. This will be discussed at another juncture in our study.

3. This is not declared in the chronological chapters covering the seal judgments, but it is covered in chapter 13, the topical chapter on the Antichrist which we will discuss in a later chapter.

Hell. The fourth judgment, remember, is death, and it has been given free reign over a fourth of the earth's population to search out people who are ripe for Hell. Death is given power to kill its prey in four ways; by sword, hunger, disease and wild beasts. But Hell, you'll observe, is overseeing this deathwatch as it scans the earth looking for any "unsaved" victims that can be cast into eternal fires of damnation. The verse of the Bible that reads, *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour"* (I Peter 5.8), has its greatest fulfillment in the days of this judgment. It is against this backdrop of turmoil, disease, hunger, confusion, intimidation, war, terror and death that Jesus readies Himself to open the fifth and the sixth seals.

While attacking the people of the earth with death under the fourth seal, Hell has not been interested in those who have the testimony of Jesus Christ and are saved. They will not go to Hell if he just simply kills them outright. He is only interested in the unfaithful and unbelieving population in the time of these judgments. His tactics against the Church of Jesus Christ must be different. He must persecute them so they will lose their faith and deny Him before he kills them. Otherwise, they would not go to Hell and he would lose their souls. He must cause them, somehow, to renounce God and His Son before he can devour their souls in his devilish jaws. Hell is Satan's purpose and prime agent, the Antichrist his arm of flesh. Together, Antichrist and Hell are now given power over the saints to make war and prevail against them.

Fixing The Time Of The Fifth and Sixth Seals

The fifth and sixth seals are opened back to back at about the midway point of the Tribulation. We draw this conclusion because of what we know from our study of

Daniel and from what we shall later find in Revelation. Chapter 12 of Revelation is a vision of the Church. She is pictured as being protected for three and a half years, or the first half of the Tribulation. In chapter 13 we are informed that *“it was given unto him [the Antichrist] to make war with the saints, and to overcome them:”*. Daniel 7.25 gives us this word about the Antichrist and the saints. *“And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.”* The meaning of the phrase a time, and times and a dividing of times is three and a half years (a time being a year, a times being two years, and a dividing of times being a half year, all adding up to three and a half years). So we are told that the Antichrist will have power to persecute and kill the saints for three and a half years. If the Church is protected for the first half of the Tribulation then the Antichrist’s power to kill and persecute must not begin until the second half of the seven year period. Also, when we get to the study of the seventh seal in the next chapter we shall see that the seventh seal judgments last more than two years. Therefore the fifth and sixth seals have to be opened before the fifth year of the Tribulation begins. Since the seals are opened in order, one through seven, and the saints are overcome for three and a half years we can safely and logically conclude that seals five and six are opened at the midway point, or three and a half years into the Tribulation.

The Fifth Seal: The Tribulation Martyrs

“And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O

Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.” (Rev. 6.9-11)

The opening of the fifth seal changes the focus and tone of the judgments. The fifth seal, curiously enough, deals exclusively with the Church and specifically with those who are martyred during the Tribulation. It is a judgment – a judgment on those who did not heed the calling of Christ in better times, when faith did not require the allegiance of martyrdom. The first four judgments were concentrated on the world as a whole. They were directed at the masses of mankind and were confined to the military, social and political spheres. The fifth and sixth seals segregate particular groups of mankind for specialized treatment and judgment. Since God has promised that judgment must always begin at the house of God, He begins the judgment of these segregated groups by judging His own. When the fifth seal is opened John sees the souls of those who had been killed on earth for two reasons and two reasons only. **(1)** They had kept the word of God and, **(2)** for the testimony which they held. These are people who have the testimony that they are born again, that they know Jesus Christ in a personal way and they had refused to deny this testimony or the name of Christ. But they also are slain for the word of God.

Apparently, their preaching will be very public, quite out in the open, not secretive or hidden. The Tribulation saints will not be hiding in Montana on some compound or riding out the storm in some mountain cave in Tibet waiting for

the end of the world. They will not be hiding in cellars of city slums as many Apocalyptic and end times movies and fictions have them. They are not killed for sedition or rebellion against the government. They will not be forming underground militia groups as is popularly conveyed in Revelation shoot-'em-ups. Nor will they hold out any hope whatsoever of reforming the Antichrist Kingdom. And they will not be trying to “hang on” until Jesus comes to the rescue. They will be standing humbly, but unswervingly, on the Word of God and the name of Christ. Their love of Christ and faith will be a matter of public record. And they will be martyred for them.

In verse ten we see this group of saints crying out to God to avenge them. They yearn for the day of vindication. God's answer is short, but reassuring. They are given white robes, the symbol of salvation and the righteousness of the saints; and they are told to rest a little longer until the full number of saints should be martyred. The fifth seal is wholly about the death of the saints. We are told in this passage from Psalms that God holds dear the martyred saints, it even speaks of a day when saints would be required to publicly testify that God is their salvation.

“I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.

I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people.

Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.

O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds.

I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD.

I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people” (Ps. 116.13-18)

Many of these saints will be those who were like the five foolish virgins of Matthew 25. They had lived foolish Christian lives and had not received and yielded to the Holy Ghost. They had no oil in the lamps and their lights were not burning when Christ, the Bridegroom, came for His bride. Holiness and the fruits of the spirit will have been foreign to their souls. Like a man who comes home to find his wife has left him without a word of warning, many will suffer utter shock when the presumption they held that they would be raptured proves false and they are left behind. They had not taken the warnings of Jesus seriously; they were not on the lookout and neglected to take care not to be deceived. Once the rapture has taken place many will instantly know that they are now destined to be Tribulation martyrs. Their only other choice will be to take the Mark of the Beast and deny Christ.

This will be the greatest time of harvest in the history of the world. People will gain in spiritual power and courage. Multitudes will stand up for the Word of God and give powerful testimony of the love and salvation of Jesus Christ. They will have missed the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus because they will have missed the Rapture. But God will be with them mightily. Gordon Lindsay, in his series on Revelation, agrees. Lindsay notes that the Tribulation saints are “not the highest order of the redeemed” but believes that, “since nearly as many people will live during the twentieth century as in all previous centuries, the number of Tribulation saints could be a substantial fraction of all that are saved during the New Testament Age. They are a ‘great multitude which no man can number’”.

There is a great deal of disagreement about the timing of the Rapture and the Tribulation. Many people insist that

all Christians will go through the Tribulation. Many others insist that all Christians will be raptured. Neither idea makes sense in the context of the fifth seal. We have already seen that a multitude of redeemed saints will reside in heaven before the first seal is opened, showing that they are the believers who were raptured. The raptured saints are clothed with white garments and have crowns and harps and worship before the throne of God. The group of the fifth seal is under the altar, not yet resurrected. They are pleading to God for vindication and final restoration with the saints who have been raptured. Therefore, they must be a separate “company” of saints. The saints depicted under judgment seal five are of two primary types: **(1)** those who had refused to die to self and had not totally given their lives over to Christ before the rapture occurred, but repented during the Tribulation; and **(2)** those who had refused to accept Christ prior to the Tribulation, but accepting Him after the Tribulation’s reign of terror had begun, won salvation through death.

The first type of Tribulation martyr will be those who did not live righteous lives in Christ. Whether it was poor teaching, spiritual laziness or just having been choked by the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, or the lusts of other things⁴; these Christians lived with one foot in the world and one foot in Christ. They may have believed the faulty doctrine that all Christians would be raptured regardless of the quality of their spiritual walk. They may have hoped to ride into heaven on the coattails of their devout Christian brothers and sisters, or the faith of their grandmother. They may have figured that answering that altar call was their “insurance policy”. For whatever reason

4. Mark 4.19

they lived an “unsalted” life in Christ, and it cost them dearly. But once the Rapture happens and the Tribulation starts they readily see the error of their ways. Thousands and thousands of Christians will repent of their lackadaisical relationship with Christ.

The second type may be even more zealous than the first. These will be the relatives, friends, neighbors and co-workers of raptured Christians. They certainly did not believe in Christ, but they had heard the Gospel. They may have mocked and scoffed at the notion of following Jesus and the idea of the Rapture during the days and years which preceded the “catching up” of the saints, but their skepticism turned to faith when they realized the Rapture had actually happened. The shock of finding out all they were told was true will make many of them fanatical in their faith. They will suffer for the cause of Christ with joy and assurance willing to stretch their necks under the guillotine, just as the early Christians succumbed to the teeth of wild beasts in the Hippodrome, stood before the gladiator’s sword in the Circus Maximus and endured the torture chambers of the Roman Empire.

During the Tribulation there will be an ocean of public pronouncements of faith and world-wide flood of testimonies for Christ. There will be a sea of martyrs whose blood will run like a river, but the miracles will flow like a torrent of hope. They will be as lambs led to the slaughter, but it will all be for the glory of God and to show forth the staying power of His love. Serene faces will mirror the sweetly sung hymns as death liberates them from the clutches of Satan and the Antichrist. Their shed blood will glorify God and tell the people of the Antichrist Kingdom that, though mortal, these people have conquered death through faith in Christ. To be a Christian during the

Tribulation will be synonymous with being a martyr, but it will also be synonymous with eternal glory.

The Sixth Seal: God Judges Humanity by Three Groupings

Under the sixth seal God divides mankind into three distinct groups for judgment: the Tribulation martyrs, the Jews and the unbelieving world. The martyrs and Jews will receive favorable judgment according to God's promises and mercy; the other group comprises the majority of the human race and will receive God's full fury and wrath, as He has promised to those who have worshiped the Beast and rejected His mercy. When Jesus opens the sixth seal the people of the earth are immediately confronted with God's frightening judgment.

“And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.” (Rev. 6.12-14)

The sixth seal is opened about four and a half years into the Tribulation. Up until this time every judgment that has come on earth could be categorized as “natural” or something that could have been brought about by man himself. To be sure, there have been a few moments when all the world knew God was acting from heaven, as when all the creatures of the universe heard God and the Lamb being worshiped⁵, but the wars, poverty, famine, even

5. Rev. chap 5

persecutions and the execution of “social deviants”, as the first five seals will produce could be viewed as events that conform with the pattern of natural human history. When the sixth seal is opened, however, mankind’s perspective on the judgments instantly changes. Believers in Christ have known all along that God is behind the catastrophes and judgments, but the world still resists the notion. Now every hard-hearted man and woman on earth knows beyond a shadow of a doubt that they are the mortal enemy of God and the Lamb.

“And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;

And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” (Rev. 6.15-17)

All parts of the earth’s environment are affected. A great earthquake hits so that every mountain and island is shaken. The sun is darkened and the moon is turned red as blood. Like a child’s sparkler on the 4th of July, the stars burst and spray the earth’s atmosphere with some sort of meteor shower. The heavens literally roll back. The clouds dissipate and the shield of the ozone layer dissolves. Suddenly God’s merciful protection in nature is completely withdrawn. Ecologists and environmentalists, the self-styled protectors and guardians of the earth, see who really is in charge of all things. In one day the security of our plush, pleasant, habitable, predictable environment turns into a frightening, unfamiliar, out of control rock spinning madly around an unpredictable sun. The effect is to cause

a terror on earth that has never before been dreamed of, let alone experienced. For all of man's science and knowledge his ignorance will embrace him and his lack of understanding will grip his heart. He will stand gazing in awe, befuddled like an aborigine of old, frightened by the eclipse of the sun. Scientists will be at a loss trying to explain how these things are happening, but all will know that it is God who is doing them. The prophet Isaiah saw this day:

"Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made:

And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself: therefore forgive them not.

Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty.

The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low:

And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan,

And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up,

And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall,

And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures.

And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

And the idols he shall utterly abolish.

And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the

caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats;

To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?” (Isaiah 2.8-22)

Now the high and mighty leaders, the strong men, the confident people of the earth know that God is their active foe. They quake in their boots because they know that the great day of the Lamb's wrath is now upon them. Rather than repent, however, the people of the earth try the usual tactic of man; to escape. They choose to fight on rather than concede to God. These ecological perversions have a terrorizing effect on this world of prideful humanity, which encompasses the great bulk of all mankind's population. The sun, the moon, the stars, the heavens, the islands, the mountains are all unstable. Where can the people of the earth go to escape from the battle that God is about to wage against them? There will be no place to hide! Fear, the great motivator of sin, is about to engulf the inhabitants of the earth. Mankind is now stripped of his great source of pride, his understanding and knowledge. He does not know what is going on; the judgments that fall on mankind when the sixth seal is opened will reduce him to a desperate animal. The seventh seal is about to be broken open and its horrifying judgments unleashed. God is about to begin His all-out assault on the rebels of the earth.

But before God begins His major offensive against the faithless world, He sets apart the two sub-groups, Jews and

martyrs, for His special protection. In His mercy, God stops the winds of wrath and delays for a moment the coming judgment.

The first group is the Jews

“And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,

Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand...” etc., (Rev. 7.2-5)

This sealing of 144,000 Jews, 12,000 from every tribe (except Dan, which means to judge), with the seal of the living God in their forehead, is God’s counterpart of the Mark of the Beast. The phrase “the living God”, implies Jesus – the one risen from the grave, the one who is alive forevermore. These people are now God’s representatives on earth who will be alive after the devastation and purging that will come with the final judgments of the seventh seal. No judgment or disaster will harm them; the Antichrist will not be able to kill them. These are God’s remnants who will preach His Gospel during the Tribulation and beyond and be able to replenish the earth during the Millennium. God’s promise to the fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will be fulfilled in this group of saints. This is a critical group of mankind because it is through them that the promise of the

prophets that Abraham's seed will inherit the land of Israel will be fulfilled. The Jews shall inherit the land promised to Abraham. The holy covenant will be fulfilled and their Messiah, Jesus, shall reign on the throne of David forever. This promise has to be fulfilled in the flesh and it is this group that will man the farms and cultivate the fields of the New Israel; they will have families and on each appropriate holiday they will worship Jesus in the New Temple in the City of David, Jerusalem.

Heretical groups like the Jehovah's Witnesses have claimed that there will be 144,000 "Super Saints". This is one of the places in prophecy from which they have drawn their perverted view. It is true there will be 144,000 human beings elected and sealed by God⁶, but they are 12,000 of each tribe of the nation Israel, and, though they are the core that will be left on earth after the Tribulation, they do not represent all that will survive. There will be a meager amount of "fortunate" ones who live through the Tribulation that will comprise the other nations and through them the nations of the earth will also be replenished during the infant years of the Millennium. But we shall speak more of this group when we take a look at the last hours of the Tribulation.

The Martyrs

The other group consecrated for God's mercy are the Tribulation martyrs which we saw waiting under the altar in heaven during the fifth seal judgment. You will recall that God had told them to hold on a bit until everyone in their "company" was saved. Unlike the Jews which

6. And there is another group of 144,000 saints, but as we shall see these are raptured saints.

numbered 144,000, this group, as Gordon Lindsay pointed out, is a multitude that no man could number.

“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 all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,

Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are 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 unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” (Rev.

7.9-17)

John had already seen this group of humanity when the fifth seal was opened. But, strangely, John does not recognize them now. In fact, he is surprised when one of

the Elders tells him they are the Tribulation saints he had seen before under the altar pleading with God. Had John expected all saints to be raptured? But now the implications must have come home to John as he begins to understand that there is more than one part to the resurrection of Christians. The group of martyred saints was not in John's doctrine, or the doctrine of the other apostles, until it came to light through the heavenly vision of Revelation. But now it makes sense to John. No longer asking for vindication and being stationed under the altar, the martyrs are standing joyfully before the throne of God. Clearly, they have undergone a transformation. They have palms in their hands, a sign reminiscent of the day when the people of Jerusalem greeted Christ with palms in their hands in Jerusalem, hailing Him as the Messiah.

The palm branches in the hands of the saints redeems something for Jesus. The enthusiastic crowd that had greeted Jesus on the dusty streets of Jerusalem two or more millennia earlier had quickly turned on Him, rejecting Him a few days later with shouts of, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!". They had given Him up to the Roman lash and an ignominious death in favor of liberating the murderer Barabbas. But the martyred saints now shout with genuine joy. With everlasting faith they shout; *"Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."* This time the multitude falls on their faces, with the angels, the Seraphim, and the Elders, to begin worshiping the Messiah for eternity. When John first saw these saints they were crying out in some despair, but now there is joy in the camp and they stand before God's throne as full-fledged citizens of heaven. God has filled the number of Tribulation saints that were supposed to be martyred and received them as a divinely completed group into the society of heaven. They

are resurrected now, ready to take their place with the saints of heaven and those that were raptured. Their number is full and the unrestricted wrath of God is about to be poured onto the God-forsaken world. †

6

The Seventh Seal

The opening of the seventh seal marks the beginning of the end. God's seven-year plan to purge the earth and make "the kingdoms of this world, the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ" is fast coming to a close. The seventh seal is only the beginning, however, for as we shall see, the seventh seal is made up of seven intense judgments called the trumpet judgments and the seventh trumpet judgment is in turn comprised of seven even more intense plagues, called the *vial judgments*.

The book of Revelation can best be capsulized by saying it is about the redemption of the earth by God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Its success hinges on Christ's authority and power to take back possession of the earth from Satan. It is Jesus, and Jesus alone, who has paid the price to win it back. He paid it in His own blood when He gave Himself as a willing sacrifice and died on the cross for the sins of the world. He has defeated the enemy in the arena of the flesh. Now it is time for Him to come back to

the scene of His victory, just as He promised He would, and take control of the “purchased possession”.

Revelation is also about the fulfillment of God’s promises to the fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God promised them that their seed would possess the land and that one of their line of descendants would sit on the throne of Israel forever. Revelation is not only about the salvation of the Church, but it is about the salvation of the Jewish nation. The process is one of burning and purging. The judgment is leveled on the earth to sort things out. The wheat is being sorted from the chaff, the sheep are being separated from the goats, the dross is being skimmed from the pure.¹ That which can be saved is being redeemed and separated from that which cannot be salvaged and must be discarded. All the things that the Lord has promised through His Word and by His servants, the prophets, will come to pass. All the false promises of man, instigated by Satan, will come to naught.

Revelation is also about the Tribulation. As Daniel puts it, this is the *70th*, the final week of God’s plan to purge and restore the earth. We have already taken a brief look into Daniel 9.24-27 in which God told the world the six basic things that would be concluded by the end of the seven-year Tribulation. It says, “*Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, (1) to finish the transgression, and (2) to make an end of sins, and (3) to make reconciliation for iniquity, and (4) to bring in everlasting righteousness, and (5) to seal up the vision and prophecy, and (6) to anoint the most Holy.*” (9.24) The six things are simple and yet wonderfully inspiring because they are the fundamentals of redemption.

1. Isa. 2:19,13:6; Zeph. 1:14; Ps. 76.7

1. Finish the transgression.
2. Put an end to sins.
3. Make reconciliation for iniquity.
4. Bring in everlasting righteousness.
5. Seal up the vision and prophecy.
6. And anoint the Most Holy.

Wow!!! What a promise! What an end! What dynamite! What hope we are given! What vision of the future! This should be enough to cause all Christians who are tempted to put their trust in political force or social reform to turn to God's Word and cling to it like a life jacket in the middle of a dark and tossing sea. Christians are not commissioned by God to forge out a decent and sanitary world, free of wickedness and perversion, one swept clean for Christ, so He can return to a righteous earth with a smile on His face. On the contrary, we are told He will come back to a filthy and sinful world. We are to preach the gospel and tell people to come out and be separate from the world of idolatry and sin. When the time has come, Christ will storm the earth with a sword in His mouth and a rod of iron in His hand and completely judge the nations. Daniel shows us that the seven-year process of judgment will be anything but clean and tidy. Revelation shows us that the seven years just prior to Christ's return will be violent and bitter. Christians ought to repent of their efforts to bathe the earth in religious and moral antiseptic, hoping to make it a pure and clean place for Christ's approval. The concept of righteousness promoted by the religious right and other moral Christian organizations is often nothing more than pious pharisaical religion, vain and alienated from God's

Word of truth. They would do better to review their doctrines and works to see if they line up truly with the Word of God, lest they be found to be working at cross purposes to God. Time spent on preaching the salvation message and the truth about the Rapture and the coming of the Antichrist and his kingdom would be time well spent, instead of trying to convert governments and bring in everlasting righteousness before its time. The earth will not be made into a decent place to live because of man's efforts, including Church efforts. The Church's mission is to testify to Christ's love so that the individual soul may be snatched from the cargo-hold of Hell. Man will not be able to legislate righteousness. Sin, transgression and iniquity will be put to a fiery end by the harsh business of purging the earth.

A Fiery Judgment That Cannot Be Averted

Today, God begs and pleads with each individual lost soul. Soon His patience will be gone and He will send a fiery judgment to punish and destroy the transgression of man. The study of Revelation shows that God's judgment is coming, and as Christians we ought to realize: what is written is written in stone, it cannot be changed. God's fire from heaven and his judgments will bring about the six fundamental prophecies promised in Daniel. The transgression of mankind, the usurping of God's authority and rejection of His prescribed salvation will be summarily dealt with during the seven years of the Tribulation. The sin of rejecting God's salvation (by doing it man's way, or any other way for that matter) will no longer be tolerated. In the end God will require the blood of those who have shed the blood of innocent people.

Some of those who have persecuted and murdered the martyrs will actually live to see the world's water supply turned to blood during the last horrifying days of the

Tribulation. In response an angel in heaven says, *“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.”* (Rev. 16.6) The martyrs of God and the Church of Christ will be avenged and vindicated². The government, headed by Jesus and administered by the saints, will be just and fair and merciful. The earth, which now cries out against the bloodshed of the innocent, will no longer cry to God for justice, because justice will be meted out. The righteous indignation and wrath of God will be quenched. All things that are written shall be fulfilled and the vision and prophecy of Daniel, Revelation, the Psalms, Jesus’s words, and all the prophets will be sealed up and concluded. (Rev. 10.7) This is the promise of Daniel fulfilled in Revelation. Nothing will be left undone concerning the promise of God’s plan of redemption. It will happen just as He said it would. Not one jot or tittle, as Jesus put it, will be left out from what God has prescribed will happen.

Then everlasting righteousness will be brought in and the “Most Holy” anointed. Jesus will be crowned King of kings in Jerusalem. The *“Author and Finisher of our faith”* will bring in everlasting righteousness. Every man and woman, every child and servant, every person on earth will get a fair shake from government. Mercy will emanate from the throne. Wisdom, and not hypocrisy; faithfulness, and not corruption; service, and not bribery will forever be the basis of Christ’s government.

Revelation revolves around these wonderful promises. We study it to understand God’s promise to us so we can fit, by faith, into His plan. We study it so we can reject our

2. Rev. 3.9

own personal notions and presumptions about what is fair and loving, or what we think God's plan ought to be. We study God's word in Revelation so we can flee vain hopes and dead religious works so we can "get with the program".

The Seventh Seal

Jesus has opened the first six seals. The suspense and anticipation of God's righteous judgment has built in heaven with the successive opening of each one. As Jesus prepares to open the seventh seal the suspense becomes nearly unbearable. What will happen? What must be done next to purge the earth? What awful judgment is needed to wrest control from the sinister hands of Satan and the Antichrist? Time stops.

"And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour." (Rev. 8.1)

There is no praising of God, no worshiping, no music or prayers, even the four beasts who worship God night and day are silent. The opening of the seventh seal at the start of chapter eight signals the beginning of the end. The title deed to the earth will be fully opened and the rightful heirs are about to take possession of their inheritance. As soon as the seal is opened everything immediately stops and an ominous, eerie silence fills heaven. Gordon Lindsay, in his series on Revelation, frames the moment perfectly:

What is the meaning of the silence in heaven for half an hour? The text does not explain this directly, but it is not difficult to understand why there should be this silence. With the breaking of the Seventh Seal, the great judgments of God are about to fall, judgments comparable to that of the Flood. It is a solemn moment when witnesses stand in an execution chamber and see the life of a man snapped out. What will it be when the moment arrives for judgment to fall upon all nations – a judgment long delayed by God's

mercy – but now finally to take place? In heaven there has been a joyous reunion. The righteous have been resurrected. There has been a reunion of friends and loved ones. It is the resurrection morning of the righteous; never more will they experience sorrow, sickness, heartache or death. There will be the rapturous praise and worship of the Redeemer by the multitude which no man can number. Finally, however, these glorious ceremonies will be completed, and then follows the solemn moment when the just judgments of God must be dispatched against the wicked and rebellious. The awful solemnity of this scene will cause the silence in heaven.

After this thunderous silence God does not immediately commence the judgments. He first gets the Church involved in the battle that is to come.

“And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.” (Rev 8.2)

These seven angels which stand before the throne of God surely must be the same seven angels that Jesus identifies as the angels of the churches in chapter one. He told John, *“The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. **The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches:** and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.” (Rev.1.20)* Most students of Revelation are too quick to accept that these seven stars stand for the human leaders of the various Churches. But it is even more likely that they are angels of a heavenly persuasion who are acting as indicated in Hebrews 1.14; *“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”* The Church has ministering angels who draw the “lifeless” people sitting in their dead pews into the light of being truly born again. As *“the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show*

himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him³, so God sends the angels of the churches to scour its halls and sanctuaries for potential true believers. As representatives of the Church these angels are now given the sacred duty of sounding the call to judgment in this solemn day of the seventh seal. The faithful portion of the Church has suffered persecution for centuries, been hated by so-called brethren and betrayed even as Christ Himself was hated and betrayed⁴. They have lived a life separated from the pleasures of this world. Now the Church, and its many martyrs, is granted the privilege of initiating the judgments that will put an end to these evils and show the world that it is they who Christ has really loved.

This picture in heaven should not be regarded as purely symbolic either. God will have the saints of Christ somehow involved in the battle that will win back the earth from Satan and his rebellious minions. Further indication that God will have the saints at the forefront of the fight is that before having the Church angels sound the clarion call to battle the prayers of “all saints” are invoked.

“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 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.

3. 2 Chr. 16.9

4. The persecutions under the Roman Emperors Domitian and Decius were great, but even greater has been the sorry spectacle of persecution of Christians by Christians. Gibbon, in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, asserts that the number of Protestants executed during the Spanish Inquisition (estimated at the hundreds of thousands) far exceeded the number of martyrs during the entire three centuries of Roman Imperial rule. In the Netherlands, according to Grotius, the number of Dutch martyrs under the reign of terror by the Duke of Alva topped 100,000.

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.” (Rev. 8.3-5)

The end is now near. Take notice that God has gathered the prayers of “all saints” for the final battle. In chapter five the prayers of saints were held individually in vials by the 24 elders. At that time the Rapture had just taken place and Jesus was preparing to open the first seal. Only those who had made themselves ready for the Rapture had the privilege of having their prayers rise up before the throne of God prior to the start of the Tribulation. Now, as the Tribulation is drawing to its terrible conclusion, the prayers of “all saints” rise up before Almighty God, including those who have had their heads cut off by the Antichrist during the Tribulation. The Church, its spiritual leaders, guardian angels, and all its saints are assembled for the first trumpet blast. Mixed with incense, the smell of their combined prayers comes up before God and He remembers all their heartfelt cries and woes. As God’s righteous indignation swells, an angel adds fire from the altar of God to the censer holding the prayers and casts it upon the earth. Vengeance is mine the Lord has told the saints, and now He will avenge their blood and the persecution which they have suffered for 2,000 years. Voices, lightnings, thunderings and an earthquake announce that the long awaited day of the Lord is at hand; the time of the seventh seal has come and the first angel, as a solemn executioner, prepares to sound his fearful trumpet.

Seven Separate Judgments Under The Seventh Seal

After the dramatic buildup we discover that the seventh seal is not to be one massive judgment, but rather a series

of distinctly horrendous judgments, each of monumental and devastating proportion. The second is worse than the first, the third harsher than the second and so on until the seventh one, which reduces the world to ashes and rubble before Almighty God. The seven angels that stand before God's throne, those ministers and guardians of the churches, are each given a trumpet. Each angel is likely to be representative of a particular type of "overcomer" in the Church. One may have been a martyr, another had died to himself by faith, another may have resisted the doctrines of Balaam, or Jezebel, or the Nicolaitans, one may have lived among ignorant Christians but managed not to soil his garments, another may have lost his first love but repented of it and found favor in God's eyes.⁵ The trumpet held by each judging angel can symbolize but one thing, the call of God's forces to make powerful and mighty war on the earth. Over the next four chapters (8-11) the seven angels blow their trumpets and seven devastating supernatural judgments fall in order onto the earth.

The Seven Trumpet Judgments

1. One third of the grass burnt.
2. One third of the seas turn to blood.
3. One third of the waters poisoned.
4. One third of heaven falls to earth.
5. WOE I: People of the world are tormented by locust-like beings.
6. WOE II: Third of people killed by beastly supernatural horsemen; The Two Witnesses judge

5. Consider the seven letters to the Churches in Rev. chapters 2 & 3.

earth, are killed and raised from dead sending fear into hearts of mankind.

7. WOE III: The seven last plagues of God poured out onto earth. "It is finished". (Told in detail later in chapters 15 & 16)

We should notice here that only a third of the earth is affected by the first six trumpet judgments. The final trumpet is a different matter. Just as the walls of Jericho came tumbling down when the Israelite priests sounded their trumpets to the tune of seven times, so too when the final trumpet is sounded the entire earth will be engulfed in a blazing inferno of fiery judgment, its protective "walls" tumbling down. But until that terrible final moment, God persists in holding out His mercy to the world. Only a third of the world's blasphemers and murders, a third of those that embrace unrighteousness and love a lie more than the truth, are destroyed by the first six trumpet judgments.

We shall also discover in chapter fourteen that part of God's plan for involving the Church in dispensing His judgment at the end is to have them preach the Gospel, in a supernatural way, to those lost souls on earth. God is still trying to save as many as He can. Like the first four seal judgments, the first four trumpet judgments pertain to natural things. First hail, fire and blood come tumbling out of the sky and a third of the world's trees and grass are burnt up. Then fire is cast into the sea and a third of the seas turn to blood killing creatures and destroying sea going vessels. Then a burning star falls to earth and a third of the water supply is poisoned. And lastly, the earth's light sources: the sun, the moon and the stars are dimmed by a third. It is a judgment of fire and darkness. The world is beginning to melt away, and yet the worst is still to come.

“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 other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!” (Rev. 8.13)

The last three judgments are of a distinctly supernatural nature, as were the last three seal judgments. God has set them apart from the first four trumpet judgments by sending an angel flying through heaven to warn the inhabitants of the earth about the gravity and severity of them. God is still being merciful, trying to warn and save anyone who will listen.

HELL ON EARTH

The Three Woes

The three remaining judgments, aptly labeled “Woe” judgments, are not only special because of their severity; they are also unique because of their completely supernatural nature. There have been those who teach that the fifth and sixth trumpet judgments may well be some kind of military contraption or hi-tech device. Some have said that the “locusts” of the fifth trumpet might be helicopters or some such thing. But why discount their totally supernatural character? The account in Revelation only makes sense when we take it literally: that these “beings” are demon forces with Satanic and supernatural powers far beyond the abilities and spheres of earthly and mortal man. They must be creatures of intelligence. Notice in the following account that they are given direction by a demonic leader (the Destroyer); they are instructed not to hurt the environment, but only to torment man with great pain; they are forbidden to kill anyone. Helicopters or war machines are not likely to have that kind of “surgical strike” capability. No, these beings can only reasonably be

interpreted as hideous monsters from the bottomless pit, just as Revelation says.

The First Woe: Monsters From The Pit

“And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.

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 to them it was given 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 on their heads were as it 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.”

(Rev. 9.1-11)

The trumpet judgments begin to fall during the last two years of the Tribulation. The earth has already suffered unfathomable judgment and still most of its inhabitants have stubbornly refused to repent. The first four trumpet judgments have produced misery and death on a scale never known before in the history of mankind, yet the Antichrist and his people are still defiant. At least a third of the earth is a total wasteland; her crops, trees and vegetation have been burnt to a crisp. People were starving to death in certain areas of the world during the first half of the Tribulation because of the third seal judgment but now food shortages have reached world-wide crisis proportions. Panic is setting in. Scientists are more than alarmed about the oxygen levels and the ecological balance of the earth's atmosphere. They are demanding that the Antichrist do something about this major crisis. They know that it is God who is doing and causing these things and they expect their champion, the one who has said mighty things against the God of heaven, to do something about it. A third of the seas have been turned to blood – the equivalent of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans being turned into lifeless bloody urns filled with dead plants and animal carcasses reeking with the stench of rotting flesh and decaying compost. Whales and large fish wash up to shore and oil spills from sunken tankers mix with the blood, flies, lice, parasites and scavengers make the coasts and islands inaccessible. The drinking water of a third of the earth has been poisoned.

Wells and oasis invite only death instead of refreshment. The sun, moon and stars have been changed and altered by God a theater stage hand might change the scenery for a new act of a stage play. Nothing about the earth is sure or certain as it has been for man in previous days. God is now pulling out all the stops.

An angel is sent to the bottomless pit to release locust-like beings out of their dark hole. The smoke darkens the sun and pollutes the earth with a foul smelling gas. The oil fires in Kuwait during the Gulf War were only a mini preview of the terrible clouds that billow out of Hell to darken the sun's rays. The locusts have power to sting like a scorpion, but they are not authorized to kill a single soul. They are also forbidden to eat or destroy any green thing. Those who lived their lives scoffing at the notion of Hell and the warnings of Christ against eternal damnation are getting a taste of their eternity⁶. The torments of Hell are beginning in this life. In Hell they will not be able to die, but have to put up with torment forever. Even now, they will seek death but not find it, but they feel an excruciating pain.

It only stands to reason that these creatures who torment the infidels with the Mark of the Beast are intelligent demons. They may be the fallen angels that have been imprisoned for taking on human flesh before the flood. (see Genesis 6) Unlike natural locusts that eat the green things on earth, these are forbidden to touch the green things of the earth. They are on a singular mission.

6. Those tormented souls of the poet Dante's imagination (*The Divine Comedy, Part I: Inferno*) who had to run naked on blistering hot sand eternally fleeing the bites of wasps, flies and gnats are only a poet's imagery, but a slight indication of the torment to come for the unrepentant during the Tribulation and their resultant damnation in Hell.

They must be more than machine in the hands of man; they get their marching orders from a king, we are told, who himself has ascended out of the pit along with them. If these beasts were helicopters or manmade weapons how would they know not to harm the green grass and trees? How would they know only to torment people with their sting and not kill a single person during their five-month mission? No, this must be the beginning of God's supernatural assault on the Antichrist and his world of followers. Humanism is under siege now from supernatural menaces. The world of the unseen, the world of God's promises, a world believed by the prophets and rejected by carnal humanists, ecologists and evolutionists is now a stark reality and greater than their fear is their torment. The only thing greater than their torment is their hatred of God.

The Second Woe: Demons from Hell

“One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.

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 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 on 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 sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.” (Rev. 9.12-21)

After reading this terrifying report who can doubt the incredible darkness and wickedness in man’s heart. When we first read verses 20-21 we cannot believe it means what it says. But we must take it at face value. The people of the earth, after all that has happened, still refuse to repent, even after the fires, the judgments, the rivers of blood, the poisoned waters, the horrifying onslaught of the locusts and the carnage of these killing machines from Hell. The prophet Jeremiah was not exaggerating when the Holy Ghost had him write,

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.” (Jeremiah 17.9-10)

How can these beings be anything other than

supernatural creatures? We are told in verse 15 that they were prepared for this one special mission. They have been imprisoned in a holding cell beneath the Euphrates River for this solitary hour. The Euphrates was one of the rivers that bordered the Garden of Eden and fed its lush vegetation making it a paradise for Adam and Eve. But God had these creatures bound up beneath the river even then for He has had His plan of redemption perfectly mapped out even before He formed Adam out of the clay and breathed life into him. Now God, the Master Architect of salvation, will use the Euphrates River once again in His grand design. This time it is not to border and feed paradise but, instead, He will use it to judge the oppressors and the rebellious and to make way for the restoration of paradise. The prophet Joel saw these creatures and their invasion of the earth and reported it as creatures who could not be stopped or killed.

“Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand;

A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations.

A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them.

The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run.

Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the

stubble, as a strong people set in battle array.

Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness.

They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks:

Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded.

They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief.

The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining:

And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it? (Joel 2:1-11)

Obviously, there is no escape. Again, we see that a third of mankind is affected by one of God's trumpet judgments, but unlike the locust-like beings that preceded them, these demonic monsters are given authority to kill. The earth's population has been decimated by the previous judgments and now a third of what remains of mankind is killed by either fire, smoke or brimstone which issue out of the mouths of these terrifying beasts. People have blasphemed and lied about God. Their mouths have spoken defiant and bold things against God. They have thought that the eloquent words of their "savior", Antichrist, could save them, that by their tongues they could justify themselves and condemn God. Now God has these Hellion demons kill them with issues from their mouth. This is the price

they pay for believing a lie and holding on to deception. Satan, the Antichrist and the False Prophet (Chapter 13) have deceived them, but they have wanted to be deceived. Now the truth has closed in on them. Hell is a killer. Fire, smoke and brimstone, the stock and trade of Hell are engulfing the earth in an army of demons 200 million strong. One in every three people alive are killed by the horsemen from Hell.

And Still They Do Not Repent

We remain incredulous at the attitudes of those who remain. We continue to ask ourselves how could anyone resist God at this point? Why would they hold out against him, shaking their fists in defiance as their uncles, mothers, children and friends are tormented for five months and then slain by such a gruesome army of devils? The answer lies in the last two verses of chapter nine.

“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 sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.”

(Rev.9.20-21)

They simply do not want to pay God His due. They will not worship Him. They do not want to stop being their own god. There can be no place in heaven for a man who does not want to repent from his own ways and turn to God on God's terms. God is God wherever He goes. How many people in this day and age pay homage to God with their lips but in their heart stay aloof from Him. Isaiah said it correctly, *“this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me”*.

Many Christians try to play both ends against the middle. They want to keep their sin and give God a payoff. Many can fool their fellow Christians but they cannot fool God, who sees men's hearts. In this time it is easy to keep the truth covered, but when the Tribulation begins the lines will be drawn. Much of the judgment of Revelation is designed just so the truth will come to the surface. The truth has come out at this point in God's plan, but the truth about repentance is the same even in the age of grace and during the Church Age. The Lord will accept a repentant and a contrite heart, but He despises and rejects the proud.

Though the world faces death and Hell, it will nevertheless cling to its own stubborn pride, its ambition and its perverted desire to control everything. Earth's people will have brought the planet to the brink of annihilation, choosing to live under a despotic megalomaniac as its world leader, because they will have refused, at all costs, to give up their wills to God. They have not repented of their murders because they want to be able to erase someone that gets in their way. They do not want God to get involved. They hold on to their sorceries because they love to deceive and manipulate their fellow man. They do not want God to intercede. They continue in their fornications because they love pleasure more than they love God. They simply do not want God to be in charge, to be the righteous judge in their lives, and so they must suffer total judgment and eternal imprisonment.

Any person, or Christian, who shuts God out and does not want to hear and obey His voice is sinning, no matter how great or beneficial the work seems to be. Repentance is hearing and doing God's will, never telling Him, in our heart, to butt out. For this condition of heart the world will suffer the judgments of Revelation. There is no other way.

What is written must come to pass. Brothers and sisters, repent. Repent today and tomorrow, and all the tomorrows to come in this life. That simply means: let God have His way. Let Him make the call. If you do there is a good chance you will be spared the things that are shortly to come to pass. †

Repossessing the Earth

Incredibly, many Christians still testify that they find the book of Revelation frightening and hard to comprehend. They fail to realize that God's mercy and hope for those who love Jesus runs throughout the book. In this chapter we are about to delve into one of the most exciting and joyous areas of Revelation chapter ten. This chapter should not only quell the fears of any believer, it should add to their hope and fill them with joy about God's wonderful purpose for the Church. In chapter ten the Father reveals His plan to transfer control of the earth from Satan and faithless men to His Son's faithful followers. It is the moment of fulfillment of Jesus' promise on the Mount of Beatitudes when he said, "*Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth*". It is the time spoken of in Ephesians when we shall actually inherit the "purchased possession". (Eph.1)

This act of possession happens simultaneously with the death and resurrection of the Two Witnesses which is detailed in chapter eleven, and together these two

monumental occurrences signal the end of the sixth trumpet judgment, or the Second Woe. Time has run out. We are near the end of the seven-year Tribulation period. All that is left after these two compelling and decisive events is the blast from the final trumpet which will send forth seven more angels with the seven last devastating plagues of God. Soon Christ shall return with His armies from heaven and the battle of Armageddon, that final war of this age, will take place.

Three Steps in the Process of Repossession

After the sixth trumpet judgment is described, John suddenly sees an interruption in the process of judgment. He writes, *“And I beheld another mighty angel come down from heaven with a little book in his hand.”*¹ The time has now come for Christ to take back the possession which He purchased in His own blood. Three significant things take place in the chapter, all concerning the repossessing of the earth: **(1)** Christ takes physical possession; **(2)** the would-be inheritors (The Church) are given a test in patience to give them an idea of the conditions of inheritance; and **(3)** the title deed to the earth is handed over to the Church, the rightful heirs, under the provisions of the cross.

The Church is also told the terms of the testament of inheritance and ownership. This is the greatest transferal of power the earth will ever see. Satan is thoroughly and finally deposed. He and all of his hordes of fallen angels are dispossessed and what once belonged to Satan is now taken away and given to another. Those who have exhibited faith and trust in their Father, because they have loved the Son, have come into their inheritance. Chapter ten of Revelation is about taking possession of the earth. As we

1. Rev. 10:1

shall discover this is the consummation of the process that was begun in chapter four when Jesus began breaking the seals on the book.

Identifying the Mighty Angel

“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.”

(Rev. 10.1-3)

As Arthur Bloomfield, the respected author of numerous end times prophetic studies put it, the action in Revelation is literal, but the symbols performing the action often have to be interpreted. This is the case with the “mighty angel” and the other characters of chapter ten. We know that someone will come down and put one foot on the earth and one on the sea and that this someone will be holding a little book in his hand. What we need to determine is: who is this “mighty” angel, what does His act of standing on sea and earth represent, and what does the little book symbolize? Once we have determined these things we can begin to comprehend what this chapter of Revelation is all about.

The object of any given action in Scripture is often identified by a symbol we find somewhere else in Scripture. Sometimes the symbolic meaning of a character or object can be discerned by cross-referencing our knowledge of other prophetic passages of the Bible. Even though we know it will happen, we need further interpretation so we can understand its underlying implications and spiritual

purpose. For example, we have concluded in this study that the twenty-four elders represent a proportionately small fraction of Christians, both dead and living, who were caught up to heaven before the Tribulation began. The action – that they were redeemed from every nation, kindred, tongue and people and taken to heaven – is literal. That they worship before God’s throne in heaven prior to the opening of the first seal is literally going to take place. But discovering who the “twenty-four elders” represent is something of a more difficult nature. We have to employ a detective’s mentality and deduce from our research of the Scriptures and our understanding of the full gospel message who these elders represent. From there we uncover things like their purpose and what qualifies one to be part of the group of “twenty-four elders”. We will employ the same methods of a Biblical sleuth to discover the meaning of the events of chapter ten.

Who is the Angel?

Employing these methods of interpretation we ask then, who is this “Mighty Angel” coming down out of heaven with such obvious authority and power? For many reasons the answer must be that it is Christ Himself, in the role of God’s greatest messenger. Mr. Bloomfield points out in his book, *All Things New*, that Jesus can always be identified in Revelation because He will appear in some way or in some aspect as He did in chapter one. Bloomfield writes:

Christ is called a mighty angel. Throughout Revelation, heavenly beings, whether Christ, the saints, or created angels, are called angels. They may be identified by their description. This description [of the angel in chapter ten] follows the rule that when Christ is mentioned, some

portion of the first chapter is repeated. There is added the rainbow which was around the throne. The rainbow is the sign of God's purpose to redeem, not to destroy the world and the human race.

Who could wear the aura of a rainbow around his head other than Jesus Christ. He is the one *"by whom all things consist"*. This mighty angel not only has a rainbow, he is clothed with the clouds, a symbol of the resurrection and a preview of the manner in which Christ is about to return to earth. It was Christ who left in the clouds and it is He who will *"return in like manner"*.

"And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by.

Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1.9-11)

Further, the angel has the voice of a lion. What other creature at this point in time would be depicted in Scripture as having a voice of a lion other than Jesus, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah? He came first as a Lamb, but He shall return as a lion! Remember too, that the word, "angel", does not always have to mean a heavenly, spiritual creature. The word strictly means, messenger. Remember, the central character of Revelation is Jesus Christ. We have already seen Him appear in many different roles, all of which are characteristic of His priesthood and royalty. He first appears in Revelation chapter one as the glorified Jesus with fire, brass, brightness, power and purity. In chapters two and three He introduces Himself in seven

different ways in His letters to the seven churches. In chapter five we see Him as the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world, having seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of the Holy Spirit. Then we see Jesus as the Lamb taking the book of the title deed of the earth and beginning to open each of its seven seals one by one in order. In chapter ten we see Jesus once again in another one of His vital roles as the Redeemer of mankind. This time it is not as a meek servant, but instead the mighty Savior. Instead of the Lamb, here He is fulfilling His role as the Mighty agent of God's sovereign power. He roars like a lion because He is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. He is the Kinsman Redeemer going through the legal protocol to redeem His people's possession. It is inconceivable that any creature or person, especially in Revelation, would be endowed with these Christ-like qualities and attributes, other than Christ Himself. All the evidence proves that the "mighty angel" must be Jesus.

He Holds a Little Book

Notice also, that the Mighty Angel is holding a little book in His hand. The only other book we have seen in Revelation is the book which had the seven seals. At this point all the seals have been broken on that book so we can assume it is fully open. Chapter ten makes a point of saying that the "little book" is open. Christ was found to be the only one who could open the book so we might deduce that he is the only one who has the right to be in possession of the book at this time of the redemption process. We can also deduce that this book amounts to nothing short of the title deed to the earth.

The stance that the Mighty Angel takes upon the earth is

very significant also. Men stake claim to lands by planting their nation's flag into the soil. When we landed on the moon the first thing we did was plant the flag of the United States into its soft surface crust, staking our nation's claim to it. The first thing Columbus did when he reached the New World was to claim it for the Spanish crown. Jesus stakes His claim to the earth in this Biblical way. He is holding the title deed to the earth; the soles of His feet are placed on the land and the sea. God has used this method to show ownership and redemption of property throughout His dealings with man. God told Abraham to walk the width and breadth of the land that He had promised to his seed. God told Moses that wherever the soles of Israel's feet touched that would be their possession. *"And Moses swore on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's for ever, because thou hast wholly followed the LORD my God."*² God had told Joshua the very same thing. The law of the kinsman redeemer required a man to take on the responsibility of his brother's wife and household and if he refused, the widow was to take off his shoe in public, expose the man's bare foot to symbolize that he would not take possession of his responsibility, and spit in his face. The feet placed on an object means taking possession and responsibility. So now the Mighty Angel, Jesus, openly accepts the responsibility of His Divine mandate by placing His feet on the purchased possession. The symbolism of the act is unmistakable. Christ is taking possession of the land and the sea. The entire earth is now under His control. Just as a new owner comes in to clean and renovate a newly acquired home,

2. Joshua 14:9

so Jesus is about to command the final angel to sound his trumpet which will begin the final cleansing process.

“And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven,

And swore by him that liveth for ever 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 which 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.” (Rev. 10.5-7)

The Mighty Angel is Jesus. If He was the only one who could open the book he must be the only one who can take possession of the earth. He is clothed in the rainbow-promise of God’s mercy. Only Jesus could wear such glory. And He declares on earth that *“there should be time no longer”*. Only Jesus can say, *“It is finished”*. The repossession of the earth has taken place. Who else but Jesus would have this honor, power and right?

The Seven Thunders: A Test of the Church’s Heart

“... 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.” (Rev. 10.3,4)

Once Jesus appears on earth holding the title deed in His hand, the seven thunders of God’s heaven utter a statement that reverberates throughout creation. But just as John, the faithful reporter, is about to record what they have said, he is told to refrain from reporting it. This has long been a subject of speculation and conjecture by many students

of prophecy. There have been so-called prophets in the Church who have declared that it was revealed to them in the spirit or by a vision what the seven thunders had uttered. But this is highly unlikely, if not impossible. God had these words spoken and then sealed them up for a purpose. He wants us to know they will be uttered in that day, but He does not want us to know what they are before that moment. We must accept that. It could be that they have something to do with taking possession of the earth and God does not want Satan and the Antichrist to know what they are. But it would also seem that God is testing the hearts and attitudes of the saints. Will they be willing to wait for the fulfillment of prophecy without conjuring up their own visions of it? The nature of studying prophecy, and Revelation in particular, is that we must often wait on the Lord for the fulfillment of the prophecy before we can know how and when it will be fulfilled. This takes patience and trust in God. We are given the knowledge of what will happen, so we know that it will come to pass, but often the details of the fulfillment are kept concealed behind the veil of time. It is written that the secret things belong to God, and so it is true.

This is a test of the inheritors. In the Beatitudes Jesus quoted Psalm 37.11 preaching that *“the meek shall inherit the earth”*. Ephesians 1 says we shall inherit the *“purchased possession”*. The student of Revelation must remain meek and humble in this way. We cannot force God’s hand. We should not demand to know every detail. The student of Revelation must be content with what is revealed in prophecy: the book of Daniel, Psalms, the minor and major prophets and Revelation. We should not let speculation, rumor and hearsay be our inspiration. God has told us the day is coming that the seven thunders will utter their voices

to all creation. We should accept this as God's wisdom. The greatest example of this type of acceptance is the promise of Christ's appearing in the clouds to Rapture His faithful Bride. Jesus has said that *"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only."*³ Many misguided people have tried to predict the day of the Lord's appearing in the clouds, from scoundrels to unfortunate fools, but all have shamed themselves. We know that Christ shall return for His own in the clouds, and then He shall return with His saints to judge the earth. Until then the righteous wait and watch.

While it is natural for us to wonder what the seven thunders will say, and we might discuss it or speculate on it, we should not spend much time on it or put any faith in a supposed answer to it. If God's Word sealed it up, and God's Word is a universal truth to enlighten the world and speak to the Church and the Jews, how can it be opened to a single prophet or minister? We'll all hear the words together on that day in the final year of the Tribulation when the title deed of the earth is being presented to its inhabitants by the Redeemer Himself, Jesus.

The Title Deed: Transferred to the Inheritors

"And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.

And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.

3. Matt. 24:36

And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.” (Rev. 10.8-11)

This is that outstanding moment when the deed to the earth is transferred to the Church. John is acting as the representative of the Church. Two things happen. John eats the book and he is told that he will again have to prophesy to the world. When the transferral of the deed to John takes place there is a conveyance of duty and responsibility that goes along with that acceptance of ownership. As with ownership of any property, labor and good stewardship is required. The gift of the possession is joyous and sweet, as when it entered into John's mouth, but the responsibilities of taking care of so great a possession will at times be bitter. It is prophesied that Jesus and His saints will come back to rule the earth with a rod of iron. The prospect of having the power and authority to bring righteousness to the world is wonderful. The fact that these things will have to be imposed, even during the Millennium, with a rod of iron will be a bitter and weighty responsibility for the saints.

Christ's words to John imply that the Church will have to teach, prophesy, and correct the nations during the thousand year reign of the Millennium. Though order will be imposed on an earth, controlled and owned by Christ and His Church, the salvation of those who are living in the flesh during this time will still hang in the balance. We will find at the end of Revelation that one last world-wide rebellion takes place at the end of Christ's thousand year reign. As implied by the transferral of power to the Church in chapter ten, there will be much responsibility and some

bitter disappointments even during the Millennium. This is why we are being prepared to be kings and priests⁴ right now, so we can be good stewards of the *purchased possession* which we have inherited from God. †

4. Rev. 1.6

The Two Witnesses

With the chapter entitled *The Two Witnesses* we are about to conclude the first half of our study of the Book of Revelation, bringing to a close the chronological chapters. We will have seen all of the seven seals opened in sequence and God's outline of Tribulation events put in crisp, concise order. We are on the brink of Armageddon, 30-90 days before the return of Christ. In this chapter we will see an "earth-shaking" resurrection. We will see God use the Church as an instrument to measure the Jews for judgment and salvation. We shall discover at long last the whereabouts of the elusive lost Ark of the Covenant. We will witness two of God's spiritual giants square off in mortal combat with Satan's evil drones. And we will hear the seventh and final trumpet blast as it comes ringing down from heaven, announcing the last judgment of God and the Second Coming of Christ, the Savior.

God begins the final chapter in His outline of the Tribulation by turning to the Jews. Though chapter eleven

deals primarily with the salvation and judgment of the Jews, the chapter by no means excludes the Church. Many students of Revelation have fallen prey to the temptation of defining Revelation in terms of whether it is about the Church or about the Jews. Arthur Bloomfield, in *All Things New*, says Revelation is about the Church. Grant Jeffrey, in his less insightful book, entitled *The Beast, The Coming New World Order*, says it is about the Jews. It has become a tradition that we must declare which side of the quarrel we are on. It is an unfortunate trap, however. Once we make such a choice then all our analysis and interpretation has to fit into a predesignated mold fabricated by the theology of our chosen side. By making such a distinction we needlessly paint ourselves into a corner of vain interpretation. Trying to be consistent in our view we end up making untenable statements. If we must give Revelation a general designation we can say, with assurance, that it is about the consummation of the redemption of man and the earth through Jesus Christ; in other words it is about the accomplishment of the six things promised in the summary of the Tribulation prophesied in Daniel 9:24.¹ Everything in Revelation is about redemption and judgment; what can be redeemed and what cannot be redeemed. We can say with boldness that chapter eleven refers to and has implications for both Jew and Gentile, Church and Israel and in this way Revelation brings together the two into the “Commonwealth of Israel” as spoken of by Paul.²

Though the riveting drama of chapter eleven centers

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1. See chapter two of this work for the six things which God will accomplish by Tribulation's end.
 2. Eph. 2

around God's Two Witnesses and the marvel of their ministry, the chapter has three primary themes:

1. The nation Israel measured by Christ, the Messiah's standards.
2. The Two Witnesses representing God in opposition to Satan's Trinity, and
3. The announcement of the end of the judgment process and the preparation for the Coming of Christ.

We are first told about God's plan for Israel and the salvation of the Jews. It then tells us about the two prophets of the last days, whom God will send to show forth His might and power to a world tormented by the fires of judgment and lost to Satanic influences. The chapter ends with a violent storm of God's wrath from heaven.

Though the pronouncement of legal right to the earth and its symbolic act of repossession is a vital precursor to the last series of seven quick and intense judgments (for this lawful act gives Jesus legal right to take the purchased possession by force), the sixth trumpet judgment is declared to be officially over not by this act of possession but when the Two Witnesses ministry is ended by their martyrdom and they are raised from the dead and ascend into heaven.³ But before God tells us about these two men's spectacular ministry, He has John act in behalf of the Church once more. In yet another symbolic act, John is called upon to "take the measure" of God's temple, its altar and God's chosen people.

God First Takes the Measure of the Jews

3. Rev. 11.12-14

“And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.” (Rev. 11.1-2)

The measuring rod that the angel hands to John in verse one has two very significant spiritual implications. A rod in Scripture is symbolic of judgment. Ezekiel prophesied about God’s rod of judgment on Israel in the last days.

“As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you:

And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. ...

And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant:

And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.” (Ezekiel 20.33,34-37,38)

Measuring or weighing can be a sign of both possession and/or testing. The king of Babylon, Belshazzar, was measured in the balances and found wanting. The prophet Zechariah saw an angel with a measuring line going to measure Jerusalem as a place of habitation for God’s true believers (Zech. 2.1-6). By measuring, God is telling us that it is time for Him to test and judge His people; to see who measures up to His Word and who does not.

Who and what God is about to test and judge could only be the Jews. It cannot be the Church, the Church would not be found inside the temple worshiping God. They have been judged in the Rapture and are being judged by persecution described in the fifth and sixth seals. We are told in verse two that the outside courts are given over to the Gentiles, or the faithless world, and are not to be measured at all. God is not interested in measuring, judging, or “saving” the world. Their fate is sealed. He has already set them apart for judgment, the die is cast, the “handwriting is on the wall”. He is only waiting for the cup of indignation to be full for the moment when He will pour out the *“fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God”* onto their rebellious world (Rev. 16). But it is not so with His chosen people, Israel. They will be measured, judged and saved. These two verses have to be about the Jews. Take note of what God is measuring.

This act would be unusual, or even meaningless, unless we perceive it as a purely spiritual act. It may not be strange that someone would measure the Temple, or even an altar, but to measure “them that worship therein” is a curious thing. We can be sure God does not want to know who is 5’2” and who is 6’3”, or who weighs 200 pounds or who weighs 135. Nor does God want to know the dimensions of the altar, or even the Temple for that matter. God is taking the measure of His people to see how they conform to the standards of true faith. This is why the Church (in the person of John) is given the rod to measure the temple, its altar and the people who worship therein. Now they will be required to see the Messiah in all the symbolism of the Temple. They will see the Law as being fulfilled in the light of Jesus’ First Coming as explained in the New Testament Book of Hebrews.

The prophet Isaiah says they will be redeemed in one day.

“Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.” (Isa. 66.8)

The inference we may draw is that the nation of Israel, during the Tribulation, will have to come up to the measure of The Church. Any Jew who resists will be weighed in the balances and found wanting just as the unrepentant and stubborn Belshazzar was judged⁴. Coming up to the measure of the Church does not suggest that the Church will dictate its own vision of righteousness to the nation Israel, it merely suggests that Israel will now be held to the same standards of faith that the Church is held to; they will be required to receive Christ as the Messiah. The scales will fall from their eyes; as the blind man in the temple they will see Jesus and know that He alone is the Son of God. They will understand, finally, that God became man so that man might become God. This, of course, is the message the Two Witnesses will be preaching all over Israel. It will be the age-old message – come to the cross, repent, accept Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, and be saved. Jesus will speak to them: *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”*; and they will hear. And who on earth by this time will not be heavily laden with fears, trepidation and anguish? The Two Witnesses will be the tutors and prophets who will teach the Jews – those Jews who have ears to hear – how to measure up to the cross of Christ. Any Jew who is saved will have to accept Jesus as

4. Dan. 5

his Lord and Savior, the Messiah. Zechariah says they will look upon the one whom they have pierced, that can only be Jesus.

“In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.” (Zech.11.8-11)

Measuring the Temple, Altar and People

With tears and repentance Israel will come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Everything in Israel must come up to the standards of Christ, that is why the Church holds the rod and is the yardstick by which all will be measured. In establishing the Temple, God told Moses, *“And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was showed thee in the mount.”*⁵ All of these things prefigured Christ and the work of salvation that He would do for Jew and Gentile alike. Moses and the artisans of Israel carefully followed this heavenly pattern for the tabernacle (temple), but over the years the pattern faded and eroded, gradually giving way to a pattern of the Jews’ own making. It got

5. Exod. 25:40

progressively worse: starting with Solomon, who introduced idolatrous things into the worship of the Temple, then through the return of the Babylonian captivity when the priests took over and their rabbinical teachings put a humanistic spin on the worship of God; then past the era of the Maccabees and the period of Greek influence, until the days of Jesus Himself when the Temple had fully degenerated from a house of prayer into a den of thieves. *“It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves”*.

How will the Tribulation Temple measure up to God’s Word and Christ’s expectations? Will it be pure and without variation from God’s prescribed pattern? Of course not. That won’t happen until Jesus sweeps His house clean at the end of the Tribulation. Cleansing the Temple is part of the Tribulation plan, to set the Temple right; for it is from the Temple in Jerusalem that Jesus *“will rule the nations with a rod of iron”*. One of Jesus’s first tasks when He returns will be to cleanse the temple.⁶ God is taking the measure of the Temple because that will be Christ’s palace and throne during the 1,000-year reign of The Millennium. The altar must also be measured according to the true and final sacrifice, which is Jesus. The Jews will have to come to the understanding that innocent blood need no longer be shed on the altar of sacrifice. Jesus, once and for all, has done the work that has given them full pardon and remission of sin. Their transgressions are forgiven. They will look from the altar of Christ and no longer see the veil that separated them from God’s presence in the Holy of Holies. They will know that it was torn in half on the day of His death on the cross never again to be a barrier between them and their

6. Dan. 8:13-14

God. All those who do not come to this altar of the innocent Lamb of God and accept the shed blood of their brother, Jesus, shall be lost. All who do shall be given life.

Each Jew will be measured individually and the thousands of Jews who accept Christ will make up the collective nation of Israel that shall inherit the land during The Millennium. Each Jew will be required, as all Gentiles, to stand in the *“measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”* Those Jews who have claimed that they love the Father will be required to worship His only begotten Son. Jesus will require all Jews to live up to His statement made to the Pharisees *“If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.”*⁷ Those who do not prove their love for the Father by their acceptance of His only begotten Son will be cast as fruitless branches into the fires of Hell. Those who do will be welcomed into the kingdom where there is no difference between Jew and Gentile.

While there will be frightening judgments going on all about Israel and throughout the rest of the earth, this time will be one of the most wonderful of all time.⁸ The Jews, supernaturally blinded for so long, will be like the blind man on the road to Jericho who had his sight restored by Christ. Their eyes will be opened by the ministry of the Two Witnesses. It is likely that these two men will be two prophets who have already had powerful ministries to Israel. It may take something as dramatic and miraculous as actually having Elijah and Moses come back to earth to give the nation of Israel its sight.

The Two Witnesses

“And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they

7. John 8:42

8. Rom. 11:15

shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.” (Rev. 11.3-4)

God has always kept a pair of witnesses on earth for Himself. After the Fall of man it was Seth and Enoch. Before the Flood it was Methuselah and Noah. Before Pharaoh it was Moses and Aaron. In the Apostolic era it was Paul and Peter. God established the principle when He declared in the law that nothing could be proven unless it was established by at least two witnesses. God will have this form of justice and truth come to its greatest fulfillment during the Tribulation when He sends two very special witnesses to declare His mercy and judgment to a besieged world. These two men will be the ministers of God’s salvation, and as God’s ministers they will be locked in a titanic struggle with the Antichrist, his system and the False Prophet (who we shall see in a later chapter). God first identifies who these two men are and the duration of their ministry. They are the two candle sticks and the two olive trees standing before the whole earth. Zechariah saw them as two candlesticks with golden oil pouring out of them, symbolic of being filled with the Holy Ghost to overflowing.

“And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves?

And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord.

Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.” (Zech. 4.12-14)

There is speculation that the two men could be some combination of Enoch, Elijah, Moses, John, or even Noah. They may even be unknown individuals living today, come

in the spirit of these men, as John the Baptist came in the spirit of Elijah and partly fulfilled the prophecy concerning Elijah's return⁹. But God may call upon two legendary leaders of Israel like Moses and Elijah to perform this ministry simply because of the enormity of the task.

The ministry of the Two Witnesses will be performed during the second half of the Tribulation. They will testify for three and a half years, the same amount of time God has allotted the Gentiles to overrun the city of Jerusalem. It is interesting that the time for overrunning the courts outside the temple is half the Tribulation, and the time for the ministering of the Two Witnesses is half the Tribulation. It seems that the time period for the overrunning of the city (but not the Temple), is during the first half of The Tribulation when the sacrifice and oblations are still in effect. But once the Antichrist stops the sacrifices and oblations, which he had reestablished in the first months of the Tribulation, his real reign of terror begins. This is the halfway point of the Tribulation; it is also the time for the Two Witnesses to begin their testimony.

The fact that the Abomination of Desolation is in place and the Temple of God is being defiled in such a sacrilegious and disgraceful way is consistent with the two men going about in sackcloth. Sackcloth is a sign of mourning and repentance for the Jew. The prophets used this as a sign of remorse; Job wore sackcloth in his despair. The Two Witnesses are going to be overwrought with despair not only because of the defilement of the Temple, but for the evil condition of the world, the lost condition of Israel and the blasphemies of the Antichrist and his sidekick, the False Prophet. Daniel gives us a timetable that

9. Matt. 11:14

is helpful in both understanding when the Two Witnesses minister and the nature of that ministry (refer to chart, Fig. 1 Ch. 2)

Wherever the Book of Revelation is considered you can be sure there will be a discussion of chapter eleven with special attention given to the identity of the Two Witnesses. While speculating about the identity of the Two Witnesses can provide chat-room fun, students of Revelation often get bogged down on their personalities and overlook the more important things like, the reason for their ministry and the timing of their appearance on earth.

The timing in relation to the rest of the events of the Tribulation is very revealing. Discerning when and how the *Two Witnesses* fit into God's plan for the final week of redemption helps us understand the reason for their mission as much, if not more than if we speculate on their identity. A series of days and times given to us in the book of Daniel, coupled with disclosures in Revelation, place the ministry of the Two Witnesses in the second half of the Tribulation.

Consider that the Two Witnesses will be ministering at the zenith of the Antichrist's power, read verses 5-13 of chapter eleven pondering them together with Revelation 13, and further consider the state of affairs due to the rest of the ongoing seal judgments, and then we begin to see how fierce and intense the battle will be between the Two Witnesses and the Antichrist. Verses 5 and 6 give us insight into the power the Two Witnesses will wield.

“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.” (Rev. 11.5-6)

The ministry of the Two Witnesses and the power of the Antichrist over the saints on earth run concurrently with one another during the entire second three and a half years of the Tribulation. Some commentators have failed to realize the full implications of this fact, partly because they do not know when the Two Witnesses appear on earth. As the Two Witnesses preach against the Antichrist and lead people to salvation, encouraging them not to take the Mark of the Beast, the Antichrist is doing everything he can to discourage salvation by killing those who refuse to deny Christ. The two represent the opposing sides: God vs. Satan. They are mega-combatants in a duel of gigantic proportions that lasts three and a half years. These are two spiritual heavyweights slugging it out in center ring Jerusalem. The ultimate winner of their very public battle will strike the decisive blow in the battle for souls. The victor of this battle will prove to be the one crowned as the ultimate winner of the age old war – God or Satan; Christ or Antichrist. Most of the world is banking its hopes on the Antichrist, and not without due cause. He will have a train of miracles to give his unholy following reason for confidence.

We must jump slightly ahead in our study now to chapter thirteen to see how impressed the world will be with the Antichrist. Revelation 13 presents us with the unholy Trinity – Satan (false God), Beast (Antichrist) and false prophet (fake Holy Spirit). The Antichrist suffers a mortal wound to the head and is raised up in a counterfeit resurrection. The world, it says, follows after him, *“And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they*

worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?" (Rev. 13)

In the eyes of his adoring public he is invincible. He sets up his throne and makes himself God in the temple of God. "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." (2 Thess. 2.3) The *False Prophet* has the people of the earth make an image after their new god and then he is able to make this image come alive. The works of men's hands have finally been given life. Anyone who does not worship this living image (this is surely the abomination of desolation) will be killed by it instantly. On top of this, the Beast has issued a worldwide decree that all inhabitants should have a mark in their forehead or hand as a display of their loyalty and worship for him. Anyone who does not have this mark is unable to buy or sell anything. All the while the *False Prophet*, we are told, will be able to do fanciful miracles and call down fire from heaven in the presence of the *Beast* to destroy anyone who opposes his claims of deity and absolute authority. The *Antichrist* will have this kind of power for 42 months and he will exert all conceivable pressures over the people of God. They will be slain and murdered in the mother of all holocausts. But, while this is taking place and the power of the *Antichrist* seems beyond the scope of death and Hell, or even God Himself, the *Two Witnesses* will be voices crying in the wilderness. They and the 144,000 Jews will be thorns in the *Antichrist's* side. The "two olive trees and candlesticks" that stand before God, along with the 144,000 Jews, will be given broad, sweeping powers and total protection from all harm.

From verse five and six we can see that the *Two Witnesses* will have all the power that Moses and Elijah had during their ministry on earth. (This makes a good case for the

two men being Moses and Elijah.) They will be able to stop the rain from falling and turn waters into blood. Droughts, death, and famines will follow in the wake of their simply speaking the word. Plush farms will be turned into deserts. Every manner of plague, we are told, will be in their power and at their disposal. They will be a scourge to the world and a judge on Israel. The Temple and altar and them that worship therein have been measured and now wherever those things are found lacking, they will be chastened and judged. All ten of the plagues that hit Egypt in days of old will be at their command. This means that all these men will have to do to send pestilence, disease, death of livestock, natural disasters, heavenly catastrophes and even death of firstborn children, is to say the word. Leprosy, instant consumption, and knee-knocking fear or anything of the sort, could strike opponents of the *Two Witnesses* on the spot ceasing them with instant fear and destruction, even to the death of their first born. They will be doing these things in localized places and under specific instances, mostly in Israel, but wherever they go they will have these total powers. They will only have to will it, and it will happen.

All during this time the Antichrist and the false prophet will be envious of the Witnesses' power. But their rage and fury will be frustrated because they will be unable to stop or injure them. They will engage in a one-upmanship unparalleled in the history of mankind. They will be like Jannes and Jambres who withstood Moses and Aaron in the Pharaoh's court (II Tim. 3.8), only ten times stronger. The stakes can get no higher; Satan is fighting for his life. Worship of the creation and control of the earth and universe hang in the balance. The Antichrist will have a fortified position in this battle. He will be entrenched in

Jerusalem. He is the one who has reestablished the Temple and the Mosaic law. Now he has changed the times and the laws and reorganized everything with him as god sitting on the throne in the Holy of Holies. Every action, word, and movement of the *Two Witnesses* will be in direct opposition to the *Antichrist*. Their mere existence, every breath they take, will be an affront to the *Antichrist's* claims of total authority and deity. The very sight of these men on television or in the streets will throw the *Antichrist* into a fit of rage just the way the thought or sight of Mordecai made the infamous Hamaan, in the book of Esther, tremble with anger and conspire to kill him and all the Jewish people.

“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 an 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 one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.”

(Rev. 11.7-10)

These four verses indicate the nature of the battle that will be taking place between the *Two Witnesses* and the *Antichrist*. The people of the earth will be choosing up sides. At this point the lines will be drawn, the choices crystal clear. There will be no gray area. Everyone will either have to take the mark of the *Beast* and be damned, or they will have to keep the testimony of Jesus and the Word of God and give up their lives. Because of the *Antichrist's*

resurrection and invincibility in war, because of the miracles of the *False Prophet* and the image that miraculously is given life, people of the earth will find courage to fight God, they will actually believe that the Antichrist is more powerful than the Lamb and God.

“And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” (II Thess. 2.8-12)

They will actually believe that they are going to win and God is going to lose. Their confidence will be bolstered daily by the on-going execution of all those who proclaim to be on God's side. Though martyrdom is God's mercy and the Tribulation's escape from the incredible hardships of the trumpet judgments, the people of the world will see it as a weakness of God and a sign of the power of the *Antichrist* and the *Dragon*. They will believe Satan's lies. Because they have not received Christ, and the love of the truth, God will send them strong delusion and cause them to believe a lie. The greatest lie, of course, is that Satan can beat God, that Satan and his devotees are more powerful than God. When the *Antichrist* is finally able to kill the *Two Witnesses* it will seem to all the world that Satan has won. This will be the final thing that convinces the people of the earth that the *Antichrist* is the true and almighty god, worthy of worship

by the world and all creation. The *Antichrist* will probably be directly responsible for their deaths. He will not allow their bodies to be buried but they will lie in the streets of Jerusalem. People throughout the world will watch their bodies and rejoice in the victory over God and the men that have plagued them for three and a half years. This could not have been possible until the present age of technology. What surely seemed like an impossible prophecy to our great-grandparents is easily imagined.

Arthur Bloomfield provides us with this insight:

At the report of the death of the Two Witnesses a strange thing happens. People all over the world begin to make merry and send presents one to another. This is a remarkable prophecy. There naturally will be no celebration of Christmas during the reign of the Antichrist. The Christmas habit, however, is of long standing and deep seated. At the first provocation it breaks out afresh, and they make merry and send presents. This prophecy could not have been fulfilled in John's day. In three and one half days the news of the death of the Two Witnesses travels around the world, a holiday is declared, and presents are purchased and sent. This requires fast communication and travel. Television.

But the victory celebration of the people of the world is short-lived.

“And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which 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.” (Rev. 11.11-13)

The world is shocked and frightened by the miraculous resurrection of the Two Witnesses. Imagine their fear when they suddenly realize that their god has been outwitted and overpowered by the God they have been opposing with all their might. Suddenly they hear a voice reverberate from heaven saying, “*Come up hither*”. These are the same words spoken to John that we earlier associated with the Rapture in chapter four verse one. The Rapture caught the world by surprise and it happened stealthily without most of the world even taking notice. Now everyone hears God’s powerful ascension voice. God shows that He is the Resurrection and the holder of eternal life. Mankind knows unequivocally that He is, and will be, the winner in the battle for control and possession of the earth. Everyone knows beyond a shadow of doubt that when God speaks it is done.

Again, Bloomfield makes this observation:

The resurrection and ascension of the Two Witnesses will make a profound impression upon the Jews. No longer can they deny the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. So the Two Witnesses will accomplish their main purpose by their death, the same as Jesus did.

In very short order the Lord Jesus Christ will appear in the clouds returning with His faithful saints to “*destroy them which destroy the earth*”. (Rev. 11.18) The Two Witnesses’ job is to announce this fact, preach to the Jews, and declare salvation to any of the world’s beleaguered inhabitants that are still able to repent and accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Master.

“The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.” (Rev.11.14)

Here we find out something important concerning the chronology of Revelation. God says outright that the end of the sixth trumpet judgment comes with the death, resurrection and ascension of the Two Witnesses. That means the only thing that follows their ministry is the final and seventh trumpet. Since their ministry lasts three and a half years during the second half of the Tribulation there must be no more than a handful of days left until Armageddon and the return of Christ with His army of saints. This fact helps us to see that the seventh trumpet, the vial judgments of total devastation of the earth (Rev. 15 & 16) must be very short in duration. This is what Jesus meant when He said, *“And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.”*

“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 unto 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 of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.” (Rev. 11.15-19)

The Actual Ark of the Covenant

As soon as the last angel sounds his trumpet the voices of the saints come cascading down from heaven telling us that God has taken control of the kingdoms of this world. All that is left is for the final vial judgments to be poured out which will last only 30 days before Christ comes back to judge the nations and *“destroy them which destroy the earth”*. Again we see the 24 elders, those raptured saints being given the privileged position of worshiping God at this defining moment of human history. The world and humankind is now on the brink of judgment day. The nations are about to gather against Christ at Armageddon. The time is drawing near for the rewards to be given to the prophets and saints according to their faith and works. Those who have pressed for the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus are about to receive their crowns of gold. Those who have given their lives for the testimony of Christ and the Word of God will be given their special crowns of life and white robes as martyrs. The servants who have been faithful stewards of God’s gifts will shortly receive authority over ten, five or two cities, all according to what they had done when they were in their bodies on this earth. Those servants who have hidden their gifts and done nothing with them will suffer loss and be ashamed. Those who were fearful, doubting and lustful will be cast into the lake of fire.¹⁰

All of heaven – now free from the blight of Satan and his hoard of demons – anticipates the last judgment which will seal up the promises and consummate the redemption process started back in chapters four and five when Christ broke the first seal on the title deed to the earth. The temple

10. Rev. 21.8

in heaven is opened. And for the first time since the reign of the kings in Judah the Bible reveals the ark of the covenant. We now see the true ark; the original, the one used as the pattern given to Moses in the wilderness more than thirty-five hundred years earlier. To Israel the ark was the symbol of God's presence and authority. When Israel moved in the wilderness the ark always went before the camp. The priests carried the ark and the hosts of the twelve tribes followed it. When Israel moved into the Promised Land the ark was brought to the banks of the Jordan River and the waters parted so the people could enter into the promises of God. Now God once again reveals the ark of His testament because He has His true priests (Rev. 1.6) in heaven to "bear" it before His hosts as they prepare to leave heaven with Jesus on white horses to take back the earth once and for all.¹¹

The chapter and chronology of Revelation ends with lightnings, voices, thunderings, an earthquake and great hail. God is about to mobilize His armies. To soften up the enemy He begins shelling earth with a barrage of both natural and heavenly disasters. The voices heard on earth are the war cries of saints and angels preparing for the battle. Manifestations of God's awesome power from lightnings and thunderings shake the skies sending shock waves and concussions throughout the earth's atmosphere for what will seem like a lifetime to the faithless rebels of earth. An earthquake has already destroyed a tenth of Jerusalem. But now an awesome one hits Israel again. The Bible tells of a time when Jesus will stand on the Mount of Olives and it shall split in half. This could be that earthquake.¹² Then like an artillery commander, God

11. Rev. 19 11-14

12. Zech. 14.4

further softens the enemy with a bombardment of “great” hail. Hailstones of enormous weight and size will pummel men and their property causing everyone to run for cover. All this will precede the full intense judgment that is about to come on the earth which will last only about 30 days (Rev. 15 & 16). The Great and Terrible Day of the Lord is at hand and no one will be able to withstand it. †

The Woman Clothed With the Sun

Success! We have completed the hard labor involved in understanding the meaning of Revelation. We now have a clear view of the chronology of the entire period called the Tribulation. We know what triggers the start of the Tribulation, how long it will last, when and how it ends, and the order and nature of the seven seal judgments. We have a grasp of why God must purge the earth of evil and faithless men and why it has to be with a fiery judgment. We have seen Jesus open the seals of the title deed of the earth one by one in descending order starting with the first and working His way in order through to number seven. We have discovered that the Tribulation is mainly about the process of Jesus Christ defeating Satan and the Antichrist and taking back possession of the earth so He can give it to its rightful heirs – His obedient followers, the Church. We know that the central character of Revelation is none other than Jesus. Revelation reveals Jesus' glories in a way

not revealed in the rest of the Bible. Revelation shows us the way Jesus truly is, as He sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven awaiting the Father's cue to appear in the clouds and call His people home in the Rapture. We have seen the Church, too, in many of her various roles. She is the second most prominent character in the book of Revelation, appearing in nearly every chapter. And, we have encountered the Antichrist and the faithless "world", the arch enemies of God's kingdom, headed for defeat and doom when Jesus returns with His army of saints from heaven.

First of the Topical Chapters

In the first half of our study we went through a seal by seal, sometimes a verse by verse, analysis of chapters 4-11 so we could get a general overall picture of the end-times vision that God has given His Church. Chapters 4-11 provide the end-times believer with a simple outline of Tribulation events. As is the intention of any outline, we have been given a quick overview of the subject matter with the understanding that the important details will be forthcoming. Thus far we have a bare-bones knowledge of the Tribulation. In the next part of this study, meat shall be put on the bones. Chapters 12-19 fill in the details of the outline and give the student of Revelation an opportunity to draw reasonable conclusions and infer spiritual implications from further details.

In understanding Revelation we should keep it just this simple: chapters 4-11 gives the student of Revelation the outline of events and chapters 12-19 cover the important topics one by one adding detailed information to the outline. Each of the topical chapters add something profoundly new to our treasure-trove of spiritual understanding which was not or could not be revealed in

the outline of God's subject. Chapter twelve begins the topical section of chapters by dealing with three of the primary characters of the Tribulation. They are symbolized by a woman, a dragon and a male child.

“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.” (Rev. 12.1-3)

Understanding chapter twelve turns on whether we correctly answer one fundamental question: Who and what does the sun-clad woman represent? We know the dragon represents Satan because the angel showing John this “wonder in heaven” tells him outright that it does (Rev. 12.9). The angel does not, however, tell John who or what the sun-clad woman represents, nor does he tell John who or what the man-child symbolizes. But if we understand who the woman is then we will automatically know who and what her man-child represents. The woman, therefore, is not only the key that unlocks the understanding of man-child, but understanding her is also crucial to the meaning to the conflict and action surrounding the three characters of chapter twelve.

The Symbolism of the Woman

The debate over identifying the woman usually centers around whether she represents Israel or the Church. Some feel the woman is symbolic of Israel and that the man-child she gives birth to is Jesus. Jesus ascended into heaven after his death and resurrection and will, during the Millennium, rule the nations with a rod of iron. On the

surface this scenario fits as an interpretation that deserves consideration. Other Bible commentators see it differently, however. They see the woman as the Church and the man-child as the raptured saints. The “man-child” they argue is “caught up” to God’s throne in an acting out of the Rapture. Gordon Lindsay, in his series of pamphlets on Revelation, even argues that the woman represents the Church/Israel, or the “Commonwealth of Israel”. That she is the “Commonwealth of Israel” (both Church and Jews) is true in the sense that the Church is made up of both, and it may even be proper to see the woman in this light as both Israel and the Church are God’s people. Ephesians chapter two tells us of this mystery of the commonwealth of Israel. Both must begin and end with the Messiah, with Christ. But they have very different promises of redemption and routes to salvation. We, therefore, hold with men like Arthur Bloomfield who conclude that the woman must be the Church, though to call her the “Commonwealth of Israel”, as Gordon Lindsay has, is not far-fetched. To say she is simply representative of the Jewish nation Israel is, however, far-fetched. Later in the chapter, references to time spans unique to the Tribulation, the use of the plural personal pronouns “they” and “them” referring to the man-child, and the references to those who have the testimony of Jesus Christ, add credence to our belief that the woman is best viewed as symbolic of the Church at large.

The following table puts the interpretation of the woman being Israel against the woman representing the Church. Each of chapter twelve’s seventeen verses are separated and a reasonable interpretation from the two schools of thought are put in columns below it. We hope that seeing the interpretations side by side will help the student see inconsistencies in the “woman as Israel” argument, as well

as the fluid consistency for the woman symbolizing the Church. For example, when seen as Israel, we are forced to jump a number of times from history to prophecy and back again. Many of the verses must stand unrelated to the outlined story of the Tribulation that we were given in chapters 4-11. But when seen as the Church the interpretation is completely confined to prophetic events surrounding the Tribulation. It adds information to the plan of redemption that we have already been given in the first half of Revelation.

After a close look at each verse we think the reader can also see the strength of the argument in favor of the woman being the Church. It should also be apparent to the reader that once we give the woman an identity the rest of the chapter takes on a direction of its own, like being on a train, you can only go where the tracks will take you. The interpretation of the rest of the symbols are confined to their relationship with the woman.

If the Woman is Israel

As one can see from a comparison of the two positions, if we say the woman is Israel we run into a whole host of problems. We are forced to believe that the chapter jumps back and forth from things that have taken place in history before the writing of the book and back to things that will take place in the future at the end of the age. There is certainly no consistency there. The first five verses which introduce the three principle characters of this great conflict may seem to lend themselves to this interpretation favorably. The sun and moon symbols having little meaning, however. The Dragon's futuristic appearance is also a problem. And how much Israel truly travailed to bring forth the Messiah is legitimately in question also. Whatever spin is put on these first five verses, when you

believe the woman is Israel they have to be historical. The man-child has to be Jesus. John is being shown something that He already knows and understands completely. How could they be a wonder to him?

Woman As Israel

Woman As Church

1. Identifying the Characters

Verse 1 *"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:*

The sun and moon have little application to Israel, not nearly as much as to the Church. The stars are the 12 patriarchs of Israel.

The Church is clothed in the sun which is Christ, darkness (the moon) is under her feet, and the 12 stars are the apostles.

Verse 2 *"And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered."*

This can only mean that Israel travailed to give birth to Jesus, the Messiah. If she is Israel the man-child has to be Jesus.

The Church waits in travailing for the Rapture. (Rom. 8.19-23; 1 Thess. 4.17 & 1 Cor. 15.51-58).

Verse 3 *"And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his head."*

Dragon did not have this glory at time of Jesus' birth. The seventh kingdom was not yet formed and the ten kings are only connected with the Antichrist kingdom at the very end. Bad fit.

Dragon is seen in his final glory at the time of Rapture. Seven kingdoms have come and ten kings (horns) now exist. (See Rev. 17 for further insight on seven kingdoms.)

Verse 4 *"And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the 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."*

Satan tried to devour Jesus when He was born. Good fit.

Satan hopes to destroy raptured saints at moment of resurrection. He is busy positioning for battle.

Verse 5 "And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne."

The man-child is Jesus. He will rule nations, true, but He was not "caught up" to heaven which is a term reserved for rapture. Jesus died, was resurrected and then ascended into heaven, not raptured into heaven. Partial fit.

The birth of the child is a symbol for the rapture. The child is immediately "caught up" to heaven, a term used for the Rapture. We see these saints in ch. four before the throne of God waiting for the seals to be opened and the Tribulation to begin. They are promised in ch. two that they will rule the nations with a rod of iron. Excellent fit.

2. Prophetic About the Tribulation

Verse 6 "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."

This does not fit at all. Israel did not flee anywhere after Jesus was born, or after He ascended to heaven. They resisted their Roman oppressors and were overcome. There was no protection. They were dispersed and their temple destroyed. This has to be purely prophetic.

After the Rapture Satan tries to persecute her but she somehow is shielded. Nothing like this has ever happened in history to date so it has to be in the future. It makes sense this takes place in first half of Tribulation. God feeds her and supernaturally protects her. This is why in our outline we see the fifth seal, the persecution of the saints, opening at the midway point of the Tribulation. It also coincides with the Antichrist setting himself up as God. Adds info to outline.

3. War in Heaven

Verse 7 "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,"

There is no indication in Scripture that war broke out in heaven when Jesus was born, or when He ascended. To the contrary we know Satan is still the “prince of the power of the air” during the age of grace. He remains in heaven accusing the brethren. Remember He asked God to sift Peter. He has access to God.

These angels are messengers sent by God. As Jesus was the mighty angel of chapter ten so these are saints, called “angels” sent to do a job. We can deduce this because verse 11 says these are they who overcame the Dragon by the blood of the Lamb, etc. This cannot be angelic creatures but only humans who are redeemed. Adds insight to raptured saints’ standing and power.

Verse 8 *“And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.”*

This is a defining moment in the history of the universe. Satan is expelled from heaven. It could not have happened in Jesus’ day or during this age. If Satan was not still encamped in heaven’s realm Jesus would not have advised the Church that, “whatsoever ye bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.”

Raptured saints prevail against Satan and the Devil’s minions are kicked out of heaven. Since the battle is fought by those who have overcome Him by Jesus’ blood, etc. this can only mean it is after the first-fruits resurrection, or Rapture, when there is an army of saints there to do it.

Verse 9 *“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.”*

Satan’s only domain now is the earth. He and His minions have no place in heaven. Again, this does not apply to Israel and the time of Jesus’ ministry on earth, or any time during this age.

After the Rapture Satan is remanded to the earth to begin his final judgment. In desperation he unleashes the full power of his hatred and spiritual might on the earth during the Tribulation.

Verse 10 *“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.”*

This is the refrain of Revelation chapters four and five and does not come until the end of this age. Again it does not make sense that this battle and its effects are fought at the time of Jesus's death, resurrection and ascension.

This cross references with chapters four and five. We know Satan is still in heaven accusing the brethren today. He has access to God's throne. Only at start of Tribulation is he fallen completely from heaven's domains.

Verse 11 *"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."*

This is a purely Christian proclamation. It is implied that these are the ones who fought with Michael the archangel and helped to cast Satan out of heaven by the blood of the lamb, their testimonies, and that they did not love their own lives, even to the point of being willing to give it up for Christ.

The word "they" is very significant. "They" clearly refers to man-child, making it plural not singular. Therefore it cannot be that the man-child is Jesus only. This can only be a group of Raptured Christians. This verse also ties the use of the word "angels" in this chapter to men, not heavenly creatures.

4. Results of the War in Heaven

Verse 12 *"Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time."*

This statement could only come at the end of time. The heavens rejoice but the world is told to beware because the Devil has come down in his full fury knowing that he only has a short time. This would imply the seven year period of the Tribulation.

"Woe to the people of the earth and sea" is a Tribulation lament. Satan has little time – seven years to be exact – and he knows it. He is desperate and angry. He wants the worship of mankind. Connects with judgments known as "Woe" judgments.

Verse 13 *"And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child."*

Satan has certainly worked to persecute the Jews so this could fit, but this is not consistent. The verse before is about the Tribulation and now we are looking back to the time when Jesus was born.

During the Tribulation the Church – the true Church – will undergo great revival in the first half of Tribulation. Millions who heard the truth but did not respond to it will be converted and saved. These people will be the focus of Satan's hatred.

Verse 14 *“And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.”*

Again this is a time-span used in reference to the Tribulation. So now we have jumped back to prophecy about future end-times things. This has never before happened in history. It must refer to the Tribulation.

The Church is safe and nourished for first half of Tribulation. We do not know what or who the eagle's wings (possibly raptured saints will help her) represent but this is new info added to our outline.

Verse 15 *“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.”*

This must also be a future event since nothing like this has ever happened in Scripture or history. Some of the time during the Tribulation the Antichrist is received in Israel as the Messiah. Satan does not persecute Israel in the first part of the Tribulation.

Satan does try to persecute the Church in the first three and half years of the Tribulation but she is protected by God. He even tries to destroy her with some kind of major catastrophe or world-wide campaign of terror. This must be in the future.

Verse 16 *“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.”*

Nothing like this has ever happened to Israel so this must also be a Tribulation prophecy. It must be a first half Tribulation prophecy because the persecution is foiled and we know that the Devil has power to persecute in the second half. The first half of Tribulation is a time of false peace between the Antichrist and the nation Israel, not attempted persecution. Bad fit again.

This fits well with the idea that the Church will be attacked but protected by God and supernatural forces during the first half of the Tribulation, but then “killed all the day long” during the second half after the Antichrist has taken his abominable throne in Jerusalem. Nothing like this has ever happened before. We will have to wait to see what this symbolizes.

Verse 17 *“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.”*

Bad fit for argument that this is Israel. Maybe we can argue that this is Israel/Church because they keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. But we cannot say this is emblematic of Israel only. They do not, at this point, have the testimony of Jesus. That comes at the end of the Tribulation when they look upon Jesus coming back on a white horse in glory (Rev. 19).

We know that after being foiled the Devil will not be discouraged. He goes after the Church with all his fury and anger and God has said he would be given power through his man, the Antichrist, to kill and overcome the saints for three and a half years. (Dan. 7.25) We know that many Christians are martyred during the Tribulation. (Rev. 7.9-17) This whole chapter then pertains to a subject not covered at all in the outline, i.e. the Church in the first half of the Tribulation. New information. Good fit.

At verse six we now have to leap ahead thousands of years to the Tribulation. We must believe that Israel will be given a hiding place by God for three and a half years during the Tribulation. There is full agreement that this is a reference to the Tribulation because nothing like it has ever happened to Israel, or the Church, so it must be in the future, at the end. It cannot be historical because Israel has never fled anywhere to avoid persecution. Verses 7-11 describe something entirely new to Scripture – a war in

heaven. Up until now the Bible has only given hints and quick glances into this battle in the heavens but now we see Satan and His hosts cast out by the power of those who trusted in the blood of the Lamb, by the word of their testimony and that they loved not their lives unto the death. They are overcomers. These testimonies are not suited to describe Israel at the time of Christ's birth or even the time of the rapture. Israel gets saved by the preaching of the Two Witnesses, the 144,000 Jews, by judgment and persecution. They will be saved when "*they look upon me [Jesus] whom they have pierced*", as we are told in Zechariah.

The next verses, dealing with the effects of the man-child's birth and the war in heaven, really get tangled if we think the woman is Israel. Verse twelve commands the heavens to rejoice, for the Devil is out of heaven, but tells the earth to mourn because the Devil has come down to earth and he knows his time is short. This must be a reference to the Tribulation. The same verse is used in the first half of Revelation (8.13&12.12). This is future prophecy. But then, the very next verse requires us to stop looking ahead with a prophetic eye and look back to the beginning of this age once again. We have already been forced to believe that Satan was cast out of heaven when Jesus ascended to heaven to be with the Father, so the persecution must be speaking of the entire age and so must the reference to flying into the wilderness and being nourished for three and a half years. Now, in verse 13 we seem to go back to the past again, or at least jump two thousand years to the birth of the man-child and the subsequent persecution of the woman, who is Israel. Then in fourteen we know we are talking about the future because this miracle of flying on the wings of an eagle has not happened to either Israel or the Church. This must be

during the Tribulation and again we are given a time span which not coincidentally equals one half of the seven-year Tribulation period. Confused yet? Fifteen and sixteen are, then, some further future event during the Tribulation. This only makes the dragon even more angry at the woman and he sets about to make war with her and the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. This is very hard to accept as Israel alone, if not impossible. They do not have the testimony of Jesus Christ – yet. At best we could call this the Church/Israel and apply one verse to the Church and one to Israel, and though this seems like it might work it does not make things crystal clear. Too much is too vague. So if you are completely confused don't be surprised. So am I. That's why the woman being Israel is hard to figure.

If the Woman is the Church

When we look at the woman as the Church things are consistent. It is a look into the future exclusively. John calls it a wonder. It is all new to him. The chapter does what the rest of the topical chapters do; provides us with further detail and information about the outline. We are given profoundly new insights into the prophecies of Revelation. It is all in the future. There is no jumping and leaping back and forth between the beginning of the age and the end of the age.

The first five verses are easy to interpret. They almost interpret themselves. The woman is clothed in Jesus. Darkness and night are vanquished, under her feet. She is a child of the day. She is crowned with a crown of leadership as symbolized by the twelve stars. Jesus appears in this chapter not as the man-child but as the covering (the sun) for the Church. The Devil appears in his final form with the seven kingdoms of history and the ten kings of the

Antichrist Kingdom as his glory. The rapture happens and the Devil is foiled in his attempt to stop or disrupt it. The stage is set for a Tribulation battle in heaven.

More new information is now added to the outline of chapters 4-11. Verse six shows that after the Rapture the Church is protected for three and a half years (the first half of the Tribulation). Souls are won and sinners are saved. God is feeding the Church like never before. We also find out in verses 7-11 that at the time of the Rapture a great battle takes place. The saints beat back the Devil and his army of angels and they cast out that Old Serpent from heaven. God has reserved the moment of victory in heaven for His Son's great army of believers. The angelic creatures, along with Michael the archangel, are part of this victory but the real battle is fought by the glorified and resurrected saints.

We discover that while heaven is freed of the stench of Satan's rebellion, the earth will still suffer from his anger and wrath. He is desperate now because he knows it is almost over for him. Verse eleven tells us who the champions of the hour are when we are told that, *"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"*. That has to be The Church.

Chapter twelve ends by telling us the results of this war in heaven. We are told there will be two supernatural events that will help the Church for the first half of the Tribulation. She will be flown by the wings of an eagle (what that is we do not know) to a safe-haven (where that is we cannot tell for sure). We are told also that the Devil will try to destroy her by a flood but the earth will swallow it up (chapter 12). This protection will take place in the first half, we are told. But the Devil will not be deterred and he will come after her

and the remnant of her seed during the Tribulation until he succeeds in overwhelming her, and we know from the first part of Revelation that the Antichrist, Satan's man, will have power to kill the saints during the second half of the Tribulation.

This interpretation makes good sense and it fulfills a requirement of the later chapters and adds new knowledge to Revelation's outline.

This is Christ's Wife

Jesus is Revelation's central character. The great teacher of Revelation, Dr. Joseph Seiss, entitled his classic series of lectures in the 1850s on the book of Revelation, *The Apocalypse*, the Greek word meaning "the revealing". Revelation is really the revealing of Jesus Christ in His glorified state in heaven. In Revelation we see His true, full identity and character. An aspect of Christ's "revealing" to us is the revelation of the Church. The New Testament teaches that the Church is a part of Christ, that they are to be one. She is meant to reflect His light. She is meant to put on His righteousness. He is the Head; she is the body. She is the virgin espoused to one husband; her husband is Jesus Christ. Her fidelity is her greatest virtue; rejection of all idolatry is paramount. We shall see this in chapters 17 and 18 when we discuss their meaning and implications. Because Christ is the Head and the Church the Body, it is reasonable to conclude that the Church is the second most important character in the book of Revelation and plays the second biggest role in the drama of restoration of the earth. She is Christ's wife. Who or what could be more important in a book that reveals Christ's true being. Christ cannot be revealed in His fullness without revealing His wife, the Church. For, *"Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the*

washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” (Eph. 5.25-27). The Church and Christ are to be married. It is God’s plan that marriage should make two into one. “For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” (Ephesians 5.30-32). Revelation is the finale. It is the last word on revealing Jesus in God’s Holy Word. In it His marriage to His bride is consummated and they become one. Is it any wonder that the topical chapters would begin by revealing more intimate details about Christ’s body and His wife?

Woman Second Most Important Character

Without question, the central character of Revelation is Jesus. He appears in every chapter and in a variety of roles, all in keeping with His character as Redeemer and Savior of mankind. He is the one who holds the church angels and leaders in the palm of His hand and decides whether a Church is in good standing or not. He is the Lamb that was slain. He is the only one worthy to take possession of the sealed title deed of the earth and open it. He initiates every judgment. He is the mighty angel that hands the deed of the earth over to the Church, the rightful heirs to the purchased possession. He appears as the reaper. He returns as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

The second most central character, without dispute, is the Church. Chapters one through three are devoted exclusively to the Church. In all of the chapters that follow she is actively involved or represented. It makes sense that God would begin the section of topical chapters by revealing more intimate truths about His Son’s separated

ones (The Church). If this reference to the woman were strictly referring to the Jews then this would be the only chapter where the Church does not have some kind of representation either in action or by being acted upon. When Israel appears in Revelation it is mentioned by name, but the Church's role, like that of Jesus, is much more diversified and complex. She has a number of sub-groups who take part in various aspects of Tribulation affairs; the rapture, the persecutions, marriage supper of the Lamb, preaching the gospel and performing various ministerial and priestly tasks. There are different companies of believers with different functions, stations and rewards, as indicated in Psalm 45. For example, the 24 elders who are redeemed from every kindred, tongue, nation and peoples, and are in heaven before the first seal is even broken, are not only leaders of faith and the Church they are among the raptured members of the Church. We are told that those who are resurrected from under the altar and receive white robes and palm branches are saints who come out of the great Tribulation. We find in this chapter that the saints make war with Satan in heaven. And we shall find later on that the saints preach the gospel to the whole world from heaven during the second half of the Tribulation. Her duties are many and varied. Her rewards are given to sub-groups according to the obedience and faithfulness with which they discharged their duties.

Final Battle Of War Started In Eden

When Chapter twelve opens we immediately see that the characters are locked in mortal combat. The Dragon positions himself to devour the man-child at the moment of its birth and then sets out to harass, persecute and kill the woman. The battle is arrayed on two fronts: heaven and earth. We are viewing the last campaign of the Dragon's

age-old war against the woman and her seed. This is the woman and the Dragon: The Final Confrontation. Chapter twelve is the conclusion of the oldest, most heated battle of the human race. It is the battle between the Devil and the woman and her seed. Does it not seem fitting that the final campaign to win the war against Satan would be fought by the Church, the called-out ones, the ones separated by the blood of Christ and given the sword of the Spirit through faith in the Son of God? This then is the sun-clothed woman. Consider first of all that the battle began in the Garden of Eden when the Serpent instigated and beguiled the woman into eating from the forbidden tree of knowledge. When the man followed along and disobeyed, eating the fruit, the battle lines were drawn. Because of Adam and Eve's disobedience and lack of trust in God their seed also became corrupted and perverted. Mankind had gained a practical, working knowledge of evil. Now they could see. Now they could choose to do anything their mind and heart could conceive. The result was instant sin. The effect was to cause the two of them to hide from God because of guilt and shame. The price they paid for their sin was death. The battle to redeem them from the clutches of the Dragon, that old Serpent, Satan, was on. God moved immediately to give them hope and restore their life to Him. But it would be a long war. First he established the rules. He pronounced judgment on the man and the woman, one would labor and never know security and peace, the other would travail to bring forth a seed that would someday redeem their situation and restore their standing with God. Both were condemned to a life of hardship and then death. Because they had not trusted Him they were now required to believe the impossible, that He would raise them from the grave to eternal life with

Him. God also pronounced judgment on the Devil, prophesying of his defeat through the seed (the man-child) of the woman. God foretold of the raging battle that would ensue. There would be an ongoing struggle between the woman and the Devil. *“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman”*, God told the Devil. He also said He would put enmity between the Devil’s seed and her seed. Gradually through the law and the prophets it was revealed that this great battle would finally be resolved only after the man-child defeated the Devil. The seed would suffer injury (the cross) but the Devil’s power would be destroyed and He would go into oblivion.

“And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” (Gen. 3.14-19)

This is the last battle of the long war between the woman, the Devil and the seed of the woman. Does it not make sense that the final combatant would be the Church – the Bride which God has prepared for His Son?

Who is The Man-child?

”And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered (Rev.12.2)

...And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.” (Rev.12.5)

We must also bring chapter twelve into context with the rest of Revelation and the chronology of events in which we have already been schooled. Does it make good sense that God would begin to give us a history lesson about Christ’s birth as a Jew and His deliverance from Satan at this point in Revelation? (Jesus always appears in a glorified powerful way in Revelation, in the way He really is now.) Does it make sense that God would depict the Savior in a way that has been already revealed in the Gospels and revealed throughout the epistles of the New Testament? Revelation is about the appearing of Jesus and its consequences, good and bad, for the whole earth and its inhabitants. No, this imagery must be about the birth of the saints into eternity and life. It must be about the Rapture. The Roman Catholic and Episcopalian Churches for centuries have tried to sell believers on the proposition that Revelation is all historical, except for the final three chapters which record the return of Jesus and the thousand-year rule of the Millennium – a notion that is always implied to be sometime off in a distant eon to come. But if we believe that, then we must discard all of prophecy. Jesus’ words are then vague and obscure, ultimately meaningless. Daniel is hardly even interesting reading if it is only history. But Jesus (around

the year 90 AD, when Revelation was penned) makes it clear that Revelation concerns the end of the age. With this firmly fixed in our mind, let's take a discerning look at the symbols.

The chronological chapters begin with John being caught up to heaven in an acting out of the Rapture. God begins the topical chapters with a picture of the Rapture as well. He does this in order to give us further insight into this crucial event in the overall plan to redeem man. God has already spoken at length about the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ in the Gospels, Acts and Epistles. In Revelation He is revealing the secrets of the Rapture. At the summation of our study we will find no less than seven references to the Rapture in seven separate chapters. Each one reveals more detail and insight into this glorious and long anticipated event. The Rapture is the great hope of the Church and was always supposed to be. It is the reward held out to all saints that strive for perfection of obedience in Christ. At the time of the Tribulation the Rapture is history. Revelation not only tells us about the qualities inherent in those who "are counted in that number" it also shows us some of its effects and fruits. We cannot see how the man-child being "caught up" is anything short of a picture of the Rapture. What follows the appearance of the woman and the birth of the man-child only supports our conclusion that this is just another perspective about the Rapture.

The time frame of three and a half years mentioned in the chapter cannot be construed as historical, for this is the time span used so consistently to refer to the Tribulation. It is only reasonable that we continue to expect this is the time frame to which chapter twelve refers. Later in the chapter we are told that "they" overcame; not "he"

overcame, but “they” overcame. This is an obvious reference to a group of people (the Church) and not a singular person (Jesus). The chapter also refers to the woman’s seed being caught up and a remnant of that seed being left behind. This too implies a group of people and they hold the testimony of Jesus. It would not be said of Jesus that He held the testimony of Jesus. His testimony, as we shall hear later in Revelation, is the spirit of prophecy, The Church’s testimony is the testimony of Jesus as their Lord and Savior. This remnant, the remnant left behind after the Rapture, is the Tribulation martyrs who will suffer persecution and death under the reign of the Antichrist. †

The Beast and the False Prophet

The mere mention of the word “Antichrist” has captivated popular imagination for two thousand years. In our time it has occasioned books, movies and television shows galore. Yet, the Antichrist is not the invention of man or the germ of his fertile imagination. Its origins are purely Biblical. The Bible coined the word Antichrist and has initiated all true prophecies about it. The whole story of the Antichrist is revealed exclusively in the Holy Scriptures and there is no authentic source of knowledge about the Antichrist spirit, its system, its kingdom or the man, other than the Bible. Early Church fathers like Paul, Peter, John, Irenaeus, Jerome and Augustine knew the Antichrist was coming and anticipated his domination of the world just before Christ’s return. Charlatans and false prophets like Nostradamus have tried to jump on the bandwagon, like they had something novel to offer, but there is nothing either unique or worthy about such so-called prophecies. They are

nothing more than stupid smoke-screens thrown up by Satan to confuse and defame the true prophecies concerning the Antichrist. While commentaries on Revelation are helpful, the Bible must remain the one true source of Antichrist revelation. The Bible is the one place believers must turn to for their knowledge and understanding of what the book of Revelation calls “the Beast”. It is the hope of this writing that this study will squelch some of the gross misconceptions about the Antichrist and direct the reader into the firm spiritual footing of Scripture. We should be able to do this if we keep a single eye focused on the Bible.

The Term – *Antichrist*

The name *Antichrist* has been used interchangeably by prophetic teachers since the second century AD to denote both Satan’s kingdom on earth and the man who leads it. The expression *Antichrist*, however, is used only four times in the Bible, all in I & II John. Simply put it defines the *Antichrist* as anyone who opposes Christ. In these references the Church is directly warned that the spirit of Antichrist is already active in the world, working its calumny and evil.

“Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time...” (I John 2.18)

“Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is Antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.” (I John 2.22)

Though the title *Antichrist* may not be the best way to identify Satan’s system and his man of the end times, it is the one we are stuck with. The best scriptural choice would have been “The Beast”, the term used by the Bible’s

two primary sources of Antichrist information, the books of Daniel and Revelation. Also, there are a variety of other terms employed by scripture to designate the Antichrist. The term “king of the north” is used in Daniel chapter eleven to name both the man and the kingdom. In Ezekiel the city state of Tyrus serves as an allegory for the Antichrist state, “the prince of Tyrus” symbolizes the Antichrist himself, and the “king of Tyrus” is used to represent Satan. (Eze. 27&28) Daniel also calls the man the “vile person” and the “little horn”, while the kingdoms that make up the Antichrist are all called “beasts”. In I Thessalonians Paul calls him the “son of perdition”. And he is labeled the “evil one”, the “wicked one” and the “man of sin” in various other places in Scripture. But because of centuries of common usage we will continue to use the moniker “Antichrist” even though “Beast” might be better.

Chapter thirteen of Revelation is one of a handful of primary places in the Bible that focus in on the Antichrist. There are two main characters in the chapter: the Antichrist and his cohort, the False Prophet. The predominant theme of the chapter, however, is the world’s worship and adoration of the Antichrist. In bringing about this worship, Satan, the Antichrist and the False Prophet attack the kingdom of God with all of Hell’s fury and power. Chapter thirteen brings to the fore Satan’s last-ditch effort to usurp God’s throne and win the worship of mankind. Out of the eighteen verses comprising chapter thirteen there are four direct references to the worship of the Antichrist and a half dozen verses which show the machinations of Satan designed to coax the people into worshiping himself and the Beast. The fact that the worship of the Antichrist is the main point of chapter thirteen is often lost in the maze of rumor that normally

precedes most discussions on the Antichrist. But this, the worship of Satan and His man, will be the central area of emphasis in our study of chapter thirteen.

Daniel First Saw *The Beast*

Prior to chapter thirteen the bulk of our Biblical knowledge about the Antichrist system and the man who rules it came from the book of Daniel and its prophecies in chapters 2, 7, 8, 9 and 11. Daniel is jam-packed with prophecies about the Antichrist – both, man and kingdom. We must draw on this information if we are to understand chapter thirteen fully.

Any mention of the Antichrist has been fleeting, thus far, in Revelation. He has appeared only briefly in two places, Revelation 6.2 and 11.7. The initial allusion comes when the first judgment seal is broken. He is seen riding a white horse, *“going forth conquering and to conquer”*. Though this is very significant because it establishes the Antichrist’s presence throughout the entire Tribulation period and tells us that he and his kingdom are the first of all the judgments unleashed on the earth, the prophecy does not go into much detail. The second mention from 11.7 adds to our knowledge because it speaks of his origin and supernatural power. It tells us that he (his power and spirit) comes from the bottomless pit. *“And when they shall have finished their testimony [The Two Witnesses], the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.”* All his powers and authority are hellish. He is given tremendous power, even the power, as we see in the above verse, to overcome and kill God’s Two Witnesses. But this is about all we know of him so far. Chapter thirteen

will add extensively to our knowledge of this “son of perdition”.¹

Through the introductory verses of chapter thirteen we see a startling portrait of the Beast from the bottomless pit.

“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 which 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.” (Rev. 13.1-2)

These two opening verses are extremely dramatic because they resurrect the awesome vision which God had given to Daniel 500 years earlier. The vision of the Antichrist was generally forgotten, discarded or misunderstood, until John recorded this second heavenly sighting of the Beast around the year 90 AD. John has been watching the conflict between the woman and the Dragon in heaven, then suddenly, alarmingly, he finds himself standing on a beach on earth looking out onto a menacing sea. As he gazes out he sees a chilling, terrifying sight. A beast, like none he or any other man (except Daniel) had ever seen before, rises up out of the water. The beast has seven heads and ten horns and names of blasphemy plastered all over it. John does not ask what this enormous monster represents and no angel offers a word to explain it. This is because the keys to understanding who and what this beast symbolizes are to be found in the ancient prophecies of Daniel (and in a later interpretation given to John by an angel in chapter seventeen of Revelation). It

1. John 17:12 & 2 Thess. 2:3

is probable that John, being familiar with Daniel's writing, even knew that this was the Antichrist embodied in all its end-times evil and power.

The Ten Horns: The Final Kingdom

The ten horns are a tip-off that this beast must be the same beast that appeared to Daniel.

“After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.

(Dan. 7.7)

The ten horns and what they represent are very significant throughout Scriptural prophecies about the Antichrist. They represent a kingdom in their own right. But they are the kingdom which the Antichrist takes over, the foundation which provides him with the means of world domination. The master of the kingdom of the ten horns and the master of the Antichrist is Satan. This is why in chapter twelve the Dragon also appears with ten horns, but unlike the horns of the Antichrist, Satan's horns have crowns. This indicates that Satan is not only the ruler of the confederacy of the ten kings but he is the Antichrist's leader as well.

As for the ten horns themselves we are directly told what they stand for in both Daniel and Revelation seventeen. They represent ten leaders of ten nations who will form a confederacy in the last days which will create the power base for the Antichrist.

“And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings.”

(Dan. 7.24)

AND

“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.” (Rev. 17.12,13)

A Reunified Roman Empire

The ten toes in the vision of the colossal statue of Daniel chapter two and the ten horns of the later visions of Daniel and Revelation are merely two ways of expressing the same thing. In the vision of Daniel two a stone from heaven, symbolizing Christ’s kingdom, crashes into the ten toes of the statue and brings down the entire Antichrist Kingdom, crushing it, and blowing its dust into oblivion. Since the Antichrist empire has not been crushed yet by Christ’s kingdom, and will not be until the end of the Tribulation, we can conclude that the Empire of that vision, which is the Roman Empire, has not ceased to exist in one form or another from that time until the present; and that it will not cease to exist until it is destroyed at the coming of Christ with ten thousands of His saints². We can further deduce that the ten kingdoms, as toes or horns, are an extension, even appendages, of the Roman Empire. Whether represented by the ten toes in chapter two, or the ten horns on top of the Antichrist beast’s head they should be considered as extensions of Rome. In that sense it is the same kingdom with the same spirit and it has remained alive.³ Though both expressions, toes or horns, represent the continuing nature of the same Roman Empire, the two modes of expression relate different attributes of the same Roman beast. In the imagery of the ten toes God establishes

2. Jude 1:14; Rev. 19

3. Dan. 2.34-35, Dan. 7, Rev. 13 and Rev. 17

two immensely important prophetic truths about the history and inner makeup of the Antichrist empire. Like the toes, which are partly of iron and partly clay, the empire would be partly strong and partly weak being divided from within. (Dan. 2.41-42)

“And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.

And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters’ clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay.

And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken.”
(Dan. 2.40-42)

Anyone with only a nodding acquaintance of the history of Western Civilization can see the obvious fulfillment of this prophecy. Europe, with its ongoing pulsating spirit of Rome, has been divided and weakened since the days of the end of Roman Imperial majesty and yet “Rome” lives on. Its culture, government, philosophies and ideals have reached into all continents and expanded everywhere through colonialism, imperialism, commerce and finance. It is still the dominant force in the world today. Because of internal wars and occasional onslaught from outside forces like Islam, “Rome” has been kept in a weakened state and partially divided by God so it would not be able to overrun the world; and will stay that way – until the time of the end, that is.

But the ten toes do not simply indicate division in the monolithic monster, it ultimately indicates unity. Most, if not all, commentators of Revelation and Daniel believe

these ten horns and ten toes mean that the Roman Empire will be revived and reunified in the end. Verse two of chapter thirteen tells us that this Beast has the body of a bear, the feet of a leopard and the mouth of lion. These are the same animals that God used to represent the kingdom of the “vile person” in Daniel chapter seven. You will recall that Daniel had seen the four great Antichrist kingdoms one by one as they morphed into the Antichrist kingdom of the end. Babylon, the first kingdom, was represented by a lion, the second was Persia, likened to a bear, and the third was Greece, symbolized by a leopard. All three of these rose up, ruled the world, and gave way to the next until they finally evolved into the Roman Empire which was symbolized by a “dreadful and terrible beast” with iron teeth, and ten horns. This final empire is the oppressive empire pictured in Daniel that devours the world and stamps the residue under its feet. This is the ruthlessness of the oppressive governments that have dominated Europe, Western Civilization and the world through colonialism, slavery and war for 2500 years. It is the ten horns and their connection with the Roman Empire that has convinced prophetic scholars that the kingdom of the ten horns will mean some kind of European reunion.

The history of Europe since the birth of Christ has proven this prophecy to be true. The Roman Empire has continued in one form or another, sometimes as the Holy Roman Empire, sometimes as the Papacy, but it has always been weakened by divisions from within because of the petty jealousies or personal ambition of its monarchs or because of regional, religious or nationalistic pride. But now, through a series of supernatural miracles, this division is more than just beginning to fade. The European Community is already a reality. Old hatreds and fears are

dissolving away like peace treaties used to be ignored in Europe. How long can it be until a cartel of ten nations forms out of these former nations of Roman heritage and tradition? Most prophetic students zero in on Europe, but we must also consider that the ten kings may not be limited to ruling over single nations. The prophecy talks of ten kingdoms. It could be that one king might be the leader over an organization like NAFTA, The North American Free Trade Association, comprising Canada, the United States and Mexico. There could be one or two leaders representing a group or groups from Africa or South America. The Commonwealth of Great Britain, including Australia could be another “kingdom” represented by one of the ten “kings”. Though it has been common in the second half of the twentieth century to look at the fulfillment of the ten kings prophecy as being ten nations in Europe, it could be much broader than that. Great Britain has a Roman heritage, North and South America, with their roots in European civilization, religion and culture, could be considered “grandchildren” of Rome. Northern Africa was not only a part of the Roman Empire but a stronghold of commercial and intellectual activity for the Empire for better than five centuries. It must be considered, therefore, that the empire of the ten kings could include ten kingdoms but many nations. In this way the Antichrist’s Empire at the end will very nearly, if not entirely (excluding the Far East and maybe Russia) comprise all the nations of the world.

Once the ten kings form their union things will be firmly in place for the Antichrist to establish the eighth kingdom, which Revelation seventeen tells us is merely an extension of the seventh kingdom, but instead of having some form of democratic-republic or parliamentary government, the

Antichrist's government will be an absolute dictatorship.⁴ But Daniel hints that the Antichrist's rise to power will not be without intrigue and conflict. It is very likely that the Antichrist will be a subtle and relatively uncelebrated, if not obscure, political figure when he is given the role as leader of the confederacy. The landscape of history is littered with examples of Antichrist types. Alexander the Great was only 19 years-old when he ascended to his murdered father's throne. Napoleon was an insignificant artillery lieutenant before his meteoric rise to Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Hitler's highest rank was as corporal in the German infantry during World War I. Scripture – and history – lead us to expect that the Antichrist will “sneak up” on the world. The ten kingdoms of the end will first form their own union. But they will be at loggerheads to select a leader or president. Then a certain leader will come up with a scheme that will be acceptable to all ten leaders. They will give over their power and authority to one man to serve as a figurehead.

“And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries. (Dan.11.21)

They will have no idea that this man is Satan's anointed one. In Daniel we are told that he will win the power of the kingdom by flatteries. That probably means he will sweet talk his way into the job and none of the ten leaders will see him as a threat to their authority and sovereignty. But Daniel tells us that three of the kings have second thoughts about abdicating their authority to him.

“I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up

4. Rev. 17.11

among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.” (Dan. 7.8)

Along with two other “kings” the leader of the league is caught unawares by the Antichrist’s talents and craftiness. At first the Antichrist seemed like someone they could manipulate, but soon after making him the head of their new confederacy, the main organizer or “prince of the covenant”, as Daniel calls him, tries to bring down the Antichrist’s government. The Antichrist acts swiftly. It is likely this dissenter will be defeated in some quick military strike that causes the world to marvel at the Antichrist’s decisiveness and brilliance. The rebellion is quelled; even the head of the league is made to submit, and all ten nations fall into line.

“And with the arms of a flood shall they be overflowed from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant.” (Dan. 11.22)

Soon the Antichrist becomes a world class figure. He begins to weave his political magic. He becomes immensely popular, especially with a small group, or nation, of people. Now there will be no stopping him.

“And after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people.” (Dan. 11.23)

This may well take place before the beginning of the Tribulation. Remember, the Tribulation does not begin until the Antichrist signs the “covenant” with many nations. It is not until this peace pact with Israel, which includes the reestablishment of the Mosaic sacrifices, that the last week of Daniel’s 70-week prophecy begins. This means that the Antichrist may be revealed to those with

scriptural knowledge well in advance of the Tribulation, and perhaps even before the Rapture. It could explain the words of Paul in II Thessalonians when he wrote,

“That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

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” (II Thess. 2-3)

They Worshiped *The Beast*

Regardless of when the Antichrist is revealed, verse three and four make it clear that the world is fully primed to worship the Beast by the time the Tribulation gets into full swing. Satan begins a series of maneuvers and a show of power to lure the entire earth into this evil worship of him and his “son”.

“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 unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?” (Rev.

13.3-4)

Everyone likes to gripe about politicians and the government. The subject of the Antichrist is a great springboard for airing social discontent. Christian books about the coming new world order and the rise of big brother politics often contribute to the misunderstanding of the Antichrist. Dire warnings about financial doom and how to divorce ourselves from the “Antichrist conspiracy” take priority in discussions and teachings. Disclosures about the coming “big brother” system, supported by Scripture or not, take up most chapters in contemporary

books on Revelation. The rumor mill overflows with warnings about sinister organizations like The “Illuminati”, “The Club of Rome”, “The Tri-lateralist Commission”, The Treasury Department and a host of others. While these groups, and the world-wide ecumenical movement are at work building up to the Antichrist system the conclusions and warnings we are given are often unwise, carnal advice. The truth is that the world will worship the Beast willingly, not ignorantly. The book of Revelation says that *“all the world wondered after the beast”,* and *“all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb...”*. We must not get sucked into fighting the inevitable rise of the Antichrist and his system. Rather, we must stay sure that we are not choked by the cares of this world, either by fighting political battles or protecting traditions that must nevertheless fade away, no matter how righteous or gleaming they appear. Most Christians, even for all of the warnings in Scripture, will be caught off guard because this man, as his predecessors did, will come as an “angel of light”. He will be brilliant. He will have a velvet tongue and an invincible sword. He will voice the most wonderful slogans and offer hope to every class of people. He will have religious remedies for every spiritual ailment. (Religion will be one of his allies because he has one objective in mind – worship; total and unrestrained worship for himself and his master by mankind.) He will have a ready solution for every world problem. He will fulfill the prophecy spoken by Jesus when the Lord said, *“I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.”* The Antichrist will look like, talk like, act like and claim to be the “Messiah”, the savior of all mankind and the world.

Satan begins his campaign for worship right away. The Beast is dealt a mortal wound to the head and the Devil raises him from the dead. This “miracle of miracles” causes the world to believe that the Antichrist is the one true God. For Satan this is what the Tribulation battle is all about. This is what the battle of the ages has always been about. This is the moment of time he has waited for. He wants the worship and adoration which is due the Father and the Lamb only. But nothing else will do; Satan is a robber and this is the greatest possession of God that Satan wants. This false resurrection is the put- up job of all put-up jobs. It is the scam of all scams. Arthur Bloomfield and Gordon Lindsay point out that during the Tribulation Satan needs a body to do his evil work. It is at this moment that Satan enters the Antichrist. Satan and the Antichrist are now one. This is Satan’s counterfeit of God and the Son being one.

All-out Assault on God and His Kingdom

“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.” (Rev. 13.5-6)

Satan hopes to manipulate the adoration of all mankind by engineering this pseudo-resurrection. At the crucifixion there were those devil’s disciples who mocked Jesus, saying, “if you truly be the Son of God come down off the cross and save yourself.” They laughed at Christ with jeering voices, “He could save others but himself he cannot save.” Now the world will have a Messiah that is able to save himself. He will come to life again and promise to save the world. He will say every manner of evil thing against God. He will mock Jesus and call him a traitor to mankind. We know he will

say the worst kinds of blasphemy. He will probably chide Christians for believing in a Jesus who went away and did not care about suffering people. He will claim to be risen from the dead and willing to stay in this world for the sake of straightening it out right away. He will begin the most vicious campaign ever devised against God and everything that is holy. Daniel says he will change the times and laws.

“And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.” (Dan. 7.25)

Changing laws and times has religious overtones to it. To the Jew this meant the law of Moses and the prescribed feasts in the law. This implies that the Antichrist will turn black into white, and make that which is holy profane and that which is profane a holy thing. He will dare to set up his own holy days and religious rituals and standards. He will shake his fist at God and challenge Him to a final duel. His bravado and swagger will make the rebellious world confident to follow him and resist the Christian God. His defiance of God will know no bounds. Those who continue to follow Jesus Christ will be maligned, persecuted and tracked down like animals for execution.

“And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, 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.” (Rev. 13.7-8)

We have already seen in the first half of the book of Revelation that the saints are martyred for keeping the word and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Both Daniel and Revelation declare that the Antichrist will have power over

the saints in order to purify and purge the Tribulation Church. These are the saints that were unable to hear the call of the spirit when times were not so difficult. They were not able to believe in Jesus when they could not see him and all of the spiritual realities that are declared in the Bible. These are the doubting Thomases. They now have been forced to die for Jesus or live with the prospect of eternal damnation.

All those who are not followers of Jesus will worship the Beast. It seems petty to the world but it is true: in God's eyes it is about choosing sides. Joshua preached it to Israel – *“Choose ye this day whom ye will serve... as for me and my house we shall serve the Lord!”* Jesus said, *“He who is not for me is against me.”* Christians feel condemned at times when this is rejected by faithless people or Christians who like to sit on the fence, one foot in the world and one foot in Christ. But the simple truth is that we must choose sides. At no time in history will this be more evident than during the Tribulation. Either a person will take the Mark of the Beast and worship Satan and his man, or they will refuse the mark, stay steadfast to Jesus Christ's name and accept martyrdom. There will be no form of salvation for Jew or Gentile, except dying for Jesus, the Lamb who was slain to give us eternal life and pardon of sin. But the greatest part of humanity will worship the Beast. Because the world will follow the Antichrist and reject Jesus, the spirit speaks this refrain after telling us of the Antichrist's power to get people to worship him. The plea that is written in the letters to the seven churches in chapters two and three of Revelation is once again voiced by the spirit.

“If any man have an ear, let him hear.” (Rev.13.9)

The Tribulation saints are then given this somber warning.

“He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.” (Rev.13.10)

There is to be no retaliation by the saints of God. God has declared this as the patience and the faith of the saints. They will have to submit to the slaughter. As it is written in the Psalms:

“Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. (Ps. 44.22)

From under the altar in chapter six we have already seen the Tribulation saints who were being martyred.

“And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. (Rev. 6.9-11)

The tone of this passage indicates the saints will not take revenge for their blood but must wait on the Lord to do it. They cry out to God saying, *“how long must we wait? How long do we have to be as sheep led to the slaughter before we are avenged and vindicated?”* *“Until the number of those who are to be saved is full”*, is the reply. They must be patient and accept their fate and then they shall receive their crowns of life.

New Information: An Unholy Trinity

“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.” (Rev. 13.11)

Now we see even further into Satan's true purposes. It is no longer a mystery. The true aim of the Antichrist and his system is worship. Keeping with the purpose of the topical chapters, God is about to add totally new information to our knowledge and understanding of this man who Daniel says, "*understands dark sentences*"⁵. A basic tenet of our study is that the topical chapters, 12-19, all add new information to the outline of Tribulation events which we have been given in chapters 4-11. This is never more true than in chapter thirteen. An entirely new character is even introduced, never before seen and only hinted at in previous Scripture. This villainous person is the False Prophet, looking like a *Lamb* but actually having two horns and speaking like a dragon. He is the third member of a wicked triumvirate made up of: the Dragon, the Beast and the Two-Horned Lamb. This is Satan's counterpart to the true Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Chapter thirteen reveals an unholy trinity. Arthur Bloomfield in his book *All Things New*, describes their relationship like this,

The dragon and the two beasts are a trinity of evil, one in spirit and purpose, and there is no reason for separating them in our thinking. Satan will counterfeit the Trinity. There will be three personalities in one satanic head. They are Antichrist. Even the people recognize this when they worship both the beast and the dragon.

We shall see that this unholy trinity will launch an all-out assault on God's name and His kingdom including heaven's inhabitants and the saints of Christ. This war will be waged with every means at Satan's disposal. Its design is to gain the full worship and adoration of the world. God will allow

5. Dan. 8.23

the False Prophet to do the most amazing miracles, ones that rival those of Jesus and the Two Witnesses.

“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 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 unto 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.”

(Rev.13.12-17)

This is the incredible ministry of the *False Prophet*. His mission is to give credence to the worship of the Antichrist. That is his sole purpose on earth. It is a perfect counterfeit of the ministry of the Holy Ghost which works to give glory to Jesus Christ. He can call down fire, just as The Two Witnesses can. He draws attention to the resurrection of the Beast by doing miracles and curing people of disease. They will likely seem very humanitarian acts of love and charity. These will be held in contrast to the current state of affairs and the judgments which are causing death and misery throughout the earth. All the miracles will be

performed in the presence of the Antichrist and they can only be done when the Antichrist is present. These two will deceive the whole earth, we are told.

We find out in these verses that the *Abomination of Desolation* is, at least partly, an image of the Antichrist that actually comes alive and is able to speak. This evil priest and religious leader, this False Prophet, is the one who initiates the creation of this abominable image. We even find out that it is the False Prophet who makes people take the mark of the Beast as a sign of worship and allegiance to him. This is the final fruit of false religion. The goal of the Whore of Babylon has been to do this from the very beginning. The False Prophet is the one who pulls it off in the name of the Antichrist. The False Prophet is an enormously important figure during the Tribulation and often overlooked in prophetic movies and studies. He is the religious force, the one who leads the world into worship and adoration of the Antichrist. Ministers, bishops and Christian leaders don't like talking about the False Prophet and the part that religion will play in the conspiracy of the end times. It often hits too close to home; professional caution teaches them not to criticize their own too loudly; it could be a reflection on their own conduct. But the False Prophet will be a leader of religion, a man of great "love and power in the spirit" – a great deceiver. He will probably be a religious leader like the Pope or a world-wide evangelist. It will most likely be the Pope since it is that office that is the acknowledged monarch of one billion religious people, is the recognized counselor and adviser of world rulers and has built a reputation for "love" over the last fifty years.

The Number 666

"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.” (Rev.13.18)

There are countless theories and stories about the Antichrist that cloud our spiritual vision and draw people away from the important points of Scriptural truth. Put the numbers 666 on the cover of a book or in the title of a film and you have a perfect vehicle to satisfy the public's thirst for supernatural hocus-pocus and farfetched horror stories. It has become such a big money maker that the content about the Antichrist is unimportant just as long as it fills the public trough with scraps of tabloid sensationalism. Truth has very little to do with the message. Unfortunately, the public, including Christians, often come away with a completely distorted idea of the Antichrist. How many people wrongly believe that the Antichrist will appear as a horned devil, born to some Satanic mistress, as in the movies *Rose Mary's Baby* and *Omen*. How many still suppose that this man will be easy to detect, a Doctor Faustus who goes public with the fact that he has sold his soul to the Devil? Many naive Christians still think that when this “son of the devil” arrives on the world political scene he will be a raving lunatic, the spitting image of Adolf Hitler, with his eyes full of madness and his veins bulging with fury. It is assumed that the Antichrist will be detectable by his loathsome appearance and demented tirades, whose system will be an odious tyrannical regime that will instantly enslave an unwilling world. They forget all too quickly that history has taught us that the archetypes of the Antichrist have always wooed the world into an illicit love affair with humanism by their charm and charisma. Each forerunner of the Antichrist has been the object of hero-worship. They always championed the popular cause. They pitched slogans promising liberty, unity and utopia.

Alexander the Great promised a “brotherhood of man”; Julius Caesar promised the Pax Romana and an end to civil unrest; Napoleon marched through Europe carrying the banner, “Fraternity, Equality and Liberty”; and Hitler, only recognized after the fact for the monster he actually was, offered a new world order to millions of bitter and disenfranchised Germans. Each one became a legend in his own time. Each one became an icon. Each one a tyrant and demigod – a deity to be worshiped.

The reference to the name of the Antichrist at the end of chapter thirteen equating it with the number 666 has solicited countless suggestions and predictions about who this “son of perdition” might be. Men with birthmarks on their foreheads, or whose name can be made to add up to 666, or whose birth date or address can add up to the number, have been imagined to be the Antichrist. Again, Scripture should be the Christian’s one and only source of knowledge about the Antichrist and his world-wide system. When the Antichrist comes there will be many ways to know him. He will sign the peace accord with Israel and many countries. This heralds the start of the Tribulation. But before that, discerning Christians may be able to recognize him because he is the head of the ten “kingdom” confederacy. They may also be able to recognize him because of some connection, not yet revealed, to the number 666. Let the wise virgins be vigilant and watching!

We have gleaned a wealth of knowledge about the Antichrist and his cohort from chapter thirteen. Now we shall see more details about the spiritual condition of the world and the way to escape his devilish clutches. †

They Follow the Lamb: “Whithersoever He Goeth”

Chapter fourteen reinforces and re-emphasizes the great truth: Jesus is the central character of Revelation. There are five topics in this wonderful chapter. First, Jesus is depicted as a Lamb on heavenly Mt. Zion. At the end He is the Son of Man with a sickle in His hand and golden crown on His head harvesting the earth. The three topics in between are administered by His “angels”, or messengers. So, even in the detailing of these Tribulation topics God once again affirms Jesus as the first and the last, the A and the Z, the beginning and the end.

Chapter 14: Five Major Events

Chapter 14 is one of the most interesting chapters of Revelation because it covers an array of topics. Unlike the first two topical chapters which cover important characters, this chapter addresses five of the fundamental events of the Tribulation, all in the order in which they will occur. Each subject reflects something about the condition

of the world, not simply during the Tribulation, but during the entire Church Age. This is what is meant when God said in the second verse of chapter one that these things would shortly come to pass. Each one of these prophesied events holds elements of faith that were vitally pertinent even to the first generation of Christians.

The topics of chapter fourteen are:

1. The Rapture
2. Preaching of the Gospel
3. Ruin of False Religion
4. Mark of the Beast
5. Harvest of Souls

All of Revelation is laid out in a systematic and orderly fashion. The information in the topical chapters, like the outline chapters, is given in descending order from first event to last. Chapter fourteen is no exception. The first event discussed is also the first event to occur in the order of things, the second topic follows the first, the third follows the second, and so on. In chapter fourteen the first topic is the Rapture and the last one is the harvest of souls at the end of the Tribulation. The topical chapters therefore not only help to confirm the chronology of the outline chapters, but when we understand that they are given to us in the order that they occur we can get a better understanding of their significance and relationship to other characters and events. For instance, we see that the Rapture happens first, then the Gospel will supernaturally be preached from heaven to all the world, then the Whore of Babylon will be judged. All this will take place within the first half of the Tribulation, before the Antichrist is given

power to overcome and kill Christians during the Tribulation. Then, at the midway point of the Tribulation, right after the Antichrist sets up his throne and declares himself God, the Mark of the Beast is issued. The Tribulation saints are then martyred during the second three and a half years, just as we were told under the fifth seal in chapter six. The final topic, the harvest of souls, that happens at the conclusion of the Tribulation when the martyred saints are resurrected and the harvest of the wicked is accomplished during the great vial judgments (yet to be revealed in chapters fifteen and sixteen) and at the final battle of Armageddon. Let's take an individual look at each of the five topics of chapter fourteen and the new information that they provide for the student of Revelation.

1. An elect company of believers:

“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:

And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.” (Rev. 14.1-5)

Immediately we see the central character of Revelation, Jesus, appearing once again as a Lamb, the very same way He had appeared in chapters 5-7. This time we see a different group of people with Him, however. He is on Mt. Zion and around Him stand 144,000 people who have been redeemed from the earth. Our first challenge is to identify who these redeemed people are and what connection they have with Christ. Many students speculate that these must be the Jews that we have already encountered in chapter seven. The number is the same and they have the name of Jesus' Father written in their foreheads. At first glance this seems to be the right answer, but nothing in the rest of the description supports that interpretation.

After we look at all the aspects of this company of believers it is much more plausible that this is yet another look at raptured saints. Here we are given clues about the characteristics that made them "rapturable". They are a company of faithful believers, who, by a walk of spiritual character and through obedience of faith, have attained the "*prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*".¹ Upon closer inspection we find that it is almost certain that the two Revelation groups of 144,000 are not the same. One group is on earth, the other is in heaven. The Jews who are sealed and given supernatural protection from the judgments of the Tribulation are on earth during the entire Tribulation preaching the Gospel. This is why they were sealed and given supernatural protection by God. They cannot be stopped from preaching on earth and they remain on earth. But the 144,000 we see with the Lamb are ensconced in heaven. They are redeemed from among men. Redeemed men do not dwell on earth during the Tribulation. Jesus is

1. Philippians 3:14

seen at this time as a lamb only in heaven, on earth He is a mighty angel, a lion, a judge. The Mount Zion which He and His select group of followers stand upon is the heavenly Mount Zion spoken of in the book of Hebrews.

“But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,” (Heb. 12.22-24)

It makes sense that these people are raptured saints because we are told they are redeemed from among men. We are told they are the firstfruits unto God and the Lamb. They, along with the group of “elders”, are among the “charter” members of the “Church of the firstborn”. We must ask ourselves, would Jews at this point of the Tribulation be said to be firstfruits unto the Lamb? Israel, as a nation, will be saved but not until the end of the Tribulation when they “*look upon me (Jesus) whom they have pierced.*” That does not happen until Jesus returns from heaven with “*ten thousands of his saints*”. If this is a picture of saved Jews at the end of the Tribulation then there is no order in the events of chapter fourteen. But we may honestly ask, why then the name of the Father in their foreheads if these are not those Jews we have already seen? This is God’s counterpart to the *Mark of the Beast*. God will seal 144,000 Jews in their forehead for protection on earth, this is true, but He also seals the forehead of 144,000 raptured saints with glory in heaven. This is the fulfillment of two promises that Jesus made to the Philadelphia Church back in chapter three. He promised that anyone who stayed obedient and overcame temptations that He would “*keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come*

upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth” and, “I will write upon him the name of my God.”

It should not be that hard to accept that God would have two sets of 144,000 people, one for the Jews and one for the Church. The number 144,000 is a multiple of the number twelve which has great spiritual significance. God will use it at the end, just as He has used the number twelve in the past for both Israel and the Church. The number 144,000 is 12 x 12,000. Twelve is the number of leadership in God’s kingdom. Twelve patriarchs headed up the twelve tribes upon which the nation Israel was founded. The Church was led by twelve men all of whom Jesus hand picked (Judas being replaced). Later in Scripture God associated the number twelve with the baptism of the Holy Ghost. It was Paul who came upon “*about twelve men*” outside of Ephesus and baptized them in the Holy Ghost, the mark of leadership and endowment of power in the Church.

If we conclude that this must be a group of raptured Christians we now have some new and engaging information about the Rapture and those who will be “*accounted worthy*”² to be part of it. This is the Bride. There will be other companies of believers saved and invited to the “*marriage supper of the Lamb*”.³ But this is Christ’s most intimate love. This is His engagement party in heaven. This is the glorious Church without spot or wrinkle being presented to Jesus which was spoken of in the book of Ephesians.⁴ The elders, also a part of the raptured saints, are there as the bride sings a new song and celebrates her engagement to Christ.

Notice that these 144,000 are virgins, without fault and

2. Luke 21.36

3. see Psalm 45

4. Eph 5.27

with no guile in their mouths. We are getting a picture now of the spiritual makeup, the character of the bride. They are without fault. Scripturally speaking they are “perfect”, not perfect in a worldly or fleshly sense, because that is not possible in this life, but perfect by obedience of faith. They stand before the throne of God having pleased God because they were unwavering disciples of Christ. They *picked up their cross* and followed after Him. They *put their hands to the plow* and *did not look back*. They believed that there would be two together in one bed and that one would be taken and the other left, and more than anything they wanted to be the one who was taken. Because they picked up their cross and followed Jesus, they will have the eternal honor of following “*the Lamb whithersoever He goeth*”. Who else but a man’s wife can go everywhere he does?

She is called a virgin because they stayed true to Christ. They were His chaste spouse waiting for their wedding day. They have not committed spiritual fornication or adultery by chasing after or flirting with idols. There is no guile found in their mouth. They are not hypocrites, saying one thing and doing another. They do not want to simply be hearers of the Word; they must be doers of the Word. They were not double-minded in their faith, but they believed God’s Word and kept His commandments. Because of this they sing a new song that no other being or creature in all of creation can learn to sing. This has to be, this must be, raptured believers. They lived the life that made them candidates for the Rapture; they were “rapturable”. The Jews do not sing this song (although a Christian Jew could be found among this number) because, as we shall learn, they join together with the Tribulation martyrs in singing the Song of Moses and the song of the Lamb when they are redeemed together at the close of the seventh year of

the Tribulation. (ch. 15.1-3). But chapter fourteen's group of 144,000 sing a song that no man can learn except their exclusive company. This is a picture of the people who captured the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

2. Only now does the Gospel get preached to all the world:

“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.” (Rev. 14.6 & 7)

We have already seen that once the Rapture happens judgment quickly follows. Jesus appeared before the throne of God in heaven as a Lamb. As the elders and other resurrected saints looked on He began breaking the seals on the book of redemption one by one and God's great judgment cascaded down onto the earth. But where there is judgment, mercy does much more abound. Now, in this topical chapter, we learn for the first time in the Bible that God will send out an angel (or messengers) with a mandate from Him to preach the Gospel to every nation, kindred, people and tongue. This can only mean that the Gospel will be preached to the whole world in a supernatural way from heaven during the Tribulation. Countless thousands, even millions and millions will be saved and the preaching of the Gospel from heaven will play a big part in it. A common misconception about the Tribulation is that no one will be saved once it begins. The scripture that is cited to support

this wrong idea is usually II Thessalonians 2.7. It talks about the Spirit of God being taken out of the way of the Antichrist once the Antichrist is revealed. They rightly understand that no person can be saved without the influence of the Spirit of God but they wrongly presume that Scripture is teaching that the Holy Ghost will be taken out of the world all together. It only says that the Spirit will not prevent iniquity from doing its work. It does not say that He will retreat entirely from the earth. People will be saved during the Tribulation. Revelation 7.9 tells us that a number which no man can number will be saved out of the Tribulation.

The Rapture has just happened and people, especially the millions and millions of lukewarm, deceived Christians, know that God's Word about the catching up of faithful Christians was true all along. God, in His mercy, strikes quickly by beginning a campaign to save the people who had lived slothful lives in the spirit, but who can receive the truth now that the Rapture has taken place. In chapter twelve it is revealed that the Devil will try to persecute and destroy the woman and the remnant of her seed, but God will have a place prepared for her in some wilderness where she can be nourished for the first half of the Tribulation. When the Dragon tries to overwhelm her by some catastrophe, or perhaps by creating a world-wide legislation to persecute Christians, the earth somehow stops the attack from taking shape and being successful. It is not clear whether the wilderness is a symbol for an actual geographical place or a spiritual form of protection, nor is it clear what kind of catastrophe the Devil will use to try to destroy the Church and her remnant. What is clear about this symbolism is that Satan will try to stop the saving of souls in the first half of the Tribulation, but his dramatic

attempt will be foiled by God who will somehow use the earth (or earthly means) to put a stop to it.

As another part of His counter offensive, God will have the Gospel preached by supernatural means to all nations. Since an angel does not always have to be a heavenly creature, but is, purely speaking a “messenger of God”, it is quite possible that the angel that preaches the Gospel from heaven is symbolic of the raptured saints. They have preached the word and kept the testimony of Jesus through trials of the flesh while living on earth. Now they are redeemed beings with glorified bodies. Why shouldn't they get this privilege? They have fought alongside Michael the Archangel and helped to cast the Dragon, that Old Serpent, out of heaven. These “angelic” messengers will be sent to warn people, interpret the Scriptures for them, and preach salvation.

The Tribulation will be the greatest time of salvation in the world's history. While Satan is trying to rob God of His worship, God will be saving souls by the droves. In chapter seven we see millions of Tribulation Christians who will give up their lives to be saved. During the second half of the Tribulation we see the 144,000 Jews and The Two Witnesses testifying in behalf of God and preaching the cross of Jesus to the Jews. Now in Revelation fourteen another piece to the Gospel outreach puzzle is added. God's campaign to save as many people in the world as possible will include having messengers from heaven preaching the gospel. In Rev 5.13 we have already been told that every creature in existence was aware of the majesty of God and of the reality of Jesus Christ. Now we know how this may be possible. Now, once and for all, the Gospel is preached. Every living creature will hear it. Whether this is a one-time event, or a phenomenon that lasts the first half of the Tribulation,

or the entire seven years we can only guess. It probably happens during the first half of the Tribulation when the Church is under supernatural protection. People are saved like never before. This is heaven's revival. Chances are that this preaching will end once the Antichrist makes and sets up his image in the temple. This could be what is meant by the phrase in Daniel "*abomination that maketh desolate*". From that point on the preaching may pass from the 144,000 heavenly saints to the 144,000 Jews who now focus, along with the Two Witnesses, on the lost sheep of the nation Israel. Those who have been saved by this supernatural preaching and protection now must give up their lives in resistance to idolatry, blasphemy and taking the Mark of the Beast.

3. False religion is judged:

"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." (Rev.14.8)

In verse seven we are told that the hour of judgment has now come. People must unequivocally worship the true Creator or perish. The witness of the Rapture has been given so people would know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God's promises and word are true. The Gospel is preached from heaven in such a supernatural way that no one can deny its reality. Loved ones who were raptured plead from heaven for mothers, daughters, husbands and sons to accept Christ, no matter what the earthly cost. Now, there is nowhere to run. Pews provide no sanctuary, denominations no longer help people put on a mask of false piety, there are no more priests to absolve them of sin and

take confession for the guilty. Religion's covering is stripped away.

At this point in Revelation God does not give us any details concerning the judgment of Babylon. But in future chapters God has much to say about her. Chapters seventeen and eighteen will deal with the mother of false religion which God calls the Whore. For now, however, God has inserted this into the chronology of chapter fourteen to establish the timing of Babylon's fall and to make us aware of her existence. (It would not be a bad idea for the reader to take a peek at chapters seventeen and eighteen right now because at least a passing understanding of what she is and who she is will be helpful in the things we are about to discuss.)

It makes sense that Satan will prepare for the total worship of the Antichrist by doing away with all pretense of Christianity, whether good or bad, and replace it with the "mystery rites" of the new Antichrist religion. It will probably include initiation mysteries centered around the Mark of the Beast, the speaking image, and who knows – the drinking of blood, a solemn oath of allegiance to Satan, or some other modern equivalency of mystery initiation. Mystery Babylon's judgment appears to be dished out in two parts by God. In the middle of the Tribulation bogus Christianity (the Laodicean Church) will be stripped, burned and ravaged. The wealth of the Roman Church and her sisters is plundered. Around the world her property is confiscated and applied to the Antichrist kingdom's coffers to be used for his worship and to finance his social programs. This is the judgment referred to in Revelation fourteen. But there will be a final judgment on her at the end of the Tribulation. The Whore of Babylon, the ancient religion and origin of all blasphemous and false religions,

which has infested Christianity and formed the basis for all other religions, will be totally obliterated. In the upcoming two chapters on MYSTERY BABYLON we are told who destroys her, why she is destroyed and that she is totally destroyed in one day, even in one hour. We are told that the saints and all of heaven sing “Alleluia” and rejoice when she is destroyed. Her judgment will not be gradual or slow, It will not be performed by parliamentary decision, lawful transition or through tax codes or any form of attrition. Property will not be confiscated or seized as it was in the middle of the Tribulation when the Christian “whore” was raped. It will be a violent and total destruction.

The other piece of new information we are given for now is the reason why she is judged. This is a great indictment of false religion and how it has infested the entire earth, including Christianity. She has brought God’s wrath on all the nations by involving them in her fornication. Fornication in the spiritual sense is to commit idolatry or to commit intimate adultery with another god. No nation or people has been exempt from her harlot’s touch. We shall find out later that she has seduced the people of the world by her sorceries. But now she is going to get her comeuppance.

4. The damned and the martyred:

“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 shall 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.” (Rev. 14.9-13)

A third angel then appears in heaven to announce the simple terms of salvation from the midway point of the Tribulation onward. Anyone who worships the Beast and takes the Mark will be eternally damned. There is no redemption once the Mark is taken. The damned will never have rest. The faithful who do not worship Satan or take his Mark will get rest from their labors. The irony of the cost of salvation will be that people are not allowed to resist the Antichrist. Anyone who thinks an underground Christian resistance will win the day during the Tribulation is void of all understanding of God's will during the Tribulation and they need look no further than this passage to find out how mistaken they are. Verse thirteen says, *“blessed are those who die in the Lord from this point onward”*; not *“blessed are those who fight with arms against the Antichrist”*. It is worthy of note that we are told that the Spirit is saying something here. Other than in the seven letters and at the very end of Revelation, this is the only place in Revelation where we are specifically told that the Spirit is saying something. All other times it is Jesus, an angel or some other person or character who speaks to us. God wants us to take note of the consequences of going into the Tribulation instead of

aspiring to the Rapture. These were the people who could not believe in what they could not see. They did not have the patience to wait for the Lord's trumpet blast. They could not die to themselves by faith. They did not live in the hope of the resurrection. And so, they missed the Rapture. Now the only way they can be "blessed" is if they forfeit their lives. They must apply faith and patience by accepting death as their fate, knowing that Christ will raise them from the dead into eternal salvation. They must believe that their works will follow them. They will be credited by God for their patience and for the word of their testimony and for *"loving not their lives unto the death"*.

These people will preach salvation and testify to it by accepting their execution rather than accepting the Mark of the Beast. The Mark of the Beast is the mechanism that Satan uses to coerce all mankind into worshipping him. But it is also the mechanism that God allows to separate the generation of the Tribulation into just two clearly defined groups: the eternally damned and those that are rescued into eternal life. Now there is truly no place to retreat. Either you take the Mark and are cast from God's presence forever, or you refuse to deny Christ and suffer the first death so that the second death will not have power over you. It is the ultimate fulfillment of Christ's warning: *"He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."*⁵

5. Two very separate harvests:

"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.

5. Matt. 10.39 & 16.25 Mark 8.35 Luke 9.24

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 time is come for thee to 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.” (Rev. 14.14-16)

and

“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.” (Rev. 14.17-20)

The chapter concludes with Christ riding a white cloud, the same way He ascended into heaven after He was on earth. He is ready to reap the harvest of His Tribulation saints. The Tribulation saints were told to be patient until their number was filled, now at the end of the Tribulation that has happened. Right after the reaping of the righteous another angel, the “Grim Reaper” begins the process of final judgment on the earth. This marks the beginning of the vial judgments which are detailed in chapters fifteen and sixteen. If these days were not shortened, as Jesus told us, all flesh would perish. As it is, most of the world and all those who take the Mark of the Beast will perish. The final

slaughter will take place at Armageddon when deceiving spirits from the Antichrist, False Prophet and the Dragon cause all the nations to come together to make war with the Lamb (Rev. 16.13-14) On that day the blood of rebellious men will flow six feet high and in a wide river 200 miles long (the distance of 1600 furlongs). During the vial judgments we will see the rivers and oceans turned to blood. The angels and saints will say Hallelujah for they killed the saints and now God is giving them blood to drink. At the end, God will cleanse the earth with the blood of the unrighteous who have followed the Beast and taken his Mark.

In chapter fourteen we see God urging us on to aspire to the Rapture. He warns us that if we go into the Tribulation we will have to suffer persecution and death to be saved. The lines will be drawn. All pretense of religious righteousness will be stripped away. There will be no place to hide. To go into the Tribulation and come out saved means to watch your loved ones go without food and the necessities of life. Their only alternative will be taking the Mark. It means seeing many friends and relatives knuckle under and receive the Mark though it means eternal separation from God. And it will mean seeing your fellow Christians killed.

The message of chapter fourteen's topics is clear, and the one repeated throughout the book of Revelation. It reminds us of the words spoken by Jesus to the apostles. *"Pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."* Let this be the prayer of those of us who know the book of Revelation and understand it. ✠

The Vial Judgments

We often hear people who are void of spiritual understanding ask the question, “How can an all loving God allow human pain and sorrow to run rampant in the world?” They are especially baffled when they are told of the prophesied judgments in Revelation. What they fail to understand is that God does not love all things. As any loving father, He will not put up with just anything and everything. God does not love sin and has no plans to tolerate it forever. Time and time again He has stated in His Word that a day of judgment is coming for every man. Those who hate Him and do evil will be separated from His presence forever. Because He is Truth He must oppose all lies. He cannot live with rebellion and hatred. If there is one thing God cannot do, it is lie. The Bible says, *“He cannot lie”* He hates idolatry and stands against those who blaspheme Him and His only Son, Jesus Christ. The book of Proverbs says there are seven things God hates:

“These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an

abomination unto him:

A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,

A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.” (Prov 6.16-19)

God has promised to right all wrongs and put an end to sin. As we have seen, this is a fundamental promise about the Tribulation given in Daniel 9:24. The book of Revelation is wonderful because it reveals both God’s mercy and His wrath. It promises mankind that He will not let sin and injustice go unchecked forever. It is because of sin and evil that God must cleanse the earth and judge the wicked. If there were no judgment day then how could God reward those who have lived by faith? How could His people be vindicated? How could He sweep away the corrupt and rotten things to make way for a perfect world? Without judgment and a separation of good from evil, eternity would be a free-for-all with sin and love continually vying for power to see who would be “king of the mountain”. But thank God that He loves us enough to be true to His word. He will separate the sheep from the goats and the chaff will be sifted from the wheat. The book of Revelation reassures us that this day of purification is coming. It details the process of separation and pinpoints God’s targets for judgment while giving us advice on how to avoid being destroyed in the fire storm that is fast approaching.

Nowhere in Revelation is the process of burning away the impurities of sin more evident than in chapters fifteen and sixteen. God has put it in the heart of man to desire and hope for a utopian world, a paradise on earth. Poets have longed for it and philosophers have tried to envision

it. Political theorists have forged systems for it and theologians have tried to forge it by a perfect religious system; man has striven throughout the millennia to devise his own means to create a utopian society. Nimrod built the first network of fortified cities that gave people a false sense of security and self-reliance. They were able to turn their backs on God and trust in themselves rather than their Creator. Alexander the Great tried to usher in an international “brotherhood of man” with himself as its sole deity to be worshiped and adored. The Roman Empire tried to create a perfect world too, imposing peace on earth by wielding an iron fist over the inhabitants of its vast domain. Karl Marx, the Jewish philosopher, invented Communism as a political means to a perfect world where every man, woman and child would have exactly what they needed and everyone would live in harmony under a beneficent, but totalitarian state. Each endeavor was doomed to failure because it tried to replace God’s plan of redemption with one of man’s own strange concoctions. All of this vanity, along with every kind of man-made solution, must be burnt away. God’s prophetic word has already declared how the day of perfect peace and harmony must come into being. Utopia will become a reality only when Jesus Christ rules on earth and the new heavens and the new earth are established by the hand of Providence. The path and process that will make this come to pass has been revealed by the prophets, by Jesus Himself and by the apostles and, finally, revealed in minute detail in the book of Revelation.

In Revelation, God promises to wipe all our tears away and to make everything right for those who have put their trust in His Son. But before this perfect world, this utopia, can come into being and the righteous rule of Christ can be

imposed on the earth, the world must be purged of those forces that oppose God's plan of perfection. God is all-loving, but those who oppose Him are anything but all-loving. A large part of God's plan to rid the earth of sin has to do with fire as an agent of purifying power. The Tribulation has a great deal to do with this process of burning. God deals the earth a series of judgments of fire. As the apostle Peter wrote:

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” (II Pet 3.10)

The vial judgments are the end of this purging process and before these take place God makes the final preparations in heaven.

Setting the Stage for the Final Fiery Judgment

You may recall that the initial outline of the Tribulation period, which was given to us in the first half of our study, stopped abruptly in chapter eleven when the seventh angel blew the seventh trumpet. (Rev. 11.15-19) At that point we were given a view of the temple in heaven. Its doors had swung open and for the first time in over 2,500 years man's eyes beheld the sacred ark of the covenant. This time it was not the one which Moses had patterned after the one in heaven but it was the actual ark, resting in God's heavenly temple. The seventh angel/trumpeter then blew his horn and immediately there were lightnings, voices, thunderings, an earthquake and great hail falling to earth. But that is where our saga was interrupted. The seventh and final trumpet judgment was never detailed. We were given no specifics about it nor were we told who these judgments would affect or what happens on earth after

they are unleashed. This is because the seventh trumpet judgment is not one judgment but, in fact, it is seven devastating and distinctly different judgments, and God reserved telling us about them for a later time when He could give them the detailed attention they require. Chapter fifteen draws us back to that moment when we first saw the seventh angel come out of the Temple and sets the stage for the seven last plagues of God.

In the introduction to chapter fifteen we are told that John sees seven angels holding the seven last plagues of God which are filled to the brim with His wrath.

“And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.” (Rev. 15.1)

These “mysterious” angels stand before the throne of God along with the Tribulation martyrs, Jew and Gentile alike. They all stand on a sea of glass which is mixed with fire and they all worship God for His power and almighty strength.

“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 marvellous 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.” (Rev. 15.2-4)

The Tribulation martyrs are present for the last judgments not only to act as witnesses and worshipers of

God's righteousness, but because it is the time of their vindication. The world will soon know that God has not forgotten or forsaken His martyrs. They have already been rewarded for their patience and perseverance in dying for Christ by being resurrected. Now they will be further rewarded by seeing the Antichrist's kingdom tormented, burnt and destroyed. We are told that the martyrs are the ones that got the victory over Satan and the Antichrist in four distinct areas: **(1)** they overcame the Beast by not following after him personally; **(2)** they did not take his Mark which made it so they could not buy or sell; **(3)** they did not commit idolatry by worshipping his image; and **(4)** they did not accept the number of his name and thereby became outcasts of society. These special martyrs stand on a sea of glass that is mixed with fire. The sea is symbolic of the world. They have come out of every nation, race and continent. There are people from China, Russia, the United States, Ecuador, Nigeria, Sweden, Australia and Iceland. They are Eskimos, Persians, Ethiopians, Croats and Japanese. The glass stands for their purity and perfection. The fire represents the judgment that burns away all impurities and will ultimately make a perfect and pure world.

But where are the raptured saints? We have already seen that raptured saints are the "angels" and they are represented by those who are holding the vials with the seven last plagues. As we have already discussed in our study, the raptured saints have the honor and privilege of directly participating in all the judgments. The martyrs are witnesses to the judgments and praise God for them, but the raptured saints have a hands-on ministry because of their faith and belief in waiting for the Lord without wavering. They were the ones who stayed "awake". They

kept their lamps burning bright. Their light was the Holy Ghost and they adhered to the advice of Jesus to watch and pray for His return. They were not caught off guard, so now they are active ministers in the redemption process. Jesus said that the saints would be as the angels¹ and the raptured saints have this glory given to them even during the Tribulation.

A further tipoff that these “angels” who are participating in the judgments are not angels at all, but saints, comes in verse six when we are told that the angels wear linen garments and breastplates of gold.

“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.” (Rev. 5-6)

We are told in Revelation 19.8 that linen is the righteousness of the saints. We can presume that only the saints will be allowed to wear linen at this point in time. It is symbolic of the covering for sin which Jesus Christ provides for His people. No longer does man need to be clothed in the skins of animals as Adam and Eve were in the garden of Eden after their fall. God will never again have to sacrifice an animal to cover man and pardon his sins. Jesus has made the one and only, the once and for all, sacrifice needed to cover man’s unrighteousness and now man wears linen instead of animal skins. Notice, too, that these “angels” have breastplates of gold. We know breastplates are symbolic of the righteousness of Christ worn by His redeemed people. Angels are not righteous in this sense; they do not have to put on the righteousness of

1. [Matt 22_30](#)

Christ as men do. Now the scene is set. All of the parties are present and in place. The final judgments of the Tribulation are about to be spilled out onto the Antichrist and a rebellious world. The pathway for Christ's triumphant return to earth is about to be cleared.

“And one of the four beasts 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.” (Rev. 15.7-8)

This scene picks up where chapter eleven left off. The seventh trumpet has been blown and now seven angels are given seven vials full of the final intense judgments from God. It is safe to assume that this judgment of the final seven angels must be the most severe of all. This is what chapter eleven called the “Third Woe”. This is literally the final few days of the Tribulation. Once the angels are given the vials full of the wrath of God they proceed out of the temple and the temple is filled with smoke so that no man can enter the temple. This smoke has become known as the Shechinah Glory of God. It is the manifestation of His presence. Up to now we have seen saints and angels crowded into the throne room of God. Creatures and redeemed men have been coming and going in worship services. As the book of redemption was opened and Jesus began breaking the seals saints stood by to witness the process. But now no man can enter the temple before this last purifying act of judgment takes place.

Gordon Lindsay, in his series of pamphlets on Revelation, has this to say about this moment when the glory of God fills the temple. “The temple of God was the

place of intercession. There Christ, as High Priest, went in to make intercession. But the hour of mercy is over. The die is cast. There is now no stopping the processes of Divine retribution, until the judgments of the Vials are completed.” The prophet Isaiah had encountered this same special manifestation of the presence of God when he stood before God’s throne in heaven. In that instance it was also connected with coming judgment.

“...the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke...

And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.

Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate.” (Isa 6.3,4,9-11)

Just as the smoke-filled temple indicated the end of God’s mercy and patience for the nation of Israel, so it means the end of God’s longsuffering patience with the world. Total judgment is coming and no man can enter the temple until the winepress of God’s wrath is fully pressed. Chapter fifteen sets up the moment and draws attention to its solemn nature. As we shall see in the next portion of our study, chapter sixteen details each one of the seven last plagues.

The seven vial judgments are:

(1) The seat of the Beast and all those who took the mark are given great sores.

(2) All the seas turn to coagulated blood and everything in them dies.

(3) The waters and rivers are turned to blood.

(4) The sun scorches everyone and everything.

(5) The Euphrates River dries up.

(6) Armageddon.

(7) All the cities of the world are flattened by an earthquake.

Though these judgments are similar to the seven trumpet judgments we shall see that they are not the same, and are a great deal more intense. Jesus spoke of the vial judgments in these terms: *“And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect’s sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.”*² In Revelation 11.14 we were told that the third woe, the vial judgments, would come quickly. As we look into these seven devastating judgments it will be easy to see that if these horrendous judgments were not limited to a month, or even less, nothing on earth would survive. †

2. Mark 13:20

The Seven Last Plagues

Heaven's citizens are poised on the precipice of time, breathlessly waiting to see what the judgments of the seven last plagues would bring upon the earth. The saved of heaven brace themselves as the fire and fury of these devastating judgments are about to be poured out onto the defiant and unholy inhabitants of the Antichrist kingdom. Yet there is something curious to be considered about the attitudes of the redeemed in heaven. The redeemed saints who are waiting for the dispensing of the final judgments are not looking on with fear, or trepidation, or even sorrow. Instead, they are filled with joy and gratitude toward God. The day that God uses His great power and purifying fire to burn away the corruption of this present world will not be a sad one for God's people. It will be a day of vindication and victory for every saint who has suffered at the hands of Satan or the Antichrist. The moment which was foreseen as far back as Antediluvian days, when Enoch, the seventh generation from Adam, saw Jesus returning with ten

thousands of His saints, “to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him”,¹ is almost here. For all the raptured saints who lived as outcasts from society, this moment marks the beginning of their restoration to the earth. Soon their enemies will know beyond any doubt, and will be forced to admit, that it was they whom Jesus loved (Rev 3.9). For the martyred saints it will be a time of justice. The evil world that has spilled the blood of the righteous saints for centuries will now be given nothing but blood to drink in the last few days before Jesus’ return (Rev. 16.6). Because they continued to resist God and refused to repent, they will be tormented by the coming plagues. In the end, even the earth will cry out for revenge, and will be satisfied only when the blood of those who have killed the saints and mocked God is itself spilled onto the ground and flows in a wide river running six feet deep and 200 miles long (Rev. 14.20).

Seven Last Plagues:

Not To Be Confused With the Seven Trumpet Judgments

Before proceeding with a look at the seven vial judgments, which are more properly called the seven last plagues, it should be established that the seven trumpet judgments and the seven vial judgments are two distinct and separate series of judgments. Many commentators on Revelation have mistakenly figured that the seven vial judgments are actually the same as the seven trumpet judgments. This interpretation makes little sense however, and is almost impossible to support. A side-by-side look at the two series of judgments makes it self-evident that

1. Jude 1.15

one is much more intense than the other and clearly shows that some of their elements are entirely different. It should be apparent by this side-by-side comparison on pages 129 and 130 that the trumpet judgments are a prelude to the vial judgments and can hardly be seen as the same events. When we look at the vial judgments item by item it is easy to see why Revelation calls them the seven last plagues. But that is not the only proof of their being two totally different sets of judgments. Two things tend to confuse the commentators who hold to the belief that the two sets of judgments are the same. They assume that chapter sixteen is just a more detailed review of the trumpet judgments and they believe that because “lightnings, voices, thunderings, an earthquake and hail” precede both of them that they must be the same. Neither argument makes good sense in the light of the whole picture.

The Judgments Display God’s Power Again!

The only reference made to the seven last plagues in the outline chapters comes at the very end in chapter 11.14 when we are told that the Second Woe is over and the Third Woe is about to begin. The seventh trumpet then blasts and the heavenly phenomena that signals the end of the seven seal judgments happens once again. If we are to believe that the trumpet judgments and the last plagues are the same then we must believe that the seventh trumpet consists of nothing more than noise from heaven, an earthquake and great hail. That hardly makes good sense. The first six trumpets get more and more severe with each trumpet blast. The last three are even called “woes”. The first is the locust-like creatures who torment men for five months, the second woe is the 200 million horsemen who kill one third of mankind and ends with the death and resurrection of the Two Witnesses. How can the third and

presumably most dramatic and devastating “Woe” be an earthquake and hail with no description and little effect? It makes no sense to think that the last of the seven trumpets and the third woe would be so anticlimactic and nondescript. No, the Third Woe is without argument, the seven last plagues. Chapter eleven leaves us hanging with only a mention of the Third Woe. Nothing is resolved. The end is announced, but the conclusion not shown. The Temple is open, but the judgment is not dished out.

The Seven Trumpet Judgments

The Seven Vial Judgments

Hail falls from heaven mingled with fire and blood. Burns one third of the earth's trees and all of the grass.

1

Grievous and painful sores invade the bodies of those who take the mark of the Beast.

A mountain-like rock falls to earth turning a third of sea to blood. One third of creatures in the sea die and one third of the ships are destroyed.

2

The seas of the world become as the blood of a dead man, all coagulated with every living thing dying

A burning star hits the earth. One third of rivers and waters poisoned. Many men die.

3

All water, including drinking water, is turned to blood and men are forced to drink it to stay alive.

One third of the light of the sun, moon and stars is dimmed.

4

The sun scorches the earth and men so that they curse God for the great burning heat and devastation that takes place.

The first "Woe". Demonic locusts from the pit of Hell torment men with excruciating pain, but do not kill them, for five months. Men wish they could die but cannot find death.

5

Terrible judgment is poured out onto the seat of the Beast and the men on earth gnaw at their own tongues because of great pain. Darkness descends on the Antichrist kingdom.

The second "Woe". Horseman-like devils come out of the earth breathing smoke, fire and brimstone. They slay one third of all mankind.

6

The final battle takes place at Armageddon. The blood of a rebellious world flows six feet high in a wide river 200 miles long.

Temple of God open in heaven and earthquake and hail signal the start of the seven last plagues. The third "Woe" is coming.

7

The last plague. All the cities of the earth are leveled. God will make a fresh start of things.

Under the seven trumpets the judgments are partial. Only selected portions of the earth are affected. In total only a third of the earth is hit. The judgments are cast down onto the earth by God's agents from heaven. They are blasts of God's fury symbolized by startling and loud trumpet blasts.

Under the seven last plagues God's fury is poured out and covers the entire earth as a flood. The trumpets are shots directed to selected areas not covering the entire earth, but the vials are total judgment and all-encompassing.

The other major problem with many commentators is that they fail to understand the transition between the seven seals, the seven trumpet judgments and the seven last plagues. It is really very simple and perfectly consistent. Lightnings, thunderings, voices from heaven, an earthquake and then hail follow the opening of the seventh seal (Rev. 8.5), the blowing of the seventh trumpet (Rev. 11.19), and the pouring out of the seventh vial (Rev. 16.18). These things amount to God's signature – master and ruler of heaven and earth. It is his royal seal declaring that these are His judgments and not the happenstance of man or nature. It shows His total power and authority over both heaven and earth. But because God uses the same set of phenomena to dovetail the three series of judgments together, some commentators have wrongly concluded that it means the judgments are the same, only viewed from a different perspective. The first series, the seven seals, makes the world ripe for God's wrath and judgment. The second series, the trumpet judgments, soften up the earth for the second coming of Christ. And the third series of judgments, the seven last plagues, very short in duration, are the final assault that purifies and purges everything allowing Christ to take full possession of the earth.

It does not take much study of the two series of judgments to see how different they are. The judgments of the seven vials are greater in intensity and aimed more directly at the Antichrist. Under the trumpet judgments a

third of the earth is burned and judged. During the seven last plagues everything is burned and the Antichrist's dominion is attacked. The trumpet judgments affect only a part of the earth and the vials take their toll on the whole earth. Below is a timeline of the Trumpet and Vial Judgments showing their order of descent and how they are sandwiched between the supernatural phenomena of Godly authority and power as symbolized in the lightning, etc. The timeline shows that the trumpet judgments begin somewhere at approximately the middle of the fifth year of the Tribulation and end 30 days before Christ's throne is set up in Jerusalem. The seven last plagues, though very intense, last only 30 days.

Timeline for Trumpet and Vial Judgments

←5 to 5 ½ Years into Tribulation

←6 Years into Tribulation

TRUMPETS					TRUMPETS	
<i>1st</i>	<i>2nd</i>	<i>3rd</i>	<i>4th</i>	<i>5th</i>	<i>6th</i>	<i>7th</i>
burnt trees	blood seas	poison water	sun dark	locust torment	demonic horse-men kill 1/3 of mankind	earthquake & hail Seven Vials

*** The opening of the seventh seal, the blast of the seventh trumpet and the pouring of the seventh vial are all**

accompanied by lightning, thundering, voices, earthquakes and hail from heaven.

The earth has been rocked by the trumpet judgments. To the inhabitants of the earth it will seem as if nature and mankind has gone out of control. The first four trumpets have hit the earth in fairly rapid succession, in a matter of no more than a few months, perhaps in only a month or so, and their effects have been devastating to man and animal. The fifth trumpet, which is the torment of the locust-like beings, we are told lasts five months. Two months before the beginning of the last year of the Tribulation the sixth Trumpet is sounded and the Hellish Horseman from the pit begin their reign of terror on earth, killing one third of mankind. It may be that these horsemen ride roughshod over the earth for one year terrorizing the entire planet and confounding the Antichrist's kingdom. It could be that this phase of God's judgment is shorter than that, even lasting only a few months or less, and that the first four trumpet judgments last longer. There is no way of really telling this because the only time length we are given for any of the trumpet judgments is for the locusts. But since the locusts last almost half a year and only torment men, it does not seem unreasonable that the Horsemen who are sent to kill a third of the earth's inhabitants will be given a year to fulfill their mission. Even if the earth's population has been whittled down to three billion people that would mean the demonic horsemen would have to kill 8.4 million people a day for a year to kill one third of the world's population. But regardless of how long each one of the seven trumpet judgments last it is certain that they begin somewhere in the fifth year of the Tribulation and go up to the last 30-90 days of the Tribulation. The seventh trumpet blast signals the beginning of the vial judgments. When we study these

last plagues it is not hard to understand why Jesus said, *“except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect’s sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.”* (Mark 13.20)

For two years the world has battled God and the supernatural upheaval that has taken place in the elements. The trees and grass, along with many food crops, have been burnt to a crisp. A third of the world’s food supply has failed. The earth’s ecology is on the edge of causing global catastrophes that could cause the extermination of man. The vegetation, so vital to the recycling of oxygen and rainfall, has been depleted by a third. The situation is reaching critical mass. Weather patterns are being disturbed. Nature has gone berserk. The wild animals of the earth are disoriented and desperate. They not only roam the countryside, but they rove through towns and cities killing men and devouring children and livestock (Rev. 6.8). In isolated places the seas of the earth have turned to blood, not only killing and destroying property but rendering shipping impossible. About five and one half years into the Tribulation a giant star-like meteor hits the earth polluting vast amounts of groundwater, rivers and reservoirs. Shortly afterwards, the sun suddenly goes dim and the darkening of the moon and stars quickly follows. It will seem as though nature is giving out on the earth. Like someone forgot to pay the electric bill. But instead of fear and repentance man will become frustrated and his heart will harden past all hope. His trust firmly in the Antichrist, he will become more and more resentful with each trumpet judgment. Instead of conceding to God, man will be shaking his fist at Him in defiance, cursing God for every judgment (Rev. 9.20).

Then will begin a wave of torment from Hell. First, an

army of locust-like creatures will ascend from the bowels of the earth to begin a reign of terror on humankind. Whole populations and communities are paralyzed by fear waiting for the terrible buzzing sound that signals the presence of these awful creatures with the terribly painful sting. Men begin to look for death, but these creatures do not kill, they only cause the worst kind of pain imaginable, and men cannot escape, even by death (Rev. 9.6). After five months the plague is over. The locusts are nowhere to be found and man may think he has finally overcome the worst that God could dish out to him. But just as suddenly, out of nowhere, an army of 200 million murdering horsemen come flooding out onto the planet. They do not merely sting, but are totally efficient killing machines. By smoke, fire and sulphur they kill one third of the earth's population. Those who have taken the "Mark of the Beast" are the ones under siege. God has put His seal on 144,000 Jews to protect them in these days. The Antichrist's people know there is no turning back. They must ride out the storm with the Antichrist, and their god, Satan. They are deceived into thinking their only hope to escape Hell's everlasting fires is to defeat God in a direct battle. The Antichrist continues to assure them of victory if they will only believe. Then, without notice, The Two Witnesses are killed in Jerusalem and for three days it seems as though the Antichrist has won the people's victory over God. But suddenly they rise and on that same day, with only a month or so left in the seven-year Tribulation period, the angel of God blows the seventh trumpet in heaven. Lightning and thunder booms from heaven. The earthquake reported in chapter 11 hits Jerusalem, 7,000 Jews die, but the rest repent. At the same time around the whole earth the voices of saints and angels echo through the skies warning man

of the coming judgments and proclaiming the glory of God. An earthquake of enormous proportions, perhaps one that goes right off the Richter Scale, hits the earth and shakes all the continents. Great hail falls from the sky, battering fields and livestock and destroying cars, buildings and billions and billions of dollars' worth of man's precious property. What seemed to be the worst possible plagues that God could throw at man will shortly be found to be nothing more than a prelude to the seven last plagues.

The Seven Last Plagues: The Final Purging of the Earth

As part of the outline we had seen Christ taking back possession of the earth in chapter ten. In chapter fifteen we had seen the Tribulation saints stand on a sea of glass mingled with fire. They were the first fruits to come out of this purging process that God is now going to complete.

First Vial

“And the first [angel] 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.” (Rev. 16.2)

The wicked people of the earth who took the mark of the beast are now tagged with God's mark. Sores mark them as despised by God. They now wear the true mark of their blasphemy and hatred against God. Their pain, though great, is just beginning. They can't sit, they can't stand, they can't sleep. It is a small taste of what Hell is going to be like for all those who took the mark.

Second Vial

“And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and

it became as the blood of a dead man; and every living soul died in the sea.” (Rev. 16.3)

Before, under the trumpet judgment, only one third of the sea was affected and one third of its creatures. Now everything dies in the sea. They can't swim or breath. The water is coagulated, like dead blood. All commerce and movement on the seas is halted completely.

Third Vial

“And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and 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.” (Rev. 16. 4-7)

Under the trumpet judgments only one third of the waters were poisoned, now all the waters of the earth turn to blood. The people of the earth have thirsted after the blood of God's people and now it is their turn to reap what they have sown. If they want to try and stay alive they will have to drink blood.

Fourth Vial

“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.” (Rev. 16. 8-9)

Instead of the sun, moon and stars being dimmed as in the fourth trumpet judgment the people of the earth are scorched by the sun. Temperatures unknown to man will hit every location in the world. They will know that it is God in heaven who is causing their pain and torment, but they will not repent. Their hearts will only get harder and harder. The polar caps will probably begin to melt. Men will be dying from heat stroke. Machinery and cooling systems will break down. The waters turn to blood and provide no relief from the heat. Their sores cannot be washed off or cooled down.

Fifth Vial

“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.” (Rev.

16.10-11)

The lights have literally gone out on the Antichrist kingdom. He and his followers are now besieged on every side. Their flesh, in which they have pinned all their hopes, is riddled with tumors and sores. The sun is dimmed again, but somehow continues to scorch the earth. Men are in such pain they actually gnaw at their own tongues as an animal might. The temperatures are 120° F, 130° F or higher. Power plants are inoperable. Their only thoughts are against God and His kingdom.

Sixth Vial

“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.” (Rev. 16.12-16)

This is the day that all the previous judgments were leading up to – Armageddon. This plague first dries up the Euphrates River so that the kings of the East can march straight into Israel to fight along with the Antichrist in defiance against God and Jesus Christ. The plagues that have caused the people of the world so much pain and torment have also made them furious enough at God to try to fight a final battle with God. It is hard to believe that men would be so foolish as to commit to a war against God. But everything has been prepared for this moment of truth. By now the Antichrist’s subjects will know that they are doomed to Hell if they do not defeat God. There is nothing left for them to lose. They are being tormented daily. They have no water to drink. They have no relief from the heat. The earth’s eco- systems have defaulted. Their flesh is rotting away on their bones. And they hate God because they know He has brought these judgments upon them. But

just in case there is not enough motive for the world to come to Armageddon to fight against God and His Christ, three spirits are released into the world to deceive the leaders of the whole earth. These spirits come out of the mouth of the Unholy Trinity – the Dragon, the Antichrist and the False Prophet – to convince the world to join forces. Unbelievably, the world will think they can beat God on the field of battle. The sixth vial is the greatest to ever hit the world because it sets up Armageddon. It makes way for the return of Jesus and the total purging of the world. The kings of the earth will gather together not to fight one another, but to defy God.

But God wants all men to escape this day that is coming. Wedged in between this announcement of so great a judgment on the world, Christ reminds us that His greatest desire is for us to be raptured. He reminds us that we must be ready and watching if we want to escape all these things that shall come upon the earth.

Seventh Vial

“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.” (Rev. 16.17-21)

On the cross Jesus said, “It is finished”. His work of salvation, His defeat of sin and Satan in the flesh was accomplished. Now a voice from God’s throne says, “It is done!” The purging of the earth is complete. The purchase price has been paid and the deed to the earth has been reclaimed. Immediately the signature of God’s victory and power is once again manifested. On Calvary the skies had darkened, a storm ensued and an earthquake shook the city. Now lightnings, thunderings, voices, an earthquake and a great hailstorm hits the earth again. Hail weighing better than one hundred pounds begins smashing the earth. An earthquake so enormous it splits the Holy City into three parts and every city on earth is flattened. Every island is sunk and every mountain is toppled. Everything has been made ready for Jesus’ return with ten thousands of His saints. The judgments have acted like a brilliant military campaign. The seals declared war on the earth. The trumpets bombarded the Antichrist kingdom and the seven last plagues had softened up enemy resistance and brought them to the place of battle of God’s choosing.

Jesus is coming to make war. †

The Great Whore: Enemy From Within

We are now about to embark on the examination of a vast and complex subject in the Church: idolatry and the “enemy from within”. The subject matter, covered in chapters seventeen and eighteen of Revelation, is so important that it required two chapters in God’s final book of the Bible. It only makes sense that we give it full attention and take it very seriously.

We must begin our examination by discovering who and what the chief subject of these two chapters, the *Great Whore*, could possibly represent. We will find that she is a spiritual contrast to the sun-clad woman in chapter twelve, whom we concluded is symbolic of the Church. Just as the sun-clad woman is righteous and sober, we shall find that the Great Whore has made the nations and inhabitants of the world drunk with lies and blasphemies about God. She is the cancer that attacks the body of Christ, sending mutated cells inside the body to devour the body’s health.

She has been Satan's agent who sows the tares among the wheat. Though the conclusions we will inevitably draw are "politically incorrect" in today's world, the honest Bible student will have to agree they are unavoidable in the light of the only true standards of interpretation: the Holy Scriptures and the undeniable facts of history.

In chapter sixteen we encountered the end of God's judgment and His final victory over the forces of evil on earth. The world had been prepared for Christ's takeover by three series of seven-fold judgments: the seals, the trumpets and the seven last plagues. Armageddon has taken place and the cities and mountains of the earth have been leveled by God's mighty hand. At the conclusion of the chapter we were told, "*and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.*" But we were not told any of the details about what this actually meant. The only other reference to this "Babylon" had come earlier in chapter fourteen of Revelation when an angel announced from heaven: "*Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.*" But again we were not given any specifics on who, what, or why, only that she has incurred God's great wrath and for that she will be destroyed. The reason for the lack of detail is because God could not cover so profound and far-reaching a subject as false religion without giving it sufficient space and full attention. A subject so influential to man's destiny and the history of his relationship with God had to be dealt with dramatically and in clear, poignant terms.

The vision of the *Great Whore* is one of the most disturbing and unsettling of all Scripture. For true believers this vision serves as both a warning and a comfort. It is a shield against idolatry and a hedge to

prevent us from accepting her lying, blasphemous practices which she so cleverly clothes in the name of Christ. But for those who have dedicated their lives to an unyielding love of the truth and God's exciting, holy Word, it is a consolation to know that this "whore" will be wiped out by God's judgment. Notice that up until chapter seventeen Revelation gives us only three tidbits of information about this loathsome lady of the night. She has been in league with the leaders of the earth. She has made the people of the world drunk so they would commit fornication of some sort. And, she has provoked God's fierce and undiluted wrath. But what could be so serious as to make our longsuffering God so irate as to want to annihilate her without mercy? The answer is to be found in the next two powerful chapters. When we are done surveying the depths of the vision about this woman of Satan we ought to come away with an abiding and clear view of the Church's true "enemy from within". In these final chapters Babylon is called not simply Babylon, but "Mystery Babylon" and The "Great Whore", a clear reference to her perverse and spiritually adulterous character. As chapter seventeen opens we are greeted by an angel who tells John that he will show him this great whore who has committed fornication with the kings of the earth and made the people of earth drunk with her perversity and whoredoms. Now begins the full exposure of this evil that has only been briefly mentioned in the passages of Revelation to this point.

"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.” (Rev 17.1-2)

This *Great Whore* has done two things that have caused God’s ire. She has committed fornication with the kings of the earth and has caused the earth’s inhabitants to be drunken with the fruits of the illicit affair she has had with the leaders of the earth. In short, she has had a love affair with the world. This woman claims to be married to God while she carries on with the world. God is not talking about carnal infidelity in this passage of scripture but spiritual adultery and perversity. Fornication in the Bible first means being unfaithful to a marriage commitment. God used this analogy when speaking of His relationship with Israel. His people are meant to be married to Him. They are His espoused wife, the Church is to be espoused to Christ. This woman has committed herself to Him and to Christ but has been unfaithful. She has claimed to be His betrothed, but has gone after other gods like a common whore.

She knows God’s stance and that He is a jealous husband. He has said in His Word, *“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”* But she has had her own agenda. Not only has she had an affair with the world, but she has made it seem so glamorous and beautiful, so full of life and hope, that the world’s inhabitants have been intoxicated by it. They adore and respect her for it. She is their celebrity, their icon, their shining example. What she says goes. She will give them anything they want as long as they pay her price. She can be bought. *“But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul”,* says

the proverb¹. By her sorceries and lies she has turned the peoples of the world, and unfortunately much of the Church of God, into a reeling drunkard fawning over what amounts to a sleazy hustler in a scarlet dress.

John Was Amazed When He Saw This Incredible Sight

“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.” (Rev.17.3-5)

The cup she drinks from is full of abominations and filthiness. Her mystery rites have included all sorts of sexual perversions down through the ages, including homosexuality and prostitution. But her greatest filthiness has been in the spiritual lies she has invented about God and the Trinity. A blasphemous Mother-child worship was conceived by Nimrod (called Bel by Assyria), the earth's first king, and his wife, Semiramis (also known as Beltis by the Assyrians), right after the flood and has persisted in *The Whore's* mystery rites. In many ways, *Mystery Babylon* has been the nemesis of God's people, even more so than the Antichrist spirit. We shall find that Babylon is God's spiritual code word for the seduction and sorcery worked by Satan's religious system. Her religious “mysteries” have always been designed to draw true worship away from God, beginning with the days of Nimrod and the Tower of Babel.

1. Prov. 6:32

The condemnation given by God's Word in these next two chapters reach to the very heart of Satan's lies and his unquenchable desire to wrest the worship and obedience of the people of the earth away from the one true God in heaven. That system, the conspiracy to misdirect man away from God, with her accomplice, the Antichrist, has continued throughout history and will be very much an active part of religion on earth until the very end. John was beholding it in all its infamy when he saw this whore riding upon *The Beast*.

It is good to keep in mind that John is the acting representative of the Church throughout Revelation. John's first impulse was to wonder if he understood it correctly and we, too, should not be surprised if we find ourselves in a state of initial disbelief. So incredible, in fact, is this revelation that it was literally unimaginable to John. Verse six shows the prophets reaction:

"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." (Rev. 17.6)

The King James translates the end of this verse as, I wondered with great admiration, but could also be translated, *I was greatly amazed*. An equivalent modern idiom would be: I could not believe my eyes. As we will discover John has just been given a full view of this abominable creature and he is left in utter shock. It could be easily argued that John knew the true God and the one true religion better than anyone else who has ever lived. This is the same John that knew Jesus in the flesh. He walked and talked with Jesus. He beheld him in every hour of his earthly ministry. He saw him on the cross and for forty days following the resurrection he communed with Jesus. John was there when the Lord ascended into heaven.

John was the man that lay on the bosom of Jesus at the Last Supper and asked who it was that would betray him. The Bible calls John the disciple whom Jesus loved. He must have also known a great deal about the false ways of Babylon, the battles that his fellow prophets had fought against the prophets of Baal and Jezebel, as well as the idolatries of the Jewish nation that had persisted over the centuries. He must have known about the evils and fallacies of Greek philosophy and humanism, and the polytheism of Roman mythology. All of these things had infiltrated and infested not just the world, but Judaism also. There is no way he was ignorant of the spreading of the plague of false religion over the whole earth. Yet, he was still astounded when he saw this vision and how big and powerful it is.

Nothing like this had ever before been seen or considered. We have to believe that this is the first time in history, in the very moment when John is given this vision, that the *Whore of Babylon* is exposed in all her infamy. Up until this time the *Great Whore* has been somewhat hidden, shrouded in mystery (thus her name MYSTERY) and the extent of her works only partially known by God's people. Remember, God has only just given this revelation of things to come to Jesus Christ who in turn handed it to one of His angels to pass on to John. When we see the picture depicted in these chapters we must understand that we are looking at reality through God's eyes. It is a fresh revelation for believing Christians. It is a miracle of God's mercy that we can see it at all. It is only made possible because of Christ's death and resurrection from the grave. We must discard our earthly mentality and put on a mindset that believes the Scriptures. What God sees is an unfaithful wife, a whorish adulterer, and much, much more. In God's view she is not only an adulteress and whore, she personifies everything

that is evil about false religion, everything that has led people away from him to any other “god”. She has betrayed Him for other “lovers”. God is a jealous God, the first, second, third, ninth and tenth commandments, makes this very clear. Because of this, God will render to her the most severe judgment possible – total annihilation.

Because John himself was caught off guard and could not believe his eyes, we too should not be surprised if we are astounded and have a hard time believing this vision at first – intellectually speaking, that is. Once again, John serves the Church as an example. He stood in for the Church in chapter four as a symbol of the Rapture. He represented the Church in chapter ten when he took possession of the deed of the earth from Jesus. And again he acted in behalf of the Church in chapter eleven when he measured the temple for impending judgment. Now, once again, the faithful John stands a symbol of all faithful believers who would seek to understand all that is written in the book of Revelation. Here, John represents the natural mind of the believer and how it will cry out in wonderment about the stated truth of the Scripture. How can this be so? How can a woman who appears to be so rich, who supposedly worships God, so powerful and influential, with many millions of devoted followers, be utterly abominable in God’s eyes? How can she hold sway over the earth, carving out political deals with leaders of nations and yet causing her legions of devotees to dismiss the true worship of God. She has made them drunk on the fruits and unholy wine of service to the gods of this strange religion. How can there even be any such being with that kind of power and influence? And why have all the world’s believers followed her?

If we are to believe Revelation we simply must believe the unbelievable. John has already seen the Rapture and

believed it. He has seen the judgments of the world and the tribulation and death of saints and unswervingly believed them. Now he must believe this too. It would only be natural if at first he could not believe that the *Whore* had committed fornication with all the kings of the earth. In the vision he saw her drunk on the blood of his fellow prophets and the saints of Jesus Christ and he was appalled. He saw the name on her forehead which she proudly wore, **Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth** and he must have asked himself, “who could be proud of such a title?” His heart was saying, “this is true”, while his mind kept arguing, “how can this be?” His intellect could not readily accept such a broad and widespread evil by this lady of religion who claimed to be “queen of heaven”. Though he surely knew of this ongoing blasphemy (Jeremiah 7 & 44) he still could not believe his own thoughts. This is why God has exposed the *Great Whore* for what she truly is. Just as the FBI notifies the nation about public enemy number one, so the Bible warns the Church of its “spiritual enemy number one”.

John had been taken into the wilderness, a place where he had formerly found the sun-clad women (chapter twelve) hiding from the face of *The Beast*, but now he saw another woman drunken and riding upon its back. What a total contrast. He must have recognized (as we do) that the beast she is riding is the Antichrist. It had the familiar seven heads and ten horns (from Daniel and previous visions of Revelation), and it had the blasphemies of the Antichrist written on it. It may have been hard for John to understand how deep the conspiracy between *The Beast* and *The Whore* has run throughout history. He had been given a full vision of the Antichrist, and had even written of it in his first epistle to the churches (I John 2.18). But

it is likely he had not been given the insight about false religion to this extent. He surely had a notion, or even a good idea, about the evils of the Babylonian tradition of religion and how it had infested the whole earth and the religions of the nations with a false form of worship and a fake trinity. When he saw that this woman, instead of being adorned with the clothing of holiness and light, like the woman in chapter twelve, was decked out in worldly apparel, he may not have been totally surprised. Or, when he saw instead of a crown of stars, the terrible inscription, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH, tattooed on her forehead, he may have figured as much. But when he saw the mixture she drank to make herself drunk he became astounded and speechless.

“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.” (Rev. 17.6)

The questions that must have been racing through John’s mind were the same ones that all believers naturally ask: who exactly is this ghastly woman, what does she represent, and what is her relationship to *The Beast*? How can she be drinking the blood of saints and martyrs? But thank God for his ministering angel and for his faithfulness to show us these things as He has promised. Knowing John’s bewilderment and amazement, and ours to come, the angel reassured John that he would let him know what this all meant. And, as we shall see, the angel interprets these matters for John in the verses that follow.

We stop at this point to admit openly right here and now that the next portions of our study of Revelation will be “PI” (politically incorrect). But it is essential that Christians honestly identify who and what this image of a whore

actually represents without regard for worldly concerns, social proprieties or ecumenical pressures. There is no need to search out the identity of the symbolism of *The Dragon* or *The Beast* of chapters twelve and thirteen. We have been told directly by God's Word that the image of the Dragon is Satan and the image of the Beast is the Antichrist. But realizing the whore's identity is not so simple or easy. God has kept that veiled for the protection of His true Church. *The Whore* must be spiritually discerned. She is an earthly institution and her mission, remember, is to deceive the world into a false religion. But for those who do not "buy her wares", she will kill and drink their blood. God chose not to give her identity away directly lest the persecution be unrestrained and it lead to the perpetual destruction and death of true believers in every era of the Church Age or even the total annihilation of faithful believers.

Down through the centuries much has been written about the Great Whore. Debate always centers around her identity. If we were to avoid identifying her it would save some argument and for this reason many commentators beg the issue. It would even save us being persecuted by her, which is inevitably going to happen to any of us who dare to state who she truly is. But there is no possible way to avoid this most critical question. In chapters seventeen and eighteen we shall find that God directs some very dreadful and bold condemnations at this woman and offers warnings to true believers concerning her. It is only logical to conclude that God would not go to such lengths to warn us about her strategies and tactics to corrupt the Church and delude the world with false religion if He did not want us to know who this enemy is. To make this woman a nameless, faceless entity nullifies God's purposes. We must, therefore, give her a true identity if we are to

understand God's purposes about telling us of her character and deeds.

Though she is not exclusively the Roman Catholic branch of Christianity, the Catholic Church is the center of activity and power in *The Whore* today and has been since A.D. 325 when Christianity became the official state religion of the Roman Empire, *The Beast*. We have already noted that her roots go back to early Babel, as far as Nimrod's Tower of Babel and the mystery religion begun there by him and his wife Semiramis. (In chapter sixteen we shall go into detail about Nimrod and that it was his conspiracy that conceived the false religion that has spawned all other false religions since then.) In days gone by men of renown in the Church have concluded this truth and as we delve into the two chapters we too shall see that there is really no other reasonable conclusion which can be drawn by either logic or spiritual understanding. Men like Joseph Seiss, Arthur Bloomfield, and Gordon Lindsay, upon whose teachings much of this study rests, long ago arrived at this inevitable, ugly, sometimes unpopular, and currently "politically incorrect" understanding. Most modern Evangelical teachers of prophecy know this truth also, but are afraid to state it much less go into detail about it. It has more than just a tendency to stifle book sales.

The Roman Church, however, is only the mother of many harlots. Many of the other denominations, such as the Episcopal, Presbyterian, Lutheran and lesser ones have invented their own unscriptural and unholy liturgies and practices which have resulted in drift from the Gospel into a new kind of idolatry. Joseph Seiss² aptly called the Roman Church the fountainhead of the whorish corruptions that

2. *The Apocalypse: Seiss* Kregel Publications Grand Rapids, MI 1987 pp.385-404 chapters 38-39.

have crept into Christianity. He sought to make it clear that the Roman Church is not alone as the harlot of the Church. We, too, agree with his assessment. The adultery of false religion goes much deeper and is spread much broader than just Roman Catholicism, or her Christian “offspring” for that matter.

Our study must take time at this point to delve more deeply into issues pertaining to the Church and true worship if we are to reap the benefits of God’s warnings about the sorceries and seductions of the idolatrous whore. Chapters seventeen and eighteen are dealing primarily with the “enemy from within”. After World War II the United States suffered a period of paranoiac fear from the threat of Communism. The Communist strategy was to infiltrate and corrupt. The Communist threat became known as the Red Threat and party faithful were labeled “the enemy from within”. Communism was seen as the Antichrist by many Christians. That kind of fear and suspicion is not unique to the United States. Governments have always feared rebellion, sedition and coups from within their own ranks. Betrayal and intrigue has charted the course of European history for the last 1200 years. Infiltrating the enemy camp to cause chaos, confusion and rebellion is a tactic as old as time itself. It is one of Satan’s favorite strategies. He first sent some of his fallen angels to earth to cohabit with women in order to corrupt the seed of man. (Gen. 6) Later he used Baalam to show the Moabites how to cause Israel to fall into idolatry by seducing its men into marrying their pagan women. He also used Jezebel to seduce Israel into following the idolatrous practices of the priests of Baal. He infiltrated and corrupted Solomon’s kingdom by having wives of foreign gods marry him and seduce him into idolatry. All of these were an “enemy from

within” strategy that brought the people of God to idolatry, designed to dissolve their relationship with God. Satan knows that God must destroy idolatry and those who fall prey to its sensual lure. Should we be surprised or dismayed that Satan has tried even greater methods to tarnish and deceive the Church?

The Scriptures say, *“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”* (II Cor. 11.13-15) She has caused humanity to drink from the cup of her abominations and filthiness. The people of Israel acted this out when they worshipped the idols they made with their own hands and then in a drunken stupor rose up to play.

“And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD.

And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.” (Ex. 32.4-6)

We shall find that the great purpose of this revelation about *The Whore* is to deliver us out of idolatry. The very first of the commandments are:

1. *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*
2. *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in*

*the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:
Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them:
for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the
iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third
and fourth generation of them that hate me”*

In verse four of chapter eighteen we hear a voice out of heaven interject a solemn warning about coming out of this Babylonian whore so as not to receive the same judgment which she gets. The warning echoes the sentiments from an Epistle written by Paul which said,

*“And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?
for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I
will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their
God, and they shall be my people.*

*Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate,
saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will
receive you,*

*And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and
daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” (II Cor 6.16-18).*

In the letter to Thyatira we are again warned of the seductions of the great whore Jezebel, that harlot witch who led Israel astray. Jesus makes it clear that her spirit is rampant in the Church and that there is a severe judgment awaiting those who fall prey to it. And also, John ends his epistle not with “grace be to you” as most other epistles are so concluded, but with, “*little children keep yourselves from idols*”. Chapters seventeen and eighteen are the most controversial chapters of Revelation. Because they deal with religion they have caused many heated debates down through the centuries, but we shall not avoid any of the tough questions in spite of the resistance they may bring to us. In this study we have stood firmly on the ground

that Revelation is simple and direct. God means what He says. The actions and promises of judgment and mercy in Revelation are to be taken literally by the Church, as well as the advice given to us by angels and Christ during the stirring accounts of the coming redemption of the earth. The harlot is the double agent in the Church and is the mother of idolatry. She is the Catholic Church and her offspring, including all other false religions of the earth from Hinduism and Mohammedism to Mormonism and the Jehovah Witnesses. We conclude this chapter on the “enemy from within” with this ancient Scriptural metaphoric warning against spiritual harlotry from the Book of Proverbs.

“Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call understanding thy kinswoman:

That they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger which flattereth with her words.

For at the window of my house I looked through my casement,

And beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding,

Passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house,

In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night:

And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtle of heart.

(She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house:

Now is she without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every corner.)

So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him,

I have peace offerings with me; this day have I payed my vows.

Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee.

I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt.

I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.

Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us solace ourselves with loves.

For the goodman is not at home, he is gone a long journey:

He hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed.

With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him.

He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks;

Till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life.

Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth.

Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths.

For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her.

Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.” (Prov 7.4-27) †

Mystery Babylon: Her Roots in the Pre-Flood World

We put a face on the harlot when we associated her with the first king of the earth, Nimrod, and stated that Roman Catholicism was the current fountainhead of the whore's sorceries in this, the final days before the return of Christ. But now we must look further into her origins so we can fully understand all that this figure of evil represents.

Any honest search for the origins of *Mystery Babylon* will conclude that her roots run much deeper than just the apostasy of Christianity. She was not born out of the heresies of Roman Catholicism or the apostasy of Christianity; she is far more ancient than that and to get to the very core of her existence we must look deep into antiquity. From things we have already found out in Revelation, the name "Mystery Babylon" is synonymous with false religion. John is told that *The Whore* has caused

the whole earth to become drunken by her spiritual whoredoms.

“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.” (Rev. 17.2-3)

The next verse says that *The Whore* is “drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus”. Right from the start, and by this we mean the time from Man’s Fall, this mother of all false religion has been the bane of those who would worship God in spirit and in truth. By her sorceries and witchcraft *Mystery Babylon* has cast a spell over the inhabitants of the earth. She has been the great persecutor and killer of the saints. Her spirit has tried to destroy the true religion, and where she could not destroy it she tried to muddle or confuse it. One of her main purposes has always been to put just enough of a twist on the true instruction and word of God so as to nullify its desired effect. This is why she veils her religion in mystery. God is just the opposite; He does His work in the light. It is open for all to see and all to accept. Satan always does his work in the dark. He never reveals the true intentions or real purposes of his religion. Confusion, mystery and secretive, fraternal rites are some of the telltale signs of false religion. (Break down the words – *Mystery: secret* and *Babylon or Babel: confusion* – and one gets secret confusion.) Her ultimate purpose is to get men to be exclusive and secretive about God by hiding their devious religion under a pile of confusion, secret initiation rites, occult rituals and carnal sacraments. Thus, *Mystery Babylon* has been the plague of true worship from the very start. Interestingly, the title *Mystery Babylon* was not conferred on *The Whore*

until just five chapters short of the Bible's end. At first glance it would appear that *Mystery Babylon's* origins are in the Tower of Babel, which was built by Nimrod around 2100 BC. But to find *The Whore's* source we must go back even further in antiquity. Back we must go. Back as far as the very beginning of civilization. Back further than the first known cultures of the Sumerians, Hittites and Egyptians. We must go further back than Noah and *The Flood*. We must consider the days when giants and fallen angels walked the earth and the world was entirely shrouded in wickedness and rocked with violence. It was a time when God said, *"the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart."*¹ In fact, to find the origins of lies and false ways we must go back to the first confrontation between Satan and Man. We have to go back to the Garden of Eden and man's fall from grace.

Opposition of True and False Religion Began Right Away

All of the commands and promises of God have been connected to the coming Redeemer who would save Adam and Eve – and their seed – from the effects of their fall from grace. Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden tree, thereby showing their capability and willingness to disobey God. God had given them control and jurisdiction over every creature and part of the Garden. For their own good He denied them access to the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil". His command was simple. *"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."* In this respect,

1. Gen. 6.5-6

true religion in the beginning was no different than today. Trust God, take Him at His Word and obey Him. So too, false religion has remained basically the same since that day in the Garden. Satan perverted God's purpose in keeping Adam and Eve from the tree of knowledge by telling Eve that God was jealous and wished only to deprive them of becoming gods, because He did not want them to become like Him. The Serpent told Eve that God was a liar and that she would become like God if she ate the fruit. Eve was beguiled by this subtle deceiver and believed his perversion of the truth. Adam knew better, but fearing his wife, went along with the Devil's lies anyway and ate the forbidden fruit. The two foundations of sin were seen in Adam and Eve; one was deceived, one sinned willfully. That very first confrontation between true and false religion was only a temporary victory for Satan, however. God had already drawn up a plan to save the day. From the very start God's plan was to create a tried and tested creature that would never be swayed by evil even though they had a full knowledge of its temptations and deceptions. God's plan of salvation began immediately. The Lord declared a curse on all three of the parties.

First He dealt with the Devil,

“And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” (Gen. 3.14-15)

Then the woman,

“Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.” (Gen. 3.16)

Then the man,

“And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” (Gen. 3.17-19)

In verse fifteen God promised to send them a champion, a hero, who would restore them to their former relationship with God and return them to a paradise even greater than the Garden of Eden. Their offspring, the Lord promised, would be bruised by the Devil but ultimately would entirely destroy the serpent and punish him for his lies and blasphemies. This was the promise of a Savior, the promise of God’s only Son, the promise of Jesus. To believe this Adam and Eve required faith. They now had to do what they had failed to do in the Garden. They had to believe God and trust Him. They were required to believe what righteous Job would testify to centuries later, “*I know my redeemer lives*”. They simply had to perform what the lifelong search of the preacher from Ecclesiastes finally uncovered,

“hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”² However, until the promised Redeemer came to cover them once and for all with His own shed blood, God had to cover their shame and sin with the skin of an innocent animal. That was done when God took an animal from the Garden and slew it to make clothing for them. Innocent blood from then on had to be shed to make atonement for any and all disobedience and rebellion.

Abel: True Religion. Cain: False Religion

Blood sacrifice was God’s one command to Adam and his sons Cain and Abel. In anticipation of the coming Savior, which would be fulfilled in Jesus some sixty generations later, they were to sacrifice a blood offering of an innocent animal. The act of blood sacrifice would show their faith and belief in God’s promise of restoration and salvation. It also showed an admission of their own sinful nature and an acknowledgment of the fact that they deserved to die but God had allowed an innocent life to shoulder their guilt and take on the sentence of death in their behalf. No works of their own hands, no words, no payment, no penance or good deed could make atonement for their sin. This impossibility of being able to save oneself by good works or righteous merit was at the heart of true religion then and has remained so ever since³. Without believing in a coming Savior, one who would shed His blood for the forgiveness of sin, a Savior who would come through the seed of the

2. Eccl. 12:13

3. The above are just a few of the areas where the Whore has penetrated into Christianity. She has offered through the Romish Church another way of salvation just as Cain had dared to do. Corrupt doctrines of penance, inappropriate confession, infant baptism, transubstantiation in communion, salvation by works, false ideas of sacraments and practices of indulgences and observance of salvation through The Law have been just some of her means of perverting the Gospel way.

woman, man's search for God and his return to Him (his religion) would be vain. This truth became painfully obvious in a showdown between true and false religion when Cain and Abel brought offerings to God. They both knew to bring offerings and to present them to the Lord. They both understood the meaning of this religious act and that it was needed in order to have communion with God. But one man did the right thing, the other invented his own religion. God accepted Abel's offering of the firstlings of his flock. God rejected the older brother's offering of the fruit of the ground. Abel had been true by acknowledging the only covering for sin, the shed blood of an innocent life in place of his own blood. But God had cursed the ground for man's sake and now Cain was offering the works of his own hands from a cursed earth to God. A characteristic of the whore was born in Cain when he took elements of the truth and put his own spin on it. It was an open show of rebellion and human pride. Cain's offering spoke of his own prowess and goodness and self-righteousness. It was a "strange" offering. It perverted God's original and righteous instructions. Cain was sacrificing to God, but it was not the divinely prescribed sacrifice. Abel's offering, on the other hand, was humble, obedient and according to truth.

Again, just as in the Garden, false religion seemed to win out over the true way. Cain rose up in the field and slew his younger brother. But God again saved the situation when he gave Adam and Eve another son, Seth, one who could succeed the righteous Abel.

"And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.

And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called

his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the LORD.”(Gen. 4.25-26)

Seth would become God’s priest and an ambassador of the true religion, but more about that in future chapters. First, if we are to truthfully chart the growth and evolution of this harlot called *Mystery Babylon* we must talk of the great world-wide conspiracy of false religion that Satan hatched during the 1,600 years of man’s existence before the Flood.

Satan’s Grand Pre-Flood Strategy

After the murder of Abel, Satan devised a plan to provoke God into destroying all of mankind. It almost succeeded. By the time of the Flood, false religion had so permeated every part of the human race that all of humanity was corrupted. Genesis 6.1-2 reveals Satan’s fantastic, but effective, strategy.

*“And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them,
That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.”(Gen. 6.1-2)*

Demons Took On Human Form

God had given the command to, *“be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it”* (Gen. 1.28). Families and villages began to overspread the earth. Agrarian communities under patriarchal leadership and guidance sprang up in southeast Europe, throughout the Near East and south into the northern part of the continent of Africa. But Satan figured out a way to disrupt the migration of mankind and corrupt both its body and soul. Certain legions of fallen angels, who the Jewish priests and fabulist

have called *The Watchers*,⁴ somehow left their first estate in the heavenlies, took on the likeness of human flesh and began to have children with the women of earth. Jude refers to them in this passage of scripture: ***“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.”*** (Jude 6)

There had been two major confrontations between true and false religion. Satan had gotten Adam and Eve to sin and he had provoked Cain into murdering the righteous, obedient Abel. The Devil had reason to believe that both schemes had been at least partly, if not entirely, successful. But to Satan’s disappointment neither scheme had stopped God’s plan of salvation. As men began to multiply on the earth Satan needed a grander, more desperate strategy. He now launched a full-scale assault on the truth using his demonic angels to corrupt “the seed of the woman”. The sinister plot was designed to ravage the world in such a total way that God would have no choice but to abort His whole relationship with Mankind. You will recall that God’s first promise to man was given to Adam and Eve when He promised to send them a “champion” who would deliver them and their children to come from the effects of their fall from grace. Having failed in his first two attempts, Satan decided competition and corruption to be the better course of action. As his angels co-habited with women they began to sire Satanic “champions” to compete with this

4. According to pseudepigraphic books like *Enoch* and the *Book of Jubilees*, which were written in the 2nd century B.C. by a Pharisee and a rabbi respectively, the *Watchers* were high ranking angels who were entrusted with guardian angel-like responsibilities to help and train man in arts and crafts like agriculture and writing as well as sciences like astronomy and building. Their leader was named Yekun (probably meaning: rebel) and he supposedly seduced the other *Watchers* into giving into their lust for women of the earth.

fundamental prophecy of salvation. Satan hoped for two things in his new strategy. He hoped to derail the true religion by getting mankind to worship the progeny of these unholy unions; and he planned to so thoroughly infect the bloodlines of the human race that no pure descendent of Adam would remain from which the Messiah could be born into this world. If no pure channel of uncorrupted human flesh could be found then the Messiah could not come. At first glance this conspiracy to corrupt man may seem far-fetched. But when the history of false religion is taken into account it becomes the most plausible explanation for Satan's motives. Genesis 6.4 makes this very interesting and revealing remark and can give the Biblical historian a whole new perspective on the world and the fact that mystery religions, obtuse and perverse in their forms of worship, existed in powerfully developed ways in the 1,600 years before the Flood. We are told this:

"There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown." (Gen. 6.4)

Superhuman Giants Like Hercules Did Walk the Earth

What this means is that these "sons of God", or Nephilim as the Jews called them, were fallen angels who came to earth and begat superhuman beings. The word actually means *giant bullies, or tyrants*. Though the history of these beings was washed away with the Flood we have been left with a vast record of what these extraordinary beings must have been like. The Jewish historian, Josephus, makes this remark about these giants in his *Antiquities*, "For seven generations, men continued to believe in God as the Master of the universe, but then they fell into vice and depravity. Some, born of angels who had consorted with women,

resembled the audacious giants of Greek mythology”⁵. The mythological religions and histories of nearly every civilization are more than fairy tales told to inspire men to greater heights of courage and national pride. The legends grew and were embellished by classical poets like Hesiod, Homer, Ovid, Horace and Virgil; were glorified in the Greek tragedies and plays; and fictionalized in much of the Jewish tradition recorded by the Pharisees, rabbis and Levitical priesthood in fabulously fictional books such as, *Adam and Eve*, *Enoch* and *Jubilees*. The Scriptural truth is confirmed by our classic past and archeological finds in the Middle East and Mediterranean countries. That these “giants”, who were both man and angel, existed should not be denied by any Bible believing Christian. We know they existed in the Antediluvian world because Genesis tells us so. The traditions that grew up were surely based on actual accounts and facts – though admittedly greatly exaggerated in many cases – and these super human mortals were endowed with the strength and power of the angels who were their crafty and lustful fathers.

The book of *Jubilees* and *The Book of Enoch* were written in the second century B.C. by Jewish priests trying to build a case for the eternal establishment of the Mosaic Law. Though they wrote these tales from the most thinly veiled ulterior motives, they indicate the Jewish acceptance of the truth of the Nephilim. Fantastic stories abound in every culture about these prodigy of heavenly beings. Among the Arabs they are genii and the Greeks painted them as cyclops, for example. Jewish tradition says that some of these giants stood as tall as 300 feet and that after they had ravaged the stores of man and eaten the best of his

5. *Antiquities* - Beginnings A1,72

crops and herds that they turned on each other, and as cannibals, seized control of tribes of men and led them in wars against neighboring tribes which were controlled by a rival Nephilim. The Scriptures merely say that violence filled the earth, it is reasonable to assume that this violence was led by the “champions” who were endowed with heavenly powers and great size. As late as second century (150 A.D.) pagan worshipers from Italy and other parts of the Roman Empire were making pilgrimage to a site north of the Adriatic Sea in the Balkans to see the skeletal remains of a giant reported to be 22 ells or 80 feet tall. Though this may be nonsense, or the size exaggerated, the pilgrimages and its site is documented and undisputed, showing that the world, even as late as 150 A.D., believed the truth of the legacy of giants.

To support the point one only need refer to the Bible and the giants who were present in the land of Canaan after the Flood. Notice that the verse from Gen. 6.4 says that giants walked the earth in those days before the Flood, “*and after that*”. Scriptures only make a brief mention of *Nephilim* in the days before the Flood but these mutated beings do play a prominent role later on in the Old Testament when Israel took possession of the Promised Land. The giants, Goliath and his brother, were the sons of *new Nephilim* who apparently had tried to resurrect the conspiracy of polluting the human seed, or had just succumbed to their lust for earthly women, after the Flood. Goliath represented the last vestiges of this “race” of abhorrent half-man, half-angel creatures, or as the Bible puts it, *The renown men of old*. The recurrence of the “Nephilim” conspiracy in Canaan is perhaps one primary reason why God demanded that the Israelites totally destroy the Canaanites who lived in the Promised Land. The seed of the Canaanites had been

corrupted again by fallen angels. After the Flood, God confined this renewed conspiracy to the area of Canaan, but before the Flood these giants had appeared wherever the seeds of civilization had been sown. This explains the legends, fables and myths, and the otherwise bizarre religion surrounding mythological gods, that were so much a part of all of the peoples and ancient civilizations of Babylon, Egypt, Persia, Greece, Rome, India, Japan, China and every minor tribe and culture in the most remote lands of the earth.

Nephilim Were Worshipped

These Herculean beings were half-man, half-god. They were supernatural mortals of flesh and blood, but with great and extraordinary power. They had the supernatural strength and wisdom of the ages given them by contact with their demonic fathers. Genesis' statement that "*these were the men of old, men of renown*" swells with a world of implications. The legends of mythology are not concoctions of unsophisticated barbarians, but are of genuine historical fact having very real basis in truth. This was understood and acknowledged, and undisputed by men everywhere until the fourth century B.C. when the original rational movement among the so-called Greek skeptics and cynics gave rise to philosophers like Socrates and Aristotle which in turn caused the rejection of all former history as handed down from Noah and his sons. As the teachings of the *Age of Reason* (so-called) and the false science of Darwinism and Evolution has tried to undermine the literal truth of Biblical history and the truth about Creation as told in Genesis, so the rational movement among the Greeks was used by Satan to obscure the truth of man's origins and the truth about the Greek gods having their origins in the conspiracy of the angels to defile the bloodlines of

mankind. But prior to the Greek philosophers and sophists, respected historians like Hesiod and Homer took for granted the historical reality of these men of old, the “*men of renown*”. Homer accepted without question that men like Achilles, for example, were the offspring of a god and an earthly woman who had been seduced.

Worship of the “gods”: Beginning of Mystery Babylon

These renown sons of “gods” grew to manhood in a time when men, if they were not cut down by war, a wild animal or murdered, lived five hundred, six hundred and even as much as nine hundred years. During that time we must believe that the strongest of these mortal Nephilim (bully “gods”) created dynasties and kingdoms of their own and were in direct competition with other such realms. The patriarchal system of villages and tribes must have succumbed to the despotism of these mighty men and their submissive followers. Cities were built, like the city in the land of Nod where Cain found sanctuary after his murder of Abel. Armies likely were raised, and wars and conflict became commonplace. The Bible tells us one of the main reasons for God bringing on the Flood was that, “*the earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.*” (Gen. 6.11) God had intended man to live quietly, in family and tribal groups while seeking Him and calling upon His name, but the advent of the *Nephilim* caused perhaps the most profound societal change that man will ever experience outside of Christ’s Second Coming. The son of a particular fallen angel would become the lord over a province or region and become, as Goliath was to the Philistines, a champion to a people. Competition, jealousy and war became fierce and commonplace.

Is it hard to understand that eventually these heroes, along with their father and mother, were idolized and

became that people's deity. They were the sons of gods and they were worshiped as gods themselves. **This is the true origin of all polytheism on earth.** Hinduism, Buddhism, the ancestor worship of the Shinto in Japan, the mythology of the Scandinavians, wherever multiple gods are worshiped, they have their origin in the Age of the *Nephilim*. The worship of many gods found its reality with the progeny of the fallen angels who took women as their wives. Their spouses and their sons were worshiped as mythical and legendary heroes and heroines.

The twelve tasks of Hercules and his defiance of the "gods" is a perfect example of the legends that were built during the millennium of the Nephilim's tyrannical rule of the earth. The world most likely became intoxicated with these men of "renown", marveling at their incredible feats. The phrase about the men of old and the men of renown from the Scriptures surely implies that these superhumans did mighty exploits just as mythology claims. It is not hard to believe that mankind started to worship these mighty champions as "gods" in their own right. It is equally easy to believe that their mothers were also revered and worshipped. Mother and child worship was a natural spinoff of this conspiracy to corrupt true religion and seduce man away from worshiping God in spirit and in truth. Naturally, the fallen angels, who Jude tells us were imprisoned for their unlawful transition into flesh, were also made into icons of faith. They were venerated as the departed "gods" who supposedly ruled from afar (but actually had been imprisoned for their outrageous transformation into flesh), on some heavenly perch symbolized by a place like Mount Olympus.

Mythology's Stories Tell a Tale of Demonic Rebellion

The petty jealousies and intrigues among the gods in

the stories of Scandinavian, Teutonic, Greek and Roman mythology were actually demons who were vying for man's worship and earthly power through their offspring. This polytheism, pantheism, or worship of many "gods", was one of the greatest factors in God's decision to flood the earth and kill all its inhabitants. A religion of rebellion had been spawned by this conspiracy. Man and rebellious angel, with Satan at its head, and man in second command was created in the 1,600 odd years before the Flood. Understanding that these superhuman beings actually existed, not just in the imaginations of men, but in all reality, sheds new light on the spiritual and religious teachings of mythology. For example, when we find in Germanic/Scandinavian lore that the subservient gods led by Odin kill their creator and make a new earth, we see the fallen angels and their progeny telling mankind that God has been defeated and that they are fashioning a new world. This tale is told again in Greek mythology when Cronus, the father of the gods, is exiled by his son Zeus, who together with a cast of other "gods" takes over the earth and sets up rule on Mt. Olympus.

The New World Quickly Corrupted by Nimrod's Mystery Babylon

When Noah and his three sons stepped off the ark onto dry ground, a pristine world full of wonderful possibility lay gloriously before them. Only one righteous man and his family remained in this wonderful possession that God had given to Adam and his seed 1,600 years before. The old corruption and evil had been washed away. As Noah looked at the first rainbow hanging in a blue sky above this bold new world he must have had great hope for the future.

The first thing Noah did after he strode down the gangplank was to build an altar and sacrifice an animal

offering as a covenant of his desire to be obedient and righteous before God. The true religion of looking for redemption through the atonement of blood by a Messiah was immediately reestablished in this new world. At his side were his three sons. Japheth the elder, Shem, and Ham, the youngest. Shem was destined to be blessed, Ham would be cursed by God and Noah for his insolence and rebellion. (Gen. 9) Both of them would be used by their respective God to bring their religion over the gulf of the Flood and into the new world. Shem was to bring the religion of his father, and Ham would bring the false religion of *Nephilim* worship with him⁶. Polytheism, the essence of *Mystery Babylon's* false religion, had already been firmly established. *The Whore* would never give this up. Whether it came in the form of the many gods of Hinduism, or the many prophets of the Muslims, or the saint worship of apostate Christianity, “mystery” religion would keep the worship of many gods alive and prospering in many different forms. Eventually the heart and soul of the idolatry of polytheism found its identity in the worship of the god and goddess of fertility. This probably came from the early respect that was given to those who procreated and multiplied man on the earth. Having children was vitally important during the first millennium of creation and greatly desired. These “gods” brought forth children and the women who became known for having many children were venerated and made into goddesses. Ashtoreth and all the variations on the name (including

6. Tales of Ham's curse and its effect abound in pseudepigraphic books, etc., but one of the main aspects of the curse was this: that he brought the stories of the Nephilim and the worship of polytheism over to this side of the Flood and it infested his family and their seed. His son Cush, the father of Nimrod, became the high priest of the Post-Flood polytheism, while Shem became high priest of the true religion. (See next chapter for more details)

Astarte, Ishtar, Aphrodite, and Venus which are the same goddess in Philistine, Babylonian, Egyptian, Greek and Roman mythology) became the primary goddess of fertility after the Flood. Satan took the command of God, “*Be fruitful and multiply*” and made a god out of fertility itself. As usual the Devil took a truth and perverted it by twisting it to serve false religion’s purposes. Madonna worship and the Easter Bunny are just two examples of the lingering corruption that was begun in the evil Antediluvian world when grotesque bullies filled the earth with violence. The man who would begin the new system of polytheism after the Flood was a descendant of Ham named Nimrod and it was this mighty one who would redefine the worship of the Age of the *Nephilim* and shape it for the new world. †

Nimrod: Father of the Mother of Harlots

The mother of harlots as depicted in Revelation seventeen and eighteen is a composite of apostate Christian denominations, as well as other world religions, which are being led and directed by the oldest, and most powerful daughter of Mystery Babylon-Roman Catholicism. But in the interest of fairness and truth we must point out that *Mystery Babylon's* roots run much too deep to be considered as running only the course of the Christian Era. *Mystery Babylon* cannot, therefore, be considered the sole invention of Roman Catholicism, or any Christian denomination, or any disconnected heretical movement swirling around Christianity at any time during the present era. One of the titles given her in Revelation 17.5 is "The Mother of Harlots". The Catholic Church was not yet conceived when the mystery rites of ancient Babylon began to first pollute the world, therefore she could not have been its mother or the mother of all harlots. She, then, must be reckoned

as simply one of the harlots of *Mystery Babylon*. In fact, we have stated that false religion, and therefore *Mystery Babylon's* foundations, were laid as early as the Garden of Eden and gained momentum with the ensuing great Satanic conspiracy of the fallen angels of the Antediluvian Era which nearly provoked God into destroying the entire human race. From passages in Genesis six we understood that some of the fallen angels had left their first estate in heaven and had taken on the likeness of human flesh so they could cohabit with the daughters of men and create a dominant race of half-man, half-god supermen who would rule on earth as “gods”. As studies in comparative religion show, a system of false religion was established worldwide. This worship of various gods and their connection with fertility rites and the worship of the elements of heaven and earth, like the sun, moon, water and fire spread and became more than just a way of life in the Antediluvian world. It became the way of worship for all mankind. In the sixteen centuries from Adam’s creation to the Flood polytheism completely supplanted the true worship of the one true God.

This abhorrent religion was at the heart of the general evil and corruption into which the Antediluvian world had sunk. The “gods” that were born out of these unholy unions, along with their mothers and their “heavenly” fathers, competed for power with the other “trinities” of their same nature. Thus Genesis says that God looked on the situation and declared that, *“The earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.”* These giant tyrants, or Nephilim, as the Hebrew word implies about them, were the real and living versions of what the mythological religions of Rome and Greece would enshrine and deify in the era just before Christ’s first coming. Pagan religions of

all cultures and civilizations adopted the same legends and myths from those former days when supernatural mortals, all of whom were destroyed by the Flood, ruled the earth and commanded the worship of their subjects. The kingdoms and cities of these half-breed monsters were washed away by the Flood with little or no trace, but the stories and the accompanying legends that grew into overblown fables about these “gods” and their exploits were not lost to posterity. They would be carried into the new world of the post-Flood Era by, of all people, Noah’s own son, Ham, and his son, Cush. But it would be Ham’s grandson that would resurrect the old false religion of Antediluvian days. He would greatly refine it so as to enshrine himself, set up a false trinity with him as god and savior, and generate a system of mystery rites and sacraments that would be the basis for “Mystery Babylon” in all ages to come. Like a chameleon this system would be adaptable to the vain imagining of man, able to suit the customs and needs of any people anywhere. Noah’s great grandson, and the originator of this antichrist religion, of course, is the first of the Antichrist types found in Scripture, the infamous Nimrod.

Nimrod: Father of the Mother of Harlots

Fables and legends abound about this ignoble figure, called in the Hebrew tongue, Nimrod, and known universally (though by different names and identities) throughout the many and varied religions of the ancient world. An in-depth consideration of the information in the Bible shows that more than any other single person or thing, with the exception of Satan himself, this man was responsible for the religious system called, *Mystery Babylon*. This system was caste by his legendary life and his open rebellion against God and was further developed by his

wife, Semiramis, and her priests after his decease. It was received by their adoring followers and at points during history, through the mediums of conquest, immigration, trade and slavery, found its way into the heart of the religion of every society of peoples on earth.

Upon the dispersion of the people by God at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11) the religion of Nimrod was weakened, but by no means was it dissolved. Many of its devotees took it to their new place of abode after they were scattered from the city of Babel. Nimrod was still the object of worship (though he became known by different names because the language of the people had been diversified). The legend, the mystery rites, and the religious worship remained essentially the same. Everywhere Nimrod's fellow rebels went, they took the religion of Nimrod with them and with it the power to rule over men's hearts and establish the thrones of kings. Monarchs took the throne because they were descendants of the gods, Nimrod had set the precedent. The age-old right of the oriental potentate to sit upon the throne, the ruling power of Egyptian Pharaohs, and even the authority of the modern monarchs of Europe have depended upon the consent of the various ruling class of mystery priests, bishops or Pope who alone had the heavenly mandate to confirm and anoint kings. As Nimrod's religion had established very early, they ruled by divine right because they had the blue blood of the gods running through their veins. Thus was *Mystery Babylon* born and her power solidified and protracted throughout the earth. As Revelation points out: *Mystery Babylon* is she who "*reigneth over the kings of the earth*" (Rev. 17.18).

The Bible is brief, but concise, in telling us how the legend of this notorious evil doer got started. Genesis ten says Nimrod became strong in the earth and was a mighty

hunter, the world's first great builder of cities. In chapter eleven we are informed of a great spiritual crisis which was brought about by the force of this one man's ego, pride and rebellion. The provocation took place in the capital city of his newly formed empire, Babel, and culminated in the incident commonly known as the "Tower of Babel". This rebellion was so great and posed such a threat to the plan of salvation that it required God to take drastic action. The future of the entire human race was in jeopardy of being taken down a path of destruction and total annihilation, much like that of the judgment that took place before the Flood. The purpose of *Mystery Babylon* was to turn the hearts of the people away from God and to give them faith and trust in themselves. Nimrod gave the people what they wanted; a chance to throw off the "yoke" of God's requirements of righteousness, and make conditions of worship more suited for their pernicious ways. Essentially, as false religion aptly does, Nimrod gave the people what they wanted; an escape from following God. The god he invented allowed for carnal lusts and earthly greed. The god of their invention would tolerate their sins and violence, and would permit them to live life as they pleased, chasing the lusts of the flesh, the deceitfulness of riches and the pride of life without regard for their fellow man, their true Creator, or the promise of the "Coming Savior".

Nimrod: The First King, Great Rebel

"And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth.

He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD.

And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.

Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh,

and the city Rehoboth, and Calah,

And Resen between Nineveh and Calah: the same is a great city.” (Gen. 10.8-12)

As we can see from the above verses, Nimrod was the son of Cush and the grandson of Ham. Ham was the son of Noah who was cursed for his rebellious mocking of his righteous father (Gen. 9) and Cush, following in the footsteps of his father, became the leader and false prophet of the corrupt ways that were brought over the expanse of the Flood by Ham. There are ancient stories that credit Cush with grooming Nimrod to be the world's first king and the standard bearer for the rebellion against God. Nimrod was the founder of Babel and the architect of a chain of cities which he forged into the world's first great empire. Through written historical records and first-hand accounts about Nimrod, his wife and child do not exist; but his existence and career as mentioned in the Bible is not hard to verify. There is agreement among classical historians of all ages about Nimrod's kingdom and that he and his system, in substance, are the basis for all mystery rites of subsequent mystery religions in all cultures. Ancient historians like Hesiod, Herodotus, Homer and Epiphanius, through Christ's contemporary, Josephus, up to Maimonides, the great Jewish Rabbi of medieval times, accept the basic facts about Nimrod and his kingdom. Modern archeology supports the Bible record on Nimrod. The work of nineteenth century archeologists, Paul Emile Botta, Henry Austen Layard, and scholars like Sir Richard Wilkinson, George Rawlinson and Rev. Alexander Hislop, help to establish that Nimrod's empire was the first empire formed and that it was in the region of present day Iraq, known in early times as Chaldea and Babylon. These men traversed deserts, hazarded storms, waded through

ancient manuscripts and documents, fought hostile tribes and risked their lives traveling through inhospitable lands to piece together ancient historical facts that support the saga of Nimrod and the conspiracy in the land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers as related in Genesis ten. For the most part all of these historical accounts agree, and though speculations on some of the traditions and legends surrounding Nimrod may differ, the consent is unanimous that this man was the innovator of many corrupt things on the earth after the Flood.

He was the first builder of cities after the Flood¹, the first one to hunt prey from horseback, first to tame wild beasts, first to enslave men, first to utilize forced labor for building projects, first to conscript men into military service, first to rule a kingdom by force through a standing army, first to fortify cities, first to wear a crown, first to demand loyalty and worship from subjects, first man to rule a nation as supreme king and lord of all, and first to declare himself god on earth. With these precedents the earth had a foundation for man to acquire and reacquire pagan religion. Nimrod's Babel is the common source of false religion. Though shrouded in different names, with

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1. The work of Botta and Layard found the sites, and in some cases unearthed the ruins, of the four cities, Babel, Erech, Accad and Calneh, mentioned in Genesis ten as being the foundation of Nimrod's empire. The site of Babel became the mighty Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar which ruled the world for a brief time but lay in total ruin for centuries until Saddam Hussein's recent attempts to excavate and revive its fortunes. Erech, the second of the cities mentioned, eventually became known as the city of Warka and its ruins sit along the old course of the Euphrates River. They are six miles in circumference and still had earthen ramparts as high as forty feet circling the city. Evidence of Calneh was found north of Erech and though the ruins rise some sixty or seventy feet above the level of the sandy desert and descend in a long gentle slope down to the plain, they are not as impressive as the ruins at Warka, though it must have been a large fortified city.

different dialects, languages and words, they provided essentially the same prescription for worship.

As the fine scholar and author of *Two Babylons*, Alexander Hislop notes the name Nimrod is rendered from *Nimr*, meaning *rebel*, and *rod*, meaning *leopard*. Therefore it can be interpreted as rebel leopard, and usually is by most commentators. This meaning is certainly justified because, as we see in chapter eleven Nimrod was the leader of the great rebellion against God that took place at Babel in the building of the tower and the gathering of the people there into one unified group against God. But Hislop gives us a better rendering with more insight. He says the name is best interpreted as “leopard subduer”. And this, according to Hislop is the character of the man that is being described in chapter ten verses 8-9.

Nimrod: Hunter and Horseman

Among the ancients (Ovid, Homer, Hesiod, Herodotus), Nimrod was purported to be the first man to break horses and use them in the hunt. The Bible declares that he became a “mighty hunter before the Lord”. At the time of Moses’ writing of the book of Genesis, Nimrod and his prowess as a hunter remained a proverb in the earth, “*Wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord.*” But Nimrod apparently also employed the leopard, as it continued to be right up until modern times, as a means to hunt other animals. In India, Africa and the Middle East the leopard still symbolizes lordship and power. Even today many leaders on these continents don leopard skin hats as a sign of their royalty and ruling dignity. Nimrod was the source of this tradition. He tamed the leopard and used it to chase down his quarry. He became a symbol to all the world, after the Flood, of man’s capability to subdue the earth. He is also the Emancipator or Deliverer as some of

his names under his “godhead” suggest and proclaim. His deliverance was not, however, from sin but rather from the yoke of God. Reverend Hislop tells of a folktale of Hindi origin that speaks of man having to walk hunched over because the heavens were too close to the earth. A mighty deliverer, however, came to the rescue for mankind when he pushed the heavens away from the earth in three separate stages allowing mankind to walk upright without being oppressed and weighed down by the closeness of the heavens. This story is an indication that men felt the presence of God was an intrusion and a burden. It was Nimrod who threw off the unwelcome presence of the Creator and gave them a supposedly less oppressive “god” (himself) to worship.

Hislop further points out that the title of being a mighty hunter before the Lord suggests that Nimrod even hunted men. He subdued villages and communities and forced them into his cause. It can hardly be questioned that Nimrod was a rebel, even the root of his name is connected to rebellion, but he was also a subduer of men. The Bible tells us that, once Nimrod had gained a name for himself and the strength to enslave men, he and his army of men started westward from regions east of the land of the Tigris River (probably from a place like the plush land of Elam, southeast of the Tigris River along the northern tip of the Persian Gulf) until he and his subjects came to the area called Shinar in the Bible.² Once in this garden spot they began to build cities, including the fabled city of Babel. The saga of the Tower of Babel is one rife with suggestion of

2. The Bible calls Nimrod's empire the land of Shinar from the words *Shi*, meaning *two* and *Nahr*, meaning *River*. The Jews called this land between the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers, *Aram-Naharaim*, “Syria of the two rivers”; the Greeks and Romans called it *Mesopotamia*, “The between river country”; and the Arabs dubbed it, *Al-Jezerem*, “The Island”.

rebellion against God. It is obvious that the ringleader of this rebellion was the man named in the Bible as the builder of fortified cities along the fertile stretches of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.

They Came Together to Defy God

“And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.

And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.

And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.

So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.” (Gen. 11.1-9)

God’s first command to Noah and his three sons was “to go forth and replenish the earth”. Genesis 9.18-19 tells us,

“And the sons of Noah, that went forth of the ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth: and Ham is the father of Canaan.

These are the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth overspread.”

The command was that they should scatter over the face of the earth to repopulate it. Genesis ten records the genealogies of the three sons of Noah and tells where they settled. God had cleansed the world of the corrupt and violent seeds of the *Nephilim* by water, but it did not take man long to rebel against God’s expressed wish that they should scatter over the face of the earth, even in this new cleansed world. Instead they clumped together and conspired against God. There are many implications to be gleaned from the brief but concise accounts of Genesis given about Nimrod’s sedition. When considering these crimes in the context of their time we can easily see the precedent that was laid for all false religion and for those abominable practices that followed in their wake, and that these abominations continue even to this day though in somewhat different form. In Genesis, five primary things are revealed about the people and the condition of the world at the time of the conspiracy at Babel.

1. The whole earth was of one language
2. They came from the east and found a place to perpetuate their rebellion
3. They used bricks and mortar to build their tower and city
4. They wanted to make a name for themselves so they would not be scattered over the earth.
5. When the people acted as one, nothing they could

imagine to do could be restrained from them.

It must have been a terrible thing they were conspiring to do if God had to take such drastic action as to confound their ability to communicate with one another and to drive them into separate corners of the earth. But when we put together all of the components that are revealed in Genesis eleven we see why God did what He did.

The people must have been of one mind and one spirit in order for them to build a fortified place where they could plant themselves, be safe and not have to scatter over the face of the earth as God had commanded them to do. Remember, Nimrod was only two generations removed from the Flood. Ham was his grandfather. Men of his generation lived four hundred years. Shem was still alive. Nimrod and his followers knew full well that God had commanded everyone to live under patriarchal authority in small communities and to scatter across the whole earth. But Nimrod's people came to the plains of Shinar for the expressed purpose of coming together. They left their homes in defiance of God. They built a fortress (many of the gods of false religion have "fortress" as part of their name and focus of worship) with "the bricks of rebellion" and "the slime of unity". The first thing that Noah had done when he left the ark was to offer sacrifice to God. It was well established that man was to rely on and trust in God for everything. Noah's obedience was an undeniable living testimony to this great fact of faith. But Nimrod and his followers gathered together for the exact opposite reason: so they would not have to rely on God. They fortified themselves against wild beasts and marauding bandits and tried to become totally self-reliant so they could disregard the necessity of relying on God their Creator.

The Scripture also says that they wanted to make a name for themselves so they would not be scattered abroad over the face of the earth. Hislop believes that this idea of making a name for themselves had less to do with fame (although that was part of it) as it was connected with living by names and signs, especially the signs of the Zodiac. Ben Adams in his book, *Astrology, The Ancient Conspiracy*, makes the same point, as does E.W. Bullinger in his book *Witness of the Stars*. They all agree that the mention of the Tower reaching to heaven in the King James Version would more properly be rendered as, “*depicting*” the heavens. Even Herodotus, the Greek historian who saw the tower after it was finished by Nebuchadnezzar, confirms this interpretation. He reported in the fourth century B.C. that the Tower of Babel had the twelve signs of the Zodiac brightly painted in twelve startling colors around its seventh and final level. It is probable that they were trying to make a name for themselves, but it was the name of the god of their own invention, and it was certainly with the man in charge: Nimrod. They had settled in the plains of Shinar, the garden place of the world, plush and fruitful in wheat, dates and figs, to carve out their own “island” paradise without God’s approval and with His exclusion. They wanted to have someone to worship other than God and Nimrod was their man. As Bullinger and Adams so deftly prove, the stars in the sky foretold the coming of the Savior. God had put them there and explained their meaning to Adam. Adam in turn, handed them down orally, before the written word was invented, to Seth, Seth told Enoch, and so on. In this way the salvation story was known and understood by early man, including Nimrod and his followers. Even the riddle of the Sphinx, the colossal statue with the head of a woman and the body of

a lion, is revealed when we understand the witness of the stars. In the circle of the stars in heaven the Sphinx tells man where the story begins. To understand its meaning we begin with the constellation Virgo, the promise that the seed of the woman would redeem the earth, and end with Leo, Jesus Christ coming back as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. The ten constellations in between tell of the birth, life, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension and separated ones of the Messiah.

The name that the people were going to “make” was by means of attributing all of these prophecies of the coming Savior to Nimrod, his wife, Semiramis, his son Tammuz – and themselves as their followers. Nimrod intended to lift himself up as the Messiah and exalted himself as the one who could save the people of the earth. With the help of Satan he tried to turn the tables on God and steal away with the worship of man. Instead of holding God’s name above all others he rallied the people behind him and planned to exalt his name as the one to be trusted, and the one that should be unquestionably obeyed.

Shem Judges Nimrod

At the heart of Nimrod’s religious conspiracy was the supplanting of the Trinity. By a depraved and carnal version of himself, his wife and his son, Nimrod dared to defy God by preaching that man could be master of his own destiny. Seeing the threat to mankind, God stepped in and put a stop to the conspiracy. After the people were supernaturally dispersed by the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel, Nimrod’s power must have been greatly compromised, if not entirely broken. Shem, who the Bible says lived 500 years after the Flood, was still alive at this time, and likely the most universally respected and influential man on earth. He had seen the Flood and it was

common knowledge that he was the heir to Noah's blessing and the "keeper" of the knowledge of righteousness and true religion. Legend has it that these two men, Nimrod and Shem, became the great protagonists in the infant days of the post Flood era. It was Shem, as "the priest of the most high God" (Shem is almost certainly the mysterious figure called Melchizedek in Genesis fourteen) who brought Nimrod to judgment.

The Bible does not speak of Nimrod after his rebels were scattered abroad over the face of the earth, only Shem, with his new name, Melchizedek, appears again in Scripture many years later during the lifetime of Abraham. But an ancient legend of Egypt tells the story that Shem led a tribunal of 76 judges who tried, convicted and sentenced Nimrod to death for blasphemy and heresy against the one true God. The sentence they passed was that Nimrod should be cut into pieces and his parts sent into all the cities of the earth as a testimony and a terror to those who would dare to institute a false way of worship. Rev. Alexander Hislop, in *The Two Babylons*, points out that in Scripture there are two such incidents (Judges 19&20 and I Samuel 11) that show the precedent for this type of action in the ancient world. In both cases the intent was to instill reverential fear in the people and unite them in a common cause for righteousness. In the case of Nimrod's judgement it was to serve notice to all peoples wherever they had been dispersed, that any continued irreverence or mischief concerning such blasphemy and heresy in this newly formed religion meant certain judgment by God. The effect was that the religion developed by Semiramis was not eradicated but only forced underground. And so it became full of secrecy and mystery rites. In subterranean vaults and hidden temples its "mystery rites" were developed.

Only the initiated knew the full meaning of the dual symbolism of MYSTERY BABYLON'S cryptic rituals. Eventually, Shem died and the religion was accepted throughout the world with different spins and twists to suit a particular culture and the land's own climate and culture. Pre-Flood stories from each tribe and peoples were also incorporated into the basic body of mystery religion established by Nimrod.

Her Offspring

Upon the death of Nimrod, the priests of Semiramis represented him as having returned to heaven to become the Father and representative of the godhead. He was declared to be reincarnated in his son, Tammuz, and Semiramis became both the wife and mother of "god". Nimrod's personal "qualities" were deified and institutionalized as objects of worship. Tammuz would save the world. Semiramis was mother of all life. The mystery system drew on the polytheism of the Pre-Flood world as well. Thus names like Bacchus (Bar-Chus) or Son of Cush are derived from the original worship of Nimrod. Bacchus, of course, is the Greek and Roman god of wine, revelry and fertility, but is really none other than Nimrod. His worship was celebrated in rites of debauchery and orgiastic festivals that have their present day manifestations in seasonal celebrations, like May Day festivals and religious observances like *The Mardi Gras*.

The unholy trinity started out as Nimrod, Semiramis and Tammuz, but took on other names in different societies; as Osiris, Isis and Horus in Egypt, for example. In Christianity it took the form of mother-child worship by

the deification of Mary in doctrines like the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption³.

With Nimrod gone back to heaven, Semiramis and Tammuz were the powers on earth. Semiramis took to herself the exalted position of being both wife and mother of God and therefore became the focal point of all worship and arguably the most powerful deity of the three. She had a connection with the “father” in heaven and the “anointed reincarnation” of god on earth. She was the “Queen of Heaven⁴”, mother of “god” and the real power to be reckoned with. What position could be more exalted than being mother and wife of “god”? The Roman Catholic Church has given her just such an exalted position in spite of the fact that it has no Scriptural basis for it. Mother and child worship sprang out of this abominable form of worship. The child was deified in all cultures, as was the mother. Mary worship in Christianity has its roots in the pagan religion of Semiramis and Nimrod. The ludicrous, unbiblical worship of the infant Jesus has its origins in Tammuz worship. In Egypt, Assyria, Greece and Rome mother/child worship became a blasphemous mainstay of its religion and connected with all kinds of lewd and immoral rituals so shameful that most historians are embarrassed to detail them in print. Sadly, mother/child adoration is one of *The Whore’s* greatest intoxicating mysteries that have made billions of believers drunk on

3. Many Catholics and most Protestants do not realize that the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is not about Jesus’ perfect birth, but has to do with Mary. It claims that Mary’s soul was born without sin, giving her divine status. Though this doctrine was preached in the Catholic Church for centuries it was not declared official Papal dogma until 1854 under Pope Pius IX. The bodily assumption of Mary, like that of Jesus, giving her further divine qualities, was proclaimed by the Catholic Church in 1950 by decree of Pope Pius XII.

4. Jere. 7 & 44

the wine of false religion. This abomination has become a primary institution in Christianity's largest denomination; its roots are unquestionably traced to the very beginnings of *Mystery Babylon*.

Nimrod had promised to throw off the shackles of God for the people. And they were of one accord. Their power must have been immense. It is the reason why God made one of the most dire statements of the entire Bible when he said, "*now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do*". For thousands of years this statement may have seemed a mystery to the faithful. What could God have possibly meant? Anyone with eyes to see and ears to hear in the twentieth century can understand this without much of a problem. Man can travel underwater and into outer space; he can blow the world to smithereens in a single hour; he can replace a man's heart or give him an artificial limb. And now he can duplicate a living creature with nothing more than a test tube and an available womb. The male of any given kind, including man, is no longer necessary for the procreation of the species. Creation is turned upside down by the combined efforts of man and his wonderful intellect and knowledge. All this is made possible by the enormous power of man's God-given mind and when he comes together for unholy purposes. That is why God was alarmed when He saw the people come together and decided to split them apart for the sake of salvation. †

The Whore Will Be Indicted and Judged

As we can now see, chapters seventeen and eighteen of Revelation provide God's people with a clear and astonishing spiritual picture of the most dangerous and notorious spiritual criminal of all time. This mortal enemy of the Church is not embodied in a single living soul like Nimrod, Jezebel, Goliath, Herod the Great, or even Judas Iscariot, as one might suppose. Even that gallery of spiritual rogues, heinous and notorious as they are in God's sight, are nothing more than singular expressions of *The Great Whore*. No, the tentacles of this adversary of Christ reach far beyond the exploits of a single person, or even a solitary movement, group or religion. She is the witch and seductress that has fomented rebellion and idolatry in a multitude of religious ways and by sordid soulish practices down through the ages. She is the combination of man's wandering heart and the Devil's subtle lies. It is a spiritual force that the book of Revelation labeled – *The Great Whore*.

The Great Whore proudly wears the blasphemous title MYSTERY, BABYLON, MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. What a graphic picture of the “madam” of Satan’s brothel – the spirit that has given birth and instruction to all the spiritual and religious harlots during the history of mankind. Therefore, we can say she is the mother of all false religions. We have taken a rather somber, but honest, look at the *Whore’s* activities in the Church, as an enemy from within, as she has sought to mingle paganism with the Gospel and thereby apostatize and dilute Christ’s teachings, hoping to corrupt true believers wherever possible.

The sum total of our investigation is that God’s people have always had to fight against apostasy and seduction from *The Whore* and that she has always tried to destroy them by deceptions from within. We discovered her origins by looking at the book of Genesis and giving due regard to documented history. We unearthed her beginnings and growth and we discussed the stranglehold she has gained over the souls of men. Proving her existence and effect on the world has been a necessary prelude to understanding all that is said in the sprawling chapters of seventeen and eighteen. We must keep the last three chapters of our study in mind as we head into a full and orderly analysis of the two chapters which deal with this great menace.

The Great Whore Indicted For Her Crimes

“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.”
(Rev.17:1,2)

Just as under the law, there must be due cause for an indictment to be rendered, so God states the charges against *The Whore* before announcing her sentence and judgment. At the beginning of chapter 17 of Revelation, two specific accusations against *The Great Whore* are leveled. The first charge is that she has committed fornication with the kings of the earth. The strict Biblical definition of fornication is: the act of sexual relations between unmarried partners. In the spiritual realm fornication is always symbolic of idolatry which is spiritual adultery. It implies that this woman is married to one god, but is having illicit affairs with other deities. It is spiritual whoredom and, frankly, this is why God calls her a whore. This woman, this great whore, therefore, is “in bed” with the leaders and gods of this world. She has been in collusion with the leaders of the earth. She has lusted after political power and worldly gain.

The second charge against her is one that is most incredible and may have caused John’s initial reaction of disbelief. She stands accused of making the inhabitants of the earth drunk by reason of her affairs and ties with this world. As we shall see, she has seduced the world by the “wine of her fornication”. She has made the whole earth drunk and, therefore, out of touch with spiritual reality. The world, which once knew God in the days of Adam and Noah, has been blinded by *The Whore*. According as it is written in Romans chapter one, the world no longer knows Him.

“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they

are without excuse:

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:

Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.” (Rom 1.20-25)

This has been the fruit and desire of her work throughout the ages. She has labored to make the inhabitants of the earth drunken on her lies, promises and deceptions. A drunk cannot see clearly, think clearly or walk without stumbling. A drunk is not in touch with reality; he is numb in body, soul and spirit. A drunk loves foolishness and strife. All this is true in the flesh, and even more true with spiritual drunkenness, for it is in the spirit that she has made people drunk. She has used religion to keep them out of touch with God’s reality, His Gospel of Truth. Her wine of religious deceit has caused believers to replace truth with lies. The world is as a falling down drunk. The world cannot see God clearly, cannot hear him, cannot stand in His presence, cannot be filled with the Spirit. Instead the people of the world are drunken with the spirit of the world. They are intoxicated with the “wine” of idolatry and self-conceit. A favorite tactic of *The Whore* has been to build bogus religious traditions in the Church

which have made “*the word of God of none effect*”¹. Jesus exposed the Pharisees on this whorish practice.

The Whore has shown the people of the world how to make gods in their own image and how to fashion them after their own imaginations, while making them look like they are worshiping the one true God. Man has learned that if the God they worship is the one of their own creation they can do whatever they want to do without fear of contradiction. They are drunk on the God-given right of freedom of choice and they choose to make their own god. Anyone who has ever dealt with a drunk or tried to get through to one knows how utterly useless it is to even try. The only thing one can do is wait for them to sober up and hope to talk some sense into them. The world has become addicted to *The Whore’s* intoxicating “wine of fornication”. She has shown them the way to “*worship and serve the creature, more than the Creator.*”²

The Evidence Against The Whore

“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.” (Rev. 17.3-5)

If it is true that we are known by the company we keep then we get a good idea of the character of *The Great Whore* by the nature of her accomplices. In the next three verses

1. Matt 15:6, Mk 7:13

2. Rom. 1:25

we discover that *The Whore* is riding on, of all things, *The Antichrist*. They are not in competition with one another as much as they are in collusion with one another. She rides upon its power and influence to make herself both influential and powerful. Down through history they have used one another. She can clearly see the Antichrist's blasphemous claims for they are written all over the scarlet colored beast. *The Beast* has the same seven heads and ten horns as the beast seen in Revelation thirteen and the book of Daniel. We know this must be the Antichrist. But we do not have to speculate on that for the angel will shortly tell John exactly what the beast, the seven heads, the ten horns and the waters on which they all sit, represent.

Contrast To The Sun-Clad Woman In Chapter Twelve

Because *The Whore* sits astride *The Beast* we begin to understand that she is no victim. Her harlotry and fornication is no accident. She has not been seduced herself, she is the seductress. She is appareled in rich clothes and with gifts from all her unholy suitors. The cup of gold in her hand is a well-known and documented ancient symbol of idolatry harking back to the fertility goddesses of Nimrod's religion and the ancient religions of Egypt, Assyria, Greece and Rome. The Bible says that it is full of abominable things and all sorts of filthiness. This is the filthiness of her outrageous mystery rites, complete with the debauched practices of a lewd and unholy priesthood. This cup of abomination is filled with the worship of the work of men's hands and every silly misconception about God since the beginning of time. In this cup is every imaginable spiritual perversion: idolatry, pride, spiritual adultery, sorcery and blasphemy. The appearance, apparel and spirit of this woman is in marked contrast to another woman of which we became familiar in

chapter twelve – the one clothed in the sun. They both are seen in the “wilderness” which is reflective of their spiritual character and place in religion. They are both in peril because they are in the “wilderness”. One however, is protected by God and the other, *The Great Whore* is in jeopardy and will meet a damnable fate in the wilderness, betrayed by her treacherous allies. One is standing on the moon, the symbol of darkness, having won a victory over the forces of evil. The other rides on *The Beast*, the very personification of evil and rebellion against all that is righteous and godly. In nearly every way the two women of Revelation are the exact opposite of each other. Gordon Lindsay in Vol. 13 of his series on Revelation details nine separate counts in which these two symbolic women differ as follows.

In all ways these two women contrast. The Sun-clothed Woman represents the true Church-Israel, while MYSTERY BABYLON, MOTHER OF HARLOTS represents the false church, as we see in the following:

1. Both women have children. The first brought forth the Man-child who is to rule the nations. The second is the “mother of harlots and abominations of the earth”.
2. Both are dressed with attire that marks attention. One is clothed with the Sunlight of heaven. The other is decked in purple and scarlet and the gaudy jewels of the earth.
3. Both are in a position of influence and power. One has the moon under her feet and wears a crown of twelve stars. The other rides the Seven-headed

Beast.

4. Both have great adversaries. One has the Dragon standing before her ready to devour her Man-child when it is born. The ten kings of the Beast turn against the Harlot and destroy her and “burn her flesh with fire”.
5. The first is a holy, virtuous woman. The other is a harlot and mother of harlots.
6. One is hated by the ruling powers of earth. The other is loved and courted by the world.
7. The one is sustained by the wings of an eagle. The other is supported and carried by the Beast Power.
8. The one gives birth to the Man-child who is to rule the nations with a rod of iron. The other is the oppressor of the righteous, and is drunken with the “blood of the prophets and the saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth.”
9. One enters the New Jerusalem where she makes her home for eternity. The other comes under the wrath of God and goes down into the night of perdition. The two women may be said to be set as rivals in history and prophecy. Their interpretation in prophecy must have a corresponding relation. As the Sun-clothed woman is the true Church, the Church of all dispensation of both Old and New testament times, so this rival is as it were the Bride of the devil, embodying all that is devilish and sensual.

Her Title Reveals Her Works

In chapter eighteen we are sternly warned by God to

get away from *The Whore* or we, too, will partake of her judgment. *The Great Whore's* title offers us clues why we should refrain from any flirtation with her.

MYSTERY, the first part of her name written on her forehead, refers to her roots both before and after the Flood when secret initiation rites were used to entice mankind into believing in false divinities and to worship the creature rather than the Creator. The relationship with Mary is a fine example of this “mystery” among believers. Believers claim they do not worship Mary, but they go to her, pray to her, revere her, and trust in her for their every need. They exalt her above God in practice and yet “mysteriously” worship only God. They believe in the mystery of the Immaculate Conception and her miraculous Assumption into heaven, making her divine in every way, but they claim it is not worship – it is, however, a mystery.

BABYLON THE GREAT, the second part of the name, has its beginnings in Nimrod's Babylon, the ruler of the world, the framer of the collusion between Antichrist government and man-made religion.

THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH, the third part of her name, speaks of the many offspring that have come out of Nimrod's Mystery Babylon system. Wherever religion has gone *Mystery Babylon* has moved in with her seduction and spirit of fornication to make the true believers (and potential true believers) confused and drunken by the lure of her fornicating ways. Whether it has been the mythological paganism of Scandinavia, India, Egypt, Greece or Rome; the polytheism of the Hindus; or Mariology in Christianity, she has been the fountainhead of abominations and the mother of these different harlots.

She Has Her Accomplices

“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.” (Rev. 17.7)

The angel presenting the vision noticed that John was amazed and overwhelmed by what the picture of this extremely evil woman who represents the false Church meant. But the angel quickly reassured John and told him not to worry because he was about to show him exactly what all the symbols meant.

She Rides on the Eight Antichrist Kingdoms

“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 which hath 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.” (Rev. 17.8-11)

The angel has given us a brief history of the Antichrist for a particular purpose. God wants to show us that *The Whore* has ridden on *The Beast* from her inception. This is a picture of the two at the very end when they are ripe for judgment, but it also tells us of their age-old relationship. The world will be in awe of the Antichrist who will be dealt a mortal wound in the head (ch.13) yet is brought back to life. *The Whore*, which could be labeled as noted author Arthur

Bloomfield does, *The Antichurch*, will be right at his side. It is probable that the *False Prophet* will somehow rise out of this ecumenical church that has embraced every form of idolatry from Hinduism to Spiritualism to all forms and denominations of so-called Christianity. This One World Church will be like the Laodicean Church, lukewarm and thinking itself rich and in need of nothing.

The angel then gives John a riddle saying that it will take a mind with wisdom to understand its meaning. We are told that the seven heads of *The Beast* represent seven kingdoms, or kings. The angel discloses that five are already come and gone, the sixth was presently in power, and the seventh is yet to be. But we are not told who those kingdoms are. For that understanding and wisdom we must employ our knowledge of the Scriptures. In the book of Daniel and in other places we have been told who these kingdoms are. The first kingdom is found in Genesis ten and eleven when we are told of Nimrod's kingdom which reached up and down the Tigris and Euphrates River valleys. The second is Egypt (its story is in Exodus), the kingdom that withstood Moses, and first utilized the religious institutions of *Mystery Babylon*. The next four are revealed in Daniel and as we saw early in our study are: Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. The seventh is the kingdom of the ten kings also revealed in Daniel and confirmed in Revelation. We are told that this kingdom will last only a short time before it gives its power willingly to the Antichrist's final powerful kingdom which is the eighth. As we have before proven, this seventh kingdom is a revived Roman Empire. The eighth kingdom is of the seventh because it is built on the foundation of the kingdom of the ten kings. It is a simple riddle if we know Scripture and Biblical prophecy.

The Antichrist and Ten Kings Make War With The Lamb

“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.” (Rev. 17.12-14)

When the ten kings actually rise to power (probably a world-wide confederacy with Europe and the European Community being a forerunner of things to come) they will quickly give their power over to their champion, the Antichrist. If we have ever wondered why the world and the Antichrist would ever go to Armageddon and what they could possibly hope to accomplish there the question is answered beyond any doubt for us now. The world, the ten kings and the Antichrist come to Armageddon with one common bond: to *“make war with the Lamb”*. But God instantly reassures us that He will overcome them. Those that are with Him at that time will be the ones that were not only called and chosen, but also **faithful** to be obedient to His voice. These will be the ones who heeded the message of prophecy and looked for the day of their deliverance. These are the ones who walked as pilgrims and sojourners. Some will have given their life that they might find it. Others will have appeared to be last even among the Church, but will be proven to be first in God’s eyes. The ten kings and the Antichrist will hold absolute power over the souls of men, and *The Great Whore* will be the force that pulls them into their clutches. The called and chosen and faithful will be the ones who hold sway with God and the Lamb.

The Waters Are the Whole World

“And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.” (Rev. 17.15)

If there remained any doubt as to how much turf *The Great Whore* covered there should be none now. She sits on the waters of the whole earth. This is a familiar expression in the Bible to denote the people of the entire earth. Revelation thirteen has already used the expression to show that the Antichrist has world-wide acceptance and appeal.

The Political Powers Turn On Her

“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 fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.” (Rev. 17.15,16)

For the first time we get an indication of her judgment. Ironically it will be meted out by her so-called ally, the ten kings. There has always been a love-hate relationship between the forces of religion and secular powers. In the end the truth will come out that the kings and the worldly powers have always resented *The Whore's* constant meddling in their business and her attempts to impose her will on them. *The Whore's* final demise will begin by her being betrayed by the Antichrist kingdom.³ They will take away her authority and all her property and instead of

3. An Historical foreshadowing of the Antichrist's betrayal of the Whore is well displayed in the story of Napoleon's coronation as Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. The Pope was summoned to crown Napoleon in St. Peter's at Rome but just as the Pope was about to lay the crown on Bonaparte's head Napoleon seized it and crowned himself. Within hours he had confiscated Papal lands, deposed the Pope and rushed him off to imprisonment in a local bell tower.

being rich, she will suddenly become naked and destitute. Her churches and retreat houses will be burned, her assets confiscated. Her priests and officials, and any others who object, will be executed. All pretense of following the Lamb or being Christian will be dropped. The False Prophet will announce a new religion with the Antichrist as God. The *New Trinity* will be *The Dragon*, *The Beast* and *The False Prophet*.

Identified Beyond a Shadow of Doubt

“And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.” (Rev. 17.18)

As if God is acting as a prosecuting attorney He has built his case against the defendant and then suddenly turns to the defendant and identifies her as the perpetrator of every crime and unlawful act listed in the charges. Without warning we find out that the finger of God is pointing at a city. This city must embody the heart and soul of this spirit of adultery and idolatrous worship. What city can be identified with religion in these end times but Rome? – the leader of the whoredoms of the earth that is renown for its control of kings and nations. For centuries the Papacy in Rome ruled over the crowned heads of Europe. Dynasties were raised on the support of Popes. Kingdoms were divided by the decree of Rome. She controlled governments in South America and all over the new world. There is always a debate about whether this refers to Rome or Babylon itself. Now we will take a look at what God means by identifying the *Great Whore* as a city and we will closely analyze chapter eighteen in which the Fall of Babylon, with all its repercussions for the world and the faithful, is recorded by the vision given to John. We will take a look at the prevalent and popular teachings of prophecy and see

how they stand up to the simple truth of God's holy word in Revelation. †

The Universal Whore

The Great Whore is now to be associated with Rome. There is no subtle way to approach this revelation. We cannot put a cheery or “loving” face on our solemn deduction. We cannot take away this offense and say it is alright, just because those we love have been immersed in her spiritual mysteries and perverse religion. But the only reasonable conclusion remains: the “Mother of Harlots” is taking her lead from the Roman Catholic Church and her efforts toward ecumenism. Her “daughters” are the myriad of apostate Christian denominations and other forms of false religion that are coming together under the Papacy’s leadership in the global ecumenical movement¹. This ancient whore, of which The Vatican is now the leader, has seduced the world away from the one true God in exactly

1. It is not within the scope of this work to cover the ecumenical movement but you have only to read the Papal Bulls, Encyclicals and Homilies since Vatican II and especially Pope John Paul II’s reign to see the overtures being made to all the major religions of the world, inviting them to keep their own false religion and become a part of the One World Church all under the ambiguous banner of being “*people of goodwill*”.

the same way a harlot might seduce a husband away from his wife. She has fed the inhabitants of the earth with the wine of her fornication, an elixir of poison that has kept them drunk on pleasure, lust, pride and every abominable form of idolatrous religion. Her idolatry and perversion of the truth has caused the world to lose touch with the real God and has coaxed them into worshiping gods that they have crafted with their own imagination instead. Where the faithful have resisted she has persecuted and killed them. She has made the world drunk on idolatry, while she has kept herself drunk on the blood of the saints and prophets.

It is our assertion that the city referred to must be the city of Rome since no other city or power during the last two thousand years could even be imagined to fit the bill. What city other than Rome has held sway over monarchs, despots, democratic societies, empires, island nations and provincial governments alike. Many commentators have made sound arguments in support of this over the years and we heartily agree with their forthright and courageous studies. Most of them, however, have held to a dubious understanding that chapter seventeen and chapter eighteen are talking about two separate and distinct spiritual forces: religious Babylon and commercial Babylon. Of that we do not agree. We have the distinct advantage of being, in some cases, as much as one hundred and fifty years further in history than our venerable predecessors who so avidly studied God's Word of prophecy. But we feel they do not give *The Whore* enough credit for being a universal presence in the earth. We feel it is the one spirit of false religion that holds sway in not only the religious sphere of man's affairs but also in the political, social and commercial realm as well. Granted, we

who live so close to the coming of the Lord are armed with the hindsight of time, so it should be easier for us to see the form that *The Great Whore*, this MYSTERY, BABYLON AND MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH would take in the end.

Rome's Influence Is Universal

Her sphere of influence is not only in the pulpits, churches, temples synagogues and mosques of the world but in the marketplace, social organizations and political institutions of all nations. Both the secular and ecclesiastical worlds have been held under her spell for thousands of years. Commentators have recognized that *The Whore* has world-wide influence and in that sense is a universal presence. They have agreed that Rome is the essence and emblem of Babylon today and that the papacy has been the seat of *The Great Whore* for better than fifteen centuries. The word "catholic" means: *universal*. The word church means: *separated ones or true believers*. The title Roman signifies the spirit. The name Roman Catholic Church put together means: *the universal believers of the spirit of Rome*. Even its name identifies it with a city; The Roman Catholic religion is the only major religion named after a city. All others are named after its founder (Buddhism, Mohammedism, Lutheran) or the type of doctrine (Methodist, Baptist).

The Catholic Church has nearly a billion devotees. Unlike the eastern and Muslim religions, Roman Catholicism has a powerful presence on every continent in nearly every nation. The influence of the Vatican in Latin America and Africa has exploded in the last three decades, doubling and tripling in membership to 120 million and 71 million, respectively. The symbolism of a harlot "*sitting on many*

waters” is a picture of universal influence and presence that can only be ascribed to the Catholic Church.

Since the Second Vatican Council in 1963 the Ecumenical Movement has taken off. The reason it has taken off is solely because Rome has given it full support, putting her full weight and influence behind it. It has only been since that time, and due to the revival of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the late sixties and early seventies, that students of prophecy could begin to see the breadth and width of Roman Catholic universalism. If commentators of old had our vantage point they would have been able to see, as we do, that there is no sound reason for dividing chapters seventeen and eighteen. There is only one woman riding on *The Beast*, only one woman that has all of this influence in the earth, and only one woman that will be judged. This one woman dominates both the religious and commercial sectors of human existence on earth. This can best be argued when reading the two chapters together without a break. Then we see that there are at least four references in chapter eighteen that are used to describe *The Whore* which are the exact same descriptions of her in chapter seventeen. If God meant these two to be viewed as two different spiritual powers why would He confuse us and use the exact same descriptions of her. Though we do not have to be dogmatic about this point, it would seem easier to understand when we consider that both chapters are speaking about one and the same power.

1. 18.3 – “*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*” (The same wording as in vs. 17:2)
2. 18.16 – “*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!” (The same wording as in vs. 17:4)

3. 18.24 – *“And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.”*
(Drunk also on the blood of the saints and the martyrs of Jesus vs. 17:6)
4. 18.2 – She is called by name – *Babylon The Great* (in vs.17:5 she is named *Babylon The Great.*)
5. 18.18 – She will be burned by fire (in vs. 17:16 she is burned by fire.)

To further illustrate our point, the character in eighteen is referred to as a woman, just as in the previous chapter. There is only one woman that contrasts with the sun-clad woman and she is the same one throughout the two chapters. God also refers to *The Whore* as represented by a city in five verses in chapter eighteen. Why would He conclude chapter seventeen by saying this Whore is a city and then confuse us by referring to another city five times in the following 21 verses?

These facts ought to prove to us that the spirit of Babylon, embodied now in Rome with its fountainhead of spiritual power, the Papacy, is universally powerful. No other church than Rome can be said to have such influence and power with merchants, either. Her merchandise and property all around the world is enormous and her wealth beyond knowing. She owns lands and property in almost every county, town, city and hamlet in every nation on every continent; her wealth in precious gems, gold and art is beyond measure. No accounting or inventory could begin to disclose the magnitude of her immense wealth. She is

the biggest business in the world. If money brings power, she is a behemoth in commercial circles. All other corporations, including Microsoft, IBM and General Motors are micro midgets in comparison to her massive holdings and glittering wealth. Her gross annual income exceeds the GNP of most countries.

At the end of chapter seventeen we are explicitly told that *The Whore* is a city that has reigned over the kings of the earth. As we rapidly approach the last hour before Christ's return and the final judgment of *The Whore* the debate has centered around whether the city is Babylon, Rome or both. If you divide the prophecy into two parts it is easy to say that Rome is the representative of religious power and that a rebuilt Babylon in present-day Iraq will be the center of this commercial whore. But if we do not divide the two but take the prophecy literally that it is "a" city then we must make a choice.

Much of the argument for the city of Revelation eighteen actually being Babylon is that Revelation uses the name Babylon and that there are Old Testament prophecies indicating that Babylon will be rebuilt and will once again rise to world prominence at the end. But there are other prophecies that are similar in nature to this, using names of other cities to describe a spirit of Mystery Babylon. Ezekiel 26-28, for example, uses Tyre, that great city-state of the Mediterranean, as a metaphor for religion and Satan. In similar fashion Isaiah uses Babylon as a metaphor for spiritual perversity. That Tyre is a metaphor for all that the prideful Whore stands for seems clear. At any rate, a reasonable argument that absolves Rome from being *The Whore* seems impossible to make. The argument that makes *The Whore's* seat shift from The Vatican City to another place is unlikely and irrelevant in some ways. Even

if it were to shift it would still be the same spirit of the same whore. If the Pope were to take His things to Babylon and set up shop there then it would still be “*Mystery Babylon*”.

There has been no other city that can be equated with this kind of power in modern or even ancient history. Rome has been dubbed the “eternal city” and certainly the universal power. What place could be called a city-state other than the Roman Catholic Church residing in Vatican City as its own temporal power. Vatican City was established for the end-times fulfillment of prophecy in 1929 by the Lateran Treaty. It is a triangular piece of ground in the midst of Rome itself. Vatican City is a sovereign nation that mints its own coins, prints its own stamps and has the Pope as its absolute ruler. It has diplomatic relations with, and sends ambassadors to, every nation and answers to no other authority but itself. In Scripture, a city is the most fundamental unit of political and national power. It is to government and order what the family is to social and moral structure. Because it is so fundamental to social order, God uses it symbolically throughout the Bible. This is why God has likened the *Great Whore* to a city and even inextricably connected her destiny with one metropolis. The woman in chapter twelve and the bride of Christ is also likened to a city (Rev 21.9-10). In that passage God shows how a city is just an expression of what He offers to obedient followers. Impurities, sin, evil and death are kept out. Peace, great riches, health, enlightenment, sustenance and contentment are within its impregnable walls (Rev. 21). Isaiah 26-28 uses the same symbolism. The city of Babylon has always stood as a citadel of security in this world for the purposes of providing escape and refuge for man from God, not to God. The city of Babylon is an expression of man’s independence from reliance on God.

It started with Nimrod's original city and again we saw it in Nebuchadnezzar's great city-state of Babylon for which he was judged (Daniel 4). In Ezekiel we see the city of Tyre likened to Satan and the Antichrist (26-28).

It may be asked, why then does God use the name Babylon and not come right out and call it Rome? After all, Rome was the existing power and known throughout the world and everyone could have related to it? For precisely that reason God did not call this spirit, "Rome". The persecution that the Church suffered in the first two hundred and fifty years was severe enough without having the Bible calling the Roman Empire the Antichrist Kingdom. The Bible would have had to survive censorship and more burnings than God wanted it to or than His plan could permit. The persecution was severe enough over the years. Estimates as high as 900 million believers have been martyred at the hands of the Roman Emperors, the Papacy and its zealot monarchs. If the Bible had expressly used her name it could have been measurably worse, even to the point of banning the Bible itself. Having said these things, the following 24 verses of chapter eighteen speak for themselves.

Now We See Her Sentence Carried Out

"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 is 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.” (Rev. 18.1-3)

Another angel now appears on the scene to administer the final judgment of the *Great Whore*. Using Arthur Bloomfield’s criteria that every time Jesus appears we are tipped off because He has some characteristic which was used to describe Him in chapter one, we can conclude that this angel is also Jesus. He comes down with “great power” and “the earth is lightened by His glory”. Only Jesus’ presence could lighten the earth. This great angel is coming to deal out the final judgment to the force that has been His nemesis from the beginning of the redemption story. Since she has been a cancer in the midst of His people and for thousands of years has dominated, persecuted and killed true believers it is fitting that He will be the instrument of her final judgment and destruction. The angel cries out with a mighty voice, a role that is exclusively reserved for Jesus in Revelation. He has the honor of declaring the demise of the arrogant city and spiritual whore. She thought she had set herself up as the eternal habitation of peace and wealth, but now she will be the habitation of every evil and unclean thing. Desolation is her inheritance. She is utterly destroyed and there is nothing of any value or goodness that remains in her. Once again we are reminded that she has committed fornication with the kings of the earth and caused the inhabitants of the earth to be drunk with her adulterous doctrines and ways. There cannot be a religious whore and a commercial whore doing the same thing to the world. It is one spiritual power influencing the world by a multitude of different means. We are finding out that there is really only one great promoter of the “deceitfulness of riches” (Mark 4.19). She has made it religiously correct to worship mammon instead of God.

Power and wealth has been baptized by her and the merchants of the earth have cashed in on her shrewd business ways and her religious hypocrisy.

A Warning for Believers and the Severity of Her Judgment

“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.

Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which 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 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.” (Rev. 18.4-8)

We have arrived at a point in Revelation where God’s purpose in exposing *The Whore* becomes crystal clear. “Come out of her, my people”, He says, “that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.” Can any Bible believer have any doubt about the sternness and gravity of this warning by God to His people? He has shown them the enemy from within and, like Lot in Sodom, has told them to get away from her so they will not perish along with her. We are fairly warned: withdraw from *The Whore* and have nothing to do with her at all.

Two things should become obvious in this warning to depart from her. First, in order to withdraw from her we

must know and recognize who it is that we have to withdraw and stay separated from. That is why we have taken pains to identify *The Whore* as false religion and apostate Christianity in all its forms. It should be obvious that if we are to withdraw from her then we must identify her and her associates and partners or, in other words, those who agree with her or refuse to depart from her. If we do not know who and what she is then we cannot be sure we are separated and free from her influence. It therefore becomes of paramount importance that we understand every part of the revelation concerning her. It is for the protection and deliverance of the true body of faithful believers. Second, if chapter eighteen were about one commercial city of some distant future time then this warning cannot be directed at and has no great purpose for the people of God. It has no relevance for us. What would the people of God be doing in her at the last hours before Jesus' return anyway. What kind of threat is a rebuilt Babylon going to pose for true believers? Are we going to move there, or are Christians going to suddenly be induced to worship Marduk or golden calves? It makes no sense that God is issuing a warning to come away from some great commercial city because it is a spiritual whore. No, this is a universal spiritual warning about an ancient spirit of idolatry and adultery that is far more subtle than the demonic worship of past pagan days. It has to be. It should be obvious that this is about the one and only Great Whore who has universal appeal and power. It is a repeat of the warning given in II Corinthians 6 by Paul;

“And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?”

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will

dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” (Rev. 16-19)

The statement that this woman makes in her heart is a religious one, not one made by the secular, heathen world: *“for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.”* God would not be interested in the carnal business world proclaiming their independence from Him. That is a given fact that goes without saying. No, this statement is the voice of hypocrisy, a statement of religious pride coming from the queen of the world’s religion. Her voice echoes the sentiments of the Laodicean Church in Revelation chapter three – the Church so despised by Christ for its self-reliance, self-confidence and dreadful independence from Him. This is the spirit that announces that it has no need of God and yet it pretends to be His closest confidant and friend, even His wife².

It is ironic that in the end the only thing that reaches to heaven for mighty Babylon is her sins. *“For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.”* She had originally come together to transcend God and reach into the heavens to control her own destiny, but by her rebellion only her sins have reached unparalleled

2. his statement is very much like the one which Christ rebukes Laodicea in Rev. 3 for: *“So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.”*

heights. God has promised to return two-fold to her all the cruelty and sin she has accumulated over the ages. She has lived in riches and pomp. The Catholic Church and others that have had the audacity to profess charity and poverty but have lived in opulent palaces like rich misers, parading the streets with jewels and robes of enormous wealth will be decimated in one day never to rise again.

The World Mourns 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 the 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 earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more:” (Rev. 18.9-11)

All the unfaithful people of the world will mourn over her. She was their religion and their shining example of pride and glory. She needed nothing from anyone. She had it all. She was the queen of heaven. But the believers in heaven and earth will not mourn for her at all. There will be shouts of “Hallelujah” and “Praise God” resounding through the universe³.

We cannot help but envision the day that Vatican City with all its wealth, pomp and circumstance, and great pretensions against God will be turned into a smoldering heap of ashes. To borrow a favorite phrase from *The Christian Spirit* writer, Leroy Gardenier, – “Rome, called *The*

3. (Rev. 18.20 & Rev. 19.1-5)

Eternal City, will ultimately be turned into: *The Eternal Cinder!*”

She Deals In People and Souls

“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.” (Rev.18.12,13)

This list of merchandise should be taken as a whole unit. It is a complete list of worldly items which *The Whore* has trafficked in since the earliest days of her history. It starts with the most valuable of earth’s metals, gold, goes through every other conceivable thing and ends with the souls of men. The souls of men is certainly not the merchandise of the commercial world. This is the favorite merchandise of religion. This list is only another argument in favor of seeing *The Great Whore* in seventeen and eighteen as one and the same. This is a list of the things that the gods of this earth buy and sell. In contrast, God is the merchant of spiritual things and truth. The Scriptures tell us to; “*Buy the truth and, sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.*”⁴. God has purchased salvation for us with His own blood and won peace and life for us; these are the things God traffics in and encourages us to purchase. But He outlawed those things the *Whore* delights to deal in. He forbade Israel to make merchandise of people or wives⁵. But the buying and selling of slaves: and domination of

4. Pro. 23.23

5. Deut. 21.14 & 14.7

souls and people's faith has been *The Whore's* favorite merchandise.

She Is Once Again Identified With A City

"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! ...

And the voice of 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 of 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 of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth." (Rev. 18.15,16; 22-24)

Rome is the abode of the spirit of Babylon. As the body is dead without the spirit, as faith is dead without works, so the city of Rome is lifeless without the spirit of Mystery Babylon. By her sorceries all the nations were deceived into worshiping false gods and its inhabitants made drunk.

The visions of this evil harlot which God presents us with in chapters seventeen and eighteen are among the most foreboding of all Scripture. The sober warning given to the faithful in chapter eighteen – that they must come out from her and have nothing to do with her – should make any conscientious disciple of Christ serious minded in their

determination to identify her so they can totally withdraw from her and her influence. So alarming is this indictment that we are shocked and dismayed when we hear it. She is accused of being the persecutor and killer of the saints and prophets of God. She claims to be the blessed one of the earth, in need of nothing and ruler over the kings of the earth, but in reality she is the Antichrist's co-conspirator and together they have continually committed spiritual fornication, raped the Church of God, and drawn the world away from true worship to their false gods and ways. We hear the Spirit saying, "Come away from her dear children."

†

Alleluia! The Whore is Vanquished: The True Bride Emerges

The method God has used in Revelation is the oldest, simplest and most universal way of communicating information: the outline. We use the outline regularly in our daily lives. For example, when a wife hands her husband a grocery list it is nothing more than a simple outline. She is entrusting him to pick up some basic items which are listed in an orderly fashion: bread, butter, milk, laundry detergent, paper napkins, etc. She then fills in the outline by giving him specific and detailed information that tells him whether he should get nonfat, low cholesterol, the “one on sale”, or a particular name brand. She may even tell him what aisle it is in or if she has a coupon for one or other of the items. Lawyers prepare briefs, engineers design products, architects build buildings, politicians devise strategies, generals fight wars

and writers write articles using this elementary but ageless method. An outline is first drawn up and then the details are filled in. It is the simplest of all methods of organizing a job or task and then setting out its purpose. This is all God has done in the book of Revelation and there is nothing more “mysterious” or cryptic about it than that. If we keep this fundamental understanding of the layout of Revelation in the forefront of our mind while we study it, all our predispositions and fears shall dissolve like morning frost melting away on a sunlit windshield. We are left with a crystal clear view of the prophetic landscape pictured for us in Revelation.

God’s purpose in laying out this outline with its supporting detail is to impart to us a more spiritual outlook of the future destiny of mankind. Our study by now should have transformed our faith from a carnal worldly trust into one more suited for the end-times saint. We should be wiser in our understanding of religion and its pitfalls. We should be alarmed by God’s warning to believers that they must come away from *The Whore*, that we be not partakers of her sins and the judgment that awaits her. We should have shed our humanistic faith that man’s efforts can make a perfect world. We should know that man is not destined to make a place for Jesus to dwell, but to the contrary, Jesus has gone away to prepare a place for us¹. There are many things our study of Revelation ought to have taught us. We should be firm in our belief that Christ will not return to a world renewed by love and peace. He is coming as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah with a sword in His mouth to a world full of turmoil, sin and rebellion. Revelation is partly about giving mankind, and the Church, fair warning.

1. John 14

The topics of the chapter we are about to cover, chapter nineteen, are: the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, the battle of Armageddon, and the final judgment of the Antichrist, the False Prophet and their stubborn followers.

Victory In Jesus

Victory in Jesus, my Savior forever.

*He sought me, and He bought me
with His redeeming Blood.*

*He loved me e'er I knew Him
and all my love is due Him.*

*He plunged me to victory
beneath the cleansing flood.*

As the classic hymn, *Victory in Jesus*, celebrates the glorious victory of our Savior Jesus over the forces of evil, it could also well be sung at the victory party which explodes with the opening of chapter nineteen. The celebration is not about Christ's conquest over Satan or His defeat of the Antichrist and his people in the Valley of Megiddo known as Armageddon, as one might think. That victory is described a little further on in chapter nineteen. The display of joyous emotion and expression of awe for God's supreme power and great love is for the judgment of *The Great Whore* which has just come to completion in the previous chapter. She has caused so much pain and suffering to the Church and, in the process, has destroyed so many souls, that the saints' joy cannot now be contained. This "party" is for all Christians who have remained faithful throughout the ages, even unto death. For those who have weathered the storm of the Antichrist's reign on earth it is a special party. They have lost their lives but have gained their souls. Now they are ready to begin praising God for the rest of eternity in the blissful habitation that God promised them in His Word of prophecy.

“And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our 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.” (Rev. 19.1-3)

The celebration begins with the spontaneous eruption of thankfulness for God’s destruction of the Church’s great nemesis. The world and its faithful followers, along with its kings and leaders and merchants, cried over her destruction. She was their queen. As her smoke rose in the air they said, *“Alas, alas that great city, Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more.”* (Rev. 18.11) But the true people of God will not pity her. They will not shed a single tear over the loss of her art and ornate pieces of gold and silver, over the confiscation of her vast real estate holdings and her stocks and bonds. When her valuables are looted and her servants are slaughtered, her buildings razed, her priests killed, and after the betrayal of her accomplices, the faithful servants of God will not mourn her for a solitary moment. When all her riches have been stolen and gone up in smoke the saints will jump with glee, they will not be able to contain their joy over her sudden and complete annihilation. She had begun her reign and seduction of the earth’s inhabitants by trying to make a name for herself above the name of God. She tried building a monument to her name, a tower

that could “reach to the heavens”². That account was recorded in the first book of the Bible and now, in the last book we find out what actually reached to the heavens. God says “*her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities*” (Rev.18.5). God patiently and with longsuffering let her sins mount up over the centuries until they reached as high as heaven itself. The saints have also been patient, but now their wait is over; they have been vindicated. God has exacted His vengeance on *The Great Whore* who has been drunken on the “*blood of the saints and the martyrs of Jesus*” (Rev. 17.6) in whom was found also the blood of the prophets as well (Rev. 18.24). Not that they had to be commanded to do so, but this is the due response to the decree given from heaven in verse 20 of chapter seventeen, “*Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.*”

“And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshiped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.” (Rev. 19.4)

Joining in the celebration will be the elders and angels of heaven. These are the elders that first appeared after the rapture in chapter four. Once again we find more information confirming their special place in Christ. They were the ones which we identified as the faithful group of raptured souls who are given exalted positions in eternity. They have been harangued, harassed, persecuted, maligned, accused, condemned and killed by her too. They shout with exuberant joy, “So Be It!” (Amen) and join in with the Alleluia chorus as it begins to swell throughout the heavenlies. Soon all of heaven will be shouting

2. Genesis 6.4

unrestrained “Alleluias”. Believe me you won’t want to miss this party.

“And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his 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 many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” (Rev. 19.5-6)

Shouts of glory and Alleluia come rushing in from every corner of heaven until it builds to an enormous crescendo of awesome praise for God. Those who have been redeemed from the earth and were martyred by the Antichrist initiate the unrehearsed shouts of Alleluia. The elders and angels join in and then all of heaven is declaring with one voice, “Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!” This explosion of praise is all because of the judgment and destruction of *The Whore*. Seeing and knowing this, who could feel sorry for the *Whore* or have the slightest sympathy for her at any time – today or tomorrow? There is no hope for her repentance or reform. She is reprobate. The only hope is for the people of God to come out from among her and be separated from any connection with her. The word “Alleluia” is used in Scripture to praise God for His judgment. While the world mourns the overthrow of *The Whore* who had made them rich in worldly things, those who have been made rich in spiritual things and have escaped her seductive powers through the grace of God are ecstatic with joy. They do not empathize with this devilish carrier of false religion. No true saint of God will mourn her annihilation. In fact the saints and angels of heaven are ready to forget all about this great impostor. God now calls

their attention to a special and long awaited moment in His plan of redemption – *The Marriage Supper of the Lamb*.

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.” (Rev. 19.7)

Christ’s Wife Busy Making Herself Ready

The Whore has been cast out and the true Bride is about to be elevated to her exalted place as Christ’s eternal wife. The promise to the Philadelphia Church is realized. *“Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.”* (Rev. 3.9) The time has come. Notice, in the scheme of things, this happens before the last battle, Armageddon. The false wife is deposed and now Christ will share His triumph over the Antichrist and his followers with His true Bride at His side.

“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.” (Rev. 19.8)

There is no doubt that the Bride must be made up exclusively of redeemed men and women. Only the redeemed can wear fine white linen. It is “the righteousness of saints”. The clean, white linen is highly symbolic. The covering for man’s sin after the fall was the skin of an innocent animal which God slew to cover Adam and Eve’s nakedness. The tranquility and peaceful security for all creatures in the Garden of Eden was broken by the needful shedding of blood. Death had invaded their “paradise” because of one man’s sin. Tranquility and security of life was not restored until Jesus shed His blood on Calvary’s cross. Once he had made the final atoning sacrifice for man’s sin there was no need for saints to be “covered” through the death of an innocent animal sacrifice

any more. Thus, the linen, a product not requiring the death of an innocent being is worn by those who have received the spiritual covering of the Lamb of God's atoning blood. This linen is clean and white. God does not see the iniquity of these saints because the blood of Christ has washed away every spot and every wrinkle. *"Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."*³

"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." (Rev. 19.9)

The apostle Paul had told the Church of Corinth, *"I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."* (II Cor. 11.2) These are the blessed ones who have not been seduced away by the beguiling *Whore* and her adulterous partner, Satan. In Matthew 22 Jesus tells us a parable about a king who held a marriage supper for his son. It is a foreshadowing of the spiritual realities surrounding the actual Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Those who were bidden to the marriage refused to come, being seduced away by cares of this world. Incredibly, they mistreated those who had been sent to make the invitation, even killing some of them. It goes on to say, when the king found out, *"he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city"*. This is what we have just seen Him do in chapter

3. Eph. 5.26-27

eighteen to *The Great Whore*. To replace those who rejected the invitation the king invited people from the streets, both good and bad, to fill out the celebration. Those who answered the call are the ones Jesus next spoke about.

“Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.

So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.

And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment:

And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

For many are called, but few are chosen.” (Matt. 22.9-14)

It is vital to understand here that the ones invited to the marriage supper are both good and bad. Christ accepts all who come to Him in true repentance. The fine linen, clean and white, must be the clothing we wear, however. Our justification for being called to the wedding is that we have received the pardon for our sins through the repentant acceptance of the atoning blood of Christ. If someone has tried to enter, as the man without the garment did, by some other covering – sacraments, tithes of money or time, good works, or self righteousness – he will be cast out. Only those who have the garments on that the king prescribed will be allowed to feast with Jesus at His marriage.

Another parable, told by Jesus in Matthew 25, just a few days before He gave His life for us as a free-will sacrifice, gives an even sterner warning about being vigilant and watchful for the day of the Bridegroom’s coming. It is the

story of ten virgins, five of which were wise and five foolish. They had all fallen asleep waiting for the Bridegroom to show up for the festivities, but five of them had enough oil in their lamps to greet him when He came, the other five let their oil run out. While the five foolish virgins scampered into town to get some oil the Bridegroom came. Those who were vigilant went into the wedding celebration with the Bridegroom, but the others were left out in the darkness and cold. This parable holds many lessons and implications. Christ is the Bridegroom. The virgins are saints. The oil is the Holy Ghost whom we must have dwelling in us lighting our way as we wait for our husband to come. All the virgins had oil to start with, all knew He was coming, but not all were ready when he came. All had fallen asleep, signifying that His coming would take some time before it happened, but some remained ready to meet Him “in the twinkling of an eye”. Jesus ends the parable by saying, “*Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.*” (Matt. 25.13) Some believers were let into the marriage supper and others, who had not heeded the warnings and admonitions of God, were refused entrance.

This parable of Jesus’ was told to the Jews because it had great cultural significance. Jewish weddings were structured in just such a way that when a woman was betrothed to a man she went into veritable seclusion preparing for her wedding day. She was anointed with oils, made her wedding gown, and lived the life of a “lady in waiting”. She did not know when her husband-to-be would arrive, it could be weeks, months, even years. It could be in the morning, noontime, dusk or at midnight. When he did arrive with his party he would give a great shout and he expected his espoused wife to be ready and waiting to

go with him to the wedding. This is precisely the analogy Christ uses for the Second Coming. Those who are blessed enough to be invited to this wedding of all weddings will have been like the Israeli woman who faithfully and vigilantly waited for her husband's shout to ring with joy in her waiting ears.

“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.” (Rev. 19.10)

The Church Glorified and Unified At Last

It is after this union, the joining of Christ with His Bride, that things dramatically change for the Church as a whole. This is expressed best when John mistakes a fellow saint for Jesus Himself. How could this be? How could John fall at the knees of another man, you ask? John had seen the glorified Christ in chapter one and on other occasions during the vision of Revelation, so it can only be surmised that this saint appeared in the likeness of Christ and with a similar glory. His appearance must have been of light and fire and great wisdom and strength beyond anything this world could ever present. Notice that this strange exchange happens after the wedding. Two have now been joined into one, Christ and His faithful are one flesh. The scripture written in I John 3.2 is fully realized. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: **but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.**”

This is a dramatic moment in time for another reason also. Not only will we be like Jesus we will have the unity of faith in the Church that Christians have longed for since the fledgling days of the Gospel. The book of 1 Corinthians talks of this day, does it not, when it says, “...whether there

*be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.*⁴ At this point, that which is perfect has finally come to be. The union of Christ with His Church has been consummated in heaven. In this day will the words of Ephesians be accomplished in Christ.

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” (Eph. 4.11-13)

This scripture says that God has given the Church apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists and pastors for edifying the body until we all come to unity of faith, etc. That means that when we achieve unity there will be no longer be a need for pastors and other offices in the Church. That's why the word “Till” is in there. Once we have unity and fullness in Christ then these offices will be unnecessary. What Church, which seeks unity on this earthly level in the Ecumenical Movement, would dare to suggest that once we obtain unity then there will be no need for pastors, teachers, bishops, or Popes? But isn't that what it means? Just as knowledge will pass when we see Christ for what He is, so the positions of pastor and teacher in the Church will become obsolete when unity is achieved.

The glorified saint ends his disclaimer to John with one

4. I Cor. 13.8-10

of the most profound statements, not just in Revelation, but in all of Scripture when he says, “*The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*” This statement is cause for us to reflect back on all that has been presented in Revelation. John had a testimony, the “angel” speaking to him had a personal testimony of how Jesus brought him to salvation. You and I, if we are born-again, also have a testimony of Christ’s saving grace. But now we are told the testimony of our Lord and Savior, Jesus. Jesus’ testimony is that He has unshakable faith and hope in the promises that God has made. He went to the cross willingly because the Father had promised to raise Him from the dead and glorify Him above all Creation. He believed God’s promises about His Church and preparing Him a bride that would be without spot or wrinkle. He has believed God that He will rule the nations with a rod of iron during the thousand-year reign known by Christians as The Millennium. Jesus’ testimony is that He believes prophecy, which is to say He believes every promise God ever made or will make. The spirit of prophecy is to have hope in God for the future. Christ leads the way in belief for us. He is the one that has shown us how and why to believe God. His testimony is that He will ever hope in God’s goodness and have faith in God’s promises. He left His glory above and took on the likeness of sinful flesh, yet being without sin, because He believed His Father’s promises to raise Him from the dead. He wants us to believe all things also. Jesus believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, bears all things because He believes the Father. Revelation is given to us with Jesus’ testimony firmly fixed behind it. In digesting Revelation Jesus wants us to gain in knowledge about God’s plans for the future and gain in faith that it will happen just as it is written. Believing that the Whore will be vanquished and

that the marriage Supper of the Lamb will be the day of glory for the Church are two of the most important things in this life that Christ wants us to have faith for. †

King of Kings Lord of Lords: Ruling With a Rod of Iron

The faithful saints, after believing, waiting and suffering, have been called to the marriage supper and are now glorified and completely redeemed. They have received their crowns of glory and have been awarded the prize of the *“high calling of God in Christ Jesus”* (Phil. 3.14). For their faithfulness they are wedded to Christ forever. Now, they are about to return to earth with Him to rule it with a rod of iron and in godly righteousness.

As Enoch had foreseen before the Flood, Christ and His saints wait at heaven’s gates eagerly listening for the Father’s command which will trigger their descent back to earth. The final assault to wrest back control of the “purchased possession” (Rev. 10) from evil and sin on the earth, to give it to its rightful inheritors is about to take place. This is the third momentous event detailed in chapter nineteen – Armageddon is about to begin.

The battle array is set in heaven:

“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.” (Rev. 19.11-13)

It was just a tiny open door in heaven at the start of Revelation in chapter four that signaled the beginning of the events concerning the Tribulation. Now, at the end, we see not just a door but “heaven’s gates” thrust open and hundreds of thousands of saints pouring through it with Jesus at their lead. For all practical purposes this signals the end of the Tribulation. At first just a small door in heaven was opened to receive the raptured saints. But at the end the gates of heaven swing wide open to allow the armies of Jesus, those who were received through that small opening (plus the Tribulation martyrs) to come storming back to earth in the greatest military assault of history. When the door was first opened a trumpet-like voice announced salvation saying, “Come up hither”. This time the trumpet sound is not a call to salvation and glory, but it heralds the doom of the Antichrist and his unholy followers; it is a foreboding of a great slaughter to come. The world, knowing God’s Word by now and exactly who it is that they are fighting, has braced itself for Christ’s Second Coming.

The first thing mankind will see is Christ riding a white horse leading a mighty, majestic army. Christ appears very much as He did in chapter one. His eyes burn like fire. His hair is white with wisdom which belies His fury, power and strength. His feet and legs glow like molten brass and

signal coming judgment on the rebels of the disobedient earth. At the start of the Tribulation, in chapter six of Revelation, we saw the usurper of the throne, the would-be king, the Antichrist, riding a white horse with a single crown and an empty bow. He was allowed to go forth “conquering and to conquer”. But here at the end we see, instead of the pretender to the throne, the true king, He who has the right to ride the white horse. This is the king that first came as a humble servant riding upon an ass’s colt, but now has earned the right to ride in majesty, and is astride the white horse which symbolizes His almighty power and sovereign authority. His military title is not Commander, General, or Field Marshall, it is: “He who is called Faithful and True”. It is the last of seven titles He uses to introduce Himself to the seven churches when He describes Himself to the Laodicean Church, the end-time Church that He will spew out of His mouth for their lukewarm arrogance¹. In righteousness, He will judge and make war. Christ is about to initiate the mother of all righteous wars in which the Devil will be subdued and the Antichrist, False Prophet and their armies will be cast into the lake of fire where they will be tormented forever.

The returning Christ’s eyes are most notable. They appear here exactly the way they were in chapter one when John first saw them. A simple glance from these eyes and we are consumed; the truth is revealed. They pierce through every pretense and hypocrisy and bring the soul of each person to its knees. Within is a fire that cannot

1. Read the letter to Laodicea in Rev. 3 carefully. The connection between Laodicea and the judgment of the world is close and this title used by Jesus confirms it all the more. In spite of the current ecumenical doctrine that would have us believe that Jesus is all love and peace and there is no judgment or vengeance in Him this verse reveals the true nature of His return and that He will also judge His own house.

be quenched, the gaze of which no person can stand, from which no truth can hide. His appearance is the same as it was at the start of Revelation, but now there is something different. For the first time in Scripture we see crowns upon His head. That's right! We have never seen the Lord of all the Universe, the Maker of the Worlds, the Master of every soul and spirit crowned in His rightful glory. The only crown He has ever donned up until this time is the one fashioned for Him as the humble sacrifice Lamb; the one that a mocking world had placed on His head when they pressed upon His brow the crown of thorns. Once, His misguided followers tried to crown Him king in the wilderness at His first coming but He rejected it. It was not time for His coronation as the Son of David, or to sit on the throne of Israel forever, so He fled from their carnal temptations. In chapter one His appearance was complete except for this one magnificence. Never had the framer of the worlds, the maker of mankind, the one by whom all things consist, been seen wearing his crowns of royal lordship until this moment when He bursts through heaven's gates. His heavenly coronation must have taken place sometime between the time when we saw Him open the seals and the moment that He began His descent to earth. He was probably crowned at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. It is impossible not to notice too that there is not just one Lordly crown upon His head, but many crowns. He is master of heaven, master of earth and master of Hell. He is Lord of all, Master of all, Supreme Potentate of the universe.

Yet, in spite of this graphic depiction of Jesus there is still just a touch of mystery about Him. We are told that He has a name showing on Him that only He understands. It suggests worlds yet unknown, universes untold, victories

of faith fresh, unique and unimaginable yet to come. There is still an eternity of surprises in store for those who are redeemed and live in intimacy with Him. Like a big brother that is looked up to by an idolizing sibling, Jesus will always be in the process of doing things and going places that we could never foresee; and we can only hope that He will invite us along to be a part of His great adventures. He will take us constantly into uncharted territories of hope and love for all eternity. Those who have been called, and chosen and faithful² will be privileged to go “whithersoever He goeth”³. His character, His love, for as we are told in Scripture that God is love, is so deep and wide, so immense and limitless, that it will always be in a state of revelation. In other words, God’s love is so great that it can never be exhausted or fully revealed, even throughout eternity. What an eternity awaits those who have been faithful and have believed. His love cannot be named or defined by a title or name. It can only be revealed a portion at a time. Christ will always have names about Himself that we cannot comprehend until the time of its expression and revelation takes place.

Because of Jesus’ magnificence we must constantly be reminded who He is so we see Him on the white horse clothed in a garment that has been dipped in blood commemorating His death on the cross for the sins of the world. This is unique to Jesus. Only He can wear the garment that recalls the blood that He shed for all mankind

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2. Rev. ch. 17.14. To be called is one thing, to be chosen is another thing, to be reckoned faithful is yet another.
 3. Rev. 14.4. What significance this phrase has for eternity. To be able to go wherever Jesus goes will be an incredible privilege reserved for the most faithful of his disciples, remember that only three, Peter, John and James, were the only ones allowed to go with Him the day His was transfigured on the mount.

on Calvary. Only *“Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. ...him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood”⁴*, has the right to wear this vesture. The Roman soldiers had cast lots for His vesture at the foot of the cross as they mocked Him without mercy. Now He wears the vesture that symbolizes His victory over sin and death. Though Christ has a name on Him that no one knows, He does bare a name as He rides to earth that describes him perfectly. He is called: *“The Word of God”*. This is the Word of God that became flesh in order to defeat sin for us. Only Jesus has this name ascribed to Him because only He is the living Word of God. We have heard of ignorant people using this name to describe the deceased Mother Teresa of Calcutta. What blasphemy. Only one person can be called *“The Word of God”*. This is why Jesus is said to have a sword in His mouth. It is the *“sword of the spirit”*, which we are taught in Ephesians is the Word of God. All Jesus will need do to His enemies upon His return will speak the Word and they will be vanquished instantly. In Old Testament times men and women were given names by God to signify their character. Abraham’s name meant *“Father of a multitude”*; Jacob’s name was changed to Israel signifying that God ruled his life; Sarah meant *“princess”*, Isaac meant *“laughter”* because of the joy his birth brought both Sarah and Abraham. Jesus is called by many names in the Bible but this is the final name given Him in Scripture. It sums up His character. Every hope, every desire, every will, every command, every declaration or thought ever made by the Father is embodied in Jesus and by His eternally perfect obedience. This obedience was proven when He willingly

4. Rev. 1:5

did the Father's bidding and gave up His glory in heaven to suffer the shame of the cross so He could save sinners from an eternity of separation from God.

As heaven's gate opens this is the picture we get. Unlike when we saw Jesus in chapters two and three when He walked among the Churches, Christ is arrayed in full battle gear. His military dress is a blood-stained vesture. His rank is King of kings and Lord of lords. His title is: "The One Who is Faithful and True." His name is "The Word of God". He is armed with the sword of the spirit. His eyes detect everything. Like an MRI or an X-Ray no truth can go unseen, no lie avoid His detection. All things are known to Him. This is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. At His first coming He came as a Lamb – meek, mild and subservient. We saw Him as a Lamb in chapter six when He began opening the seven seals of judgment. But gradually, we saw other aspects of His power and character as the Book of Revelation progressed. He roared as a Lion as He came to take control of the earth in chapter ten. He appeared as an angel in the clouds holding a scythe of judgment in His hands harvesting the earth in chapter fourteen. We saw Him as the mighty avenging angel powerful enough to judge *Mystery Babylon*. Now He bursts forth from heaven in all His glory, burning up the armies of the Antichrist and the False Prophet with one glance of His fiery eyes, and defeating them with the terrible, swift sword of His mouth. With Him are His faithful ones.

"And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean." (Rev.

19.14)

These are the armies of heaven⁵, but they are not the

5. Joel 2:11

armies of angels anymore. These are the saints. Just as Jesus wears the vesture dipped in blood as His exclusive military uniform, so the saints are the only creatures who have the right to wear linen that is clean and white. Fine linen clean and white symbolizes the righteousness of saints. It is their exclusive wardrobe because it is “their shield and armor” symbolizing the covering of the sacrifice that Christ made for them on the cross. Their clothes are washed not in the righteousness of their own works, but in the blood of the Lamb. Those that are raptured repent of their own dead works⁶ and put on the righteousness of Christ during their lifetime. They give up their lives (spiritually speaking). The Tribulation saints literally give up their lives and have their vestures washed in the precious cleansing blood of Jesus. *“These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”* (Rev. 7.14)

The white horses that these faithful saints (both raptured and martyred) ride upon are symbolic in that they show how the faithful ones will get to share in the majesty and power of Jesus Christ during the upcoming thousand-year rule of Christ on earth, known as the “Millennium”. Those who are raptured prove their worth and might in the battle of faith that will be waged on earth before The Rapture. They also fight against Satan and his minions alongside Michael and Gabriel⁷ when Satan is cast out of heaven right after Christ’s appearing (ch. 12). Others fight the battle of faith by keeping their testimony for Jesus right through the Tribulation until they die a martyr’s death. They fulfill Christ’s prophecy: they lose their lives so that they can find

6. Heb. 6.2

7. Gabriel: Dan. 8 & 9, Luke 1. Michael: Dan. 10 & 12, Jude 1:9, Rev. 12.

life. The faithless of the earth keep their lives but lose all chance at eternal salvation. (Matt. 10.39)

“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 winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.” (Rev. 19.15)

It has been rightly said that Jesus is coming back with a vengeance. He is going to put away all unrighteousness and idolatry. He is about to institute a new age. The Tribulation signaled the end of the Age of Grace. Now Christ is about to usher in the Age of Imposed Righteousness. Many Church members and preachers have gotten side-tracked because of their misunderstanding of prophecy on this point. They think it is God’s intention during the Age of Grace to force the world into accepting the righteousness of Christ. The moral majority, the “religious right” and conservative Catholics all think the imposition, legal and otherwise, of righteousness on the world is the Church’s duty. But if they took stock in either history or prophecy they would know better. They are sadly out of touch with the Spirit. Christ did not try to do it at His coming during His ministry on earth. The apostles did not preach a social gospel of reform or revolution against the existing power of Rome. Gospel history of the primitive Church in no way gives credence to such an attitude in the Church. The Age of grace is a divine dispensation of choice. The choice is between receiving God’s merciful plan of salvation through His Son’s shed blood or, receiving any of the infinite number of gospels that man can conjure up in his own mind. Let people choose God’s mercy, grace and the love of God, which is freely offered to all takers; or let them choose unrighteousness, the false gods of their own making or the ways of *Mystery Babylon*. During the thousand-year reign of

Christ's Millennium, God's righteousness will be imposed by Christ from His throne in Jerusalem and enforced by His ambassadors (the returning saints) who will administer His justice and teachings as kings and priests of God (ch 1). Psalm 149 tells the believer that this is the inheritance of the saints and that the day is coming when they will administer justice and righteousness on earth – with force when necessary.

“Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints.

Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.

Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.

For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.

Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand;

To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron;

To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD.” (Ps. 149)

This honor have all His saints, but in due time. Chapter nineteen of Revelation tells us this is the moment when God's imposed righteousness will begin in earnest. But just before the battle begins our attention is called to one last glorious declaration.

“And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” (Rev. 19.16)

We are to make no mistake, or be deceived in any way.

This Jesus descending to earth is the one and exact same Jesus who gave up His glory in heaven and took on the likeness of sinful flesh to defeat sin in the flesh for us⁸. After His resurrection Christ walked with us for forty days and then He rose back to heaven to be with the Father. At that time He ascended into the clouds before the apostles. Two angels were present then⁹ and they told the apostles that Jesus would return in the same fashion, in the clouds. *“Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”*¹⁰ Many religions have this totally confused. They claim that Jesus may come back, but it will be as a different Jesus, not the one and same Jesus. The Muslims have faulty ideas in this regard about Jesus. Another *Maudi* will come, some other teacher in the “name” or spirit of Jesus and he will return to a perfected world. Cult Christian religions like the Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons believe a Jesus-like person will come again to lead the world to a Utopia. Some believe He is already here and is hiding in some remote cavern or one-horse town in the Midwest. How preposterous! All these are anti-Scriptural and perfect set-ups for receiving the Antichrist when he comes “in his own name”. Jesus warned mankind about this when he said,

“Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Behold, I have told you before.

8. Phil. 2

9. Probably Michael and Gabriel

10. Acts 1.14

Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.

For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” (Matt. 24.23-27)

But Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords and Master of all the earth. *“Every knee shall bow and every tongue will be made to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.”*¹¹

He was before the worlds were made and His going forth is from everlasting to everlasting. God has given us the picture of a coming army led by the great master and general, Jesus Christ, the Righteous. It is the fulfillment of Christ’s prophecy,

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” (Matt. 24.29-31)

All this is in preparation for what Moses had seen thousands of years earlier in his last prophecy to Israel.

“I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me.

11. Phil. 2.10-11

I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy.

Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people.” (Deut. 32.41-43)

Now Armageddon is here. God is ready to make a slaughter of all those who have opposed Him, His Son, His kingdom, His people and His nation, Israel. Mercy temporarily gives way to His terrible, undiluted judgment and overflowing wrath.

“And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the 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 mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on 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 together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.” (Rev. 19.17-19)

Christ's descent to earth will not be the same as His appearing at the time of the Rapture. The Second Coming and His Appearing (the Rapture) are two very distinct and separate events. The time of His Appearing will be as the lightning flashing in the sky going from east to west, an instantaneous, momentary flash. Just as with lightning, those who are not looking directly at the sky in the right spot (spiritually speaking of course) will not see it. Only the people who are watching in the right spot (spiritually speaking) are taken in *the twinkling of an eye*. This is the way

of Christ's appearing. Christ does not come back to earth at the Rapture. It is a catching up of people – not a return, in the strict sense, of Christ. But Armageddon is the time of the Second Coming. Now, when the mammoth gates open in heaven all eyes on earth will see Jesus leading His saintly armies to war against them. Everyone, no matter who they are or where they are, spiritually, will see Him. Perhaps He will first appear from somewhere by the “Morning Star”, (Venus) and will begin His long descent to judgment. Telescopes and television cameras will be trained on Him and His awesome army of saints. By this time all people will be expecting Christ. The Antichrist and the False Prophet will have rallied the people to fight against the Lamb and He who sits on the throne in heaven. There will be no confusion or surprise as to what is about to take place. It is a battle royale. The final confrontation – Man and Satan against God.

In Revelation 1.7 the promise of His return is repeated, *“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.”* The timing of Armageddon has already been established in chapters sixteen and nineteen. It comes at the end of the Tribulation and is the sixth and next to last vial judgment, which makes it the next to last judgment of the entire Tribulation. There is nothing rational about why the kings of the earth gather together at Armageddon to fight against God. Revelation has shown us that the people of the earth hate Him for all the judgments that have befallen them, but that does not explain why they would think they could defeat God in a war. The explanation is given to us earlier, however. They will be drawn to the battle by deceiving spirits. In chapter nineteen we are told that three spirits will come out of the

mouths of the Dragon, the Antichrist and the False Prophet to go to all the kings of the earth to trick them into believing that they can defeat God at the valley of Megiddo in Israel. A miracle even occurs when the Euphrates River dries up so all the armies of the East can cross the river and advance in time for their appointed judgment.

Jesus' return is gradual enough in the sky that the kings will see Him coming and be able to make war preparations against Him. They will know He is coming to take the earth by force and they will be dead set against giving it up to Him. All their munitions and forces will be mustered against God's armies. Every gun and weapon that is left on earth will be trained on Christ and His armies.¹² By then their hearts will have been thoroughly hardened by hatred for God and His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. They will be a hundred times more belligerent toward God than Pharaoh was in the days that he withstood Moses. This is what Armageddon is all about, make no mistake. It is all out war against God and the Lamb of God. (Rev. 17.14) The Antichrist, the False Prophet and the world's leaders, along with their followers are completely decimated.

More than any other event in prophecy it is the battle of Armageddon that is speculated about with all sorts of scenarios suggested. The incredible fact is that the nations of the world do not converge on Israel with the sole purpose

12. If we take into account the seven years of judgment that have just besieged the earth and its inhabitants we should not assume that the world's arsenal of weapons is that huge. After so much devastation, loss of life, natural and supernatural disasters, water and seas being poisoned, vegetation and food crops being decimated etc, etc. armies may be reduced in firepower significantly. We know that wars will occur throughout the seven years and it may deplete munitions and weapons. We also can only guess that manufacturing and industry will have nearly dried up by the end of the Tribulation due to social strife, reduced manpower and loss of many industrial essentials like electricity, fuel, lubricants, plastics, chemicals and technological support.

of destroying one another as in a conventional war. The enemy is not so much the other nations, it would seem, and the purpose not so much for world domination as it is to defeat God, Christ and His armies¹³. God has tormented them. The Antichrist and his kingdom have just recently been afflicted with great and terrible sores all over their bodies that cause them to gnaw at their tongues so painful is their disease. Whether the kings of the east, (China, India and/or Japan) 200 million strong¹⁴, are in cahoots with The Antichrist, or whether they are in opposition to both his kingdom and Christ's we cannot be sure. Two things are certain here, the kings of the east, having also been deceived by the spirits that came out of the unholy trinity's mouths, will be at Armageddon to fight against the Lamb, and the carnage will be so great that a river of blood, as wide and deep as the Euphrates itself, will flow from the bodies of the slaughtered rebels. The birds of prey, starving because of the recent last plagues on the earth, will find their source of salvation by feasting on the carcasses in the valley of Megiddo.

“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

13. This is a little known or understood reality about the battle of Armageddon. Revelation 17:14 alludes to Armageddon as a war against the Lamb by the Antichrist and his kingdom, but Rev.19:19 implicates all the kings of the earth with a single purpose against Christ and His armies of heaven: *“And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.”* Armageddon, therefore, is not a third world war for supremacy among the nations. It is the final war of man and devil against God for control of the earth. The world has never seen such a war as Armageddon will be.

14. Rev. 16:12

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.”

(Rev. 19. 20-21)

The six things which God had promised in the prophecy of Daniel chapter 9.24 more than 2,500 years ago are now complete.

“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to (1) finish the transgression, and to (2) make an end of sins, and to (3) make reconciliation for iniquity, and to (4) bring in everlasting righteousness, and to (5) seal up the vision and prophecy, and to (6) anoint the most Holy.”

1. The transgression of man by his disobedience and distrust of God has been arrested by God’s wrathful judgment. The rewards of obedience have been proven and the price for disobedience has been paid. The transgression started in the Garden by disbelief and disobedience has been righted by the obedience of Christ and those who followed in His ways.
2. Sin is ended. Christ has defeated sin for us on the cross at Calvary and through His ministry has delivered willing souls from the wages of sin. Those who were resurrected before and during the Tribulation are living proof that an end has been put to sin.
3. Mankind, having been cast out of the presence of God when Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden, has been restored to the Creator and welcomed in heaven. The first of this glorious fact was seen at

the beginning of Revelation. Man is reconciled by Christ's redeeming work to his Creator.

4. The coming of Christ in the clouds heralds the new dawn of a perfectly righteous reign of a just and righteous ruler where every man and woman will now get a fair shake, an even deal, without corruption from an honest beneficent government. And man shall never again be without everlasting righteousness at the helm of government.
5. All that has been written and prophesied, in spite of man's (and the Church's) disregard for prophecy, has been completely fulfilled just as the Bible stated it. The days of God's vengeance are done.

And last, but not least,

6. Christ has been crowned King of kings and Lord of lords, has deposed the impostor, and has taken the throne in Jerusalem to rule the nations with a rod of iron. †

The Millennium: Saints Judge The World

We now have a complete picture of the seven-year period known as the Tribulation. God's promise to redeem the earth from the hands of Satan and wicked men has been accomplished. The Tribulation is over. Christ has conquered the forces of the Antichrist. The promises of Daniel, written more than 2,500 years ago, have come to pass. Sin, transgression and iniquity have been remedied by the shedding of the innocent Messiah's blood. Christ's return to earth has brought to conclusion the final stages of the Old and New Testament prophecies which were written long ago concerning God's plan of redemption. Jesus' coming has brought with it the assurance of everlasting righteousness. He has subdued the earth "with the sword of his mouth", and now, He is about to be crowned its ruler and "Only Potentate". A great coronation to anoint the Holy One awaits the Savior King in the City of David, Jerusalem, the same city where He was scorned and crucified at His

first coming¹. In short, all the prophecies concerning both the first and second advents of Christ are done. The “70 weeks” of Daniel, necessary to the redemptive process, have been completed, and yet, we are surprised as we continue on in Revelation that there are still a few profound matters left unresolved.

At the end of chapter nineteen we saw the Antichrist and the False Prophet thrown headlong into the lake of fire, never to cause rebellion or trouble for God’s creation again. But what about the Devil? And what about the age known as the Millennium? What about peace on earth and Christ ruling the nations with a rod of iron? And what about the judgment of the countless souls that were not resurrected at the time of the Rapture or at the time when the Tribulation martyrs were raised? Chapter twenty provides us with answers to all of these questions and a smattering of insights into this brave new world of Christ’s thousand year reign.

Satan’s Fate Intertwined With Man’s Destiny

Conspicuous by his absence in chapter nineteen is the “Old Serpent”, Satan. While his co-conspirators are judged he seems to have slipped the arm of justice. Is it possible that the Dragon, ringleader of the ancient conspiracy against God, has escaped? Is this once anointed cherubim too powerful to be brought to justice by Jesus Christ? Or has God reserved a different judgment for “the Father of all lies”? So important is the story of Satan’s final judgment that God has reserved its telling for one of the final chapters of the Bible. The Devil is not destroyed at the end of the Tribulation along with his servants because Satan’s judgment and destiny is inexorably intertwined with man’s

1. Ezek. 44.2

destiny. Satan's demise corresponds directly with the end of man's redemption. Satan infected man with sin and death by tempting Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It is only fitting that his power and influence should be utterly ended when his sinister work has been foiled and man's recovery from sin and death is complete and absolute.

The “Millennium”: One More Chapter In History To Be Written

In chapter twenty we also find out, to our surprise, that God's work of redemption is not entirely finished. Before God makes all things, including heaven and earth, new, there must be a period of renewal and restoration. There is still one more chapter of history yet to be written, the age known in Biblical parlance as “The Millennium”. Many of the prophecies made to the Jews and the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob can only be fulfilled after Christ's second coming. The prophet, Ezekiel, foretold of a temple that will be rebuilt to serve Christ, the King. Isaiah prophesied of a safe road that would go from Assyria through Israel to Egypt. God promised the seed of Abraham that they would own the entire Middle East from the Euphrates River to the Mediterranean Sea. This cannot happen; judgment has come, Israel is converted as a nation² and the “Millennial” government established. But we shall also find that chapter twenty of Revelation dispels some of the deepest Christian presumptions about the Millennium. The reader may be shocked and astounded to find out that chapter twenty tells of a Millennium that is far from the placid, tranquil Shangri-la that most bible-believing teachers and

2. This will not happen until Israel looks upon Jesus, the one whom they have pierced and the nation is saved in one day. (Zech. 12:10) This will happen when the Two Witnesses are raised up thirty days before the Second Coming right near the end of the Tribulation, that time called by Jeremiah, the Time of Jacob's Trouble.

preachers suggest will exist. Once again, the bare-bones of God's Word in Revelation shows us a much different story.

The “White Throne” Resurrection and Judgment

Chapter twenty brings to light an array of profound questions that challenge many of the mainstream or popular teachings on salvation and prophecy. At the end of the age God will resurrect every soul (**that was not previously part of the first fruits or Tribulation resurrection**) and have them appear before the judgment seat of Christ. The “book of life” will be opened and those who are not found therein will be cast into the lake of fire. Some souls will be saved, but no one will escape their call to judgment before God in heaven, no matter who they were in this life or what they did. This is the main subject of chapter twenty. What is of primary importance is not simply the factual Scriptural truths they reveal, but their implications. The first of these truths and the implications we are to examine deal with Satan being loosed at the end of the Millennium.

Satan Loosed Again? Why?

“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 should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.” (Rev. 20.1-3)

When we first read these opening verses of chapter twenty we might say to ourselves, “Whoa! Wait just a second! You mean to say that Satan is not destroyed along with the Antichrist and the False Prophet at the end of the Tribulation? Am I reading this correctly?” But that is exactly

what it means. Satan is to be jailed, not slain, at this time. Incredulous, we read on to verse three and find that at the end of a thousand years Satan is to be unleashed on the world once again? The first thing we might infer from this is that everything may not be as perfect in the Millennium as we thought if Satan is given freedom to influence mankind again. What possible reason would God have in allowing Satan to influence the inhabitants of the earth after so long a period of time? Why does God want to allow Satan to again deceive the nations, as he had done for thousands of years before the Second Coming of Christ? In these verses we are only “introduced” to the notion that Satan’s diabolical deeds on earth are not completely finished.

By the symbols God uses for Satan in 20:2 – *Serpent* and *Dragon* – we get the sense that God is referring to both the beginning and the end of Satan’s conspiracy. In the Garden he appeared as a serpent, at the end, in Revelation, he appears as a Dragon. When the angel lays hold on him to bind him for the thousand years of the Millennium he is called “that Old Serpent” and a “Dragon”. We need to know that Satan is a “snake in the grass”, a deceiver; and also a “man- eating monster”, devouring whomever he can. So why would God allow this harmful, deceitful monster, Satan, out of prison to harass man once again? Verses 7-10 help us to understand the answer to our question, and we shall get to it shortly, but before looking into Satan’s relevance to the Millennium, God diverts our attention to a familiar group of God’s creatures whom we see sitting on thrones.

“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 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.” (Rev. 20.4-6)

God reveals here that there are only two groups of people that are resurrected and given “glorified bodies” before the end of the Millennium. The two groups who will be resurrected before the end of the thousand year reign of Christ on earth are the Raptured (both those who are alive and remain at the time of His appearing in the clouds and those who are “asleep” in Him) and the Tribulation martyrs, who give their lives for the testimony of Christ. These people are given thrones of authority and power. This is the “first” (part) of the resurrection. God expressly tells us that the rest of mankind will not be raised up until after a thousand years³.

Initially, we might be surprised that this is not a worship scene or a celebration of Christ’s great victory over the Antichrist and Satan. Upon examination we find that it is a scene of judgment. The saints are seated on thrones and judgment is given to them. They have “earned” a place in God’s administration by their performance of faith on earth. The Raptured souls died in Christ and were willing to give up their lives in the “spirit”. Keeping the words of

3. This fact about the resurrection is not clearly stated in the Bible until this point and is a good example of the importance of understanding and believing Revelation.

Christ, they walked as true disciples picking up their crosses to follow after Jesus. They died to self and let the spirit of Christ rule in them. Their goal and reality was to be able to say along with the apostle Paul, *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”*⁴ The Tribulation martyrs died to self in a different way. They literally gave up their lives rather than deny their faith. For this they are given thrones and judgment is entrusted to them.⁵ This, therefore, is not a scene looking forward to an age of utopian bliss, but one that will require perfect and righteous judgment coming from worthy judges appointed by Christ. Verse six says these resurrected souls shall be priests and that they will rule with Christ a thousand years. The fact that they are priests and “kings” has enormous implications for the Millennium. The primary ministry of the priest is not only to offer appropriate sacrifice to God (in this case the sacrifices of the New Testament: praise, our minds, good works, etc.) but to teach the people also. The job of a ruler and judge is to administer justice and see that it is enforced. Revelation has already declared that Christ will rule the nations with a rod of iron during this time. This implies that peace and justice will have to be imposed which further implies a state of imperfection. It is written that the law is for the lawless, not for those who

4. Gal. 2.20

5. Though we do not want to be dogmatic about many of the things we infer from Revelation's great understanding it seems to imply in verse four that the saints will somehow be given a part in the white throne as judges. This is implied in verse four of chapter twenty when it says, “judgment was given unto them”. We know that the righteous shall judge the angels, we are told so. Will God hear the appeals of his saints, listen to their suggestions and invite them into “the white throne process”? Maybe, just maybe.

by nature keep the law of God (I Tim. 1.9). During the Millennium any breach of the law (and the prophets prophesy that there will be, see Zech. 14), will be dealt with quickly and severely by Christ's "rod of iron" and through His administrators of justice: the saints who are part of the "first resurrection".

We can conclude then that during the Tribulation there will necessarily be laws and courts and imposed justice. There will be law breakers and sin will still be found in the community of man. Governments will even defy Christ and there will be rebellion and unrest in certain areas of the globe. Not all is perfect – yet.

What is perfect is the government and the administrators. Justice will not be corrupted. The saints will have been perfected and will be endowed with all the wisdom and knowledge of Christ Himself. For these blessed ones the second death, which is getting thrown into the lake of fire and suffering eternal damnation, is no longer a possibility⁶. Their eternal home with Christ and God will be, once and for all, secure when they are raised from their corruptible state and are made incorruptible, when their mortal bodies put on immortality (1 Cor. 15:53-54). The remainder of the human race are not raised until after the Millennium. Those who are born during the Millennium will still need to be converted and saved by

6. This author believes (again, not dogmatically) that the second death consists a great deal of being eternally alone. It has been said that life is defined by communication. Our life with God does not begin until we are converted and communication is opened between our spirit and our Creator's. A relationship is dead when there is no communication between parties. The second death is to be cast into the lake of fire, suffer eternal torture, but without any hope of ever having communication with anyone or any spirit for the rest of eternity. It is as if a man were buried alive in a coffin of fire and worms that never die. It is given to every man to suffer death once and then the judgment. At all costs we must do whatever it takes to avoid that second death. Receive Him who can deliver us from so terrible a fate.

faith in Christ. As is the case today, some, and sadly even many, will resist the spirit of God and hold on to their own ways and wills. A lot of confusion exists in Christian circles over this fundamental truth. They do not realize that the resurrection happens in increments or stages. Even the first resurrection occurs in parts, the “first fruits” and the resurrection of the martyrs. The people who are not part of this “first resurrection” must be raised and judged at some point and we find out now that it is at the end of the Millennium. Verse five only makes mention of this part of the resurrection. It is not until the closing verses of chapter twenty that we get a better understanding of the general resurrection of mankind and why it will be done at the end of the thousand year age of Christ’s rule on earth.

Man’s Heart is Deceitful and Wicked Above All Else

Now God turns us back to the subject of Satan and uses him to give us a clearer idea of the condition of man’s heart and the purpose of Christ’s perfect reign on earth.

“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.”

(Rev. 20.7-10)

Satan will do what? Satan will be able to deceive people

again? Even after the righteous thousand-year reign of Christ, which will be aided by His redeemed servants and their testimonies? It sounds incredible, but it's true. And it's not just a small local rebellion that will erupt. Incredibly, once again it is world-wide war against God and Christ. They come from "the breadth of the earth", they "number the sand of the sea", and they completely surround God's city of Jerusalem where Christ's throne is. Presumably, this great rebellion has been festering and building. True, Satan is released to, once again, deceive man into thinking he can beat God in a war, but there has to be a flaw in man's heart if he can still be deceived by Satan. That is the greatest implication of Satan's return to earth and the only reason for God to allow Satan to have access to mankind again. It has to be to reveal the truth about the unrepentant, unconverted heart of man. The prophet Jeremiah says, *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."*⁷ With Satan out of the way for one thousand years man cannot say, "The Devil made me do it." They cannot blame their unrighteousness on evil spirits. The truth that their own heart is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" will come out during the Millennium. Satan will not be around to blame. What God will use Satan for is to deceive the wicked hearts into thinking that they can beat Him. It is a, not so instant, replay of the Tribulation.

Most fundamentalists and evangelicals of our generation have a picture of a blissful world with harmony and peace forever emblazoned in their mind. Posters of a

7. Jere. 17.9-10

lion passively lying down with a lamb at its side resting on a backdrop of beautiful wild flowers have been displayed prominently on the walls of countless Christian bookstores across the world for a generation of believers. The image is powerful. We are encouraged to expect a flower-child world. The hope of the “Woodstock Generation” is to be finally realized in Christ. Unconditional love will fill every nook and cranny on earth as an adoring world worships Jesus in total freedom. Though this may seem to be the case at the very beginning of the Millennium it will not be long until man backslides into his old ways of rebellion and sin against God.

The picture of paradise on earth is true to a certain degree. The prophets of old told of a time of peace and harmony. Isaiah prophesied that the lion would lie down with the lamb (Isa. 11). We are told that the weapons of war will be forged into tools of production and good for mankind (Isa. 2.4 & Mic. 4.3) The saints will happily go up to Zion to worship Christ on a regular basis during this glorious time. (Isa. 51.11) These are just a few examples of the promises of beauty during the Millennium, but there is another side to this time also. We get an idea of this from the opening three verses in chapter twenty. As we have already noted, Satan’s work with the *Whore of Babylon* has always been to deceive the people of the world. She has made them drunk, intoxicated with self-love, self-importance, self-confidence, self-reliance and pride. While she is in league with the leaders of the world, Satan is working to corrupt and cloud the true nature of God’s salvation by using the governments and powers of the nations to deceive their subjects. But after the Tribulation Satan’s control of the world to deceive it as the “prince of the power of the air” and sovereign dictator of all evil

spiritual powers and principalities will come to a screeching halt. The two other members of the “Unholy Trinity” will have been cast into the lake of fire, but not him. His career is not yet over. But his days are numbered.

The judgment God has ordained for Satan is one of progressing limitations on his power and freedom. Once he was called Lucifer, Son of light, and he was the anointed cherub (Isa. 14.12 & Eze. 28.14). He walked among God’s glory. The earth was his possession. But upon his rebellion God began to diminish his glory and power. Man was created to refute his claims that sin was inevitable and could never be corrected. Man was given dominion, not over the entire earth, but over the portion of it around the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in the fertile crescent, named the Garden of Eden. There Adam was given dominion over all the animals and God promised to make all the earth his paradise. Satan still had claims to the earth however. He was present in the Garden and able to deceive Eve into effectively giving him back control of all that God had bequeathed to Adam and Eve. Satan had lost his possession, but had gained it back, to a degree, by stealth.

After this the Devil still had access to God in heaven. We know from the book of Job that he was able to go before God to accuse Job and taunt God. Gradually, this access and power in the heavenlies has been limited to earth and the affairs of men. Jesus’ death and resurrection was the great blow that cast Satan out of the courts of heaven. His claims and pretensions toward the throne of God were condemned by God’s only Son. By that victory Christ was able to give man authority over Satan on earth⁸. The next phase in limiting his power and domain will come at the

8. Matt. 18:18

time of the Rapture when he and his minions are cast out of the heavenly spheres in the earth's realm by the resurrected saints and the armies of angels in heaven. The thirteenth chapter in Revelation tells us that Satan is cast down to the earth and that he is furious because he knows his time is now short (Rev 12.12). When Jesus returns, Satan will be imprisoned but not "executed". This amazing fact, to our surprise, must come at the end of the Millennium and it is at that time he is thrown into the lake of fire which was prepared for him and his angels from the beginning of his rebellion in ages long past, even before the creation of Adam. *"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."* Now Satan is gone forever.

It is time now that the rest of the souls of history, not yet resurrected, must be raised up and judged.

"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." (Rev. 20.11-15)

This is the moment when all things become new. Satan

has been dispatched. All those who were born during the Millennium have either repented and been saved by faith, or perished in the ill-fated rebellion led by the Devil. Now as Jesus said, *“heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words will last forever.”*⁹ It is time for the sky to peel back and the earth to flee away. We are told there is no place found for heaven and the earth. Somehow, and this we do not understand yet, the earth and the heavens are no longer relevant. All unfinished business must be taken care of now before we move into eternity. The great unfinished business has to do with all the souls of mankind, the billions of people who died without faith in Christ, or who did not live by the faith they professed, who must now be judged individually and according to what is written in the “book of life”. Time will not be a factor because time is no more. There is no sun and moon and stars to keep time. No earth rotates on its axis to tell us of passing days. Every soul ever born, not having been a part of the first resurrection, will be marched before the judgment seat of Christ to endure the light of the truth. Every thought and every deed of their life will be judged by Christ in open court. *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”*¹⁰ No one will escape this. Everyone must be given an opportunity to receive their just reward. Everything will come to light. Jesus warns man that we will have to answer for everything, even every idle word that has been spoken. The only way out of this intensive judgment is to accept the atoning blood of Jesus as the remission for our sins and be willing to have judgment fall on us in this life rather than in the afterlife. That is why we are advised by the apostle Paul

9. Matt. 24.23, Mk. 13.31, Lk 21.33

10. 2 Cor. 5.10

that, *“if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.”*¹¹ If we accept the deliverance and chastening of the Lord in this body we shall not have to suffer judgment and loss in the next. But for those who have not done this their time has come. We are told they will be judged “according to their works”. Nothing will escape notice. As the Scripture says, *“Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.”*¹² Anyone who knows Jesus Christ and the great mercy of God also knows how great a sinner he or she is. No one who is truly born-again would want to chance his eternal soul to the balances of his own righteousness. Beads of sweat the size of Niagara Falls would flow from our brow if we knew our own goodness was our only hope of salvation. Anyone who must rely on their own works will have a frightening time on that day. But apparently some people will be saved. It is another expression of God’s enormous love and boundless mercy that anyone could be saved apart from having a walk with Jesus in this life.

Granted, this revelation at the end of chapter twenty flies in the face of traditional evangelical doctrine. But we are instructed that there must be something to it. We must ask ourselves; “Why else would God open the book of life (notice it is not the Lamb’s book of life which we saw previously in Revelation) if there were not some names written in it who were about to be judged and saved?” There are some indications in Scripture that people who were ignorant of the saving nature of Christ’s blood and the necessity of being born-again might be saved.

“For there is no respect of persons with God.

For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish

11. 1 Cor. 11:31

12. Heb. 4:13

without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;

(For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)

In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.” (Rom. 2.11-16)

Paul, here, seems to be saying that some people who have not heard the gospel will be accounted worthy to enter into the kingdom of God. Of course, it must be implicit that they would have to yield to Christ. The implication is already given that by nature they did yield to God and His will and were led by a godly fear of God in spite of their ignorance. Only the end of a thousand years after the Millennium will reveal how many and who is saved. It is important for us to repeat the fact that anyone who thinks they can rely on their own goodness and charitable works is being totally reckless with their immortal soul.

We do not even teach this as a doctrine, but it does answer the oft asked question of what will happen to those who were never given a chance to accept Jesus. God has made provision for all to be saved, even to those who never had the gospel delivered to them. †

The Faithful Get a Glimpse Into Eternity

Revelation's simplicity should be apparent to the reader by now. If one knows Jesus Christ as his personal Savior, and sincerely seeks to understand the Book of Revelation, God will take all of the mystery out of it. Bewilderment will dissolve away into simple, clear knowledge. And there certainly is no mystery as to where Revelation came from either. It did not come from some Apocalyptic prophet or from the heart or mind of any mere mortal. We are told at the very outset of the book that it proceeded directly from the throne of the omnipotent God. These "secrets of the ages" were disclosed to any person who wants to listen to them. They came down in a chain-like manner. God first gave them to Jesus, who in turn handed them over to one of His ministers (an angel) who was instructed to deliver them to Christ's reporter on earth, the apostle John. John's mission was to give account of these matters just as they were given to Him and He did so under the anointing of the

Holy Ghost without embellishment or change. He simply reported them as a court stenographer would record the transcript of court proceedings.

The title, *Revelation*, comes from the Greek word *apokalupsis* meaning: *to be revealed*. Revelation therefore is about the revealing, or the coming day of Jesus. It shows Him in His glorified state where He sits at the right hand of the Father, as He is now after His ascension into heaven. Revelation is also the “revealing” of all that God wants the faithful to know concerning anything that is part of Jesus or pertains to Jesus. It shows us His faithful Church, His enemies, His judgments to come and His promises which reach into the Tribulation, through the Millennium, and all the way into the vast boundless expanses of eternity. The task of revealing all of this in twenty-two short chapters was monumental and could only be accomplished by a clear and orderly presentation and that is how Revelation is structured.

God organized all of *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (which, by the way, is the book’s full and proper title) in a simple sequential manner often using visionary pictures and spiritual symbolism to meet mountainous needs that would otherwise have taken a thousand words to express. All of the initially “curious” symbols and scenes depicted in the book are nothing more than God’s use of the age-old method of employing pictures to speak volumes. The expression: a picture is worth a thousand words is most appropriate when applied to the Book of Revelation. Therefore it only makes sense, Revelation should be studied in the order of its presentation. When it is studied this way we learn that it is an orderly and methodical look into the ultimate destiny of man and the wonderful work of Christ’s sweet redemption. Because of the book’s scope, which had

to run from the Church Age all the way to eternity, we have been careful that our study of Revelation has followed the sequence of God's presentation; chapter by chapter, verse by verse, in order. If we had not kept the order we would run the risk of becoming confused and disoriented as many ill-fated studies of Revelation have done. This is why it is wise to study Revelation slowly, methodically, and in the order it was given to John.

God begins Revelation by showing us the resurrected Jesus. This is Jesus in His glorified state (ch. 1). Then we are given a complete prophetic history and summary of the spiritual condition of Christ's Church (chs. 2&3). God then leads the reader, step by dramatic step, through the Tribulation revealing the resurrection of the dead and living and the Tribulation martyrs, the purging of the world of wicked faithless men, the repossession of the earth by Christ and His resurrected followers, the vanquishing of Christ's foes and the ushering in of everlasting righteousness as promised by the prophets (chapters 4-19). In chapter twenty we are given a window into the Millennium, the one-thousand-year reign of Christ on earth as King, reigning along with His saints. The book is so orderly and methodical, and conforms so perfectly to the rest of the Bible, that once God reveals how simply the book is laid out it becomes hard to understand why there is so much trouble and controversy over understanding Revelation. The real mystery becomes how people cannot see the "forest for the trees". In chapter twenty-one we are rewarded for our determination to study and understand Revelation. Mankind is finally out of the woods now. God gives us a quick glimpse into the light of eternity and the unspeakable, unfathomable joys that lie before us. As Paul spoke to the Philippians, God's people have now

apprehended that for which also [they were] apprehended of Christ Jesus. (Phil 3.12-13) At the end of Revelation, man's goal to return to God has been reached.

Introduction To Eternity

Welcome to eternity. God's redemption plan is complete. The white throne judgment has signaled the end of man's redemption story. Those that are to go into eternity will, those that are condemned to the second death are gone forever. God's ultimate purpose to create a fellowship and dwelling place for Himself is done. Now we see the destiny of all those people of human history who turned to Him and trusted in His love. In the opening verse of chapter twenty-one we are greeted with the knowledge that there will be no more division, all the redeemed will be in perfect harmony, as we were told in Ephesians: *"And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."*¹ Never again will any of His people spend even a nano-second out of His loving arms. Salvation is come and the overcomers are given all things just as He promised. But those people who stood in opposition to God, those who took the Mark of the Beast during the Tribulation, those who rebelled at the end of the Millennium, will be thrown into the lake of fire and forever separated from God and His people.

No More Division

"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." (Rev. 21.1)

Of course the first thing that grabs our attention about this opening verse is that everything, including the heaven

1. 1 Cor. 15.28

and the earth will be totally new. We shall say more about this when discussing verse four. First, we should point out that there is one thing that can easily go overlooked in this opening statement. God says there will be no more seas. Why would God announce this as something which should excite us? What a curious thing. Do not the seas provide us with much of life's sustenance, adventure, resource and pleasure? Why is this something good, something for us to look forward to, that there will be no more oceans or seas?

Besides showing us that all things will be new and that it will begin with the ecosystem of the world and universe (for it must be obvious to us that where there is no sea the ecology will be entirely different from the world we now know) there is also a greater spiritual implication. To understand the full ramification of the first verse we must travel all the way back to the beginning of the Bible to chapter eleven of Genesis. In it we are told that in His wisdom God split man apart at the Tower of Babel for his own good. Man had come together conspiring to control his own destiny and attain eternal life without looking to his Maker. *"And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do."*² We know that unity of man was the problem and that division of man was the solution because Genesis 11 tells us so. The power of numbers had emboldened man to shake his fist in defiance of God. When God acted to put down this horrible rebellion man was in the process of setting up a false religion by resurrecting some of the old gods and blasphemous religious rites that had been part of

2. Gen. 11.6 (We cannot here go into detail about why unity and division are what they are, that has been done in earlier parts of this study, it must suffice us to quote the Scripture, believe it and understand its implications.)

the wickedness in the world before the Flood. At the head of the rebellion was the infamous Nimrod, the world's new god, so God split everyone up in a great act of division, confusing the languages and dispersing the people among the nations of the earth. Though we are only given a brief account of this monumental conspiracy we can be sure the reason for splitting man apart was this false unity and the threat it posed to man's ultimate salvation.

So what does this have to do with the seas? Since that time God has expended a lot of his energies working to keep man apart, so He could save individuals from the wickedness of the human heart and the propensity man has for doing evil and sinning when he gathers together in force. Putting seas in between the land masses was one of the measures God employed to keep man apart. We are told that the continents of the earth were divided by seas early after the Flood in the day of a man called, Peleg³. Together with language barriers these natural barriers (like mountains and deserts also) served God's purpose of keeping the human race from coming together and conspiring against Him in the dangerous fashion that had been masterminded at Babel by Nimrod and his unholy followers.

The Bible's story of redemption begins with the natural division of things brought about by the supernatural hand of God in order to correct a potential abuse of unity. Now we see at the end of the Bible that God restores things to the way He always intended they should be. There are no seas to divide mankind and His people. Seas and oceans are emblematic of division. They were imposed on man for his own good just as the curses of death, toil and childbearing

3. Gen. 10.25

were brought into play as tools to show man the truth about his sinful condition and the division it caused between himself and God. The division which God hates is the division between an individual soul and Himself and it is the unity He desires first and foremost. It is the reason He sent His Only Son to earth: to unify the individual with God. It is the reason he kept man from banding together in false security and self-confidence. Now the seas, as barriers to humanism, have no further use or purpose in this regard. No division is desirable or necessary, the way that it had been in ages past. The only gulf that will remain is the one Jesus tells us about in the parable by which the rich man and Lazarus are forever separated, that impassable gulf between the Lake of Fire and Paradise⁴. But there will no longer be barriers between the redeemed. Heaven and earth are entirely new and so are all the conditions of nature and experience. The Ecumenical spirit which is trying to rush God's Word into being is flawed because of its misunderstanding of the whole word of God and what it means to keep the faith of the prophetic word. This serves as a fine example of why we will be deceived if we do not take to heart all of the teachings that are presented in Revelation. Only at the end of the Millennium – remember there is even a rebellion at the end of the thousand years – is everything brought together in full harmony and unity. It is not God's plan to unify all things until then. The prophecies of the Old Testament about the Millennial rule of Christ even testify to this. There will still be separate nations and ethnic groups of mankind⁵. The day is coming for unity, as

4. Luke 16

5. Zech. 14:17-18. Notice the KJV uses the word families here for the nations, implying that during the early part of the Millennium nations will have been reduced to very small family groups.

we see here, but we are obliged to patiently wait for it. It will come in God's prophetically declared time.

The Bride's Coming Out Party

“And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” (Rev. 21.2)

After the Millennium there will be no more division and the symbol of that perfect unity is the bride of Christ, the Church presented by God to Jesus Christ without spot or wrinkle. This is the Bride's “coming out” party. The marriage supper of the Lamb and wedding of the Church will have already taken place at the end of the Tribulation, but for the entire time of the Millennium she toils with Christ to bring the rest of her number – those born during the Millennium and needing conversion and salvation just as anyone else – into the fold. The nations will be ruled with a rod of iron and punished when they are defiant or disobedient to Christ. Many of the Bride's duties during this thousand-year period will be distasteful and heart-wrenching. She will have to enforce the law and administer the full brunt of its deterrents to the unlawful. She will endure the burden of judging the inhabitants of the Millennial world. Her job of teaching and performing the priestly duties of the new testament saint will be fruitful for many, but certainly not to all. A sorting out of people will continue for the entire thousand years, the sifting of the “wheat from the chaff”, the separating of the “sheep from the goats” will be executed by the Holy Spirit with the same painstaking patience it is in this current age. The process will not include those who were redeemed before the Millennium began, they are forever saved and it is impossible for them to slip away to destruction, but the generations of people born during the Millennium are still

making choices, choosing or rejecting Christ in their hearts. But now, with the coming out party of the Bride, the sorting is done. The Bride is completely assembled, all her parts are in place. What she is and was always meant to be, now is. She is not only wedded to Christ but she is “wedded”, if you will, to God also. (The second half of this chapter of Revelation goes into great detail about the Bride of Christ and will be examined in depth in the upcoming chapter of this writing.)

God’s New Home

“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.” (Rev. 21.3)

God always intended that the body of faithful believers of all ages would be His eternal dwelling place. This is why He formed Adam out of the clay of the earth and gave Him dominion over all of it as His possession. This is why God withstood Satan in the Garden and pronounced a curse on the Devil. It is why He promised the forlorn Eve that there would be a Savior from her seed, the one who would rectify her and Adam’s disastrous fall from grace. It is so God could have a home. This is why Jesus forsook His glory in heaven and took on the likeness of sinful flesh and did battle with sin. This is why God allowed Jesus to crawl up the hill to a place called the “Skull”, battered and bruised, beaten and bleeding, listening to the catcalls of the mockers and the shameful taunts of the scoffers, on His way to be nailed to a cross, suffocated in agony between two thieves. This is why God raised up the Church and sent His Holy Spirit to indwell the faithful believers of His Only Son. It was always to make Himself a home in which He could live in for all eternity. It has always been about making Himself

a perfect dwelling place. And that dwelling place is us – the redeemed portion of mankind!!!

The indications we get in the letters to the churches from Peter calling us lively stones is a portent of this revelation. *“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”* (I Peter 2.5) We know that God would not always dwell with the angels in a temple among the distant stars. We are to be His ark, His tabernacle, His temple, His abode, His house. Under the law God’s presence dwelt in a temple, an edifice made to the specifications of the one standing in heaven. From that place He administered His Word and judgment. He metes out the white throne judgment from His temple throne room, but now the vision of eternity is realized and there is no temple. He dwells among the creatures that have been redeemed from among men, those who were perfected by faith and have had their corruptible natures changed by His love into incorruptible ones. *“For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”* (I Cor. 15.53)

All Things Are New

“And God shall wipe away 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.” (Rev. 21.4)

It is not possible for this place to be anything short of perfection and bliss. There will be no more pain, suffering, tears or distress of any sort. No fear, doubt or concern. Perfect paradise, boundless love, genuine harmony. The joy and ecstasy that the old hymns longed for have materialized. The sweet by and by, that bright and shining river, that wonderful Beulah Land, that beautiful shore, the gathered sheaves, where time will be no more, is all a

rigorous bursting reality. The future now lies in God's ever expanding kingdom where His adventures of love will forever keep us occupied. Hope, Faith and Love are the slogan of eternity. As we learned in Daniel, there will be no end to it.⁶ The former things are passed away. Any heartache suffered over lost loved ones, any regret over misjudgments or past injustices are irrelevant, all dashed and shattered hopes will be swept up and replaced with new and beautiful hope, though unthinkable and unfathomable to our meager imaginations at this time. All that was lost will be replaced, as God did for Job, with greater riches. Everything that was not redeemable, that did not or could not enter into God's eternity, will be washed away. All that remains are the streets of gold. The saint will be unburdened. No tear will ever stain the pillow, no complaint will cross his lips, no anguish will fill the soul.

Everything will be made completely new, not least of all our psyche, our memory, and all our hopes. All will be bright, new and gleaming.

This is Our Faith

“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.” (Rev. 21.5)

We know all the above is true, we can count on it because God emphatically says here that He will make all things new. No distressing thing will linger on in our mind, no worn out idea, or human hope will confuse and cloud the future. No former sin or travesty of justice will plague our thoughts and influence our actions. He wants us to understand this and know that this is something we can count on with all of our faith. Thus He says: *“These words are*

6. Dan. 7.27

true and faithful.” It is a whole and complete new beginning for all creation. The moon, the stars, the heavens will pass away, even the natural laws of the universe will likely be wholly different. Gravity, the speed of light, radioactivity, the law of inertia and quantum mechanics, the change of the seasons, the laws of biology and of life and death may all be changed. Dimensions, time and space will be irrelevant. All things will be new. We can only know that all that we understand about the universe will be subject to change and any speculation about the new things would only be feeble speculation. We must wait to find out what this future universe will be like and what wonders will be in store for all those who live in this glorious new world.

It Is Done

“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 the water of life freely.” (Rev. 21.6)

This is reassurance. Those who thirst after righteousness shall be filled. Those who are thirsty for God will be allowed to drink freely of His life and spirit. All those who have thirsted are now in His care forever. That is why God says here, “It is done”. This is the second time in Revelation that God has declared, “It is done”. The first time, you’ll remember, was in chapter 16.17 when the final vial was poured out and the Tribulation brought to a conclusion. In that context it meant that the prophecies of the Tribulation and the day of the Lord are complete. Christ and His saints have reclaimed the earth, the possession once given to Adam, but lost in the fall because of sin, is reclaimed. But now, near the closing verses of the Bible, we discover that the redemption plan is not entirely done until all things are made new and the Bride of Christ is revealed. Not until the Millennium is over, the white throne judgment

accomplished, and every soul that ever lived brought before the judgment seat of Christ, is everything finished.

“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.” (Rev. 21.7-8)

Before going on to give a detailed picture of the Bride, God gives the reader of Revelation an important alert. He reminds us that there is no room for hypocrites in eternity. The Bride of Christ will not be a motley crew made up of a mixture of degenerates and perfected saints. God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10.34-35). Just because one says he is Christ's does not mean he is. A man must be not only a hearer of the Word but a doer also⁷. The Lord told a parable to illustrate this truth.

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was

7. James 1.23

founded upon a rock.

And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.” (Matt 7.21-27)

Salvation is for those who thirst after it and have done what Christ required of them. It is no accident that God uses the word overcomers here just as He did in all of the seven letters to the Churches when He exhorted believers to repent and overcome the temptations that would plague the Church (refer to chs. 2 & 3). Those who overcome will inherit all things. Sinners be warned! Not all will enter paradise, only those who thirst for truth and to those it will be given regardless of their station in life. No money, no smarts, no power, no skin color, gender or position is needed, nor can any of that exclude you from heaven. All that is required is a repentant heart mingled with faith and molded to love. †

The Bride In All Her Glory

God told John at the beginning of Revelation to record the things he would see and hear because the time was at hand. Obviously, God did not intend those words to mean that everything He prophesied about would happen immediately or come to pass in one generation. He meant that everything recorded in Revelation could be put to spiritual use by the believer right away. It would be beneficial to their understanding and applicable immediately to their faith. What that means is that all the things written in Revelation have been pertinent to the follower of Christ from day one. It has been God's hope that all Christians, from the first century A.D. on, would absorb the lessons of Revelation, heed its warnings and accept its charitable advice. If the time for its understanding and application was then, it certainly must be even more vital now as the day of Christ's appearing and His Second Coming draws nearer with each passing day.

The vision in the second part of chapter twenty-one of

the Lamb's Bride, which we are about to study, is no less important to our faith than any other part of Revelation. This panoramic picture is actually a detailed analysis of the Bride's character and must not be viewed superficially, merely as a passing portrait of her beauty. As we shall see, the sight of her is beautiful, yes, but it is the beauty that it symbolizes that should reach into our faith and get hold of our heart and mind. In verses 9-27 God has revealed to us a glorious Bride without spot or wrinkle. This is the Bride in all her holiness, goodness of character and faith. God has given this vision to all Christians down through the Church age so they would have something with which to compare themselves, a sort of mirror in which to adorn and prepare themselves so they would be ready for the appearance of the Bridegroom. This representation of the Bride, descending out of heaven to be merged with God as one forever, is a mechanism used by God to show us the spiritual requirements and condition of Christ's eternal wife.

The first part of chapter twenty-one introduces us to eternity, the promised paradise of God. We are told how everything will be made new, nothing in the former world will bother us. God will not permit fearful people, doubters, liars, haters or sinners of any sort to be part of the Bride. Only the righteous in Christ will dwell as one with Him. Perfect beings in a perfect setting secure for all eternity. God will be all in all.

It was in the first part of the chapter that we were alerted to the vision of the Bride of Christ, that glorious body of faithful believers who have been taken into eternity to live with Christ. We recall the words of the Bible that were written to the Ephesians declaring Christ's ultimate purpose for The Church, "*That he might present it to himself a*

glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Eph. 5.27) But the full detail of her beauty is not immediately revealed. God reserves this epic depiction of her beauty for the second half of His glimpse into eternity. The Bride's importance in the grand scheme of redemption and eternity should not escape the reader as it is exhibited by the fact that she, the glorious wife of Christ, is the final major topic to be revealed in the entire Bible. It can be said that God ends His revelation to mankind by showing him the Bride of Christ. Up to this point she has only been mentioned briefly, her reality and future only hinted at. Now God is about to give the serious student of Scripture, those who have forged their way through Revelation, a series of snapshots within the overall picture of the Bride. Each one is a small picture within the big picture, each giving us deeper insight into her development, holiness and character. Each picture is worth a thousand words. Each one is designed for the believer so he may peer into his own heart and see if he finds himself among the Bride. Do we conform to her? Are we without spot or wrinkle or any such blemish? God is giving us one last mirror in which to see our own reflection, to see if we are matching her beauty, to see if we will be one of her number. Verse nine offers the first pool where we can stop to see our own reflection.

"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 show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." (Rev. 21.9)

It is not a coincidence that it is one of the judgment angels of the seven last plagues that introduces us to the Bride. To be counted among her number is a great judgment, though it is a good judgment, it is nonetheless

a judgment. To be excluded from her is a total spiritual disaster. In the preceding verse we learned who and what she will not be like. Those who couldn't find it in their heart to truly trust God are not part of the Bride. Those who were afraid and could not believe that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose will not be among the chosen ones. And, of course, those who hypocritically cling to their sins, such as: idolatry, fornication, hatred, lying, stealing and any other thing that is opposed to the sound doctrine of the Bible will be cast into the fires of Hell. God will not give away a corrupt Bride to His Son. There is no place for duplicity in the Bride. She cannot have one foot in the world and one in Christ's bed. She cannot be kind or gentle, but still be a whore. She cannot be faithful and free of idolatry, but still lie to Him. She cannot be reverent and obedient, but be a murderess or have murder in her heart. She must be without spot or wrinkle or any such blemish. Ninety percent good and ten percent bad is not good enough. Above all she cannot be full of fears and doubts about God's goodness or His control of all things. She must be a dutiful wife with all faith and confidence in her husband. Otherwise, how could the marriage work? All the interactions and lessons of marriage in this life are nothing more than an acting out of the great spiritual truth that Christ is to be married to His beloved Church¹. If fornication and adultery are not permitted in this life among the married, should we think that God will permit them in the marriage of His Son?

“And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy

1. Eph. 5:24-32

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 crystal;”

(Rev. 21.10-11)

The angel at once carried John away to a high mountain to show Him the Bride. It must be that her beauty and enormous glory could only be seen from a great vista. When we look at the Bride we are looking at the domain of Christ; this is His kingdom to which there shall be no end. The mention of a mountain overlooking a kingdom transports us back to another time when another angel, a fallen one, took Jesus to a mountain to show Him the glories of this world and to tempt Him to give up His quest for a Bride and bow down to him. *“The devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.”*² Christ resisted the Devil and won the battle over him. Now Christ’s faithfulness has won its reward. We go to the top of the mountain to see the kingdom for which he waited. The light emanating from the Bride pulsates with life. The jasper stone is clear as crystal, but has laser-like streaks of deep red light running throughout her. It is the cleansing, life-giving blood of the Lamb. The blood of Christ runs through her veins, forever giving her strength and life. Every saint who is blessed to be part of the Bride is empowered with the authority and almighty unction of the blood of Christ their Saviour. It is by the blood of Christ that they have utilized their authority and won victory over demons and devils. The blood of Christ has given them power to resist temptation. The blood of Jesus gave them

2. Matt. 4.8-9

access to the throne room of God during the trials and toils on earth. It made it so God could hear their prayers and cries for deliverance. It covered their shortcomings and sins and by it they won the forbearance of God and lived in His continual mercy in a harsh and cruel world. By it they were made clean.

The jasper stone, in which the city is encased, is pure and perfectly clear, except for the streaks of deep red veins in her. They are permanent reminders of the wonder-working power of the Lamb's blood. No member of the Bride will be without this covering, or without the victories that the blood of Christ brings in this life.

“And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the 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.” (Rev. 21.11-13)

Now some of the details of the city start to come clear to us. It has a high wall, twelve gates and it rests on twelve foundations. It is immense. Our attention is captured by her gates and foundations. Each one has a name written on it. We suddenly realize that the Bride is made up of both the children of the 12 tribes of Israel and the Church, represented by the twelve apostles. Men and women of faith from every age make up the Bride and are now under one banner dwelling together as one. The way to being a part of the Bride was made possible by the twelve tribes of Jacob, who, for our sakes, were used as examples to show the Gentile world the truth about sin and the way of

salvation. We remember that Romans has spoken to us about our being the “wild” olive tree grafted in at Israel’s expense and that some day the Jews would be restored to God. In previous chapters of Revelation we see the 144,000 believers out of each tribe of Israel being sealed with the protection of God during the Tribulation, and we see the salvation of Jerusalem at Christ’s return. This is the time of the true “brotherhood of man”.

The Church is fully represented also. The city’s foundations are named after the Lamb’s closest friends. They are those who left everything behind; as Matthew did when he left the money table, as Andrew did when he left off following John the Baptist, as Peter did when he put down his net and left his father’s business to be with Jesus day and night. These men, with their spirit of faith and loving trust in the Savior, are representative of the spiritual character that all those who are of the Bride must have. Like the 12 apostles, she has left the world with its lures and cares behind, so she can be with Jesus.

“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, an 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.” (Rev. 21.15-18)

Now God shows us the dimensions and magnitude of the Bride. They, like all the other pictures, are symbolic. The Bride is not actually a city. God is using a city to personify

the Bride. To understand the symbolism we must consider what a city represents in Scripture. Cities in Biblical days did not conjure up the same image in a believer's mind as they do today. Today we think of the city as a place of violence and decadent living. We think of poverty and drugs, confusion, pollution and turmoil. There are threats on every side. But in the days of the Bible it was just the opposite. The city was a place of refuge. God tells the dispersed Jews of the Babylonian captivity to seek "the peace of the city". Under the law a person who accidentally killed someone could run to a specified city and be safe from retribution by one of the victim's family members.

Cities were places of wealth and security. The walls provided the inhabitants within a haven from robbers and warring or marauding armies. When her gates were shut at night, sin and lawlessness was shut out. Inside her walls law and order was established. It was in the city that the authority of the king offered full protection and recourse under the law. Outside on the plains, or in the woods, man was on his own, left to fend for himself and defend himself against attack. Caravans laden with gold, spices, tapestries, delicacies and weapons streamed into every major city of the Middle East. It was in the city that commerce flourished and could be conducted without fear of being vandalized. The shops of craftsmen and skilled artisans in every trade were to be found lining the streets of her commercial districts. Wealth was concentrated in the cities. If riches and luxury was to be found in a nation or region, it was to be found in its cities. Physicians and medical care could also be found in the city. Outside the city there were few doctors and even less knowledge of medicine. All of man's physical needs were accommodated in the ancient city. The mind, too, was nurtured in the city. All libraries and seats

of learning were situated behind the comfortable walls of city life. Here priests and scholars taught and instructed pilgrims who came for education.

But the city did not only provide for the needs of the body and soul, it was also the center of worship for every nation. The temples and shrines were placed within the confines of a fortified city. The king, often the high priest or center of worship, resided in a palace within the city. In short, living outside the city was risky. There were threats on every side and no place to run and hide. Living inside the protective walls of a city provided every possible security of law and order while affording its inhabitants the chance to acquire wealth and live in luxury. The city of the ancient world, therefore, is symbolic of the Bride of Christ. God has taken the measure of the city and it is a perfect cube 12,000 x 12,000 x 12,000 furlongs. (It is a 1,500 mile cube, or about the size of the United States.) It measures out a perfect multiple of twelve, the number of God's perfect government as illustrated by the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles. Her walls are also a perfect multiple of twelve measuring 144 cubits high. Within her walls is the perfect government and rule of God. There is no anarchy and no rebellion. Everything is in perfect harmony and is perfectly proportioned.

All sin is shut out and nothing evil or threatening can enter into her ever again. She will be a *Mecca* for every kind of unimaginable riches and beauty for all eternity. The Bride being likened to a city is a promise of all that is good about a city. She is secure, rich, beautiful, learned, healthy and free to worship God in peace for all eternity. Reason enough to strive to be part of her, wouldn't you say? ✠

We Are God's Jewels

The prophet Malachi, prophesied of a day when God would gather together all those who love Him to make them into the jewels and centerpieces of a totally new and revamped universe. *“Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.”*¹ We can only wonder at what this imagery means and how such splendor could possibly be displayed through the children of dust. Somehow, though, our time-worn flesh will be turned into such stunning beauty that it will surpass the radiance of the sun, the magnificence of the moon, the brilliance of the stars or any resplendent thing that this present universe has ever known. God will turn the saints into the crown jewels of His new creation. As a king

1. Malachi 3:16-17

wearing a royal ring, or a bejeweled crown of gold, or an insignia to declare his power and enhance his majesty, so God will adorn His new worlds with the testimony of His saints. Their light and beauty will gleam into every corner of the universe like enormous sapphires, rubies, emeralds, and diamonds declaring the power of the love of Christ that saved them from the grip of death and decay.

So it should be no wonder that the Bible ends with the Bride of Christ descending out of the heavens personified as a city, the New Jerusalem, the capital of the new universe. She will be the eternal habitation of the Father and The Son. She has become the eternal “hub” of the universe. Everything will gravitate to her and all authority and majesty will flow from her. It is very significant that the Bride of Christ is the Bible’s last major topic. Therefore the story of the Bible begins, quite naturally, with the creation of man and how his relationship with God was severed through sin; and ends, also quite naturally, with man’s perfection and marriage to the Son of God. The institution of marriage, like so many things that are set up by Providence, is a shadow of the true spiritual things to come. The history of man can be seen as a story of his betrothal to God, of becoming Christ’s fiancée, then His Bride and finally, His eternal wife. God reveals the details about the Bride of His Son at the very end of the Bible. Giving His Son a bride is the reason why He has willingly suffered so much pain and heartache in creating man. At times He was so hurt from man’s rejection of Him that He was sorry He had even created him. He had nearly scrapped the project 1,500 years after it began, but found one man, named Noah, that gave Him delight and encouraged Him to continue with the process of bringing to Himself a people who could fellowship with Him for all eternity. All along the way, at

critical times, He found men who had faith in His love and caused Him to take heart and have hope for mankind. There was Job, the man who was able to resist the Devil and by his faith effectively countered Satan's claim that men would not worship or revere God unless everything was going well. God found Abraham who believed the Almighty One could do all things and thereby was able to please God. The Lord found His dutiful servant Moses who, when God was about to destroy the rebellious Jewish nation in the wilderness and start over with his seed, rescued them from God's anger by appealing to His mercy. God found David, a man after His own heart, to lead His people. There were the prophets who were all obedient and told Israel about the coming Messiah. This epic story of faith was all leading up to the coming of the Savior, the creation of the Church of God and the marriage of all faithful believers (both Jew and Gentile) with Him for all eternity.

In the first part of chapter twenty-one we discovered that God had always planned that man should be His eternal habitation. God did not want to live alone or simply with the angels in the vast expanses of heaven. He did not want to live in a palace or temple, but He wished to live in a home "made without hands". His residence would be among the souls of the creatures that He Himself had made and then carefully nurtured to salvation through His Son. He would make these people into a nation of lively stones, building them one by one into an eternal dwelling place that would provide Him fellowship and return His love. The book of First Peter tells of this plan to make the saints into a house for God's habitation.

*"Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,
As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that*

Ye may grow thereby:

If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” (I Peter 2.1-5)

Later in chapter twenty-one of Revelation, we discover that God employs the symbolism of a city to illustrate this great truth. He uses the city to personify the Bride. The characteristics of the ancient city, with its security, riches and full provisions for body, soul and spirit serve as a perfect description of the Bride’s eternally secure existence² in Christ. The city, being a center of learning, health, government, and worship, is a fine reflection of the Bride’s vast riches of wisdom, health, security and liberty in Christ. This is the inheritance of those who love Christ and give their all to Him in this life. They shall reap the rewards of being His eternal wife. This is what we have already learned in the first half of chapter twenty-one, but seeing and desiring the promised inheritance and understanding how to attain the inheritance and the right to be called Christ’s wife is quite another matter. In verses nineteen and twenty we see that the Bride of Christ, appearing as a city, has descended from its place in heaven; its foundations shimmering brightly with the glorious light of twelve different types of precious stones, each one in some way representative of the characteristics of the saints. God itemizes the twelve stones to use them as analogies to teach

2. Herein lies the true nature of eternal security. Once we have been converted in this life and resurrected into immortality we are secure, and only then. This is the proof of our election and how we have made our “election sure”. We are not only the called, not only the called and chosen, but we are proven to be the called, the chosen and *the faithful*.

the student of Revelation about the process of polishing and refining that is necessary in the preparation of the saints to become the unblemished Bride of Christ. Each one, therefore, has its own meaning and significance.

“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, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;

The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.”(Rev. 21.19-20)

The foundations have the names of the twelve apostles written on them, but they are garnished with these twelve precious stones. What meaning do these stones really have? Why are they named by name? And what significance does each one have? In searching their root meanings some very interesting things can be discovered about these stones. Although six are of uncertain origin and have no discernable linguistic significance, half of them have significance that can be gleaned from their root meaning. They reveal a process of purifying and perfection. The process we, the saints of God, must go through is a polishing that requires sanding off the rough edges and abrading the imperfections of the soul. God is determined to perfect the saints in a spiritual way so that He can present to Himself a perfect Bride. Ephesians 5.27 says this quite plainly, *“That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”* A list of the six stones that have significant word roots is given here along with the root meanings.

1. Jasper: to polish
2. Sapphire: as used for scratching other substances, to score with a mark as a tally or record; (by implication) to inscribe and also to enumerate; to recount i.e. celebrate; commune; count, declare, number, reckon, scribe, shew forth, speak, talk, tell (out), writer.
3. Chalcedony: copper-like; through the idea as hollowing out as a vessel (this metal being chiefly used for that purpose); appearance, fashion, shape, sight; to know, be aware, behold, consider, (have) knowledge, look (on), perceive, see, be sure, tell, understand.
4. Chrysolite: gold or yellow stone; to furnish what is needed; (give) an oracle, “graze” (touch slightly), light upon, i.e. (by implication) to employ or to act towards one in a given manner; entreat, use.
5. Chrysoprasus: greenish-yellow gem; (through the idea of the utility of the metal); gold, a golden article, as an ornament or coin.
6. Amethyst: to prevent intoxication; from two root words meaning to drink to intoxication, i.e. get drunk; and an intoxicant, drunkenness.

We Are Polished

A pattern emerges showing that these stones represent a process that we as believers – partakers of that heavenly calling, are required to go through to be a “lively” stone, a part of the foundation of that great city, holy Jerusalem, the Lamb’s wife! Aptly, the first stone in the foundation – Jasper – signifies “to polish”. To make refined or elegant

is one of Webster's definitions for being polished. Christ takes us the way we are as raw gems and performs the work of polishing us up.

This is one of God's great mercies and rests at the heart of the Gospel message. We are all sinners in need of God's Grace. All men's hearts are desperately wicked³, but Jesus died for us while we were still His enemies. (Rom. 5.8) When we admit our sin and are truly repentant then He is faithful to forgive all our sins and we are miraculously converted into a new creature. (II Cor. 5.17) He gives us a new heart, one that can please Him, one able to bust free from the hold that sin has had on us. He promises that this conversion will lead to a polishing, a perfecting, if we allow His Spirit to work within us. He uses the Word to instruct, rebuke, correct and reprove us. (II Tim. 3.16) The Word is designed as a polishing agent so that we *"may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."* (II Tim. 3.17) He promises to send the Holy Ghost to us to reprove us of sin and convict us of judgment and righteousness. The Spirit will work diligently on us to polish our souls if we let Him so that we can live lives of victorious and reputable faith in Christ.

The Rough Edges Are Sanded Away

The second jewel – Sapphire – connotes a "scratching" action. We've all heard the term "sanding off the rough edges". People are sent off to finishing school to have the rough edges removed. In our walk with the Lord he sometimes has to scratch us up, or sand us down a bit to get to a more perfect finished product. What must be sanded away is our flesh, our will, and that always hurts; but when it's removed what appears is a beautiful polished stone,

3. Jer. 17.9

a stone that is ready and willing to “recount, celebrate, declare, shew forth” what the Great Polisher has wrought.

The Sapphire also implies testifying and publishing the Gospel with our mouth and our pen. It is no accident that the elements of sanding away our flesh and testifying for the Lord are combined under this one symbolic precious stone. What the saint teaches and testifies to must be the truth. We cannot say one thing and do another and hope to have an effective testimony. God does not abide hypocrisy. To be a true witness for Christ, and therefore an effective one, the saint must be transformed by the Gospel. He or she must have allowed this sanding process to be active. To tell of the glories of Christ without letting Christ have His way with us is to tell of an experience which we ourselves have not partaken or allowed in our life. Sanding and testimony go together in one jewel.

We Are Emptied Out

The third gem, Chalcedony, is a very significant stone in the overall foundation of the Bride. As noted in the definition, it is “the hollowing out as a vessel”. Again the Scripture speaks to Timothy the servant of God saying, *“there are vessels of gold and silver, of wood and earth; some to honour and some to dishonour, ... purge yourself from these so that you can be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.”*⁴ By fleeing youthful lusts and following righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart we become vessels of honour. We are taught here to hollow out ourselves, empty out the old man who is dead in sin, and let God fill us up with the new and spiritual beauty of Christ. (Rom. 6.6, Eph. 4.22, Col. 3.9) Also noted is the last part of

4. 2 Tim 2.20 & 21

the definition which tells us to “be aware, behold, consider, know” and again, as with the definition for Sapphire, “to tell”. We cannot be slothful or lazy in understanding the Gospel and knowing God’s Word. We are expected to be alert and communicative to others about God’s mercy to us.

Imbued With the Holy Ghost

The seventh stone, Chrysolite, is the next stone that relates to this overall refining and polishing operation. This stone refers to the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Ghost, who is so vital in the burnishing process. The root meanings for Chrysolite are, “to furnish what is needed” (give an oracle); “graze” (touch slightly), and “light upon”. If we are to have a victorious life in Christ then we need to be furnished with what is necessary – the Holy Ghost to “light upon” us. It is He who gives the oracle (the gifts such as; prophecy, wisdom, healings and faith). It is not only He who provides us comfort and consolation in the trials of this life, but He is the one who leads us into all truth.⁵

Great Worth and Purity

Number ten, the Chrysoprasus, is a greenish, yellow stone but the word, as a root meaning, is connected with the most precious of all metals – gold. Gold must be refined, the dross separated from the pure gold and burnished to a glittering luster. The implication here is great value, extreme beauty and immeasurable worth. The prospective Bride must be refined in the fires of the trials of this life. The dross, as in gold, must be separated so that only the pure value of what Christ has done in the life of the believer will be left to shine forth to enrich the lives of others.

To Prevent Intoxication

The twelfth, Amethyst, has as a root meaning to “prevent

5. John 16.7-14

intoxication”. The epistles command us to be sober; *“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”* (I Pet. 1.15). Peter also admonishes *“But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer”* (I Pet. 4.7). Paul tells us to *“be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.”* (Eph.5.18)

Coming into our “right mind” is so vitally important as a Christian. We are told in Ephesians to not walk as other Gentiles do, in the vanity of our minds. We are supposed to acquire the mind of Christ, to allow God to give us His thoughts and feelings. The way God looks at things is quite different from the way men do. *“My ways are not your ways, nor are your thoughts my thoughts”*, God tells us in Isaiah. Once again, the Word of God is given to the Church for this purpose. It is used to save our minds, to transform our views of life and righteousness into God’s views of truth and righteousness.

There is also a spiritual implication here that we not be intoxicated with ourselves. We are to be moved and impassioned by the spirit of Christ in us. Pride is a form of intoxication. Self-reliance and self-confidence may be what the world is after, but it is not what God expects of His Bride-to-be. He wants us to be thoroughly dependent on Him, ready to receive anything and everything He has for us.

Used to Sand Others

Number four, Emerald, is a corundum type mineral. This means that it is used as an abrasive itself. The oriental emerald is a beautiful green gem, highly prized as jewelry, but because of its hardness is also used to grind, cut, smooth or polish another substance, especially other gems. While the previously mentioned gems were themselves

improved and polished to a beautiful state of perfection, this stone is used to help in the polishing and perfecting of other stones. This is part of the mission of the Bride. She is to work to perfect others. Proverbs says, *“As iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.”* The stones of the New Jerusalem will have been involved in sharpening one another.

Nailing Our Sins to the Cross

The fifth stone, Sardonyx, is a translucent onyx with reddish streaks running through it. Its color harkens back to the blood of Christ. It is Christ’s blood that pulses through the spiritual veins of the Bride. All onyx stones derive their name from the Greek word onyx meaning: “nail”. The color of the stone and its meaning combine to point to the cross and the forgiveness that it purchased for the Bride. *“And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross”*.⁶ The nails that were driven through Christ’s hands also nailed our sins to that cross. The sardonyx signifies Christ who willingly died for His Bride. The Bride will forever testify of Christ’s love for her and how it was manifested on Calvary. The power of His shed blood has redeemed her and been instrumental in making her God’s most precious jewel of the universe.

Following in Christ’s Footsteps

Number six, the sardius, is a sard stone which has layers of white and reddish color and once again speaks of the blood of Christ which was shed for the remission of sin. A sard is also a chalcedony, which from number three we

6. Col. 2.13-14

know means to empty out as an empty vessel. We can infer that by the blood of Christ we are to take His lead and empty ourselves out. His advice is suggested in this Sardius stone when He told His disciples to “pick up their cross and follow after Him”. He emptied Himself out for our sakes. He left His heavenly glory and became of no reputation. We, too, should concede our reputation and ambitions to God and follow in the footsteps of Christ. We should die to ourselves.

Strengthened and Whitened

The eighth, Beryl, is also important because of its meaning and properties. The stones that are of the beryl family are noted for their extreme hardness. The quality of being unbreakable speaks of the Bride’s immovable position. Her relationship with God cannot be severed or broken for all eternity. The word has its roots in the Greek word *Berullos* meaning: to whiten. She wears the white and pure linen of the righteousness of the saints.

The Light of the World

The ninth, Topaz, is a yellow corundum. But this corundum is transparent. It is like a light shining forth its brilliance. This stone represents that everything about the Bride is an open book. She has nothing to hide. She has done her work in the light and there has been nothing hidden or secretive about her ministry in Christ. She has been the light on the hill and reflected the light of the world. Jesus said, *“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”*⁷ As

7. Matt. 5:14-16

represented by the topaz, The Bride has been faithful as a witness to Christ's light in the world.

Life-Giving Blood

The eleventh, Jacinth, is a mystery. It is derived from the word hyacinth which in the ancient world was a variety of flower, which is the same today. It is purple and was supposed to have sprouted from the earth by the blood of a slain god. The connection again is to the blood of Christ which has its great supernatural and mystical life-giving powers. The Bride has been given eternal life by the blood of the cross shed by Jesus.

The Other Six Stones

The remaining six stones, the emerald, sardonyx, sardius, beryl, topaz and jacinth, also have significance. Though not by the meanings of their root words they are still interesting symbols because of their natural properties.

Conclusion

Jesus promises overcomers of the church of Pergamos that He will give them a white stone with a name written on it that only he knows. An edifying definition for this white stone is as follows: "a pebble (as worn smooth by handling) i.e. (by implication of use as a counter or ballot), a verdict (of acquittal) or ticket (of admission), a note, stone, voice; to verify by contract; feel after, handle, touch; also to twitch or twang, i.e. to play on a stringed instrument (celebrate the divine worship with music and accompanying odes) make melody, sing (psalms). So this one word tells us the story of how we are acquitted of a verdict, given a ticket of admission and then celebrate our admission with divine music and psalms. The culmination of all of this is: *ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation*

of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”
(Eph. 2.19-22) †

Bride Will Be the Hub of the Universe

The Bride of Christ is destined to be the centerpiece of God's new and revamped Universe. And what a centerpiece she will be. She will not only be God's eternal home, His pleasant and peaceful residence, but she will be His honored capital city with all the resplendence that we would expect the capital of the Universe to project. God and Jesus will have their throne in her. She will be the Hub of the whole Universe. Creation's activities will flow to her from every corner of the Universe. From her all God's power will emanate. God's edicts will be announced from her, every adventure of faith will be launched from within her gates, all God's righteous judgments will be rendered from this marvelous and magnificent lady. From within her the plans of worlds yet to-be will be initiated, galactic star systems not imagined by us will be created by the mere utterance of God's booming voice. The government of the Universe will be seated in her. Yes, she, the Bride of Christ

will be the Hub of the Universe. The Bride of Christ, the one that is seen coming down out of heaven in the beginning of chapter twenty-one, will be the jewel of all creation and all of creation will do her honor for all eternity. She, and not *Mystery Babylon*, is the true eternal city.

She stands in great contrast to the imposter, *The Whore of Babylon*, whom we see (chap. 18) has called herself the eternal city but is punished by God for her blasphemous lies and harlotry. Now, at the end of the Bible, we see the real honored woman, The Bride Of Christ. This honor is not due to anything she has done on her own, or anything she has achieved by her own skill or righteousness. She will be the Hub and the Jewel of God's new Universe because God has made her into a perfect wife and this is where He has chosen to live. It is the city "made without hands", a place for Him to inhabit that is not made of mortar and brick, or granite and steel. It is made of the lively stones of converted souls, built one by one into a mighty and glorious habitation for God.

In previous studies we have seen that Revelation and the rest of Scripture firmly establishes that the Bride is made up of faithful men and women down through the ages who have lived subordinate lives to God and Christ. God compares her to a great and beautiful city to help us understand her purpose and destiny. She is strong and secure, a place of refuge, full of riches and ruled by peace and justice. We can find no words to do justice to her beauty. The picture painted for us in Revelation can only give us a mere sketch of her unimaginable glory. Her beauty is incomparable, there is nothing our mortal eyes have seen, or our carnal minds have thought that can tell us of her true splendor. She has been built, "stone by stone", actually person by person, by none other than God Himself

for the purposes of providing a place for He and His Son, Jesus Christ, to live for all eternity. God has taken the time and care necessary to build Himself a perfect and incredible mansion of mansions. And, since she is God's place of habitation, His home forever, he has made it, as any king's palace should be, the most glorious thing in all His domain.

It is literally impossible for us to comprehend the depths of this truth. The analogies that God provides in the chapter will have to suffice. The Bride is compared to a city with high and magnificent walls providing the greatest possible security. But it is not only famine and sword that she is impregnable to, she can no longer be attacked by temptation or sin. The ravages of time and death are unable to breach her walls. No threat can disrupt her peace, nothing can shake the foundations of her faith. She is forever saved. Her dazzling rays of color stream forth like a prism making her the lighthouse of the Universe. Emeralds, rubies, topazes and diamonds are but tarnished rocks next to the grandeur of her blazing lights. Her beauty is meant to turn the head of every part of creation to testify to the wonder-working power of the Lamb of God who, by His love, has redeemed Himself a Bride from a lost world of corruption and sin.

The Prize of the High Calling

We can infer that the Bride is a "cut above" all other parts of creation. This is why the angel in Revelation said these words to John.

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour 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.” (Rev. 19.7-9)

This blessing, we may conclude, is a special blessing over and above salvation. There is excellent Scriptural reason to believe that the Bride is not comprised of every believer who has ever lived and it is not just this one verse we have quoted from Revelation that suggests this. To be part of the Bride is the highest reward, the greatest position in Christ. Paul spoke of the “*prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus*” and apprehending that reward. What prize could be higher than being Christ’s Bride? But if we are to strive for this reward then that must mean there are those among the household of faith who will not attain to it. Though the Bride comprises a massive area – a cube 1,500 miles or roughly the size of the United States – it should by no means be thought that these boundaries will house every eternally saved soul. The Bride is the chaste virgin of Christ, those who were faithful and undefiled by idolatry. (Rev. 14.1-5) Not every saved soul will have this testimony. The Bride is comprised of the wise virgins who waited and prayerfully watched for the return of their husband-to-be. They did not get distracted or let their lamps burn out as the foolish virgins had done (Matthew 25). Not every believer will have this testimony. Though the foolish virgins were shut out of the marriage supper we should not conclude that they shall never be allowed in the presence of the Lamb and His Bride ever again. They have missed *The Rapture* and will not be part of the Bride. We are told in the book of I Corinthians that after the fires of judgment have burned away all the works of the flesh, that the only thing left will be our works in Christ.

“Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.

If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, 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.” (I Cor. 3.12-15)

Many saints will suffer loss that day, but they will still be saved. Salvation and eternal life is the first promise and the very last and most difficult to be burned away by fire. Other promises of great blessing are added to those who have been scrupulously obedient, heeded Scriptural warnings and advice, and who have conformed to God’s Word. Just as a long life is promised to those who keep God’s commandment to honor and obey their parents, so there are additional promises added to reward those saints who honor and obey their Father in heaven. And the converse is true also. *“If any man’s work is burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet as by fire.”*

There should be no question, then, that the Bride is special. She is Christ’s wife. We are told in the very first sentence of the Bible that the earth stood among the firmament without form and void, but God’s spirit moved over the face of the waters and restored order to the earth and the heavens. Now, at the end of the Bible we see God making a new beginning once again. This new order begins with the Bride’s appearance. The old heaven and the old earth have been put off like a coat out of fashion. The Bride has descended onto the new earth signaling the fresh regeneration of creation. She is the hub. God will rule from her; all jurisdiction, edicts and power will flow from the

throne of the omnipotent God who lives within her. The last seven verses of chapter twenty-one wrap up this revelation of the Bride. It concludes by giving us further insight into the nature of this station of godly authority and how the business of the new universe will be conducted from her. Within her walls will be the mass of governors, priests, ambassadors and kings that will rule and govern God's new and ever-expanding kingdom. In the final seven verses we are given further insight into the character of these men and women who have been raised up by God to *"reign as kings and priests with Christ"*. (Rev. 1.6, 5.10, 20.6)

Crafted By the Hand of God

"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." (Rev. 21.21)

With verse twenty-one God begins to describe the Bride's uniqueness and special place with him. There are twelve gates to the city each one being one huge pearl. Here we have the number twelve again signifying leadership among the community of believers. We are told that the twelve gates stand for the twelve tribes of Israel and that the twelve foundations represent the twelve apostles. But the symbolism of the twelve pearls is not given, we are left to figure this out for ourselves. Immediately the parable about the pearl of great price comes to mind. The pearl for which the merchant sold all that he had in order to buy is, of course, Jesus. But these 12 pearls are indicative of the saints that have become like the Great Pearl. The pearl is one of the most sought after prizes of creation. Men and women have long used it to adorn the body. Its unique grayish white luster gives it an almost supernatural appearance. But its greatest symbolism is that it is the only gift of nature that cannot be enhanced by man's art. Its

translucent grayish white color seems to throw off a different light than any other thing on earth. It is never etched, colored, polished or scrimshawed. The twelve pearls tell us that the Bride of Christ has not been perfected by her own deeds or skill, nor by the hand of man, or by any system devised on earth. She has been brought to perfection solely by Christ¹ and the power of the Trinity. The Father has drawn her to the Son, the Son has provided her with the means to be redeemed and the Holy Spirit has guided her into all truth. She has been set free of the bondage of sin and delivered from the fears and cares of this world. Her incandescent beauty speaks of her relationship with Christ, having been hid in him like a pearl that was formed inside the soft surroundings, secure and protected by an impenetrable hard outer shell. The Bride has come to maturity being surrounded by the love of Christ and protected by the fortress of His strength.

The streets of the Bride reflect the glow of these enormous pearls because they are made of gold, gold so pure that it is transparent. The transparency stands for her deeds; they are an open book, nothing is hid. She has been refined like gold in the fire seven times over and her worth has been proved by her works of faith and the testimony of Christ's power in her life. Her gates and roads immediately

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1. Luke 4.18-19 tells of the incident early in Christ's ministry when he stood up in his home synagogue, quoted from Isaiah 61.1-2 and proclaimed his mission before the people. His six-fold ministry has been fully received by the *Bride*. Three of this ministry's aspects were about preaching some part of the Gospel: teaching repentance to the needy, deliverance of the captives and telling of the acceptable year of the Lord (prophecy). The *Bride* has accepted His preaching of each of these and let them grow into a living and vital faith. She has also accepted the other three aspects of Christ's earthly ministry: the healing of the broken-hearted so that she harbors no resentment or hatred for any man; the knowledge that she is blind and can only see when Christ gives her sight; and though bruised by sin and sufferings in the world, she has accepted deliverance and been set free to trust and serve the living God.

put every visitor and traveler at ease and fill them with hope.² The gates that open to her roads are crafted by God alone and her roads are open, wide and paved with truth. There is no double-dealing or crafty government to contend with. Everyone knows what to expect and nothing is done in dark, back rooms. The city itself is made of clear gold.

No Need For Temple: We Live Together

“And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.” (Rev. 21.22)

Some Jews may mourn the fact that there will be no temple; and there are those who have built magnificent cathedrals and shrines to God who may be sorry to see that there will be no magnificent temples in this new Hub of the Universe. But Christians who have taken the Scriptural proclamation that we are the temple of the Holy Ghost literally are neither surprised nor disappointed that there is to be no temple in the new heaven and new earth. As we have “lived in Christ” and “He in us” we have enjoyed being His temple. We need not go anywhere to worship or pray. We have not been bound to the inconvenience of having to go and visit God at His place one or two days a week. We have not visited Him, He has visited us. By His Spirit He has dwelt with us daily. This is why His name is called, Emmanuel, God With Us. So there will be no temple in the capital, and why should there be? Jesus gave His disciples a glimpse into this when He said, *“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a*

2. It would seem possible that there will be those who are saved but not part of the Bride of Christ, though we don't want to be dogmatic about this. The residents of the Bride are “blessed”, implying that some saved are not “blessed” in this way. These people will be able to enter her gates, rest and partake of her glory but their abode is not within her walls.

*Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*³ That hour was upon His disciples then because Jesus had come into the world and had revealed God to them in the flesh. He promised to send the Holy Ghost to teach them how to worship God the way God wanted to be worshipped. But, Jesus was also speaking of this day long in the future, at the threshold of eternity, when He and the Father would be the temple, and the Bride and the Son would be one, when it would no longer be necessary to go out or come in because they would dwell in Him and He in them forever.

In Revelation we have seen the temple. So we know that it has a useful part to play during the judgments of the Tribulation and during the Millennium. We have seen the doors open and lightening bolts of judgment come flashing down onto the earth. The temple is the scene of worship during the Tribulation. The raptured saints are received there. The Tribulation martyrs are given crowns before God's throne. The opening of the seven seals takes place in the temple, the angels with the trumpet judgments and the seven last plagues come out of the temple before unleashing their charge on earth. The temple is the place from which God announces: "It is finished!" and "It is done!" Throughout Scripture we have seen the temple's vital importance. Moses patterned the tabernacle of the congregation after the temple in heaven. God set it up to replicate the life, death and resurrection of Christ the Savior. Prior to man's total restoration the temple is necessary. During the Millennium the temple will be restored to operation in Jerusalem and Jesus will rule the nations from there for 1,000 years. There is still some need

3. John 4.23,24

to meet God on some common ground. All of Creation is not redeemed or in good standing with God. The temple in heaven is where controversies are judged. All spirits, good and bad, will have their day in “court”, or in the temple of God. In earlier chapters of Revelation we see the books that God keeps. These books of salvation will be opened in the temple at their respective times. But in the new heaven and new earth, after the books of judgment have been put away and the souls of the living have been relegated to their proper eternal places, there will be no need for a meeting place. God and the Bride are “one”. The promise of I Corinthians 15.28 is now come to pass, *“And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.”* A temple is irrelevant.

Christ’s Light Powers Her

“And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.” (Rev. 21.23)

The sun and the moon, given to us to set the seasons and order our lives, are no longer needed either. The former things have passed away just as God promised they would. All the rules have been changed. All, except one. Jesus is still the true Light of the world. We are told here that the glory of God will lighten the city. That glory is directly stated as the light of the Lamb. The light of the Lamb is Christ’s love. This is the light that lights every man that comes into the world.⁴ Somehow this glory of God, which is the love of His dear Son, will radiate throughout the Bride to light up the entire city. No electricity, no candles, no heating system, no power station, no generators will be necessary. The love

4. John 1.9

of Christ will power the Bride and be its energy source forever. No more electric bills, no more fuel deliveries, no more visits to the mechanic for a tune-up or to fuss over a muffler change. No more pollutants in the air. The love of Christ will fully supply this city's every need.

Man has come full circle. Here is the truth about evolution. The evolution of man is not linear but cyclical⁵. In the beginning God came over the face of the earth, it was void and without form and He said, "Let there be light." This was the first day. It was not until the third day that God created the sun and the moon. The light that God ordained to show upon creation was the light of His Son's love, the light of Christ. The true light of eternity is not from a star or a light bulb. The true light of the world and of the universe is the light of life, it is what gives living creation sight and the ability to commune with God. It is the light that lights the soul and without this light there is no communication and no life; without it there is only darkness and stillness. In the new heavens there will be no need for lights in the skies, at least not for the enlightened City of the Bride. Somehow Christ's love will be so penetrating that it will light everything. The Bride's light is not governed by day and night or the rotation of planetary spheres or the radiant beams of a far off nova. Her light pulsates at 100 percent all of the time. God said at the beginning "*let there be light*" and it shone upon man to light his way. In the end, that light is established within man to give him eternal life and man will never be without it.

Saved Nations Bring Her Honor

"And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in

5. Darwinism is hogwash and every person who takes a sincere look at evolution's theories will admit it, but in the above sense evolution is the story of man returning to his Creator.

the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour 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 honour of the nations into it.” (Rev. 21.24-26)

Now we come to a sticky point for many Christians. We see that there are saved souls who will be allowed to go in and out of the city. But if they are bringing their glory and honor into the city that means they are producing that glory elsewhere. We could reasonably infer from this passage that those who are bringing things to the city will not be residents of the city proper. In other words they are not part of the Bride. Unfortunately, people get all riled up about this. They object because they say, “God does not play favorites”. The rewards of paradise are promised, they contend, without restriction to one and all who come to Him and repent. Popular doctrine presents the simplistic idea that all saved souls will be given precisely the same reward in heaven. As support for this doctrine they cite the parable of the eleventh hour laborers, pointing out that they were given the same reward as the workers who had toiled in the fields during the heat of the day. But that is not the point of the parable⁶ and there are too many other instances in the instruction of the Word that tell us that there are degrees of not only punishment, but of reward also and that the station of each believer will be largely determined by their degree of obedience and submission to the Spirit of God in this life. We have already covered this and we do not want to belabor the point. Suffice it

6. The point of the parable is about salvation, as the thief on the cross was saved at the last moment, but he surely will not be given the authority and position equal, for example, of the faithful steward who was given ten cities to rule.

to say that it is apparent that the resources of other saved communities and nations of saved ones will flow into the capital city of *The Bride* and that God's love is wide and deep extending into every expanse of the universe beyond *The Bride*.

Perfect, Safe, Secure Forever

“And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” (Rev. 21.27)

The Bride will be a paragon of security and virtue. Nothing abominable, false, deceitful or corrupt will be allowed through her gates. There will be no need to “vote the rascals out” or launch reform movements. There will be no scandals to investigate or conspiracies to uncover. Hypocrites are persona non-grata. Those who weave clever webs of lies will not be admitted into her. The spirits of Jezebel and Balaam (Rev. 2) will be cast out forever. Any idolatrous spirits will have dried up and blown away with the winds of judgment. Only those written in the Lamb's book of Life will even be permitted entrance into the city limits. The Bride is God's perfect jewel put into the perfect setting – nothing can ever undo it. †

Paradise Lost Has Become Paradise Regained

Near the end of his life the English poet, John Milton, wrote two epic poems: *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. The former tells the story of Satan's rebellion and the tragic fall from grace of Adam and Eve. The sequel recounts Jesus's work of salvation and the defeat of Satan and his followers. These two simple titles are an apt way of introducing the final chapter of Revelation. Man's pathos began tragically in Genesis with Paradise being lost, but ends triumphantly in Revelation chapter twenty-two with paradise being regained. Man's destiny and God's predetermined plan of redemption does not end like a Greek tragedy, but it ends in glorious beauty and triumph. Death is eaten up by life. The drama in the Bible has brought mankind full circle. His sin has been converted into righteousness, his despair turned to joy, his loneliness obliterated by an eternal marriage to the Son of God.

As we venture into the last chapter of Revelation we

should be mindful that this final chapter is not only the end of Revelation but it is also the conclusion of the Bible. We are hearing God's last words of warning and encouragement. This is the final message God has chosen to preach in His Word. We, therefore, should attach enormous significance to this message. It is much more than just a conclusion to Revelation. These are words spoken to the Universal Church meant to be applied to the entire scope of the Bible and to every true believer's faith. God has chosen to end the Bible with the declaration that man will be fully restored by and through the accomplishments of the First and Second Comings of Jesus Christ. Man will not make a better world for himself. He will not make a righteous planet to which Jesus can return. The judgment of God and the Second Coming of Christ will destroy evil, sift out the wicked from the faithful, and make heaven and earth anew.

Jesus Did It All

We have come to understand from our study of Revelation that God had two basic purposes for creating man. One was to make a place for Himself to live and the other was to give His Son a Bride. It is upon this foundation of home and wife that the family of God is built. God gave us a prophetic foreshadowing of this intention from the very start when He gave Adam a perfect place to live and then gave him a wife with which to share it. But Adam and Eve needed to be tested to see if they and their prodigy would be a fit place for His habitation. Though they failed the test, God had a plan to restore things and make man a perfect dwelling place for Him into eternity. At the center of that plan was His Only Son, Jesus Christ. Chapter twenty-two opens as an angel appears before John to proclaim the glories of God's newly restored home and

family. God's intent for man has been accomplished. The drama of salvation has been played out. With a master's hand God has brought every promise and prophecy to its predestined conclusion. In this final chapter (verse 13) we see the proclamation that we first heard at the start of Revelation, *"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last."* Jesus has accomplished it all. The redeemed of the earth are now one with God, inseparable and perfectly like Him, all because of the work of Jesus. Sin and death has been routed out, all because Jesus was willing to leave His Godly estate, take on the form of human flesh and defeat sin head-on. The earth has been bought back from the clutches of Satan and restored to a beautiful blissful place, all because Jesus has paid the purchase price in full. Satan and his conspiracy against God has been crushed by the seed of the woman – Jesus. The Antichrist and his faithless followers have been interred in Hell by our conquering hero, Jesus. Man is healthier, happier, safer and closer to God than he was in the Garden of Eden, all because of Jesus. Jesus is everything and has accomplished everything for us. Is there any wonder why God would exhort us in the final chapter of the Bible to wait for His return?

Once cast out of the Garden, Adam and Eve were left without any of the things which Christ has restored. They had been permitted to eat freely of all the fruit of paradise except for one tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God had warned them about it, *"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."* When they ate the forbidden fruit their innocence was sacrificed and they suddenly became mortal. Having chosen evil they had forfeited eternal life and severed their relationship with

God. When God came to the Garden next to commune with them they hid from Him. What a terrible moment. God had warned them that they would not be able to stand in His presence if they disobeyed Him and ate from the forbidden tree. After eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil God had said to Adam,

“Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” (Gen. 3.17-19)

Paradise was lost. God sent a mighty angel to bar access to the tree of life and pronounced a curse on the earth for man’s sake. Man was cast out of the Garden and from God’s presence, never to look upon God’s face again during his mortal days. The light of God that had illuminated his soul was withdrawn and anguish filled it instead. Man was left with only the inanimate objects of the sun and moon to light his way and radiate his life. Instead of having God to govern his life, the lights in the sky ruled over him and set seasons of work and toil. This curse has plagued man ever since he was cast from paradise, but now, in the waning verses of the Bible, God has sent an angel to John to reassure us that there will never again be a curse against man.

“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 bare 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 of 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.” (Rev. 22.1-5)

In these five opening verses of Rev. twenty-two we see restored paradise. This is greater than the Garden of Eden. Unlike Eden this paradise cannot be lost. We are eternally secure in it for this is the home of God. The waters of life run placidly down its middle, giving sustenance to the trees of life which line the river on either side. All the family of God is given free unrestricted access. There is no tree here from which we may not eat. There is no threat from the knowledge of good and evil because all of the redeemed souls here have confronted good and evil and have freely chosen God. They have rejected “sin’s dread sway” and thrown themselves into the arms of Jesus. They have tasted the fruit of sin and have spit out its poison seeds.

Along the river of life the spreading branches of the trees of life yield twelve different types of fruit that provide the inhabitants of this new creation with the essence of the divine nature and all things that pertain to life and happiness. The leaves of the trees are for the healing of all nations and peoples. They provide the shade, as it were, against any harsh memories or injuries incurred in their battles against sin and the world. Man is at rest. No more blood, sweat and tears. No more toil, no scratching out a living. No more battles waged against a sinful nature. Now that the curse is over man can live up to his created

potential. Man will be both servant and king, like Jesus. They will rule with God and serve Him forever. Man can now be in the presence of God and actually look upon His face without being consumed by guilt or feeling the urgent need to run away and hide as Adam and Eve had done so long ago in the Garden. He will not have to run for refuge out of the noonday sun, or hide in shelters from the cold and darkness. There will be no need to worry about energy sources, or the pros and cons of nuclear power. God and Jesus will provide it all. The work will be done. It will be a happy home at peace, full of unimaginable riches, and all of it at our disposal!

We must understand that the curse, including separation from God, life's toils and pain, and death itself are all part of the curse for our sake! God has shown us the ultimate end of all things and the purpose of His plan of redemption because he wants us to keep our eyes fixed on the goals and the way He has promised to implement those goals. Remember, when Thomas asked Jesus to tell him the way Jesus replied, *"I am the way..."* Getting to paradise is the whole point of our journey. Being part of The Bride is the exalted prize. Because of this the angel emphasizes the importance of what he has just revealed to John about the restoration of paradise.

"And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.

Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." (Rev. 22.6-7)

The angel is telling us that we can stake our future on these things being true. In fact, it is implied that we ought to stake our future and our very life's work and faith on the truth of these words. We are told that these things must

shortly be done. Not that they would be done overnight but that they will be set in motion and the process will begin in this age, this era of grace. We are once again warned that the return of Christ is always looming on the horizon. His coming will happen quickly, or suddenly. There will be no warning except these magnificent warnings given in God's prophetic word and by their fulfillment. It is God's mercy that He takes time in His final message of the Bible to again warn us to be on the lookout for Christ's return. We are reminded of Christ's words,

“And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.” (Luke 21.34-36)

The world will be taken by surprise but God does not want us to be caught off guard. And then the angel repeats the first warning and exhortation of the book of Revelation from chapter one verse three, *“blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.”* We are being instructed to walk in all those prophetic things that we have learned and understood from our study of Revelation. Knowledge without faith is useless. Even worse, knowledge without faith breeds arrogance and self-righteousness. We must now walk as though we truly believe that Jesus is coming back, that the Rapture can happen before we finish this sentence, that government will not get better until Christ returns, that the world must undergo awful judgment before it can be redeemed and that *The Bride* must be spotless and without wrinkle or any such blemish. To know

these things is one thing, to understand them still another, but to keep them is the important thing. The angel is telling us to keep the sayings written in the prophecy of Revelation. We must do more than just believe them, we must trust them, rely on them and adhere to them. In short, these lessons we have learned in Revelation should transform us and change our way of living.

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” (I John 3.2-3) †

Jesus Gives A Prophecy: “Truly I Come Quickly”

Life, health and perfect peace are now the possession of those who truly loved Christ and followed Him in this life. The angel once again told John that Christ's return would happen suddenly and reminded him that those who heed the words of Revelation will be the ones who receive the blessings that are enumerated in its pages. It is a wonderful message of hope and anticipation. John has come a very long way from the days when, as a very young man, he followed the Messiah on the shores of Galilee and through the hills and towns of Judea. God has brought him to the end of time, past thousands of years of the salvation plan up to the restoration of Paradise and into the infinite timelessness of eternity. Now John stands at the foothills of eternity looking upon the most glorious being He has ever seen. So impressive, in fact, is the angel, that John assumes this must be Jesus Himself and falls to his knees to worship at the feet of this marvelous “angel”.

“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 which showed me these things.” (Rev. 22.8)

But John is in for a shocking surprise.

“Then saith 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.” (Rev. 22.9)

John was not only shocked, but as any God-fearing man would be he must have also been embarrassed by this surprising case of mistaken identity. We know that John would never have bowed to any creature other than God. He was certainly aware of the commandment which clearly says, *“Thou shalt have no other God before me.”* He had seen redeemed saints and martyrs in heaven over and over again during the visions of Revelation and had not confused them for Jesus, so why would he do so now at the end of the vision? The answer must be that John thought the angel was actually Jesus Himself because he looked so magnificent and full of power. We should excuse John for thinking Jesus might appear to him in this way in this circumstance. In John’s prior visions of Revelation he had already seen Jesus in no less than five separate and distinct glorified forms. Christ first appeared in chapter one as the king and judge of the church with His eyes as flames of fire and His legs as burnished brass. In chapter five John saw Him as the Lamb of God who had been slain for our salvation. In chapter ten John, acting as representative of the Church, encountered Christ as the mighty angel and redeemer and received the deed of the earth from His hand. In chapter fourteen John saw Jesus riding the clouds holding a scythe in His hand, reaping the harvest of the earth. In chapter nineteen John saw Christ in still another

form, this time in his role as commander-in-chief of the redeemed army of saints leading them triumphantly back to earth to conquer the Antichrist and establish the thousand-year rule of the Millennium. Recalling these things, now, picture the scene.

John instantly falls at the feet of this “angel” thinking he is just another incarnation of Jesus. A glorious angel has just shown him *The Bride of Christ* descending out of heaven. The aged John is in awe and overwhelmed by the magnitude and beauty of *The Bride* he has just witnessed. Thinking that the messenger must again be Jesus in another one of His glorified forms, John drops to his knees and worships him. The only reason John would have done this is because this messenger of God was so much like Jesus that it was only natural for him to mistake this redeemed man for God. The whole of creation has been restored and renewed at this point. God is all in all. This saint has become like Jesus in every way. He is powerful, glorious, and royal in appearance. His eyes are piercing and yet full of love, compassion and mercy. His voice resonates perfection and authority. His words are soothing, piercing and true. And yet this is a redeemed man.

Instantly, the angel tells John not to worship him, that he is a prophet like himself. And then he tells him another very interesting fact. We must be aware that John has stepped ahead in time more than three thousand years and this futuristic angel tells him that he is among those people who, in the future, will follow the words of the book that John was now recording. This angel is telling John that he is one of those who would keep the sayings that were written in Revelation and had thereby received the blessings that are promised for keeping the words of its message. This is

a man who lived during the Church Age and was obedient to Revelation and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our fellow angel and saint stands as a testimony to this fact. He is a product of the words written in the book by John. We do not know when this angel lived on earth. He could have been a second generation Christian who died a martyr's death in the Circus Maximus at Rome in the second century. He might have been one of the Christians who fled Spain during the persecution of the inquisition. Perhaps he was a preacher in Holland or Germany during the Reformation, or an English clergyman persecuted for his faith in the sixteenth century. Regardless, this angel had paid heed to the words of the Gospel and of Revelation and had let them be a *"lamp unto his feet"*. He had not leaned to his own understanding but had allowed the Holy Ghost to direct his paths.

The statement made by the angel in verse nine tips us off to another very significant purpose of this messenger of God. The angel tells us he has been sent as a prophet to prophesy in the name of Jesus. This is important because it alerts us to the fact that the last dozen verses of the Bible are actually a prophecy delivered by this angel and should be read as the words of Jesus. The prophecy begins in verse ten when the angel declares, *"And he saith unto me,"* which is simply another way of saying, *"Thus saith the Lord"*, the way Old Testament prophets began their divinely inspired oratory. Read verses 10-20 as if they are a prophecy and it will make excellent sense. Christ is speaking.

"And he [prophesying in the name of Jesus] 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 which 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 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 the 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.” (Rev. 22.10-20)

What a blessing! How fitting it is! God has chosen to end His revelation to man with a final word from His Only Son. In red letter editions not all of these verses are highlighted as words of Christ, but it would be correct if they were. God has spoken to us through his servants the prophets, men like Noah, Abraham and David. Now we leave the Bible

with the voice of Jesus ringing in our heart. The greatest opening line of any book known to man may be from the book of Hebrews. *“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things...”* The Bible ends with Jesus speaking to us in these last days before His dramatic return. God has used men like Peter, John and Paul to record and teach His Word, but Jesus has the last word. Remember the words spoken early on in Revelation. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. The voice speaking is Jesus. As is true throughout the prophecies of Revelation, this prophecy is also interwoven with strong warning, as well as fatherly advice that will lead to a reward for the faithful. This is the final warning to the church. It is the final encouragement and reassurance.

Christ first tells us that the time for the adherence of the words of Revelation began in the moment that they were spoken to John. They were not meant to be directives given for people in some distant century, but were for the guidance and counsel of all believers throughout the entire Christian era. Unlike the book of Daniel, which God had instructed Daniel to seal up until the time of the end, Revelation was never sealed and has always been open to those who seek its wisdom and direction. There is no valid excuse for not seeking out the understanding of its wise pages.

Jesus announces one final time to the world that mankind will be divided into the redeemed and the lost in the end and that man’s free will shall never be taken away. Jesus had told His disciples a parable about sheep and goats

to illustrate this point.¹ Those that chose to be apart from God will remain that way and those that come to Him shall be saved. There will be no “ultimate reconciliation” with all creatures. God will not turn a blind eye to sin. He died on the cross for sin to be forgiven, but those who do not accept His sacrifice have made His death vain and meaningless. He is telling the world that salvation is their choice and He cannot, and will not, make the choice for you. The division of lost souls and saved souls will not be a 50/50 split either. Most of the world’s inhabitants will reject God. The whole nation of Israel rebelled against God in the wilderness and were overthrown there. Only Joshua and Caleb entered into the Promised Land. It was Jesus who said, *“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in there at: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”* Christ makes one last appeal. Let no man deceive himself by thinking that the unrighteous and unholy will enter into Paradise. He makes a point of saying that He is the beginning and the end, the first and the last of all things. There is no path to God but by and through Him. As He said, *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”* There is no other name by which a man can be saved. Mohammed, Buddha and the Great White Spirit do not save. Only Jesus saves. Jesus tells us that He is everything. He is the root of David, a man born of flesh; He is the bright and Morning Star because He owns the heavens and rules the cosmos. Heaven and

1. Matthew 25:31-46

earth are His to command, they must do His bidding. In verse 17 Jesus issues the unrestricted invitation to come to Him and be saved. He states that His agents, in offering this invitation are the Spirit and the Bride, His mature and faithful Church. They cry as He did when He first began His ministry on earth, *“Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand!”* They faithfully preach that *“you must be born again in order to gain entrance into the kingdom of God”*. The invitation is to all; Jew and Gentile, black, white or red, small or large, woman or man, rich or poor, gifted or rejected, intelligent or weak-minded. Come and drink freely of salvation’s healing waters.

Jesus then warns every person on earth not to tamper with the Word of God. Anyone adding to the Words will be given the plagues outlined in Revelation. Anyone who takes away from the Bible, and especially the words in Revelation, will have their name struck from the rolls of the saved. We must be very careful we do not add or take away from God’s Word. Christ ends the prophecy with the reassurance to His Church that He will return, and that it will be a sudden return just as He told His disciples. *“For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.”*²

Jesus ends His prophecy with, Amen, or, So be it. Given all

2. Matthew 24.38-42

of this, brothers and sisters in Christ, how serious should we be about the Book of Revelation? †

Let No Man Take Thy Crown

The futuristic author Ray Bradbury once wrote, “I don’t write about the future, I try to prevent it.” For those of us who understand Revelation those words have a ridiculous ring to them. No one can prevent the future; and even if we could, why would we want to?

The future is written in stone, etched deeply into the granite words of Revelation. By studying Revelation we have been made witnesses of the outcome. A rebellious, unholy world is burned with fire, judged by natural disasters and supernatural judgments from heaven. The saints are saved and the world is redeemed from the clutches of Satan and his henchmen. Good is separated from evil, the wicked are destroyed and the righteous are preserved forever. The end is perfect, fair, just and full of God’s mercy and love. Once you understand Revelation you can’t wait for the future to unfold. Each time a Christian opens his or her Bible they have an infallible guide to the future right under their nose in the form of the book of

Revelation. The sad part is that most Christians have been sold a bill o' goods that Revelation is too hard to understand, too scary, too controversial. They are told to leave its contents for the experts to decipher and debate. But if our study of Revelation has proven anything it should have exposed the awful fallacy of such noxious notions. Revelation is meant for everyone. When studied methodically in the light of the rest of the Bible, Revelation is not that hard to understand; it is scary only to unbelievers; it is controversial only to ignorant naysayers.

Once a believer understands Revelation it becomes an exciting faith builder that impregnates them with hope and encourages them to live a godly life in this present evil world. This, in fact, is the objective of our study, that by understanding and keeping the words in Revelation we will live godly lives of faith and be accounted worthy to escape all the judgments that are recorded in its pages. But our reasons for studying Revelation are not all selfish. We also studied the book of Revelation because, as Christians, we want to serve the Lord in these last days before Christ's return. To serve the Lord well we must know where the battle is and how to fight it. One of the enemy's grand strategies is to confuse and deceive believers so they expend all their energies fighting the wrong battles. Any military strategist knows that if he can get the opposing army fighting a diversionary skirmish then the real battle will go uncontested. Revelation is important in this regard. It shows Christians where the real battle is and what is at stake. It is a sad truth, however, that many who apparently have a heart to serve the Lord are, and remain, at cross-purposes with God and Christ due to their lack of understanding of Revelation. To fight the end-times battles of the Lord the Christian must know God's plan from

beginning to end. Revelation is, as we learned through our comprehensive study of the book, the picture window of God's household giving the Christian a clear, unobstructed view of the end of God's redemption plan.

Through this prophetic window we not only see God's plan but we also see His purposes and His ultimate goals. People often go wrong because they are deceived into thinking that God's plan of redemption, as revealed in Revelation, should be exactly the way man would go about it. They attach meanings that aren't there. They impose human notions of goodness on its interpretation that are not given in it. We have approached Revelation trying to shake off our human presumptions and natural misconceptions about the way God ought to be. We have taken Isaiah's advice who said, God's ways are nothing like our ways.¹ We have studied Revelation knowing that its story is greater than anything we could conjure up in our fertile imaginations. It is God's plan and we must be educated by Him concerning it. We have to come to Revelation ready to take it at face value, without imposing our ideas on it. Those who refuse to humbly receive Revelation in this manner are destined to fall into some man-made way of fulfilling God's will that sounds like love and light but is fraught with deception. This is why it can be deadly to be ignorant of Revelation and why we have spent so much time and effort studying its contents. Christians who are ignorant of Revelation can easily end up like Ray Bradbury, albeit unwittingly, but nevertheless working to prevent the future. If we are not checked by Scripture we will automatically gravitate to humanistic, unscriptural positions and end up working for causes and ministries

1. Is. 55:8,9

whose goals are contrary to God's declared plan of redemption. Those believers who are knowledgeable of Revelation ought to be frustrated by the majority of Christians who continue to buy into the notion that we are supposed to build a better world so that Christ can return. Revelation teaches us just the opposite. The world to which Christ returns is anything but good and righteous. Jesus himself directed this rhetorical question at His disciples, "*When the Son of man returns will he find faith on the earth?*". He knew, and Revelation confirms it, that He will not find the earth filled with men of faith. His primary instructions to the Church for dealing with the world was that she should offer salvation to the lost. He has asked her to issue an invitation for the saved to come into the Church and leave the world behind. He did not preach, nor did He expect His followers to preach, that the Christian Church is to make the world a tidy, sanitary place fit for Christian family life. Jesus said if the world hated me it will hate you also. Revelation confirms Christ's instructions that we are to watch, wait and pray for our redemption which is coming, not from the Church's efforts, but from heaven. Our redemption cannot come in the form of a new political ideology or by some Christian reform movement supposedly dedicated to God. If that were the plan then God would have to rewrite the Bible. In fact, Revelation makes it abundantly clear that the Church will not, and cannot, bring salvation to the earth by anything it does. We must wait for it in the form of God's judgment and Christ's triumphant return to earth that has been softened for his return by scorching by fire and God's wrath.

Revelation has taught us that the world must be purged of sin by fiery judgment. This cannot be avoided or diverted. We see in Revelation that Christ will return to

earth on a white horse, backed by His army of saints, to wrest control of the earth from the unholy trinity of Satan, the Antichrist and the False Prophet. Most of the world will be in cahoots with them. Over 90 per cent of the world's population will be obliterated by the judgments that fall during the seven-year period of the Tribulation. Most Christians will miss the Rapture because they presumed that they could live with one foot in the world and one foot in Christ and still be accounted worthy to escape the horrifying judgments of the end. Millions upon millions of these people, who are among the ignorant Christians today, will find the faith necessary to stand by their testimony for Jesus during the Tribulation, but they will have to forfeit their lives during the persecutions of the Beast and the Dragon. The Tribulation will be a reign of terror; a blood bath as never before will ensue. The Antichrist and Satan will sacrifice the whole world in a last-ditch, desperate attempt to defeat God. This is not a pretty scene, but it is the world to which Christ will return. It does not take much discernment to figure out that it is not God's will or His plan for man, whether it be the Church or not, to make the world a clean, righteous, holy and decontaminated place fit for Christ's luxurious arrival. Christ returns with a vengeance, a sword in His mouth and fire in His eyes.

Our study has also answered the question, when will this all take place and how should we prepare for it? We found that no man knows the time of the Rapture, not the angels, not even Jesus, only the Father knows, and He's not telling. The reason for this is to keep end-times saints strong in the spirit, not strong in the world, but strong in faith and in hope for the resurrection, able to resist the temptations

of the world.² Our study deduced that the Rapture will definitely precede the Tribulation. We concluded this for two reasons. First, we know what triggers the Tribulation and when it begins. When The Antichrist “confirms the covenant” with many nations and reestablishes sacrifice in the Jewish temple in Jerusalem under Judaic Law then the seven-year clock of the Tribulation begins ticking down to Christ’s return from heaven. If the Rapture were to happen after the beginning of the Tribulation the element of surprise would be gone. Everyone would know that the Rapture would happen within seven years before Christ’s return. The Rapture, as an agent to purify the believer, would have no significance. The second reason is that before Christ opened the first seal in heaven to “kick off” the Tribulation we saw a multitude of redeemed saints sitting around the throne of God worshipping the Lamb. If no one was resurrected, if the Rapture had not yet occurred, then we must wonder, who are these people and how did they get there? It only makes sense that these are Raptured saints. Therefore, the Rapture certainly happens before the Tribulation, as a thief in the night, just as Jesus apprizes us, without warning as the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25 depicts. Revelation, then, helps us to get ready for the Rapture, not the Tribulation. We know what is coming and we know it is God’s will that we avoid it (Rev. 3.10). Though we do not know the day or the hour, we can know the approximate time. Christ gave us signs of the end.³ Jesus also rebuked the Pharisees and the Sadducees for not being able to read “the signs of the times”.⁴

The signs that the end is drawing near are many. Jesus

2. 1Jn. 3:1-3

3. Matt. 24, Mark 13, Luke 21

4. Matt. 16:3

gave many of them to us in His Olivet Discourse. The main signs are; **(1)** Israel becoming a state again⁵; **(2)** the growth of unity around the world and particularly among European nations; **(3)** the rise of many false Christs, occult fascination and the advent of bogus religions; **(4)** the two world wars of this century (“nation will rise against nation”); **(5)** the increase of earthquakes in diverse places around the globe; **(6)** increase of travel and knowledge making this world a “global village”; **(7)** the breakdown of societies and governments; and **(8)** the general ungodliness and atheism of cultures everywhere. All these things, mounting with ever increasing force day by day, tell the student of Revelation to “look up for their redemption draweth nigh”. In the end, our study of Revelation will be fruitless if we do not take the advice of the third verse of the book which states, *“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.”*

All of our labor and our knowledge will be for naught if we do not truly believe in the words that we have learned. We must not be only a hearer of the Word, we must be a doer of the Word. It is imperative that we take to heart what we have learned in Revelation. The words must become “engrafted” in our hearts, so that they become a natural part of our life. One day a group of people came to Jesus to tell Him that His mother and brothers were outside trying to get through the crowd to see Him. Instead of parting the crowd and going to see them or making way for them to see Him He made this reply. *“My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.”*⁶ It is imperative that we are faithful to the words of Revelation.

5. (the fig tree budding/Matt. 24.32, Luke 21.29, Mark 13.28)

6. Luke 8.21

To believe in the words does not merely mean to acknowledge their truth. It means to, as the Amplified Bible puts it, rely on, trust in and adhere to, the words. If we hope to attain the promised blessing for keeping the words of Revelation then we must keep them in the sense that a man keeps his word. We must live as if we believe the Rapture could happen this very moment and that it is required that we live spotless lives in the spirit in order to be Raptured. We must act on the belief that this world cannot be saved and that it will be judged. We must forsake our humanly notions of perfection and walk humbly in the spirit. The Christian call to reform and sanitize this world, no matter how righteous it sounds from the pulpit, must become repugnant. We must be willing to be rejected and be weak in worldly power.

To concede to this we have to forsake the “high fallutin” Christian church as well. They just don’t get it, and they won’t until the Tribulation is in full swing and the Rapture has passed. The letter to the Philadelphia Church in Revelation, chapter three is the one directed to those who are willing to study, learn and keep the words of the last book of the Bible. In this short, but heartening, epistle Christ reassures the end-times saints that He knows that they are weak and have little strength. Unlike all but one of the other churches which Christ wrote to in Revelation, our Savior has nothing against this group of faithful believers. They have loved the truth and not denied His name. They have not been worldly wise and did not seek to have influence over political events. They loved His Word and strove to keep His commandments to love one another as He has loved us. Their immediate reward is to get the blessing promised in verse three of chapter one, which is, to be Raptured. *“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience,*

I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” They will also be vindicated in paradise. Jesus promises, “Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.” We who keep the words of Revelation will not be vindicated in this life. Our faith will be its own reward for now. But after the great drama of redemption has played out and the Rapture and Tribulation are history we shall wear our crowns in heaven. Jesus gave the believers of Philadelphia, the Church of Brotherly Love, this loving advice. We give it to those who have studied Revelation with us. *“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”* †